PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE CAREER CHOICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

Laura C. Slater

A thesis in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the explanations offered by individuals for choosing to become a school principal, focusing specifically on the personal, professional and organizational, and community and cultural influences on making that choice. A review of the literature was used to hypothesize these broad categories of potential variables as a conceptual framework for exploring the possible influences on choice.

Interviews were the primary means of data collection. Principals were engaged in conversation through a focused interview technique to gain insight into the nature of their choices. A pre-interview questionnaire was also provided to principals. Field notes were kept for each interview, and local documents relating to local district policy, rules, and procedures were collected. Seventeen elementary school principals selected through purposeful sampling from one school district in the province of Ontario took part in this study (nine women and eight men). Nine individuals had five years or less experience in the role (seven women and two men). Eight participants had more than six years experience (two women and six men).
The findings suggest that making a career choice is a process involving the interaction of multiple variables in patterns unique to each individual. Despite complex and sometimes uncertain working conditions associated with the role, the participants were apparently confident prior to entering the role that they could be effective principals. In most cases, perceptions of the role changed upon entry to the position. Some aspects of the role were unanticipated and some were unattractive. Despite these negative conditions, principals were apparently satisfied with the position, believed they had made a good career choice, and would readily choose the role again.

The reasons for choosing to become a principal were the result of a collection of influences — influences grounded in experiences and the influence of others — over time. Four general patterns of choice making emerged for choosing to pursue an administrative position. These are: a long-range goal to become a principal, a natural progression towards the role, the role as the next step in their careers, and other people's suggestions regarding the pursuit of the role. Very few differences were apparent in the explanations offered by recently appointed and veteran principals, and between men and women.
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One of the greatest lessons I learned throughout this doctoral process is the importance of the number of people who were involved from its conception to its completion. Without these people, this research would not have been possible. For me, this is the piece I will remember most fondly.

Dr. Paul Begley: supervisor, advisor, mentor, friend. It is impossible to think about creating this dissertation without thinking about the amount of dialogue and time he spent in the process. The dedication to providing timely feedback, encouragement, critique, and opportunity was relentless. I was never alone. Thank you.

The words of advice and the expertise from Dr. Ken Leithwood and Dr. Nina Bascia, as well as the encouragement and input from Dr. Richard Townsend, Dr. Keith Walker, and Dr. Jim Ryan were greatly appreciated throughout my journey. Thank you.

The principalship is an extremely busy position, and seventeen principals gave their time and reflections in participation of this study. These are your stories. Thank you.

I would also like to make special mention of the Erindale College Library staff who provided service in a way unmatched in my experience. Without their searches and quick resources, this project would not have been completed in such a short period of time. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career track is one of the most critical decisions an individual can make in a lifetime. The implications for lifestyle, personal fulfillment, standard of living, and health can be quite profound. Therefore, such decisions deserve careful deliberations and ought to be based on good information. This is especially the case for teachers in Ontario considering the transition to a school administrative role. Making the decision to become a school principal has become more complex in recent years because the role of the principal in Ontario has evolved significantly. It has always been a diverse and dynamic position but even a casual observer will readily note the multidimensional nature of the role, the contrast between management and leadership functions within the role, and the uncertainty generated by recent reform initiatives presented from the government. Conversations with some veteran principals reveal positive anticipation at the prospect of an early retirement. Moreover, those now gaining certification as principals in Ontario appear to be less qualified than in the past in terms of teaching experience and some may be motivated to pursue the position for reasons different from those that motivated their more experienced peers.

A recent article in The Toronto Star asks, “Why would anyone want to be a school principal?” (Brown, 2000, p. A8). This article discusses the ways in which the role has become more demanding. It cites a study by the Canadian Association of Principals which reports that the job of principal “no longer pays enough to match the expanding responsibilities, takes too many hours and causes too much stress” (p. A8). Further, a survey of 300 principals carried out by the Ontario Principals’ Council reveals
that almost half “say their job satisfaction has dropped in the past two years” (p. A8).

The article describes the role of the principal as being “complicated,” “complex,” increasingly “difficult,” and growing in size. These circumstances appear to be dissuading teachers from applying for the jobs. This trend is exacerbated by the loss of 9000 administrators to retirement in Canada by 2005. The outcome is that the province is in desperate need of principals.

Several recent research articles add weight to the argument that the role of the principal is becoming more demanding (Malone & Caddell, 2000; Portin, et al., 1998; Protheroe, 2001; Walker, et al., 2001). Principals in many regions of North America are apparently burdened by increasing numbers of hours on the job, dilemmas between how they want to lead and the actual nature of their work, and additional pressures from the public and from government initiatives around issues of accountability. Walker, et al. (2001) cite Davis’s (1998) findings that “principals are faced with the unrelenting task of maintaining the basic structure and order within an increasingly hostile, unpredictable, and conflict-laden environment” (p. 1). Further, Davis (1998) found that dwindling resources, burgeoning paperwork, crumbling facilities, increasing public criticisms and expectations, growing numbers of students with special needs, and increasing demands by teachers and parents to participate in decision making pose serious challenges to principals. (p. 58, as cited by Walker, et al., 2001, p.1)

In addition to a plethora of role demands, it is apparent that the number of applicants interested in the role is decreasing at this time. The gap between the number of people and the available positions is growing (Berg, 2001) for, “As many principals are leaving the ranks as they approach retirement age, fewer qualified people are applying to fill these vacancies” (Barnett, 2001, p. 1) (see also Barker, 1997; Malone &
Caddell, 2000; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Protheroe, 2001). Further, this circumstance appears to be common to many countries around the world beyond Canada (Berg, 2001).

In contrast to some other professions, it is interesting to note that candidates for the role of principal are self-selected (see Crow, et al., 1992). That is, an individual decides for him/herself to pursue the position. Therefore, this person must have a sense of what the position entails prior to preparing for the role (Wanous, 1980). Once this person chooses, he/she takes the necessary steps to achieve this goal. For example, in Ontario, aspirants must enroll in a qualification program comprised of two courses operated by faculties of education or professional associations, which must be successfully completed, before being eligible to apply to a school district for appointment. There is some evidence to suggest that districts and faculties of education are actively looking for ways to attract more teachers to consider an administrative role in order to fill their growing vacancies (Barker, 1997; Malone & Caddell, 2000).

Much of the current research addressing the decline in the number of candidates for the principalship focuses on identifying the reasons why individuals choose not to pursue an administrative position. For example, Protheroe (2001) reports the findings of a survey of administrators responsible for filling principal positions: the factors that apparently discourage potential applicants are “1) compensation that is considered inadequate when compared to the responsibilities of the position, 2) the often stressful nature of the job, and 3) the long hours required” (p. 3). Malone and Caddell (2000) similarly found that the demands of the position are perceived as too high for the payoff, which discourage individuals from applying.
Adopting the opposite approach to studying this issue might be more productive. It may be possible to glean valuable information about the role of the principal and the apparent shortage of principals through understanding why individuals do want the job. Increasing principals' salaries, taking away the stress associated with the role, and decreasing the hours of work, that is, changing the role to eliminate the aspects that are unattractive, may not be possible. Those aspects are an integral part of the role. Focusing on the difficulties of the position may even worsen the situation by potentially dissuading more from considering the principalship. Since principals' qualification courses continue to draw candidates and these individuals are, for the most part, securing jobs once they are qualified, why not investigate proactively in that direction? The role still appears to be attractive for some and fulfilling enough for others who, although eligible to retire, choose to remain in the role. The answer to the question of why anyone would want to be a school principal could thus focus on the reasons people do choose the position, rather than why they do not. Identifying ways to attract people to, rather than dissuading people from, the job may be more effective in dealing with the apparent principal shortage.

In the early 1980's research that analyzed the process of change in schools examined what did not work in implementing new programs and initiatives. It was soon discovered that there were limitations in this type of research in that little was offered in the way of findings that could be used in a proactive fashion. Researchers realized that retrospective analyses of failed innovations were not particularly helpful in producing positive change in schools (Fullan, 1982; Leithwood, 1986). Thus, research methodologies gradually shifted towards examining the ways in which schools were...
being successful in this regard. The result was the school improvement procedures that have become so common to current school leadership practices (Clark, Lotto, & Astuto, 1984). The aspects of process that contribute to success, rather than those that produce failure, may generate better results in schools seeking to implement positive change. Similarly, for the purposes of this study, the aspects of the role that attract principals to school leadership roles may be more useful information for those interested in enticing more individuals to pursue the role.

At the present time in Ontario, there is a perceived need for many more qualified school administrators. Exploring the reasons that people articulate for having chosen to become principals in recent as well as past years may provide insight into the process of choice making generally. This may also lead to practical suggestions about ways for increasing the number of people interested in school leadership roles as well as ensuring that principal vacancies will continue to be filled for the foreseeable future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the personal, professional and organizational, and community and cultural influences on the choice to become a school principal. Given the context of current educational practices, why would someone want to be a principal? The role of the principal is considered diverse and demanding. As such, how recently appointed and veteran principals respond to these challenges is of interest. Of specific interest is what attracts people to the principalship in the first place. The basic question this study sets out to answer is what are the reasons that people offer as explanations for their choice to become principals?
Research Questions

Given the preceding statement of purpose for the study, the following research questions are relevant:

1. What explanations do individuals offer for their choice to seek appointment as principal? What influence do personal, professional, and cultural variables have on principals' choice to pursue the role?

2. What are the relationships among the personal, professional, and cultural variables influencing the choice to pursue the principalship? Are there particular variables that dominate in the choice making process for certain individuals or under certain circumstances?

3. What particular functions, aspects, or qualities do individuals perceive as attractive or unattractive about the school leadership role?

4. How do the explanations provided for career choice by recently appointed principals compare to those of veteran principals?

Significance of the Study

This study has implications for both theory and practice. Very little educational literature considers the notion of making career choices. The ways in which decision-making by administrators occurs with respect to school goals is readily apparent in the literature. Theories about how principals resolve value conflicts within the school setting are also documented. Outside the field of education, how people make choices is researched in various psychology disciplines (cognitive psychology, organizational
psychology). However, how teachers make the personal choice to enter educational administration appears to be a gap in the educational literature.

Some would describe the state of education in the province of Ontario today as being in turmoil. A large number of school initiatives have been initiated by the government in recent years (for example, standardized testing and standardized computerized report cards). As teachers’ contracts expire in districts throughout the province, stalled negotiations have led to political action from teachers’ unions in the form of work-to-rule campaigns and strikes. Issues of accountability have achieved prominence, some perceive an increased workload, and others express concern over perceptions of decreased resources within the field. The public image of educators appears to be under increased scrutiny as new educational issues are raised weekly in the media. The outcome is an atmosphere of poor morale that plagues many schools in Ontario at a time when there is a push towards improved standards and student results.

Examining and understanding the process of choice in becoming a principal will also have implications for the leadership succession practices of school districts. As previously discussed, there is a current shortage of principals throughout North America. In addition, some principals are retiring sooner than expected. Thus, a study of why people choose to become principals will have potential impact on both recruitment and retention practices, in this case at both the provincial and district levels. Investigating the choice process may uncover the extent to which organizations have any influence on the choices individuals make. Knowing how a district or the Ministry of Education may be able to influence teachers to pursue administrative roles will aid in the development and improvement of local recruitment practices. The unsettled state of educational affairs in
the province of Ontario at this time makes the topic of this study timely. There is a readiness and need in the field for answers to the questions that this study asks.

Outline of the Thesis

The purpose of this first chapter is to present an introduction to the study, detailing its purpose, the research questions that guide it, and the significance of the study. The current context in which the study takes place is discussed to provide insight into background considerations and to set the framework in which the study takes place. Implications of the results of the study for theory and practice are proposed.

Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature for the study. Various topics are considered including different forms of socialization, theories about career choice, images of the role of the principal, notions of organizational and community expectations for the school leadership role, and the experiences of beginning principals. These bodies of literature represent the foundation for the conceptual framework, which is presented at the conclusion of this chapter. The conceptual framework outlines the various variables - personal, professional and organizational, and community and cultural - that may combine to influence the choice individuals make to become a principal.

The methods used to conduct this qualitative study are described in Chapter Three. Included is a rationale for the chosen methodology along with a description of the sample involved in the study and the procedures utilized. How the data for the study are collected, managed, and analyzed is also explicated in this chapter. In addition, the methodological limitations of the study are considered.
Chapter Four is the first of two chapters that displays and describes the results of the study. This chapter outlines the biographical data of the participants. This is followed by individual documented cases for each of the seventeen individuals who make up the sample. The cases allow for a better appreciation of the potentially unique experiences of the individuals in the study and in a broad sense reveal the reasons they expressed for choosing the position. A summary of these reasons is presented as a conclusion to the chapter.

A cross-case analysis of the data is presented in Chapter Five. The variables of the conceptual framework are used to structure this chapter. In Chapter Six a detailed discussion of the findings of this research is presented using the research questions as a structure. This final chapter outlines the implications for theory, practice, and further research. The study's overall conclusions are also reported in this chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is devoted to the review and discussion of several categories of literature in support of this study on how individuals choose to become school principals. The literature is used to explore several perspectives. To gain an overall or outcomes perspective of the process of taking on a new role, the literature on socialization (organizational, personal, and professional) is examined closely. Then the literature on the process of career choice is examined. This category of literature is derived primarily from outside the field of education, with any education-based references specifically identified as such. Then alternate images of school leadership practices are reviewed with a particular emphasis on identifying the ‘influences’ on leadership practices. This is followed by a consideration of the ways in which organizational and community expectations may influence educators at the local level. Finally, research dealing with the experiences of beginning principals is reviewed and the linkages are established between this induction stage into the administrative career and a preceding choice to pursue the position in the first place.

The exploration of these categories of literature leads to the formation of a conceptual framework, which structures this investigation. The conceptual framework is presented as a concluding section of this chapter.

Socialization

“Socialization refers to the process through which one acquires knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to adequately perform a social role” (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 2).
Merton (1957) states that socialization "refers to the learning of social roles" (p. 287) whereby individuals "selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, the skills, and knowledge — in short, the culture — current in the groups of which they are, or seek to become a member" (p. 287). Basically, socialization is the process through which the expectations associated with a role are acquired. It involves interactions and relationships among individuals and groups. Individuals learn what is expected of them within a particular group and through the process "come to internalize the values, norms, and beliefs of the groups to which they belong and to accept the meanings these groups ascribe to events, other people, and ideas" (Hart, 1993, p. 10).

Brim and Wheeler (1966) investigated the development of socialization processes beyond childhood. They interpret socialization as a continual process. Socialization is "developmental in nature...occur[ring] in a regular progression" throughout one's life span (Brim, 1966, pp. 18-19). Wentworth (1980) for his part notes an important distinction between primary and secondary socialization that he attributes to Parsons: "primary socialization was the relatively nonspecific process of personality development in children. It was also taken to be the basis for the transition to the roles that are to be encountered in later life" (p. 36). On the other hand, secondary socialization refers to adult learning of specific functions of particular roles. During secondary socialization, the socially constructed role is combined with the personality system of the individual.

Others have also described the socialization process as occurring over time and at different stages of one's life. The consensus among many scholars seems to be that socialization into a particular role begins before appointment to that role, continues during the beginning stage of learning the role, as well as after the individual becomes
established in the role (Marshall & Greenfield, 1987; Merton, 1957; Miklos, 1988; Peterson, 1986).

Thus, socialization is a process that is a developmental progression over time that reflects the various ways in which people learn the knowledge and expectations associated with a role to which they aspire, adopt, and ultimately integrate as part of their personal identity.

**Personal Socialization**

Brim (1966) describes the need for socialization during childhood and onward:

Even though some of the expectations of society are relatively stable through the life cycle, many others change from one age to the next. We know that society demands that the individual meet these changed expectations, and demands that he alter his personality and behavior to make room in his life for newly significant persons such as his family members, his teachers, his employers, and his colleagues at work. (p. 18)

He goes on to explain the developmental nature of these changing expectations and how they tend to correspond with stages of physical development and involve the influence of significant others who generally remain consistent across an individual’s life span. He makes the important point that “Socialization in later years builds on attitudes and skills acquired earlier, using them as a foundation for later, more demanding learning” (p. 19). Central to this conceptualization is the notion that early socialization results in relatively durable, stable learning and that it is at this time that individuals acquire “the unconscious material of the personality” (Brim, 1966, p. 21). Thus, many personality characteristics are established in the early years and remain generally unchanged throughout one’s lifetime. Further, “it is the relationship of earlier learning,
or its absence, to later learning which determines whether it will emit or facilitate adult socialization” (p. 22).

Wentworth (1980) also expresses these ideas well:

...primary socialization forms a relatively stable emotional and social matrix that affects (in some unspecified way) all later role learning...This overall position...accounts for our experiential sense of continuity – that is, we feel we are the same person at whatever age and in whatever role. (pp. 36-37)

Although, as Brim (1966) notes, adult socialization may not always be the result of responding to the norms of the group and may instead be self-initiated, “this self-initiated socialization has its roots in the expectations of ‘significant others’ whether they are present or not” (Van Maanen, 1976; p. 97). If we consider that early socialization by significant others (for example, parents) helps to establish relatively unchangeable personality characteristics, it follows that the results of adult socialization will be determined to some degree by the personal qualities of the individual. How one understands, interprets, and reacts to socialization efforts will be a function of the personal socialization process that begins in early childhood. As Schein (1968) notes:

The changes occurring in a person as a result of adult socialization are changes in the nature and integration of his social self although it is unlikely that the basic character structure will undergo much change. (p. 13; as quoted by Van Maanen, 1976, p. 74)

Certainly, the process of personal socialization will be influenced by elements of the culture into which an individual is born. The norms, beliefs, and behaviours associated with an individual’s ethnic and cultural family background will be transmitted to the person through significant others, and where incorporated in the culture, through the person's immediate community.
Thus, an individual forms his or her identity as a person throughout early childhood socialization processes that continue to have influence through the life span. This “person” remains quite stable over time so that later socialization has different results dependent upon personal characteristics acquired earlier in life. The accumulated personal values, beliefs, and attitudes of an individual, then, will likely influence the process of becoming a principal.

Organizational and professional socialization are two specific categories of adult socialization that have been explored and researched relatively well. These processes and their relationship to the principalship are reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

**Organizational Socialization**

“Organizational socialization refers to the process by which a person learns the values, norms, and required behaviors which permit him to participate as a member of the organization” (Van Maanen, 1976, p. 67). Organizational socialization is said to begin with anticipatory socialization, which occurs prior to an individual assuming a particular position or role within an organization. It can occur in different ways: it may be deliberate or it may occur informally or even spontaneously without specific intent by either the individual or the agent (Brim & Wheeler, 1966). In fact, anticipatory socialization likely occurs throughout an individual’s lifetime as the individual acquires additional understandings of specific roles. Indeed, “Research on the socialization of administrators has confirmed that the process begins in early home life and continues through all levels of schooling” (Miklos, 1988, p. 68). For principals, being a student and later serving as a teacher allows for exposure to the role prior to even aspiring to it
Anticipatory socialization continues as individuals aspire to the role and more consciously seek information and experience in order to prepare for the role. Teachers who aspire to become principals "develop a positive orientation to that reference group, [and] they begin to learn and internalize the values and orientations found in that group" (Greenfield, 1985b, p. 102). In order to become a member of the administrator group, teachers must understand the nature of the role as well as its expectations and obligations (Daresh & Playko, 1992). Further, anticipatory socialization effects continue as the individual is appointed to the new position. New administrators must adjust from a classroom-based view of education to an administrative perspective (Hamilton, et al., 1996). In summary, anticipatory socialization is important for two reasons:

For the individual who adopts the values of a group to which he aspires but does not belong, the orientation may serve the twin functions of aiding his rise into that group and of easing his adjustment after he becomes a part of it. (Merton, 1957, p. 265)

The process of organizational socialization "continues in varying degrees throughout one's organizational career" (Greenfield, 1985a, p. 2). An individual is continuously involved in learning the social knowledge and skills involved in the organizational role. However, this process is more intense and problematic for a member (and others) just before and just after a particular boundary passage. That is, an individual's anxiety and hence vulnerability to organizational influence are likely to be highest during the anticipatory and initiation phases of an organizational boundary passage. (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 224)

Thus, teachers aspiring to and principals new to the role will be involved to a higher degree in the organizational socialization process and, as such, will attempt to learn the aspects of the role as quickly as possible. In this way, individuals can feel more prepared
for the role and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness (Miklos, 1988; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Although, as stated, organizational socialization continues throughout one's career, the rate of socialization decreases with time (Hall, 1976; Schein, 1971).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) point out that organizational culture is an important component of the socialization process since this involves the transmission of information and values. They describe what is meant by organizational culture:

Any organizational culture consists broadly of long-standing rules of thumb, a somewhat special language, an ideology that helps edit a member's everyday experience, shared standards of relevance as to the critical aspects of the work that is being accomplished, matter-of-fact prejudices, models for social etiquette and demeanor, certain customs and rituals suggestive of how members are to relate to colleagues, subordinates, superiors, and outsiders, and a sort of residual category...regarding what is appropriate and "smart" behavior within the organization and what is not. (p. 210)

The cultural modes of thinking, feeling, and doing are so established that "they become viewed by insiders as perfectly 'natural' responses to the world of work they inhabit" (p. 210). Newcomers learn the cultural norms of the organization through socialization and thus perpetuate them over time so that they remain relatively stable. In the case of the position of principal, both the district and the individual schools maintain organizational culture and new principals will be exposed to and informed about, both formally and informally, the way things are done in each case. As Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggest, however, principals will also "bring with them at least the potential for change" since "Novices bring with them different backgrounds, faulty preconceptions of the jobs to be performed within the setting,...and perhaps values and ends that are at odds with those of the working membership" (p. 211).

The culture of an organization, then, is composed of the norms, beliefs, values, and assumptions shared by the members of that organization (Schein, 1985). Values,
beliefs, and traditions make up the character of the organization and give meaning to what people say and do. Culture "shapes how [people] interpret hundreds of daily transactions. This deeper structure of the life of organizations is reflected and transmitted through symbolic language and expressive action" (Deal & Peterson, 1991, p. 7). This culture is usually maintained as individuals new to the role become socialized. However, there is also room for newcomers to impart change on the established culture based on personal characteristics and values.

Greenfield (1985a & b) notes two objectives of organizational socialization:

Moral socialization is concerned with the acquisition and internalization of group norms, values, and attitudes. Technical socialization is concerned with the acquisition and appropriate use of knowledge, skills, and associated techniques needed to adequately perform in a particular role or position. (1985a, p. 2)

Everything learned through the process of organizational socialization is particular to the way the role functions within the particular organization to which the individual belongs (Hart, 1993). In this way the institutional values are sustained and passed on (Blau, 1964). A principal, then, must adjust to the norms of the district and the school (Hart, 1991). As a new member of the social group, entering a district or a school as a principal requires that the individual engage in both moral and technical socialization.

Several authors have used the same framework for describing different socialization "tactics" that produce different socialization responses (Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1991). Six process dimensions are viewed as socialization tactics and are arranged in three categories. Depending on the context, socialization occurs either individually in an isolated fashion or collectively in a group setting. This may occur in a formal or informal manner, depending on how segregated the individual becomes from the "regular organization members" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 236) for the sake of
socialization programs. What is learned – the content – can be presented either sequentially so that material is learned in a particular order, or randomly, which can be more ambiguous and changing. The time frame for learning the material can either be fixed or variable, and allows the individual to gain a sense of when to expect a role transition. As for sociability tactics, the socialization process can be either serial, in which role models are utilized to prepare new members, or disjunctive, where role models are absent. Further, investiture socialization allows an individual to feel confident that his or her professional identity and values are appropriate, while divestiture socialization requires changes to the individual’s established identity (Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1991; Schein, 1971; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Responses to or outcomes of these socialization tactics can take three forms (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Custodianship involves the replication of the role, preserving current practice with virtually no change to the actions, values, beliefs, and definition of the role. “The new principal becomes the custodian of an unaltered social niche in the school” (Hart, 1991, p. 465). With content innovation, the basic assumptions and traditional expectations of the role are accepted; however, new ideas or innovations are applied in order to improve or change aspects of the role or its function. Role innovation involves changes to goals and mission as well as to content. This is the most innovative response and involves the desire to “redefine the ends as well as the means” (Hart, 1991, p. 465). Returning to the tactics explained above, role innovation is most likely to occur when socialization is “individual, informal, random, and without role models (disjunctive) and affirms a strong, innovative, professional identity” (Hart, 1991, p. 465).
Indeed, Greenfield (1985a) found that the new principals in his study experienced an individual, informal, and random socialization process within a variable time frame.

“In addition to deliberate tactics, scholars use stage frameworks to illuminate steps through which all newcomers pass during organizational socialization” (Hart, 1993, p. 28). Linear models show progression through steps on a continuum, which end in full integration in the role (Feldman, 1989; Wanous, 1980). Cyclical models see the process as continuing perpetually (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). As noted by Hart (1993), three stages continue to appear in the literature: “They identify periods of learning and uncertainty, gradual adjustment during which outcomes...begin to emerge, and stabilization” (pp. 28-19).

It can be seen that organizational socialization processes involve the ways in which individuals adjust to the prevailing norms of the organization, as well as the ways in which the organization reacts and adjusts to the individual. Both the individual who becomes the principal and the school bring something to the socialization process. This is an interactive process in which “the principal goes through a period of adjustment to the school while the school is simultaneously adjusting to the principal” (Norton, 1994, p. 4; see also Hart & Weindling, 1996).

For principals, then, the organizational socialization process begins prior to making a decision to pursue the role during the process of anticipatory socialization. Once the decision is made, the individual will learn about the administrator group’s underlying norms and values. As the individual moves closer to entering the role, many of the previously held beliefs and behaviours may be given up for those consistent with the role of principal (Greenfield, 1985b; Van Maanen, 1976). The knowledge, skills, and
dispositions of the role will begin to take shape and will continue to be refined as the individual enters further stages of the organizational socialization process. Further, the individual acquires the needed information about the role through various organizational tactics.

**Professional Socialization**

According to Parkay, et al. (1992a), "'Professional socialization' refers to the processes through which one becomes a member of a profession and, over time, develops an identity with that profession" (p. 45). Rather than focusing on the particular knowledge, values, and behaviours associated with a particular organization, professional socialization "is more closely related to the beliefs and attitudes associated with the profession in general" (Norton, 1994, p. 11; see also Hart, 1993). These socialization processes can be either formal (such as orientation programs offered by an employer) or informal (such as through discussions with predecessors or peers), and can include both intentional strategies and unplanned activities or encounters (Hart & Bredeson, 1996). Thus, "professional socialization depends on colleagues as well as courses" (Draper & McMichael, 1998).

Bucher and Stelling (1977) maintain that the character of the professional socialization process determines the nature of the outcomes, which include "the specific professional identity, commitment, and sense of career" (p. 20) established within the individual. Further, the professional socialization process involves the preparatory training that individuals engage in prior to beginning a position, and, "as trainees move
through socializing systems they are becoming persons who are of their professions” (Bucher & Stelling, 1977, p. 177, emphasis in original).

Schein (1971) suggests, however, that professional socialization occurs both during initial training and in the early part of an individual’s career. He suggests that early career socialization can continue to support the norms established through the training process. On the other hand, what is experienced in the formative career years can also undo learned norms.

Turning to the literature on the professional socialization of administrators, one can find a similar view. As Daresh and Playko (1992) point out, “Duke (1988, p. 22) noted that professional socialization for school managers ‘encompasses learning about the field of administration and how school administrators…make sense of the world’ ” (p. 149). This differs from organizational socialization in which administrators learn to function in a particular organizational context or setting, such as the particular district or school (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Hart, 1991 & 1993; Schein, 1986). Further, “These [organizational] values and norms may be very different from those the person learned as part of his professional socialization” (Hart, 1993, p. 11). In fact, when professional and organizational socialization occur simultaneously (as in the early induction period), organizational socialization processes will be more salient if the two conflict, and norms and values established during professional socialization will be replaced by those of the organization (Hart, 1991; Hart & Weindling, 1996). Examples of professional socialization activities for principals include, “Acquiring schoolwide, as opposed to classroom-based, perspectives on matters of curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and
There is some inconsistency within this body of literature, however, as to when the professional socialization of administrators begins and ends. For example, Hart says that on the one hand, the process is said to begin “in teaching and moves through preservice training, internships, and the first professional assignment” (Hart, 1991, p. 452). On the other hand, it is stated that the process “begins in training or preparatory programs” (Hart, 1993, p. 11). As noted by Hart (1991 & 1993), the views differ depending on whether or not there is a belief that educational administration is a distinct profession from the teaching profession. Hart and Bredeson’s (1996) position is that the influencing factors such as modeling or training help shape the notion of the principalship for the individual: “From principal preparation program to actual appointment to a principalship, professional socialization processes help novices transform abstract ideas and aspiration into personal definitions of their professional role” (p. 240).

It may also be argued that professional socialization may not end with the appointment to the role or the first principalship assignment. Parkay, et al. (1992a) describe a set of five stages of professional socialization for principals: survival, control, stability, educational leadership, and professional actualization. They followed twelve principals during the three-year period that followed their appointments. Their results led them to conclude that principals begin their appointment at different stages (not always the survival stage) and move through the stages at different rates. In fact, not all principals reached the last stage of professional socialization by the end of the third year.
Although, as they also note, "a principal's eventual level of professional socialization is strongly indicated by the end of the first year" (p. 61), for some principals professional socialization can conceivably continue well into their career.

The notion of professional socialization can also be linked to identity formation. In exploring the transition of individuals to the role of headteacher in the United Kingdom, Draper and McMichael (1998) discuss a developmental perspective on identity. They propose that an individual's (professional) identity, [like the personal identity formed through personal socialization], continues to evolve over time, incorporating new elements and expectations that arise. "Not only does identity evolve, but the elements which contribute to it do not themselves stay static, for example expectations of what makes for effective headship have changed" (p. 200).

It may be, then, that changing expectations throughout the course of one's career will continue the professional socialization of principals beyond the initial induction period. Throughout a principal's career, various beliefs about the profession will emerge or evolve, contributing to the development of a personal sense of the meaning of the role.

**Career Choice**

The choice to become a principal is not a topic that is addressed well in the literature. Extensive searches yielded some research and theoretical models, but most from fields of inquiry other than education. Much of this literature on choice relates to research about organizations or the transition to management positions outside of the field of education. The organizational psychology literature yields some related topics
such as job attitudes and job satisfaction. Very little research has addressed the topic of career choice by school principals.

Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) consider the effectiveness of a need-satisfaction model of job attitudes with respect to career choice in general. Essentially, this model works with the premise that "Job attitudes and, occasionally, motivation, are presumed to result from the correspondence between the needs of the individual and the characteristics of the job or job situation" (p. 428) (see also Behling, et al., 1968). This model has been used to identify ways that organizations can motivate people and thus enhance performance. These authors note that this model is similar to theories of rational decision making, which suggest that "people make decisions consistent with the extent to which choice alternatives satisfy or do not satisfy their preferences or self interest" (p. 437). Although these authors contend that this particular model may not be subject to empirical verification, it implies the notion that individuals have personal needs and goals and will choose jobs or careers that they view as able to meet these needs.

Hall (1976) explains that career choice is based on compatibility between an individual and an occupation: "Because such a large proportion of a person's life revolves around work, it is not surprising that people try to choose work that will best enable them to fulfill their interests, meet their needs, and express themselves" (p. 11). Reviewing theories and research in this area, Hall (1976) determined that there are four general personal characteristics that are considered with respect to job compatibility: interests, self-identity (e.g., self-image), personality (e.g., needs, values), and social background (e.g., socioeconomic background). Much of this research looks at the degree of match between an individual and a career or organization; again, this match relates to
the choice by an individual of a job that will satisfy personal needs. It also may imply the ways in which organizations might adapt to provide this match.

Blau, et al. (1956), as quoted and summarized by Hall (1976), looked to integrate personal and social effects on career choice:

The authors also point out that career choice is not made once and for all at one dramatic point ("the crossroads") in life, but that such a choice is made and revised repeatedly throughout the course of the person's working life. These decisions are interrelated, such that earlier choices generally restrict the range of future possibilities and thus influence later choices. (Hall, 1976, p. 21)

In examining Ginzberg, et al.'s (1951) stage theory of career selection, Hall (1976) once again asserts that the process of career choice is not simply one decision made at one point in time in a person's life, but rather happens "at several different times throughout a person's career" (p. 24).

Hill (1992) followed new sales and marketing managers through their transition into the role. These individuals did not make hasty decisions regarding the choice to pursue a management position. Instead, they took time to think and reflect about it and to speak with various people about what their job responsibilities would be. They considered their past work experiences as a basis for what would be expected of them in a manager's role and concluded that they would simply do more of what they had been doing but with more power, control, and accountability. In fact, the primary reason that led them to choose the position "was the opportunity to assume more authority and responsibility than their technical positions would ever afford, and in the long run to make more money. In short, they wanted to be the boss, to exercise power and influence" (p. 160).
Hill's (1992) managers also tended to pursue a position only after an invitation from a superior. For many, the consideration of a management career was instigated by a suggestion made by someone already holding a position of authority. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) outline some job characteristics relevant to the process of deciding on a career: “the nature of the work itself,...the company, pay, status, outcomes of the task, supervision, pace of the task, and physical surroundings” (p. 445). Marshall (1985) summarizes how individuals make a decision about a management career that includes elements of Hill's (1992) and Salancik and Pfeffer's (1977) work:

When people make decisions about careers, they look at career stereotypes, opportunity for success, access to formal and informal training, role models, mentors, and sponsors. They are encouraged by a tap on the shoulder and then make calculations (consciously or not) about the opportunity structure, the value of the career weighed against other choices, the degree of difficulty in acquiring the stated and unstated qualifications as they gradually form decisions about whether to aspire. (pp. 29-30)

The ideas of sponsorship and mentorship are evidently a factor considered by both Marshall (1985) and Hill (1992). The superior who provides a “tap on the shoulder” or an invitation to pursue a position is considered a sponsor for the individual in that it is understood that the superior believes the individual to have potential or to be worthy of the position. Pavan (1987) cites research indicating that sponsors provide four basic functions: exposure, advice, protection, and sanction. “The sponsor helps move the aspirant from the classroom by providing administrative experience, access to other district administrators, and career guidance” (p. 319). In an examination of business literature, this author notes that numerous functions can be attributed to mentors. He categorizes these into career functions (including sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching and protection, and challenging assignments, among others) and psychosocial
functions (for example, role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship). Respondents in his study ranked support and encouragement and enhancing self-confidence (both psychosocial functions) as most important to them as aspiring principals.

Certainly there is a connection implied here between mentorship and the socialization process. At times, mentors for aspiring principals can be assigned in a formal way through certification or district-level programs. Other times, mentor relationships develop more informally. Hart (1991, 1993) notes that informal mentorships may result in poor quality outcomes due especially to the absence of mentor training. On the other hand, formalized mentorships may constrain innovation because veteran principals will simply coach aspirants on the characteristics and goals of the existing role, perpetuating these values. The effects of sponsorship and mentorship, therefore, may differ depending on the type of relationship established. In the eyes of the aspirant, perhaps an informal process is more desirable because it is more likely to result in psychosocial functions.

Turning now to the small amount of educational literature that touches on the topic of choice to pursue the principalship, we see that one common theme that emerges is the desire to make a difference in the lives of children (Alvy & Robbins, 1998; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). It is also noted that the decision is not made lightly. Alvy and Robbins (1998) describe the thinking patterns of teachers. Teachers feel that teaching and learning occur in the classroom and that this is where they can influence this process. At the beginning of the teaching career, teachers are more concerned with focusing on learning how to be an instructional leader in the classroom. Later in a teacher's career, a
realization is made that being a principal will still allow for making a difference in children's lives. Further, by sharing experiences and expertise, principals can work with teachers to improve their effectiveness through various means.

Other research indicates that with respect to recruitment practices, "information about the job is the most salient factor affecting applicant decisions" (Winter & Dunaway, 1997, p. 145). Pounder and Merrill (2001) found that high school teachers viewed the idea of becoming a principal more positively if they felt they had a good possibility of being selected for a position. They also found that salary and benefits were a positive predictor of the attractiveness of the principalship.

Hart and Bredeson (1996) discuss the antecedent conditions revealed by the unique stories of how and why individuals become principals:

Personal factors include personality characteristics and traits, individual biographies, and work and life experiences. Environmental factors include historic, social, economic, political, and organizational influences affecting individuals' socialization. (pp. 225-226)

Finally, Alvy and Robbins (1998) describe various ways in which an individual's background may influence the choice to become a principal. A person's own formal schooling experience and the image of the principalship formed during this time may be a factor. In addition, "Background factors include cultural heritage, family experiences, gender, tolerance for change, and personality style" (p. 6).

In sum, there are several ways of viewing the notion of career choice. Both the characteristics of an individual and the organization can contribute to the making of choices. In addition, the process of career choice, including rational decision-making, can be examined. Certainly, various influences will impact on any individual in forming decisions around career goals. Gronn (1999) expresses the idea of career choice well:
Pursuit of a career does, of course, bring with it financial reimbursement, but there is also a number of other equally important compensations and rewards such as status, scope to express one’s individuality and identity (i.e. to perform in a way in keeping with one’s personal needs) and the capacity to foreshadow and realize one’s potential. There is also an implied notion of commitment to a course of life and perhaps even a sense of craftsmanship as well. (p. 25)

Image of the Role

The role of the school principal has been a subject of special interest to researchers for at least three decades in North America and the accumulated literature on this subject reveals a broad range of images for the role. This reflects the broadly held belief that the principal plays a key role in influencing what goes on in schools. These images of the principalship have continuously changed and evolved over time in response to social trends and issues, some quite local in influence, others more global in scale. The relative validity and appeal of these various scholarly images of the school leadership role depend very much on time and place, who the author or researcher is, the immediate organizational context, and the greater social context.

A selective review of the research literature on the principal’s role conducted for this study reveals that the role can be conceptualized and described in many ways. Alternate conceptualizations of the role have usually emerged as a consequence of the different purposes that authors adopt when they examine the role as well as a consequence of the variations in methodologies adopted to carry out the research on the role.

For example, the principalship has been conceptualized within the literature as being predominantly unidimensional. Cuban (1986) suggested that principals focus either on administrative and bureaucratic tasks in a managerial role or on leadership in an
instructional supervisory role. He traces these single dimension images of the principal's position to the early 1900's and recognizes that they persist today. He also notes that research reveals that principals would rather spend time with instructional supervision than with administration and that some suggestions for splitting these roles between two positions can be found in the literature.

Alternately, a multidimensional approach has been posited to recognize the wide range of roles attributed to the position. As noted by Leithwood, et al., (1992a), Sergiovanni (1984) suggested five "leadership forces" to illustrate the range of dimensions in the role.

These dimensions included: technical management activities, provision of interpersonal support and encouragement to staff, instructional intervention, ... signalling to others what is important (symbolic leadership), and developing an appropriate and unique school culture. (Leithwood, et al., 1992a, p. 16)

Sergiovanni (1984) asserts that competent schools exist through leadership that is technical, human, and educational, while excellent schools also provide symbolic and cultural leadership dimensions.

Another way of describing the role is through the use of metaphors. For example, Beck and Murphy (1993) delve into the literature of the decades from the 1920's to the 1980's, examining the metaphors that emerge during each decade in order to gain a sense of the principal's role over time. They contend that "metaphors do, indeed, reflect shared meanings and that a study of metaphors can provide insight into the evolution of conceptions of principals' work" (p. 4). Beck and Murphy (1993) describe a series of major changes in role expectations for the principalship. They portray these changes as a series of decade length phases. In the 1920's, the principal was a transmitter of traditional and spiritual values and held an honorable role as a social leader in the community. The
1930's saw administrative tasks as important with a focus on organization and supervision. The need to be a democratic leader arose in the 1940's with an emphasis on social order. The verification of theory using empirical data became more important in the 1950's. In the 1960's, the principal was viewed as a bureaucratic executive and needed to respond to political demands. By the 1970's an image of the principal as a humanistic facilitator took precedence, as principals were expected to lead within the larger community, ensuring positive interactions among students and teachers. In the 1980's, the principal became an instructional leader, solving problems, providing resources, developing an ideal school vision, and functioning as a change agent.

Several researchers have inquired about the nature of principals' actual roles versus their preferred roles. Brubaker and Simon (1987), for example, found discrepancies between how principals viewed their practice and the ways in which they described the roles they would prefer. Principals saw their role as an administrator and instructional leader; however, they described the roles of other principals as general managers. It may be that the preferred view of the role as an instructional leader identified in this study was the outcome of changing expectations for principals derived from district personnel and universities, rather than being grounded in their actual actions as school administrators.

The principal's role has also been described in terms of typical and effective practices. "Principal effectiveness has been defined in terms of effects on student learning either directly or through mediating variables" (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982, p. 310). Thus, the actions of principals have been studied to determine the extent to which particular principals' practices result in effective school outcomes. Leithwood,
et al. (1990) describe some of the dimensions of effective practice. Effective principals hold "high levels of commitment to goals for the school, especially instructional goals" (p. 15). A school vision is articulated that encompasses the belief that all children can learn. Further, a number of strategies were found to increase principal effectiveness such as "monitoring student progress, ... establishing and communicating clear, high expectations for students and staff, ... and maintaining a positive school climate" (p. 16).

Research about patterns of practice or leadership styles "has attempted either to identify dominant orientations to the role without concern for differences in impact, or to define progressively more effective styles or patterns of practice" (Leithwood, et al., 1990, p. 12). For example, Hall, et al. (1984) suggested three styles of leadership: Initiator, Manager, and Responder. Initiators hold clear goals and beliefs about what is best for students and make decisions based on these. They have high expectations for teaching and learning and monitor these frequently. Although Managers usually do not move beyond basic expectations for the school, they provide defense and support for teachers implementing new programs. Responders provide little guidance to others, allowing them to lead based on their own expertise. This latter category emphasizes personal aspects of relationships with others. When it comes to implementing new programs, Initiators were found to be the most successful and Responders the least successful. However, Managers were seen by teachers to create the most positive school climate.

Further, after reviewing the literature in this area, Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) describe four particular leadership styles. Student achievement and wellbeing are the goals of one leadership style, with the sophisticated use of various interpersonal,
administrative, and managerial means to achieve this goal. Principals with a program focus look for effective school programs, staff competency improvement, and the procedures for delivering program with the most success. A third style focuses on interpersonal relationships, whereby principals work to establish cooperative relationships with the school as well as in the community in order to increase school success. The fourth and final style described by Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) is one with a focus on "administrivia" in which principals spend their time on organizational and maintenance issues rather than on instruction and curriculum.

In research conducted several years later, Leithwood, et al. (1992a) report influences on the principal's role. Discovering the influences on the practices of incumbent principals, they argue, is "useful in beginning to think about what sorts of experiences will contribute most usefully to future school-leader development (or growth)" (p. 22). A review of studies in this area yielded four types of external influences:

- the principal's role (e.g. expectations, complexity), a large cluster of influences concerning the attitudes, abilities and behaviors of others (e.g. teachers' willingness to innovate), characteristics of the school system (e.g. district policies and procedures), and the principal's "own" background (e.g. training, socialisation experiences). (p. 26)

Further, as Leithwood, et al. (1992a) report, the internal mental processes of the principal also influences practice: personal traits, knowledge and beliefs, values, attitudes and feelings, and skills (p. 26).

Understanding the influences that affect the practices of principals is an important area for inquiry. People, events, and personal characteristics combine as influences and generate the ways in which people lead. These influences may provide insight into the
formation of individuals as principals. In the same way that certain factors influence principals' practices (such as those found above by Leithwood, et al. (1992a)), these factors may also influence people's choices to pursue the principalship. On the other hand, there may be very different factors that influence an individual's choice to pursue the role beyond the ones that Leithwood, et al. (1992a) identify.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) describe six different models of leadership based on an analysis of literature contained within four particular journals since 1988. These models include instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, and contingent leadership. They note that each model represents a focus for principals' work. When one looks at the role of the principal as outlined by literature produced since the 1990's, there is a movement towards the promotion of transformational leadership (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Leithwood (1994) notes that school restructuring efforts beginning in the last half of the 1990's have generated changes to the role. He argues that transformational leadership practices are better suited because this type of leadership will stimulate change and result in school improvement. The dimensions of transformational leadership he identifies include the development of a vision, promotion of common staff goals, expectations for high staff performance, modeling of espoused values, provision of intellectual stimulation about educational practice, provision of individualized staff support, creation of a productive school culture, and fostering participation of others in school decisions (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood, et al., 1999b).
Organizational and Community Expectations

A discussion of several categories of organizational and community expectations is presented below as factors associated with how the role of the principal is perceived by individuals in those roles.

Organizational Expectations

The formal organization is said to define "the structure in which people work" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p. 123). This structure allows individuals to understand how the organization operates through defined norms (generalized rules of behaviour) and roles (expectations of the position).

As described earlier, organizational culture is important in the process of socialization. Particular expectations are placed on new principals as they enter the position within a school and a district. These organizational expectations are communicated to individuals from various sources.

For the school principal, there are several sources of organizational expectations for the role. Some of these sources reflect vested authority, such as the expectations verbalized to the principal by the superintendent or by the school council. These expectations are usually fairly informal in nature. Other sources are more policy related and thus more formal in nature, such as government legislation and school district programs and documents. Several examples of these policy sources will warrant consideration here to gain an understanding of the organizational expectations that influence the nature of principals' work.
In Ontario, *The Education Act* defines the duties and powers of the principal. This Act, along with subsequent additional regulations that are passed periodically, form the rules that govern the behaviour of principals in the province. In addition, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) serves to make recommendations to the government about improving the quality of education in Ontario through the use of standardized student testing, standardized report cards, new elementary school curriculum and secondary school reform, along with various other initiatives (Leithwood, et al., 1999a). These initiatives are implemented in schools under the leadership of principals who are provided with specific guidelines from the accountability office for the processes. Another organization, the Ontario College of Teachers, was established in 1997 to regulate and govern the teaching profession in the province. The College has provided a document, *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* (1999) that serves to guide educators in their practice. In addition, the College is responsible for providing guidelines for accreditation, including the content and delivery of the Principals' Qualification Program (2001). These two required courses associated with this program provide another source of expectations for principals. Candidates in the courses learn about educational legislation, Ministry and district policies, and current theory and research about the principalship. Topics include, for example, decision-making; interpersonal skills; school program management; the needs of students with exceptionalities; personnel assessment and evaluation; assessment reporting; legal issues; school planning processes; and generic leadership processes. Finally, another organization, the Ontario Principal's Council, is a professional association for practicing principals and vice-principals in Ontario's publicly funded school system. It provides
professional services through workshops, conferences, and a regular newsletter, as well as professional assistance and legal support.

At the local level, the district in which one is employed typically develops and produces a number of documents and procedures that address the expectations of the principals in the district. For example, districts may offer leadership programs that focus on what it means to be a leader that are aimed at individuals who are considering moving into leadership positions. Internship programs for people actually seeking leadership roles may also be offered. These may include formal mentorship pairings between those in a position and those aspiring to the position. Orientation or induction programs are another element that some districts may provide. Through this process, principals new to the role or new to the district would engage in learning about current provincial and local directions and expectations. Many districts also provide professional development opportunities for administrators and the areas addressed usually correspond with current emphases within the district. In addition, each district will have a performance appraisal procedure for assessment and evaluation of principals. The elements of focus within this procedure will reflect the expectations the district has for principals.

The expectations communicated to principals in the particular district to which they belong will have an impact on their image of the role. The ways in which they carry out their jobs will depend to some extent on how their superiors and the organization in general view the principalship. This in turn may have an impact on individuals' choices to pursue the role of the principal. Local and contextual organizational variables, then, may have an influence on these decisions.
Current Expectations of the Role

Leithwood, et al. (1999b) describe how school restructuring became a dominant theme of the 1990’s:

Across virtually all parts of the developed world schools are being challenged, in the name of restructuring, to, for example, change their governance structures, open themselves to greater community influences, become more accountable, clarify their standards for content and performance and introduce related changes in their approaches to teaching and learning. (p. 23)

Others also indicate that school reform efforts have a great impact on the evolution of the role of the principal (Bredeson, 1993; Murphy, 1994; Portin, et al., 1998; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Rinehart, et al., 1998). One increasingly common theme in the literature is the notion of increased demands on the principal to the point where the role is becoming unmanageable. Pounder and Merrill (2001) note that societal changes and school reform efforts have resulted in a more demanding role where expectations are increasing while no responsibilities are being taken away (Portin, et al. (1998) describe this as “layering” while Murphy (1994) considers this role overload). Malone and Caddell (2000) describe the challenges facing the principal: “The principal is expected to be a manager, instructional leader, motivator, lay psychologist, and public relations expert” (p. 163). They also note that the amount of time spent on the job has increased dramatically (see also Portin, et al., 1998).

After studying the metaphors of the principalship over the decades, Beck and Murphy (1993) proposed “that the role of the principal is an extremely malleable one, shaped by a diverse set of concerns and events” (p. 197). Leithwood’s review of the various conceptualizations of the principalship over time lead him to assert that different
approaches to leadership (e.g., managerial leadership, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership) emerge depending on context:

Each developed in a context of organizational and broader social goals, needs, norms, ideas, and expectations, which allowed one or several approaches to leadership to dominate, as an ideal, until such time as that context changed sufficiently as to more clearly favour yet another approach or approaches. (pp. 22-23)

Thus, the factors that influence the expectations associated with a principal’s role and, by extension, those that influence the decision to pursue the role, may not be the same today as they were in past decades. Indeed, the changing external environment likely generates the variations in images of leadership. Current images of the principal’s position will thus be predictably affected by the current climate of restructuring and reform initiatives characteristic of many North American school districts.

Community Expectations

Similarly, the expectations of a community may also impact the way individuals view the role of the principal. For example, schools have become increasingly diverse:

Staff and student populations are diverse, whether a school...consists predominantly of one racial or ethnic group or of a variety of cultural groups. Diversity includes differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, religion, physical and mental ability, language, and ethnicity. Although some schools have greater diversity than others, all schools must acknowledge and act on the diversity found in their populations [and] the community itself. (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p. 90)

Indeed, the nature of the community and the cultural context of the school are related. If a community’s population is predominantly White, the population of students in the school will be predominantly White. If the community’s socioeconomic status is low, children in the school will reflect this through the nature of their belongings, for example.
Connected to this are the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of those who make up the community. Principals and staff must be sensitive to the cultural ideals of the families that attend the school. Pressures on principals and schools related to cultural pluralism are complex in that the issues include “Differential valuing of different forms of knowledge, citizenship principles, appropriate roles for men and women, academic freedom and norms of experience, and secular-moral dimension of education” (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 280). The principal thus becomes a celebrant of diversity while at the same time a mediator who must reconcile “coexisting values, traditions, and mores” (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 281). Expectations from the community based on diverse cultural backgrounds helps to shape the principal’s role.

In addition to general cultural expectations, the community communicates expectations in other ways. Each school in Ontario has a formal school council comprised of the principal, at least one teacher, at least one student, at least one non-teaching staff member, a community member, and parents of children who attend the school. This school council acts in an advisory way for the principal in order to enhance the learning of students in the school. Items of discussion are current educational issues as well as local concerns and educational needs (Ministry of Education and Training, 1996).

At times, local businesses may also impart expectations on schools and principals. Increasingly, there is an expectation that principals involve business and other local organizations in the life of the school. The neighbourhood convenience store may expect the principal to limit the number of students who visit the store during lunch hour, for
example. Or, a community church may wish to coordinate after school day care with the school.

In addition, as noted above by Cunningham and Cordeiro (2000), the political beliefs of the local community may also have an effect on the kinds of expectations people have of the principal and the school. As the province of Ontario is involved in extensive restructuring initiatives imparted through the current government, issues involving political ideologies will surface within communities and within the school context itself. Similarly, in recent years Leithwood has directed an increasing amount of attention towards considering how political ideology influences leadership practices. Leithwood, et al. (in press) discuss how recent reform initiatives have "a central concern for holding schools more accountable." Further,

A primary reason for this similarity of concern across reform efforts can be traced to their roots in a New Right political ideology generally hostile to traditional public institutions. This ideology has captured the allegiance of many governments and, as a consequence, much greater emphasis on accountability is a critical part of the context in which school leaders now work. Furthermore, although initiated at the "center," successful implementation of such accountability-oriented reforms depends significantly on the practices of such leaders.

It can be seen, then, that community expectations that arise from various sources will influence the nature of the role of the principal and how individuals perceive their roles. Again, these expectations may influence the choices that people make about becoming principals. Both organizational and community expectations, then, are important considerations for exploring the influences on the choice to pursue the principal's position.
Beginning Principals

A final area of the literature to be reviewed for the purpose of establishing a foundation for this study is the research about beginning principals. In his chapter on career choice, Hall (1976) includes a section discussing choice implementation, for, “Once a career decision has been made, the next series of tasks involve the execution or implementation of that decision” (p. 25). This is when organizational socialization processes are said to begin. Hall (1976) graphically represents the connections between pre-entry elements, the period of anticipation and decision, and post-entry elements, the period of implementation, in the stages in career decision making (p. 27). Indeed, individuals begin by exploring options before making a choice, then enter a period of induction while new to a role, before becoming integrated with the organization. Hall (1976) also indicates that at times, due to unforeseen circumstances, individuals may need to step back a stage (for instance, if no positions are available after preparing for a job).

Because organizational socialization processes include the beginning stages of an individual’s career, this is an important area of consideration for this study. Role transition is “the process of changing roles and trading one set of expected behaviors in a social system for another” (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 224). Louis (1980), in describing the stages of organizational socialization, notes that individuals begin to form expectations about a new role during the anticipatory socialization process and that these expectations are often unrealistic. “Reality shock” occurs when individuals subsequently begin their new role and encounter differences between their anticipations and experiences. Louis (1980) goes on to explain three entry experiences: change (those
objective elements of the new situation which differ from the old setting), contrast
(differences between settings noticed by the specific individual), and surprise
(differences in the individual’s expectations and actual experiences in the new setting).

Louis (1980) describes how surprise can take several forms. Surprise can occur
when “conscious expectations about the job are not fulfilled in the newcomer’s early job
experiences” (p. 237). It can also occur when conscious or unconscious expectations
about the individual him/herself are not met, where the individual learns more about
perceptions of self. In another form of surprise, “unconscious job expectations are unmet
or...features of the job are unanticipated” (p. 238). In addition, surprise can occur when
individuals do not predict how the new experiences will feel. Surprise also “results when
the newcomer relies on cultural assumptions brought from previous settings as operating
guides in the new setting” (p. 238). Finally, Louis (1980) notes, “Both pleasant and
unpleasant surprises require adaptation” (p. 238). In order to deal with surprise, this
author suggests that individuals go through a process of “sense making” so that
explanations can be developed for actual versus predicted occurrences. These
explanations are retrospective and provide reasons for the outcomes and discrepancies.
Sense making occurs within a framework of knowledge and understanding about
personal, interpersonal, and organizational characteristics.

“[B]ecoming an administrator is a process of growth and development rather than
a single event marked by signing a school district contract” (Parkay, et al., 1992a).
Further, the early professional socialization of principals has a large impact on “their
subsequent professional identities and in their functioning as formal school leaders”
(Hart, 1993, p. 57). Through the transition to a principalship, individuals must leave
behind one role orientation (that of teacher) in favour of the new one (the principal's role). Understanding the expectations of them in their new role involves their own personal understandings as well as the expectations others have for them:

The expectations of students, teachers, other administrators, parents, and school board members shape the role of the principal and preparation for that role. Organizational cultures, community values, traditions, precedents and predecessors in the job also contribute to their professional role legacy. (Hart & Bredeson, 1996, p. 228)

Further, tension is created because of discrepancies between how principals see their own roles and the expectations others have of them.

Daresh (1986) describes the main concerns found in his study of beginning principals. Role clarification was one such concern where principals had difficulty truly understanding the nature of their roles. Also, they were surprised by the amount of responsibility associated with the principal's position in terms of authority and leadership. Principals had concerns about lack of technical expertise such as procedural issues, and found challenges in the area of interpersonal relations. They also felt unsure of the behavioural expectations from the district.

In an examination of the internal and external problems and issues of first year principals, Parkay, et al. (1992b) found that "coping with a wide range of tasks" and "establishing/improving channels of communication" (p. 27), along with "creating a better public image of the school" and "working with parental problems" (p. 29) were of most concern. Parkay and Rhodes (1992) describe sources of stress for new principals including, for example, role demands, task overload, communicating negative performance evaluation, external community and district politics, and parental behaviour. They indicate that "the most intense sources of stress result from perceived limitations of
the self, whereas those less intense result from limitations the principal perceives in others” (p. 114, emphasis in original).

In the United Kingdom, several studies have shown that new heads have been alarmed by the “increased burden of paperwork, curricular change and management demands” (Draper & McMichael, 1998, p. 198). In their own research, these authors found that new heads, although feeling very prepared for their roles, still encountered surprise and shock upon assuming their jobs. They found they had little time for themselves and were overloaded by the demands of the job. They were surprised by the level of respect their roles elicited from their staff but found support from district superiors to be lacking. New leaders often felt unskilled and unsure of themselves, affecting their sense of self as competent managers.

In a study that examined the transition to leadership of principals in the United States and the United Kingdom, it was found that individuals had had prior administrative experience. However, “Nothing could prepare the respondents, both American and British, it seems, for the change of perceptions of others or for the intensity of the job” (Daresh & Male, 2000, p. 95). They had not anticipated the actual extent of what the job entailed and reported high levels of stress as a result. Most new principals attempted to incorporate strategies for dealing with this stress, setting aside personal time to do so. These researchers conclude,

...people often do not appreciate the way in which taking on a management post will be a life-transforming experience. One’s personal control of time and priorities is altered drastically. Reaction by peers is changed largely because one soon learns that ‘peers’ are suddenly no longer present when one takes a place on the ‘hot seat’. (Daresh & Male, 2000, p. 99)
Currently, on-going research is being done in several countries about beginning principals. The International Beginning Principals Study (IBPS) (Barnett, 2001; Walker, et al., 2001) includes Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, the Netherlands, and the United States. Preliminary results from Canada and the United States show some of the surprises encountered by new principals. Time demands were much greater for principals than expected in all four studies (Barnett, 2001; Berg, 2001; McGrevin, 2001; Walker, Sackney & Cassavant, 2001). They found the job to be consuming enough as to intrude on their own time, finding it difficult to balance the job and their own personal lives. The pace of the job as well as the number of tasks involved was of concern. Two studies revealed a sense of loneliness that had surprised newly appointed principals (Berg, 2001; Walker, et al., 2001). The large amounts of paperwork surprised some principals (Barnett, 2001), while not being able to provide instructional leadership due to role demands was of concern to others (Berg, 2001). Interestingly, some principals did indicate that the job was similar to what they had expected, perhaps because of prior experience as assistant principals (Barnett, 2001; McGrevin, 2001).

The transition to the role of principal, then, is one marked with surprise. Elements of the position that have not been previously anticipated will have an impact on individuals’ understanding and performance in the role. As part of the process of socialization, the induction period for new principals is an important area of consideration.
Conceptual Framework

What has emerged from the literature as the conceptual framework for this study is depicted in Figure 1.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, anticipatory socialization occurs as an individual begins to learn the requirements and characteristics of the role to which he/she aspires. This process may begin prior to the choice to pursue the role as some have suggested. For instance, while they are students and in the teacher's position, individuals learn about the role of the principal. However, literature pertaining to organizational and professional socialization considers the process after individuals have made this choice. Similarly, literature concerning images of the role and expectations of the role reflect the practices of those who are actually in the role. Yet, aspects of these bodies of research may point to possibilities in regards to better understanding the making of choices.

Indeed, personal socialization, which begins at birth, leads to the development of personality characteristics. The ways in which an individual thinks and acts, then, can be traced to this socialization process. These attributes may have a bearing on the choices an individual ultimately makes throughout life, including choices to pursue particular roles. Organizational and professional socialization occur once a person has made the choice to go into administration. However, since these processes serve in part to perpetuate the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours of the role of the principal, there is a connection between these processes and the way people view the principalship. That is, a person will have a concept of what the role is about prior to making the decision to become a principal. This concept will be based on observations made of others already
in the role who have engaged in both organizational and professional socialization processes.

As Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) cite from Greenfield's (1986, p. 45) work, “we might well return to one of Simon's original starting points and seek to understand the logic and psychology of human choice” (p. 39). In addition to the highly rationalized ways of making decisions associated with the literature just reviewed, administrators also encounter values and value conflicts associated with personal and educational issues and thus may make decisions based on less rational ways as well (see Begley & Johansson, 1998). If individuals make rational and nonrational decisions in these ways once they are immersed in the position of principal, it is reasonable to assume that the choice to enter the field initially may also be the outcome of both rational and nonrational influences. Louis (1980), for example, suggests that the assumption that newcomers who enter unfamiliar organizational settings are rational beings who form conscious expectations of their roles, which then leads to either satisfaction or turnover, is not well supported. Many more conscious and unconscious, rational and affective factors come into play as individuals make sense of their new positions.

The notion of influence on choice as it relates to the process of becoming a principal appears to be missing in the literature about leadership. Although research has explored the effects of influence on principal practices and the notion of choice in problem solving and decision making, these areas have not been applied to the matter of career choice and socialization. Specifically, what are the influences that affect the choice of an individual to become a principal in the first place?
A few clues about how this process occurs have been noted in the preceding literature review. These potential influences include: exposure to the role as a teacher and the images of the role formed during this time, the effects of an invitation by a superior to consider the role, the encouraging effects that a mentor can play, the perceived availability of positions, and background life factors and experiences. However, these notions are derived from research aimed at answering other questions. Researchers have not directly addressed the question of the choice to pursue the principalship.

From the preceding review of the literature, combined with several months of reflection and conversation with others on the matter, the following three broad categories were developed as a framework for exploring the possible influences on this choice: personal variables, professional and organizational variables, and community and cultural variables. Within each of these broad categories, lists of potential influences were developed. This is not to suggest that this is a complete and comprehensive view. From the beginning of the study it was understood that other variables might be uncovered as outcomes of the research findings of this study.

Personal variables include family background, critical events during the course of one’s educational career, the effects of one’s personal philosophy of education, one’s personal identity including values, beliefs, and ethnicity, and one’s identity as a part of a home community environment. The literature reviewed about personal socialization and, to some extent, anticipatory socialization, has informed these variables. Professional and organizational variables include formal and informal organizational expectations, one’s image of the role of principal, the effects of formal and informal preparation directly or
indirectly related to the role, and any impact made by professional organizations in addition to the district and Ministry. Literature pertaining to organizational and professional socialization, image of the role, and organizational expectations are connected to these variables. Community and cultural variables include the culture of the school and/or district, the expectations from the school community, the effects of culture and diversity within this community, and individual or community political ideologies.

Taken together, the bodies of literature that were reviewed as preparation for this research merge in a way that suggests the many and varied influences affecting a person's choice to become a principal. This choice is not one made lightly or easily and cannot be addressed on the basis of a single factor alone. The role of the principal is complex and dynamic and, as such, the decision to enter administration is also complex and dynamic. It is thus proposed that the various personal, professional and organizational, and community and cultural variables identified and assembled in the conceptual framework just described were derived from the literature review. They represent the factors most likely to influence individuals as they make the decision to become principals. The data analysis for this research may confirm or disconfirm these variables as actual influences on the career decisions made by real people. Other variables not referenced in the existing literature may also be revealed through their accounts of their career choice making experiences.
Figure 1. Influences on the Choice to Become a School Principal

Community/Cultural Variables
- school/district culture
- community expectations
- community culture
- political ideology

Personal Variables
- family
- critical events
- personal philosophy of education
  - personal identity: values, beliefs, ethnicity, culture
  - home community identity

Choice to become a principal

Professional/Organizational Variables
- organizational expectations:
  - formal (Ministry, District policies and procedures)
  - informal
- image of the role:
  - researcher
  - practitioner
- preparation for the role:
  - formal (coursework, District programs, mentors)
  - informal (peer group, experiences, mentors)
- professional organizations:
  - College of Teachers
  - Ontario Principals' Council
  - unions/federations
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the methodological structures of this research. The chapter begins with a general overview of the methodology adopted, followed by a rationale for the specific methods used. Next, the process used for reviewing the literature pertinent to this study is outlined. This is followed by a discussion of procedures used to select participants, collect and manage data, as well as the procedures followed in conducting the data analysis. The ethical concerns associated with this study are then considered. Finally, the limitations and delimitations of this research methodology are presented.

Overview

This is a study aimed at understanding the ways that individuals make career choices. Accordingly, the emphasis will be placed on the actual experiences of individuals and their perceptions of those experiences. This implies that dialogue between the researcher and the individual participants in the study will be the primary means of collecting the data. The quality of those conversations is therefore of primary importance. For the purpose of this study, then, the primary source of data is interviews. Principals with little administrative experience and principals with extensive administrative experience were engaged in conversation through a focused interview technique to gain as much insight as possible into the nature of their choices. The principals who were interviewed needed to recall their experiences and the thought processes leading up to their making the choice to become a principal. The primary
strategy for facilitating such recall is constructing with the individual, through questions and dialogue, the context of the time and place when they made this career choice.

**Research Methodology and Rationale**

This research was conducted as a qualitative study. Indeed, "Qualitative data are attractive. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 15). The intent is to interpret and understand the descriptions, recollections, and meanings assigned to events by the participants in the study (see also Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Merriam, 1998). In order to gain as much insight as possible into the perspectives of principals, four separate methods were employed in an integrated manner. The first step was a pre-interview questionnaire provided to principals in order for them to begin to think about the subject matter in advance. This was also intended to collect demographic and biographical information. A letter of agreement was also sent to participants with this questionnaire that explained the nature of the study. The second step was an in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended interview that was conducted with each principal. As a third step for the data gathering process, field notes about each interview were written immediately following the actual interview. Finally, local documents relating to local district policy, rules, and procedures were collected. These documents were made available to the researcher through an employee of the district who was part of a team that conducted research and developed programs for teachers and administrators. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) point out, "...the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure
an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question...[The multimethod strategy] adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation" (p. 2).

Because of the nature of this study, participants were selected through purposeful sampling. That is, principals were contacted based on their number of years of experience as a principal and their gender. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Indeed, this investigation is concerned with the perspectives of particular groups of individuals; thus, the principals were chosen by the researcher before being contacted.

The primary source of data for this study came from interviewing. "Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 361). It provides us with the opportunity to uncover participants' unobservable feelings and interpretations of the world, and to understand the nature of past events (Merriam, 1998). In a semi-structured interview, participant and researcher engage in conversation that is guided by flexible, open-ended questions. Questions are designed to probe specific areas of concern while allowing for individuals to respond in unique, meaningful ways (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Merriam, 1998). Further, the interview process allows for comparisons to be drawn across subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

**Literature Review**

The process for conducting the literature review, which was used in the formation of the conceptual framework for this study, occurred in several steps. Discussions with
faculty members of the university provided many suggestions for likely sources of literature pertinent to this area of research. Computer-aided literature searches were conducted via the Internet and ERIC (The Educational Resources Information Center which includes the world's largest database for educational information). Journal articles and books were identified from this source and subsequently obtained through University of Toronto libraries and from other university libraries throughout the country (such as Lakehead University and the University of Victoria). In addition, back issues of the following journals spanning the last ten years were searched by hand for relevant articles: Educational Administration Quarterly, the Alberta Journal of Educational Research, and the Journal of Educational Administration. The Journal of School Leadership was searched from 1994 to 2001. References acquired from these articles and books generated further searches and acquisitions that contributed to the search. These resources were kept on hand for the duration of the study and writing of the thesis. Finally, the researcher attended several conferences during 2000-2001: the University Council for Educational Administration Convention (UCEA); the 14th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement conference (ICSEI); the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA); and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education conference (CCSE). Particular sessions of the AERA conference were especially informative with respect to research being conducted about beginning principals.
Sample

Seventeen elementary school principals from one school district in the province of Ontario took part in this study (nine women and eight men). Nine principals held the position for five years or less (seven women and two men) while eight participants had been principals for a period of time greater than six years (two women and six men). An additional four principals who were contacted declined to participate in the study. When a person declined the opportunity to participate, another person was selected from the larger list of principals provided by a contact in the district. Therefore, this study involves principals of elementary schools that service kindergarten through grade eight.

Because the sample involves principals from only one school district, generalizability to other school districts in the province and to other provinces and territories in Canada is limited. However, the common circumstances shared by the participants provided for more direct comparisons within the same context. In addition, choosing one school district circumvented the difficulties associated with obtaining permission to carry out the same study in several districts. Finally, the school district chosen covers a large geographic area and encompasses many different communities; principals who participated in the study are representative of the various areas of the entire district.

Procedure

Before proceeding with the study, an OISE/UT approved proposal was provided to the research committee at the school district office in order to gain permission from the Director of Education for the research. This permission was granted promptly following
one adjustment to the letter of consent. At this point the researcher consulted with a
district contact, who was a senior administrator for the Board, to obtain a list of over 40
principals who met the selection criteria relating to different amounts of experience.
From this list a balanced group of women and men were selected for initial contact by the
researcher. Neither the district contact nor any other employee of the district was
involved in this latter step of the sample selection process as a guarantee of anonymity
for the participants.

A letter was then sent to each principal outlining the nature of the research and
indicating that the researcher would be in touch by telephone regarding their
participation. Despite some difficulty in reaching a few principals for the follow-up
telephone conversation, 21 principals were contacted and 17 agreed to participate. Of the
principals who gave a reason for declining to participate, lack of time was the primary
reason expressed.

During this telephone discussion, any questions principals had about the research
were answered and dates and times for the interviews were set up. Interviews were
carried out between November 15 and December 14, 2000 at each principal’s school site.
Interestingly, this scheduling went extremely well with no interviews canceled and only
one interview rescheduled due to weather. A letter of consent (see Appendix A) was sent
to principals along with a pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix B) following the
time of the initial contact. The letter of consent detailed the nature of the study. It
included an assurance of confidentiality, the right to withdraw from the study at any time,
the request to audiotape the interview, the opportunity to review the transcript from the
interview, and an offer to provide a summary of the findings for the complete study upon
request (see Appendix B). Prior to the beginning of each interview the participant was asked to sign this letter and retained a copy. The completed pre-interview questionnaire was collected from the participant by the researcher at this time as well.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. Questions were guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix C). This schedule was created using the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two as a guide to generating questions. That is, three areas of interest were examined: the personal, professional, and cultural influences on individuals' choices to become principals. Because principals were required to draw on memories of the past in order to answer these questions, the questions went beyond the time of the actual choice-making and into the beginning stages of the principalship. Through this questioning, principals were immersed in thoughts about that time of their career and became engaged in the interview process as they recalled the context and thought processes involved at the time. In this way, the questions developed for the study allowed for the emergence of detailed and authentic answers from the participants. Overall, the interviews went smoothly. One principal asked for clarification of several questions and was able to answer the questions after this was provided. Another principal tended to answer in generalized ways rather than from a personal standpoint at the beginning of the interview, talking about how "most" principals would probably answer; however, after approximately a third of the way through the interview, she spoke about her own personal experiences. The rest of the participants appeared to be relaxed throughout the interview and spoke freely in answer to the interview questions.
Interview times varied from 35 minutes to one hour and twenty minutes. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. The taping equipment used included a small tape recorder with two microphones that clipped to each person’s clothing. This allowed for clear recordings with minimal background noise and aided considerably in the accurate transcription of data. Participants subsequently received a copy of their transcript with an invitation to make comments, edit, or provide additional information. Four transcripts were returned to the researcher with minor editing, while two additional transcripts were returned with no change. Following each interview, field notes were written that captured any interesting occurrences during the interview and commented on the context of the interview. These notes were both descriptive and reflective in nature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Prior to the commencement of the study, the pre-interview questionnaire and the interview schedule were piloted by the researcher with two experienced principals who were not involved in the study. This allowed for the opportunity to gain feedback from informed individuals who could comment about the appropriateness, effectiveness, and clarity of the questions. Because of their redundancy, three questions were eliminated from the interview schedule as a result of this feedback.

Official documents were collected from the employing school district. The key documents consisted of guidelines, regulations, procedures, and policies that contributed to the understanding of district expectations for principals. As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), “Internal documents can reveal information about the official chain of command, and internal rules and regulations. They can also provide clues about
leadership style and potential insights about what organizational members value” (p. 101).

Data Analysis

Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed in full. Each transcript and the corresponding pre-interview questionnaire and field notes were given a code in order to separate individuals’ responses and to ensure anonymity. Participants were given the opportunity to review and react to the transcripts in order to ensure the accuracy of comments.

A filing system was established to maintain each respondent’s data (pre-interview questionnaire, transcript, and field notes).

Additional thoughts that emerged during the course of data collection, literature searches and readings, informal conversations with others about the nature of the study, and data analysis were collected in a small notebook and referred to at various stages throughout the process of writing this thesis.

The district documents that were collected were examined and notes were taken that pertained to the expectations of principals. These documents were then returned to the district office.

All data, including pre-interview questionnaires, transcripts, field notes, tapes, and disks have been securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s home.

Huberman and Miles (1994) explain that data analysis occurs before, during, and after data collection (pp. 428-429). Before data collection, “...anticipatory data reduction is occurring as the researcher decides...which conceptual framework, which sites, which
research questions, which data collection approaches to choose” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). During the course of the study, further data reduction was carried out, data reduction meaning “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the ‘raw’ data...” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Finally, once all data is collected, data reduction continues “until a final report is complete” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). As such, during the course of this study, data was continuously examined: field notes were written, themes were identified, coding was utilized (see below), research questions were considered and revised where necessary, and the conceptual framework was examined.

Miles and Huberman (1984) discuss the second stage of data analysis as “data display,” meaning the ways in which data are organized and presented “in an immediately accessible, compact form” (pp. 21-22). Coding was used to gain an understanding of the common themes, experiences and perceptions of principals and was based on the conceptual framework. Additional categories were established during the course of analysis as new and different themes and findings emerged. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) note, “particular research questions and concerns generate certain categories” (p. 156). They also explain that a coding system is based on a search for “regularities and patterns” (p. 156), which may be in addition to those generated by the research questions. The following is a selection of the codes and themes that were utilized in the coding analysis for this study: Ad (advice to aspiring principals), Bar (setbacks or barriers), Ch (changes in the role of the principal), Conc (concerns), Ex (experience), F (family), H (health), Man (managing the nature of the role), Ment (mentor), Pol (political discussion), Prep (preparation), R (reason for becoming a
principal), Sat (satisfactions), and T (time). In all, 42 codes were created. Several codes pertained to a very few participants. The result was a subset of 20 codes that were used in every transcript.

The data were also displayed through the documentation of cases. Brief cases were developed for each participant (see Chapter Four), based on each interview transcript and the emerging themes identified through coding. This allowed for "the identification of patterns of experience both common and unique to study participants" (Johnson & Fauske, 2000, p. 164). The use of cases also adds to the interest level and readability of the data display, while painting a more human picture of the experiences suggested by data. Practitioners, in particular aspiring or recently appointed administrators, may find more relevance in the real life stories presented in the case study format.

The third step in data analysis, according to Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994), is that of "conclusion drawing and verification." This is the process of "decid[ing] what things mean, [through] noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 22). It was at this point that the data that have been examined and compared were connected with the conceptual framework through a cross-case analysis and presented as findings.

**Ethical Considerations**

Many steps were taken throughout this study to protect the anonymity of participants and to ensure appropriate research methodologies. Principals were well informed of the nature of the study, through a written letter as well as a telephone
conversation, prior to agreeing to participate. They were clearly informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. After transcripts were written, principals were given the opportunity to edit them before they were incorporated into the data analysis. Although a contact person from the district provided a list of potential participants, only a subset of this list was contacted for the study. Thus, district personnel were unaware of exactly who participated in the study. Throughout the presentation of data analysis and findings, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of individuals. The district involved in the study is not identified. As well, details of context contained in the data that might identify a participant have been excluded. Special attention was paid to the two or three situations where principals emphasized the confidentiality of the information they were sharing. Any issues that could be considered sensitive were also treated with additional care.

Methodological Limitations

Miles and Huberman (1984) discuss some of the concerns of qualitative research. One question that arises is that of sampling which is connected with the concern of generalizability. Even with the use of more than one case, the sample chosen in any study may or may not be “a reasonable sample of [the] larger universe” (p. 15). This study involves a large enough number of participants that the limiting effects of a small sample will be offset somewhat. Because only one school district in Ontario was selected, results of this study may or may not be consistent with the results that might be generated in other geographic areas of the province or in the country. There are unique circumstances relating to demographics, community culture, and geography that reduce
the generalizability of the findings; for example, the homogeneity of the participants in terms of the shared cultural context of the district. Thus the results cannot be considered as prescriptive or predictive. Nevertheless, there are general patterns of socialization and decision-making apparent in the experiences of these individuals that are at least potentially instructive to aspiring administrators and the policy making context of other school districts. To that extent, the findings of this research will contribute to the further development of educational administrative theory and procedural knowledge.

Another concern is the possibility of researcher bias (wherein the researcher emphasizes or looks for his/her own theories in participant responses). Indeed, how the researcher views the world can affect the whole process of the research (Merriam, 1998). In this case, the researcher is not a principal. I am a teacher and consultant working with other teachers and administrators. At the time of this research, I had been struggling with the idea of becoming a principal myself. As such, I have needed to be aware of my own decision-making processes and keep this separate from the research. As a researcher with my own views and perspectives, it has been important to be cognizant that I may not always make accurate assumptions of others' conversation. Thus, in order to be as objective as possible, several factors were taken into consideration. Because of the open-ended nature of the interviews, participants were allowed to direct the interviews as they needed to, reducing the effect of bias on the part of the investigator. Principals were told that the interviews were completely non-judgmental in nature. Measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality and this, too, was impressed upon participants. Particular skills were considered during interviewing: listening without inferring,
remaining neutral, not conveying messages to the participant through verbal or non-verbal means, and providing feedback that showed interest but did not represent a stance.

Additional measures were taken to reduce the effects of researcher bias. Pilot interviews allowed for ensuring that the language constructs used within the interview questions yielded the types of answers anticipated. In reporting the analysis and findings for this study, direct quotations by principals were used as much as possible. Finally, participants were invited to review their transcripts as well as to comment further about the content in order to be as clear as possible about their meanings.

Certain limitations occur with self-reported data. Participants were required to draw from their memory during interviews and it is assumed that they answered questions honestly. There are particular difficulties associated with memory. It has been found that memories of recently completed processes that are retrievable from short-term memory are quite accurate, whereas those memories that must be accessed from long-term memory are more fallible (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). Further, “when subjects fail to recover from [long term memory] information that has been requested of them, they may reason about the situation and report the results of their inferences instead of memories” (Ericsson & Simon, 1984, p. 168). Thus, it would be unreasonable to expect people to recall specific details of events that occurred as many as 26 years ago (in this study). Individuals may forget, may for various reasons give more or less meaning to events and decisions, or they may have revised events so that they report fallacies. As noted by Ericsson and Simon (1984), “recall depends very much on the availability of retrieval cues...if the experimenter specifies the relevant time period and particular type of events to be recalled, recall increases considerably” (p. 45). Thus, in an attempt to derive as
accurate data as possible, principals were asked questions that took them back to the time of their lives about which they were to reflect.

Further questioning served to cross-reference their answers in order to lend more validity to their comments. During the interviews, the researcher recognized that certain factors may contribute to difficulties with validity of responses. Participants may become self-conscious or embarrassed, they may feel the need to provide the correct or expected answers, they may feel the need to impress, and they may mistrust the interviewer. In an attempt to reduce these affects, the researcher sought to establish rapport with each individual, ensuring they understood the nature of the study and felt comfortable with the content, while assuring that the interview could be interrupted at any time due to immediate school concerns. In fact, four principals provided unsolicited comments that the researcher was engaging and that the interviews brought back favourable memories. These participants thanked the researcher for the opportunity to reflect and enjoyed this process.

Finally, with respect to validity and reliability, Merriam (1998) notes, “The applied nature of educational inquiry...makes it imperative that researchers and others have confidence in the conduct of the investigation and in the results of any particular study” (p. 199). This study was undertaken in a rigorous manner, and with several methods of data collection. In particular, the triangulation of data (“using multiple methods of data collection” (Merriam, 1998, p. 207)), enhances the validity and reliability of this research. With respect to the presentation of results, the inclusion of cases allows for the illustration of specific individual differences and nuances. However, during analysis, especially cross-case analysis, and summaries of findings, some data will
not be brought forward due to the nature of collapsing, conflating, and finding common themes.

**Delimitations**

The researcher would like to emphasize that during the course of this study, two important factors were considered. First, no value judgments were placed on the responses of the participants. Second, no evaluation was made of the participants' effectiveness as principals. These delimitations were expressed to principals in the initial face-to-face meetings.
CHAPTER FOUR

CASES

In this chapter a case has been generated from the transcript of the interview for each participant in this study. The intent is to portray the experiences of individuals rather than a generalization of the experiences of many people (this will occur in Chapter Five with a cross-case analysis). These cases focus on the experiences and perceptions of each person and provides the most pertinent information as well as some unique facets of the individual. The cases also allow for the examination of individuals' reflections within the context of their entire experience over time, rather than in small, unconnected pieces. This approach presents the research findings in a format that is particularly relevant and informative to aspiring and recently appointed principals.

The chapter begins with an overview and comparison of the biographical information collected about the principals who were interviewed for this study. Table 1 presents an overview of the individuals involved in this study. This biographical information was collected primarily through the use of the pre-interview questionnaires. The cases that follow Table 1 are presented in the same sequence as the table data, from most experienced to least experienced in the role. Where two principals hold the same number of years of experience, the number of years as an administrator, that is as a principal and vice-principal, becomes the ordering criteria. Presenting the cases in this order allows the reader to obtain a sense of the distinct personality of each individual as well as the differences and/or similarities in ideas, attitudes, and experiences that influenced an individual's choice to become a principal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years as Principal</th>
<th>Years as VP</th>
<th>Years as District Leader</th>
<th>Total No. Years in Ed.</th>
<th>Total No. Years in Vic.</th>
<th>Total No. of Schools</th>
<th>Total No. of VP</th>
<th>Total No. of Districts</th>
<th>Other career?</th>
<th>Other panel?</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>M Ed., 2 specialists, Pl. 1 Spec. Ed., Pt. 1 Guidance</td>
<td>Junior consultant, area committees, curriculum writing, taught AO courses, 10 years in secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed., S.O. papers, Spec. Ed., Guidance, 4 divisions</td>
<td>guidance, trained as secondary, taught night school, secondary summer school, taught AO courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Guidance Specialist, ESL Specialist</td>
<td>grades 4-8, guidance, ESL, interim VP, lead teacher since 2nd year teaching, area/regional committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Counseling Specialist, ESL Specialist</td>
<td>guidance councillor, regional level councillor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>M Ed., S.O. papers, Spec. Ed. Specialist, ESL</td>
<td>leadership position in Federation, elementary and secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Spec. Ed. Specialist, Junior/Intermediate Specialist</td>
<td>lead teacher 10-15 years, principal designate, guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Ph.D., S.O. papers</td>
<td>consultant, department head, summer school principal, workshops for teachers, teacher exchange to U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed</td>
<td>spec ed consultant, area committees, attended principals' meetings/conferences, taught AO courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>AQ courses</td>
<td>administrator in Germany, promoted in another district, principal designate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed, Guidance Specialist, Spec. Ed. Specialist</td>
<td>spec. ed. administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>P.E. Specialist, Guidance Specialist, Library, ESL</td>
<td>18 years teaching in secondary, interim VP, guidance, ESL, principal designate, inner-city/middle teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed. (no Principals Part 2)</td>
<td>principal for 7 years, then VP for 5 years (own choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed., Spec Ed. Specialist, Guidance Specialist</td>
<td>area committees, workshops for teachers, chair of various committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed., “Reality Therapy”</td>
<td>12-13 years in first school, lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Spec Ed Specialist, Primary Specialist, ESL</td>
<td>university recruitment team for teacher education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M Ed., computers</td>
<td>taught at university 1 year between VP &amp; P, province-wide science org., science consultant, committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>M Sc, Spec Ed Specialist</td>
<td>special education consultant, only 3.5 years teaching, 9 years admin. position with autism organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biographical Information

As indicated by Table 1, eight participants among the 17 are highly experienced ("veterans") in the sense that they have been principals for six or more years with the most experienced in his twentieth year. Of this subset of the full sample, two are women and six are men. A total of nine participants had been principals for five or fewer years. Seven of these nine less experienced principals are women; two are men. If one considers the number of years as an administrator (i.e., both vice-principal and principal), nine principals have a total of five to nine years (seven women, two men), while eight principals have a total of 10 to 27 years (two women, six men). When teaching experience is combined with administration experience, fifteen of the principals interviewed have been working in the field of education for 20 or more years (20 to 36 years), while two have been in the field for 15 years each.

All of the principals who have held the position for six or more years have been in more than one school as principal. Two principals with five or fewer years in the position have been principal of two different schools; all others in this group have only been principal of one school. Nine principals in this study have worked in more than one school district; however, only two principals have worked in two distinct districts as administrators while the rest have only been administrators in the district involved in this study.

Three principals have worked in other countries during their careers. Cameron worked for a year in Japan prior to becoming a teacher in Ontario. Gloria taught on exchange for a year in the United States. And John was a teacher and administrator in Germany for a year prior to pursuing administration in Ontario. Two principals worked
in other careers prior to entering the field of education. Theresa worked for an autism organization and Audrey worked for the Government of Ontario. Two other principals held other careers after teaching for some time. Nancy left teaching to start her own personnel agency, coming back to education after many years. Gloria became a stockbroker for one year before returning to the district to pursue administration. Three principals were teachers in secondary schools before moving to the elementary panel. Lisa was a teacher at the elementary level before becoming an administrator. Gloria’s teacher exchange year in the U.S. was at the elementary level. And Audrey held an elementary consultant’s position prior to becoming an administrator. Further, Elizabeth began teaching at the elementary level, then moved to secondary teaching positions before becoming a principal in the elementary panel.

Ten principals in this study hold graduate degrees (nine M.Ed.’s, one M.Sc., and one Ph.D.). Three principals, Gloria, Elizabeth, and Bob, also have their Superintendents’ qualifications. Ten principals listed the additional qualification “specialists” that they have acquired. Seven specialist designations are in special education, six are in guidance, and five are in other areas (English as a Second Language, physical education, and divisional specialists). Mike, the principal with the most experience in the role, did not complete his principals’ qualifications.

All principals have had previous leadership experiences. Six principals were consultants in the district prior to becoming principals. Others worked on school-wide and area-wide committees, held lead teacher or department head positions, were involved in guidance at the whole school level, provided workshops for teachers within the district, and were chosen as principal designate or appointed to interim administration
positions prior to assuming an administrator’s position. Although it appears that principals have had specific levels of educational, the training experiences they have had are varied and do not appear to follow a pattern.

The age range for this group of participants is 40 to 55 years. Although three women did not disclose their ages, they would likely fit into this range of ages. Interestingly, the women’s ages range from 40 to 55, matching closely with the men’s from 41 to 53. There is small age variation when participants are sorted by gender. Principals with six or more years of experience have an age range of 49 to 53, while those with one to five years in the principalship are 40 to 55 years of age, representing the full range of ages in the sample.

If one sorts these data according to gender, the ages of the principals in this study are very similar. One woman is 40 and the others range from 47 to 55 in age. One man is 41 and the others range from 47 to 53 in age. The number of years that women and men spent in the field of education prior to entering administration is also similar. The average time for women is 18 years with a range of seven to 30 years. The average time for men is 14 years with a range from seven to 22 years. However, women have less experience than men in the role of administrator as seven women have been principals for five or fewer years (compared with two men) while two women have been principals for six or more years (compared with six men). Overall, women have been administrators for fewer years than men; however, they have spent slightly less time as vice principals with an average of three years in this position while men have been vice principals for an average of more than four years. Also, the four people who have held careers in fields
other than education are all women, as are the four who have had positions in both the elementary and secondary panels.

At this point the cases will be presented, followed at the end of the chapter by a summary discussion of the ways these individuals reported choosing to pursue the principalship, as well as other pertinent observations about the individual participants in this study.
The Cases

Mike

Mike has been a principal for 20 years and has spent a total of 34 years in education. After spending two and a half years as a vice-principal he was appointed principal and was in that role for seven and a half years. He then returned to the vice-principal position where he remained for five years before assuming the principal’s role again.

Mike describes how his initial decision to go into administration was based on the suggestion made by the vice-principal of the school at which he was teaching. He was enjoying teaching at the intermediate level and had not contemplated the role to this point. At first Mike thought the vice-principal “was out of his mind.” Then he recognized that it was simply opportunity: “back in 1974 it was more or less the expected thing ... for young males to go the administrative route.” For Mike, then, there likely was not “conscious thought [but rather] just the automatic assumption that [that] was the route you went.”

Although Mike’s vice-principal made the comment to him, he found he was influenced more by the example and expertise of the two principals he worked for as a teacher. These principals were not mentors for Mike but provided an indirect influence “in terms of seeing their skills and their ability to choose quality people.” Because he displayed leadership qualities and initiative, he received moral support from the school staff while pursuing the position. He also reports having support from his family all the way through, even when he made decisions that were somewhat backwards (i.e., returning to the vice-principal role). Staff and family provided support rather than
influence on his choice to pursue the role. There were no organizations at the time that provided either support or influence in the form of courses or other leadership development opportunities.

If Mike reflects back to childhood, he recalls that his grade six teacher was “the one [who] really triggered an interest in [him] in terms of becoming a teacher” because of her enthusiasm, skills, and positive interactions with students.

Mike did not take steps to prepare for the principal’s role. Even now he only has the first part of the two principals’ courses. He describes the process as simply applying for a posted position, being sponsored by an immediate supervisor, and sitting for a single interview.

At the time that he first became a principal, Mike felt he had “the world by the tail.” This confidence quickly subsided when he learned the differences between being a vice-principal and a principal: “The reality is you have no idea what the role is until you’re there …. And then it’s a great deal of learning and you have to do it very very quickly or the walls start crumbling down very very quickly all around you.” Upon entering the principal’s role he felt initially that he had made the biggest mistake of his life. He also discusses the shock of becoming a principal in terms of the situation: he was promoted over a weekend from a large senior public school where he was vice-principal to principal of a small elementary school where he also taught various grades and subject areas half time. Thus the environment of the school changed drastically for him, as did his expected level of knowledge and his level of responsibility.

After over seven years as principal, Mike’s decision to return to the vice-principal role was based on personal reflections. In his own mind only, he felt he was not
performing adequately and was not “convinced that [he] was doing the kind of job that was expected as a principal.” Making the switch also allowed him to decide if the principalship was really what he wanted to do with the one hundred per cent complete responsibility. He mentions there may have been some minor health and family influences as well. After five years he realized he could do the job “as well as ninety per cent of the principals out there” and when approached by the district, returned to the principal’s position. Since then he has experienced the reality of doubts at times in the job but feels successful over all.

Mike feels that although he did not have a global view of education at the time he entered the principal’s role, he felt he knew what was right for kids and held strong beliefs about how kids should be treated and about making them feel successful enough to want to come to school. He reflects that the role of principal has the greatest amount of impact in this regard.

Mike learns about the expectations for the role from parents, from the “political realm,” from the district and the superintendents. He feels, however, that a great deal of the job is common sense in that principals must have a strong belief about what is right and make decisions in the best interest of kids (rather than in the interest of parents, the Board, or teachers).

When Mike thinks in terms of expectations, he describes a variety both in terms of the nature as well as the sources of the expectations. His examples include applying the new curriculum, changing the homework or behaviour policies, responding to EQAO [Education Quality Accountability Office] results, and responding the way students expect when they come to the office. For Mike, the kids’ expectations are the most
important, as they are the reason for being in the building "in the first place." In order to manage everything, he ignores some things in order to focus on the most important things that will have an impact on kids. Mike believes that the things that are really important will come back to him to address again if he has ignored them. "There are some things that you have no choice about and those are the things that you have to do. But other things, there's usually a lot of choice as to if you do them or when you do them." Mike sees that with many administrators, particularly the "young ones," they feel they need to respond to everything. With experience, administrators learn how to make choices and how to take the risk to say that other things take priority and some things just cannot be done. Mike has also found that his superiors will usually accept his choices.

Mike sees that the role of principal needs to be far more responsive to political issues now. Another change he notes is the different role that parents and the community play, as well as a change in the role of federations. Curriculum expectations are far more complex than they were and the impact of this on teachers is greater. There is more open accountability with increased publicity. He also believes that the tone of education has changed whereby teachers were more revered and seen as professionals in the past compared with the public perception today.

Mike's greatest satisfaction in the role is working with kids in and around the school. This is where the fun is for Mike. He purposely begins his day early and leaves later in order to deal with administrative issues and paperwork, leaving the day time hours to interact with students. He also enjoys working indirectly with teachers to have an impact on students.
On the other hand, labour issues are of concern to Mike because they have caused a constant drain. When he reflects over the last eight to 10 years, he sees that these issues have caused “a great deal of distress to parents, to kids, to the school staff.” As a result, teachers who have entered the field during this time frame have a more cynical perspective than he did when he began teaching. They also end up spending time dealing with confrontation instead of doing “what they do best, and that’s teach kids.” As such, kids suffer, which of course is not in their best interest.

Mike would choose to become a principal all over again, based on the career he has had. Given the possible direction that public education is heading now (for example, charter schools), and the image of the principal shifting to that of solely a manager involved in a political role, he likely would not choose to become a principal today. For Mike, it is important that principals be excellent teachers first.

Mike has been asked at times to consider a supervisory officer’s position but is not interested because “it’s too remote” from working with kids. He will be retiring after one more year as principal.

Mike’s advice to aspiring principals is to “Make sure that every decision that you make is centred around kids.” He believes that “the wheels start falling off” when decisions are made around the interests of parents, teachers, or the superintendent. Instead, all decisions should come back to “what is going to improve the learning environment and the skill level and the knowledge acquisition of those kids, and how to [ensure] that they’ve got a safe, consistent environment when they come to this building.”
Sean

Sean has been a principal for four years. He was a vice-principal for three years following which he spent a year teaching at a university before being appointed principal. In the time preceding this, while a teacher, Sean held a high interest in science education and worked for a province-wide science foundation. This science background drew Sean to consider applying for a consultant’s position in the district. In order to pursue this position he became involved in administrative activities and thus began his journey towards an administrative position. “To some extent, [Sean] sort of fell into it naturally.” He describes gaining organizational and administrative experience through the science foundation in the province. He worked with people “from all over” and was thus able to branch out of his classroom, finding out that “the world is broader than your classroom, your school, and that there is no end to the kind of learning that children and adults can do.”

Sean feels he has been “immersed” in administration throughout his entire career. His father-in-law is a former Director of education and as a result he’s “lived and breathed education pretty much ever since coming into it.” He also has worked with some interesting administrators. The principal at Sean’s second school encouraged him and another teacher to become involved in the administrative tasks at the school. He was regularly working with this principal until seven or eight o’clock at night. He feels this principal really looked at them as “people” which is something Sean continues to see as very important for the role. Sean describes working closely as a colleague on committees and such with the principal, in a way that enabled him to really learn the role. He
describes his principal as an "informal mentor" who focused on developing Sean's strengths.

Sean grew up on a farm in rural Ontario. Here he learned that you have to "make do with what you have," accept outside circumstances (such as rained-out crops) and be creative. He was teaching Sunday school from the age of 13, working closely with the "superintendent."

In describing the steps he took to prepare for the role, Sean feels he always knew that at some point he would be a principal. Moving into a consultant position was part of this process. In this role he had the opportunity to meet with groups to discuss larger educational issues. He also networked with principals and superintendents around such issues. In his estimation, it was these contacts that were more important than anything else in preparing for an administrative position because these people provided honest, down-to-earth advice and answers to his questions. Sean does not feel he was influenced or supported in any way by any organizations ("strangely enough the women teacher's organization was much more active than the men's teacher's organization").

Sean was very confident going into the role of principal. He had always believed that the principal was the decision-maker and "it wasn't until [he] became a VP that [he suddenly] recognized the role that everybody around the table needed to play." He believes strongly now that it is important to allow everyone on staff to have a role in forming decisions and he feels he is able to facilitate that while in the role of principal.

Sean feels he has always had "strong relationships" with superintendents. It is through dialogue with them that he learns about the expectations for his position. He also benefits from this communication in that he gets "a perspective of the much broader
picture of leadership and working in the politically challenged and charged times that we do.” Sean talks briefly about some of his expectations. The recent government initiatives mean that he needs to deal with people who have difficulty managing rapid change. Community involvement means that the school must find ways to help parents understand the nature of the academic curriculum and how their support can best be utilized. By being visible and interacting with parents regularly, Sean can also deal with parent concerns and issues.

For the most part, Sean talks about his role in terms of how he manages all the expectations and all the people involved. He has learned to “accommodate and select from the things that” need to be done. He knows that stopping the juggling act means dropping the things that are not important. There needs to be a priority list to which critical items are attended, starting with things associated with the safety of children. He learned from his father-in-law that some things need to be ignored and only thought of as important if they are brought up again at a later date: “we assume because we receive a piece of paper that there is some action that is an outgrowth. Sometimes the action is no action, and you’ll have to make that distinction.” As such, Sean sees his job as administrator as a “gatekeeper … there are times when you have to shut the gate and say, you know what, we’re filled now, we can’t do any more.” In order to take something new on, something else has to be let go.

Sean feels it is important that everyone play a role in the school where each person’s strength is utilized in an ongoing dialogue. He ensures that all staff members are involved, including teachers, secretaries, and caretakers. He realizes, however, that
he cannot give up his responsibility and that even if others are making decisions, he's the
one that is ultimately responsible.

Sean notes that education is becoming a data-driven organization. However, he
recognizes that “each one of those little numbers deals with an individual person who has
very unique needs” and he hopes that the role of principal does not become one of
looking only at the bottom line because education is different from the business world.
He talks about other changes in his role in terms of changes in education in general. The
philosophical approach to curriculum has changed and “we’ve gone from no
accountability and changing curriculum to a tremendous accountability, clear
expectations of what needs to be taught and what the classroom environment will look
like when that’s being done.” In addition, politics is now at the forefront and community
attitudes towards education are less positive.

Sean’s greatest satisfaction in his role comes from “watching a new teacher really
shine with a [class].” Seeing a new teacher learning and feeling successful is exciting for
Sean. He enjoys encouraging teachers to take risks and be creative, and he enjoys
working with children. On the other hand, he does not enjoy dealing with a teacher who
is experiencing difficulty and has concerns when children are not achieving. He also
finds it challenging to deal with the politics and “the games that are played.” Although
he feels that he knows he does not have to play, he sees others becoming frustrated
feeling that they need to.

Sean talks about how stressful the principalship is: “there are not many
occupations where you deal simultaneously with five hundred and fifteen clients, all their
subclients, their subcontractors, in this case the parents, as well as all the other political
arms of the organization. And that goes [on] instantaneously.” He talks about making
decisions while always needing to keep in mind how those decisions affect everybody
else. He knows he has to put the job as number two behind his family and place limits on
the time he can commit to the job. To Sean, “the job is big, but it’s not so big that it
should sort of smother everything else in your life. And it doesn’t help you in the long
run.”

Sean would become a principal all over again, “without a doubt.” He agrees with
his father-in-law that the most autonomy is in the role of principal, which is why he never
considered a superintendent’s position. The principalship allows him to work with
children and with teachers who have a direct impact on children. He could retire in a
year but hopes to stay in the position for another four or five years.

Sean’s advice to aspiring principals is to “read, talk, and listen.” He points out
that you do not have to have all the answers because you are simply expected to know the
process for getting them. He suggests getting to know key players and to listen and learn
from them.

**Harry**

Harry is 49 years old and has been a principal for 13 years. He was a vice-
principal for two and a half years. He began teaching in a little isolated school in Alberta
where his wife also taught. A job opportunity in Ontario, along with his mother
becoming ill, precipitated the move to this province. As it turned out, his wife stayed
home to raise their children after being unsuccessful in finding a teaching position.
Harry "was convinced [he] would never ever be a principal. [He] was firmly committed to that idea." A very good friend and colleague of his was instrumental in changing his mind. When his friend decided to become a vice-principal, Harry "was really annoyed with him. [He] thought he had sold his soul and he was going over to the dark side." Harry's friend talked to him about the influence a principal can have on "wider groups of people." He also really respected his friend's values of being down to earth and being absolutely firm about putting kids first. However, Harry, at that point, was still not entirely convinced, did not actively set out to seek an administrative position, but started to think about the possibility.

After teaching for five years, Harry worked as a special education consultant. He missed having a home base, a class, and a community during that time, and considered moving into a special education role in a high school. This did not happen. Instead, he talks about having a series of "blind luck" experiences where he has been in the right place at the right time throughout the process of moving towards a principal's position.

Harry discussed the possibility of going into administration with his wife who has always been highly supportive of his decisions. Although she did not return to teaching, she has maintained a love of education and has always been a "sounding board" for Harry. Growing up, Harry's father was a trustee and the Chair of the Board in which he was a student. However, Harry did not really consider teaching as a career until part way through university.

Harry also spoke with a superintendent while considering whether or not to seek an administrative position. He held the superintendent in high regard because of his being "connected into global education and literacy" and being a "thoughtful
practitioner." He describes this superintendent’s excitement about teaching and learning as “infectious.” Another superintendent asked Harry to attend all the principals’ meetings where he “sat in on the conversations and occasionally had things to present.” He also attended principals’ conferences and was asked to sit on some area committees. Again, Harry feels lucky to have had these opportunities.

He mentions, too, that being a special education consultant allowed him to learn about the latest curriculum issues through inservice and connections with other consultants. He feels teaching AQ courses (Ministry sanctioned Additional Qualifications courses) likely helped to prepare him for the role as well. He does not mention any district or other organizational support or influence.

Harry does not feel that he encountered any barriers when pursuing the principalship. He did not feel comfortable with playing a strategic game of trying to make himself known in order to become a principal: “if they don’t want to take me, then that’s fine, I’m not going to prostitute myself to do that.” This is partly why he feels he was fortunate with his opportunities – they just came his way.

Harry believes that prior to entering the position he “didn’t know what a principal’s role really was” because of his limited teaching experience. However, he also feels he had “a reasonably good sense of it” because of his involvement with principals in meetings and on committees. He “saw people making good decisions and saw people making some less good decisions” and thought that he could make some of those decisions himself. So although he felt he was missing the wealth of experience as possessed by others who had been in education for many more years than he, he felt confident that he could research and learn from others as he went along.
Harry remembers being surprised that on his first day as principal he found himself searching for a child’s missing boots. However, because he had no real expectations about the job prior to beginning, his beliefs and philosophies really became established once he began the role. In his first vice-principal’s position he worked with a principal who was “very kid-focused and really very staff-focused and liked to have fun.” He taught Harry how to go about building a strong team that worked well and how to support the staff in a way that would generate an “exponential return.” Through this principal’s modeling, Harry came to understand that these things were also important to him.

Several years ago Harry had the opportunity to open a new school. He feels he was very much able to put his philosophy into action at this school. He could consciously decide on the things he saw as important, such as “loving kids and loving cultural diversity,” as well as valuing learning from one another. When he moved to a different school he “had to change to really look through different eyes”; however, he sees positive growth and change since beginning at the school (in himself as well as others).

Harry has learned about the expectations of his role, such as having a curriculum focus, through superintendents. He feels he is not given as many messages about these expectations now that he has been a principal in this particular area of the district for as long as he has. He finds that he gets “tons of things coming across the desk” and experiences many interruptions – from a required report for the superintendent to a child wanting to read aloud to a parent who is upset about a teacher’s actions. Because he has been in the job for some time, he knows whom to call and whom to pressure if things are
not getting done. He also recognizes that "there's nothing to drive ourselves crazy about... we have to enjoy ourselves when we work here because there's all sorts of built-in stresses that we don't have control over." Therefore, he tends to feel relaxed about not adhering to every directive. He will, however, "hold the line" on issues such as someone treating a child poorly.

When Harry thinks about the changes in the role of principal, he feels that over the last three or four years "the whole accountability movement [has] gone amuck." He feels that things like EQAO [Education Quality Accountability Office] testing has resulted in an enormous amount of time taken away from the interactions he has in his school. He questions the validity of the assessments and wonders about the scientific approach now being emphasized. He also sees teachers working incredibly hard because of a more rigorous curriculum. Teachers are working longer, harder, and smarter, but are in the spotlight with respect to media, politicians, and parents, which to him is a "sad irony." He finds parents are no longer supporting the school's expectations for students and although there is now more community involvement, there is also less "built-in institutional respect."

One of Harry's greatest satisfactions is "trying to help remove stress from people so that they can do a job." He enjoys being with kids inside the school and in the yard. And he enjoys discussing education issues, such as community involvement and cultural diversity, among small groups of teachers, as well as connecting with others outside the school, such as at reading recovery meetings.

The issue of staff unity is of concern to Harry. He feels frustrated when people are either too shy or have an "us-them" attitude which means they do not want to discuss
ideas or suggestions that they do not like. He would rather that the issue be dealt with, even if there is agreement to disagree. It concerns him that some people have been hurt or taught to be cautious or nervous rather than being able to work in an open and supportive consultative way.

Harry would “absolutely” become a principal all over again. He believes he loves his job “80 or 90% of the time,” especially because he likes “knowing a little bit about a whole lot of things.”

His advice for aspiring principals is to “Have fun, enjoy the kids, enjoy the staff, enjoy ... the opportunities.” Look to create a supportive and nurturing culture. Be open to others’ ideas rather than going in “assuming that it’s your way or the highway.” And, be well organized in order to handle all the incoming information.

Gloria

Gloria has been a principal for 12 years after being a vice-principal for two years. She began teaching at the secondary level where she became a department head after two or three years. She held a consultant’s role for one year and was the principal of summer school for a summer. Gloria holds a Ph.D. in education as well as superintendent officer’s papers.

Gloria had “no plans” to be a principal, let alone a department head. A significant event occurred to her one year when she was called in to meet with her principal. She thought she was “in trouble.” However, her principal asked her to be the principal of summer school. She tried it to see if she would like it, and she did. Her principal then coached her to get her qualifications, which she did the following year.
Gloria admired the work of her principal and felt “if he thought I could do it, you know what, I could do it.” She had been presenting workshops for teachers as well as studying about guidance and counseling with an idea of going the consultancy route: “It didn’t dawn on me that I could be an administrator.” She attributes much of the decision to go into administration to the support she received from her department, from her principal, and from a superintendent.

Gloria taught at a school that was “very state of the art, very leading edge.” Because of this she could see herself doing things differently as an administrator than commonly occurred in other schools. She also notes that there weren’t too many women in the role and that she wanted to be less aggressive than what she had experienced being modeled by another woman. She preferred her school’s philosophy of being collaborative with students and parents.

Gloria came from a nurturing, supportive family. Her mother was a caretaker at the local neighbourhood school while her father was a mechanic. During high school, Gloria was required to help her mother clean the school. She notes that her parents were very shocked, but supportive, when she became a principal.

In preparing for the role, Gloria describes doing the coursework, becoming involved in leadership experiences at the high school, and doing regional workshops. She became a consultant, which allowed her to learn more about the system. She also believes that going on a teacher exchange in the U.S., along with being principal of summer school, gave her the “big picture.” Gloria took a year off between being a vice-principal and a principal and worked as a stockbroker to make sure education was where she wanted to be. She learned “how other people dealt with their work environment” and
subsequently decided that she wanted to be back working with kids. Gloria found that there was no district or other organizational support available to her at the time she chose to pursue the position. Instead she sought out leadership opportunities and spoke with people. All in all, she felt confident about her abilities going into the role, based on her background and successes.

Gloria applied to both the elementary and secondary panels, partly because “in the big picture I [could] see myself as probably wanting to be a superintendent or a director of a small Board.” She found it difficult to obtain a principalship: “They thought that a young small person couldn’t be a secondary school vice principal … It was mostly all men,” and the interview process emphasized memorized answers rather than process. Gloria felt that this, along with the fact that the “Ministry thinks I could be an S.O. [Supervisory Officer],” were enough to appeal the process “in a very nice but a very assertive way.” Any time she came across a “road block” she appealed because she knew she had the skills (“that’s why I made sure that all my educational background was more than the minimum that I needed”), but that she “didn’t play the game right.”

Gloria’s beliefs about the role of the principal have not changed since she became one. Because her mother was a caretaker while she was growing up, she “really knew a whole lot about what makes it work.” She saw the need to have everyone be an active member, including herself, but does not see herself as “the boss.” She makes sure to consult all of the stakeholders in her school. She has others evaluate her to find out how she is doing and how she could help them more. “So none of that was new … picture a little village, that everybody’s a part of it … that’s what makes it work.” This philosophy
she has been able to practice as a principal, embracing the input of others, putting all the pieces together where “usually the decision emerges and all the stakeholders see it.”

She also talks about needing to be in the building, “on the front line ... supporting my learners and my teachers.” With respect to understanding the expectations of the role, she considers the evaluations from others and the Board’s procedure for evaluating principals. She uses some of the district’s programs as guides to “what they were looking for.” Because she is self-directed, she keeps in touch with “what’s going on at the Board” and hears messages through principals’ meetings.

Through developing a school profile each year, Gloria has learned that her community wants her to be visible and supportive of the children. They want her to be “firm and fair and state of the art ... [and] really up to date on curriculum.” She notes that no matter what type of community it is, “all parents know what they want for their children.”

Gloria feels comfortable with legislated school councils (“I had it way before it was even legislated by the government”). The most recent government change with which she has difficulty is that teachers can now give two weeks’ notice and now principals often cannot find teachers to hire or cannot get supply teachers. Gloria tries to “pamper” her teachers, giving them all the support they need to entice them to stay. As for the new curriculum, she tried to make it manageable for teachers by doing small pieces at a time and blocking some of the things that come in.

In order to help manage all the expectations and new information, Gloria returns to her school plan and emphasizes the priorities of the school. She “acts as the funnel,” guiding her staff in choosing what can or cannot be done, depending on how it meshes
with what they care a lot about. She has a list of teachers in the school who want to be leaders and distributes materials to them, leaving it to them to decide whether or not to pursue the item. She then supports anything they wish to embrace and there is no pressure for the things that are not seen as important. Gloria also ensures that her staff has the necessary resources to implement new initiatives; for instance, she covered classes for one teacher who needed extra time and coaching to learn to use the new computerized standard report card.

Gloria’s satisfactions with being a principal include “seeing that people feel like part of the whole team” and really embrace teaching. She feels proud when she receives notes and comments from people coming back to tell her she made a difference in their lives. For her the rewards are in the human relations rather than from being recognized at the Board. She has no concerns about the role: “I wouldn’t have stayed in the role if I didn’t like it.” She feels very confident and really likes to help people, to make a difference (and does things like her paperwork at night in order to be available to others).

Over time as she sees more stress in the teaching environment, she has become more convinced of the need to create a nurturing culture in the school. For her, “it’s not about the curriculum … when a kid remembers what worked for them and what made them a motivated learner, … it was that somebody cared.” So, if anything, it has become “increasingly more important” in the role to be collaborative and to look for feedback from others.

Gloria would become an elementary school principal again “in a minute” as it fits with her philosophy. She sees a lot of diversity in her job, which is part of the reason she has not pursued a superintendent’s position. She recognizes that she hasn’t done the
subtle things that would be expected in order to be promoted; however, she does not want it “bad enough” because she enjoys her position as much as she does.

Gloria notes an increase in paperwork in the job and the necessity to be really organized. She believes that principals need “huge people skills,” need to care about people, need to know about technology, and need to be able to gather data from all the stakeholders. Her advice to aspiring principals is to ensure that these skills are mastered and that they have had the opportunity to practice leadership (such as being a lead teacher). And, “be sure you find someone who’s going to mentor you. And if they’re not doing a good job, go to somebody else.”

Elizabeth

Elizabeth began her teaching career in a small district north of where she works now. She was flexible in her choice of position because she was a new teacher and the district was going through a period of redundancies: “I had to either adjust or I wouldn’t have a job the next year.” She moved from junior and senior kindergarten positions into a high school. She was a vice-principal for two years and has been a principal for 11 years.

For Elizabeth, after “year after year [of] repeatedly being able to rise to different challenges, the confidence was growing.” She was at the same time working in leadership positions within her federation and enjoying success there. “And it was a time when [the notion of] women in leadership was really evolving” and that women would be given every opportunity to become leaders. A powerful influence for her was noting how few women were actually in these positions and becoming involved in identifying the
factors in the district “that were not enabling women to enter the positions of responsibility.”

Elizabeth also describes her “internal motivations.” She began to open up within herself as she rose to the challenge of continually changing grades, then changing panels, and even moving to “the big city because [her] husband had transferred here.” She felt empowered through realizing just how much she could do. “And I think it was [that] I got into a mold where I was ready to change and [the] principalship just seemed appropriate.”

Elizabeth came across some negative influences that were also powerfully motivating for her. One principal she encountered was “just so disrespectful towards teachers and their needs” and she felt the position needed people who were more supportive of students and teachers. On the other hand, she met three women when she first joined the district who had “a powerful influence” on her through their example as women in leadership roles along with their encouragement and support. She feels their support helped her to move into leadership very quickly.

Elizabeth “definitely had family supporting her.” Two of her four children were babies while she went back to school for her B.Ed., M.Ed., and supervisory officer’s papers. Her two older children, in their early teens, were “incredibly supportive,” as was her husband. Her younger ones were able to spend summers with her parents and extended family at their family cottage. “If I hadn’t had that family support, there’s no way I could have done it,” for it was important to her that her children not suffer emotionally.
Reflecting on her childhood, Elizabeth remembers as early as grade one that she always wanted to be the best and that she had to work hard to keep up with her classmates. She also recognizes the strong sense of self-esteem instilled in her through her family, especially in regards to a disfiguring birthmark she had at the time. Being empowered to do whatever she wanted came from an active family life of “swimming ... in the summer, boating, camping,” along with support and a “good home life.” Elizabeth’s mother did not work until she and her siblings were teenagers and although her parents and aunts were not career-oriented per se, all of her “generation became professionals” due to a “strong drive for the kids to be educated.”

Elizabeth joined a study group while pursuing an appointment to an administrative position. The group was very supportive of each other, not happy until each of the five women had reached success. She remembers the fun they had together, learning in a non-competitive setting “over strawberries and wine.” These people encouraged her to work for the federation and helped her learn about the district. If she sees any barrier to her pursuit, it was the type of lifestyle she led while earning her credentials: “I would go home after work ... feed the kids, do the housework, read the bedtime story, put them into bed,” then clean up before sleeping. She would begin the next day studying from 4:30 to 6:30 a.m. before waking her children and taking them to the sitter’s. Two nights a week she was at the university. “So when I look back, the tremendous amount of self-discipline that was required, it was just incredible.” Otherwise, she had no slow-downs and becoming a principal happened really quickly for her. “And it was fun.”
In preparing for the role, Elizabeth also attended district level leadership programs. She got involved in committee work with upper administration that allowed her to get to know “a big system,” as did attending Board meetings and sub-committee meetings. She was “totally confident” about being a principal from the time she chose to go that route, putting things into place along the way.

Elizabeth talks about how much she enjoys what she does: “I fit into this profession like an old shoe.” As a teacher and a principal she sees what she does as “a lot of fun.” In the principal’s role, “the responsibilities have grown larger” and she describes how this evolved. She was first responsible for her own class and those parents, then began taking on whole-school events with her colleagues, then began to take on more responsibility for the well being of colleagues as she grew stronger.

Elizabeth has always thought of the principal’s job as one of service. She feels she needs to take care of everyone in the building from the standpoint of physical and mental well being as well as learning. She wants the best for children and wants teachers to be able to provide the best programs for students, with her help. She feels she “leads from behind” because she wants others to be “in the spotlight,” rather than herself. Upon entering the position, Elizabeth recognized early that “if you had any weaknesses, they would be tested.” She was surprised by particular people’s reactions to certain things such as parents being in tears over a split-grade placement for their children. However, she feels she is really learning about others’ perspectives and perceptions in the process.

Keeping on top of things related to student program is important for Elizabeth. She sees this as being “one of the most powerful aspects of what [she] brings to the
school principalship.” She engages in personal study, attends workshops, dialogues with others, and brings it back to the teachers in her school. She also places an emphasis on attending to the needs of the kids. She looks to the community to help provide assistance in the form of breakfast, peer groups regarding anti-bullying and social skills, early literacy, and others. She states, “I’m not quite as excited when it comes to … [the] little managerial skills” like doing the school budget, although she does try to stay on top of her computer skills.

Elizabeth likes to compare herself to what is going on around her. She networks with other principals, reads leadership magazines, dialogues with principals in other districts, travels to other cities, all to find out what others are doing and how this can benefit her and her school. She feels she has a “hunger” to go out and learn, to see the broader picture, in order to increase success.

Elizabeth attributes some of this to her “roots.” She builds relationships in her community that she hopes will be long term “so the kids get the stuff in the end.” Growing up in a small town she came to understand how local clubs and groups would support and work in the school: “Because in a small town, you were community, you had to create your own fun, you had to create your own resources.”

Similarly, she feels there is a need to build relationships with parents in order for them to feel comfortable and welcome in the school and to attend functions. Building trust and empowering parents to work with their kids are important to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth describes the changes to the role of the principal over time in terms of the educational philosophy of the government in power at the time. The type of teaching, such as activity-based, has changed, as has the level of responsibility which moved from
being responsible for the children (program and extra-curricular) to now the whole community. She does not know "if it's better or not, but certainly schools have had to adjust to keep kids healthy and busy and learning."

Elizabeth's greatest satisfaction is working with groups of children in classrooms. She also enjoys working with teachers. This is what she finds fulfilling which is why she has chosen not to pursue a superintendent's position.

Her personal concerns about the role revolve around staying healthy and keeping a balance in her life. At one point Elizabeth found herself out of commission for a year due to illness. This has made her reflect on the amount of time involved in the role - many hours at the school as well as evenings and weekends at home: "So you can literally work yourself to death if you're not careful." Both physical health (eating properly and exercising) and emotional health (taking mental relief) are important to maintain.

Elizabeth would not change a moment of her career. She loves the profession, has found challenges, learning opportunities, and has received family support along the way. She could retire but sees continuing for another four or five years before doing so and then continuing to do "interesting things with kids."

For aspiring principals, Elizabeth suggests getting varied experiences, taking leadership opportunities, getting to know a great variety of people in the system, listening hard to mentors, and "always be humble, really be humble."
John

John has been a principal for seven years after being a vice-principal for four years. He started teaching in a school district other than the one where he currently works, then went to Germany where he was promoted to an administrative position. Upon returning to Canada, he continued teaching while pursuing an administrative appointment.

Before going to Germany, John had already begun to think about becoming a principal. He and a friend who were team teaching had observed that "people who were not good teachers were principals" and they felt they could do better jobs than the principals they saw. They were also involved somewhat in administrative issues, taking on responsibilities for discipline issues or intervening with parents when their administrators were out of the building: "It's almost like we had the big picture. And whether that was a natural thing or just something we developed over time, I don't know."

John had been teaching in the primary division and felt he "was getting a little bit old [and] didn't see [himself] being a grade one teacher when [he] was 50 or 55" because he did not feel he would have the energy and this was not "fair to the kids." Thus, he began to work harder to ensure that he moved out of the classroom.

The principal John worked for in Germany was a mentor for him, who "showed [him] how a good principal can do the job." He also found a mentor in his superintendent within the district. He describes both mentoring relationships in terms of process: "It was as if we both understood that I could do the job"; they provided an understanding of how to obtain a position. For instance, he was given information about
the interview panel and the types of questions he might be asked. The superintendent also supported him by putting his name forward.

John feels that his wife has always supported him fully. She is also a teacher and has always had “great confidence” in what he can do. John’s parents were proud of his accomplishment. He describes his position in his family (the fourth boy of five children) and needing to learn leadership skills in order to stand up for himself. He reflects, too, on being involved in various clubs and activities throughout high school.

No one significant event stands out for John in his decision to pursue the principalship: “it was almost a natural progression.” He prepared for the role in several ways. He began by “arbitrarily” taking on leadership roles in the school. He presented curriculum workshops for the Board and was involved in other area-wide and Board-wide activities. He took the principals’ courses as well as a leadership program offered in the district that went into the “nitty gritty” of how things worked within the Board. He also changed schools and areas to ensure a range of experiences. Applying for a consultant’s position gave him more experience in going through interviews. He was also involved in informal networks with others seeking appointments. He was not in a study group and does not feel he was influenced or supported by any other organizations.

John was not successful in becoming a consultant, which he found discouraging and reflects that the hiring process likely interfered. He mentions that even the administrative hiring process was not adequate because it emphasized how someone responded to questions rather than how they worked within the school. Once he received a promotion, however, John felt “fairly confident that there wasn’t anything that was going to happen that was just going to overwhelm” him. He reflects that being so young
he was probably “so confident [he] figured [he] could do anything.” He does discuss feeling nervous, even upon entering the school he’s at now after being an administrator for 10 years.

John learned a great deal as a vice-principal. He had to step into the role as an acting principal at the beginning of his first year due to an injury incurred by the principal. Seeing how John performed so successfully, this principal allowed him to “do anything [he] wanted” and as such John learned about the role and that this “was the way [he] really wanted to go.”

John’s beliefs about the principalship have not changed since entering the role. “The people part is the most important part of the job”; human interaction in the school is most important and John feels he has had this belief reinforced through his administrative positions. He sees expanding what he did in the classroom into the whole school and tries to always know what teachers are going through on a daily basis by still teaching kids. John “still thinks the job of the principal is to make sure everybody can do their job the best and all [he is] is the facilitator.” He feels as principal he can put his philosophies into action, emphasizing human relationships among himself, teachers, parents, and students: “If you look at effective school literature, I think probably underlying all of it is the relationship aspect.”

John learns the expectations for him in the role of principal from various sources: parents, other community members, the Ministry, the Board, staff, his wife, and professional reading. The district provides worthwhile leadership workshops while reading allows him to learn ways of changing things for increased achievement in the school. John lives in his school community and had the benefit of hearing community
expectations prior to working at the school. Positive interactions among teachers, parents, students, and administration are a primary concern of the community. There are also high academic expectations along with good parental support. John talks about the political nature of the position and the way in which teachers are often viewed as overpaid and under worked. He feels that the school needs to “get the good message out about some of the things that we’re doing.”

John feels part of his job is to “filter ... Whenever ... what I perceive to be unrealistic expectations come flying at the school, whether they’re from the community, the government, or the Board, I think it’s my job to stand in the way of those expectations and say, yeah, we’re going to get to them, but not right now, we’re busy doing the other expectations that you’ve given for us.” He wants to ensure that it does not end up that everything gets done poorly because they are trying to do everything. He tries to maintain a school focus and to implement things “that will help the kids.”

Having moved to the school (and district) he’s in, he feels he’s going back 10 or fifteen years because he is able to do more curriculum work in the school than he’s been able to do in recent years. He notes that striking a balance in parental involvement from having them running the school to being a positive and supportive influence is another change over the years. He feels students are much more aware of their rights and do not take as much responsibility for their learning so that educators are required now to intervene more in these kinds of interactions. “Principals are becoming more and more social workers and psychiatrists and psychologists, not always with the kids, than we ever were before.” And the amount of paperwork has increased, regardless of the introduction of technological means of communication.
John’s greatest satisfaction in the role of principal is the kids. He becomes “uplifted” while interacting with them, regardless of the negative issues he has had to deal with. He enjoys all the people – the staff, the kids, and the parents. When he looks at the big picture, John has some concerns. He “occasionally gets down about society in general,” watching students being dropped off early, picked up late, with fast-food meals substituting for good nutrition. He is also concerned about having been taken out of the union by the government, not because he ever wanted to be in the union, “but just the fact that now that we’re being pitted against the teachers,” which goes against the required collegiality of the job. He sees a wedge being driven between staff and administrators and the new image of the principal as strictly a manager. Nobody needs the added amount of stress this creates.

John feels he would become a principal all over again, probably even sooner in his career. He might also choose to move to this district sooner as it has been a rejuvenating experience for him. He would “rather do this than any other job.” He has five years left before retiring but may not choose to do so based on his present enjoyment of the position and where he is located.

John’s advice to aspiring principals is to “lead a balanced life. The job isn’t everything … A balanced life and a sense of humour will get you through many a day.”

Daniel

Daniel has spent 32 years in education, the last six years as a principal. He was a vice-principal for four years. He worked in one area of the district for 14 years in various
classroom positions as well as guidance counselor. This area, which is considered “needy,” is also the area in which Daniel grew up.

Becoming a principal “was always part of [Daniel’s] career plan.” Part of the reason it took him as long as it did to enter the role was because he did not want to be taken farther away from kids. However, he “began to realize that what [he] did for [his] classroom [he] started to do for a division, then [he] started doing for a school, and then at one point [he] was doing it for an area.” Further, Daniel was aware of teachers who viewed their job as “nine to five” and who did not appear to like kids. He is an advocate for doing things in the best interest of kids and was attracted to the position because of the additional power or authority to push this view: “the seemingly autonomy that you had as the principal, that you were a change agent, you could make things happen for kids.”

Daniel’s own children attended the school where he was teaching. During this time he came to realize, “if it’s not good enough for my personal kids, why should I accept it for my other kids, my students out there?” Even now, Daniel often considers his own children when making school decisions. He feels his children have an understanding of the time demand of the role “because they were in the thick of it” but that the hours of the job and having to work from home have added turmoil for his wife. He feels she supports what he is doing because she sees how much he loves his job, but that she resents that there seems to be no end to the job.

Daniel comes from a large farming family. He describes his family as “socially minded” where he and his siblings were always in sports or involved in some sort of community social activity. He looks back and sees that “those values are still there …
serving the community.” He was involved in coaching kids’ sports which “just led on and on.” It seemed “natural” for him to go into teaching. Later he describes how he has a vested interest in the kids at his school since they were the children or grandchildren of his classmates while growing up.

No one significant event led Daniel to pursue the principalship. However, he does see a connection to the deaths of a child in his building in each of 13 years he was a teacher: “We want to make every moment in their lives as joyous as we possibly can at school.” This may have been a “nudge [to] get out there and just be a voice for kids.”

Several people were influential in Daniel’s decision and pursuit of the position. One of his former principals, whom he respected, opened his eyes to the idea that what he was doing as a lead teacher for a division he could do for a whole school. While he was lead teacher he received positive feedback from his peers. Once he began the application process, he received support from two superintendents he considers his “sponsors.”

He also talks about the fact that “the real meaningful stuff was through study groups.” He sees establishing a study group as “paramount to success.” In his experience, he was able to gain the opinions of others, both peers and superintendents, in an informal setting where he received validation or clarification about issues. This was a more comfortable (and less judgmental) setting for him than turning to his own administrators.

In preparation for the position, Daniel had a “well mapped out career path” created in conjunction with dialogue with others. He ran a regional level group around counseling, he was a lead teacher, he attended various workshops, seminars, and conferences, along with Board leadership programs. He also did “an absolute ton of
research [and reflection] in determining what [he] stood for and what [his] values" were in education. Again, his study group was helpful in this regard. He attended to the current educational issues, considered the climate, and tried to be a visionary.

Daniel’s involvement in a province-wide counselors association allowed him to see things in a more global way. He found the material presented through the women teachers’ federation to be extremely valuable, whereas the men’s federation had “almost a cavalier attitude that you’re a guy, you’re going to become a principal!” and the real key issues around education were not addressed. Daniel finds his relationship with the Ontario Principal’s Council today to be very positive and productive.

Being prepared for the role allowed Daniel to feel confident and comfortable about entering the position. He feels his beliefs about the vice-principal role did not change when he moved into the role. He was able to engage in a collaborative teamwork approach, looking at the curricular program and corresponding resources, working in the best interest of kids. This changed when he became a principal. He felt he was “seen differently and … treated differently.” There seems to be less dialogue around curriculum and child achievement and more discussion around people’s troubles so that he feels like a mentor or a father. The latitude to try different things as a vice-principal is gone. He also realizes now that, as a principal, “the buck really stops here,” that he needs to check on staff to ensure they are being effective. The role holds “the ultimate responsibility, and so it should be. It’s just a weighty responsibility.”

As a principal, Daniel is able to put his philosophy into action at his school. He is able to “walk the talk” which allows him to keep kids first on the agenda. Because of the authority of the role, he can make decisions regarding budget, supervision, parental or
community involvement, that support putting kids first. He enjoys putting the structures in place to allow teachers to maximize their efforts, such as staffing arrangements. Importance is placed on the focus of the school – curriculum or discipline management, depending on the site. He feels that being a part of his community for so long has contributed to this philosophy; it has become a passion and a commitment.

The expectations for the role of principal come from the superintendent at administrators’ meetings. Daniel views these policies and procedures as a framework rather than as directives “because the very next problem that comes through my door is something we haven’t seen before.” Thus, Daniel feels he is “an island unto [his] own,” making decisions in the best interest of the child, placing the impact on the child at the forefront of his decisions over the interests of teachers, the secretary, the superintendent. In this way, again, he is able to carry out his philosophy.

In discussing community expectations, Daniel notes that “it varies very clearly from community to community.” He feels he has been well received and respected in each school community he has been part of. He believes he has to “go out and find them,” inviting people in to clarify and understand what their expectations are. Dialogue allows everyone to agree to work for the best interest of kids.

Daniel believes that the government has “set us up in an adversarial position ... It’s really tough to hear that you’re no longer a teacher.” He views himself as a teacher – of kids and adults – as well as a learner. He resents being considered a manager: “as professionals, nobody wants to be managed.” He feels the strategies used by the government have been shrewd, creating “hardship and turmoil and [he] believes somebody within the think tank for the Conservative government said, hey, you’ve got to
crack some eggs and make omelet.” However, he also feels “we’re getting to a stage now where we can see things are changing for the better.” Being accountable and being open to the community, for instance, is the way things should be. And, a few years from now, Daniel predicts that although the process is not easy, the end result will be worth it.

Daniel sees the role of principal as having changed in a couple of ways: “Our realm now is corporate sponsorships, business partnerships, … tapping into grants.” He sees, then, the role as being more entrepreneurial and thus more broad-based, beyond the school. He also sees that he has more difficulty gaining agency support as they have downsized and/or reorganized their services.

Daniel’s satisfactions in the role begin with the kids and the feedback and involvement he has with them. He also is happy about “just staying alive,” thinking about how the job affects people’s health. He makes sure to balance his life with regular recreational activities as part of a therapeutic approach. And he continues to love his job.

Daniel’s concerns about the role revolve around the need to have “some type of internal support mechanism … optimism … magical thinking.” He realizes that he often feels that “everyone’s got a piece of me today, I’m not sure what’s left for me.” He sees the need to have the emotional resources to “rebuild” in order to come back to work the next day in an appropriate frame of mind.

If he had to do it all over again, Daniel would become a principal, but “faster so I had more energy or enthusiasm.” In this way he feels he would be able to take on the challenges of the job more readily.

His advice for aspiring principals is to “Know yourself first” so that you know what you stand for when the really hard issues are presented. “Be open, be receptive to
change ... make your decisions in the best interest of kids. You don't have to please anybody else.”

Bob

Bob is 47 years old and has been a principal for a total of six years, having been a vice-principal for three years. He also held a secondment position in Human Resources with the district for six years (after five years in the principalship).

Bob “knew fairly early on that [he] wanted to go into administration.” He feels he probably saw himself going in that direction from the time he entered teaching. His teacher training was at the secondary panel level, but apart from teaching summer school and night courses, he has always worked in the elementary panel. When he moved into this district from the one where he began his career, he had the opportunity to spend some time out of the classroom (due to his guidance position) working closely with the administrators in the school.

Bob comes from a family of educators. His father was a high school principal, his mother an elementary school teacher. Although he feels that this exposure, including family debates about the merits of each panel and “who had the toughest job,” attracted him to education, it was not until his fourth year of undergraduate university that he chose teaching. However, he thinks his parents were surprised that he went into education. He also mentioned that his wife was very supportive of his choice and his quest to become a principal.

Bob has received encouragement and support throughout the time he was pursuing the principalship. The principals of the schools in which he worked gave
encouragement, made suggestions such as taking courses, and provided opportunities to take on additional responsibilities such as being principal designate while they were out of the school. These principals were aware of Bob’s desire to become a principal and he feels that they must have seen the ability in him since they were as supportive as they were. Bob moved quickly to prepare himself for the position. In seven years he had his “qualifications in four divisions, guidance, special ed., a master’s degree, and [his] principal’s qualifications.” Bob also joined a study group with a group of women who were encouraged to do so by their federation. He also did a lot of studying to prepare on his own. In his opinion, no organizations were influential in his decision to pursue the role.

Although he feels that he appears to be more confident than he is, he was able to work through any doubts he had about taking on the role through dialogue with a mentor. One setback he encountered along the way was that his principal missed a deadline to nominate him as a candidate and he had to wait another year. Other than that, there was competition, albeit minimal: “individuals such as myself who were White males who basically, if you could breathe and walk, were able to go into administration.” One event that occurred was of significance to Bob. Before he was appointed as principal, he was placed as an interim principal for someone who was terminally ill. From January to June that year he ran a school of 700 students, English and French Immersion, completing work that had not been attended to prior to his arrival. During this time he was called for his interview which to him seemed strange: “they wanted to put me through an hour of questions that would somehow validate in their minds the fact that I could act as a principal.”
Bob talks about opportunities and experiences. He feels that things like taking on various roles (i.e., guidance), teaching AQ [Additional Qualification] courses through the university, and working in the Board's Human Resources department have contributed to his knowledge, understanding, and preparation for the position. He also feels that mentoring was important, especially the kind of experience in which he was able to seek out and develop truly authentic mentoring relationships (rather than the artificiality of a system-wide mentorship program).

When Bob reflects on his beliefs about the principalship, he feels he did not realize before he went in "how lonely it can be," due to the fact that he has the ultimate responsibility around decisions. He also did not realize "how much collaboration there could be" and he "quickly learned that the best decisions [he] would make as a principal would be decisions [he] made totally collaboratively with [his] staff." Upon entering administration as a vice-principal, Bob worked with a principal who saw Bob's position as one of disciplinarian. He felt that the expectations for him as a vice-principal were in conflict with the way he would have preferred to operate. However, as principal, he has had the opportunity to be the kind of principal he believes is important, and carry out his educational philosophy. In opening a new school, he has reflected on and operated within his ideas about "how do I go about community building, how do I go about selecting staff, how do we go about building school policy, how do we go about dealing with kids. And so that's the ultimate in terms of having the freedom, within the constraints of today's governance, to do that."

Of issue to Bob is the idea of being true to himself. He feels strongly that "what you see in me as a principal is what people saw in me as a teacher, as a community
member, as a family member. I don’t believe that I put on a different skin to carry out this job.” Similarly, when thinking about leadership profiles or the research about the characteristics of effective schools, Bob feels that although these are valid, “Not everyone is the same, and the last thing I would want to do is have a cookie cutter factory which cranked out school principals.”

Messages about the expectations for the principal’s role come to Bob from various sources. During administrators’ meetings, information “flows” from Director’s Council, the curriculum department, the Ministry, through superintendents. Memos and E-mails provide another medium of presenting expectations.

When talking about the role of the principal and how it has changed over time, Bob points to special education, curriculum, and other issues that have changed drastically. He thinks, “we still hear consistently that the main job of the principal is as curriculum leader.” However, other issues have come to the forefront: governance, school councils, community building, collaborative leadership. This “fits” with Bob: “I feel really good about my role as a facilitator, someone who works to maximize teacher performance as it directly relates to student learning.” Bob sees the role as one of community building, marshaling student resources, helping teachers become more effective, and managing data. He feels it very important to develop leadership in the school and that “the more [he] gives away the more effectively [he] leads.” He enjoys creating the condition in the school to allow others to lead effectively.

When it comes to community expectations, Bob feels that he needs to be open and that the community wants to provide input and feel welcome in the school. There is the expectation to produce the best possible results in the students along with making
results visible and answering questions related to them. Bob sees this emphasis as a change in community expectations.

Similarly, there have been changes implemented by the government. Bob believes that these changes, with an emphasis on accountability, are positive and healthy. However, he has "difficulty with hiding money issues behind legislation," which he views as happening with the current government's agenda.

In managing the various expectations coming his way, Bob realizes that not everything can be attended to: "you have [to] step back and take a look at the number of concerns you have about something, or the number of hits on a certain issue."

Bob's greatest satisfaction in the role is kids, and "if I can help a kid, a teacher, a parent to be successful, that's wonderful for me... I tend to be a helper, whether it's on my street or [with] my kids or with this group." A concern for him is the amount of time it takes to learn everything, that it seems impossible to "get there" because "it gets bigger and bigger and the number of day-to-day stuff prevents me from doing that."

In reflecting about becoming a principal, Bob says he would probably do it all over again. He sees himself moving into other roles within public education where he feels he can make a difference while meeting a new challenge.

Bob's advice for aspiring principals is to "Do it for the right reasons." He emphasizes that as a principal he is truly a teacher, an educator, and a "servant of the community." He feels that he is "not [in] a seat of power so much as [in] a place to be a competent facilitator, coordinator, mediator." In addition to curriculum leadership, he advises to be aware that "there's also four hours a day of budget and discipline and plant
and ordering and stuff like that.” In his view, it is a very worthwhile and fulfilling job, but it is not all “pie-in-the-sky” stuff, which is important to keep in mind.

Theresa

Theresa has been a principal for five years after spending three years as a vice-principal. She did not begin her career in education. She worked for nine years in various capacities with a centre devoted to families with children with autism. Following this she became a consultant with the school district, went into the classroom for three and a half years, and then became an administrator.

Theresa initially moved to the district because she felt she would have a greater impact on bringing about positive change from inside the Board. She contacted the superintendent of special education at the time who offered her a consultant’s position in coordinating care and treatment facilities. After four years, Theresa “decided that [she] really wanted to get into a leadership role in the Board” and this is why she went into the classroom to teach. She felt that only in a leadership position would she be able to really make a difference: “[the principalship] always seemed to be the one position in the Board that really appealed to me.” This she learned once she moved to the district. She found that she never really felt connected while she was a consultant, whereas she could see that principals had a sense of community with their staff, parents, and students, who were all part of a team. Principals could also influence district-wide direction as a team of administrators. And, at this point Theresa was ready to move out of special education.

Theresa has a sister who was also a principal in the district. She and her parents were very supportive of Theresa’s decision. She also continues to receive ongoing
support from her husband: “you have to have somebody at home that really recognizes
what it is we deal with on a day-to-day basis.” Growing up, Theresa was constantly
receiving messages from people at school or at camp that she had good leadership
abilities. Even though she did not see herself as a leader, she was always pushed in
leadership directions.

Theresa saw her superintendent as a role model in terms of his leadership style
and the way that “he really gave away the power.” She also had a mentor in her principal
who again provided a “good” model, moving a staff forward, but also pushed her towards
her goal. She suggested Theresa was ready for administration sooner than Theresa would
have considered and supported her through the process.

To prepare for the position, Theresa first ensured that she got all the necessary
accreditation. She did professional reading related to leadership. She joined the district’s
workshops for aspiring leaders. Through her principal she became involved in school-
wide leadership activities, such as strategic planning. She was principal designate when
the administrators were out of the school. Basically, she took anything available that
would help prepare her for the role. She was not involved in a study group because she
preferred to prepare on her own. And, in Theresa’s opinion, apart from some workshops
she went to organized by the Women Teacher’s Federation, no organization was
influential or supportive to her in making her decision or while pursuing the position.

Theresa was confident that she could do the job: “I felt that I had the skills and
the kinds of experiences” necessary to do so. She talks about having doubts at times
especially when she considers the number of people who look to her for guidance and
leadership; however, she generally felt confident from the beginning that she would be able to learn on the job.

Before assuming the role, Theresa expected that she would be doing “more strategic planning, more curriculum leadership, those kinds of dynamic aspects of the job.” Now that she’s in the job she realizes that much of this is put on the back burner as she deals with the day-to-day running of the school. This hit her hard – it was not what she had anticipated. She was also surprised by the amount of paperwork that “kind of takes on a life of its own.” Moving from vice-principal to principal was also a challenge because at this point responsibility “lands squarely on your shoulders” and because of this she “didn’t sleep at night anymore.” In addition, she had to learn not to take things personally, especially with so many people “trying to take a piece” of her all the time. She did not enjoy the principalship during her first year, feeling, too, that she had better relationships with the staff as a vice-principal “because they didn’t see you as a boss.” As a principal she found building trust was difficult where she had to continually demonstrate that she really means what she says.

Theresa feels she can demonstrate her philosophy about children, learning, and learning environments in the role of principal. She feels she can be autonomous, running her own community, even with Ministry and district requirements. She has her own leadership model that is based on her philosophy where interacting as a group to make decisions for the sake of positive change is the emphasis.

Theresa learns about the expectations for her role through the district and from the Ministry who pass down those things that are out of the control of principals. She
also creates her own expectations based on the needs of the school, starting with an entry plan and forming a school vision. These expectations are formed internally.

Theresa’s school community is very demanding. She spends a great deal of time working with parents who do not expect their children to have to experience natural consequences for their actions: “they’re always saving their children.” She finds that parents are not supportive of the school and feel their children are always right. Theresa also finds that they make more of situations than is necessary – “the melodrama drives me crazy.” When it comes to school council, Theresa finds that the parents are supportive and provide good advice and recommendations.

Theresa comments that she feels that principals should have training in counseling because in the job she finds she is constantly counseling kids, staff members, and parents. She describes the position as “a human resources job” and often compares it with a mid-sized business with employees, kids, and parents. She finds the daily nature of the job is managing this company, being “responsible to our constituents, we’re responsible to our customers, the parents and the students, and we have a product to deliver, we have a curriculum to deliver and we have to be accountable for the results.”

She sees herself as president and CEO where she manages a building and people and hopefully gets the curriculum piece in too.

Theresa’s own expectations were to do all the administration tasks and also get into classrooms. She felt it was really important for her to be visible. She then realized that she could not do it all, that it was too stressful. “I think that comes with experience, too, that you recognize, okay, I can’t do it all, so something has to go.” She feels she needs to prioritize and find a balance, juggling what is really important. Theresa also
talks about understanding that school is not her whole life and that she needs to be able to enjoy her private life and her family. She now takes home very little work and chooses not to take on extra things like additional committee work, especially things that pull her away from the school too much. And, Theresa comments on the pace of her job where some days she never gets a break and it is all very overwhelming: “you've got people coming at you all the time and it’s almost like people never recognize that you're a person and they very seldom say thank you.”

Theresa has several other concerns in her role. She feels that parents are giving their children the wrong message – that they do not have to take responsibility for their behaviour. She misses professional development days and the opportunity they provided for things like strategic planning. She also finds that establishing priorities – screening and filtering – is a challenge because she can easily be pulled in different, less important, directions that take up most of her time. She is frustrated with having “to give so much and sometimes you get so little back.” And dealing with the human interactions and people's constant and immediate needs becomes exhausting.

Theresa’s satisfactions with the role have to do with learning that everyone has strengths to draw on and that not everyone is like her “but that doesn't mean you can’t ... sit down and ... work as a team.” She finds it exciting to make connections with people and to make a difference for somebody. She enjoys working with the kids and she enjoys the strategic planning and working with others to fulfill a vision.

Theresa would become a principal all over again, although she has some hesitation. She’s been considering looking outside education lately. She describes how she has always held positions for three or four years and then moved on, and this is the
stage she’s at now. Nothing in the district interests her and she has looked into human resources roles in the private sector. She does see positives in the principalship, however, so is struggling because a new challenge could be something like opening a new school. Essentially she feels she could not continue doing the same thing for the next 13 years until retirement.

Theresa’s advice to aspiring principals is to learn how to insulate themselves. She suggests keeping balance in your life, establishing priorities, and “recogniz[ing] that you’ll never be able to please everybody.” Do not let little things become stressful. Develop a tough skin but still be compassionate. She also sees networking with other administrators as very important.

Audrey

Audrey has been a principal for five years and was a vice-principal for two years. She began her career as a teacher in the secondary panel where she taught for 10 years and she has been employed in three different school districts.

While teaching at the secondary level, Audrey was encouraged by the principals and vice principals of the two schools in which she worked to consider the role of principal. As a young mother she had no interest in pursuing administration. After 10 years, however, she became a program consultant and then coordinator at the elementary level and “came to realize that there is more opportunity to make a difference with younger children.” Going into the classrooms of various schools in the district, Audrey found that she wanted to have an impact on teachers and children.
When Audrey took the principal's course, she "had no intention to become a principal," taking it instead based on a friend's recommendation that it would "broaden [her] perspective on things." Once she began taking the course she became interested in pursuing the position. She states, "my reasons for going there were feeling that as a principal you can make even more impact on quality program. And as both a consultant and coordinator for my Board, I got really engaged in high quality curriculum and it's really important to me. And so I want to see it happen in schools and this is where you can make it happen. If you can get people on board with curriculum you can make a difference in a school."

Audrey attended a leadership program that was offered by her district. Of particular significance to her was the fact that by the fourth night only 12 of the original 75 people remained. This caused her to reflect on why she still felt interested and she found that the others' reasons for opting out did not change her mind. For her, then, it was "meant to be; [I was] on the right track."

Audrey felt that her various experiences helped to prepare her for the role: "I served on a lot of system level committees. I wrote curriculum and was on Board-based teams for writing curriculum, taught AQ [Additional Qualification] courses." She asked principals about what the job was "really like" in order to get as clear an understanding as possible. Audrey did not feel that she encountered any barriers when pursuing the position; she did feel disappointment with not obtaining it after her first application process.
Audrey felt confident when she was pursuing the position that it was a job that she could do. She was not sure, however, that she would be able to portray her readiness to the interviewing team in order to get the position.

While preparing for the role, Audrey attended the one leadership program offered in her district. She found that this was the only real formal organizational support available to her at the time. In addition, Audrey engaged in discussion and problem-solving amongst members of a close networking group of women that was established by them informally.

In talking about her family, Audrey indicated that educators “weren’t [held] in terribly high regard.” She felt her parents and siblings were always proud of her accomplishments but that they, along with her spouse at the time, did not lend her much encouragement. Although Audrey has tended to go ahead and do things without consulting family members per se, she feels that she has had support from them when she has shared her decisions and achievements.

Audrey’s beliefs about the role of the principal before becoming a principal were similar to her current beliefs. She sees the role as being very broad-based, so that consideration must be given to classrooms, an entire school, and an entire system. Her experiences at the Board level and with the secondary panel, she feels, helped her gain an understanding of this perspective. She also “understood that it’s very much an interpersonal job, that without good interpersonal skills you [aren’t] going to be successful.” In addition, she had learned from others that you have to choose which mountains to attend to: “your energy has to be directed on the things that really really matter.” For Audrey, this means the “things that directly impact on kids.” Her focus is
on programming for children and she will give up other things if necessary (such as seeking community partnerships) in order to attend to this. She does believe that she can keep this focus and make things happen for the students in her schools.

There were two things that Audrey feels she was not prepared for prior to entering the position. One is the influence of parents and the amount of time she devotes to "revisiting issues with parents who are more difficult than others." The other thing is the fact that there are teachers who do not have the same level of commitment to exemplary teaching as those with whom she associated while teaching, writing curriculum, and preparing workshops in her district.

Audrey receives direction about what she is expected to do as a principal "from superintendents, from directors, from parents, and certainly from staff" as well as from students to a degree. She feels the role has become political in the sense that she needs to be able to communicate everything with supervisors and especially with parents. Parent demands and questions need to be attended to in satisfactory ways. She also feels the push to involve her community with everything. In addition, she now sees the job as being very "data-driven," gathering and analyzing data. This is an area of need, as there does not appear to be any training to go along with this newest expectation. She also struggles with the idea that the EQAO [Education Quality Accountability Office] testing results have such an "incredible impact on everything in the school"; she questions the authenticity of the data as well as the validity of comparisons derived from the data. All in all, Audrey sees that accountability issues are important and are a recent change for the principal's role.
Audrey sees that managing the various expectations of the role of principal begins with learning the critical issues about the school through an entry plan and then putting measures in place to address them. Attending to public image comes after this important step. She feels, too, that “you can’t be all things to all people” (such as being visible in the school and attending inservice sessions). She says, “it really does become, not a management position in terms of the old way we thought of managing, but managing all the issues yourself.” She has trouble keeping on top of everything and puts in 14 hours a day in an attempt to do so. Balancing her job, her family, and her physical health is difficult. For Audrey, part of this is because she feels that more demands are being made of the principal, again from various sources.

When asked about her satisfaction in the position, Audrey replied, “it’s bringing a teacher along because ultimately that’s going to bring along 30 students.” Seeing a teacher learn and employ new strategies and become enthusiastic about the results is a sense of accomplishment for Audrey. This influences an entire classroom. On the other hand, Audrey is concerned about being able to keep up the pace of the job for the 11 years she has left until retirement. Thinking back, Audrey would become a principal all over again, perhaps a little earlier in her career. Thinking ahead, she would like to work for the principal’s organization or the Ministry or for “educational improvement” in order to further her educational perspective by learning an outsider’s view (beyond her district).

Audrey’s advice to aspiring principals is to “know the job. Talk to people. Get a clear sense of what it’s all about. Get as broad a based perspective on education as you
can... Get the most experiences that you probably can. And be prepared for the fact that it's a life long learning job... And want to do it, embrace it."

Peter

Peter is 50 years old and has been a principal for four years. He was a vice-principal for seven years. He has had a variety of teaching positions — junior, intermediate, physical education, instrumental music, lead teacher — and describes holding positions for clusters of four or five years before trying something new.

Peter had been teaching for 18 years before giving administration a thought. At this point he asked himself if he wanted to teach for the 17 years he had left before retirement. He would not go so far as to say he was bored, but for him, teaching “was sort of on cruise control, you could do it, you didn’t have to think about it.” Two years earlier Peter had taken the principals’ qualification courses to have “just in case” and now he was looking for a new challenge. He applied for a teaching position at the nearest high school but did not have the specialty area they were looking for. He then applied for an administrator’s position even though he still was not sure that this was what he wanted; he was not successful. Then, due to the death of a principal in the district, Peter was given an interim position for six months. It was this opportunity and experience that gave him the desire to pursue the position and this is what prompted him to get serious about the role.

Peter taught at his first school for 12 or 13 years. Here he worked for two principals. It was the second principal who first began him thinking about the possibility of taking on administration. This principal suggested he take the principals’ courses and
suggested he move to another school to teach in order to get a broader picture of the system.

Peter's wife was supportive of his decision; "it was never an issue." If he thinks back further, he had originally wanted to be a police officer rather than a teacher. He simply chose to follow his girlfriend into teacher's college (after receiving a bursary) when he learned his vision acuity was not adequate for the police force. Peter's father was Chief of Police while he was growing up and he describes the discipline and structure, the management mentality, that may have had an influence on his career choice.

In order to prepare for the role, Peter went back to get his undergraduate degree, followed by two teaching specialists, and then started his master's degree. He went to workshops offered by his federation. He also learned that the professional development offered by the women's federation was better, so he went to those workshops too ("maybe they're just a little more thorough about the way they prepare for things"). Peter also attended district level workshops and a leadership program and was involved with a study group. He tried to make himself better known throughout the region through things like committee work, track meets, and music festivals. He also describes his first interview process as finding out what it was all about rather than a serious attempt.

Peter was confident going into the role: "I felt comfortable in it, right from the beginning." He attributes his experiences as lead teacher and interim administrator for this security, along with knowing the staff.

Peter feels his beliefs about the role "fundamentally [haven't] changed a whole lot" since he became a principal. There is no power trip in the position. Instead, he
believes it is his responsibility to create an atmosphere, free from clutter, where teachers can focus on teaching the kids.

Peter receives direction on the expectations for his job through things like the Ontario Education Act and district policies and procedures. However, he has a strong sense, personally, about what the role entails and is able to live this out in his school. He has a strong focus in the area of student behaviour (partly stemming from some background training in this area) and has established a clear and consistent way of dealing with behavioural issues in the school. Ensuring the cooperation of the students and a common understanding among staff allows the rest to follow. He sees himself as a coach, taking people through change in a slow and steady way, “just constantly sort of leaning, just pressure, just nudge, nudge, nudge.” For instance, Peter recognizes that the major changes in the way the curriculum is developed and implemented means that he needs to be open to the fact that some people will find the change difficult and that he needs to put things into place (such as consultants) to allow the change to occur in an effective way.

Reflecting on the changes in the role over time, Peter sees that “the job has grown.” He feels principals are now taking on some aspects of the traditional superintendent or inspector’s positions. Staff supervision responsibilities have grown. There is still budget, the need to be a curriculum leader, and the administrative things, but the role has expanded in other ways. Principals must now serve as an advocate for special education students to find the proper resources. They also have become counselors, working to develop parenting skills. There is more involvement with outside agencies and finding community resources. In particular, principals must now be
"politically astute, you have to be very careful of what you say to people who come into your school." Peter feels he needs to be globally aware, looking for trends, comparing systems outside the province and country.

In his school, "it's a struggle to get parents involved." The parents speak a different language and the culture is such that they wish to leave their children's education in the hands of the school. He is also involved in CAS [Children's Aid Society] cases often where, again, culture reflects different definitions of abuse. Peter's school is attempting to create community partnerships along with finding additional ways of attracting the community into the school (i.e., by providing computer access after school hours).

When Peter talks about the recent government initiatives, he describes teachers who entered the profession in the last 10 or twelve years to "have had nothing but abuse." He sees his role as that of "historian," trying to keep things in perspective for these teachers (unlike those who have been teaching 25 or 30 years who have "seen this all before"). He needs to again be a coach and try to keep up morale. Being pulled out of federation has been another big change; Peter sees there may be some benefits such as not having to "straddle the line" during negotiations and job action.

When Peter thinks about the various and numerous aspects of his job, including the "ton of paper that comes across the desk," he recognizes that "there's nothing in this job that's important enough to lose sleep over." It is not worth it to let the stress "get to you." Peter learned from a retired principal that ninety per cent of the paper "nobody cares about and does anything about." He has learned to sort through and pick out what's really important. From a team of superintendents, Peter learned that he needs to set up a
school plan to deal with only a couple of issues at a time. Then he filters everything through that plan so that some items are ignored while others reflect the school focus. He reflects that this may be one thing “that you aren’t prepared for [in the role]. And maybe initially you’re not ready to do. You take it so seriously at first that you’re trying to do everything that everybody’s asking, and you can’t do that. Not and survive too.”

Ultimately, Peter describes the role as a “people job.” He feels he needs to hire the right people and let them to their job and that it always helps to hire people that are “smarter than you,” even if this is a scary endeavor.

Peter gains satisfaction from the number of his previous students who make the honour role after grade nine. He enjoys “watching a teacher take a risk and having it pull off.” He has been satisfied giving a teacher on an administrative transfer a reasonable opportunity and seeing positive results. He feels good “seeing a kid turn around.” He also likes it when previous students, now adults, approach him elsewhere and say, “hi, remember me?” These people-oriented things really make being a principal worthwhile for Peter.

It is the “administrivia” and the wasted time that concern Peter the most. He finds it difficult to have to go through hoops in order to receive support (for example, forcing parents to be humiliated to gain special education funding).

Peter feels he has “the best job in the business” and would become a principal all over again, “without a doubt.” He perhaps would have done it earlier, but does not regret his seven years as vice-principal because he then did not struggle when he became a principal.
Peter feels that teaching for a short length of time is not enough to gain the "big picture" that comes with teaching various subjects and grade levels. His advice to aspiring principals is to move around and become involved in various things. He suggests getting involved in the mentoring program the district now offers. "Volunteer. Take every chance you get to get into the office and try the different things ... soak up as much as you can."

**Kathleen**

Kathleen has been in the field of education for 36 years after spending four years as a vice-principal. She is in her third year as a principal.

When asked about why she chose to become a principal, Kathleen responded that the decision was partly money driven. Initially she went back to university to earn her undergraduate degree, which yielded her a greater salary. In this way her husband would be able to go into business for himself. Kathleen actually went back into teaching after raising children and moving to this region which has a higher cost of living than where she had been living. She was also having marital difficulties and felt she needed a job to keep herself happy and in case things did not work out. "And then once [she] was in it, then [she] just kept going."

Kathleen also says she always wanted to be in the role because she "always thought she could make more of a difference in a school than the principals that [she] was dealing with were making." She sees herself as bossy, even from the time she was a young child when she used to play school and was always the boss. She tends "not to hold back" and speaks her mind.
Along with her husband, friends and colleagues were important influences for Kathleen's interest in the position based on the support and encouragement they provided. She was involved with a group of women who were "upwardly mobile" and feels it was their influence that got her thinking along the lines of administration. These were fellow teachers who are now administrators. Other colleagues indicated they would want to work for her if she became a principal. The principals she worked for encouraged her and provided leadership opportunities in the school. At one point Kathleen became a special education administrator due to her interest in the area. Once there she felt it would be difficult to go back into the classroom: "You've had a taste of administration, you've had a taste of seeing how the other side is." Kathleen "always wanted to be the one that was going to make a difference in the education of children" and believes that the principalship is the "place to do it."

Kathleen's husband was supportive and "baby-sat the kids" while she pursued the position. She prepared for the role by obtaining her bachelor's degree, two specialists (special education and guidance), and the principals' courses. She did a lot of professional reading and began to set goals and to self-evaluate. Networking became important for her for learning about what the job is like and she also took a district level leadership program. No other organizations were influential or supportive in her decision (she's "not a federation person to start with," for example).

Kathleen did not experience any barriers while pursuing the position. She was successful in receiving appointments to vice principal and principal the first time she applied, even though the process was extremely stressful and she felt she had to "jump through hoops." She was prepared to give up a lot of her time in order to gain the
credentials she needed, which she sees as the price to pay rather than a barrier. Kathleen observes that she’s “probably encountered more barriers since [she’s] been in the job than [she] did getting the job.”

Kathleen’s beliefs about the role changed somewhat after she became a principal: “originally when I thought of the role ... I was Queen bee ... I was going to tell everybody what to do.” She feels she gained this idea from growing up and getting into the field when the role was very male-oriented, very much the disciplinarian where the office was a place to go when you were in trouble. For her, the office is a place for kids to be rewarded as well as for discipline. She tries to create this balance so that she is respected rather than feared.

Kathleen was surprised when she became a principal that others perceived her as “the boss” and that their perceptions of who she was changed when she moved from vice-principal to principal. She now understands the role as one of give and take. Although she thinks some people would not agree, she now sees herself as a team player. She tries to use the team approach in order to carry out her child-centred philosophy about education. She attempts to be collaborative, to listen to others’ viewpoints and incorporate others’ ideas. This has been difficult for her at times because she likes to do things her own way. She does not “always use a collaborative approach,” but does so when she can. She believes her school is more warm and inviting because she is encouraging to children, she’s “hands-on” and visible, and she’s been able to decrease the number of behavioural issues.

Although Kathleen learns about the expectations for her as a principal from the Ontario Education Act, the principals’ courses, and from observing and talking with
others, if she were "asked to write down what [she] thought the expectations for a principal were," she does not think she could. She notes that the expectations of her have been different in the two schools she's been in as principal, but that she is expected to run a safe school and to provide an environment that is conducive to learning. The district provides professional development around the curriculum aspect of the job. And she uses the district's leadership supervision process as a guideline for herself. Her expectations for herself include that the staff, students, and parents are feeling successful, that parents feel they can go into the school to discuss issues, and that "kids feel that they're in a happy well-educated environment."

Kathleen believes the community wants to know that their children are being treated fairly. She feels they like to know what is going on and they want extra curricular activities. Because the staff has been at the school for a long time, they would like to see younger teachers. Kathleen always knows when parents feel their kids are not happy because they communicate this with her.

For Kathleen, the recent government initiatives have "created far more stress [because] there's [been] too many changes too quickly." She sees she is now a sounding board for teachers and that she has to provide them with a lot of encouragement and support which takes time away from other aspects of the job like the kids. She agrees that some changes were necessary such as standards for grading "'cause marks were too inflated." However, EQAO [Education Quality Accountability Office] testing is too stressful for such young children and she has had to support students, teachers, and families throughout the process. For Kathleen, the Ministry initiatives have made her role "be more a social worker role."
For Kathleen, changes in her perception of the role of principal occurred as a result of changing schools and communities where the emphasis was different (i.e., discipline versus curriculum). She feels that she cannot implement all expectations at once; rather, focusing on three things within the parameters of the school plan is how she manages.

Kathleen gains satisfaction being a principal from “seeing the kids, working with the kids, hugging the kids, praising the kids.” She enjoys teachers and students sharing their successes with her. Working with staff to bring about positive change for students brings her happiness: “Even though I started out by saying money was important, it is, but that doesn’t bring you the satisfaction.”

Kathleen puts the children above others; she will interrupt what she is doing to attend to a student. She gets along with the parents but her “least satisfaction is from interaction with the parents. [She] couldn’t care less if a parent ever walked in the door.” She is also concerned with the amount of paperwork in the job because she sees it as non-productive. At the time of the interview, Kathleen was frustrated with the union because she feels it has set up the conflict in the province and that this is hurting the students. The fact that some things are out of her control, such as not having enough supply teachers, concerns Kathleen. These issues take her time away from being in classes and focusing on children and their programs.

Kathleen would definitely become a principal all over again. She could have retired two years ago and has no intention of doing so yet. She may have set earlier goals for herself, especially because she always knew she wanted a position of responsibility. She also mentions that she likes the flexibility she has at this stage in her career. She
sees retiring as her back up and can choose what she wants to act on depending on how readily it matches her values system. Ten years ago she would not have been able to do this.

Her advice to aspiring principals is to make sure they really want the job and to go in with their “eyes wide open.” She suggests they take care of themselves first and not get so wrapped up that the job becomes everything. In addition, having balance allows you to be a more well-rounded person so that you have more to offer. It is important, too, to learn about the big picture through a variety of experiences such as working in several schools and networking. Most importantly, though, “take time for yourself.”

Nancy

Nancy is in her second year as principal after spending four years as a vice-principal. Early in her career she taught for four years, then went into her own business and was out of education for 15 years. After about four years back as a teacher she began to consider administration.

She describes herself as one who has always had an “administrator bent,” assuming leadership roles wherever she went. She sees it as part of her personality to take initiative and organizational types of roles. She took on lead teacher positions, sat on many district level committees, and presented area- and district-level workshops. She recognizes that in schools, the role of Chair always seemed to be given to her. She realized at some point that she had done so much already and that there were other things that she could do and things she could assist people with, but not while in the teacher’s position. The reasons she sees for people to go into administration are because others see
the person as a leader and encourage them or because there are some really bad administrators and instead of criticizing they do something about it. Nancy did not indicate if these were both influences in her decision making.

Nancy received encouragement from people she worked with at the school level and from consultants and superintendents she worked with at the district level. Two people acted as mentors for her - a vice-principal and a superintendent. From these individuals she learned about the global picture with respect to policies, politics, and bigger educational issues. She learned about having a larger vision beyond an individual teacher’s concern or what is going on in one school. How actions and policies impact on a larger scale, she learned, is important to keep in mind as a principal.

Growing up, Nancy had very supportive and intelligent parents who enjoyed learning and understanding in terms of global issues. She failed a year in high school due to her involvement in sports and her parents helped her get back into academics. She reflects that she has always been very outgoing and into a variety of things and that her personality has not changed much since then.

To prepare for the position, Nancy used her workshop and committee work as a vehicle for making herself known to various people including superintendents. Having people know about her and about whom they might be working with was important. Apart from the principals’ courses, one leadership program was offered through the district that she attended. No other organizations were supportive or had anything to offer her. Even though the federation held some professional development, she felt it was a duplication of leadership skills, such as conflict resolution, that she had already learned in her own business.
A barrier that Nancy faced while pursuing the position was not being given a lead teacher position in one school where she taught. However, the staff had already recognized her as a leader, which meant “the other person didn’t have a very good year”. At another school the principal did not support her when she applied for the position, even though support was being given to two other people (who are still not administrators at this time). In this case Nancy’s superintendent recognized there was a problem and assisted a transfer for her to another school.

Nancy had confidence in herself that she could make the proper moves and that she would eventually obtain a position. She was confident she could do a good job because “it didn’t matter what school [she] was in, basically [she] became the focal point,” balancing things, helping people, settling disputes between staff members, doing curriculum, presenting workshops, and implementing anything new.

Before going into the role, Nancy recognized that it entails being a curriculum leader, a motivator, and a good communicator with parents. What she has learned while in the role is that “you have to deal with everything that comes through the door every second of the day, whether it’s kids, whether it’s parents, whether it’s staff, the community, doesn’t matter.” Because of this and constantly making decisions, Nancy sees the role as different from that of teacher where her hours were less, fewer demands were made, and she was less mentally exhausted.

Nancy feels her pronounced work ethic and high expectations are in line with the role of the principal. Her philosophy or style of leadership is to work with her staff around making decisions, even if it is she who sets the deadlines. She feels she cannot be
successful if she cannot work with people. There are times when she has no choice but to say "do as I say" but there's always "a nice way of getting there."

Expectations for her role come to Nancy at monthly meetings, through superintendents who clearly communicate the expectations around curriculum, school plan, and the running of the school. Weekly newsletters also convey this information. Essentially the Ministry initiatives are sorted out through the school district personnel who then present them to administrators. Nancy sees that in the eyes of the government, the principal is more of a focal point now where there has been an increase in the level of responsibility for the role. In addition, the time lines for completing things has accelerated.

The school community expects the school "to be vibrant, to be alive, to be welcoming, to carry on different things." They expect Nancy "to be able to motivate people and deliver excellent curriculum, they want their children to have a top notch education," they want excellent testing results, and they want her to facilitate staff and parent involvement in events and classrooms. Nancy feels that when she grew up, the school was a key part of the community and she wants this for her school now. She wants to do what parents expect by being visible, open, and approachable. Parents need to see that their concerns are addressed and that some solution is found. Nancy has also educated her parents about what to look for as proof that their children are getting a good education. In this way they can be confident that nothing is being hidden.

Because Nancy has been in education for 22 years, she can see how the role of the principal has changed. In the past, the principal participated in mostly management tasks – scheduling, reading report cards, making appearances at events (rather than
participating), settling problems, giving the strap. Principals were also mainly men.

Now principals must know the curriculum in order to motivate, to create a school plan, and to collect data. In addition, in the past staff were in awe of the principal, “sort of like mystique.” Now there is a totally different attitude where young teachers are used to speaking their minds, which creates a challenge for principals.

Nancy finds satisfaction in working with people towards success. For example, working with teachers and parents to assist a child in becoming a more responsible student has brought about joy for Nancy. She enjoys “helping people see the whole picture” by setting goals and determining how to reach them.

Nancy is concerned about health issues where “eventually a lot of people have blood pressure problems.” She describes having emotions like everybody else and therefore dealing with others’ “stupid” actions when they “get themselves into hot water” becomes a concern. As a result, every day Nancy has to choose what to take on. She does not have tolerance for “people who are not logical” and act stupidly without thinking because she then has to “dig them out.” For instance, she feels others should be able to handle their own discipline problems “if they were where they should have been in the first place.” It is the mistakes people make, their lack of understanding, and their egocentricity that gets Nancy “fed up with people” more than anything.

Nancy would choose to become a principal again. She enjoys it and she’s good at it, according to the staff and parents in each school she’s been as an administrator. She also feels she would run out of things to do as a teacher.

Nancy’s advice to aspiring principals is to be willing to put in the time and be able to take criticism. Recognize that there will be few thank you’s and the money
should not be an incentive. If you are a really negative person, this is not the type of position to get into. Listen to feedback and make changes where necessary.

Cameron

Cameron is in his second year as principal. He spent three and a half years as a vice-principal after teaching for 10 years. When he first entered teaching, he was not completely sure it was “for [him]” but soon he found that he loved it. He has taught all the grades from four through eight, along with holding guidance and ESL [English as a Second Language] positions.

For Cameron, becoming a principal was a natural progression. He held lead teacher positions (junior lead, computer lead, and science lead) from his second year of teaching. Between his various teaching and lead positions, “it just seemed natural for [him] to go into this area.” Cameron moved into an interim vice-principal’s role when his principal received a secondment elsewhere in the Board. This move, again, felt “natural” for him. While in this role, the interim principal asked him if he was going to pursue administration, “And that’s kind of the start of ... how [he] got into administration.”

Cameron has a very supportive family; they are proud of his accomplishments. He tends, however, “to do things and not tell them until after,” perhaps because of a fear of disappointing others if he does not succeed. He describes his elementary school experiences as “really crummy,” failing grade six, barely passing the second time through. In grade seven his average jumped to 94%, and from then onward “[he] started to excel and ... to figure out what I really wanted to do ... I wanted to work with kids.”
He felt he could do a better job than his previous teachers and that even his principals “didn’t really understand what was going on in teachers’ classes and didn’t have a handle of how teachers were treating kids.” For Cameron, then, the fundamental reason he feels he is a principal is because he knew he could do a better job than what other people were doing.

Cameron has had a close mentor from the time he entered the profession. He believes he “wouldn’t have made it through the year without” her. She moved into the vice-principal and principal positions about five years ahead of him. He describes having many dinners together to talk about his direction. For him, “she’s probably the most influence on the fact that [he’s] in this office now.” In addition, Cameron moved through teaching, taking courses and preparing for the role, together with two of his peers who are also now administrators.

To prepare for the position, Cameron continued to apply for and obtain lead teacher positions. He took university and AQ [Additional Qualification] courses every summer as well as taking any opportunity to attend workshops or professional development courses (such as those offered in his district around leadership). He conferred with his mentor regularly, as well as discussing his plans and seeking advice from his superintendent and principal. He transferred schools to gain additional experience. He also participated in some area and regional committees that helped him think in more broad terms such as understanding the impact of things on an entire school. Cameron was Chair of his church board, seeking out leadership opportunities outside of the school, which were valuable learning experiences for him. He valued preparation
support through the district's programs; no other organizations were influential or supportive for Cameron.

A setback occurred for Cameron when he was not successful in being appointed as principal after his first attempt. This "was really devastating and ... really knocked [his] self-confidence and ... threw [him] for a loop." At this point he received feedback and engaged in a summer of self-reflection in order to further prepare him for the application process.

Cameron was not completely confident about taking on the role of principal, initially wishing he had remained a vice-principal longer so as to learn more through working with the principal in the school. When he first entered the role, he took things very personally, disappointed if he did not have all the answers, not sleeping at night. The transition from vice-principal to principal was difficult because he now took everything home with him since it is now "his school," his responsibility.

Going into the position, Cameron felt he had a "fairly good understanding of what the role is about," based on the coursework he would taken. He did not realize, however, how political the role is: "there's pressure from the senior admin., there's pressure from the parents, there's pressure from the teachers, and there's pressure coming up from the students." As the principal, he needs to be able to "stick handle" these pressures while treating everyone in a fair manner. In addition, Cameron was surprised by the amount of (unnecessary) paperwork and its duplication with technological means of communication. Cameron also was not prepared for having to deal with some of the system's structures such as having to go through the caretaker's union in order to deal with performance issues.
Cameron is in the role of principal because he wants to “make a difference.” In his role he feels he can affect the tone for success in the whole school rather than in one classroom. He feels he is able “to work within the philosophy of the Board to guide and support the teachers in that direction.” Based on his district’s influence, Cameron sees the role of principal as having an emphasis on being a curriculum leader with assessment and evaluation as a current focus. He feels he needs to be a change agent, to identify needy curriculum areas and guide his staff through the process to deliver positive results. In addition, the management areas include the site, the staff (teaching and non-teaching), the students, the parents, the community, building access, plant issues, safety, and budget. He also sees the role as one of “being an advocate, a spokesperson for the Board, for the school.” Because of negative press exposure, he feels he needs to promote better communication to parents about what the school is doing. He feels responsible to create a positive school environment, acting as referee at times for students or teachers to positively resolve situations. As a model, Cameron believes he needs to be visible in the school. He enjoys being collaborative with his staff: “I want people to buy into something rather than just lay it on and tell them that this is the way it is.” This style he understands to be different from the way the previous principal led the school.

The community uses the school building for functions other than school activities and some of these are planned though Cameron’s school council. There is a concerted effort to try and attract community members and parents to the school, as many “only come when their child is performing.”

Cameron feels that “all of the new government initiatives will be very positive. The only issue [he has] around it is that we don’t have enough money to support them.”
For instance, school wish lists now contain literacy materials and textbooks whereas they used to list sports equipment.

There is "an enormous responsibility in this position." For Cameron, "it can be very rewarding, but it can be also very lonely too." He feels that the government’s influence has created a distinction where principals are "islands unto themselves," not privy to union decisions and directives. He feels that "in society, everything seems to download ... to the principal." In managing his role, he knows there is never enough time to deal with everything and he focuses first on students, parents, and teachers before attending to the paperwork responsibilities. He also spends numerous hours doing his work at home after his "incredible" hours at the school.

Cameron’s greatest satisfaction with being a principal is setting goals and a vision and working with the staff to see the positive rewards: "I think when you can see the change that has happened because of some of the decisions that you’ve made, I think that’s the most rewarding part." He has this sense of satisfaction in seeing the positive attitudinal change he’s been able to facilitate in his staff since moving to this school a year and a half ago.

It is difficult for Cameron to tell someone that they have “messed up.” He struggles with this and “beats [himself] up 10 times over before [he has] to go do it.” He finds human interaction issues (such as interpersonal conflicts among staff members) also difficult to address. He intends to seek professional development opportunities to help with both these concerns.

Cameron has several times questioned himself about being in the role. However, for him, now, the positives outweigh the negatives and he would probably become a
principal all over again given the chance. He would like to be moved to a school closer to his home to assist in his feeling of being “drained.”

His advice to aspiring principals is to take on leadership roles around the school, to discuss their plans with their administrators and to receive ideas about how to get there. One piece of experience that is critical is to be an acting principal in order to understand what the position is like. Taking advantage of professional development opportunities is important. Cameron also believes that “you need to make sure that you’re healthy, both mentally and physically ... your well-being needs to be on a really stable foundation.” And, Cameron suggests that aspiring administrators engage in self-reflection to understand why they are going into the role and what they hope to get out of it.

Francine

Francine has been an educator for 29 years and is in her second year as a principal. Shortly after becoming a teacher she went back to university to upgrade her qualifications and earn a maximum salary. At the same time she raised four children (with only one year off). She was a vice-principal for three years.

Francine feels she likely would have considered pursuing the position earlier in her career except for the fact that she wanted to be available for her children. She began to think seriously about the position two years prior to becoming a vice-principal (about seven years ago). She describes the various roles she had as a teacher: primary, intermediate, physical education, science, math, guidance. “Every two years I would try to do something different. And ... I had tried everything different that I wanted to do.”
Francine describes her support from her husband while she was pursuing the position. He took holidays to correspond with time she needed and also made sure to be home for the children the one night a week that she attended courses and/or networked with a group of four peers, all moving towards administration. She has also received encouragement from her children (now aged 16-23) and feels she has been a good role model for them at the same time, as they have watched her go through disappointments but also be successful.

Looking back further, Francine is not sure of any connections between her childhood and where she is now. She describes herself as always being independent, likely because her parents were divorced, and not always “the best behaved person at school.” She finds it interesting, however, that both her sisters are in helping professions as well – one with a women’s shelter, the other with day care.

As an intermediate teacher, Francine was involved in a group that made decisions in conjunction with administration and she feels she received a great deal of encouragement from her vice-principals and principals. She feels she was given opportunities to make administration-like decisions. She was also a lead teacher “for 10 or fifteen years” and was given the position of principal designate for the occasions when both administrators were out of the school. Francine mentions several people – principals and superintendent – who supported and encouraged her along the way.

Networking was very important for Francine. She attended courses offered by her federation, which allowed her to network with others. She joined a group who took their undergraduate and specialist courses together. She met with another group to discuss issues, three or four times prior to the interview process. Another group met after
attending federation meetings to discuss the evening presenters. Francine also attended leadership programs offered by her district, which she found to be quite worthwhile. She has since gone back and become involved as a group leader for one of the programs.

Francine found a barrier to becoming an administrator in that she was not successful her first time through the interview process. However, after receiving her feedback (which was not very valuable to her), she immediately applied again and was appointed to vice-principal.

She was quite confident that she could be a good principal: “I knew I could do this. I was looking forward to doing it. That was my whole intent. I was looking forward to doing something new that I knew I could do.” When she became a principal, Francine could not “get over how people keep telling me I’m the boss.” She prefers to be collaborative, listening to and dealing with everybody’s ideas. She also finds the role to be very hectic, never doing what she had actually planned for the day.

Francine considers herself a coach, helping primarily new teachers get through the year while also supporting their transition to a new community (many of the teachers at this school are first-year teachers who move on from this more rural or remote community). She states, “My philosophy of education is sort of on the back burner while I’m trying to solve [problems] or help people just to cope with what they have to in education.” She feels the need to mentor her teachers, ensuring that they feel confident and that they have the resources they need. Francine feels that part of her philosophy is the idea of the “whole student” and this she puts into practice because of the nature of her student population: “… it’s not just academic … we have a lot of students here who
achieve academically but have real social problems ... we can all learn but it's the lifelong learning that really is important.”

The messages about the expectations for the role come to Francine through administrators' meetings. She also finds she learns a lot on the job and through phoning and networking with other principals and with superintendents. She has found, too, that she has learned through working closely with others where she has “watched them make decisions either [she] liked or didn’t like or what [she] would do in that situation.” Area meetings contribute to her learning and help her feel encouraged about her role and the decisions she makes. Francine also learns through reading such things as magazines from the Ontario Principals' Council.

The school council is “excellent” and really likes to be informed. There is also a PTA that organizes fund-raising for the school. Francine finds her community demanding, though: “they do call a lot about everything that's going on.” They expect her to call them back immediately and they want their problems solved “right now.” She is very professional when discussing issues with parents, as they often attempt to shift blame to others when their child is involved in a conflict. Francine is also aware that there are likely more parental concerns because she has so many inexperienced teachers. In the end she feels that the parents are pleased with whatever is done and are encouraging in this manner.

When it comes to recent government initiatives, Francine feels that the curriculum changes have affected her role. She needs to learn the curriculum while supporting her teachers with it. District level workshops and learning how to budget for appropriate resources are helpful in this regard. Because she enjoys being a collaborative leader, she
feels things are working out in that teachers are open to offering suggestions and expressing their needs.

Francine feels that being visible, "being out there and knowing the students and knowing what's going on in the classroom stops a lot of other things from happening," such as calls from parents. As such, she presents herself as a role model. She ensures her teachers have what they need around curriculum. She finds that she tends to take home paperwork or stays at school on Friday nights until 9:00 in order to get a lot of it done. For her, "basically the bottom line is it's a really busy office ... [and] the paperwork and the management is not high on [her] priorities until [she] takes it home."

Francine is happy with her decision to wait until her children were older before becoming a principal. She feels that she can be more committed to the job as a result. She tries to maintain a healthy, positive point of view, for herself and for others. However, she realizes that there is stress with the role and that she's often on her own, taking things home. Because of where her family is now, she feels better able to deal with this.

Francine's greatest satisfaction is the kids: "Being in the class[es]. Getting out at recess. Meeting them off the bus. Saying good-bye at the end of the day." She also enjoys receiving phone calls from previous students who have become teachers, knowing that she has provided a good role model. Being well received in the community is also a source of satisfaction. For her, these things "are not dollar values."

The amount of responsibility in the job concerns Francine. She often wakes up at night wondering if she's forgotten something or if her decisions have been good ones.
She recognizes that the role requires good people skills “to make it all happen for the children” and hopes she can make others in the school feel good about themselves.

Francine would become a principal all over again, and although she could have done it earlier, “it’s been nice” the way it’s worked out. She also looks forward to retiring at the same time as her husband that she would not have been able to do had she taken more time off for raising her children. The option of retiring and then coming back as a teacher appeals to her. She feels she will have the energy to do something else after retirement, “maybe not even related to teaching.”

Francine’s advice to aspiring principals is to start with “looking at how you deal with people” because this is the nature of the job. Be positive. Understand the increased role that families expect now. And, “you’ve got to really want to go and do it.”

Rebecca

Rebecca is in her first year as principal. She was a vice-principal for four years. She is 40 years old and has been in the field of education for 20 years.

Rebecca credits a principal she worked for with starting her thinking about becoming a principal. She was a very energetic and enthusiastic teacher who was involved in “all aspects of the building.” Her principal recognized this and encouraged her to look at using her talents in different ways. Because he saw potential in her and because she realized that she had already begun to branch out within the school, she began to consider the role. She saw similarities with what she was doing as a teacher and what the role of the principal was: “just helping more people.” Prior to her principal’s encouragement, Rebecca never really thought she was “the kind of person for the job.”
For Rebecca, the initiative came from others: “I guess other people had seen that there were skills that I possessed that I should use for administration and then it kind of opened my eyes and opened the doors and the more I got involved the more I realized that it was something that I really wanted to do.”

Rebecca also feels that working in a team teaching situation with a teacher who became vice-principal designate was a significant influence for her. This teacher allowed her to see and understand what the administrative position was really like, giving her a better sense and more positive image of the role.

Rebecca was supported by her husband who is a retired teacher, by her peers, and by the parents in the school while pursuing the principalship. Her principal spent a lot of time with her, discussing issues, providing reading materials, recognizing her qualities, and continuing to nudge her along. She describes him as a mentor, very open and caring.

Rebecca has two sisters and a brother with Down syndrome. She feels that this has had a great impact on her. She always wanted to be a special education teacher. She now advocates for children in a more understanding way and can relate to parents when they come in advocating for their children. She notes that both her sisters work in the health profession so that they all work with people in the service industry.

Rebecca connected with a group of women who were preparing for the principal’s position, meeting with them regularly to discuss issues and to study. She did some professional reading. She listened to her principal-mentor and took more of a leadership role in the school. She also began to network and to get superintendent support in order to be seen and recognized as someone who was seeking administration. Rebecca was a lead teacher and was involved in school committees as well as attending district-level
workshops. She also acts as an adjunct professor with a university, screening teachers’ college applicants. No other organization was influential for Rebecca; however, she attended several courses through the federation and now finds support while in the role from the district and the Ontario Principals’ Council.

When asked about barriers to becoming a principal, Rebecca considers that the application process itself was very difficult, very daunting. She feels she beat herself up in the process and was shaken by the experience, finding it hard to keep balance in her life along the way. Once in the position, she’s gone through growing pains recognizing that “no matter how well prepared you think you are, you’re not.” Although she was not confident that she would be able to display her skills adequately during the hiring process, she was always confident that she could do the job.

Initially Rebecca saw the vice-principal’s position as one of constant conflict. She did not see the hidden aspect that brings joy – that of supporting people through decisions. She was not prepared for the fact that she would never sit down or eat lunch and would have to pull back so much on her own needs. She did not realize the job would be so all consuming where she’s also working many nights and weekends.

Rebecca learns about the expectations for her role through the superintendent and upper administration who provide very clear directives. Examples include focusing on the school plan, on the use of data, on assessment and evaluation, on the implementation of the new curriculum, and on the involvement of parents in the school.

She sees that her community has “incredibly high expectations” for staff. They want the staff to be accessible at all times in order to respond to what they have learned has occurred at the school. Parents are “very well informed of their child’s perspectives
of what's happened." Rebecca has worked to build relationships with the parent community and is protective of her staff, supporting and buffering them from many "episodes."

Rebecca feels that the latest government initiatives have had a detrimental effect on morale and climate in the school. As such, she tries to bring the staff together to focus on the positive successes that are occurring and "despite the fact that [they're] being bashed regularly by everybody," they are doing a really good job. Rebecca also sees that because of the Ministry there is no longer enough support and enough staff to deal with an increased number of special education and ESL [English as a Second Language] students, which poses another large challenge.

Rebecca feels that she has been able to live out her educational philosophy in the role of principal. She is "at the core [very] moral" and feels the Board policy is indeed ethical and moral. She feels comfortable being able to speak her mind and be who she is and be respected for this. In her role she works hard to do what is right while at the same time reducing teachers' anxiety and relaxing their workloads so that they can do a really good job.

Rebecca does not know how she manages all the expectations for her role. She focuses on the school plan but realizes that if she and her teachers were to do everything expected, nothing would be done well. She allows teachers to make decisions around removing certain things while striving for excellence. They are "not there yet" with the curriculum and so cannot deal with all the constant paper that comes through.

For Rebecca, satisfaction comes from "working with people that are smiling and happy." She is "personality-based" and enjoys knowing that kids, parents, and teachers
are happy, comfortable, and safe. On the other hand, she is concerned about being judged by test scores because they do not reflect the whole academic picture.

Rebecca would choose to become a principal again. Most days she loves her job and she is comfortable with whom she is and feels good that she’s doing something right. It is very satisfying for her to achieve great resolutions to challenging conflicts.

Her advice to aspiring principals is to believe in themselves and to be happy with whom they are and what they have to offer. “If you feel you have something to give … others will believe it as well.”

Lisa

This is Lisa’s first year as a principal, her 28th year in the field of education. She was a vice-principal for three and a half years. She taught at the secondary level for 18 years before changing school districts and teaching elementary school. In both panels she enjoyed taking on a guidance role with children and also found herself providing parenting workshops.

While working in the secondary panel, Lisa “had never entertained any idea of ever becoming an administrator.” When her vice-principal at the elementary school took a leave of absence, her principal asked her to fill in as interim vice-principal. She refused initially but due to his strong encouragement, took the position. He then helped her get started on her principals’ courses and gave her guidance and ESL [English as a Second Language] experience in the school. As a vice-principal she also received encouragement and support to pursue a principalship. She considers herself as not very ambitious in terms of the district hierarchy and knows that she “would not have gone this
route had it not been for mentors and for principals' support that [she] encountered along the way."

Lisa received support and positive feedback from her staff. Her husband was encouraging and supported the time she needed and her mother was proud of her and supported her choices along the way. Growing up, Lisa's parents wanted her and her siblings to be university educated so that they could always support themselves, which was different from the attitude of the times where women were seen to be looked after by their husbands.

In order to prepare for the role, Lisa joined a study group with other women who met regularly to discuss issues and problem-solve. She read more professional materials and spoke with her principal about what she should be doing and for feedback for further growth. She feels both her secondary and guidance experiences helped her prepare for issues that arise in the role. She also immersed herself in the district's curriculum areas of emphasis. Lisa taught in a native Indian community at one point, which gave her some first-hand experience with anti-racism issues. Again, this experience, along with some experience teaching in an inner-city setting, helped her prepare.

Lisa felt confident dealing with older elementary students. She also gained confidence through the interim position where she had experience dealing with issues such as students bringing knives to school. Her confidence was also built up through positive feedback from her principal after filling in as principal designate while he was out of the school.
Lisa felt that the women teachers’ federation was supportive in that they encouraged women in leadership positions. Being recognized with a gift at a federation dinner was a special honour to Lisa.

Lisa remembers being initially uncertain about becoming a principal because she does not see herself as a “super cop.” The image she had of the role was of constantly dealing with fights, vandalism, drugs, students skipping classes, with the police involved often. She saw the role as one of dealing with conflicts among staff, students, and parents. She was not interested in always having to consequence kids’ negative behaviours, deal with angry parents, or have to discipline a colleague. After serving as interim vice-principal, however, she realized that she had been involved in many positive interactions and that her style could be effective. She could see positive results and get good feedback without having to yell and scream at kids. At this point she realized that she was making a positive impact on kids.

Lisa felt the district’s process for becoming a principal was very stressful and was somewhat of a barrier. She was uncomfortable knowing her colleagues would be asked questions about her and wanted to portray herself as knowing what she was talking about. This process provided an obstacle for her and caused her some sleepless nights. In the end she was successfully appointed after her first attempts for both vice-principal and principal.

For the most part, Lisa feels she can put her educational philosophy into action. When dealing with tough issues and dilemmas she always considers what is in the “best interest of kids.” She seems to be able to make decisions in the best interest of kids, which is reassuring.
Lisa learns about the expectations for her role from the district, from her superintendent, from parents and the school council, from children, and from the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Education Act. She finds that these various expectations and their sources are always changing so that the “role is always evolving.”

The Ministry expectations have been fairly consistent from the standpoint of the role they expect the principal to play. Lisa finds meeting the needs of some parents quite challenging and needs to adjust her idea of her role accordingly at times. She feels she is not the only one who needs to be involved in resolving difficult situations.

Lisa believes that principals need to be curriculum leaders first. However, “more and more ... the management side of things is creeping into the role.” The administrative tasks need to be attended to which means it is more challenging to fill the “educator” role. Lisa’s responsibilities include teacher evaluations, ensuring open communication with staff, and solving problems among parents and staff. She finds she is pulled in different directions by others and wishes she could participate more in student learning in the school and that she had more opportunities to facilitate professional development for teachers for things like the new curriculum. As such, she tries to be creative in finding ways to achieve these parts of the role.

Lisa feels that she “cannot lead a school by [her]self [and] won’t even pretend to do so.” She has designated lead teachers in her school to count on to carry out certain tasks and to top into their areas of expertise and skill. By having the staff chair their meetings, Lisa has seen new leaders emerge, which she encourages.

Several parts of the role of principal concern Lisa. Initially she did not want to be perceived by her colleagues as someone who thought highly of herself or better than
them. Once she became a principal, she was able to appreciate what a principal had once told her—that staff tend to go to the vice-principal first because the position is one step closer to teacher. Lisa realizes that as principal, she cannot share everything with her staff so that they can never see the big picture. Therefore, when dealing with an unsatisfactory teacher, for instance, others cannot fully understand the issues so that only the teacher's view is considered. "So you have to sort of go with the flow, and that's very frustrating too because you'd like to be able to present a clear picture."

Lisa is also frustrated that she cannot be more visible in the school. Again, she feels teachers cannot possibly understand the nature of what goes on in the office which prevents this: the parents who arrive demanding instant answers, students who require attention, teachers who fall ill and need their classes covered, being without secretarial staff at times. She feels if she had more time she could "do a better job." The parents in her community are very demanding and take up "an inordinate amount" of her time. She sees that this time may be an investment because some parents are now her allies and are willing to get involved in the school. However, dealing with the parents who only want to vent and not provide any support is frustrating and takes her time away from issues that concern the kids.

Lisa understands that she has to attend to priorities and to put some things—the "administrivia"—off in order to do so. She and her staff are focusing on four pre-established goals for the year and she is tapping into as many people and material resources as possible to work towards these goals. Again, she feels she could never do it alone: "I guess part of my role [see as looking at what we need to do and then trying to ... establish a framework and [bring in] resources ... to make those things happen."
Lisa’s greatest satisfaction is the kids. She thoroughly enjoys interacting with them in the schoolyard and around the school. When she deals with discipline, she feels she can connect with them and make positive gains with them. “Seeing kids learn and become more independent and more capable in their everyday decision making, I find very rewarding.” Similarly, seeing teachers interact positively with kids and being enthusiastic about them brings Lisa pleasure.

On the other hand, Lisa is concerned about parents “who won’t allow their children to take responsibility for [their] own actions” and arrive at the school in defense of their children’s actions. These parents appear blind to teaching their children to take responsibility for themselves.

Lisa would become a principal all over again. However, she feels she’s close to being a perfectionist and thus wants to do her job well. The role has taken a toll on her physical health and has had an impact on her family due to the regular 12 hours a day that she works. Because the “buck stops” with her, her level of commitment is “huge” and she therefore takes the time to do things right. She feels she cannot keep up this pace for 10 or fifteen years or deal with “the sheer volume of paper … and the tasks that [she’s] expected to perform.” She looks forward to retiring in six or seven years when she can take time for herself to join a gym again and perhaps start traveling.

Lisa’s advice for aspiring principals is to make sure to be really ready and prepared to make the commitment. She also advises to “never feel that you have to make a decision in isolation … there are people you can call for support if you need it.” She advises remembering that it will be a big time commitment and “when you really want to do it, then go for it.”
Summary Discussion of Cases

In the cases presented here, it is evident that people make their own choices to pursue administrative positions. That is, even though every person’s story is unique, they all appeared to have the need to feel that they were choosing something that would be good for them. Choosing the principalship allowed them to meet their own personal needs and/or goals. Some sort of internal process was at work for each person, shaping their perceptions of the role and how it might enhance their own lives.

Thus, although some people indicate and describe the influences that others had on their choices, ultimately they found reasons to enter the role that had meaning for them personally. However, many had not considered the idea of administration until someone suggested it to them first. Mike’s vice-principal simply asked him if he was interested in going that route. Harry’s close friend and colleague, while pursuing the position himself, indicated to him the benefits of the position. Gloria’s principal urged her to be a summer school principal. Rebecca feels that the principal she worked for inspired her to pursue the principalship. And Lisa was persuaded to take an interim administrative role by the principal she worked for. In each case, this suggestion to consider making the choice was internalized by the individuals as something positive. It was something that appealed to them. Mike recognized that going into administration was an opportunity and the thing to do, and that he could likely be successful. Harry learned from his friend that as a principal he could have influence over a wider range of people and instill in others the need to put kids first. For Gloria, the idea of being an administrator gave her a personal sense of satisfaction and achievement. Rebecca came to recognize that the positive impact she had as a teacher could be expanded to a larger
group in the position of principal. And although Lisa appeared to be the most reluctant to enter administration, she became aware of the positive interactions and results she could have within a school as a principal.

For some people, then, becoming a principal began with a "tap on the shoulder" by others whom they admired and respected in the field. These sponsors allowed them to learn or recognize the possibilities available to them and the ways the position could allow them to make positive contributions to their schools. When they realized that the principalship was a job they could do, a positive sense of self-esteem appeared to emerge. These individuals believed in themselves that they were suited for the position and that they would enjoy the role.

A number of people, then, appear to have reacted to others' suggestions in making their choices to pursue administration. Others tended to be more proactive in their choices. Two people felt they knew all along that they would be principals. Daniel's long term career plan included the principal's position. And Bob basically saw himself in the role from the time he entered the teaching profession. In each of these two cases, making a difference in the lives of others in the school, especially children, were very clearly motivating factors for seeking positions. In addition, when these individuals let others know that this was their goal, they were able to secure support from those who could help them move towards appointment. Interestingly, Bob moved into administration relatively quickly after 10 years in education, while Daniel took his time and became an administrator after 22 years.

Other people describe going into administration as a natural career progression. Sean feels he has been immersed in education most of his life because of his relationships
with others in the field. His interest in science and a consultant's position led him to become involved in administrative activities that broadened his views and set him on the path towards the principalship. Elizabeth taught in both elementary and secondary schools and in a variety of positions. She held leadership roles within the women's federation and saw the importance of promoting women into positions of responsibility. She describes growth within herself and the motivation to meet new challenges, which ultimately led her to the principal's role. John describes how he became involved in administration-like activities in his school along with a colleague. The two of them began to note ways in which they could do better jobs than the principals they observed. John also realized that he did not want to be a teacher in a classroom into his fifties and because he had a sense of "the big picture," chose to move into administration. Audrey had no intentions of becoming a principal. However, once she moved out of the classroom and into consulting positions, she learned about the ways in which she might have a bigger impact on others in an administrative position. Experimenting with courses, she also learned that the role appealed to her and she became motivated to pursue it. Cameron talks about his "natural progression" towards the principalship. He moved into various lead teacher positions for many years and then into an interim vice-principal role. He learned throughout this process and through the help of a mentor that he could make a positive difference, promoting success in a school rather than in only one classroom.

Closely related to the notion of a natural course of action is the idea that many people became principals because it was their next step. Theresa describes how she likes to move into new roles and challenges every three or four years. After leaving her
position in an organization for autism, she continued to work in special education within
the school district. From this position her next challenge was to assume a leadership
position in education outside of special education, and the principalship thus appealed to
her. Peter found himself on "cruise control" after teaching for 18 years. Searching for a
new challenge, he first applied for a secondary teaching position before recognizing that
the role of principal would provide this challenge. Kathleen is unique in expressing that
her choice to pursue administration was partly due to money. She went into teaching
after raising her children in order to ensure her own security after her marriage failed.
Once there, she realized that she liked being a leader and moved into a special education
administrator's job. At this point going into the principalship became her next step.
Nancy, too, sees herself as having been a leader all along. She has held various lead
teacher and committee Chair positions and provided inservice for other teachers. She felt
she had done all she could in this regard as a teacher and that she could do even more as a
principal. Francine chose to wait until her children were older (in their teens) before
pursuing the position. She talks of having tried everything different that she wanted to do
— various grade levels and subject areas as well as lead teacher positions — and that being
a principal was the next thing to do.

Interestingly, several principals (Elizabeth, John, Kathleen, Nancy, and Cameron)
note that they felt they could do a better job than other principals they had observed.
This was not the primary reason for choosing to go into administration; however, it was
an important consideration for these individuals. Each felt that they had something more
to offer in the role than some of the others who were already there. This added to their
personal motivation to seek a principalship.
It is evident at this point that, again, people found internal psychologically-based reasons for pursuing administrative positions. Addressing the broader sphere of education and wanting to influence more people and outcomes than is possible as a classroom teacher were motivators for several individuals. Others continuously sought new challenges, moving through various positions and leadership roles until the next challenge was the principalship. Their personal sense of continuously learning and expanding in their field were important. Underlying this for most was the desire to be able to have an impact on others for the sake of positive results within a school. Related to this is the fact that almost every principal felt confident that they could do the job upon entering the position, suggesting that they felt ready to meet the challenges and visions they held.

A few interesting points can be made with respect to the views of men and women. The idea that men were expected to go into administration, because they were men, was expressed by Mike, Daniel, and Bob. Similarly, women were not actually frequently placed in administrative roles in the past (men dominated these positions), as noted by Gloria, Elizabeth, Kathleen, and Nancy. Even this distinction – men felt they were expected to go into the role while women felt underrepresented in the role – sheds light on the ways men and women see gender differences in relation to administrative positions. Gloria, Elizabeth, and Kathleen also felt somewhat motivated to pursue the position because they believed they were women who could succeed as principals. Gloria and Elizabeth even entertained the idea of going further and becoming superintendents, earning their qualifications for this position (although neither ultimately pursued the superintendency). All of these seven principals who raised gender
differences as a subject during the interviews have been in the field of education for at least 22 years. In fact, although Kathleen has only been a principal for two years, she has been in the field the longest— for 36 years.

Three other individuals also make reference to opportunities for professional development differentiated by gender. The Women Teacher's Federation (that is no longer in existence as it has merged with another federation in the province) invested time, money, and research into promoting the appointment of women into leadership positions. Lisa mentions that this organization's recognition of her promotion made her feel special. Sean and Peter saw the professional development offered by this federation as better than that which was offered through the men's organization. Daniel and Bob also indicated that they gleaned valuable information, in the form of materials and a study group, through the women's federation. Elizabeth, too, feels that this organization was a valuable influence for her in her pursuit of the role.

For two women, the image of the role of principal was shaped at one time by views of men and women. Gloria felt that those who were involved in hiring for the positions did not believe that a "young small person" could effectively fill a secondary vice-principal's role. Kathleen's image of the principal as disciplinarian grew out of her observations of men in the position whose offices were the "place to go when you were in trouble."

These issues—the lack of women in administration, the promotion of women leaders by the women's federation, and the male-oriented image of the role—were discussed by more than half the principals in this study. What is interesting is that none of these 10 individuals feel that these issues persist today. They describe these factors in
terms of the past, that this is the way it was at the time, and for the men who recognized the ease of their promotion because they were men, these were not necessarily positive issues (all spoke favourably of the measures taken by the federation). Thus, one gets the sense that gender differences existed and had an impact on how people became principals in the past, but things are different today.

A final point relevant to the theme of gender differences is the observations of beliefs about people's roles as parents. Two women principals, Elizabeth and Francine, were highly aware of their roles as mothers while considering the principalship. Elizabeth ensured that measures were in place so that her young children would be properly taken care of while she earned her degrees and credentials. She balanced her teaching career and preparation work with raising her family and describes in detail how she managed this feat. Francine also pursued higher education at a time when she knew her husband could take care of their children. She chose to wait until her children were more self-sufficient before actually pursuing a position. In addition, Audrey and Kathleen also mention family considerations. Audrey waited until an appropriate time in her children's lives and Kathleen secured care-taking responsibilities from her husband prior to seeking administrative positions. Of the other women in this study, Gloria, Nancy, and Lisa do not talk about having children, and Theresa and Rebecca mention balancing their careers now with their family and home lives. The men in this study were less vocal about their families. Five principals (Mike, Harry, John, Peter, and Cameron) do not mention anything about children (it is unclear who actually has children). Daniel discusses how his children have helped him in his role because he makes decisions for kids based on how he would feel about the decisions as a father. Bob sees himself as a
helper and believes that he is the same person in this regard with his own family. Sean talks about the need to always put family first, as it is more important than career. None of the men talk about a care giving role within their families. Interestingly, none of the women who do so show any signs of negative feelings about this.

At the beginning of this chapter, the sequencing of the case studies was described as a potential source of patterns. The ways in which views have changed over time are more easily considered by presenting the cases in a sequence from the most experienced to the least experienced principal. When this consideration is applied to the reasons that people have expressed for going into administration, a few observations can be noted. For those who were prompted to go into administration by someone else, three have been principals for more than six years while two are newly hired principals. Of those who describe a natural progression into the role, again three have had six or more years of experience and two have had five or fewer years of experience. The two principals who report knowing from the start of their careers that they were going to be administrators are both in the more experienced group. Most noteworthy, however, is the fact that all five principals who felt the position was a next step in their career have only been in the role for five or fewer years.

Other observations can be made about the contrasting experiences and perceptions of veteran versus recently promoted principals. However, as these observations are related more to being in the role than the choice to pursue the role, this discussion will be reserved for the next chapter.
Chapter Five presents a cross-case analysis of the data from the interviews. This discussion is structured by the conceptual framework of potential variables influencing choice that was introduced in Chapter Two.
CHAPTER FIVE
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The components and sub-components of the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter Two structures the analysis of interview data that is presented in this second of two data display chapters. Each of the variables hypothesized from the literature as potential influences on the choice to become a principal is examined in detail. The three key dimensions of the model are summarized in Table 2 below. The key dimensions are personal variables, professional and organizational variables, and community and cultural variables. The results of the data analysis associated with each variable are presented in the same sequence. The relationship of the cross-case analysis to the research questions is examined in Chapter Six.

Table 2: Influences on the Choice to Become a School Principal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Variables</th>
<th>Professional/Organizational Variables</th>
<th>Community/Cultural Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>organizational expectations</td>
<td>school/district culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>critical events</td>
<td>image of the role</td>
<td>community expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal philosophy of education</td>
<td>preparation</td>
<td>community culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal identity</td>
<td>professional organizations</td>
<td>political ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home community identity</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Variables**

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two pertaining to personal socialization and anticipatory socialization implies that personal variables are likely influences on individuals' choice making. The early personal socialization experiences of individuals are hypothesized to form the core identity of those individuals as persons. Personal socialization produces an individual's personality characteristics, which in turn influence the decisions that the individual makes regarding lifestyle and career. This is the connection between socialization and the making of choices, including such decisions as
the one to pursue the principalship. Five categories of data relating to personal
background are identified as potential influences on an individual's choice to become a
school principal: family, critical events, personal philosophy of education, personal
identity, and home community identity.

Family

As Brim (1966) notes, socialization begins in early childhood. The ways in
which a child is socialized result in fairly stable personality characteristics. Thus,
experiences during childhood and the formative years may have an influence on how
individuals choose their careers. Further, there may be ways in which more recent or
current family dynamics have a bearing on such choice.

In response to direct questioning about family, all 17 principals interviewed for
this study commented on connections (or lack thereof) between family life and becoming
a principal (see Table 3). For example, Bob speaks about the fact that his parents were
both educators and that he witnessed discussions and "debates at the breakfast table,"
especially regarding differences between elementary and secondary education and
teaching. Bob reflects, "I think my exposure to education attracted me [towards
education]." Interestingly, Bob is the only principal in this study that speaks of his
parents being educators. Some exposure to education from a parent's perspective is
mentioned by Harry, whose father was the Chair of the school Board while he was in
high school, and by Gloria, whose mother was a caretaker at the community secondary
school. A few principals mention siblings who are also in the field of education or in
similar "people service" professions, indicating that whatever family influences affected
Table 3

Family Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Influences</th>
<th>Sibling Connections</th>
<th>Family Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>parental influence: mother as elementary teacher, father as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>secondary principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>influence of small community sister as teacher; three others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>environment as lawyers</td>
<td>supportive wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>supportive husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>parental influence: mother as secondary school caretaker +</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>positive family environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Chair of school Board</td>
<td>supportive wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>supportive wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td></td>
<td>supportive husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>influence of positive family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>environment</td>
<td>supportive family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>influence of positive family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td>supportive wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>influence of brother with Down syndrome + suggestion two sisters in health</td>
<td>supportive husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>by husband profession</td>
<td>supportive family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>sister as retired principal</td>
<td>supportive family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

their choice similarly affected the choices of their brothers and/or sisters. Rebecca reports that her two sisters are in the health profession as nurses. Daniel has a sister who
is a teacher and three other siblings who are lawyers. Francine's two sisters work in a women's shelter and in a day care centre. And Theresa has a sister who is a retired principal for the school district she works for. In a different vein, Peter is the exception who had originally chosen a different career. He speaks of wanting to be a police officer while growing up, following in the footsteps of his father who was a police chief; wearing glasses prevented him from taking this route. He subsequently chose to go into education and then the principalship.

Four principals speak about growing up in a nurturing family in which they were taught that they could do anything they put their mind to. For instance, Elizabeth talks about a home environment that fostered her self-esteem:

...I always felt very empowered to do what I wanted to do...I always had the sense that I could do anything I wanted to...So it was a very supportive and a good home life I think, [and that] helped, because you just felt what you wanted to do, you could do.

Gloria, too, speaks about this kind of support:

So they'd [her parents] worked with me at all these new things I was always trying. So lots of support, a very nurturing family.

John feels his parents were very proud of his becoming a principal, viewing it as an accomplishment, and believes they always felt he could do what he set out to do. Lisa describes her father's views as being "enlightened," considering his generation. Her father wanted her and her sisters to go to university to get a good education so that they could always support themselves: "so I never ever grew up thinking that I was going to be looked after. I was always going to be a contributing person in any relationship."

Three principals sound more independent when speaking about family influences. In Audrey's family, "educators weren't [held] in terribly high regard. So I don't think I
really got any encouragement from my whole family.” When she began to think about an administrative career, she didn’t talk with her family very much about it:

I think that might be a trend that I have, or a personality thing that I have, that when I’m doing those things I don’t really talk a lot about it...I think [support] comes from your workplace as opposed to your home, maybe, I’m not sure.

Audrey speculates that a fear of failure might make her hold back in sharing her aspirations. Cameron, too, chooses to act prior to consulting with his family:

...my family is really supportive, yes, and they’re really proud, but I tend to do things and not tell them until after I’ve done it. So that, I don’t know if it’s a fear of failure of not making it and disappointing others or whatever, but I generally go for it and then tell them what’s happened.

Francine’s parents were divorced before she went to university, “So I’ve always been sort of independent, and I’m the only one in my family that went to university.” She cannot think of any connections between growing up and where she is now in the role of principal.

Twelve principals discuss the support they received from a spouse as they considered and pursued the position. Elizabeth “couldn’t have done it without a very supportive husband.” Francine’s husband took holidays to coincide with time she needed to pursue her education: “My husband baby-sat and looked after the children all of the time.” Similarly, Kathleen describes her husband as “supportive, so he baby-sat the kids” while she pursued her education. Lisa’s husband was also encouraging: “he said, if this is what you want to do, by all means pursue it.” He was also supportive in caring for their children while her work hours increased as she pursued the job. Harry’s wife began teaching when he did, and although she left teaching and stayed home to raise their children, he describes them both as having “a love of education” and that this has been “a huge support afterwards [after promotion], sort of as a sounding board for things that
come up.” John’s wife, a teacher, thought the idea of his becoming a principal “was pretty neat and she supported me one hundred per cent. She’s always had great confidence in the things that I could do.” Mike’s wife and children were always supportive of his choices:

Even when I made career decisions that were in some ways backwards. But not an influence in the decisions, but simply support for whatever the decision was at the time.

Peter reflects that he and his wife have always been supportive of each others’ career choices: “do what you like, you’ve got to be happy doing it, so go for it.” Rebecca’s husband is a retired teacher and he always thought she would make a good principal, thus encouraging and supporting her regarding her choice and pursuit of the position. Theresa notes that her husband and family were very supportive as well. You can’t do this job without support. You have to have somebody at home that really recognizes what it is we deal with on a day to day basis.

Daniel, too, talks about his wife recognizing the demands of the job:

It’s having a supportive spouse that knows that when you come home and you don’t talk for an hour that you’re not upset with her. You just have had it.

This job pressure and the amount of time on the job has created turmoil for him and his wife, for

It’s just difficult for my wife to consider the time that has to be invested...she doesn’t resent the job because the job’s been really good to us and our family, but I think she does resent that there isn’t an end to it.

**Summary of Findings on Family Variables**

Family variables, then, appear to have an influence on the choice to pursue the principalship for nine individuals in this study. Parental occupations, the instilling of
self-esteem and motivation in a nurturing home environment, and, in one case, encouragement from a spouse, are connections individuals have made between family variables and their choices to become administrators. For 12 principals, family support becomes an influence later in the process, after the choice has been made as they pursue appointment or during their current practice. Three principals reported no relationship between their family lives and being school administrators. No differences are evident among the responses of new and veteran principals and men and women with respect to family variables.

*Critical Events*

Throughout a lifetime, certain events occur that may be accorded greater significance or meaning by individuals as influences on particular courses of action taken. The term *critical incident* was employed by Silver (1987) as a way of describing an experience that has a profound or lasting impact. Viewed in this context, a critical incident could be an experience, positive or negative, which serves to empower, disconfirm, or change an individual's orientations. For instance, a significant event may lead to an individual being drawn towards a particular role. This idea can be expanded beyond the notion of a single event and thought of as a process as well. Rather than a single event, a slower, more cumulative experience or series of experiences may influence an individual's choice making.
Twelve principals interviewed for this study identify critical events or experiences that helped to influence their choice to become an administrator (see Table 4). For two principals in this study, failing a grade during their own schooling holds significance for them. Cameron reflects,

I had a really crummy elementary school experience. And, in fact, I failed grade six...what I wanted to do was, I wanted to work with kids and I had, I thought I had crummy teachers, and I felt I could do a better job. Translating that into administration, I felt that...the principals that I had throughout my schooling didn’t really understand what was going on in teachers’ classes and didn’t have a handle of how teachers were treating kids. And I think that fundamentally, that’s why I’m a principal, is because I knew that I could do better than what the other people are doing.
This experience was ultimately an influence on Cameron's choice to become a principal. Nancy also failed a year (while in high school) and received a great deal of support from her parents to return to school. She feels that failing "is probably the best thing that ever happened to me" in terms of her personality.

On a similar note, Mike speaks about how his grade six teacher had an influence on him:

She was the one that really triggered an interest in me in terms of becoming a teacher. If you don't become the teacher, you don't become the administrator...[It was] just her as the person and her as the teacher. Her as the support role in the classroom. She knew what she was doing; she had a way of doing it in a positive way with kids and kids just thoroughly enjoyed being in her class.

Three principals speak about being placed in a temporary administrative position and the fact that this experience confirmed for them that they were interested in administration:

I was dumped into a school as an interim principal where the principal was in fact dying of cancer. And I was dropped in in January and I was there from January to June...and I was surviving. [Bob]

It was the opportunity. When I was asked if I would fill it [an interim vice-principal position], for the six months. And it was actually having the opportunity to be in the role and like I say, I enjoyed it, and then I got serious about it. [Peter]

When I got into the [interim] role and I found myself using my counseling skills...and then the positive vibrations I got back from kids...I realized then I was making an impact, at least I think a positive impact on kids...once I was back in the classroom again...I kind of missed the interactions with kids and parents]. [Lisa]

Five principals mention the influences of others as being significant to their formation of an image of the principal's role and their subsequent choices to go into
administration. Sean's father-in-law was a director of education for the district and as a result he has

...sort of lived and breathed education pretty much ever since coming into it...it's not a monumental incident, but in the perspective, I guess I've been sort of immersed in administration from day one. It's interesting.

Harry had a close friend who became a principal. At first he believed his friend had "really for the first time in his life made a very poor choice." However, his friend showed Harry the benefits of the role and ended up pursuing it himself. This "would never have happened" if not for his friend's influence. Rebecca describes a similar situation in which her team-teaching partner shared with her a great deal of what she was doing as an interim vice-principal en route to the principalship. She opened Rebecca's eyes to what the role was like and this, along with the high respect she held for her partner, led her to seriously consider the position.

Gloria's principal suggested that she become the principal of summer school one year. She recalls the significance of being called into his office and thinking she was "in trouble." This suggestion was completely unexpected. Upon reflection, Gloria chose to take the position because, "if he thought I could do it, you know what, I could do it." This began her route to the principalship. Similarly, the principal who Lisa worked for asked her to take an interim vice-principal's position when the person in the role fell ill.

Encouragement and perseverance on his part led Lisa to accept this position and eventually become qualified for and apply for an administrative role.

Two principals describe different critical events that influenced their choices to become principals. Audrey attended a district-level inservice program for people
considering leadership positions. After the fourth session, enrollment had dropped from about 75 to about 12 participants.

And I think that was a time that was really significant for me, to see how many people opted out and I wasn’t able to see why. And even speaking with them, the reasons weren’t solid enough for me to be swayed. And that was significant for me because then I kind of felt okay, so you’ve gone through this, you’ve talked with other people, you still feel strongly, so it’s meant to be, you’re on the right track.

For Daniel, the death of a student in the school he was teaching in during each of 13 years was significant. He strongly feels that educators need to make kids’ lives “as joyous as possible” at school.

But I think... whether I knew it at the time or not, that helped to nudge [me] along – hey, get out there and just be a voice for the kids. You’re going to need some type of authority or power structure to make that happen, because some people are reluctant.

Five principals do not identify critical incidents during their careers as influences on their choice to become a school administrator. For example, John reflects,

"...there was no epiphany, no aha moment or anything. It was almost a natural progression, or it seemed to be...every time I tried for something or wanted to do something, I was successful."

Summary of Findings on Critical Events

For 12 of the participants in this study, then, particular critical events are significant to them as influencing their choices. These events are quite varied. However, more than one person comments on childhood schooling experiences, on holding interim administrative positions, and on the effects of others’ experiences as having significant influences on their decisions to pursue the principalship. No differences are evident among new and veteran principals and men and women with respect to critical events.
**Personal Philosophy of Education**

Those who become educational administrators in Ontario must first be qualified and experienced teachers in the province. Teachers are encouraged from their teacher training onwards to consciously form an idea about their educational philosophy and appropriate purpose(s) for education. The Ontario College of Teachers now has developed and highly promoted their standards for the teaching profession (1999). In addition, individuals may also have less conscious or implicit notions of the purpose(s) of education. A person's philosophy of education, then, may influence their choice to become a principal in that this position may allow individuals the opportunity to live out their philosophy (see Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must make decisions in the best interests of children</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative leadership style</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on human interactions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global perspectives of education and leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in being of service to others</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** No. = number of people

Hodgkinson (1991) explores the purposes of education traditionally identified in the literature. Education is described as a special enterprise and is characterized by three broad categories of purpose: aesthetic, economic, and ideological. At any given time, for a given society, the balance among these three broad purposes of education may shift in emphasis. Also, they rarely exist in a pure form. There are often overlaps or spillovers
from one to the other.

Four principals interviewed for this study discuss the ways in which actions impact on children and the fact that their decisions are made with this in mind. Their focus is to make decisions with the best interest of kids in mind. The role of the principal may allow individuals to focus on improving things for children. For instance, Audrey says, “I think the nature of the job is such that your energy has to be directed on the things that really really matter, and for me, it’s the things that directly impact on kids.”

Daniel expresses his philosophy in terms of the children:

In order to put kids first, you have to not only talk but walk, and I think that as a principal you really are allowed to do that. And if there’s any achieving goal for being a principal, that’s the one, that you can keep kids first on the agenda, and I think it’s really easy to do if you just walk that talk...Your budget supports that, decisions we make around anything of supervision or action here supports the kids first, parental involvement, community involvement supports the kids...

Similarly, Lisa says,

I guess one of my most guiding principles I stick the closest to is any time there’s a tough issue, and I don’t know which way to direct my energies, I guess I’ll often say, is it in the best interest of kids. If I’m really in a dilemma, I’ll look at what’s in the best interest of kids...generally speaking the decisions that I have to make as principal support what’s in the best interest of kids.

Mike’s sentiments reflect the same philosophy:

[When I became an administrator] I had some strong beliefs in terms of what was the right thing for kids and how are kids treated and what you did with kids to make them successful and make them feel good about school...a great deal of this job is common sense. It’s having a belief in terms of what’s right. Having a philosophy that I think has to be educationally sound, but I think the key part of it is your decisions, whatever they may be, they have to be what is in the best interests of kids.

Eight principals speak of their philosophy of collaborative leadership. They wish to lead in a way that involves others in decision-making. For example, Francine’s school staff has been open to her style of “the collaborative kind of leadership” and she feels she
can meet teachers’ needs in terms of things like curriculum and scheduling meetings as a result. In another example, Gloria talks about the qualities of support and collaboration that she transferred from her secondary department head position to her elementary school principal role:

The values that we cared about at the school and in my department were very much that we really supported kids and we were collaborative, the kids were part of decisions, parents were part of decisions...So, the kind of school that I try to create is one where everybody’s a part of it. I’m involved in everything and I don’t see myself as the boss.

Closely related to the idea of collaborative leadership, three principals focus on the human interactions aspect of leadership. Theresa notes that “a lot of things we’re doing here [at her school] are based fundamentally on my own philosophy around, not just education, but how people interact together.” At her school the staff “work[s] as a group and we make decisions together.” Harry learned as a vice-principal from the principal he worked with about being “really kid-focused and really staff-focused.” He also got ideas about building teams: “I learned tons from him in terms of what made a team work really well,” and he incorporated these ideas and beliefs into his own philosophies about running a school. Similarly, John emphasizes,

I still think that the human part of it, the relationship part, is so important. It doesn’t matter what point of the education system you’re in, that’s the one that has to be emphasized...the important thing is the relationship between...the child and the teacher...The same thing, that applies between myself and the staff and the parents. So those kids of relationships I think are integral to running a good school.

Three principals hold a somewhat global philosophy around education and leadership. Rebecca says,

I’m not a hugely spiritual person, but I’m very very at the core moral and very much believe that we have to do it for the right reasons. And I’m continually validated through that...Board policy is ethical and moral...I can speak my mind
and be comfortable with who I am and be respected for that as well.

Bob talks about a similar belief:

...what you see in me as a principal is what people saw in me as a teacher, as a community member, as a family member. I don’t believe that I put on different skin to carry out this job...I’ve tried to be true to myself...I think my philosophy is that I’ve got to be.

Finally, Cameron discusses his philosophy:

I suppose that I’m here because I want to make a difference. And I see the principal’s role as affecting more than just one class of kids, it affects the whole school and it sets the tone for how successful the school will be. And I see, I guess I see me as being able to work within the philosophy of the Board to guide and support the teachers in that direction.

Four principals similarly discussed how they viewed their role as a coach or as being of service to others (Sean, Gloria, Elizabeth, and Francine). Two principals, Bob and Harry, who had the opportunity to open new schools, feel very strongly that they were able to fulfill their personal philosophies of education through the hiring of teachers and the establishment of school goals and culture. As Bob notes, opening a new school is “the ultimate opportunity to ‘principal’ in alignment with your educational philosophy.”

Summary of Findings on Personal Philosophy of Education

Indeed, overall, the principals interviewed for this study seem to feel that they can live out their philosophies in the position of principal. Many of their decisions are made with the best interests of children in mind. Those who discuss collaborating with others also talk about their philosophy in terms of actually being able to collaborate within their schools. And principals who express making a difference or being true to themselves believe that they can do these things as practicing administrators. In fact, when expressing their philosophies, principals speak in ways that indicate that their beliefs are
central to the ways in which they carry out their roles. No differences are evident among the perceptions of new and veteran principals and men and women with respect to personal philosophy of education.

**Personal Identity**

Included within the notion of personal identity are an individual's values, beliefs, ethnicity, and culture. Most people intuitively sense that they have values and understand that others do as well. Moreover, having values is generally viewed as a good thing. To suggest that one does not have values is tantamount to renouncing one's human nature, or at least implies a rejection of the formative experiences of family, community, and society. For the purposes of this study, the following definition of values is adopted:

Values are a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action. (Parsons & Shils, 1962, p. 395)

Conceptualizing values in this manner highlights their function in making choices. In administrative practice, then, values will influence an individual's problem solving or decision making processes as they make choices among alternate responses. The personal values and beliefs associated with a lifetime of socialization for an individual may thus have an influence on the choice to become an administrator.

Ethnicity and culture are also associated with a person's identity. The socialization experiences one encounters as a function of cultural background are indeed likely influences on the types of choices one makes.
From this study, it is evident that the principals who were interviewed identify closely with the needs of children (see Table 6). As noted in the previous section about principals' philosophies of education, doing what is best for students is especially important for four principals. Indeed, the value of serving children predominates. Children are seen as the most important or satisfying aspect of the role by ten principals in this study. Additionally, eight principals identify personally with a core value of collaboration as a preferred style of leadership, discussing how involving everyone—parents, teachers, and students—is important in how decisions ought to be made in the school. For example, Gloria remarks,

But I knew that all the players had to be a part of the mixture. So deep in the bottom of my soul I knew that everybody needed to be an active member...picture a little village, that everybody's a part of it, and that's what makes it work.

This strong belief in how one goes about leading, or the elements of leadership, is important to many principals. In addition, six principals speak about their personal leadership qualities emerging when they were youngsters. Theresa talks about others' impressions of her:
I never saw myself as a leader. And yet I've constantly got those messages from people, in my camp experience, school, whatever, people talked about my leadership ability and pushed me in those directions.

Nancy believes that her "personality's probably [always been] there to a large degree, as she was always "very outgoing" and very much involved in leadership activities growing up, such as on sports teams. John remembers that, as the fourth boy of five children, he had to "stand on your own two feet." He reflects,

I think probably there were elements of leadership all the way through. If I were to look back at the yearbook, I was involved in various clubs and activities and so on.

Daniel, too, recalls how coaching peewee hockey and baseball and teaching summer school as a teenager contributed to his self-identification as a leader. Kathleen's leadership connection to childhood is very vivid in her mind:

I was always the one who used to play school and I was always the one that was the boss... Four years of age and I had everybody lined up and they were all sitting in their seats and I'd have my chalkboard or I'd be playing with my dolls or my dolls would be in their chairs and playing...

She believes that she has always wanted to be in charge, to be the one with influence.

Peter can also trace some of his ideas about leadership to his childhood:

...certainly growing up with my dad being the Chief of Police... the discipline was there, the order, the structure... I guess I grew up with sort of a management mentality all the way along...

Thus, many principals do speak about their personal identity and beliefs about education and leadership as stemming from their early lives. Kathleen notes that nobody from her past is surprised to hear that she is a school principal. On the other hand, Harry and Lisa are somewhat surprised themselves that this is the role they are in now. Harry "was convinced that [he] would never ever be a principal. [He] was sort of firmly committed to that idea." He describes himself as never being a strong long-range planner.
of his own life, not even deciding to go into education until part way through university. Lisa was the most reluctant of the participants in this study to go into administration. It was only due to the encouragement of others that she decided to pursue the position. She sees her style of leading as different from what she had observed while she was a secondary teacher; instead of being a "peace-maker" as she sees herself, administrators were "cops" who dealt with conflict among groups of students and between teachers (this image is now different in her mind).

**Summary of Findings on Personal Identity**

When talking about their values and beliefs about the profession, then, principals speak in terms of child-focused education and an orientation towards collaborative school leadership. Reference is also made to a certain extent to personality characteristics that principals could trace back to their early lives. Many express that the leadership qualities that they first manifested as youngsters have influenced their careers by gravitating them towards roles as leaders of schools.

The participants in this study do not come from diverse cultural or ethnic backgrounds. None of the principals specifically discuss the effects of either culture or ethnicity as having any influence on who they are as people, their choice to become a principal, or the ways in which they lead. No differences are evident among new and veteran principals and men and women with respect to family variables.

**Home Community Identity**

It is plausible to propose that one's community may provide socialization
experiences that affect one’s values, beliefs, and personality formation. The sense of community (or lack thereof) that one develops over time, and one’s role within that community, may have a carry-over effect into the field of education and the role of the principal.

Only four principals in this study speak about community in relation to personal considerations. Daniel talked about growing up in a large farming family:

We were always socially minded... We were always in sports of one kind or another or partaking in something that was social with the community. So we were all very strongly community based as well... You can look back – those values are still there, you know, serving the community.

He believes that growing up in this type of community within a large family influenced his choice of career as “it just seemed natural to move into teaching.”

Elizabeth also makes connections between growing up in a small town and her focus on involving the community in the life of the school as a principal now. She spends a great deal of time searching out support and involvement from community organizations for the sake of improving the programs and opportunities for children in her school.

For me, it gets right back to my roots because I grew up in a small town... and you got to see how things worked, how clubs supported, for example, the Kinsmen Club would support the school, or how local church groups would work within the school. Because in a small town, you were community, you had to create your own fun, you had to create your own resources. So for myself, it actually is going back to my roots and sort of pulling in things that I used to do. So it’s quite natural in some ways.

Gloria’s experience as a student in a “one room school house” who helped her mother work as the caretaker at the high school has contributed to her belief that everyone should be involved in the life and decisions of the school. She includes the caretakers, the secretary, the support staff, the teachers, and the parents in what goes on in the school:
"...what I've grown up with is very much a part of what my school looks like. It's a little small town, like a village. You know that saying, 'it takes a village', well it's true."

John’s situation is unique. His own children attended the school in which he is now a principal (they were not there at the same time).

So I saw this school as a parent, and that’s a very different part of the community...as a whole. I wasn’t happy as a parent in this community because of...the interpersonal relationships between kids and teachers and administration and parents and administration and kids...And so when I got here I had some idea about the things that I could do here...[my expectation is] that we will do the right thing with every kid.

He thus has first-hand knowledge of the thoughts of the community in which he resides. This is somewhat different from the experiences of the other three principals included here, as they make connections with the communities in which they grew up. However, John’s involvement in his own community has had a bearing on the values he brings to his role as principal of the community school.

Summary of Findings on Home Community Identity

It is evident that a few principals in this study have been influenced in one way or another by the community in which they lived. Interestingly, the three who speak about the ways in which their beliefs as principals have been influenced by the type of community involvement they had while growing up had been living in small communities. In addition, these principals are all veterans, with six or more years as principal and 27 to 33 years in the field of education (no differences were evident between men and women). None of the other principals in this study describe living in small communities as children; nor does this latter group of individuals mention any influence of their home community as having an effect on their lives as principals. It
appears that those who were involved to a great extent in their small town communities within their immediate families have established views about community living that they bring to bear on their roles as school principals.

**Summary of Findings on Personal Variables**

It is apparent that many of the personal variables hypothesized from the literature within the conceptual framework do actually serve to influence individuals' choices to become school administrators. For three principals, having parents who were involved in education in the form of teacher, principal, school Board Chair, and school caretaker had an influence on their choices to find careers in the field of education. Three principals recognize their personal sense of motivation that came from their parents' attitudes that instilled beliefs of being able to do anything they wanted to do. Another principal received the suggestion and encouragement from her husband that she should become a principal. Three principals note that childhood experiences in schools had an influence on them becoming principals. For two, this experience was negative in the form of failing a grade; for the third, a positive classroom environment had impact. Other critical incidents also were important for other principals. The experience of being in an interim administrative position was influential for three principals, while observing and discussing the administrative experiences of significant others influenced three other principals. Six principals were influenced by their own personal identity, in that they recognized leadership characteristics and personality traits in themselves from their early lives. Others also held strong beliefs in what is good for children in schools and the form leadership should take, which served to influence their choices. Three others can see a
link between the types of communities they grew up in and the fact that they are in a service role within a community now. This latter group is the only one where an effect of years of experience is evident; all are veteran principals.

When discussing their personal philosophies of education, participants do not indicate that this has influenced their choice to become principals. However, they do agree that they are able to carry out their philosophies within the school. Making decisions with the best interests of children in mind, leading in a collaborative manner, and being true to themselves are common philosophies expressed by principals.

The variables of ethnicity and culture are not expressed at all by any of the participants. In addition, the experiences of and influences on men and women are not different with respect to personal variables.

**Professional/Organizational Variables**

The socialization literature implies that as individuals gain more experience with and a deeper understanding of a profession, they are more likely to see themselves as an integral part of the profession and to identify with the profession. Many variables may lead to the development of an interest in a particular role. Personal variables were reviewed in the previous section. In this section variables suggested by the literature on organizational and professional socialization, image of the role, and organizational expectations are considered. These include the influences of formal and informal organizational expectations on the choice to become a principal, an individual’s image of the role from a researcher’s and/or a practitioner’s perspective, formal and informal preparation, and involvement with professional organizations.
Related to these variables are the ways in which school districts impart expectations, create an image of the role, and prepare individuals for promotion. Several examples of ways that formal expectations are conveyed by organizations in the province of Ontario or by local school districts were presented in Chapter Two. This is now expanded below with a discussion of the particular types of programs offered by the district involved in this study. The information about these programs was gathered through a search of documents published by the district.

The district that the principals in this study work for has five programs that deal with leadership and the principalship. One offering is an internship program for leaders. This program is designed for any employee seeking a leadership role within the district and includes a formal pairing with a mentor, the development of a professional portfolio, and several sessions involving training, technology, simulation practice, and reflection. Particular selection criteria must be met including a recommendation from a current supervisor, before participation in this program can commence.

Another program available to all staff in the district is a year long program that focuses on basic leadership development through a series of interactive sessions, with the premise that everyone in education has a leadership role to play, regardless of their position.

First-year school administrators and individuals new to the district are offered a structured induction and orientation program in which participants learn about current provincial and local directives and expectations, along with matters considered significant in the first year such as entry planning and finance management.

Each year, this district sponsors an institute for administrators, which is designed
to present new professional development opportunities through a series of sessions and
draws presenters from across Ontario. Other in-service sessions are planned and
provided for school administrators throughout the year.

Performance appraisal for principals in this district is outlined in detail as a
procedure in the district’s binder of formal policies and procedures. Several categories of
criteria and corresponding behaviours are outlined “as a basis for gathering data and
providing feedback.” The supervisory process is described in five steps. This district is
currently developing a unique leadership profile for administrators. Modeled on
Begley’s (1993) and subsequently Begley and Slater’s (2000, 2001) profile work, the
intent of the district is to produce a leadership development tool representative of the
culture and beliefs of this district’s administrators.

Organizational Expectations

Both formal and informal expectations and sources of expectations may influence
how one views the nature of a particular role.

Sources of Organizational Expectations

In this study, principals make reference to both informal and formal means of
understanding their role (see Table 7). All 17 principals talk about the sources of the
expectations for their role. For instance, Audrey notes that messages come “from
superintendents, from directors, from parents, and certainly from staff.” Principals also
mention receiving messages from students and from school councils, as well as from the
Table 7

Sources of Organizational Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Formal/Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Councils</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education and Training</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum consultants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members other than parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District leadership programs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Political realm&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District office communications</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals' qualification program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District's principal evaluation process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional magazines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue with colleagues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of colleagues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-direction/personal beliefs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total formal sources</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total informal sources</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. No. = number of people*

Bob describes the underlying, unspoken expectations of him in his role.

The bottom line is the superintendent doesn’t want to get a lot of complaints about your school. I think they’re expectations around the way you do business with the trustees, the way you deal with community.

Other informal ways of understanding role expectations derive from a range of sources. Elizabeth, for example, learns about what she should be doing as a principal from dialogue and observation with colleagues, along with personal reflection.

I do a lot of networking with principals. So we get to see what each other is doing and we have a lot of growth from that. I also do a lot of reading, for example, different magazines, principals’ magazines...and you get to see, how are other principals handling diversity, or how are they handling technology...So
beg, borrow, steal, dialogue, you just keep active, keep in the know about what’s happening elsewhere. And the broader your picture is, the more you’ve got ideas to bring to your building.

Kathleen describes watching others for ideas about the expectations for her role:

I’m very much a people watcher. And watching what others do and saying, yeah, that’s a good idea or that’s not a good idea. And just talking, talking with others, basically.

Francine also learns about her role from informal sources. For her,

A lot of it’s on the job training and then phoning someone to say, what would you do in this situation. Phoning superintendents to find out what to do in different situations. A lot of it is experience because I’ve worked closely with other people and watched them make decisions either I liked or didn’t like or what I would do in that situation...And I do a lot of reading...we get magazines from the OPC [Ontario Principals’ Council]...and [I] find that they’re right on and I use the articles out of those quite a bit.

Gloria, too, describes being “self-directed.” She refers to Begley’s (1993) leadership profile for ideas about her role, and she “read[s] lots.” Reading is also important for

John:

professional articles, Canadian Association for Principals journal...I’ll read the effective schools material and certain things will resonate with me and I’ll say, okay, now how can we change what we’re doing here so that we can try to achieve better...

Learning about expectations of the role in a personal and informal way is also important to Theresa:

I think some of it you create yourself. When you work in an environment you see where the needs are. When I first arrived here I did an entry plan. So I met with all of the staff, some of the students, trustees, some of the parents. And that really helped me create a vision for myself for the school long term. So that was sort of internal information that I got that helped to create my own expectations.

Interestingly, Bob speaks about the informal messages he received while in the vice-principal’s role. The principal he worked for expected him to be the school’s disciplinarian. This expectation was in conflict with Bob’s beliefs and he has ensured
that, as principal, the expectation is not passed on.

Principals in this study also describe how expectations are communicated in formal ways. As noted above, directors, superintendents, school councils, the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, and the Ontario Education Act all serve as formal sources of expectations. Most participants in this study identified these sources. In addition, Bob notes that information comes from the curriculum division through consultants, while John also receives input from other community members. Gloria mentions having participated in several district level leadership programs over the years, which has provided another means of learning about expectations for the role. John mentions attending the leadership workshops for principals new to the district as a source of role expectations. Kathleen also reports receiving information from professional development experiences offered by the district. In addition, she refers to the process used in the district for evaluating administrators. Mike senses and responds to the expectations that are derived from what he calls the “political realm.” Nancy finds that weekly newsletters and information from district offices are another source of expectations for the role. Theresa notes that EQAO [Education Quality Accountability Office] also imparts expectations about the principal’s role. Finally, Kathleen, the only one to specifically mention the principals’ certification courses, says, “the principals’ course certainly gave you what they felt the role was.”

**Types of Organizational Expectations**

Nine principals spoke about the specific expectations that are communicated to them from the above sources (see Table 8).
Table 8

Types of Organizational Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy and procedure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School planning</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive school environment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. No. = number of people*

The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training provides direction with respect to "policy and program... around reporting, around curriculum issues, around administrative issues, around safety issues" [Bob]. Theresa provides another example with the implementation of the new provincial report card. Harry's superintendent provided clear expectations and feedback about curriculum issues. Kathleen's example of expectations coming from the district is, "now we're moving into assessment and evaluation... the curriculum aspect of the job." Rebecca notes that the district focus is on school plans, a huge focus for school planning. Use of data, assessment and evaluation... Implementation of the new curriculum... [the] safe environment of schools... And our parents should be phenomenally involved, we should have a huge involvement from our parents involved in our school councils and decisions, and so those are very clearly, very clear expectations.

Kathleen describes her expectations that she has internalized for herself:

The expectations for me are that my staff is feeling that they're successful, my parents feel that their children are successful, and my parents feel that they can
come and talk to me and my kids feel that they're in a happy well-educated environment.

Managing Organizational Expectations

Principals discuss the different ways they managed the various expectations of their positions.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Technique</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to meet all expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long hours to meet expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on school plan and priorities/goals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek assistance from others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take paperwork home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot always meet expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filtering: choose to disregard particular expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

Daniel and Harry speak about not always meeting the expectations that are directed towards them. Daniel describes the policies and procedures as "a framework in which you work," rather than as directions. He sees laws as guidelines:

So support or direction from senior admin is well appreciated and it's well intended, and we can certainly use that as the framework. But you certainly are the island unto your own, making those decisions, and that's the nature of the job...If the superintendent's upset with me, okay, secretary, teacher, parent, whoever it happens to be. If they're upset with me, so be it. But if it's in the best interest of the child, I can walk, and I can walk very easily on that one.

Daniel comments further on the necessity of meeting the needs of children:

...sorry, we're not doing it that way. I know that's the Board's policy, we're not doing it here that way because it doesn't work for our kids, here's the way we're
going to do it. And, it's nothing about being confrontational. It's remembering your focus.

Similarly, Harry recognizes that some of the directions that come his way are not necessarily important enough to "drive ourselves crazy" about. He recalls being expected to provide temporary letters of standing for teachers teaching outside their qualified divisions, and "my response was, there's not a chance we're going to do that, if they find us out, we'll deal with it at that time, but I mean it's just nonsense."

Eight principals speak about how they manage all the expectations of the role, similar to the reactions reported by Daniel and Harry above (see Table 9). All of them recognize that the role entails numerous and varied expectations and that it is not easy to meet all the expectations. In fact, nine principals comment about how much time is involved in their role of principal. Cameron describes the "incredible hours at school, but you also put in some time at home too." Rebecca sees the role of principal as "all-consuming, and a lot of nights and lots of weekends." Similarly, Elizabeth points out, "it's not unusual as a principal to have two to three nights of work... and it's also very easy to start working weekends." Mike works 11-hour days on a regular basis, Lisa comments about her 12-hour days, and Daniel views his position as a "24-hour-a-day job." Audrey attempts to deal with all the expectations for her role by working fourteen hours a day. She describes how she manages:

It's overkill in that you can't be all things to all people. And for example, I have always believed that a principal should be in his or her school. I can't be asked to attend three inservice sessions in a week and still be in my school. I can't be asked to be out supervising children and still respond to an EQAO [Education Quality Accountability Office] plan and a school improvement plan and demands of the community and school council and all of those things. So it becomes very difficult to figure out how you're going to manage all of those things. And it really does become, not a management position in terms of the old way we
thought of managing, but managing all of the issues in yourself...you can’t manage it all, you can’t keep on top of it.

Rebecca “doesn’t know” how she deals with all the expectations of the role:

Honesty, I try to stay focused [on] what [the] school plan is and what you know that has to happen in the building. I mean there are times there’s absolutely no way that we can achieve all the curriculum, we cannot do a really good job.

She finds that at times she allows teachers to choose which curriculum expectations to leave out in order to do what they can in a more effective way. Nancy finds she’s very tired when she gets home, due to the expectations of the role. She focuses on finding time lines that will address various items such as the school plan. Where ever possible, Nancy looks for ways to simultaneously deal with everything:

It’s like a juggling act. But all the balls have to go in the air and all have to stay up. And it’s something you learn how to do. As good as you are at doing the juggling act is as good as your school is. No doubt about that.

She does contend that because she has the power to make decisions, she can prioritize expectations and actions in order to manage her time. In addition, she finds she can utilize others like the school council to work on some items such as the school profile, behaviour codes, and policies – “that’s all there and you just slot it in at different times.”

Francine manages all her tasks through the use of personal time:

I take a lot of stuff home and on the weekend I will donate [time] – sometimes on Friday I usually stay here till around nine o’clock at night because I don’t want to take too much home. But I do the paperwork or the little things, and sometimes I just get behind and it’s just the way it is.

While at the school she is involved in classrooms and with people in the office area and focuses on curriculum and “leadership,” “but the paperwork and the management is not high on my priorities until I take it home.”

Theresa realizes that she has had to let go of some of the expectations of the role:
I used to pride myself as a principal...as still being able to do all the things they ask you to do plus get into classrooms. And I suddenly realized that I was adding additional stress to myself because if I wasn’t getting into classrooms, I really felt...I was missing a big part of the job...But I realized that I couldn’t do it all. So I think that comes with experience, too, you recognize okay, I can’t do it all, so something has to go...You really have to prioritize...I used to always take home paperwork.

In order to balance everything, according to Theresa,

You have to understand first what’s important to you, what are your priorities in your life. And then making decisions about what will work for you, what will work for your school.

Lisa also establishes priorities within her school in order to help manage the many expectations that are apparent to her. One focus for the school this year is the issue of bullying, for example. In order to keep focused on school priorities,

...sometimes you don’t get the paperwork done, the administrivia you’re supposed to do, but I’ve just said, this is going to be a priority. And therefore we’re going to make it a priority. And our actions are going to reflect that.

Lisa also describes how, because of the multitude of role expectations, she “cannot lead a school by myself, I won’t even pretend to do so.” As such, she has called on people within the school with particular areas of expertise to deal with some of the tasks that come to her. In order to look at the big picture and meet school goals, she draws on as many resources as she can, such as parent volunteers and the school council, along with a business partnership focusing on school culture.

At Kathleen’s school, three goals are created for the school year. For example, this year the focus is on early literacy, problem solving, and wellness. “I don’t think you can implement all the Ministry guidelines at once...You can only focus on three things.” Other expectations are viewed with respect to “how are we going to do this within the parameters of what our school plan is.” Kathleen talks about the expectations of
principals during the work-to-rule political action taken by teachers. What is interesting about Kathleen's response to this is her thoughts about retirement:

...right now I have some questions around if the Board tells me to do something whether or not I'll be able to do it. And I'll have to cross that bridge. But I have the back up that I can retire. I can just say, I'm sorry, you are going against my value system right now, whereas ten years ago I couldn't do that. And it's a nice feeling to be in, it really is.

Bob considers how he manages expectations when he speaks about those coming from the community:

If you spent your day...doing everything that people asked you to do, you'd never get anything done. And so what I think that you have to do is you have to step back and take a look at the number of concerns you have about something, or the number of hits on a certain issue that you deal with...we're there to respond, but not necessarily to each micro-point.

Four principals use the word “filter” when they describe how they manage the various expectations of the job. In this regard, they speak of making choices about which items to act on and which ones are not important enough to do anything with. For instance, John says,

We spoke a little earlier about filtering. Well, that's part of my job is to filter it. Whenever unrealistic expectations, or what I perceive to be unrealistic expectations come flying at the school, whether they're from the community, the government, or the Board, I think it's my job to stand in the way of those expectations and say yeah, we're going to get to them, but not right now, we're busy doing the other expectations that you've given us...otherwise we're going to do what's been done in the past which is the scatter gun approach where...everything gets done but very poorly...Now who determines whether those expectations are allowed to pass, well, me...those things may be of great importance, but they're going to have to sit on the sideline for a while because we're going to do these things that we've established and we're going to do them right.

Similarly, Gloria acts as a “funnel” for her school, focusing on the expectations that “mesh with what...we care about a lot.” When it comes to the new curriculum,

we'll do little bits and pieces at a time, we don't have to do it all. So making it
manageable. I block a lot of things that come in. I'll share it and say these are things we could do, but really our priority [is this]... what can we do, what can't we do, let's be really clear, and let's not feel guilty... let's do what we can and really embrace it and do a really good job.

Peter talks about the "ton of paper that comes across the desk." He reflects about learning from a retired administrator that "90 per cent of it nobody cares about and does anything about." Thus, he talks about sorting and picking out what's really important, such as a September Report:

...you set up your school plan, and you can't deal with more than maybe a couple of issues at any one time. And [then] everything that comes across your desk you filter through that plan... So the stuff that's coming in, they're saying do this and do that and then, excuse me, it doesn't fit, put it away.

Mike, too, recognizes the need to "ignore" some things—"it goes in the wastepaper basket. If it's really important, it will come back." Noting that there aren't enough hours in the day to everything, he makes decisions based on what things are important and "what are the things that are going to have the greatest impact on kids." Further,

I think you have to be careful about what you filter out. I mean there are some things that you have no choice about and those are the things that you have to do. But other things, there's usually a lot of choice...

Sean also speaks about selecting and dropping expectations from consideration. He learned from a superintendent that

we fail to recognize that at some point in time we need to drop something... and stop this juggling act that we try to put ourselves into. And so that's probably one of the things that I've learned over the years, is there are some things that need to be dropped.

Three of these principals also discuss the fact that there is a learning process involved in understanding how to manage all the expectations of the role. When Gloria talks about funnelling the things that come into her school, she comments she can do this "only because I'm old and experienced." Peter reflects that as a principal, he learned that he
needed to ignore certain things, that for principals in the beginning it's probably the one thing that you aren't prepared for. And maybe initially you're not ready to do. You take it so seriously at first that you're trying to do everything that everybody's asking, and you can't do that. Not and survive anyways.

Mike also talks about how experience impacts on making choices about what to take action with:

Too often I think administrators see it coming down and I think it’s particularly true with young ones, where they figure they’ve got to do everything... I think it comes with experience. You just simply have to know that there are risks out there and you've got to be prepared to be able to say to somebody, I can't do that for these reasons, these things are a greater priority.

Summary of Findings on Organizational Expectations

Organizational expectations, then, are a very important consideration in the lives of principals, whether male or female, or new or veteran. These expectations are communicated through informal means such as through dialogue among colleagues, observation, and professional magazine articles. Staff, students, and parents express their expectations, usually in an informal way (school councils are more formal in nature). Formal expectations also come from senior district administrators, professional development, and from provincial organizations. The types of expectations that principals speak about are curriculum, assessment and evaluation, reporting, school planning, and parent involvement. How they manage all the numerous and varied expectations are of concern to the principals in this study. They discuss the long hours they endure in order to deal with everything, especially the paperwork after the school day. Time management is another strategy, which is connected to prioritizing the issues and tasks. Focusing on a small number of school goals is important, and many speak
about filtering information based on these goals. Some principals actually ignore material and expectations for the school. Interestingly, those who do are the more experienced principals in this sample. Several of them even observe that this is a strategy they have learned over time. The less experienced principals in the study do appear to attempt to do everything. Considering that seven of the nine less experienced principals in this study are women, more women than men appear to feel compelled to meet all expectations. This may, however, be an effect of experience rather than gender.

**Image of the Role**

The research perspectives used to create or describe images of the principal’s role have been many and varied. The extent to which individuals accept and interpret these images will influence their understanding of the role and predictably, their subsequent actions. Further, practitioner perspectives may differ in important ways from the perspectives of researchers. The day to day activities associated with leading a school are more compelling influences than research when one is in the role (Begley, 2000) and this will have an impact on the beliefs about the role that individuals develop.

**Principals’ Current Images of their Role**

The principals interviewed for this study provided 22 descriptors and 12 role responsibilities and/or skills associated with the job of the principal (see Table 10).
Table 10

Image of the Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image No.</th>
<th>Role Descriptors</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Change agent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Collaborator/team builder</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Curriculum leader</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Decision-maker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Discipline manager</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Evaluator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Filter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Funnel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gatekeeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Helper/supporter</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mediator/referee</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nurturer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Problem-solver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Servant</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Associations</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability/data</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business image</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/culture</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People skills</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people
The most prominent image that emerges from the data as associated with the role is that
of curriculum leader, with ten participants mentioning this. For example, Cameron talks
about the fact that the role has different "lights":

And one of the huge pieces is as a curriculum leader...being able to identify a
curriculum area and then take the staff...through a process that will ultimately
deliver positive results.

Audrey and Elizabeth also focus on curriculum and program in their roles as principals.

Part of the reason that Audrey chose to become a principal is because of her strong ideas
about curriculum:

...my reasons for going there were feeling that as a principal you can make even
more impact on quality program...I got really engaged in high quality curriculum
and it's really important to me. And so I want to see it happen in schools and this
is where you can make it happen. If you can get people on board with curriculum
you can make a difference in a school.

For Elizabeth,

I've always been a strong leader in program...that is the most interesting [part of
the role for me]. So the challenge for myself is always to try to keep on top of
things...teaching myself through personal study, attending workshops, working in
different groups that help me understand it. And then to bring that back to my
school so then my teachers can be the best and we can offer the best program for
kids.

Francine also participates in professional development in order to learn about curriculum
to support her staff. Interestingly, seven principals note that their greatest satisfaction
associated with the role of principal is in supporting teachers so that they are successful
with students in the classroom. For Audrey, "bringing a teacher along...[is] going to
bring along 30 students." "Watching a new teacher really shine with a classroom" is
satisfying for Sean. Peter enjoys "watching teachers take a risk and having it pull off."

Mike, Gloria, Bob, and Nancy especially enjoy focusing on working together with
teachers, seeing improvements in teaching techniques and subsequent improvements with students.

Daniel notes that the role of the principal can be dependent on the school. That is, he explains that in one school where he worked as principal,

I clearly thought I was a curriculum leader. We put programs in place, we assessed those programs, we moved those programs along, and we could see the growth of programming in that building.

However, at his present school as principal, Daniel focuses mainly on discipline issues and creating structures within the school, such as student recognition programs, in order to manage student discipline. Similarly, John is happier at the school he now works in because he can get back to focusing on curriculum. In the district he worked for up until last year, he found most of his role was as a manager, attending to "stuff that basically detracted from what I thought the role was." He is clear that he prefers to be a curriculum leader, rather than a manager. Daniel is not clear about this, he is responding to the needs of the school and does not appear perturbed that the focus is not on curriculum. Lisa also emphasizes that

...as principals we're curriculum leaders first. And I definitely agree with that, but I find that it's more and more challenging to fulfill that role. Because the administrative tasks don't go away either, they have to be attended to.

Theresa echoes this thought:

There's all kinds of things I do in the curriculum piece, but the day to day management [comes up]...You're managing a building and people, and then hopefully you get the curriculum pieces in.

Seven principals speak in terms of the principal as a manager, including those indicated above. Of these, two are women and five are men. Cameron describes the management role in terms of it being
...a given with this role, is that you’re managing a site, you’re managing your staff, kids, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, managing parents, the community, access to the building, all of those things, from plant issues, to the curriculum issues, to safety...[and] manager of the money.

As mentioned, management for Daniel involves discipline issues and for Theresa managing includes the building and people. Interestingly, four of these principals, all veteran male principals, note that since they are no longer members of the teachers’ federation, the image has been created that they are now in management positions in schools. Sean mentions the unfortunate blurring where “there’s now a very distinct line between management and teachers.” Mike notes, “We’re [in] a management role and therefore teachers will rightly see us differently than when we were fellow members of the same federation.” Daniel reflects that “We’re not even principals, we’re managers now. And nobody wants to be managed.” And Peter sees a distance between principals and teachers now. He believes, however, that there may be a positive spin to this because “it makes it a little easier to manage the [work action] situation because everybody knows exactly what’s where now.”

Six people emphasize that people skills are a prominent requirement for the position as the role entails a great deal of interaction with various others. Two of the six are veteran men, while the other four are women with five or fewer years of experience. Sean notes that it’s “critical for an administrator to remember that we’re dealing with people” even when analyzing data. He goes on to talk about listening to others and communicating with staff, students, and parents in open and inviting ways. Nancy says, “You have to be able to work with people and not as a do as I say, it’s a working with people.” She realizes that at times she has to make decisions regardless of others’ views, but it is still important to dialogue and consider everyone’s input. Theresa sees the role
as a “human resources job” with managing people along with the building. In Francine’s words, “I think to be in this role it takes just a lot of people skills, a lot of really good people skills to make it all happen for the children.”

Seven principals spoke about the creation of a positive culture or environment within the school. Kathleen and Mike seek to “provide an environment that’s conducive to learning and [in which] your children in the school are going to be well looked after” [Kathleen]. Cameron talks about creating a “progressive and friendly” atmosphere in the school through modeling to teachers and students. Similarly, Francine is “always positive, because if you’re not positive, then it really keeps going down to everybody else.” Referring to the work-to-rule action by teachers, Rebecca sees the climate of the school as suffering. With teacher morale down, she feels she needs to bring the staff together and work to maintain a positive attitude. Other principals also speak about creating a positive school culture (Gloria and Peter).

Five principals talk about the high level of responsibility associated with the role:

I think that there’s a huge, an enormous responsibility in this position. [Cameron]

...the responsibilities have grown larger [than in the teacher’s role]. [Elizabeth]

...the buck stops with me as principal. [Lisa]

...it doesn’t matter if you have all sorts of other people making the decisions for you, when it comes down the line, you’re the one that’s responsible. [Sean]

Responsibility – it lands squarely on your shoulders...you don’t sleep at night anymore. [Theresa]

Each principal emphasizes a different aspect of this responsibility. For Cameron, dealing with staff, parents, and paperwork is tough from a time perspective, but he also feels the burden of “society...[where] I think a lot has been downloaded down to the principal.”
Elizabeth describes the transition from working with her classroom students, to working with their parents, then working with colleagues on extra-curricular events so that “now I’m responsible for all the kids in my school, all the parents, all the teachers, all the caretakers. It just sort of evolved.” Lisa feels she needs to work long hours so that she accomplishes everything, but also so that she does it “right.” Sean refers to delegating decision-making to others, while Theresa feels the difference in the role from that of vice-principal where the ultimate responsibility belonged to the principals she worked for.

Ensuring a safe school for children is mentioned as a priority by four principals, while other common descriptors they employ include decision-maker, advocate, collaborator, and mediator with responsibilities for accountability, budget, and the sense of being visible within the school.

The perceptions of the principals in this study, taken as a group, do not create a single composite picture of a particular image of the principalship. That is, they all have an image of their roles, but they differ slightly about what to place an emphasis on or what is the most important. By and large, there are many and varied roles the principal is expected to play. Bob summed up his thoughts in this area:

We talk about leadership profiles, and we talk about characteristics of effective schools, and the research around that. They’re all hugely valid. Not everyone is the same, and the last thing I would want is to have a cookie cutter factory which cranked out school principals. My vice-principal and I, I think we’re a hugely effective team. We’re as different as night and day. We have different experiences, we know each other’s strengths, we complement each other’s strengths, and we lead well together…I guess I rejected the notion that we all have to be this, that, or the other thing.
Changing Perceptions of the Role Upon Entry

When discussing their beliefs about the role of the principal, participants in this study were asked to describe how these beliefs may have changed once they became principals. All but three principals were able to identify how their actual roles differ from their perceptions of the role prior to beginning the position (see Table 11). Interestingly, the aspects of the role that were incongruent with expectations were different from person to person. Of 22 differences noted by principals, only six were expressed by more than one principal.

Five principals, all women relatively new to the position, note the fast pace of the job. Audrey notes that she has “11 years left” before retirement and she’s “not sure [she] can keep up this pace...I keep looking at it and saying that if I’m this tired now, how’s this going to feel in five years...in ten years.” Francine finds the position “really hectic. What I plan on starting the day with, it never works out that I’m doing actually what I had planned.” Similarly, Theresa finds that she is not able to focus on curriculum leadership as much as she would like due to “the day-to-day kinds of things you’re doing” in the area of management. The pace surprises Rebecca:

I just totally didn’t realize that I would never sit down or eat lunch or those kind of things. Little things like pop into the store during lunch hour...I don’t know if that’s part of the job that I hadn’t anticipated, that it would be all-consuming. I always thought teaching was all-consuming and it sure is, but I didn’t realize that administration is actually even more all-consuming. And lots of nights and lots of weekends.
Table 11

Changing Perceptions of the Role Upon Entry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Positive/Negative Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can't function as a boss, not sole decision-maker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratifying to help/support people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High degree of collaboration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must let go of some things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a super-cop regarding students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the entire system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding child's missing boots</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No beliefs prior - learn on the job</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of counselor to staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of paperwork</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraining structures of the system</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with poor teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of parents</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of supervisory responsibility</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting everyone's needs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must know everything immediately</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough curriculum leadership/too much manage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of demands</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace faster, hectic</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viewed as boss by others</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total negative changes</td>
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Perceptions that Did Not Change

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<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job is one of service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is an active member of the school community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human interactions is the most important thing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total positive changes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people
Like Theresa and Rebecca, Nancy finds that both the pace of the job and the number of demands to attend to are more than she had expected:

...what people do not realize is as administrator, you have to deal with everything that comes through that door every second of the day. Whether it's kids, whether it's parents, whether it's staff, the community, doesn't matter...it doesn't matter what it is, it lands on your doorstep...So you're really busy during the daytime, whereas in teaching, I'd be teaching my lesson...that was it...But as administrator you have to make decision after decision after decision, and they have to be good decisions...mentally, you go home really really tired during the day.

Three principals also did not expect the great amount of paperwork in the job. Cameron “never realized that there was that much paperwork” and he doesn’t think it is necessary. Theresa was surprised by the paper that “is just overwhelming. It kind of takes on a life of its own.” And Peter reflects that “you never get used to the paper.”

Three principals found they learned to understand the nature of the job from the perspective of collaboration. That is, once they began working as a principal, they found out that they could not function as “the boss.” Kathleen sees this as a major change in her perception of the role:

Originally when I thought of the role, I was Queen bee...I was going to tell everybody what to do and, no, you don't, they tell you what to do half the time, but it's very much give and take. So the original seventies role that I had that I thought of the job, is, I'm 180 degrees from there. And probably enjoying it far more in this frame that I would have in the other frame.

Sean reflects that “when I got into the profession the belief was that the principal was a decision maker.” He believed when he entered the role that the principal was the decision maker; however, once he became a vice-principal, “I suddenly recognized the role that everybody around the table needed to play.” Similarly, Bob “didn't realize how much collaboration there could be” in the role: “I quickly learned that the best decisions I
would make as a principal would be decisions I made totally collaboratively with my staff.”

Other ways in which principals’ perceptions of the role changed once they began the role include the fact that they were viewed as the “boss” by others when they didn’t see that as their role, coming to terms with the political nature of the role, the influence parents have on the dealings of the school, and being able to interact with others in positive ways in order to resolve conflicts.

Of the 22 changes in perceptions upon entry to the position noted by principals, 13 can be classified as negative, while six are positive and three are neutral differences. Two neutral comments came from Harry and Mike who found that they really didn’t have any strong beliefs about the role before becoming principals and instead learned about it over time while in the position. Harry also remembers being surprised about having to find a child’s missing boots his first day on the job, another neutral experience.

Three veteran principals indicate that their beliefs about the job did not change once they became principals. Elizabeth explains her perceptions of the role:

I’ve always thought of it as a job of service, and that’s never changed. My job is to take care of everyone in this building... their physical well being as well as their mental well being, and for the kids, of course, their learning. So that hasn’t changed. It’s a job of service.

Gloria reflects on her childhood, assisting her mother with her caretaker position at the high school. It is here that she learned that “all the players [have] to be an important part of the mixture. So deep in the bottom of my soul I knew that everybody needed to be an active member” of the school community. As for John,

I really believed, and I still do, that the people part is the most important part of the job, and it’s just like the classroom... we’re not turning out widgets, we’re
working with people, and you really try to expand on that in your school as opposed to your classroom.

**Changing Role of the Principal Over Time**

Many principals in this study describe how the role of the principal has changed over time (see Table 12). Only two principals, Francine and Rebecca, do not mention changes to the role over time. Principals indicate 16 broad changes, 12 of which are noted by more than one principal. It is apparent that some principals have difficulty distinguishing between how the role of the principal has changed and how education in general has changed over time. That is, if the changes are examined closely, it is evident that many describe changes in the field of education, rather than changes to the role of the principal per se. Changes to the curriculum, teaching and learning philosophies, and the public climate and attitudes about education are some examples.

Six principals, five of whom are veterans, talk about the increase in community involvement. Four principals view this change as positive, while two remain neutral. For instance, John describes significant changes in parent involvement:

> Involvement of parents is significantly different than it used to be. And it’s kind of gone on its own particular ride where it started off where some people thought that they were going to be running the school as parents and then there was a swing back the other way where people really didn’t want to measure desk sizes and figure those things out. And now we’re kind of trying to find a balance where the parent role can be one that’s really very supportive and very positive for the school to make significant positive changes in the school. So, far less of a power struggle. That has changed within the last six years or so.
Table 12

Changing Role of the Principal Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Positive/Negative Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement - increase</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data - gathering/analyzing data</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federations - have different roles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophies around teaching and learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource searching/business sponsorships/entrepreneurial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker role/counselor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement - increase</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum - more rigorous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data - gathering/analyzing data</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demands - more = position more time-consuming</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding - less</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government agenda driven by money</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paperwork - increase</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political aspects - increase</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political turmoil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public climate, attitudes - media, politicians, parents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress - increase</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total positive changes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total neutral changes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total negative changes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

Elizabeth talks about how the focus on “mak[ing] kids successful” has changed to include “the school actually having an impact on building community capacity.” That is, in order to see success with children, the community must be included in the life of the school. Bob notes that parents want to be able to ask questions and they want to get answers. They want to have a voice in their child’s education... It is their school, and we are expected to...
produce the best possible results in their children and listen to parents and their input.

Audrey recognizes that “depending on your parent support level the job is very different.” Even though she believes that parental involvement is important, Audrey also comments that if parents do not feel satisfied, the role of the principal becomes “miserable.”

Six principals, five of whom are veteran men, discuss the nature of the climate surrounding education in terms of public attitudes. They see this as a negative turn of events. Mike observes,

I think we’re more publicly accountable, and publicly being in newspapers and all of that kind of stuff... All you have to do is take a look at the tone of a lot of the coverage that we see in the press and in newscasts. You go back to the sixties, teachers were deemed to be more revered in terms of the profession that the teaching profession is today. Still do the same job, and it’s still the same responsibility, but there’s a different perspective out there as far as the public is concerned.

Harry talks about how much teachers work while receiving public criticism:

I see teachers working incredibly hard, just amazingly hard. And it’s just this huge, sad irony that the temper of our times means that they are in the [eye] of the media and the politicians and the parents and so on, and the reality is that they’re working longer, harder, smarter than, in general, teachers were 20 years ago.

He goes on about how parents do not necessarily respect the expectations the school has of children:

It’s a huge change when you call a parent and the parent just absolutely refused to accept, I don’t think an out-of-line point of view in terms of what we should expect of our kids.

Similarly, Theresa has difficulty understanding how parents are constantly “saving their kids”: 
...because, boy, when I was in school, if something happened in school and you were in trouble, if anything your parents always supported the school. But nowadays...it’s challenging [because this doesn’t happen].

Attitudes of parents towards schools are connected to the attitudes of children as well.

According to John,

Interaction with kids with any kind of authority figure has changed somewhat in the last ten years and certainly a lot in my years as an educator. Where kids are a lot more savvy about their rights but far less so about their responsibilities.

Thus, several principals are concerned about the nature of education from the perspective of the public and parents. Changes in attitudes on the part of parents and students, as well as the public (and even teachers, as “years ago as a principal your staff were in awe of you,” according to Nancy), have occurred over the last six to ten years.

As such, the climate surrounding education has been negatively affected.

Five principals in this study discuss how their role has become more “data-driven.” All but one view this as a negative change. This is closely connected to the views of four principals that see accountability as being a major focus in education in recent years. Again, three of the four interpret this change as negative.

For Audrey, the role has become “data-driven... And that’s probably the newest thing, is how much of everything we do depends on gathering data and analyzing data.” Nancy, too, talks about collecting data to help in the formation of the school plan. She brings up the question of whether or not the data is reliable. Audrey also is concerned that the data collected does not necessarily reflect the needs of students and the school.

Harry finds that a great deal of his time is taken up with the process of collecting and analyzing data, but also questions the validity of the data: “we can compare numbers till we’re blue in the face, but...if that assessment isn’t a valid assessment then the
comparison is doubly invalid." While considering data, Sean warns, "we shouldn't lose sight of...the fact that each one of those little numbers deals with an individual person who has very unique needs."

Audrey, Bob, and Harry also mention how the nature of accountability in education has increased over time. Additionally, Mike notes that there is now "more open accountability. Not that we were not accountable at the same time [years ago]." Being accountable to parents and the public in terms of student outcomes appears to be a more recent focus in education, which has an impact on the role of the principal.

Four principals mention changes revolving around curriculum. Harry notes that the curriculum is "far more rigorous" now than in the past and that teachers are working much harder as a result. Mike describes curriculum expectations as "far more complex than they were back in the early seventies." Peter notes, "Obviously there are some major changes in the way that the curriculum is developed and implemented," and Sean describes how different approaches to curriculum have been taken by school districts over the years in terms of creating their own documents to now relying on the provincial common curriculum.

Three principals feel the role has become more demanding, while two note that there has been an increase in stress in the role. Of these five principals, four have been more recently appointed and four are women. For Audrey, "more demands have been made" on the principal and the principal "becomes the manager of all of these things and it's time-consuming and I think that's the reason for burnout, truly." Nancy believes that the principal is "more the focal point now. More lands on you than ever before." Peter feels "the job has grown. We are essentially doing many things that superintendents
were doing or inspectors were doing 30 years ago.” Kathleen sees that there have been “too many changes too quickly” in education, and as a result, there is far more stress and she has become a “sounding board.” She attempts to encourage her staff to help offset this increased stress. Finally, as the environment around education becomes more stressful, Gloria sees the increased need for her to support and “nurture” her teachers.

Interestingly, four principals discuss the need for balance in one’s life as advice they would give to aspiring principals, while two others – Audrey and Elizabeth – mention attempting to keep a balance in their own lives. Daniel suggests having “balance in your life” with respect to family and friends so that the demands of the job do not become all-consuming. John remarks, “lead a balanced life; the job isn’t everything.” Theresa notes that keeping a balance allows others to recognize that the principalship “isn’t your life [but rather] it’s part of your life and you have other things that are important in your life.” And Kathleen cautions, “take care of yourself first,” engaging in activities outside of the school. For five principals, ensuring that their own families are not neglected is important. For example, Sean feels his family is most important in his life:

I think many of us who are in the role who have very young families are starting to say clearly there is a limit to the time that I can commit to the job. Because my primary responsibility is to my family, to my home...in my life, that's number one. And then number two comes the job.

Overall, 11 principals talk about health-related issues. Five principals mention physical health and mental and emotional well being: “you need to make sure that you’re healthy, both mentally and physically. I think it’s really important for you to be very...emotionally stable and grounded” [Daniel]. Elizabeth warns, You can literally work yourself to death if you’re not careful...you have to keep
eating properly, and you have to keep exercising...So that physical healthiness, but second your emotional healthiness...you’re always dealing with people and their problems and somehow you’ve got to be able to put it aside and do things that give you pleasure...you’ve got to be able to put it to rest.

Other changes noted by principals include an increase in dealing with the “politics” of education, including accountability, community involvement, curriculum, and being politically astute: “you have to be very careful of what you say to people who come in to your school,” such as a newspaper reporter [Peter]. Peter and Mike also observe that over the last ten years or so, teachers have had to deal with “nothing but abuse” [Peter] and “distress” [Mike]. Political turmoil has been the result of government initiatives and attitudes. Both these principals work to create as much of a positive perception about teaching and education as possible in their schools. Peter tries to “keep things in perspective for [teachers], trying to be the historian...trying to keep the morale up.” Mike believes that teachers have become more cynical due to this issue.

Other changes that principals have seen over time include the philosophies around teaching and learning, an increase in the amount of paperwork associated with the job, having to look for resources (such as business partnerships), and taking on the role of social worker or counselor for parents, teachers, and students. As noted, an increase in community involvement is considered either a positive or neutral change, while data collection and accountability are seen as negative changes by all but one principal in each case. Of the remaining changes observed by principals, four are viewed as neutral and ten are believed to be negative in nature.

Summary of Findings on Image of the Role

The image of the role of the principal helps define the nature of the position for
the principals in this study. Principals see the role as one of curriculum leader and manager, and describe the need for people skills in order to carry out the role. More men who are veteran principals than recently appointed women discuss the management aspects of the role. On the other hand, more women with fewer years of experience talk about people skills than veteran men. Principals believe themselves to be responsible for the creation of the environment of the school. They recognize and feel the high level of responsibility associated with the role, especially when compared with other roles they have held (vice-principal, teacher). Principals appear to emphasize different aspects of the role, and overall describe many and varied aspects. Most principals note changes in their perceptions of the role once they actually became principals. The demands of the job, including the fast pace noted by recently appointed women, and the amount of paperwork surprised some principals. Others learned about the nature and importance of collaboration in the role. Several principals describe changes to the role of the principal over time. An increase in community and parental involvement, negative attitudes on the part of the public about education (both discussed primarily by veteran principals), accountability and data collection and analysis, curriculum changes, and an increase in the demands associated with the role (noted primarily by recently appointed principals and women) are changes principals discuss.

Preparation for the Role

The level of readiness of an individual for a school leadership position is related to the type of preparation he/she encounters. Preparation may be formal, in the form of coursework or district programs, or informal, in the form of peer group discussions and
school level experiences. Examples of formal programs have previously been discussed, both in Chapter Two with respect to organizational expectations and in this chapter, at the beginning of the professional/organizational category of variables. In addition, individuals from time to time find themselves in other situations in which they gain experience and knowledge that will assist them in developing the skills necessary to become a principal. Conversations with current principals and with peers around the role of the principal, as well as informal mentoring by a principal and leadership experiences within a school, all contribute to a deeper understanding of the role and may thus influence an individual in pursuing the position.

Seven principals interviewed for this study note the encouragement they received from others to pursue the position as being influential in making their decisions and preparing for the role. Six of the seven – Audrey, Bob, Francine, Kathleen, Lisa, and Rebecca – were encouraged by the principals that they worked for as a teacher, while Nancy was encouraged by consultants and superintendents. Lisa and Rebecca also received specific encouragement from their husbands and Audrey, Bob, and Kathleen received additional encouragement from their teacher-colleagues.

Formal and Informal Preparation

Principals interviewed for this study identify 21 kinds of experience associated with preparation for the role. Of these, seven can be considered formal in nature as they involve accreditation and other transactional processes (i.e., principals’ qualification courses). Seven of the 21 kinds of experiences are formal but take the form of experiences (i.e., lead teacher positions). Six kinds of experiences are informal, four of
which involve dialogue with others (i.e., networking). And one kind of experience can be seen as both formal and informal: study groups were organized in a formal way but took on an informal nature (see Table 13).

Although all principals in the province of Ontario must complete a program comprised of two principals’ certification courses plus a practicum prior to applying for a position, only eight principals mention this as a step for preparing themselves for the role. The other areas of accreditation that principals talk about are acquiring their undergraduate degrees and their master’s degrees, and completing additional qualification courses such as specialists in special education or guidance. For example, Bob describes how he equipped himself “as quickly as possible”:

So I found myself after seven years having qualifications in four divisions, guidance, special ed., a master’s degree, and my principals’ qualifications. And so I was ready to move on at that point.

In addition, principals took other formal steps including attending workshops and conferences and participating in district level professional development programs. (“they also had a program offered for prospective leaders that allowed us to find out about the nitty gritty, about how various things worked” [John]). Seven of the nine principals who discuss participating in district programs and professional development have only one to five years of experience. One principal, Mike, described how his principal sponsored him for the principal’s position he applied for:
Table 13

Preparation for the Role of Principal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Preparation</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Formal/Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District committees</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim vice-principal/principal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teacher positions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership positions in school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal designate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing district workshops</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Formal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional qualifications courses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending workshops, conferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District programs - participated</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals' qualification courses</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored by principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Formal&gt;informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor - dialogue with</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move for experience - schools, grade levels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking to get self known</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with principals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total formal experiences</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total formal learning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total formal&gt;informal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total informal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

There was far greater emphasis placed on your immediate superior's opinion of your performance and I guess your theoretical level of success as they look at that in terms of the future than all of the processes that we use now to try and weed out and identify the best prospects for promotion...positions would be posted and...you simply applied for them. You went through an interview, usually a single interview.

Formal experience that principals identify as steps they took to prepare them for
the role include taking on leadership roles within their schools and being lead teachers in their schools ("I always applied for a lead teacher position" [Cameron]). Principals also describe working in the role of consultant, sitting on district level committees ("doing the hands-on committee work was really really educational for getting to know a big system" [Elizabeth]), and providing district level workshops. Audrey describes her experiences:

I had a system level position as a consultant, I served on a lot of system level committees, I wrote curriculum and was on Board-based teams for writing curriculum...

In addition, two principals were assigned as principal designate when all administrators were out of the school, three worked as an interim vice-principal and a fourth as an interim principal. When discussing advice they would give to aspiring principals, seven principals suggest that gaining a wide array of experiences is crucial: "take as many leadership roles around the school” as possible [Daniel]. Elizabeth concurs: “take any advantage you can for leadership...it’s important to really get to know every part of the school system and every kid’s developmental age.”

Informally, principals prepared for the role by talking with other principals about the role (“...tell me more about it. Like, what’s it really like, so that I knew when I was applying that I knew what the job was” [Audrey]), and interacting with a mentor. Cameron, for instance, “met with [his] mentor on a regular basis.” He describes the relationship as one through which he would not otherwise be in the position, for “she’s probably had the most influence on the fact that I’m in this office now.” Sean describes “informal mentoring” where he dialogued with superintendents “every so often” on current educational issues. Nancy’s mentors helped her develop “an understanding of a more global picture” of education and the role of the principal. Theresa’s principal, who
she describes as a mentor, "involved me in some of the strategic planning at the school level...whatever I was interested in she would support my involvement." For John, his mentor "was a guy that was showing through example how a good principal could do the job." None of the principals in this study were involved in a mentorship relationship that was formed through formal means (such as a district program). In fact, Bob talks about the difference between a formal mentorship pairing and a more informal relationship:

I believe that the people [aspiring to the principalship] have to seek out authentic experiences and develop truly authentic mentoring relationships. And somehow there's a bit of artificiality around [formal pairings]. I was always able to seek [authentic mentorships] out and gain those experiences.

Networking with peers and superiors added to the preparation experience of five principals (four of whom were women), while networking in order to make themselves known to superiors was an important informal step for two others. Audrey describes how she "had a very close networking group and we brought problems to each other and solved them amongst ourselves too." This sense of networking is closely connected to the idea of study groups, which is addressed below. Nancy, on the other hand, talks about the strategy of becoming known to others:

One of the things you have to do because of the variety of people on the committee, is for people to know you and know what you can do...[Providing workshops and sitting on committees made sure] you got to know superintendents and they got to know you...they're going to be working with you, it's really good if they know something about you.

Principals also engaged in professional reading ("I spent a lot more time reading professional materials" [Lisa]), and moved to different schools and between different grade levels as teachers in order to gain wider experience. John notes, for example, "I changed areas in the Board as part of the process to make sure that I had sufficient experiences over a wide range of grade levels."
Finally, nine principals speak about joining a study group while preparing for the role. The study groups were often arranged in a more formal way through, in particular, the Women Teachers’ Federation at the time. However, the participants chose the members of the groups and the groups became more informal in nature as participants interacted over time. This appears to be a significant aspect of the preparation for any of the principals who were involved in a study group (“the study group was another big piece” for Elizabeth). Indeed, principals in this study identify this step most often when discussing their preparation. Lisa saw this as an opportunity for “interacting with colleagues that had similar pursuits.” They would “bring scenarios to the group” and discuss the surrounding issues in order to learn how problems could be solved. This was a similar experience to what Rebecca talks about:

I just became very connected with… a group of other women that were in the similar situation as I was. And we just supported and met through it regularly and studied and read and became actually immersed in the process.

Bob describes how “we were encouraged to form study groups.” He joined a study group where “I was the only man that went to study groups, and it was really interesting.” He notes that this was a primary source of his preparation. The picture painted by Elizabeth with respect to study groups is particularly striking:

There were five of us, and we didn’t make a pact per se that was verbal, but I think we all made a pact that nobody would be happy until we all had reached success. So we were so supportive of one another... But we had so much fun. We would meet together and go through questions and study things but we would do it with strawberries and wine and it was so much fun. But it really was not an individual thing, it was not a competitive thing. It was very much that we wanted all of us to be successful, we all wanted to learn as much as possible. So that was really powerful.
Levels of Confidence and Barriers to Preparing for the Role

When asked if they were confident that they could do the job when they became principals, all but one principal in this study replied that they, indeed, felt confident. Francine reflects, “I knew I could do this. I was looking forward to doing it. That was my whole intent. I was looking forward to something new that I knew I could do.” Daniel notes that “the preparation was critical” in boosting confidence. For Elizabeth, like Nancy and Peter, her experiences of “year after year repeatedly being able to rise to different challenges” built her confidence. Lisa believes that “having had that interim opportunity I think really gave me the self-confidence” for the actual position. Three principals note that they have had doubts or felt nervous at times about the position. As Theresa says, “I think all of us have doubts, you have self-doubts...there are even days now every once in a while you second-guess yourself.” However, like Bob and John, she always felt she could do the job, that the skills were in place and that additional learning would come with the job. On the other hand, Cameron was not as confident as the other principals in this study were upon entering the job. For him,

When I was told that I was coming here, I wished that I hadn’t applied so soon. Because I wished that I had had more opportunity to work with that second principal [as a vice-principal]. I felt that I needed to learn a little bit – a lot more actually. And once I got here I didn’t sleep for the first three, four months. I was waking up in cold sweats in the middle of the night, I was taking things on very personally.

However, as he learned more about the job and “what [his] limits [were]” and could "access the information that teachers need, problem solve in the middle of the day,” he could “walk out of the school feeling that [he’d] accomplished something,” and was therefore more confident in himself.

One other interesting point is John’s: “I was much younger on entering the job, I
probably was so confident I figured I could do anything.” This sentiment is echoed by Mike, who returned to the vice-principal’s role after seven years, then went back to the principalship after five years:

If you’re talking confidence at the beginning, you’ve got the world by the tail, you figure you know it all. In ’83, when I had to reconsider, then obviously your confidence level is significantly different... So, I think the comment about confidence depends [on] where you are with your career. And I think anybody who goes through multiple multiple years, one hundred per cent sure of everything that they’re doing, I’m not sure really has a firm hold on reality. Because if there aren’t doubts in this job as you go up and down, then there’s something wrong, I think.

Six principals speak about the process involved in seeking the position of principal within the district. Five of these principals are women who have been recently appointed to the position. Although confident that they could do the job, Audrey and Rebecca weren’t “absolutely certain that the process was going to validate that” [Rebecca]. Rebecca especially found the process very “daunting”:

I think that there’s parts of the process that shake your very foundation and being, although I always believed I could do it, I just thought maybe I, maybe this question might not show my strengths or maybe I’m not going to be able to demonstrate in the interview or the on-site [visit] or whatever it is, what I’ve got to offer.

Audrey felt that she “jumped through a lot of hoops to get there.” Lisa describes the process of applying for the position as “pretty grueling” and “stressful.” And Kathleen and Lisa were determined to get the position on their first attempts:

I always made up my mind that if I didn’t get it the first time I wasn’t going to do it again... I know some people who’ve gone through it three and four times. There was no way I was prepared to do that, no way. I found the process extremely stressful. [Kathleen]

Francine found the interview part of the process was a barrier to her success in being promoted, for she “didn’t do as well as I thought I should have done,” and thus was
not promoted until her next attempt. Similarly, John was not successful in attaining a consultant's position with the district he was in at the time and feels the "process" let him down: "I subsequently found out why [I didn't get the position] and it had absolutely nothing to do with my qualifications."

Other barriers that individuals encountered in their pursuit of the principalship are varied. Bob's principal missed a deadline for submitting his name and he had to wait another year to apply. Gloria notes that "they thought that a young small person couldn't be a secondary school vice principal." And Nancy was not given a lead teacher position, nor did the administrators in the school in which she taught when she sought a principal's position support her.

Summary of Findings on Preparation for the Role

Both formal and informal preparation processes were in place for the principals in this study. In fact, every principal mentioned both formal and informal steps that they took to prepare themselves for the role. Formal steps involved both accreditation and school and district level experiences, while informal steps were primarily in the form of interactions with others. Networking was especially relevant for women. For most principals, these steps were taken once they had chosen to pursue the position. That is, they had already made the choice before engaging in the steps to become a principal. Some principals found that their experiences, in retrospect, helped to prepare them for the role. For instance, Audrey got to know the ways in which the whole "system" worked while in the position of consultant. She, like the three others who were consultants, did not apply for this position as a stepping stone towards the principalship. It was once they
had been consultants that they began to consider the principal’s position. However, they felt that this position helped to prepare them for the role of principal. Similarly, holding lead teacher positions and other leadership roles within the school, as well as providing district workshops were not necessarily steps taken in order to prepare for the role. Instead, these often occurred prior to choosing to pursue the position, but did indeed help to prepare individuals.

Principals were confident going into their positions. Some noted barriers associated with the pursuit of the role, while the district’s process for appointing principals was particularly stressful for the recently appointed women in this study.

**Professional Organizations**

Provincial educational organizations may serve to provide information to individuals about education in general and the role of the principal more specifically. It is reasonable to assume that this information might assist or influence some individuals in their decisions regarding career paths. For example, in Chapter Two, the roles and responsibilities of the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario Principals’ Council were outlined. In addition, various unions, or federations, throughout the province also provide professional development opportunities for educators. These take the form of conferences, courses, and workshops and are offered for the purposes of classroom teaching and for leadership development. Although principals are no longer members of unions in the province of Ontario, as teachers, these services are available to them. Unions also influence educational climate and culture in schools with their procedural and policy directives to members, for example, by communicating to members the
actions they can take in order to protect the profession from the ways in which the union sees the government’s attempts to industrialize it.

Principal in this study do not perceive themselves as influenced to any great degree by any of these sorts of organizations (see Table 14).

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Organizations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation-sponsored courses and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided Federation involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation specifically influenced choice to pursue leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Principals' Council provides support today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

Five principals talk about the fact that their federations (four referring to the women’s federation) offered courses or workshops that were beneficial to them while they pursued the principalship: “Federation offered courses for people who wished to find out about it, which were in the evening. And they were really interesting” [Francine] and “helpful” [Rebecca]. Theresa describes,

...the Women's Elementary Teachers' Federation did run a series of workshops that I attended. Those were good. And they brought in speakers, principals, superintendents, to talk about the role, which was good.

Further, Daniel reflects,

I stole an absolute ton of stuff from the Women's Federation. They really had great stuff...it was marvelous stuff – the strategies, the curriculum, the conferences. You know, I was almost willing to go in a dress just to go to the conferences.

Interestingly, three principals purposely were not involved in any federation activities:

"I'm not a federation person, union person, and so I stayed clear away from them"
Kathleen, too, is “not a federation person to start with.” Similarly, “Federation I think for my salary and my benefits, but they did nothing for me” with respect to influencing or supporting the decision to pursue the principalship [John].

Elizabeth did feel influenced to a great degree by the Women Teachers’ Federation. She held a leadership position within the organization and describes the role this played for her:

Certainly federation would have been a powerful [influence] for myself...you were able to travel to different workshops for federation, and of course, you were able to go for example, to this annual summer meeting...I held some positions in federation, I became president of the local and also was involved with collective bargaining. And it was a time when women in leadership was really evolving. We made, for example, presentations to the Board, which were rather exciting because there was a feeling that women would have every opportunity [to become leaders]...

Other than federations, three principals mention the role of the Ontario Principals’ Council from the standpoint of supporting and providing opportunities to aspiring and current principals today: “I find the relationship with OPC so far to be very very positive and productive” [Daniel]. The council, according to Rebecca, is “phenomenal. Just to know that...I can access [the council] at any time that I can just bounce ideas and check things out.” Further, “the Ontario Principals’ Council has a number of...workshops and opportunities for training” [Peter].

Summary of Findings on Professional Organizations

For most principals in this study, no organizations influenced their decisions to pursue the position. Further, the current single elementary public teachers’ federation no longer offers these programs. In addition, principals in general do not consult with these bodies now that they are in the role of the principal. Overall, principals do not place
importance on outside organizations, whether universities, federations, or professional organizations, as sources of influence for their choice to pursue the role and in their current practice as principals.

**Summary of Findings on Professional/Organizational Variables**

According to the data collected in this study, professional and organizational variables have some influence on the choice of individuals to become principals. Principals speak quite easily about the expectations for their role and the image they have of their role. They manifest a very clear understanding of what the role of the principal entails, with its many and varied responsibilities. Formal and informal sources inform principals of their expectations. Learning to manage the numerous expectations is an important consideration for principals. Principals with fewer years of experience feel they must attempt to address all expectations, while veteran principals choose to disregard certain expectations. Curriculum leadership and management are primary roles that principals see for their jobs, with men noting the management aspect more often than women, while people skills are viewed as very important for the position, especially by less experienced women. Participants in this study also talked about how their beliefs about the role changed once they became principals. Some surprises emerged after appointment, including the fast pace of the job, which more inexperienced women note, and the high number of responsibilities and demands, again mentioned primarily by women and by recently appointed principals. Changes in the role over time are described as an increased role of the community and negative public attitudes towards education as described by veteran principals, and increased accountability with the addition of data.
collection and analysis. Some of the changes that principals associated with their own changed perceptions upon entry and with changes over time are considered positive; however, most changes are negative in nature.

Preparation for the principal’s position included both formal and informal experiences. Formal measures included accreditation and experiences, while informal steps were primarily in the form of interactions with others. All but one principal in this study was confident that they could do the job upon entry. Five recently appointed women felt that the district’s process for promoting principals was difficult or obstructive. Finally, for a few principals, federations served to provide effective professional development opportunities; however, most principals were not influenced by any professional organizations outside of their district.

Principals had formed a view of the principalship prior to pursuing the position. Although parts of this view may have changed once they became principals, how they perceived the role certainly played a part in their choice to become principals. For some principals, formal experiences helped to prepare them for the role; these experiences were not necessarily pursued as a preparation step for the principalship. Thus, experiences had an influence on several principals in making their choices. One principal was particularly influenced by her federation towards pursuing the position; however, for the most part, professional organizations were found to have no influence on individuals’ choices to become principals.

Community/Cultural Variables

Within the school community there are various sources of expectations for the
school and for education in general. The organizational expectations of the role of the principal, as imparted by formal and informal means, were explored within the category of professional/organizational variables. Another category of potential influences is community and cultural variables. These include the particular expectations placed on educators in specific schools from the community, along with the cultural identity of the school, the school district, and the community, all of which may impact on the ideas that individuals bring to bear on the role of the principal. Further, an individual's political ideology, or that of the people around him/her, may also influence the choices that individual makes.

In this study, it is evident that school culture, district culture, community expectations, and community culture are very closely related as influences. All 17 principals in this study addressed at least one of these areas during the course of their interviews.

**School/District Culture**

The norms, beliefs, values, and assumptions of a school district, as well as those of a particular school, are potential influences on how an individual perceives his/her role as principal within that district and school.

The principals interviewed for this study do not specifically discuss how the culture of the district or school affects their role to any great extent. Ten principals do make comments about the district's programs as influences on them in one way or another (see Table 15).
Table 15

Influences of School/District Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District leadership programs as influence on choice to become a principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District leadership programs as influence on practice</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District initiatives as influence on practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture as influence on practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

Both the leadership programs offered by the district and the initiatives taken by the Board in regards to curriculum and school policies are mentioned.

For instance, Bob notes how this district is progressive and, as a result, he feels he is better prepared for further government initiatives:

[This district], interestingly enough, on safe schools, on school planning, on parent councils, we tend to be in the forefront of the province, and so it’s not so much of a shock to us. If I was an administrator in another Board and I wasn’t proactive in seeking out best practices around the province, then I might in fact be caught by surprise...And you take a look at the work that [the district] did on curriculum and we sold those three big binders all over the world because it was perhaps the best produced.

Three others also mention how the district’s decision to initiate an outcome-based learning process in the past prepared educators for the new common curriculum implemented by the government in recent years:

This Board was taking a great deal of initiative to address outcome-based learning, and so I got quite immersed in it at the time [that it was implemented]. [Lisa]

Our Board...[has] really been on the cutting edge of a lot of things. Like, I don’t know if anybody talked about [outcomes-based learning] and portfolio assessment. Well, we were doing that here in [this district] for a long time. So when...the common curriculum came out...basically, they fashioned it after our outcome-based learning...[so] we’ve kind of been doing it all along. [Theresa]

Sean details how the teachers in the district “painstakingly” produced curriculum
documents in the past. Although there is some resentment that they went through this process only to have the government implement new documents, …the side effect of course I think is teachers who really understood curriculum. We had a very rapid adoption of outcome-based education. And at the same time I think we have reasonably rapid understanding compared to other parts of the province of the new Ministry curriculum.

Six principals also speak of the district’s leadership programs. Cameron found that of all the organizations that could have influenced his decision to pursue the principalship, the district “was probably the most influential by providing the leadership opportunities and by providing the leadership development program.” He describes the program as repetitive of the principals’ courses, a lot of the same information from the principal’s courses, and so that wasn’t as helpful, except that it gave the [district] spin on things. And that was helpful.

Daniel talks about the district’s programs as well, noting that they tended to be “grooming” towards the district’s “light” at the time, but were still well appreciated: “So the leadership programs I really did appreciate and the different conferences sponsored by the Board were good opportunities.” Peter views the programs offered by the district as very “supportive.” He mentions programs available for aspiring principals as well as workshops provided to current principals. Rebecca concurs: “We have a phenomenal leadership initiative here where they’re very supportive of all the different styles of leadership and courses and workshops.” She, too, “rel[ies] on the Board for [her] professional development” now that she’s in the role.

One other comment about the district came from Kathleen who is conscious of the opportunities available to women as compared with men: “[This district’s] a good Board to be, because they are very proactive where, you know, and it’s a large enough
Board that women can move ahead.”

John moved from another district this year. He has “a lot of affection for” the other district. He enjoyed the programs offered by the district for aspiring principals as well as the workshops available for practicing principals. He also found that taking the provincial principals’ courses within the district allowed him to get an idea of the things that were important to administrators within the Board, while recognizing, too, that taking it through the district “was easy for a lazy guy like me because then I didn’t have to make a particularly huge effort to get it.” He is very pleased now to be a part of this district:

This will be a great Board and a great school to retire from whenever that comes. I’ve got five years but I’ve found that this has really rejuvenated me, being able to do my job again, and not having to worry about a lot of the garbage [like in the other district].

Principals mention the expectations of their communities, which will be reported in the next section. They generally did not speak in terms of the culture of their schools. Only Cameron commented about the culture of his school when he arrived as a new principal and how that affected his role:

I walked in this building when I first arrived and I didn’t think teachers liked kids here. That was how I felt when I walked in the building and I have a very different sense of that today...the changes that have happened here within the last year are just phenomenal...we ultimately are responsible for the environment that we create...I think the principal has a role around creating the atmosphere in the school. If we’re open and progressive and friendly...I think we have to model what we expect our teachers and our students to demonstrate.

Summary of Findings on School/District Culture

Thus, it appears that in this particular school district, principals perceive themselves to be highly influenced in their practice by the programs the district offers.
Leadership programs are helpful and the initiatives the district takes in other areas such as curriculum serve to prepare principals and teachers for further Ministry initiatives that are implemented. School culture does not emerge as a particularly salient category of influence in this study to the extent that principals made very few specific references to culture during the interviews in response to the questions posed by the researcher. No differences are evident between new and veteran principals and men and women with respect to school and district culture.

Community Expectations

As reviewed in Chapter Two, each school in the province of Ontario is required to establish a school council, which serves to make recommendations about decisions at the school level. Other parent groups may also be formed within each school community for various purposes such as fund raising or special education lobbying. These groups will provide suggestions and expectations to the school, usually through the school principal, about how the school should be run for the benefit of the students.

In this study, six principals discuss the notion that one of the main changes in education over time is the increased involvement of parents and community (see Table 12). All 17 principals discuss how community expectations are important in their role. For the most part, principals consider parental expectations as equivalent to community expectations, discussing them interchangeably.
Table 16

Community Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant and immediate accessibility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective curriculum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on own children</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High academic achievement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input in decision making</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be kept informed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time demands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible principal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome in school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of community involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

Principals note 12 expectations the community has on schools (see Table 16); for example, school safety, high academic achievement, extra-curricular activities, input in decision-making, and the need to feel welcome. For example, Audrey describes,

...they want a safe environment for their children. They want a pleasant environment. They want to know that this is a clean building and that it's just as good as the building down the street...They want a strong extra-curricular program, and they want their kids to be high achievers. So in a nutshell, they want it all for their kids...

Six principals talk about the high demands that parents place on them and the school. All six are women who have recently been appointed to the role. Lisa describes the amount of time she spends working with parents:

...it's a demanding parent community...this is one of the most challenging parent communities I've ever taught in. And there's a lot of stay-at-home mothers who have a lot of time. And that can be both positive and negative...they take up an inordinate amount of my time. I would probably say that dealing with parents is about 30 per cent of my admin time.
Being constantly available to parents is one of the demands that Rebecca and Francine talk about: "Incredibly high expectations. They expect teachers and anybody to be accessible at any time of the day" [Rebecca].

But I do find them demanding and they would like to have a call back within that day and if they don't get a call back within that day I always say why I didn't call back because I find that they want it done and they want it done right now. [Francine]

Francine also notes, "I always find that they want to shift to, what happened to the other person" with respect to school yard conflicts among students. Theresa, too, finds her community "very demanding" and that "they don't expect their children to have to experience the natural consequences" when they make a mistake:

I find they’re always saving their children. So that’s one of the biggest problems here. And they make mountains out of molehills, they really really do. The melodrama drives me crazy….They’re not always supportive of the school, their children are always right.

In addition, Audrey notes that you have to communicate things to parents that sometimes you’re thinking, why do they need to know this, but you know if your heart they need to know this because if they don’t it’s going to come back….sometimes the best answer for a parent would be, get lost, take a hike, the way that you have to bring a parent around, and it’s a long, long process...

For Kathleen,

My community want to know that their children are treated fairly. They like to have a lot of impact. There’s a lot of parents in and out of the school knowing what’s going on. There’s a lot of talk outside the community…as long as the kids are happy, and they’ll come in if they’re not happy, they’re on your doorstep and very vocal about it.

In addition, Kathleen mentioned her feelings about parental involvement and her role as a principal:

My least satisfaction is from interaction with the parents. I couldn’t care less of a
parent ever walked in the front door. I like parents and I get along with them, don’t get me wrong...but if I’m sitting here and I’m talking to a parent and there’s a child outside that wants to show me their work, there is no way that I will keep talking.

Similarly, Lisa reflects,

Where I find the greatest challenge in terms of understanding my role sometimes might be in meeting the needs of some parents. I think, well I had one mother this year that suggested I should be weeding, picking the weeds out of the fields in the playground. And that’s an extreme example...And those are challenging scenarios that you have to deal with sometimes, where you try to educate people that yes, I am the principal of the school, but we all have a role, we’re all part of a bigger community...and if there are situations that are difficult, then let’s see what we can do to resolve it, but it’s not just my role as principal.

These principals speak about the demands that parents place on them on a fairly regular basis. Three principals, on the other hand, comment on the lack of involvement from the community within the school. In Cameron’s community, “it’s very rare that we see them in here for parent workshops or curriculum night and it’s even difficult to get them in here for parent interviews.” In Peter’s school, “it’s a struggle to get parents involved,” while Elizabeth describes the effort it takes to entice parents to get involved:

Well, for this community, you have to build relationships with your parents or they won’t come to you. So they won’t feel comfortable in your building, they won’t attend different functions that you want with their children...they won’t feel welcome. So you would work in isolation. So if we want to be a part of the community, we have to build trust and we have to create a lot of opportunities for our parents to come in and feel comfortable...we’re always cognizant around, what does the community really want, and trying to facilitate those things.

Similarly, Daniel talks about how the community expectations must become known:

Community expectations, you have to go out and find them and you have to invite them in, and you have to clarify with them, and you want to make sure that you understand what their expectations are. And I’m not indicating that you follow their expectations, but you have to make sure you know what they are. And in most cases through dialogue, they’re in the best interest of their kids too, so already we’re on the same team.

Daniel also notes that community expectations vary “very clearly from
community to community.” Gloria explains,

   Doesn’t matter whether it’s a strong academic type of community or whether it’s a working class, they know what they want. They’re bright; all parents know what they want for their children. It’s not a mystery; it’s easy for people to tell...

   The involvement of the school council is important to four principals: “So now that I’m doing a school improvement plan, for example, I need to get input from my school council, I need to get input from the community, from the parent community…” [Audrey]. Gloria also looks for input on “the school profile” every year. For Theresa,

   I have a great school council. And they’re very supportive. We discuss everything…they’re involved in our school plan for continuous improvement, and they make recommendations.

   Sean recognizes the need to have the community involved in more than just fund raising but also in educational issues: “one of the things we’re trying to do with the school council here is to change its role from being the organization that raises funds” to one that helps make decisions about what to do with the funds, for example.

   Three principals speak about connecting with the outside community. Cameron talks about the school as being the “centre of the community in the sense that we have permits throughout the week.” Although parents are not overly involved in the school’s activities, the community accesses the school for “various functions other than the school activities.” For example, the school council “ran a magician show last year and invited the community.” Elizabeth notes an extensive list of programs and connections between her school and the community:

   A breakfast club is in place…different peer groups around anti-bullying, for example, or a family has broken up, what kind of skills do you need around that. We certainly have a huge link at this school to early learning. We go out into the community, we have an outreach where we have Tales for Tots and we have a partnership with the Y where we have a play group three mornings a week.
And for Peter,

We’re trying to build partnerships with some of our community resources. We have a Presbyterian church down the way here that we’re trying to work with to set up some kind of before and after [school] program because there’s a real need for that in the community and we don’t have the space anymore…in this particular community a lot of our people don’t have computer access, so how do we make our own resources available to the community, how do we get them in.

Summary of Findings on Community Expectations

It seems, then, that the role of the principal in the school for these individuals includes, to a great extent, meeting the needs and expectations of the community and parents within that community. As Gloria notes, parents “want me visible, they want me here, they want me a part of things.” This is echoed by Nancy: “They just want somebody who’s visible, who participates, who’s open, who’s approachable.” Principals in this study talk about the extent to which parents are or are not involved in the school and the need for them to go out and seek positive interactions with community members. The school council provides a vehicle for gaining input about decisions and plans for the school. And community partnerships can provide added programs and opportunities for students and families.

Community Culture

The unique cultural characteristics of a community may also have an impact on the way principals run their schools. They constitute or contribute towards the specific working conditions associated with the role and by extension become things that either make the job more or less attractive. To that extent, they may be influences on career choice. In some cases, schools have a predominant culture, which suggests the adherence
to particular beliefs and actions; for example, the celebration of Christmas and other
Christian calendar events. In other cases, the population of schools is made up of
numerous and varied cultures, producing a diversity to which individuals must pay
attention and accommodate. In this case, principals may also need to mediate between
incompatible cultural norms within the same community. Regardless of the type of
community, school principals will find themselves influenced by this aspect of
leadership.

In only three cases did principals interviewed for this study talk about the culture
of the community as having an impact on their roles. Peter connects the difficulty of
having parents involved in the school, from the standpoint of school activities and
curriculum and program, to the ethnic cultural make-up of the community. “Language is
an issue” in that the families do not speak English. As a result, Peter notes that “65 to 70
per cent of our kids don’t get read to at home.” Further, cultural norms suggest that
“school is school, home is home. And they don’t understand that we want them in the
school, that they have a part in the educational process.” Peter also deals with the
Children’s Aid Society “around what we would call abuse” but what parents in the
community consider appropriate discipline practice.

Cameron notes that “between a quarter and a third of my school are from
subsidized housing, and they bring a different perspective to what they think a school is
about.” He attributes the perceptions of these parents as accounting for their lack of
involvement with the school and with their child’s education.

When Gloria considers how there are different types of communities and that “all
parents know what they want for their children,” she notes that this is true,
regardless of their educational background. And if you have parents who have limited educational background, you need to work even harder at embracing them so they’re not feeling uncomfortable about sharing that with you.

Summary of Findings on Community Culture

Community culture is a consideration for the role of some principals interviewed for this study. Principals recognize the importance of involving the community in the activities and programs of the school and can point to particular cultural reasons for the lack of involvement on the part of certain communities. Other principals such as Harry and Lisa mention how important it is for principals to understand how multicultural and diversity issues impact on schools and both have a desire to work in schools with a diverse community culture. Other than these points, the principals in the study do not emphasize this aspect of their roles.

Political Ideology

The political beliefs associated with a community may affect the ways in which school principals perceive their role. In Ontario, recent government initiatives in the area of educational reform will have an impact on the views about education for principals, teachers, parents, and the general public.

For principals interviewed for this study, one of the major sources of change for the role of the principal is the impact of government initiatives. Interestingly, when asked to talk about the changes in the role of the principal over time, the 15 principals in this study who speak about change point to aspects of education that deal with political issues (see Table 17). These are addressed earlier with respect to the image of the role. For
example, as discussed, community involvement has increased, public attitudes about education have become more negative, accountability has risen to the forefront, and the curriculum is more rigorous than ever before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current government has created a &quot;political climate&quot; in education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government has set up principals in an adversarial position</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government initiatives have created more stress and turmoil</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government has created negative public attitudes regarding education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need more time to implement new government initiatives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need more money to implement new government initiatives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased community involvement due to government initiatives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis by government on accountability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More rigorous curriculum implemented by government</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals need to be an advocate to change negative public attitudes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government initiatives are positive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people

In addition, four men speak generally about the impact of the government on education. Cameron didn’t realize that the job is “as political” as it is, “especially in the times that we live in today, there’s pressure from the senior admin, there’s pressure from parents, there’s pressure from teachers…” Sean notes that “There are certain things that we can’t control in terms of what the Ministry’s political agenda is.” He spends time conversing with superintendents which is “really good for an administrator [in order] to get a perspective of the much broader picture of leadership and working in the politically challenged and charged time that we do.” One of the concerns he has in his role of principal is
dealing with the politics and the games that are played. I guess I’ve been in it long enough to recognize some of the games that are going on... And I guess part of that comes from experience is knowing what games I want to play in and what games I don’t... [it is challenging] watching the frustration on some of the other people who feel they have to play.

Mike also believes that the position “has to be far more responsive to political issues” now as compared to the past. When asked if he would become a principal all over again, his response was,

If this job was solely a political one and removed and all I became was a manager, probably not. ’Cause I think the people who truly get into the job are excellent teachers first, and if they’re not excellent teachers first, I hope they don’t get into the job because you still have to have that focus all the way through. At least where education is right now.

“Where education is right now” for Daniel is not a comfortable place. He believes the government has set us up in an adversarial position. I think that’s really clear. It’s really tough to hear that you’re no longer a teacher. I don’t believe that for a second. If I’m not teaching kids I’m teaching adults, I’m teaching everyone around me, I’m learning as I teach, I’m being taught. So I think the provincial influences have made working conditions a little adversarial or a little challenging. They haven’t changed a whole lot of what we believe in, what our values are... [but implementing all the recent initiatives] created hardship and turmoil and I believe somebody within that think tank for the Conservative government said, hey, you’ve got to crack some eggs and make omelet... And we’re getting to a stage now where we can see things are changing for the better or moving in a more positive direction. But they certainly did set us apart from teaching... I think there’s going to be better results in the very near future, two and three years from now, we’re going to look back and say, yeah, it was tough sledding but now it’s worth it.

It is interesting to note, in fact, that four other principals echo Daniel’s sentiment that all is not negative when it comes to the implementations of the government. Kathleen believes that the initiatives have “created far more stress [because] there’s too many changes too quickly.” However, she also believes that “education couldn’t keep going on the way it was going... There needed to be some standards.” Theresa feels that there
should be more time for implementation because “we never get a chance to get good at anything.” However, she is “hoping this curriculum will stay with us for a long time. Then we can build new resources and we’ll do a good job” because “I think it’s good stuff.” Cameron, too, suggests that some good will come from the recent changes: “I think all of the new government initiatives will be very positive. The only issues I have around it is that we don’t have enough money to support them.” Similarly, Bob feels,

In terms of directives, and that’s around the accountability...we’re gathering more data, I think that’s healthy...[however] obviously the current government has an agenda. And a lot of that around the co-curricular activities, and that sort of thing, is directed at...negotiation issues around that province, and that’s driven by money...I have difficulty with...hiding money issues behind legislation.

John talks about being an advocate regarding the negative image of education at the present time:

I think within the community as a whole, it’s the same thing throughout Ontario. You’ll see the people who say teachers are overpaid and underworked and another minority will say oh no, teachers, they earn their pay, believe me, we’ve seen them. So basically what we have to do here, and this is where it gets political, is get the good message out about some of the things that we’re doing...and that’s part of the political part of my job.

Cameron also talks about providing a good image:

I also see the role of principal as being an advocate, a spokesperson for the board, for the school. We get a bad rap in the press all the time, teachers do, and so I think we need to make sure that we do a better job of communicating, of educating our parents as to what’s happening in our schools, what we’re working on.

Summary of Findings on Political Ideology

Thus, the “politically charged” [Sean] environment that surrounds education in the province of Ontario today has an affect on the role of the principal. Principals see this aspect as being the most salient with respect to changes to the role of the principal
over time. Principals talk about how the government's agenda has created turmoil and stress as well as negative public attitudes about education. Some principals point to positive results of the initiatives. Others focus on how they need to be an advocate for education, presenting their schools in ways that emphasize the positive things going on.

**Summary of Findings on Community/Cultural Variables**

Principals interviewed for this study recognize the leadership programs offered to them by the district as having positively influenced their beliefs about the role of the principal and their practice in the job. Further, they speak highly of the district's policies and programs, such as the curriculum they developed prior to the introduction of the province's common curriculum. Otherwise, apart from one principal who commented on the attitude of the school when he arrived, the culture of the schools and the particular culture of the district were not discussed by principals. It appears that this does not have an influence on the choices that people make to become principals.

All 17 principals speak about the expectations of the community on principals and schools in general. They note that community involvement is one of the main changes in the field over the last several years. Recently appointed women find that the demands of parents are quite challenging, while others observe that parents from the community are not involved in the schools. Finding ways to encourage parents to become involved is important for several principals. In addition, creating partnerships with outside organizations and agencies will enhance the programs available in the schools. Again, understanding the community expectations allows principals to gain a better sense of what their role entails. However, principals do not seem to be influenced by these
expectations with respect to the initial choice to enter the role.

Only a few principals speak specifically about the culture of the community as having an impact on their role. In one community, language and cultural norms present a challenge, while in another, parents from a lower socioeconomic group do not get involved in the school’s activities. One principal notes that no matter what community a principal finds him/herself in, parents will always know what they want for their children. Community cultural variables, then, are another consideration for principals while in the role, but not prior to pursuing the position.

Government initiatives have posed a challenge for principals. They discuss the poor morale found in schools, the negative public attitudes towards education, and an increased emphasis on accountability and curriculum. Men in particular define the times as “politically charged” and are upset with the change in status in the eyes of the government from teacher-leaders to managers. Some principals identify that many of the initiatives are positive in nature; the process of implementing them is what has caused turmoil. As a result, two principals talk about being an advocate for schools and education, looking to change the negative views that have come about through the government changes. One principal noted that he would not become a principal today, based on the recent political challenges. Otherwise, principals in this study do not indicate that politics had an influence on their choice to become principals.
CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the overall findings of this study structured by the four research questions presented in Chapter One. In addition, implications for theory, practice, and further research are outlined.

Introduction

The role of the principal is multidimensional and complex. Many and varied demands are associated with the role along with a great deal of ambiguity and uncertainty (Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Portin, et al., 1998; Protheroe, 2001; Walker, et al., 2001). Indeed, the principals interviewed for this study reflected all these qualities in their descriptions of their roles. The multi-faceted nature of the principalship was evident in their commentaries on expectations for and images of the role.

Despite these complex and sometimes uncertain working conditions, the individuals interviewed for this study indicated that they were confident prior to entering the role that they could be effective principals. For the majority of principals interviewed perceptions of the role changed upon entry to the position. In most cases, these perceptions changed for the worse; that is, these people were displeased with what they discovered and the newly discovered conditions did not make the role more attractive. Yet, every one of the principals who participated in this study insisted that, given the choice, they would seek to become a principal all over again. Although many aspects of the role were unanticipated and some were unattractive, these principals were apparently satisfied enough with their position that they believed themselves to have made a good
choice in pursuing the principalship and readily confirmed that they would select the role again. These findings — choosing administration again if given the choice and being very satisfied with the position — are consistent with the findings of other researchers (Borg & Riding, 1993; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Protheroe, 2001). Yet, on the surface this appears to run counter to current literature indicating that there is a decline in the number of principals available for the number of vacancies because of a perception that the role is less attractive than it was at one time (Barker, 1997; Barnett, 2001; Berg, 2001; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Protheroe, 2001). Why do individuals choose to pursue and remain in this complex, dynamic, and sometimes troublesome role?

These questions and others are answered in this chapter within the organizing structure of the four research questions presented in Chapter One. This discussion is then supplemented by a detailed discussion of implications for theory, research, and practice.

**Research Question #1**

What explanations do individuals offer for their choice to seek appointment as principal? What influence do personal, professional, and cultural variables have on principals’ choice to pursue the role?

The socialization literature reviewed in Chapter Two suggests that personal, professional, and organizational socialization processes effect the choices individuals make about career goals and pursuits. Individual personality characteristics as well as formal and informal learnings about the nature of a particular position are thought to interact in various ways and lead to particular decisions by the individual. Consistency between an individual’s values and beliefs and those associated by the individual with a particular profession are also predicted to exist prior to the choice by the individual to
pursue a position within the field. To this extent the literature presents a deterministic image of the process. Those who become educational administrators begin their entry to the role through self-selection (Crow, et al., 1992; Wanous, 1980). That is, these individuals perceive a match between themselves and the role and thus begin to aspire to the position. The findings of this study confirm this line of thinking to some extent, but choice making is certainly not as simple as the literature about anticipatory socialization suggests. This body of literature conveys the impression that choice making occurs in a predictable and mechanical way (Brim & Wheeler, 1966; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Greenfield, 1985b). One major finding of this study is that making a career choice is the culmination of more than a single decision for the 17 principals interviewed for this study; it is a process involving the interaction of multiple variables over varying lengths of time.

For each principal interviewed, more than one influencing variable on choice can be identified. Principals did not always mention these influences when initially explaining how they became principals. Many variables emerged later in the interviews as an outcome of further discussion. This highlights the importance of probing on key issues by involving the person in a sustained and open-ended conversation during the interviews. It also demonstrates the benefits of displaying the data collected for this research in two ways. The cases presented in Chapter Four help to reveal the reasons expressed by individuals for choosing the principalship, while the cross-case analysis presented in Chapter Five identifies the generalized influencing variables on this choice across the sample of 17 principals (see Table 19). A summary of the influences of these variables follows.
This study examined the personal, professional and organizational, and community and cultural variables that influence an individual’s choice to become a principal. Numerous variables within each category were hypothesized through a review of the literature. These were considered and discussed with participants through an interview process. Not only was it evident that several variables were relevant to the process of choice for each person, but particular variables emerged as more salient than others. On the other hand, some of the variables suggested by the literature appeared to have no impact on choice. For example, community and cultural variables did not appear to influence individuals’ choices to pursue the role of principal. These relationships among the key variables and their relative impact on choice are discussed more thoroughly in the section that responds to the second research question. However, there is more to be said about the choice making process first.

**Reasons for Choosing the Role**

Principals who participated in this study presented a wide array of explanations for choosing to pursue an administrative position. This was particularly evident in the presentation of the individual cases in Chapter Four. Four general patterns of choices emerged from these explanations (see Table 18).
Two participants among the 17 had had a long-range goal to become a principal. They had always simply assumed that this was what they would eventually do. Other principals in this study described a natural progression towards the role. These individuals became involved in various aspects of education while teaching (different grades and subjects, lead teacher positions, consultancy positions, other leadership opportunities within the school), and these experiences led them towards an administrative role. These particular principals identified some of the factors that influenced their choice; however, they did not pinpoint any one reason for choosing the principalship. Similarly, other principals saw the role as the next step in their careers. They perceived themselves as looking for a new challenge or increased responsibility within the field of education. This ultimately led them to the position. A fourth category of explanation comes from those individuals who discussed the importance of other people's suggestions regarding the pursuit of the role. These individuals, however, once again pointed to additional reasons and influences rather than a single reason for choosing the principalship. One principal among the 17 left the principalship for a vice-principal's position after seven years, then returned five years later. Upon reflection, this
principal noted that his reasons for returning were the same as his initial reasons for
choosing the role (others had suggested that he become a principal and it was a position
he felt he could do successfully). For the principals in this study, then, the reasons for
choosing to become a principal were the outcome of a number of influences — influences
grounded in experiences and the influence of others — over time. This suggests that
making this choice is a process, not the outcome of a single or even a few predictable
events. Indeed, the participants' decisions were made in a gradual fashion as individuals
internalized a variety of influencing variables.

Table 19

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<td>Positive community environment</td>
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<td>Personal leadership traits</td>
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<td>School experiences as students</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must make decisions in the best interest of children</td>
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<td>Could do a better job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Could make a difference</td>
<td>4</td>
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<th>Professional/Organizational Variables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Significant others (other than initial suggestion)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant others (making initial suggestion)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Temporary administrative position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federation involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the role that did not change upon entry</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other perceptions of the role</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principalship as expansion of classroom role</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. No. = number of people
Personal Variables as Influences

When one examines the data collected for this study case by case and across cases according to themes, it becomes evident that particular personal variables helped to influence certain individuals to choose the principalship as a career path.

Only three principals perceived themselves as influenced by their parents' occupations. One principal reported being immersed in educational discussions while growing up, with a teacher and school administrator as parents. Another principal's father was Chair of the Board for the district, while a third principal's mother worked as a high school caretaker. In each of these cases, principals referred to their parents' roles as having an impact on their decisions to go into the field of education in the first place and subsequently on their choices to become principals. To this extent it would appear that the three children of educators in this group follow in the footsteps of their parents.

Three principals discussed how the nature of their upbringing influenced the type of person they are today. They described living in families that were nurturing, caring, and which fostered a sense of self-worth and the ability "to do anything." Two of these three, along with one other principal, also talked about the influence of growing up in a small community where a sense of involvement in recreational and other community activities was instilled as a personal value. These individuals emphasized the importance of serving the community and creating a community-like atmosphere within the school through the inclusion of community organizations and agencies.

Six principals were able to trace their personal leadership traits back to earlier stages of their lives. These principals recalled leading sports teams and camp groups, being involved in clubs, being out-going, and receiving compliments regarding their
leadership abilities. One principal felt his father, a Chief of Police, instilled leadership qualities in him. Viewing themselves as leaders, then, had an influence on this group’s decision to pursue administration as they gravitated towards positions of responsibility.

Experiences in schools as students were influences on the career paths of three principals. One was significantly influenced by his grade six teacher who acted as a role model for him. After failing a grade in school, one principal reflected that she became a stronger person, while another developed strong beliefs about how educators should deal with children. Four principals discussed their views about school and children and expressed a strong conviction that decisions should be made in the best interests of students. For them, this strong belief had an influence on their choices to become principals, as they would be able to provide leadership that would ensure children were well served. These individuals appeared to be choosing the principal’s role with the needs of children in mind.

**Professional/Organizational Variables as Influences**

All but three principals of the 17 spoke at length about the influences of others in their pursuit of the position. This was a strong finding. For seven of these individuals, significant others (such as a principal they worked for) had particular influences on their actual choices. Five of these seven principals indicated that they had admired or highly respected the significant others. For five of the 17 principals, the initial suggestion to pursue the principalship came from a principal or vice-principal with whom the individual worked. Another influence expressed by one principal was traceable to his father-in-law who was a director of education. This principal felt that he was immersed
in an administrative perspective on education from the time he began his teaching career. Another principal interviewed for this study had a close friend choose to become a principal, and indicated that this had the effect of broadening his perceptions of the role and influencing his choice. Another individual learned about the role through discussions and observations with a colleague who had accepted an interim position. This principal also noted the significant influence of her husband, a retired teacher, who had suggested to her that she should go into administration.

Three principals reflected on their experiences as interim administrators, indicating this as having had a large impact on their choices to become principals. One person had made the decision that at some point he would be an administrator but the interim position verified this choice and became the point in time when he acted on this decision. Another was unsure about what his next challenge in the field of education would be and the opportunity to serve in an interim position led him to choose the principalship. A third had been encouraged to pursue the role but was only convinced that she wanted to do this after going back to a classroom position following a positive experience in the interim position.

One principal had held leadership positions within the Women Teachers' Federation while she was a teacher. She described the influence of success in these positions as well as becoming sensitive to the importance of promoting the appointment of women to administrative roles. The research and initiatives of the federation helped to motivate her, as a capable woman, to pursue the principalship.
Image of the Role as an Influencing Variable

The findings of this study suggest that the ways that individuals perceive the principalship prior to choosing it as a career path have a persisting influence on their choice to stay with the role despite the changes in their vision of the role that occur once appointed. As depicted in Table 10, principals' images of the role are quite extensive. Also, every principal in this study had established perceptions of the role prior to beginning the position. For three of these principals, these original perceptions did not change once they began the role. Orientations towards viewing the principalship as a "job of service" to others, including all members of the internal and external community as active stakeholders, and an emphasis on human relationships were key notions for these principals from the beginning. For the other principals, particular aspects of the role evolved or were perceived differently once they took up the position. While some of these changes in views were perceived as positive, twice as many changes were considered negative or unwelcomed.

In addition, specific beliefs about the role of principal were voiced by several participants as having particular influence on their choice. Although more of a contributing influence rather than a precipitating reason for becoming principals, five individuals believed that they would be able to "do a better job" than other principals they had observed. In addition, four principals believed that the principalship would allow them to "make a difference" in the educational lives of children. Finally, five principals described how they viewed the principalship as an extension of their classroom roles. They explained how they would be able to influence and have a greater impact on more people than was possible as a teacher. They viewed their role as expanding their
influence beyond the classroom, to taking leadership roles within a divisional grouping in
the school, to taking on whole-school leadership opportunities, to becoming involved at
the area or district level, to finally becoming principals. Indeed, the perception of the
role as one of providing meaningful direction and leadership on a broad scale was
influential on the choices made by many individuals in this study to pursue the position.
These are people who gravitated to the role because of a perception that they could have
an impact on the quality of education.

Advice Offered for Aspiring Principals

Principals in this study were asked to provide advice to aspiring principals. In so
doing, they revealed their personal views about what should be taken into account when
making the choice to become a principal. This was a useful expansion on the information
they provided about the process of choice making and the influences on that choice.

Several individuals revealed what they felt were important considerations when
making the choice to pursue the principalship. Five principals recommended that
aspirants get a real sense of what the job is all about before making the choice in order to
be absolutely sure they want to be principals. They felt that individuals should talk with
current administrators in their workplaces about their aspirations, to more fully
understand the role and establish opportunities for learning within the school. Practicing
principals believe accumulating a variety of experiences such as teaching at different
grade levels, changing schools, becoming lead teachers, and serving as principal
designate is important preparation for the role. Principals also suggested that aspiring
principals ensure they are interested in the position for the “right reasons.” They point
out that the job is not one of power or prestige and that individuals must remain open to others' opinions and suggestions while in the role. Other advice included being informed about current educational issues and maintaining a positive attitude, especially in light of the negative social context surrounding education at this time. Principals warned that the job is time-consuming and that aspirants should recognize this commitment, while at the same time working to maintain a balance in their lives between work and home. Getting to know others through networking was also considered important advice to aspiring principals, as was the idea of finding a good mentor.

Seven principals highlighted the importance of mentors on their preparation for the role. Mentors encouraged these individuals to aspire to the position and then continued to provide support to them (such as ensuring leadership opportunities and engaging in dialogue) while they considered and then pursued the position. In all cases, this relationship was informal in nature. In addition, those who acted as mentors were in positions of responsibility (most were practicing administrators) and most initiated the relationship through a suggestion to the individual to consider the position as a career goal.

The Process of Choice Making

It is evident, then, that for all 17 principals participating in this study, more than one variable was associated with each administrator's choice to become a principal. Making a choice to go into administration was the outcome of a dynamic interactive process involving a combination of influences and an unpredictable series of events. The next section of this chapter explores the relationships among these variables.
Research Question #2

What are the relationships among the personal, professional, and cultural variables influencing the choice to pursue the principalship? Are there particular variables that dominate in the process of choice making for certain individuals or under certain circumstances?

As described in the preceding section, personal variables and professional and organizational variables were influences on principals’ choices to pursue the role. Community and cultural variables were not. Among the personal variables, family, critical events, personal philosophy of education, personal identity, and home community identity all contributed to the career decisions principals made in direct and indirect ways. Within the category of professional and organizational variables, perceptions of the role (from a practitioner’s rather than an academic’s perception) and in one case a professional organization (the Elementary Women Teachers’ Federation) served as influences on choice.

Organizational expectations and preparation experiences for the role were apparently not influential on initial choice making. Principals had beliefs about and comments regarding other variables (organizational expectations, preparation, school/district culture, community expectations, community culture, political ideology). However, these variables were spoken of in terms of their current roles while actually in the position rather than in relation to making a choice to pursue that position. Thus, although these variables played a part in how principals carried out their roles, they did not influence their choices to pursue the role in the first place.
### Table 20

**Influences on the Choice to Become a Principal According to Individuals**

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<th>Positive Family Environment</th>
<th>Positive Community Environment</th>
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<th>Federation Involvement</th>
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P = Personal Variables  
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In 14 of the 17 cases, principals identified at least one personal variable that influenced their choice to become an administrator. In the other three cases, principals talked about how they took into account their families once they became principals by...
creating a balance between the job and family responsibilities. They also discussed certain beliefs and values that they have about the role. However, even when they spoke about personal matters, these comments were in reference to already being in the position. These three particular individuals did not indicate that personal variables contributed to their choices to become principals. In all but one of the 17 cases, principals mentioned at least one professional or organizational variable that influenced their choice (see Table 20). For eight of these principals, their perceptions of the role prior to entry served as the only professional or organizational variable influencing their choices.

Image of the Role before Appointment

All principals had an image of the principalship prior to entering the position. For all but three principals, these images changed to some degree once they became principals (see Table 11). Whether or not their perceptions changed once they began the job, principals had an idea of what to expect in the role. Even the two principals who articulated that they had no beliefs prior to entering the role and that they had learned about the role after entry still talked in terms of their prior experiences having prepared them for the role. This suggests that they may have held perceptions of the role before pursuing it. Knowing what to expect in the role was reflected in 16 of the 17 individuals' overall high level of confidence about becoming principals at the time. Thus, individuals formed ideas of what the principalship was going to be about at some point during their teaching career. This idea then influenced their choice to become principals. This was perhaps the most perceived influence on the individuals' choices. That is, all principals
had perceptions of the role that influenced their choice in one way or another. Among the other remaining variables, no other single variable predominated for the entire sample of principals.

**Mapping out the Choice-Making Process**

Miles and Huberman (1984) describe a process for analyzing and displaying data called *causal networks*. Through the use of boxes and arrows, the networks show the causal relationships among numerous variables. Although the reasons and influences associated with the choice individuals make to become principals cannot be depicted in a causal way, a variation on this procedure can be usefully adopted to map out the choice making process. Mapping out the influences on choice, and the process of becoming a principal, provides a clearer understanding of the dynamics associated with a person's choice making process. Using Miles and Huberman's (1984) model as a starting point, individual maps were developed to graphically plot the choice making process of individuals.

Figures 2 to 5 illustrate the ways in which four of the 17 individuals who participated in this study formed the decision to become a principal and how they pursued the role. Each of the four figures illustrates one of the four general reasons for becoming a principal identified earlier (see Table 18). Two men and two women, one of each with high and low levels of experience in the principalship, are represented within the four figures. The boxes connected by arrows depict the steps these individuals reported taking, according to a serial time frame. The circles show additional influences on the making of choice for each individual that are not connected to the boxes because a
Bob

Father was a high school principal; Mother was an elementary teacher

Worked closely with administrators as a guidance counselor

As a teacher, had a long-range goal to become a principal

Let other administrators he worked for know of his goal

Principals provided support, encouragement, and leadership opportunities

White males were expected to become principals

Held various roles as a teacher

Prepared himself through accreditation

Joined a study group and studied on his own

Supervising principal missed a deadline for nomination; waited another year

Became an interim principal

Became a principal

Figure 2. Map depicting Bob’s story of becoming a principal. Boxes represent the process. Circles represent additional influences on his choice.
Gloria

Nurturing and supportive family instilled belief that she could do anything

Had no plans to become a principal while working as a secondary school teacher

Considered a consultancy

Current principal suggested she become a summer school principal

Decided she could do this role since her principal thought she could

Found success and enjoyment in role of summer school principal

Current principal suggested she take the principals’ qualifications courses

Noted women were not in admin. positions

Took principals’ qualification courses

Received continued support and encouragement from principal

Received support from peers, superintendent

Chose to pursue a principal’s position

Applied in both elementary and secondary panels

Became an elementary vice-principal

Took one year and worked as a stockbroker to ensure principalship was what she wanted

Became a principal

Figure 3. Map depicting Gloria’s story of becoming a principal. Boxes represent the process. Circles represent additional influences on his choice.
Figure 4. Map depicting Theresa's story of becoming a principal. Boxes represent the process. Circles represent additional influences on his choice.
Cameron

Failed grade six

Was not sure he wanted to be a teacher - started and enjoyed teaching

Felt he could do a better job than others

Became an interim vice-principal

Wanted to make a difference

While in interim position, principal asked if he was pursuing the role

Long-time mentor assisted in career aspirations and preparation

Sought advice from current principal and superintendent

Applied and was not successful in becoming a principal

Applied the following year and became a principal

Transferred schools for additional experience

Participated in district-level programs and committees

Took on various teaching positions - grades 4 to 8, guidance, ESL

Took on various lead teacher positions - junior, computer, science

Saw principals' role as an extension of the classroom

Figure 5. Map depicting Cameron’s story of becoming a principal. Boxes represent the process. Circles represent additional influences on his choice.
point in time cannot be clearly identified for them. They are placed according to approximate time relationships with the events in the boxes. From these sample maps it is evident that each person was influenced in different ways with a unique combination of personal and professional influencing variables. Indeed, the choice to pursue the principalship is a very individual and personal process. Each of the four samples is discussed briefly below.

Bob’s parents were in the education field while he grew up (see Figure 2). He had always believed he would become a principal, especially because at the time he was a teacher, it was expected that White males would do so. He made this goal known to his supervisors who in turn provided encouragement, support, and leadership opportunities for him. He became involved in various teaching positions including guidance counselor, and thus worked closely with other administrators. Bob completed all the necessary coursework and studied with a group and on his own. During the year following a missed deadline for principal application, he became an interim principal and then secured his permanent principalship the next year.

Gloria had no initial plans to become a principal (see Figure 3). She described growing up in a nurturing and supportive family where her mother’s job was as caretaker of the local high school. A critical event occurred when she was approached by her principal with the suggestion to be the principal of summer school. At this point she was involved in presentations at the district level and had been considering a consultant’s position. Because her principal thought she could do it, she took on the role of summer school principal, enjoyed it, and subsequently took her principals’ qualification courses. Continued support and encouragement came from her supervisors and peers. She also
learned that women were underrepresented in the role and developed an understanding of how she would operate as a female administrator. She applied for a position in both the secondary and elementary positions, became a vice-principal of an elementary school, took a year away from the field of education to ensure this is what she really wanted, and finally became a principal.

Theresa noted that she has had leadership traits throughout her lifetime (see Figure 4). After working in a centre for autism, she felt she could have more impact on children if she worked within a school district rather than at the centre. She entered the district as a special education consultant and, after a few years, decided that she wanted a leadership position outside of special education. She felt the principalship would allow her to make the most difference for children. She then became a teacher for three and a half years, developing a strong mentoring relationship with the school principal. While gaining all her necessary accreditation she also took on leadership roles within the school such as principal designate before ultimately becoming a principal.

Finally, Cameron found out that he enjoyed being a teacher after uncertainty upon entry to the field (see Figure 5). He took on various teaching positions and lead teacher roles and found himself believing he could do a better job than others he had observed, especially after failing a grade in school. While in the role of interim vice-principal, Cameron’s principal asked him if he was considering the principalship. This suggestion, along with regular and detailed dialogue with a long-time mentor helped him decide to pursue the role. He felt he wanted to make a difference for students and saw the role as an extension of his classroom responsibilities. He made his aspirations known to his supervisors and transferred schools to gain broader experience. Formal preparation
included district-level leadership programs. Although taken aback when he did not secure a position on his first attempt, Cameron became a principal the following year.

**Preparation for the Role**

Informal preparation experiences appeared to be more important than formal preparation experiences for principals interviewed for this study. In fact, participation in the principals' qualifications program was mentioned as a preparation experience by only eight principals. Further, as noted earlier, preparation experiences for the role of the principal was not mentioned as an influencing variable on choice to pursue the role. However, preparation was intertwined in principals' understandings of the role. For some, this involved experiences that provided opportunities to gain a better understanding of the role while also reassuring some individuals that the principalship was what they “really wanted to do.” Advice that the principals in this study would give to aspirants included gaining a variety of experiences to fully understand the nature of the principalship in order to make an informed decision about pursuing it and securing leadership experiences through such opportunities as lead teacher positions and interim positions. This sense of learning more about the role of principal in order to help them decide to pursue the role, while gaining knowledge and skills that will be important upon entry to the role, suggested that individuals require a certain level of “practice” before becoming principals. This is consistent with Hill’s (1992) research, which showed that in order to more fully understand their role, individuals had to act in the role of manager first. Further, Draper and McMichael (1998) postulated that the individuals in their study
chose to enter the principal’s role because of the nature of their leadership experiences rather than because of formal training preparation. This study confirms this finding.

Mentor relationships were viewed as important aspects of preparation by seven principals who participated in this study, while nine principals spoke of the importance of study groups in their preparation. One noteworthy point is that when discussing advice for aspiring principals, only two mentioned gaining the support of a mentor and none suggested the involvement of a study group. Regardless of this omission in terms of the advice they would offer to future principals, mentors and study groups were viewed by the principals in this study as important aspects of their own preparation for the role. Indeed, in most cases, mentors were the same individuals who made the initial suggestion to pursue the principal’s position. Although a conventional notion of mentoring suggested that individuals may have already chosen to pursue a principal’s position, the impact of mentors’ initial suggestions and subsequent support in preparing individuals for the position pointed to the importance of mentoring relationships in the formation of individuals as principals.

From the comments that principals made about their mentor relationships and study group experiences it was evident that these processes were informal in nature. No mentors were established in a formal way through a district or other professional development program. And although the Women Teacher’s Federation suggested to some that they form study groups, this was always done and then carried out in informal ways. Within these study groups, principals noted the openness and quality of learning that had occurred in these friendly and entertaining environments. Principals spoke in terms of a trusting relationship with mentors whom they had admired for their beliefs,
skills, and leadership traits, along with their continuous support. Further, three principals had served as mentors in the formal program offered within the district. Although not available to any of the principals who participated in the study while they were aspiring for the role, these three principals commented that they had enjoyed being mentors. However, they also described positive informal mentor relationships while they prepared for the role and one principal emphasized the importance of the establishment of informal relationships is as compared with formal ones.

When do Individuals Make the Choice to Become Principals?

The principals who participated in this study have worked in the field of education for anywhere from 15 to 36 years. The amount of time they spent in the field prior to becoming a principal varied from 10 to 34 years (the average is 20 years). For more recently appointed principals, this range was 10 to 34 years; for veteran principals the range was 11 to 26 years. With such a large range, it was evident that principals again followed an individual path in their careers, choosing to enter the position at different times throughout. One principal entered administration in 1975, four in the 1980’s, and 12 in the 1990’s. Three principals revealed that they were not successful in obtaining an administrative position on their first attempt, while two mentioned that they were successful initially (others did not comment on this issue). For the principals in this study, initial failure to be appointed did not dissuade them from pursuing the position.

Research Question #3

What particular functions, aspects, or qualities do individuals perceive as attractive or unattractive about the school leadership role?
As indicated, principals in this study talked about their reasons for pursuing the position in terms of having had a long-range goal to be a principal, a natural progression towards the role, the principalship being their next step, and because of the suggestion made by someone else (see Table 18). In addition, it was evident from responses that in all cases individuals had internalized the idea of becoming a principal, believing that this was something they could do and something they wanted to do. Even if the process began with someone else's suggestion, individuals had come to the decision from a personal standpoint. All seemed to have chosen this career for themselves. Regardless of their reasons, several personal and professional variables influenced their choices. One primary influence was the perceptions individuals held of the role prior to entry.

Image of the Role Before and After Appointment

When they discussed how they had viewed the role of the principal, participants tended not to make positive or negative judgments. They spoke in terms of what they do and how they do it, also indicating some of the skills necessary for the role. However, when they talked about the ways their perceptions changed after becoming principals and the ways the role of the principal has changed over time, principals could, for the most part, associate the changes with positive or negative feelings. Further, the negative associations outweighed the positive ones three to one.

For principals whose perceptions of the role did not change when they entered the role, the images they held have always been positive (see Table 11). They enjoyed being of service to others, involving all stakeholders in the life of the school, and establishing positive human interactions among and between others. Once they had become
principals, other individuals in this study were pleased to note that they were not the "boss," but rather that decisions for the school were made in collaboration with others. They had initially believed that they would hold the ultimate responsibility, or be the "Queen bee," making all the decisions. Including others in these processes was a welcome change to their earlier notions. One principal was pleased to recognize just how gratifying the position is with respect to helping and supporting others. Another principal enjoyed being able to discipline students without being a "super-cop." Gaining an understanding of the entire district was something another principal was pleased to find. And another principal learned that some things must be let go of in order to manage the role; this, again, was a positive change to role perceptions. Other positive changes that principals identified, with respect to changes in the role over time, included an increase in the level of accountability associated with the job, the increased emphasis on gathering and analyzing data, and the expansion of community involvement in the life of the school.

Changes to the perception of the role that principals viewed as negative (see Table 11) included: the great amount of paperwork, the constraining nature of the district's system, dealing with poor teachers, the "incredible" influence parents have on the life of the school, the large supervisory role they play, feeling lonely, attempting to meet everyone's needs, the need to know everything at once, the fact that the role focuses too much on management and not enough on curriculum leadership, the high number of demands associated with the role, the fast and hectic pace of the position, how "political" the role is, and being viewed as a boss by others. When considering the ways the role has changed over time (see Table 12), principals viewed as negative the more rigorous
curriculum, the increase in demands which had resulted in a more time-consuming job, less funding for curriculum materials, an increase in paperwork, an increase in stress associated with the role, an increase in the political aspects of the role, a government agenda driven by money, political turmoil, and a negative public climate in that media, politicians, and parents' advanced negative attitudes about the field of education. In addition, and in contrast to positive views noted above, an increase in accountability and the shift to collecting and analyzing data were viewed as negative changes by some principals.

Connections to the Literature on Image of the Role

Several connections can be made between the image of the role as perceived by participants in this study and the literature in this area. For instance, the literature notes that principals often have a view of what they would prefer to consider as their role as opposed to what they actually understand their role to be (i.e., that of instructional leader instead of manager (Brubaker & Simon, 1987)). Several principals in this study were very concerned about the most recent public image of their role as strictly managerial. They viewed themselves as leaders of teaching and curriculum and appeared offended by the suggestion of their position being one of management. Although they did not disagree that their role entails management responsibilities, they also preferred to believe in themselves in terms of being educators.

The role of the principal as perceived by the participants in this study was multidimensional in nature. Principals described themselves as curriculum leaders and managers, as well as collaborators, facilitators, responsible for the school environment,
and as possessing exemplary people skills. This aligns with what Begley and Slater (2000, 2001) describe as exemplary practice within a multidimensional portrayal of the role. Cuban (1986) suggested that one image (curriculum leader or manager) predominates as a focus for the role and that leadership is the preferred dimension. For the principals interviewed in this study, both of these aspects of the role were discussed. Principals felt strongly that their role included a curriculum component. Those who made reference to the change in definition of the role that had occurred as a result of recent government policy initiatives were concerned that a management function was now being emphasized as the primary orientation of the position. They tended to view themselves as curriculum leaders first, and desired to maintain this image along with their management responsibilities.

Like academics such as Beck and Murphy (1993), principals often used metaphors to describe their roles. Using words like coach, facilitator, mediator, servant, and collaborator, alongside words such as decision-maker, filter, gatekeeper, coordinator, and problem-solver, principals saw themselves as being central to the quality of human relations in schools, serving to support interactions among others, while also holding the responsibility for the running of the school. Principals said they do nothing in isolation. They work together with others (for example, staff members and parents) in setting a direction for the school, responding to external demands (such as those imparted by the government), and solving day-to-day problems. They considered themselves responsible for the environment of the school, including the safety of students, and were responsive to current educational directives such as accountability issues.
Much research has focused on the practices of typical and effective principals in portraying the image of the role (Hall, et al., 1984; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Leithwood, 1990). Due to the nature of this study, no attempt was made to evaluate the level of effectiveness of the principals who participated. This was not a concern of this particular study. This study focused on personal, professional, and cultural influences that affect individuals’ choice to pursue the position. Of the variables proposed in the conceptual framework (p. 52), some were derived from Leithwood, et al. (1992a) who discuss internal and external influences on the practice of principals. Several of these variables that were assessed as likely influences on career choice actually were not. They did, however, have an influence on principals’ beliefs about the nature of the role. For instance, organizational expectations, preparation experiences for the role, and community expectations all had an influence on how principals described their work, but not on their initial choice to pursue the role. External variables contributing to principals’ perceptions of the role included, for example, Ontario Ministry and district policies and procedures, district level professional development and leadership programs, and requests from the school council. Internal variables such as leadership traits and personal philosophies about education also influenced principals’ ideas about the role. These internal variables also influenced individuals’ choices to pursue the role in the first place. It appears, then, that both external and internal variables can influence principals’ perceptions of the role and subsequent practice, while internal variables are additionally responsible for initially influencing individuals’ decisions to pursue the role.

For most principals interviewed for this study, perceptions of the role changed somewhat after entry to the position. Regardless of whether or not these perceived
changes were positive, principals continued to view their role favourably. Principals seemed to derive special satisfaction from the curriculum leadership aspect of their role, along with providing support to others. Despite negative qualities of the role such as too much paperwork, too many demands, and increased hours on the job, overall the principals in this study reported experiencing fulfillment in their positions.

Research Question #4

How do the explanations provided for career choice by recently appointed principals compare to those of veteran principals?

Few differences emerged between the explanations offered by recently appointed and veteran principals for choosing the principalship. By far the most notable difference attributable to the number of years of experience in the role of principal was the ways in which principals described the management of the numerous and varied expectations associated with the position. Although principals described the various ways in which they dealt with these expectations (see Table 9), working long hours and taking paperwork home in order to meet expectations were strategies utilized primarily by newly appointed principals. Further, principals with fewer years of experience expressed the need to meet all the expectations that the role encompasses. It was the veteran principals in this study who recognized that it is not possible to meet all expectations and that they must choose to forego particular ones in order to manage the job properly. In fact, several principals noted that this was a skill that they learned over time while in the position.

When talking about the reasons they became principals, the two principals who had indicated that they had held a long-range goal for doing so were veteran principals.
The three other reasons – a natural progression towards the role, the principalship being the next step in their careers, and the suggestion by others that they consider the position – were expressed by both recently appointed and veteran principals. As for influences on the choice to become a principal, parents’ job roles and growing up in positive family and community environments were noted by only six veteran principals. Four of the six principals who noted the influence of their personal leadership traits were newly appointed principals, as were the four who believed they could make a difference in the educational lives of children by becoming a principal. The three principals whose beliefs about the role did not change upon entry were veteran principals. Other than these differences, all other influences were not expressed primarily by either new or veteran principals. So the basic motivations for becoming a principal have remained the same over the last ten years for the principals involved in this study.

Although the research questions for this study did not specifically focus on investigating choice making according to gender, an examination of responses for women and men reveals a few differences. The differences that were noted appeared in the experiences of veteran educators – principals who have been in the field for more than two decades. As described in Chapter Four, three men felt that they were expected to go into administration because they were men, while four women reflected on the underrepresentation of women in the role at the time that they were making their choice. Three of these women were somewhat motivated to pursue the position because of the small number of female administrators at the time. Gender differences, therefore, account for one influence on how some experienced individuals in this study made their choices to become principals.
Implications

The balance of this chapter addresses the implications suggested by the findings of this study. The discussion is organized in three sections: implications for theory, practice, and research. Within each section specific issues or themes are summarized and discussed.

Implications for Theory

Evidence from this study gives rise to four implications for theory. These implications concern the nature of professional socialization, the orchestration of organizational socialization, preservice professional development in relation to socialization, and the process of choice making.

The Nature of Professional Socialization

Two implications can be offered about the nature of professional socialization from the findings of this study.

First, results from this study imply that professional socialization is indeed distinct from organizational socialization (Greenfield, 1985b; Hart, 1991 & 1993). Professional socialization involves developing an identity with a particular profession, rather than with a particular organization (Hart, 1991 & 1993). The individuals who participated in this study described their beliefs and values, in addition to their images of the actions and skills associated with the role of principal. It is evident that all 17 principals had an understanding about the role prior to becoming a principal and that they had perceptions about the principalship prior to making the actual choice to pursue the...
role. On the other hand, organizational socialization occurs within the framework of a particular organization, beginning with anticipatory socialization during which individuals begin to learn about the norms, values, and behaviours associated with a role in a particular organizational context. This continues during the course of one's career within the organization as one continues to learn about and adjust to the required elements of one's role (Hart, 1991 & 1993). All 17 principals in this study referred to district programs and expectations as being important for them in understanding the nature of their role.

Another implication of the current research for professional socialization theory is that the beginning and ending times associated with professional socialization actually parallel those of organizational socialization. There is inconsistency in the literature about the point in time when the process of professional socialization actually begins and ends. It is variably portrayed as starting before the choice to pursue the role or at the subsequent point of entry to a position (Hart 1991), or while in training for that position (Hart, 1993). The ending time of the process is alternately portrayed as the point of entry to a position (Hart & Bredeson, 1996) or after the first three years or so in the position (Parkay, et al., 1992a). Results of this study suggest that professional socialization actually begins at a much earlier stage in one's career than is suggested in the literature. Regardless of when principals made the decision to go into administration, they had ideas about what the role was all about. Further, the simultaneous occurrence of professional and organizational socialization at the time of induction as indicated in the literature (Hart, 1991 & 1993) was supported in this study. For most, perceptions of the role changed after appointment. Preparatory experiences and training did not complete
the socialization process. Thus, professional socialization, like organizational socialization, appears to continue throughout one’s career, rather than ending at any particular point in time. The various socialization processes as suggested by the literature (Greenfield, 1985b; Hart, 1991 & 1993; Hart & Bredeson, 1996; Parkay, et al., 1992a) compared to what is implied by the current study are depicted graphically in Figures 6 and 7, respectively. A star (*) identifies the theorized beginning and ending points for each process.

Further evidence of the continuation of professional socialization throughout the entire career of an individual can be derived from the role descriptions of veteran principals. Principals at a later stage in their careers held particular attitudes, values, and beliefs about the role that even they identified as having been established with experience over time. It was the veteran principals who had learned how to pick and choose among the expectations of the role presented to them from various sources. These principals did not attempt to meet all expectations associated with their role. Instead, they learned to disregard some in order to focus on others that they deemed more important. Whether they felt overburdened and used this process as a coping mechanism, or felt confident in their decision making strategies, or felt established enough in their jobs to be able to make such choices without supervisory repercussion, they indeed carried out their role differently than newly appointed principals. Those with fewer years of experience appeared to work long hours and independently for the purpose of meeting all of the expectations of the role. Indeed, the organizational expectations are just that: expectations. To suggest that certain organizational directives could be ignored, as expressed by veteran principals, must be a function of a process other than organizational
Figure 6. Temporal relationships among personal, organizational, and professional socialization as suggested by the literature. Stars (*) represent proposed beginning and ending points.

Figure 7. Temporal relationships among personal, organizational, and professional socialization as suggested by the current research. Stars (*) represent proposed beginning and ending points.
socialization, namely professional socialization. This, too, implies that professional socialization processes extend beyond the first few years in the role of principal.

**Orchestrating Organizational Socialization**

The findings of this study suggest two implications about the extent to which organizational socialization can be orchestrated.

First, the results of this study imply that the socialization process leading to becoming a principal is far more dynamic than suggested by the literature. A particular body of the socialization literature conceptualizes the organizational socialization process as a series of tactics (Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1993; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) (see Chapter Two, pages 17 to 19, for a description of each of the terms). The implied focus of this perspective is on orchestrating the organizational socialization process in a conscious way. To speak of tactics implies intervention in the process, not just a description of the process. Greenfield (1985a), using this framework of tactics, found that individuals proceeded towards the principalship in an *individual, informal, random, and serial* way over a *variable* time frame where *investiture* occurred. The results of this study are consistent with this pattern. These characteristics of organizational socialization processes were discernable among the experiences of the principals participating in this study. However, there was nevertheless large variation among the individual cases in terms of the influencing variables. Each principal described a different set of influencing variables leading to their choice to pursue the role (see Table 20). In fact, these tactics describe a generalized socialization process that occurs after the initial choice to become a principal is made. Thus, the current study suggests that
making that initial choice to pursue a school leadership role is a far more complex process than Greenfield and Hart imply with their portrayal of tactics associated with a socialization process.

Second, these results also have implications for the theoretical notion of socialization tactics themselves. Some aspects of the tactics portrayed in this model are difficult to reconcile within the field of education. The tactics are described as a series of opposing dynamics (for example, *individual* versus *collective* socialization strategies). In the field of education, it can be argued that the socialization tactics are more static since the opposing tactics are not actually possible. For example, because individuals are immersed in the field of education prior to choosing and pursuing the principalship, they form perceptions about the role early in their career. It is difficult to speculate, then, that socialization tactics for principals could be effectively orchestrated to any significant extent. That is, it is unlikely that a group of individuals would learn about the role in only a *formal, collective, and sequential* manner within a *fixed* time frame. The process cannot be *disjunctive* since every individual at one time would have worked as a teacher with a principal and therefore had a role model. And, given that principals generally do not quit, *divestiture* socialization likely will not occur. Thus, in the field of education, common organizational socialization tactics occur, but the management of these might be beyond the reasonable control of the school district in any formal sense.
Preservice Professional Development in Relation to Socialization

Two implications about preservice professional development, specifically the Ontario principals' qualification program, can be derived from the findings of the current research.

First, the results of this study imply that organizational socialization processes do indeed become more salient to individuals than professional socialization processes when the two occur simultaneously. This can be illustrated using one formal method of socialization for individuals pursuing the principalship as an example. The principals' qualification program offered in the province of Ontario is an example of a formal training experience. Successful completion of the two courses and practicum making up this program is required prior to applying for a position. The socialization literature suggests that when professional and organizational socialization occur at the same time, organizational socialization processes become the dominant source for imparting attitudes, values, and related behaviours associated with the role (Hart, 1991 & 1993). The findings of this study confirm that this is indeed the case, lending support to this body of literature. Only eight of the 17 principals mentioned taking the courses in preparation for the position. Participants seemed not to recall their formal preparation experiences. Moreover, no difference was found between veteran and newly appointed principals with respect to this observation. In contrast, principals easily identified both the formal and informal preparation they encountered within their district in the form of, for example, district leadership programs, workshops, conferences, networking, committee work, and interim administrative positions. The types of preparation that were more salient for principals, then, were those associated with the district itself.
Second, the results of this study may also imply that the principals’ qualification program, as delivered in Ontario at this time, is better conceptualized as relating to professional socialization processes while district inservice is related to organizational socialization processes. This interpretation helps to explain the consistently positive evaluation data collected from individuals who have recently completed the principals’ qualification program. Aspiring principals seem highly satisfied with the program, suggesting that such courses do indeed serve to professionally prepare individuals for the role. However, it appears that over time, principals (at least in the district involved in this study) come to rely more heavily on the processes of the school district organization for information about the nature of their positions and their organizational socialization to these positions.

The Process of Choice Making

The findings of this study have implications for theories relating to career choice. Much of the literature about the process of choice making reviewed for this study is primarily from outside the field of education (i.e., Hall, 1976; Hill, 1992). However, despite the noneducational context, many parallels can be drawn between these theories and the results of this study. This research also points to further implications for the development of a theory of choice for individuals choosing to become principals and supports the scarce literature about this particular area (Alvy & Robbins, 1998; Huberman, 1988).

In relation to the area of career choice, the assumption made within the literature that individuals do not make a single choice at one point in time, but rather revise their
choices at various times throughout their career (Hall, 1976) is supported by the results of this study. Hall’s (1976) work does not focus on the specific area of educational administration. However, for the most part, participants in this study did not begin their careers having already made the choice to become principals. This somewhat extended decision making process began later in their teaching careers. Further, several individuals moved into consultancy roles within the district or held guidance counselor positions before making the choice to pursue an administrative role. All principals were involved in additional leadership responsibilities within their school at some point while teaching, which, to some extent, can also be considered “career choice.” Thus, it is evident that principals do indeed revise their career choices over time rather than make a single conclusive decision.

Similarly, most individuals made the decision to become principals over the course of time and through reflection and conversation with others. Many described how they saw the role of principal as an extension of what they had been doing in the classroom and within the school and felt that the role would bring them the increased authority required to influence a greater number of people. These findings are consistent with Hill’s (1992) research about how individuals arrived at the decision to pursue management positions. In addition, the finding that for several principals in this study, a “tap on the shoulder” was influential in instigating this choice for the role is also reflected in Hill’s (1992) work with managers. Once again, Hall’s (1976) and Hill’s (1992) research is derived outside the educational administration field. The similar results in this study suggest that these aspects of Hall’s (1976) and Hill’s (1982) career choice theory can be extended to the field of education.
In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with Alvy and Robbins' (1998) notions of how individuals choose to go into the role of principal. Individuals in both their study and the present research want to make a difference for students. They choose the principalship as the place to do so after careful reflection and consideration and after exerting influence as a classroom leader.

Huberman (1988), in examining stages of teachers' careers, notes that after a period of stabilization as a teacher, individuals look for novelty in their positions and begin to move beyond the classroom: "Once a basic level of mastery is achieved, there is a need for refinement and diversity" (p. 124). Teachers become involved in multiple classrooms and school wide activities at this stage of their career. The principals interviewed in this study revealed similar orientations. Again, they were not quick to choose the role and they all became involved in leadership roles outside of their own classrooms first. Many principals spoke in terms of the role becoming their next challenge (two of whom expressed boredom as a teacher). This is consistent with Huberman's findings and thus suggests a relevant contribution towards forming a theory about career choice within the field of education.

Implications for Practice

Evidence from this study gives rise to five implications for practice. These implications concern job satisfaction, managing overload and stress, changes in social expectations for education, the distinction between leading and managing, and mentoring processes.
Job Satisfaction

Four implications can be drawn from the results of this study about principals' job satisfaction.

First, all 17 principals in this study were satisfied with their positions. This implies that regardless of the nature of the role as described by these individuals, the principalship is perceived, overall, as a positive or at least worthwhile experience. Whether newly appointed or experienced in the role, all principals confirmed that their choice was a good one. This was also found by Baltzell and Dentler (1984) who note that "...all 30 of our recent principal appointees were educators who wanted the position, who were glad to get it, and who showed no inclination to withdraw from the role" (p. 44).

Second, despite the less attractive aspects of the role encountered after appointment to the position, principals in this study continued to express their overall satisfaction with the role. This finding suggests that for organizations such as school districts wishing to attract and retain principals, focusing on changing the negative aspects of the role should perhaps not be a primary objective. This is good news since some of the negatives are not easily reconciled. Principals formed perceptions of the role prior to choosing to pursue the position and thus prior to entry. For most principals, these perceptions were altered to some degree once they took up the position. Some of their surprises were positive; however, most were negative. Overall, principals found the role very demanding from the standpoint of fast pace, long hours, and a multitude of expectations. These surprises along with others such as the large amount of paperwork and the need for collaboration support the research findings of others (Daresh, 1986;
Daresh & Male, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 1998; Duke, et al., 1983; Parkay, et al., 1992b; Parkay & Rhodes, 1992). Regardless of whether their perceptions include negative aspects of the role, these principals have continued in the position and are not disappointed. Even the one principal who chose to step away from the principalship for several years, became a principal again and is satisfied with the position.

A third implication related to the previous one is asserted by Duke, et al. (1983): "it would be helpful to new principals if the negative impact of these surprises could be minimized" (p. 11). Those responsible for formal leadership programs could help to prepare individuals for these particular aspects of the role by examining the types of surprises principals experience upon assuming the role rather than attempt to actually reduce or neutralize these aspects as part of the course syllabus.

Fourth, the results of this study imply that principals will continue to react to changes associated with the role, regardless of the source or nature of the changes. Principals who participated in this study discussed the ways the role has changed over time and how they have responded to the changing elements of the role. For instance, principals recognized the increased emphasis on accountability issues and have put procedures such as data collection and analysis in place in order to address these issues. Again, they did not always view these changes in a positive light; however, they continue to implement changes and adjust their roles according to changing expectations.

Managing Perceived Overload and Coping with Stress

Two implications relating to how principals manage overload can be derived from the findings of the current research.
First, the results of this study imply that experienced principals, as compared to newly appointed principals, manage the pace and number of demands associated with the role in different ways. Their descriptions of the ways in which they prioritize and ignore particular expectations implies a perception that it is not necessary to meet every expectation associated with the role. Principals with more experience readily described how they made choices regarding the many expectations placed on them. In order to keep the role manageable, experienced principals established priorities for themselves and their schools and held every expectation up to this framework. Expectations were considered worth responding to when they were in line with the focus for the school. Experienced principals had more of a sense of what is important and worth carrying out. They described learning how to use this management strategy over time in the position. Not only does this point to the nature of the demands of the job (i.e., it really is impossible to meet all the expectations associated with the role), but it also indicates that newly appointed principals attempt to do everything and that perhaps it is really not possible, nor even necessary, to do everything. Additionally, over time principals seem to develop coping strategies that allow them to deal with the multidimensional nature of the role.

Three implications relating to the nature of stress in the role of the principal are suggested by the findings of this study. One implication is that principals may find themselves “burnt out.” Gmelch and Gates (1998) describe different consequences of stress, one of which is emotional exhaustion: “that aspect of burnout which is associated with low levels of energy and the feeling of being drained.” Indeed, this was described by several principals in the present study. It appears that this does not result in principals
choosing to leave the position. However, given the level of stress and associated
exhaustion that is experienced by principals, it is possible to predict that they will not be
at their most productive levels of performance at all times. And finally, a high level of stress in the principalship suggests that principals may be vulnerable to being ill more
often than the general population.

A number of studies have examined the nature of stress in the role of the principal
(Borg & Riding, 1993; Carr, 1994; Duke, 1988; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Sarros &
Friesen, 1987; Whan & Thomas, 1996; Whitaker, 1996). All these studies have found
that a variety of factors associated with the role of the principal contribute to a high level
of stress for those in the position. Many principals who participated in this study cited
health issues as a personal concern. Principals felt that their role was so all-consuming
that they were unable to take proper physical and emotional care of themselves. When
providing advice for aspiring principals, they spoke in terms of taking care of health
matters, finding time to enjoy a balanced life with activities outside of the school, and
making sure to be emotionally stable enough to be able to cope with the multitude of
demands and the nature of interpersonal relationships associated with the job. This has
implications for principals' practice.

Changes in Social Expectations for Education

The findings of this study imply that the professional role of the principal has
expanded to include issues relating to the wider social context of education that will in
turn impact on the expectations for principals' practice. This broadened perspective of
the role is evident in several themes that emerged in this research.
When asked to talk about their roles, principals in this study often spoke about the broader field of education as opposed to a narrow administrative perspective. They described student learning, staff relationships, community involvement, expectations for the role, and a collaborative leadership style. Some items for discussion were directly related to role duties and requirements while others were broader, encompassing attitudes and beliefs about the field as well as about the particular role. It appeared that principals considered all aspects of the field as having an impact on their position. This suggests that the role of the principal is becoming broader. Principals appeared to be responding to more than simply professional issues. They described having to be responsive to greater social issues as well.

Participants in this study frequently observed that teachers are increasingly becoming responsible for children in ways that were traditionally attributed to the family. In discussing the responsibilities associated with the role, principals in this study described involving outside agencies for the provision of early childhood education, before and after school programs and supervision, and breakfast programs, for example. In addition, principals described themselves as “social workers,” providing support to students, parents, and staff members about family crises and discipline and care giving roles. This is similar to the finding reported by Goddard (2000) about teachers’ impressions of their external environment.

Further, principals in the present study noted an increased responsibility for fostering community involvement as well as the need to be politically astute. These findings are consistent with those of Portin, et al. (1998) who conducted research about the changing nature of the principalship and found an increase in interactions with
parents and more time spent on external relations such as establishing business partnerships are now associated with the role. Brubaker (1995) also noted an increase in political issues due to recent educational reforms.

Leaders or Managers?

The findings of this study imply that the debate about the leadership versus management roles associated with the principalship persists and that principals continue to view curriculum leadership as the more important aspect of the two.

Principals in this study had a concern about the role increasingly being perceived as one of pure management. According to several participants, recent government directives have given the impression that the principal is now the manager of the school. Curriculum leadership is no longer associated with the role, or so these directives imply. This is reflected in the newest guidelines for the principals’ qualification program in Ontario (2001). Much research about the role of the principalship has focused on the distinction between and relative importance placed on each of these two dimensions – curriculum leadership and management. While both aspects are considered important, administrators and researchers have emphasized that although there does not appear to be enough time to always engage in curriculum affairs, this is a primary role of the principal. Winter, et al. (1997) found that emphasizing instructional leadership instead of management role attributes in brochures designed to attract applicants to principals’ positions resulted in more applications. Those who were interviewed for this study reflected this desire for a continued emphasis on curriculum leadership. They talked in terms of protecting this aspect of their jobs and were resentful that this image was being
discounted. Practicing principals, then, persisted in emphasizing curriculum leadership in their roles and preferred to continue to carry out their jobs in this way.

**Mentors and Mentoring Processes**

The findings of this study support preceding research that implies that the establishment of mentor relationships is not only important for aspiring principals, but that these relationships may have more positive results if they are formed in an informal way (Pavan, 1987; Samier, 2000).

In preparing for the role, several principals interviewed for this study described a relationship with a mentor and the importance of this mentor in their understanding and pursuit of the role. In all cases, this relationship was informal in nature. None of the principals in this study had been assigned a mentor to assist them in the process of becoming a principal. According to these principals, this type of relationship was effective and also comfortable. They felt they received open and honest feedback and opinions and were directed in appropriate ways. Pavan (1987) reports that the psychosocial aspects of mentoring (such as support, encouragement, counseling, and friendship) were very important factors reported by aspiring principals in her study. As well, Samier (2000), in examining the nature of mentoring relationships, reports that planned mentoring programs have limitations in that objective matching criteria results in outcomes that have a basis in organizational legislation or structuring. She also points out that effective mentoring relationships are based on “mysterious and irreducible aspects of the relationship” resulting in a “fit” between mentors and protégés (p. 96). Indeed, informal mentorships appear to allow for such a “fit” to occur.
Implications for Research

The outcomes of this study give rise to seven implications for research. These implications concern the influence of the vice principalship, principals' commitment to curriculum leadership, principals' strategies for managing role expectations, the influence of community and culture, the influence of gender, what comes after the principalship, and sampling a larger population.

The Influence of the Vice Principalship

Results of this study did not indicate influences of the vice principal role in the formation of individuals as principals. Further study specifically focusing on the experiences of principals while they were in the vice principalship might reveal the significance of this position with respect to influence, choice, and their images of the role of principal.

Principals' Commitment to Curriculum Leadership

Principals interviewed for this study portrayed an emphasis on curriculum leadership in their roles. They reflected that this was a necessary component of being a principal and that the suggestion through recent government initiatives that the principalship is strictly a management role is not appropriate. Further research in this area may reveal whether this expressed emphasis is an actual preference of principals, or if principals are simply reacting to the expectations imposed on them for the role.
Principals' Strategies for Managing Role Expectations

Veteran principals in this study described how they prioritize goals for the school in order to assist in their reactions to expectations for their role. They identified a high number of demands associated with the role and found themselves choosing which expectations to carry out and which ones to drop. Principals did not provide specific examples of which expectations they found appropriate and which ones they chose to disregard. Further investigation in this area could easily answer such questions as well as indicate what expectations principals consider realistic and unrealistic.

The Influence of Community and Culture

Cultural variables were not an influence on choice making for principals in this study. The culture of the school, district, or community was not discussed. Brubaker (1995) suggests that issues of diversity and ethnic tension "will continue to be a major theme in the next 20 years" (p. 92). Apart from two principals identifying their school communities as being diverse and two mentioning how they embrace diversity, these issues were not spoken of. Further investigations into the nature of individuals' choices to pursue the principalship, as well as the nature of the role itself, may be guided by more specific interview questions that may prove more effective in eliciting responses in this area. Additionally, the principals involved in this study did not come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Further research is warranted about how principals from varying ethnic origins choose the position in order to expand the findings of this study of influences on choice making.
The Influence of Gender

Few differences were found in the choice making processes of men and women in this study. Several of the veteran principals in this study articulated the ways gender was an influence on their decision processes in past years. Men were naturally expected to make the choice to become principals and some women felt compelled to consider the role because their gender was underrepresented. However, all the men and women participating in this study reported being more strongly influenced by other variables to pursue the position. Further investigations into how individuals’ choose the role and the ways in which they interpret the nature of the role could be carried out with a more specific focus on uncovering the influence of gender on the choice making process. This could potentially reveal interesting differences according to gender that were not possible in this study. Such a study might illustrate more than just the differences in the choice making process of men and women. It might also illustrate how individuals within a single gender group differentially arrive at their choices.

What Comes After the Principalship?

Some principals in this study indicated what they felt their next steps would be after the principalship. For many, retirement looked appealing as their next stage in life. Others were considering a different role, whether in the area of education or not. As career choice is not a stable single event, exploring the future career aspirations of practicing principals may shed some light on their processes for making choices associated with their careers. Similarly, researching the ways in which they chose to
enter the field of education itself may add to the understanding of the influences on the choices of individuals to become principals.

**Sampling a Larger Population**

In order to expand the validity of this research, a study involving a larger sample is implied. To this end, the methodology may be different in that interviews are time-consuming and the opportunity is now there to build on the findings of this study. A questionnaires or survey might be distributed to find out more about why people choose to be principals and the various influences on this choice across a larger population of school administrators. In addition, the replication of this study with principals from other countries is now under way.

**Postscript**

A few years ago I completed the courses and earned the qualifications necessary to become eligible for appointment as a school principal in Ontario. In retrospect I realize that I was motivated to pursue these qualifications by the thought that at some point I might choose to become a school principal. I was aware that the responsibilities of the principal are multi-faceted, that an increasing level of accountability is associated with the role, and that numerous new "reform" initiatives are being passed down to schools from the Ministry of Education. I also recall noting that the province was in the midst of a great deal of political unrest. I believed that this turmoil would last perhaps five years, after which things would settle down and I would then consider pursuing the role. Several years later, however, I did not see things becoming settled. My desire to
become a principal did not grow as I had anticipated. This uncertainty led me to reflect on why a teacher might choose to become a principal.

The principals interviewed for this study described the high level of responsibility associated with the job, along with the numerous and varied expectations and sources of expectations for the role. They spoke about the stress and resulting potential health concerns related to this demanding role and indicated some of the strategies they use to lessen these effects. Veteran principals expressed the need to disregard in a highly selected manner some expectations as one way of managing all the expectations of the role. Taken together, these discussions point to a high-paced, highly interactive, and time-consuming profession where sometimes triage is necessary.

Several reasons for choosing to become a principal emerged from this study. Many influences had an impact on this choice for the principals interviewed. Upon reflection, I can identify a few of the same influencing variables that did not have an impact on me. Yet, even after the completion of this study, I am uncertain about pursuing the role myself. Another area for future research, then, may include responses from individuals who have yet to make this choice but who have encountered some of the same influencing variables as those who did choose to become principals or with individuals who decided a definite “no” is in order. If an individual has received a “tap on the shoulder” but has chosen not to pursue the role, what internal (or external) variables are acting on this individual that are different from the ones impacting those who make the choice? In the province of Ontario, an increased number of newly qualified principals will be required in the near future. Understanding how the particular variables identified in this research influence individuals in one way or another may
suggest strategies for filling the upcoming vacancies as well as where organizations should not waste time and resources.

Overall, people choose to become principals based on their own desires and career trajectories, which have been influenced by several personal and professional variables. The process is dynamic and individual, regardless of the point in time that the choice is made. No two paths to the principalship are the same. But those who do choose the role appear to find it satisfying and rewarding enough to stay in the position.
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APPENDIX A:

LETTER OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE
October, 2000

To participants in this study:

The purpose of the present study is to determine the socialization experiences of principals in forming their perceptions, or images of the role. The factors contributing to decisions to enter the position, along with the factors that serve to develop an understanding of the position, will be explored. The twenty principals participating in this study will be selected based on the number of years they have held the position (i.e., fewer than five years; greater than ten years). In addition, a balance between male and female and between elementary and secondary administrator participants will be sought.

This study will be carried out under the supervision of Professor Paul Begley, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. The data is being collected for the purposes of a Ph.D. thesis and perhaps subsequent research articles.

A pre-interview questionnaire will be provided initially to collect background information. This will be followed by a face-to-face interview of approximately one to one and a half hours. During the interview you will be asked questions about your choice to become an administrator, your expectations and responsibilities as a principal, your satisfaction and concerns, the ways in which you perceive the role as changing, and the nature of external influences on your opinions. As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding, but my part will be mainly to listen to you speak about your views, experiences, and the reasons you believe the things you do. After the interview, I will write brief notes that will be used to assist me in remembering the surroundings of the interview (i.e., characteristics of the site).

It is the intention that each interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed to paper; you have the choice of declining to have the interview taped. You will be assigned a number that will correspond to your interviews and transcriptions. Your transcript will be sent to you to read in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored in a secure location. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, schools, school districts, and communities cannot be identified. All raw data (i.e., transcripts) will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process. You may request that any information, whether in written form or on audiotape, be eliminated from the project. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it and may request a summary of the findings of the study.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Laura Slater
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Email: pbegley@oise.utoronto.ca

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ____________________________ School: __________________________________

Signed: __________________________ Date: __________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: _______
APPENDIX B:

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE
PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: ____________________________ Email: ____________________________

Mailing Address: ______________________________________________________

Telephone: Work: __________ Home: __________ Fax: ______________________

Gender: _____ Age: ______

Number of years in the position of Principal: ______

Number of schools as Principal: ______ Number of districts as Principal: ______

Number of years in the position of Vice-Principal: ______

Number of schools as VP: ______ Number of districts as VP: ______

Total number of years worked in education: ______

Total number of schools worked in: ______

Total number of districts worked in: ______

Ever worked in another country? _____ Details: __________________________

Ever worked in another career? _____ Details: __________________________

Present school district: ________________________________________________

Private or publicly funded? ______________ School population: _____________

Panel: __________ Ever worked in another panel? _____ Number of years: ______

Formal training (degrees, certificates, etc.): ______________________________

__________________________________________________________

Other training (school district level, informal, etc.): ______________________

__________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

How long have you been a principal? Administrator?

Tell me how you came to be a principal.

Further questioning will build on this and will include questions like:

Thinking back, why were you interested in becoming a principal?

When in your career did you make the decision to pursue the role?

Who was influential in supporting your decision/aiding in making your decision to become a principal?

How was your family in supporting your choice?

If you were to reflect on your childhood and growing up years, do you think that your upbringing was at all influential in you ultimately becoming a principal?

Was becoming a principal consistent with your philosophy of education?

What beliefs did you have about the principalship prior to pursuing the role?

How do you think you came to believe these things about the role?

Were there any significant events that contributed to your wanting to be a principal?

What steps did you take to prepare for the role?

How confident were you in yourself that you would be successful as a principal?

Was there anyone helping you along the way?

What kind of preparation did your district provide for you? (formal, informal)

How would you explain the role of the principal? Is this consistent with what you believed about the role before you pursued it?

From where in the school district do you receive messages about the expectations for you as principal?
Were there any organizations that were influential in your decisions? (Federations, Board of Education, Ministry of Education, College of Teachers, Ontario Principals Council)

Are any of these organizations important to you now in your daily functioning as a principal?

What kinds of expectations do you feel your community has for you as the principal of the school?

How have the recent government initiatives affected your role as principal?

What are the aspects of being a principal that bring you the most satisfaction?

What are the aspects of being a principal that concern you the most?

How has your role as principal changed over time?

Having had the experience you have, if you were to do it all over again, would you still choose to become a principal? Why/why not?

What advice do you have for aspiring principals?