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PRINCIPAL. ME
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WITHIN THE PRINCIPALSHIP

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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This work is dedicated to Annaly, Gabriela Dulce, Jens Albert, Marcy, Mom and Dad.

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of the past several decades, the principalship has shifted dramatically. Neo-liberal inspired accountability pressures and shifting societal demands have increased the complexity of the work for those who lead schools. With mounting job responsibilities and often, fewer resources to work with, principals are being pushed to the limit.

A documented principal shortage coupled with the impacts of broad school reform efforts and a shift toward corporate-style accountability have created a turbulent environment for principals to do their work. In this challenging era, it becomes more essential than ever to develop a clearer picture of the work of the school principal.

Utilizing qualitative autoethnography as a research method, this study seeks to examine role conceptualization within the principalship. Through a lens of distributed leadership and role theory, a highly contextualized portrait of one principal's experience provides a template for self-reflexive practice for practitioners and insight for those responsible for training and supporting principals.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Societal shifts in expectations of educational institutions have led to calls for increased accountability in schools and for those who lead them. This increasingly assertive move toward accountability has changed the role of school principals and has profoundly impacted their work. The role of the principal has shifted dramatically over the past several decades from an authoritarian figure charged with managing buses, books, and buildings to a visionary instructional leader responsible for engaging and involving diverse stakeholders in an effort to positively drive achievement for all students and being held accountable for "success" in this regard. The stunning *A Nation At Risk* report released in 1983 signifies a call to action in reforming schools in the U.S. and the influence of the report can still be seen in the re-examination of content and standards and the advent of standardized tests as accountability measures (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Callahan, 1962; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). In many ways, *A Nation At Risk* marked the predictable outcome of decades of evolution in U.S. schooling signaled by a shift from "scholarly" emphasis to a more pragmatic approach dating back to as early as the turn of the twentieth century. In examining the foundational work of Callahan (1962), Berman notes:

> An important corollary to the general infatuation with business practices was the growing urge to make public education more practical. A strong current of anti-intellectualism emerged and was expressed in such catch phrases as "mere scholastic education" or "mere book learning." The consequence was "an American tragedy" in education (the initial title of Callahan's manuscript), for the movement had produced a new breed of educational administrator, men who did not understand education or scholarship. Thus they could and did approach education in a businesslike, mechanical, organizational way. (p. 298)

Upon review of the literature, several themes are revealed that convey the expectations and the varied roles of the principal in today's schools. Specifically, these responsibilities include: providing a safe and orderly school environment conducive to student learning, instructional leadership, developing and maintaining a school culture that values learning for all, developing and maintaining parent and community partnerships and communication, managing people, data, and processes, shaping a school vision of academic achievement for all students, and understanding and responding to the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in which the school exists (Popham, 2001; Wallace, 2013; Taylor, 2007; CCSSO, 2013).

To examine the shifts in the principalship over the past quarter century, it is imperative to note the historical context of school principal's work and the corresponding contrast to current role expectations for the position. Donaldson (2006) notes the initial intent of the position:

> Historically as schools and districts grew in size and as curriculum and other services became formalized by states, "principal teachers" were appointed to serve these largely managerial functions. Early designers of the role borrowed from the emerging field of business management to create principals and superintendents in the image of public executives. (p. 3)

For the first half of the 20th century the principal was expected to serve a primarily middle-management function, this corporate-rooted, middle-management work of principals was typically carried out by male principals overseeing their female faculties (Donaldson, 2006).

In light of accountability reforms in the educational landscape resulting from political influences that are undeniably neo-liberal in orientation, the image of principal as middle manager has changed (Giroux, 2002). Legislative and policy changes have

altered the position and have challenged building principals in new ways. Simply stated, what is asked and expected of a school principal today is vastly different from what was asked of them twenty years ago. According to The Wallace Foundation (2013), "They (principals) can no longer function simply as building managers, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations and avoiding mistakes. They have to be (or become) leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction" (p. 6). The skill set and personality traits that used to be adequate to reach expectations for principals will simply no longer suffice amidst today's rapidly changing and evolving educational landscape. Hannigan (2008) notes, "In an era of change and accountability, administrators are no longer able to rely on having charismatic personalities or on being effective managers to improve academic achievement in their school" (p. 1). That being said, research has offered personality traits that can potentially bolster effectiveness for school leaders, according to Day (2007):

> A small handful of personal traits (rather than charisma) explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness; the most successful leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (e.g., in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all), resilient, and optimistic.(p. 16)

Day's offerings align nicely with the transformational leadership style communicated in a broader literature review in light of principal expectations. Furthermore, the emphasis on core personal traits benefitting principals speaks to the essential task of cultivating a culture of shared leadership and decision-making in schools so crucial to preserving teacher autonomy in the creative process of schooling (Day,

2007). A comprehensive analysis of transformational versus transactional leadership will be discussed in Chapter II.

The work of the Wallace Foundation (2013) posits that twin realizations have altered the work of principals and the way schools conduct their business. “Career success in a global economy depends on a strong education; for all segments of U.S. society to be able to compete fairly, the yawning gap in academic achievement between disadvantaged and advantaged students’ needs to narrow” (p. 7). One of the key shifts presented in the broader accountability movement in schools is the underpinning philosophy of raising achievement for all students toward principally economic ends. In 2008, The U. S. Department of Education released *A Nation Accountable: Twenty-Five Years After A Nation At Risk*. *A Nation Accountable* sought to update the country on the progress and challenges facing public schools in the U.S. since 1983 and the release of the landmark report *A Nation At Risk*. Long-held assumptions of students as economic actors are revealed in the 2008 report: “As many have noted, a number of critical factors determine a society’s long-run prosperity, including: respect for ownership, a relatively open-market, and ambitious entrepreneurs” (Spelling, 2008, p. 15). This effort to narrow the achievement gap between various subgroups characterizes the focus of current educational reforms. Beginning with NCLB under Bush and progressing through Race To The Top and current reform efforts under the Obama administration, market-driven and corporate-style accountability have left an indelible mark on the work of schools (Spelling, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The life of the principal has become increasingly multi-faceted and complex. What has long been a balancing act requiring juggling of priorities and real economic decisions in use of time and energy has been elevated. According to Andreyko (2010):

> Principals are spending more time on the job than they had in the past, and they are navigating ways to be successful in the high stakes work context that has permeated the job. This changing nature of the principalship has required more time, political savvy, stress management, accountability measures, legal expertise, and the ability to deal with health concerns. (p. 3)

Principals are navigating the bureaucracy of new federal and state legislation, while also completing more paperwork than the job ever required in the past. The complexities of school safety, public relations, curriculum reforms, student activities, and much more have created a job that appears to extend far beyond normal work hours. In light of mounting bureaucracy and legislative reforms, the job is changing at record pace. Accountability has risen as supports and resources have declined.

Relatively new stressors driven by technology compound rising complexity within the principal's office and "access" related expectations. Schmidt (2008) notes: "the avalanche of new mandates and research on teaching and learning has caused smart principals [to succumb to the facts] that the inbox never sleeps, and they can work 24-7 and that the little red voice mail light will still blink relentlessly" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 25). According to Andreyko (2010), many principals new to the role find surprise in the realization that the "demands of constant attention to the political landscape" offers very little time for fruitful and meaningful interactions with the teachers, students, and stakeholders whom they are charged with serving (p.7).

Furthermore, principals are expected to enact data-driven decision making to seamlessly improve instruction in their schools and possess the mindset and attributes to continually push for increasing levels of effectiveness and efficiency throughout the organization and among all stakeholders. The challenge of adapting to the shift from manager to leader is only intensified by the realization that this evolution does not include an abandonment of the management imperative, but rather the addition of the leadership expectation. With the complex interaction and merging of diverse expectations from a wide array of stakeholders and constituents, principals can be left to feel that they must be everything to everyone.

Statement of Purpose

The broad and overwhelming nature of the principal's job description can lead to impossible expectations, burnout, high turnover in the position, and has worked to challenge the viability and sustainability of the position. Furthermore, the frustrating nature of battling time and energy shortages makes "getting everyone on the same page" very difficult within schools. The weighty tendency to gravitate toward top-down, transactional and policy-based leadership by principals seems to be the result of accountability pressures, lack of time, and institutional history. Donaldson (2001) notes, "We seem to not only be saddled with a leadership paradigm from the 1920's but with schools whose size and structures make any other leadership paradigm very difficult to develop" (p. 19).

With the multitude of ever-evolving expectations from an array of stakeholders, the prospects of consistent role conceptualization among school building leaders is daunting. As the 21st century job description for school principals continues to be written,

several key facts remain: more is being asked of the position and increased scrutiny has brought greater accountability and pressure to principals (Wiseman 2005; Lortie, 2009; Richards & Templin, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to examine principal role conceptualization and to further examine the lived experience within the principalship. Empirical and conceptual literature both within the field of education and more broadly across industry and organizations will be utilized to provide deeper contextual meaning. A qualitative, autoethnographic method will provide an investigative framework. I assume the position of a sociocultural anthropologist who studies the culture of the principalship while being personally embedded, the very subject in fact, in the specific setting being studied (Chang, 2008). This study seeks to illuminate the experience of the school principalship and to provide in detail the human experience of a school principal and the personal process through which role conceptualization occurs within the position. I will study myself and cultural surround as the principal of a large, comprehensive, public high school.

Research Questions

1. How does my experience as a secondary school principal lead to a conceptualization of my role?
2. What implications exist for such a conceptualization in contemporary U.S. public schooling?
3. How do I make sense of the work I am engaged in and how do I prioritize both the wide and dense expectations placed upon me?

4. What implications exist for such sense making considering the professional practice of administrative leadership?
5. How does my lived experience of the principalship inform the ongoing role conceptualization and reconstitution of the administrative position in public schooling?

Significance

This study seeks not only to provide answers to the aforementioned questions but also to provide an explicit rendering of what some practicing principals do, only not so explicitly – they engage in theory-informed critical self-reflection, or praxis. This process permits principals to better understand themselves and their position and ultimately, to perform more effectively within the position. Critical self-reflexivity offers practicing principals a valuable tool to improve and refine practice. Fostering this practice among principals and providing a template for this level of deep reflection is of value as school leaders seek to make deeper meaning of the work they engage in. Institutionally-rooted and at the same time, highly contextual, school principals and those who prepare and/or support them can benefit from a framework that is cognizant of broader implications on the field as a whole and inclusive of micro-level and ongoing, personal reflection and awareness within.

Conclusion

Shifts within the field of K-12 education have created a ripple effect that has altered the work of stakeholders engaged and impacted by these institutions. School principals are challenged with the daily task of directing their buildings and being inclusive of faculty and students in a way that attempts to meet the oft times divergent

expectations resulting from myriad sources of influence. In consideration of moral and ethical purpose, a neo-liberal political agenda and the associated mandates, and conflicting stakeholder expectations, role conceptualization within the principalship is at the very least, highly complex.

Examining the aforementioned role conceptualization based on the lived experience of a practitioner residing within the principalship not only suggests a map for similar in-depth personal analysis for other principals, but also offers rich insight into how principals conceptualize and define their roles on the job which ultimately work to explain decisions made and behaviors engaged in.

The study begins with a review of literature in the field. In addition to a review and situating of the principalship in a historical context, significant time is spent tracing the evolution of the position from its birth through the present. Examination of the principalship is inclusive of the identification of current "expectations" associated with the position. Broader work from the fields of organizational leadership, psychology, and sociology are reviewed as well. Role Theory (Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957) is discussed in significant detail as it is utilized along with Distributed Leadership as offered by Spillane, Halverson & Diamond (2004) to provide the theoretical frameworks for the study.

Chapter III provides a discussion of and justification for the use of autoethnography as the research methodology for the study. A general history of qualitative inquiry is provided along with a more comprehensive analysis and explanation of autoethnography in this regard. Within autoethnography, the researcher is both the observed and the observer. Essentially, the researcher becomes a socio-cultural anthropologist exploring a lived experience or culture from within as a participant

(Chang, 2008). This deep level of participation and acquaintance provides a valuable perspective from which to harness the voice of those interacting with and simultaneously experiencing a given phenomenon. In this research effort, that is to say, living within the culture of the principalship.

The personal narrative and presentation of the research is provided in Chapters IV through XII. Beginning with my personal background and transitioning through entrance into education as a career field and culminating in the position of the school principal, these chapters represent the "lived story" to be examined.

The study concludes in Chapter XIII. In the conclusion, connections are made between autoethnographic narrative and interview data and the broader work of research encompassing the principalship. Implications for the field along with considerations for future study round out the chapter.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Initiation of a broad review of scholarly literature will begin with the intent of placing the principalship in U.S. schooling in the appropriate historical context. Additionally, key theories must be explained and connected to this study and the greater project of understanding the dynamic position of the principalship. Central constructs help to provide the necessary groundwork to proceed. A thorough examination of the history of the principalship has been undertaken along with the identification of current principal expectations and requisite skill sets, personal characteristics, and traits required to navigate the position moving deeper into the 21st century U.S. setting. The work of Spillane et al. (2004) on the concept of "distributed leadership" is utilized as a theoretical lens through which to view the work of the principal in a more context-sensitive manner inclusive of "leader", "followers", and "situation," Review of pertinent literature in broader institutional and leadership theory is included as well to more fully inform a more complete picture of the work of school principals.

Historical Causes of Change in the Principalship

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided constitutional rights to schools and the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, or ESEA, sought to provide comprehensive equality of access to educational opportunities for all U. S. school children including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. ESEA provided federal money to schools and districts charged with serving disproportionate numbers of economically disadvantaged families and students. Accompanying these federal dollars was a requirement that the receiving schools evaluate the effectiveness of their respective

programs to ensure that monies were being spent effectively and as intended. The role of the school principal at this time in U. S. history was one of a bureaucrat. Principals were looked upon to provide order and stability in a time of social and political upheaval while coming to terms with new expectations of the role of schools in adequately serving all children (Taylor, 2007; Beck & Murphy, 1993; Vann, 2005).

In 1966 the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS), or Coleman Report added to the early accountability culture and was driven by the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. A byproduct of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Coleman Report (1966) sought to examine the quality of educational opportunities provided to the nation's diverse ethnic communities. Results described in Coleman indicated that the social setting and socio-economic make-up in which a student lived in and attended school were the primary indicators of educational achievement, not the differences between schools (Vann, 2005). The assertion that schools didn't matter by Coleman set off a frenetic search for "effective schools" that were achieving success in their efforts at educating students from challenged or disadvantaged backgrounds. Several new expectations began to arise for schools at this historical juncture inclusive of bilingual education services and special education. Responsibility for implementing these new initiatives and entitlements landed on the shoulders of site administrators (Vann, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Hallinger, 1992).

In the late 1970's, the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare delved back into research questioning the findings of Coleman. The result of this new research found hundreds of examples of less resourced students performing in exemplary ways. Continued study of these "effective schools" produced characteristics to serve as a road

map for other schools and birthed the "Effective Schools Movement." A primary researcher in this effort was Larry Lezotte. Armed with the belief that all children can learn, Lezotte identified the "Correlates of Effective Schools." Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools posits that schools control enough of the variables to ensure that virtually all students can learn and schools should be held accountable for student achievement. More specifically, Lezotte's Correlates call for the disaggregation of measured student achievement data to be certain that success is being achieved by all student subgroups within schools (Vann, 2005; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). The Effective Schools Movement, as it would become known, profoundly influenced the role expectations for schools and principals and worked to entrench the belief that schools played a major role in effectively educating students. This philosophical departure from earlier works including but not limited to the assertions of the Coleman Report have been highly influential in school policy development over the last three decades (Lezotte & McKee, 2006; Taylor, 2007). Coinciding with the "Effective Schools" movement, another crucial political force was being born.

Beginning in the early 1980's, the National Commission on Excellence in Education was established. Secretary of Education, Terrell Bell's work resulted in the shocking and landmark report in the spring of 1983 titled *A Nation At Risk*. Frustrated with lack of accountability, policymakers used the findings of *A Nation At Risk* to usher in new accountability measures and performance checks for schools, specifically, schools receiving Title 1 funds. *A Nation at Risk* centered on the role of the United States in a globally competitive sense and called for the study and implementation of effective school strategies to address what had become a national concern. According to Taylor

(2007), the 1980's saw principals become "program focused, problem solvers, resource providers, a visionary, a change agent, and an instructional leader" (p. 10). Consistent with many other education reforms and calls to action over the past thirty years, *A Nation at Risk* was instrumental in the evolution of principal to instructional leader. Specifically, in response to *A Nation At Risk*, recommendations were made to adopt rigorous standards for all educational institutions and to hold schools and school administrators accountable for student achievement (Vann, 2005).

In 1989 the administration of President George H.W. Bush coordinated a landmark educational summit that led to the establishment of the National Education Goals Panel and the launching of national education goals. Initially named America 2000, the proposed legislation became known as Goals 2000: Educate America Act, during the Clinton Administration. Goals 2000 held schools and principals accountable for improved teaching and learning and for bolstered levels of student achievement (Taylor, 2007).

According to Taylor, principals in the 1990's were expected to be "leaders, servants, educators, organizational and social architects, moral agents, and persons in the community" (p. 11). The late 90's also saw continued criticism of U. S. schools and their perceived failure at reaching acceptable levels of achievement for all students. In 2001, the criticisms were met with a response in the seventh reauthorization of ESEA known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 under President George W. Bush. NCLB held all schools accountable, not just Title 1 schools, and differed from previous legislation in three distinct ways: it expanded the information that must be reported to parents and the public including teacher quality, it required schools identified as "needing improvement"

to develop and implement improvement plans, and it ensured that every state defined the label of highly qualified teacher and ensured that low-income students were not subjected to disproportionately large numbers of less than qualified teachers (Vann, 2005). A lasting legacy of NCLB has been a focus on the expectation of "continuous improvement of instruction" led by building principals and strong accountability for the academic achievement of students spanning all demographic groups. This shift has profoundly impacted the way principals operate and behave (Taylor, 2007, p. 12).

Skills Needed for "Effective" School Leadership

Historical analysis explains and documents changes that have occurred in the work of school principals over the last three decades. When considering the standards movement and a burgeoning literature on effective principals, several common themes emerge to define the current role of the position. Serving as a philosophical underpinning for expectations of U. S. school principals is the vetted belief that schools, and therefore the principals who lead them, are responsible for the academic achievement of all students and should be held accountable for this subsequent achievement or lack thereof. Academic accountability themes include the following: providing a safe and orderly school environment conducive to student learning, promoting and enacting instructional leadership, developing and maintaining a positive school culture, developing and maintaining parent and community relationships and communication, actively shaping a school vision of achievement for all students, and being responsive to the "political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in which the school exists" (CCSSO, 2013). A broad review of the literature was utilized to identify themes including but not limited

to work from The Wallace Foundation and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards for school principals.

In *The School Principal as Leader* report, The Wallace Foundation outlines five key practices of school principals: shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement.

The shift to specific and designated professional standards for school principals has contributed to the accountability culture felt by school leaders and represents an attempt to provide clear expectations for the position. Hannigan (2008) outlines the development of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium and the role it has played in shaping the job description of principals primarily through higher education preparation standards for credentialing the novice aspirant. Established in 2002, and refined in 2008, the ISLLC standards include:

> Setting a widely shared vision for learning, developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts. (p. 6)

An example of implementation of the ISLLC standards can be seen in the state of Illinois where, as explained by Hannigan (2008), the standards were adopted and renamed the "Illinois Content Area Standards for Principals." The six adopted standards are virtually identical to ISLLC (Hannigan, 2008; CCSSO, 2013; Taylor, 2007; Fullan,

2007). Following is a more in-depth discussion of the recurring themes that reflect principal roles and expectations in today's schools.

Creating a safe and orderly environment to facilitate student learning

Popham (2001) defines transactional leadership as the "efficient management of school, climate, organizational processes and procedures" (p. 6). Transformational leadership is representative of processes that lead toward shared leadership and decision-making and move an organization toward a common vision or goal (Sergiovanni, 2007). Pepper (2010) posits that a balance must be struck between the highly publicized and much demanded transformational leadership style and the transactional leadership that ensures a school runs smoothly and functions properly (p. 46). Fullan (2002) explains that principals are caught between testing and accountability expectations and the long-held view of the middle management inclination indicative of transactional leadership. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium or ISLLC (2013) stresses a shift for principals to instructional leadership yet still includes management in their standards in 2002 and again in 2008: "Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (p. 6). The work of Marzano, Walters & McNulty (2005) reflects the "Effective Schools" ideals of the 70's and lists "providing an orderly atmosphere and learning environment" as a standard to be achieved by school leaders (p. 23). In discussing transactional leadership's necessity, Sergiovanni (2007) goes on to call for a tightly structured organizational operation. The work of the Wallace Foundation (2013) includes: "Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail" (p. 5). Undeniably, school leaders are called to provide for a school

climate conducive to learning for all students in their charge. In theory, it is through this process that they are afforded the ability to focus attention in the realm of instructional leadership.

Instructional Leadership and School Culture

According to Hallinger (2013), "Today, we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (p. 7).

Taylor (2007) discusses the principal's evolving role in instruction and notes that beyond all other developments in the alteration of the role of the school principal, a shift to instructional leader from manager is arguably the most profound. Murphy (2007) Posits that the principal's primary focus should be on learning and school improvement and the Council of Chief State School Officers further recognized the move from manager to instructional leader (Taylor, 2007; Murphy, 2002).

The Wallace Foundation (2013) identifies "improving instruction to enable teachers and students to learn at their utmost" as one of the five key responsibilities of school leaders (p. 6). ISLLC Standards (2013) promote administrators as developing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (CCSSO, 2013). The work of Marzano, Walters and McNulty (2005) focuses in great detail on the importance of instructional leadership from the principal's office and further emphasizes monitoring student progress on specific learning goals, supervising teachers, and promoting high expectations for student achievement and teacher growth (p. 23). Hallinger (2013) contends that instructional leadership is no

longer “optional” for school principals as the work of and demands on the role have shifted. “Thirty years later there is substantial consensus on the importance of instructional leadership in efforts to raise and sustain the quality of teaching and learning in schools” (p.7). Hallinger (2013) goes on to propose four tenets of instructional leadership in schools today:

> Instructional leadership affects conditions that create positive learning environments for students, creates academic press and mediates expectations embedded in curriculum, standards, structures, and processes, employs improvement strategies that are matched to the changing state of the school over time, and supports on-going professional learning for staff. (p. 7)

The context of accountability has changed the role of the principal and the definition of instructional leadership in the context of school principals’ work. Taylor (2007) notes several significant shifts including the need for principals to foster “Learning for all, adults included. Everyone is a learner and everyone is a teacher” (p. 25). Principals used to serve a familiar, middle-management role: books, buses, and buildings; now they are expected to be leaders of learners, promote collaboration, and engage in shared leadership that fosters professional growth for all. School-level administrators are charged with the task of developing and sustaining a school culture of continuous improvement for both students and adults. Furthermore, they are responsible for establishing a culture that is conducive to student learning and rooted in a socially just foundation (Freire, 1972; Gewirtz, 1998).

Parent/Community Connections

School leaders are expected to build fruitful partnerships with family and community. Epstein and Sanders (2006) defines these relationships in the following way: "Collaborations between school and community stakeholders that benefit school, community, and student performance" (p. 87). Epstein (2011) further notes:

> Without partnerships, educators segment students into the school child and the home child, ignoring the whole child. This parceling reduces or eliminates guidance, support, and encouragement for children's learning from parents, relatives, neighbors, peers, business partners, religious leaders, and other adults in the community. (p. 5)

With the call and expectation for schools to produce student achievement success for all patrons, the need for parental and community support for schools has never been higher or more expected. Epstein (2011), Khalifa (2012) and Ishimaru (2013), among others, have produced extensive research outlining the necessity of fostering strong, two-way partnerships between schools and the home and greater community. In many urban contexts, the principal serves an additional role as community organizer. Similarly, a striking contrast exists between the expectation of school principals to interact with and cultivate relationships with diverse stakeholders and the professional development or preparation work they receive to actually carry out this task. Utilizing community resources allows school leaders to more effectively address multiple dimensions that directly or indirectly impact student learning (Ishamiru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012; Epstein, 2011; Honig, 2012).

School districts must address the issue of community engagement and school district capacity to empower building leaders to harness community expertise and liberate principals to become organizers of a more robust pool of expertise to serve students in a

more comprehensive manner. Research connects strong community partnerships with increases in community support and perceptions of school effectiveness. Epstein and Sanders (2006) posit, "Students learn more and succeed at higher levels when home, school, and community work together to support students' learning and development" (p. 87). Beyond adding value to the school in the mission of educating students, community partnerships can create a tangible two-way benefit. Research has suggested that school leaders can directly improve community and neighborhoods. According to Khalifa (2012), "several studies have demonstrated that school leadership can play a role in *community*-oriented goals, improve the neighborhood community, and thus improve the lives of students" (p. 427). The broader community not only has many resources to offer principals but also expects and demands to be represented in schoolhouse affairs. This valuable awareness must be developed within building principals to engage community in a manner that fulfills both of these obligations. It is important to note that community involvement must be explicitly defined to represent the valuing of stakeholders as partners, not merely contributors of material resources. Epstein (2006) notes: "research shows that *partnership* is a better approach. In partnership, educators, families, and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate successes" (p. 4).

Khalifa (2012) draws a distinction between the more traditional "school-focused" goals of these partnerships and the current trend being presented through research. "The prevalent practice has been for schools to control the dialogue, to have school-oriented goals at the center of the relationship, and to place community-related goals and interests at the periphery" (p. 458). To move toward community-focused goals and reflecting the

principal expectation of community organizer requires a significant shift in preparation efforts for school leaders. According to Epstein (2011), "Most administrators are not prepared with new strategies to guide and lead their staffs to develop strong school programs and classroom practices that inform and involve all families about their children's learning, development, and educational plans for the future" (p. 10).

Social and cultural awareness must be present in the process of community engagement as well. The work of school principals is highly contextual and a keen sense of the community in which their work occurs is essential. Valuing of diverse groups and possessing skills to bridge gaps between school and these communities is of paramount concern and of great importance for leaders expected to produce and foster success for all students. Issues of equity that transcend socioeconomic, racial, and demographic boundaries undergird calls for broader and deeper community connections. Khalifa (2012) notes: "traditional methods of involving parents in school are not accessible to Latino families; for school leaders to be effective with often marginalized communities, innovative approaches must be developed and employed" (p. 429).

Shifts in administrator preparation efforts and in policy reforms have reflected and supported the development of principals as partnership-builders with community and family stakeholders. Epstein (2011) indicates: "The Education Commission of the States (2005) reported that of the 50 states, 17 directed all districts and schools to implement parental involvement policies while 15 others "urge" these programs" (p. 8). The role of effectively engaging diverse community stakeholders into the work of schools is now impossible to escape. Following a review of the literature, building and maintaining

relationships with parents and the greater community is revealed as a primary role and/or expectation of today's school principal; this has not always been the case.

Shaping a Vision of high achievement for all students

Keeping consistent with research dating back to the Effective Schools movement and reflective of the grander move toward social justice and equality on a cultural scale since 1964, school leaders are expected to shape a vision of high achievement for all. Similarly, accountability measures and educational policy have been rooted in holding school principals accountable for the academic achievement of all students in their charge (Freire, 1972; Brown, Benkovitz, Muttillo, & Urban, 2011; Darling-Hammond, Kohn, Meier, Sizer & Wood, 2004).

Understanding and Responding to Political, Social, Economic, Legal, and Cultural Context

Increased media scrutiny and high-pressure legislation inclusive of single letter grade school report cards proffered as a legitimate measure of school performance have placed increasing pressure on principals and therefore communication with stakeholders has never been more important. In an effort to garner as much support as possible, the role of principal has very much evolved into a position requiring excellent communicative skill and the eye of a marketing expert. Schools and their principals must "sell" their "product" to students and families and in many instances this competition is quite definitive. Charter, magnet, homeschool, and private school competition have changed the work of principals. Principals are left to communicate with the community to advocate for increased resources and to convince families to stay. It is no longer enough to do the work, principals must now make every effort to ensure that they communicate

that the work is being done and done to a level that garners a view of organizational legitimacy from a wider public (Hallinger, 2013).

Demands on schools and school leaders have changed over the last several decades. Rising accountability expectations and measurement has shifted the roles and expectations that stakeholders have for principals. Social changes and political pressures have altered community expectations of the principal and have forced a transition to a role that is at its core transformational. Distinctions between transformational and transactional leadership will be made later. Principals are expected to provide a safe and orderly school environment conducive to student learning, provide instructional leadership, develop and maintain a school culture that values learning for all, develop and maintain parent and community relationships and communication, manage people, data, and processes, shape a school vision of academic achievement for all students, and understand and respond to the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in which the school exists (Wallace, 2013; CCSSO, 2013). Current literature in the field, political dialogue, and administrator preparation efforts have worked together to perpetuate a lofty image of school leaders and have been constructed and shaped around faith in the viability of this "new" principalship (Wiseman, 2005; Lortie, 2009).

Bass andAvolio note (1996): "Some authors describe concepts similar to transformational leadership as charismatic, inspirational or visionary leadership" (p. 6). In contrast and in discussing transactional leadership, Hartog, Van Muijen and Koopman (1997) suggest: "transactional leadership theories are all founded on the idea that leader-follower relations are based on a series of exchanges or implicit bargains between leaders and followers" (p. 20).

Leadership

Definitions of leadership are as varied as the vast theories developed and offered to attempt to foster understanding of leadership and the individuals both formal and informal who engage in the process. Clearly defining key vocabulary in a conversation regarding leadership and school leadership is critically imperative. "Distributed leadership" as proposed by Spillane et al. (2004) is not the same as the commonly referred to models of "shared leadership" espoused in scholarly research and in trade and practitioner literature (p. 6). Similarly, distinctions must be made between the frequently used terms: administrator, manager, and leader. Effort will be paid to removing ambiguity in this regard and significant time will be spent on distinguishing terms, theoretical frameworks, and ontological perspectives that lend themselves to confusion among school leaders and scholars alike. Furthermore, variations in the use of terms and vocabulary among researchers and scholars does not necessarily reflect a lack of understanding among these individuals but rather different interpretations and uses of the aforementioned terms, strengthening the necessity for clarity in description within this dissertation.

Leadership Theories

Numerous theories have been developed to explain the work of leaders across broad contexts that are applicable to schools and the work of principals. An examination of a selection of relevant theories can provide context for a dialogue on school leadership and can work to inform leaders and aid in reflection on leadership practice and initiating change in schools.

Trait Theory

An early 20th century paradigm, according to trait theory as described by Hoy and Miskel (2008), "Leaders were generally regarded as superior individuals, who because of fortunate inheritance or social circumstance, possessed qualities and abilities that differentiated them from the followers" (p. 423). Trait theory and research dominated leadership study until the 1950's when widespread recognition that traits could be altered through inheritance, environment, and education began to occur. Hoy and Miskel (2008) continue: "In sum, the evidence supports the conclusion that the possession of certain traits increases the likelihood that a leader will be effective but it does not represent a return to the original trait assumption that "leaders are born, not made" (p. 423).

Despite the deterministic view of early trait theory, research and theory focused on the traits and skills associated with effective leadership abounds. Hoy and Miskel (2008) note that a more "balanced" approach has occurred over the last several decades. These traits can be divided into several categories including personality, motivation, and specific skills. These categories include attributes and characteristics ranging from self-confidence, integrity, and extroversion to self-efficacy, achievement orientation, and specific technical and interpersonal skills (p. 424). Study and analysis of leadership practice from a trait perspective is leader-focused. That is to say, it is aimed at producing a list of characteristics or behaviors that effective leaders possess without paying attention to or factoring in the other actors at play in a given context: followers, colleagues, and the situation. This point will be returned to in discussion of distributed leadership as espoused by Spillane et al. (2004) and marks a clear distinction between divergent theoretical perspectives (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Contingency Theory

A contingency theory perspective would claim that the situation of the school, the socio-economic status of the students for example, might have a more significant influence on leadership effectiveness than the behaviors or actions of the leader. Likewise, the motivation, self-efficacy, and interpersonal skills of the faculty can strongly contribute to the effectiveness of school leadership. Spillane et al. (2004) posits:

> Contingency Theory has focused on the relations between the situation of leaders' work and their actions, goals, and behaviors. Contingency theory assumes that there is no one best approach to organizing, that organizational structure matters when it comes to organizational performance, and the most effective method of organizing depends on the organization's environment. (p. 21)

Contingency theory illustrates a shift to a more contextually aware paradigm for analyzing the behavior of leaders and leader effectiveness. An introduction of "situation" into the interaction of leaders and their work adds complexity to analysis and moves beyond the more individual-focused tradition of trait theory. According to Hoy andMiskel (2008), "First, traits and skills of the leader and characteristics of the situation combine to produce leader behavior and effectiveness. Second, situational factors directly impact effectiveness" (p. 433).

Institutional Theory

Spillane et al. (2004) contends that institutional theorists tend toward deterministic views and can "smother human agency" (p. 8). Institutional theory posits that the behaviors and action of leaders are driven by a need for organizations and those charged with leading them to meet social and institutional norms, expectations, and institutional legitimacy. "Leadership is about preserving institutional legitimacy in order to maintain public support for the institution" (p. 8).

Institutional theory presents a risk of becoming "overly deterministic" and is considerably more focused on the institutional and organizational forces and structures than the behaviors and actions of the actors within the setting. Within this theoretical tradition the bounded rationality of those who are participants in the institution and a broader global society that determines what the institution is about and what it is do all dramatically form and frame the role of the principalship (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Baker & LeTendra, 2005; Wiseman, 2005). Speaking of the institutional nature of schooling, Baker and LeTendre (2005) note the "flattening" of schools that occurs of national and local cultures (p. xii).

The downplay of individual sense-making and conceptualization by leaders presented by institutional theory is a potential cause for concern when searching for frameworks that offer potential for human agency to take action in initiating change and making sense of context. Though not leader-focused in comparison to the aforementioned trait theory paradigm, institutional theory left to stand alone presents equally deterministic concerns for holistically analyzing leadership broadly and more specifically, in the context of mass schooling.

Distributed Leadership

In response to the stated concerns of the aforementioned potentially deterministic leadership theory paradigms, Spillane et al. (2004) outlines a leadership theory from a distributed perspective. The authors make a strong case for a need for a broader and more comprehensive lens through which leadership can be investigated and studied: "The literature on leadership, regardless of tradition, has focused mostly on those in formal leadership positions, chiefly on the chief executive officer or in the case of schools, the

school principal" (p. 6). This represents an ontological shift in what leadership means: "the leaders' traits approach defines leadership chiefly as a function of individual personality, ability, traits, and style and the focus on the venerable "great man" theories of leadership continues unabated." (p. 6)

Schools are by nature social and cultural organizations. This is to say, schools are communities inclusive of diverse structures, serving diverse communities and diverse students. If traditional theories of leadership are relied upon to analyze the work of school leaders, we run the risk of ignoring the social and context-diverse nature of schools and therefore are granted minimal potentially beneficial insight. Spillane et al. (2004) offers: "If leadership is an organizational quality, then investigations of leadership practice that focus exclusively on the work of individual positional leaders are unlikely to generate comprehensive understandings of the practice of school leadership" (p. 6).

The work of school leaders and of schools happens within a social context. Simply put, leaders do not operate in a vacuum. The situation and the various other "actors" that work in concert to paint the picture of the schoolhouse are not merely stage props and window dressing completing the backdrop of the work of leaders. In fact, these actors are deeply intertwined with the work of the formal school leader they are in essence, inseparable.

Distributed leadership theory outlines a theoretical framework that acknowledges that individual ability, skill, and personality of the leader is not enough to make strong assertions about effective leadership practice and behaviors. "Thus, because of the mutuality of the individual and the environment, human activity is distributed in the interactive web of actors and artifacts, and situation is the appropriate unit of analysis for

studying practice" (Spillane, et al., 2004, p. 8). The purpose of the distributed leadership framework is to provide a "meta-lens" that offers potentially valuable insight into the work of school leadership.

Distributed leadership theory is highly contextual and issues a call for context-specific study of leadership varying significantly from generalized lists of traits, attributes, or actions suggested without mention of social, organizational, or institutional context. "In this view, activity is a product of what the actor knows, believes, and does in and through particular social, cultural, and material contexts" (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 10). Analysis of leaders should occur not through what leaders do, but through leadership activity that requires and occurs through the execution of specific tasks and inclusive of leaders, followers, and situation. This context-rich focus provides greater depth to understanding the complex work of school principals. According to Spillane et al (2004): "Context-specific rather than proposing to develop, articulate, and disseminate neutral, task-generic templates outlining the moves that leaders should make, it argues for the development of rich theoretical knowledge based on studies of practice that are context-sensitive and task specific" (p. 10).

Distributed leadership theory values the study of leaders in action and views the followers and situation as essential elements in leadership practice. Therefore, leadership is not situated as an attribute of a person, but rather leadership is a quality of the constitutive space between organizational actors, relational and organizational tools, and particular cultural and material settings. This ontological turn means that principals reside in an interactive web of co-directionality and influence based upon a process of reciprocal interdependency (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner &

Szabo, 2002). The interaction of leaders, followers, and situation in how leadership tasks are carried out is at the core of this theoretical framework. Again, it is important to note that distributed leadership is not to be confused with shared leadership. Many have used the term in this fashion but in the context of this paper it is defined as a specific theoretical lens that embraces the notion that leadership activity is "distributed" among a web of actors in a given social context inclusive of leaders, followers, and situation.

To harness collective organizational energies in an effort to move schools forward, a definition of leadership that reflects the intrinsically complex nature of the work of school leaders is required. We must take a deeper, more descriptive look at defining leadership and defining leadership within the context of mass schooling (Wiseman, 2005).

Hoy and Miskell (2008) define leadership as "a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task" (p. 419). The authors go on to draw a distinction between administrators and leaders: "Administrators emphasize stability and efficiency whereas leaders stress adaptive change and getting people to agree about what needs to be accomplished" (p. 420). Spillane et al. (2004) is more specific in formulating a definition of leadership as it relates specifically to the work of schools: "The identification, acquisition, allocation, co-ordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning" (p. 11). Finally, Donaldson (2006) defines school leadership as "The mobilization of people to adapt a school's practices and beliefs so that it more fully achieves its mission with all children" (p. 2). The aforementioned definitions build on one another and each provides greater depth to

the broader dialogue. In synthesizing these definitions of school leadership, common themes arise including: initiating change, identifying, acquiring, and utilizing diverse resources, pursuit of a common purpose, and benefitting all students. Undoubtedly, school leadership entails mobilizing individuals in a concerted and focused effort.

A Brief History of Leadership in Schools

The role of the principal has shifted dramatically over the past several decades. With this shift, the call for educational leadership has strengthened among legislators, policymakers, and in district offices across the U. S. This trend has signaled an abrupt evolution in the practices and behaviors of school principals and significant role conflict has developed between various stakeholders and their accompanying expectations for building leaders (Biddle, 2006; Ishamiru, 2013). To further understand the historical context of this shift in roles and expectations, it is necessary to examine in greater detail the process that has moved principals from "managers" to "leaders."

School leadership and specifically, the principalship has its' roots in corporate culture. This top-down, authoritarian model presents a stark contrast to the style of leadership proposed by current "effective school" and collaborative research. The "middle management" nature of the principal position is well documented. Social and institutional forces have worked together to produce other, more subtle expectation for building leaders regarding gender, age, and personality traits that "suited" the position. "During the first half of the 20th century, school-level leadership came to be accepted as primarily a middle-management function executed by male principals in schools of mostly female faculty and staff" (Donaldson, 2006, p. 4).

Role Theory

> The principal is conflicted. He values being a loyal subordinate in the district's chain of command. He is expected to execute district policy. Someday he may even want an administrative job in the district office. But the principal as a former teacher, also values teachers' classroom autonomy and respects their professionalism. (Cuban, 2001, p. 11)

Role Theory (Biddle, 1986, 2006; Hindin, 2009; Ishamiru, 2013; Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957; Parsons, 1951; Stryker, 2001) suggests that conceptualization of individual role and perceived expectations of that role, influences behaviors and actions of the individual filling the role. As previously mentioned, role conflict can develop or exists when different stakeholders conceptualize a role in divergent or varying ways. Progressing forward, the collective grouping of these stakeholders will be referred to as the role-set. This connection can lend valuable insight into the shifting role of school principals over time. More directly, by understanding the historical context of the principalship, we can better understand the challenges facing these leaders as they work to reinvent the nature of the position and move increasingly further away from a position conceived at the turn of the twentieth century (Biddle, 1986, 2006; Hindin, 2009; Ishamiru, 2013; Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957; Parsons, 1951; Stryker, 2001).

Role Theory works to explain the how individual "actors" in specific social contexts are expected to behave or act. According to Biddle (1986), distinct behaviors can be predicted based upon social identities and situations. Linton (1936), an early role theorist, defined "status" as an individual's position within a given hierarchy. According to Role Theory, individuals are guided by internal or perhaps, enforced expectations and are judged or evaluated on how effectively they meet the aforementioned expectations.

Role conflict develops when conflicting expectations present themselves and fulfillment of these divergent expectations is simply not realistic or feasible. In the context of school principals, this conflict can manifest itself in many ways, namely, the varying expectations placed upon the principal from stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, and board members (Hindin, 2009). Additionally, role conflict can potentially lead to the advent of "role retreatism" as discussed by Richards and Temlin (2012). Consideration of role prioritization and development of "sense of self" within the office of the principalship is paramount within this study.

> There may be limited possibilities for avoiding role conflict by redefining the situation as well as evasion of the roles. However, role conflict often results in role retreatism, which involves devoting additional time and commitment to one role at the expense of others. The role that is chosen can often be predicted by the way in which an individual prioritizes roles related to prioritization, role and person merger involves a role becoming central to an individual's sense of self. Roles are arranged in a loose hierarchy from most to least important to the individual's identity. Actors tend to prioritize performance in the roles that are higher on their personal hierarchy. Roles most closely tied to an individual's identity are most predictive of behavior. (p. 164)

The Leadership vs. Management Distinction

Obvious conflicts arise for the work of principals upon examination of the prescribed intentions of leadership and management functions. Leadership, and as will be discussed more comprehensively later, transformational leadership, occurs to initiate change. Managerial functions on the other hand, exist to maintain order and stability within an organization. Principals must possess the ability to engage in the blending of managerial and leadership functions. Organizationally speaking, schools are structured in many settings to facilitate management while being naturally opposed to behaviors or

movements that in some ways may potentially threaten the status quo (Spillane et al., 2004).

Donaldson (2006) notes the overwhelming tide toward management behavior in schools: "Within the school and district workplaces, the managerial imperative, not the impulse toward leadership, dominates behavior" (p. 2). It is of importance to reiterate the strength of competing organizational forces that structurally define the principalship. Hallinger (2013) in quoting the work of Cuban (1988) addresses the "overt" and "covert" forces that make this so: "Embedded in the *DNA* of the principalship is a managerial imperative. Efforts taken by principals to act in ways that depart from this managerial or conservative orientation are likely to face overt and covert resistance from above and below, as well as inside and outside the school" (p. 8).

Balancing leadership styles is a requirement of the principalship. Pepper (2010) discusses transformational and transactional leadership and their dual importance to effective principals. Transformational leadership is inclusive of collaborative efforts of principals with various stakeholders ranging from teachers to community members. Transformational leadership similarly entails shared decision-making and leadership. Transactional leadership on the other hand, refers to the efficient management of the school, climate, organizational processes, and procedures. Principals are caught between expectations, the transactional role of the past and the achievement-laden accountability culture of today (Pepper, 2010).

Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership

In U.S. schools today, it is expected that effective principals must possess both management and more pure "leadership" skill. Popham (2001) refers to these as

transformational and transactional leadership roles. School leaders are responsible for providing both. In speaking of transformational leadership as it relates to the school context, Pepper states: "This approach advocates a shared leadership base in which school administration, along with faculty and staff, participate in decision-making focused on effective curriculum development and instructional practices" (p. 46). Transformational leadership is indicative of familiar beliefs inclusive of working toward a shared organizational vision or mission, collaborative work and purpose, and developing and nurturing a strong organizational culture that values the input and growth of all members. Bass and Avolio (1996) outline four inter-related components of transformational leadership: "charismatic, inspirational, intellectually stimulating, and individually considerate" (p. 9). Transcendence of self-interest to benefit society or the group is a hallmark outcome of successful transformational leadership, as the leader wields influence toward this end. If the desired outcome of transactional leadership is to ensure followers do what is expected through a tit-for-tat exchange of quid pro quo contingencies, the desired outcome of transformational leadership is to inspire followers to go beyond job descriptions and traditional expectations such as work-to-rule mentality. Transformational leadership is often characterized by a strong and personal attachment to the leader along with an enhanced awareness among followers of the broader mission of the organization and belief in exchanging personal gain for group progress toward a collective mission and purpose (Bass & Avolio, 1996; Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997).

In drawing distinction from transformational leadership, Bass and Avolio (1996) discuss two prevailing characteristics of transactional leadership; management by exception, and contingent reward:

> Management by exception is active, such as when the leader arranges to monitor and correct follower performance, or passive**,** i.e. only when something goes wrong does the leader intervene to take remedial action. The leader concentrates on identifying and correcting mistakes and taking disciplinary action. Contingent reward is a more constructive, positive transaction involving directed, consultative or negotiated agreements between leaders and followers about objectives and/or task requirements. The leader promises and/or provides suitable rewards and recognition if followers achieve the objectives or execute the tasks as required. (p. 10)

Pepper posits that transactional leadership is focused on more traditional "managerial" functions within schools: "This aspect of leadership is best accomplished through the transactional leadership style which provides for the effective oversight of the daily management and organizational needs of the school" (p. 7). This leadership style takes a very directive approach to managing the environment. Transactional leadership clarifies expectations for followers and provides recognition when goals and expectations are reached. Hartog et al. (1997) note: "transactional leadership theories are all founded on the idea that leader-follower relations are based on a series of exchanges or implicit bargains between leaders and followers" (p. 20).

Researchers vary in their definitions of transactional leadership and the role it should play in school and principal leadership. Physical and organizational structures must be tended to and the cafeteria must function smoothly. Custodial services must be in line and the processing of textbooks ought to be seamless for the organization of schools to operate effectively. Little argument is made against the managerial role of principals; this work is deeply embedded in the position and will remain so. Scholars differ in their

use of the term “transactional leadership”. Managerial functions and expectations do not necessarily entail a transactional leadership style as proposed by some literature, but rather are a necessity of a position that included physical and organizational resources and structures that need maintenance and upkeep. It is necessary to draw a distinction between transformational and transactional leadership style that differs from this managerial definition espoused by Pepper (2010), among others. Bass (1985) argues that leaders can be both transactional and transformational as transactional leadership builds on transformational leadership, but not vice versa. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles represent a desire to reach an end goal, the greatest distinction to be drawn is in the process through which this goal pursuit and attainment occurs. That being said, the accomplishment of the managerial imperative can occur largely through transformational means as belief in organizational purpose can compel individuals to assume roles and responsibilities for processes representative of a culture rich in self-governance and driven/inspired by a sense of professional autonomy (Bass, 1985; Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997).

Transactional leadership is associated with more traditional “top-down”, or hierarchal models of leading organizations. Donaldson (2006) addresses the tendency for many school leaders to be pulled away from transformational leadership practice:

> Despite leaders desire to be transformational, their inability to reach everybody routinely with the same message and to “get everybody on the same page” incline them toward top-down, transactional leadership relationships and methods that school reform literature declares ineffective. (p. 20)

Donaldson’s definition of transformational leadership is one of collaboration, common purpose, stakeholder input, and is aimed at lasting organizational change for the

better. In practice, transformational leadership described by Donaldson would be associated with specific behaviors. Embedded structures that foster professional collaboration, the sharing of ideas, and mentorship among teachers and administrators alike are powerful tools to drive professional growth (Connery, 2014; Donaldson, 2006). Targeted and intentional development of a shared mission and vision is consistent with the end goal of establishing a common organizational purpose that results in "action in common" among stakeholders. Additionally, providing faculty members with professional autonomy to make decisions within their respective spheres of influence fosters sustained stakeholder engagement in the school improvement process. Essential structures that provide consistent input from teachers and staff along with policies reflective of diverse stakeholder voice further aid in the development of the transformational model theorized in the work of Donaldson (Donaldson, 2006).

Challenges to Leadership in Schools

Formidable organizational and institutional forces are in place making leadership, more specifically, transformational leadership in schools challenging. As noted by Donaldson (2006), time constraints for example, make interaction between principals and those they lead difficult at best, "Most American public schools operate in ways that make people largely inaccessible to leaders" (p. 11). This isn't to say that teacher unavailability is a negative but rather creates an organizational "obstacle" to leadership and institutional change. Ironically, this unavailability of teachers is due to the involved nature of their direct work with students and their largely compressed work schedules favoring the maximization of face-time with students in classrooms and courses. If teachers are to spend the lion's share of their time working with students toward

improved instruction bolstering learning for all, when do they have time to provide feedback, insight, and input to principals, let alone professional develop themselves as a vibrant community of practice as a job-embedded practice within the field? When do they have time to assume formal and/or informal leadership roles (Donaldson, 2006)?

As such, this organizational feature of schooling can very readily predispose school workers to a compliance orientation rather than a professional commitment orientation (Rowan, 1990). Donaldson (2006) addressed this point further and hints at the complex interaction of organizational and institutional influences that make transformational leadership practices in schools such an awkward fit.

> Again, the busyness of school - unquestionably a positive attribute of a responsive, student-centered school conspires against the model of leadership that requires regular, concentrated time from all constituents for communication, planning, coordination of efforts and policy, and uniformity of practice. (p. 13)

Donaldson's Theory of School Leadership

Gordon Donaldson (2006) presents a familiar perspective of school leadership that is transformational in nature. Donaldson's school leadership theory posits that leadership occurs in three essential dimensions: fostering mutual trust, marrying individual commitment and organizational purposes, and nurturing a shared belief or "action in common" (p.7).

Donaldson (2006) contends that school leadership has failed to promote lasting organizational improvement and has failed at producing a model or expectation sustainable for school leaders. Similar to the work of Spillane, et al. (2004), Donaldson (2006) posits that leadership exists in vast and rich interpersonal networks of actors in a given setting. Highly relational in nature, this theory stresses three "streams" within

leadership practice: an open, trusting, affirmative relationship; commitment to mutual purposes with moral benefit and shared belief in action-in-common (p. 49). Donaldson draws on the metaphor of streams flowing into a river to speak to the inherent intermingling of the streams and the associated and natural complexity of putting our finger on school leadership: "Once in a river, we cannot really separate the water droplets of one stream from the other. Altogether, they constitute the flow, the shape, the health, and the power of the river, intermingling in ways that we need constantly to study but which we are unlikely ever to reduce to a simple and accurate model" (p. 52).

Donaldson's three streams model shifts the responsibility of leadership to all community members interested in progressing the organization forward and alters the role of principal to one of leadership developer. The model does not seek uniform and policy-based action but rather "action-in-common," that is to say, all actions moving in the same direction and anchored in a strong focus of increased learning for all students. With its emphasis on action-in-common instead of uniform action, the model legitimizes the professional autonomy and independence of school workers and community members, both autonomous and collective deliberative judgment, and "orbital patterns of educators' work without compromising common purpose" (p. 54).

Leadership expectations for school principals have shifted and these individuals are left to wrestle with competing roles representative of traditional approaches and newly suggested theory, as noted by Pepper (2010), "today's school leaders are caught between current expectations of improving test results and expectations of the past in which the principal's job was to see that the school ran smoothly and the principal was responsive to students, parents, and other stakeholders" (p. 2). Through a call for

transformational models of leadership and inclusive theories developed by the likes of Donaldson and Spillane, institutional and organizational pressures and forces work in contradiction to this revolution. Pepper (2010) notes:

> The current spotlight on the use of test scores to demonstrate accountability without guidance or support for capacity building may inadvertently be creating a situation in which principals feel forced to take full responsibility for the academic programs and processes of the school. This pressure could lead them to use a more authoritative leadership approach in which they alone make decisions about the instructional practices used and about curriculum development activities within the school. (p. 2)

Research has documented the potential value of shared leadership models and practices but a study of the context of mass schooling in a culture of accountability can add clarity to why so many school leaders fail to make this transition from transactional to transformational (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Wiseman, 2005; Lortie, 2009). Hallinger (2013) among others contends that the connection between school leaders and student achievement is not necessarily a direct one, and that "leadership effects on learning are achieved *indirectly* by affecting people, work structures and processes, and school culture" (p. 8). Hallinger further warns of the "heroic conception of the school principal while simultaneously emphasizing the crucial need for excellent leadership from the position" (p. 8).

Trends in the research indicate a necessity for shared leadership to combat the "hero principal" dilemma and to foster belief in a shared purpose toward a common goal among formal and informal leaders alike. Lezotte and McKee (2006) address this point and stress the importance of implementing collaborative processes and assigning appropriate leadership roles throughout the organization.

School leadership is a highly contextual art and science. Leaders must possess the ability to develop leadership at all levels of the organization with an emphasis on sustainability as a constant. This examination and reflection is afforded through the frameworks provided by Donaldson (2006) and various other institutional and organizational theorists with a school leadership bent. Progress within the field is only possible through perspectives that honor the inherent complexity and contextual nature of school leadership. According to Day (2007):

> The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices—not the practices themselves—demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work. Successful leaders apply contextually sensitive combinations of the basic leadership practices to their workplaces. (p. 8)

Institutional Nature of Schools and School Leadership

Alexander Wiseman summarizes the plight of the school principal today in the U.S.:

> American principals are in peril. They are in peril of becoming victims of the growing accountability policies in the United States. They are in peril of believing the hype of their own importance and power. They are in peril of becoming heavy-handed demagogues in largely democratic educational systems. (p. 2)

The role of the American school principal has mirrored the shift in schools in general that has occurred over the past century plus. In an era of internal progress at the turn of the 20th century it was necessary for principals to be bolstered with the autonomy and ultimate authority to make efficient, top-down decisions. This need called for a corresponding centralization of power and decision-making strength with a top administrator, the principal. With the ushering in of the Cold War and specifically, the successful launching of the Russian satellite, *Sputnik*, an age of external competition

forever altered the landscape of American education and birthed a lasting emphasis on science and mathematics education. With external competition came the pressure on principals to produce a quality product that could compete globally. Finally, the 1980's marked the beginning of the current era of standards and accountability in American schools. These standards and accountability have fostered a need for increased layers of standardized testing practices for students and high-stakes accountability measures for public school educators. Wiseman (2005) outlines the evolution of three primary expectations that create pressure for school principals: the achievement expectation, the access expectation, and the accountability expectation.

Tucker and Codding (2002) coherently outline the inherent challenges of the current principalship and the struggles, challenges, and vexing contradictions implicit in holding the position:

> Imagine that you are the principal, this person who is being asked to produce great improvements in student achievement. You cannot select your staff. You cannot fire anyone who is already on your staff. You cannot award or withhold a bonus from anyone. Seniority rights for teachers mean that overnight, you can lose people you have made an enormous investment in and have them replaced by people who couldn't care less about your agenda. You may have little control over the instructional materials that are used. Someone else controls the training agenda. Someone else controls how all but a small amount of your regular budget is spent. Someone else controls how the federal program money will be spent. Some people who work in your school report directly to people in the central office rather than to you. In some systems, you do not even have the right to assign teachers to classes because teachers' seniority rights govern assignment. Yet despite all this, if your students do not make progress on the state accountability measures, your school is likely to be put on a public list of low performing schools. If performance does not improve, your school could be closed, the faculty disbanded, and you fired. You will be held responsible for the whole mess. (pp. 6–7).

In considering the work of Wiseman (2005), a return to Institutional Theory is appropriate. Institutional theory posits that the behaviors and action of leaders are driven

by a need for organizations and those charged with leading them to meet social and institutional norms, expectations, and "institutional legitimacy." "Leadership is about preserving institutional legitimacy in order to maintain public support for the institution." Spillane et al (2004) further work to situate institutional theory in the broader analysis of educational leadership as norms, rules, and definitions are constructed within the role.

Multiple perspectives must be considered in an analysis of divergent theories on leadership and institutional theory as lenses to view the current state of the principlaship. Institutional theory presents a risk of becoming "overly deterministic" according to Spillane and is considerably more focused on the institutional and organizational forces and structures than the behaviors and actions of the actors within the setting. This argument serves as a warning or call for an awareness to the prospective limitations of analyzing the principalship merely trough an institutional theoretical lens which clearly shifts the role of principals and the corresponding power to leverage organizational and institutional change.

The principalship has changed dramatically over the course of the last two decades. Principals are accountable to many more pressures than their predecessors and are the recipients of greater media and community attention. Cries for accountability have expanded from a focus on academics into various social and affective dimensions. Despite these increased pressures and demands, little has changed in terms of supports for principals and the establishment of more viable expectations and descriptions of the principalship. (Wiseman, 2005) The question is very relevant and timely facing principals and those responsible for helping them improve: Do systems, structures, and realistic expectations exist that present opportunities for sustainable success for principals? Are

school districts and communities patient enough to invest in low principal turnover realizing that it takes between five and seven years for principals to have a "beneficial impact on a school" (Wallace, 2013, p. 16)?

Viewing the principalship from an institutional perspective and discussing the work of school principals in the context of an "accountability culture," Wiseman makes note of the dominant economic belief undergirding American society specifically. "When individual exceptionalism blends with market-driven capitalist ideology, individual accountability for performance becomes a part of the conventional wisdom" (Wiseman, 2005, p. 19). Accompanying the influence of the aforementioned ideologies is a belief that school principals ought to act and behave in a manner consistent with the traditional image of the corporate CEO. Building on and perpetuating the model of top-down, authoritative, middle manager, this image initiates lofty responsibility expectations for principals. Harkening back to the ideology of individual exceptionalism, strong institutional tendencies toward individualizing organizational responsibility further explains the accountability pressures felt by school building leaders (Wiseman, 2005). A common and vetted belief in the sustainable performance of "hero principals" works alongside the institutionally-situated context of schools to further identify the accountability culture: "coupled with the mass, compulsory, and publicly permeable character of the American school system, leads to a lot of accountability" (Wiseman, 2005, p.19).

Substantial research has been produced further documenting the institutionally rooted concept of the authoritarian, corporate inspired executive in the principal's office. Grubb (2006) outlines the traditional strategies for combating the issue of the

overwhelmed principal. These traditional strategies are rooted in faith in the recruitment of outstanding candidates and reflecting on and analyzing principal preparation efforts. All of these strategies work together to strengthen the aforementioned and strongly held belief that a "super or hero principal" can be identified or grown who is capable of effectively handling the rigors of the position (p. 520). Any further reiteration of this viability fallacy only works to move the reconceptualization of the principalship into a more realistic model further away.

Documented flaws in principal preparation and support not only perpetuate unrealistic expectations for principals, they work to produce "checklists" of behaviors and actions disconnected from the reality of the work and individual context. Honig (2012) posits that school district-level leadership has been unsuccessful at establishing authentic models of principal professional development as opposed to more traditional models including graduate coursework and professional day style PD. Calling for rigorous job-embedded professional development for principals is not unlike earlier mentioned models that rely heavily on reflective practice and inquiry to develop capacity among all stakeholders, school leaders included. This idea of developing a shared or collective capacity for leadership in an organizational setting meshes well with the concept of transformational leadership and is consistent with researched-based recommendations for combating ineffective and flawed principal preparation and support efforts (Lambert, et al. 2002; Wallace, 2013). Further complicating the challenges facing principals when considering achievement, access and accountability pressures is the status quo in the field of principal professional development where minimal supports for practicing principals exist. Honig (2012) offers an alternative approach:

> At the heart of several of these reforms, central offices move away from occasional professional development for principals to prioritizing ongoing, intensive, job-embedded support to school principals to help them improve classroom instruction-roles for principals sometimes called "instructional leadership. (p. 734)

Without support (focused coaching and mentoring programming for instance) for sustainable and reasonable models of principal behavior and clearly explained and detailed job descriptions, principals are left to drown in a sea of ambiguous autonomy (Connery, 2014).

Research and institutional theorists indicate that a neo-liberal inspired culture of accountability is present for school principals born from three different expectations for principals working together: the achievement expectation, the access expectation, and the accountability expectation.

The Achievement Expectation

Considering the shift to principals as instructional leaders, Wiseman (2005) notes: "The resulting pressure on principals to influence and, it is hoped, improve the instruction of students is significant. This notion of principal as instructional leaders has become the conventional perspective of principals, although the terms used to describe it change every few years" (p. 21). This achievement expectation strengthens the belief that the behaviors and actions of the school principal are directly responsible for the academic achievement of student who should perform well and should demonstrate a continued upward trajectory in academic achievement year after year. Wiseman (2005) illuminates the lack of strong, data-based evidence producing a causal link between principal behavior and student achievement and more specifically, positive change in student performance.

Utilizing an institutional theory approach, Wiseman (2005) argues that linking principal behaviors to student achievement is an effort to "validate the purpose of principals" (Wiseman, 2005, p. 21). Essentially, the argument that Wiseman is making is that the role of the principalship in the United States and other traditional-sponsored schooling systems would be vastly altered if the link between principal and student learning were not present. This expectation and belief is strongly represented in literature, education research and policy, and in the conventional wisdom of those inside and outside of schools. Institutional forces and expectations are working against the reconceptualization of the principalship.

The Access Expectation

According to Wiseman (2005), access to principals from a variety of stakeholders can prove to be a major undertaking: "The access expectation requires that principals be available to every parent, every citizen, every business leader, every politician, and on top of that everyone else who is in that school's community" (p. 22). The very public and democratically-oriented nature of schools in traditional settings like the United States coupled with being "largely locally funded," results in a strong expectation of access for stakeholders. In essence, every taxpayer in a given community becomes the principal's "boss," or feels that they have a significant voice to be heard in the affairs and in the decisions being made in the schoolhouse (p. 22).

Mass and compulsory schooling means that every member of the community not only has access to, but also is required to attend school. Similarly, public schools are strongly rooted in the public service sector. These organizational characteristics work together to produce a strong expectation of "permeability" among stakeholders ranging

from parents to broader members of the community. Wiseman (2005) notes the permeability pressures on principals: "Schools are the only organizations in the world in which high degrees of organizational autonomy and high levels of external penetration are both expected and required" (p. 22). Despite the high permeability of the work of schools, the conflicting performance and accountability expectation associated with corporate-style leaders is demanded. This contradiction in autonomy, or lack thereof, versus accountability makes for a unique and vexing dilemma for principals.

School principals are expected to be accessible to parents, business leaders and community members. In addition to accessibility, the work of schools is required and expected to reflect the desires and values of their greater constituency. It is of importance to discuss the "permeability" of public schools in light of their compulsory nature. Principals feel the access expectation on a daily basis as they engage in the decision-making and leadership process. Additionally, twenty-four hour, seven day a week connection to school leaders has become the norm. Corporate-style accountability is demanded of schools and principals yet these organizational leaders are burdened with the expectation of immediate access and responsiveness to parent and community requests and concerns. Principals are required to be available and to be responsive to the long term and immediate requests, demands, and values of the wider community. Additionally, the issue of access is one of addressing critical multiculturalism, equity, and social justice. There are historically and systemically marginalized populations that do not and/or cannot access dominant U.S. institutions and their related opportunities. A Multicultural Education Framework calls for practical school leadership functions including: culturally compatible teaching rooted in student learning style, and the broader

diversification of school faculty (Leistyna, 2002). Educational leaders are confronted with the moral imperative of viewing all students as more than economic actors and a collection of remedial deficiencies impeding their ability to function properly within the status quo in U.S. compulsory mass schooling. That is to say, educational leaders seek to progress or to transform the entirety of the educational environment (Leistyna, 2002). In further elaborating on the moral imperative embedded within Critical Multicultural Education, Leistyna (2002) notes that the construct provides a viable framework for school principals to both examine potential access issues rooted in a moral perspective within their schools while presenting creative options to combat the ramifications or protection of the status quo resulting from inaction in this regard.

The Accountability Expectation

Mounting accountability pressures according to Wiseman (2005) have worked with other expectations to alter the principalship:

> The accountability expectation requires that the responsibility for the ever-increasing achievement or productivity in a school belongs to the principal first and foremost, and if ever the achievement expectation should not be met, then the principal must be doing something wrong. (p. 23)

The nature of the principalship demonstrates that principals are organizationally removed from direct contact with student learning, however, principals are held directly accountable for student learning or the lack thereof. Wiseman (2005) argues that a tradition exists in education policy and reform efforts of emphasizing a "corporate, top-down structure" for accountability in schools (p. 23). Moving back to what he deems a flawed achievement expectation for principals and lack of a causal link between principal behavior and student learning, Wiseman notes that this ever-present demand for

performance despite convincing evidence has built and perpetuated a corporate accountability structure.

As with corporate executives, school principals are held accountable for the performance of their organizations. Wiseman (2005) concludes that a culture of accountability has been established in schools that has fundamentally changed the way that principals are forced to act and operate. Facing greater pressures, many principals have abandoned democratic leadership and principles and have resorted to "heavy handed demagoguery" where top-down mandates and detailed control rule the day (p. 12). In his article: "A Job Too Big for One: Multiple Principals and Other Nontraditional Approaches to School Leadership," Grubb (2006) states: "In an era of accountability, policy makers have imposed new requirements, and the principal is responsible for enhancing progress on multiple (and often conflicting) measures of educational achievement" (p. 519).

Wiseman (2005) utilizes institutional theory to propose alternative explanations for achievement outcomes by students in schools: "The nonconventional approach suggests that principals' individual resources and decision-making authority are not as significant to student learning as the institutionalized model or organizational context in which their behaviors exist and to which they conform" (p. 25). This broader lens to view student achievement and school performance works directly against the leader-centric accountability culture. "Variation in behavior that is contextualized to specific school conditions and communities should also be more influential than behaviors that follow a strictly standardized model" (p. 26). This connects with the work of Spillane et al. (2004) who contend that through "distributed leadership," leadership behavior is spread fully

over leaders, followers, and context. More specifically, leadership behavior is more effectively analyzed when viewed in light of these various considerations working together to shape behavior and decision-making. According to Wiseman (2005), context-based and nuanced study of decision making by school principals works against the model calling for generic templates or checklists for effective principal behavior that work to fortify the accountability expectation in schools.

Wiseman (2005) points out the institutional nature of leader behavior in schools: "Across the many kinds of schools and educational environments that exist, there are often consistently similar pressures on principals to behave in certain ways and perform certain duties" (p. 101). How principals act and behave is a complex conversation. Principals look to a variety of sources to derive meaning and many forces and pressures work together to help shape this behavior. "The mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change consist of coercive, mimetic, and normative influences" (p. 101). Institutional isomorphism is the idea that similar institutions evolve to similar models of belief and action even across wide boundaries and international contexts. If left unchecked, this process can subject principals with the overt and sometimes covert, pressures of applying normatively dominant neoliberal policy/reform perspectives, and context-neutral behaviors or strategies while further ignoring individual or local challenges, issues, and considerations (Wiseman, 2005). Understanding the context of schools in diverse layers is essential in defining and developing appropriate and potentially effective principal behavior and decision-making. Similarly, it is of great importance for school leaders, policy makers, and other stakeholders to possess an awareness of the institutional forces acting on the principalship and the work of educators.

Wiseman (2005) contends that the natural function of school principals is much more closely related to a manager than that of a leader. Furthermore, this role confusion or false expectation placed upon principals places them in the crosshairs of overwhelming accountability pressure and the increasing weight of unrealistic expectations (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). The shortage of "strong" applicants coupled with the challenge and pressure of the position make what might be deemed a position of glorification and ironically a systemic necessity. Wiseman's (2005) proposal of embracing a managerial paradigm for the principalship is rooted in what he determines to be an organizational reality. This concept is reflective of institutional theory that proposes that wider, systemic factors and realities shape, limit, and ensure a set of generalized behaviors, actions, and decision-making processes across contexts locally, nationally, and internationally (Wiseman, 2005).

By revisiting Institutional Theory and stressing the importance of the institutional environment, light can be shed on further potentially compelling reasons for school behavior and practice. Huerta and Zuckerman (2009) note: "institutional environment identifies legitimate forms of schooling via a school's conformity to environmental conditions that define effectiveness through standardization and certification procedures (the symbolic rituals, norms, and myths of the institutional environment), rather than measurable outcomes" (p. 415). Essentially, if schools focus on compliance and managerial issues, that is to say teacher certification, class size and the like, they can avoid "inspection." This function can signal a move toward a declining focus on output or on measurable learning performance. This function or rather, effect of institutional pressures on principals and schools works alongside the desire to achieve legitimacy as

compliance with classification and norms and furthers the case of a school's or principal's legitimacy.

Institutional forces and various other systemic forces (economic, political, ecological) have worked to create a tenuous time for principals in the U.S. Accountability, achievement, and access expectations have pushed principals to their limits and have created what amounts to unsustainable, non-viable expectations and roles that lead to burnout or demoralization and force many potentially effective principals out of the field or convince them to not pursue the position in the first place (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Understanding these various pressures and the cultural and institutional beliefs that are held for principals is crucial in the continuous re-defining of the nature and purpose of the principalship. Challenging current principal preparation and professional development efforts and questioning actions and dialogue that perpetuate the desire for "hero principals" can be powerful tools in situating the work of principals in contextually relevant ways.

The Principalship has shifted over the last several decades and these shifts have had a profound impact on the work of school leaders. Examining the effects of this new culture of the principalship on these individuals and exploring how role expectations influence their behavior, self-conception, dispositions, values, and decision-making can lead to important insights into the job. Policy makers, district leaders, school principals, and I stand to gain a much better understanding of the principal self and a more accurately situated conceptualization of the principalship in cultural terms.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

In discussing autoethnography, Schwandt (2001) states:

> (Autoethnography) originally defined as the cultural study of one's own people, this term now commonly refers to a particular form of writing that seeks to unite ethnographic (looking outward at a world beyond one's own) and autobiographical (gazing inward for a story of one's self) intentions. The aim in composing an autoethnographic account is to keep both the subject (knower) and object (that which is being examined) in simultaneous view. (p. 12)

In autoethnography, the writer is simultaneously the researcher and the data. This distinction represents the core separation or deviation from traditional ethnography. In ethnographical research, which is rooted in the field of anthropology, the researcher seeks to be both inside and outside of the *culture* to be studied. Ethnographically speaking, the observer must be permitted access to research data via observation and study. This issue is mitigated through the use of autoethnography as the researcher is also the subject to be researched, they are one in the same.

To examine "culture," we must first work to derive a common definition. According to Merriam-Webster (2013), culture is technically defined as "The set of values, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic. The characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time" (Merriam-Webster). The American Association of Anthropology (2013) defines sociocultural anthropology as a field that "examines social patterns and practices across cultures, with a special interest in how people live in particular places and how they organize, govern, and create meaning" (What is Anthropology section, para. 2). Making a deeper connection to the field of anthropology,

this notion of "creating meaning" is at the heart of autoethnography. For anthropologists, the study of culture and human existence is intimately connected with and recognized by an emphasis on observation of the research context for extended periods of time. For researcher, this involves placing oneself in the aforementioned research context.

Chang (2008) notes the qualities that distinguish autoethnography from other forms of self-narrative: "Stemming from the field of anthropology, autoethnography shares a storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation" (p. 43). It is the analytical and interpretive features that separate autoethnography from other self-narratives. A move within the field of anthropology, and more broadly, qualitative research in the social sciences in general, has seen research efforts become widely more accepting of the self-reflexive and personal narrative style of genres including autoethnography. Chang notes: "it not only reminds us of anthropologists' long-standing interest in self, but also liberates a new generation of anthropologists to bring their personal stories to the center stage of their investigation" (p. 45).

In Autoethnography as Method, Heewon Change (2008) offers five broad guidelines for the autoethnographer:

> (1) (autoethnographer) is a complete member in the social world understudy; (2) engages reflexivity to analyze data on self; (3) is visibly and actively present in the test; (4) includes other informants in similar situations in data collection; and, (5) is committed to theoretical analysis. (p. 46)

The embedded nature of researcher is imperative in the examined social and cultural context. Researchers deliberately work to engage in self-reflexivity and the analysis of self, acknowledging that their own lived experience within a given cultural

moment is inseparable from that culture, with both forces contributing to and shaping the other. Ellis and Bochner (1996) elude to the "interconnectedness" of researcher and the cultural, lived experience of researcher offered by autoethnography by defining them as: "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (p. 742). The autoethnographer must possess a keen and valid description of culture and data must be triangulated and collected from various sources to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. Although valuable in the research, the "personal perceptions" of the researcher do not stand alone in and of themselves in describing and/or defining the cultural context or in verifying the collected research and corresponding analysis.

Why Autoethnography?

Autoethnography offers the potential of an appealing narrative for readers that can foster understanding of the lived experience of the researcher and those other individuals included in their cultural "story." Chang (2008) notes: "When a personally meaningful topic is chosen and investigation is contextualized appropriately in the sociocultural context of the researcher, autoethnography can powerfully engage readers in understanding not only the autoethnographer's worlds but also others in them" (p. 57). Building on the long tradition of narrative inquiry and anthropological study, autoethnography provides a representation and reflection of the lived experience of the individual. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) contend that this nature of narrative research captures an innate function of human beings. "One theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives

Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways that humans experience the world" (p. 1). Although critical of the validity of autoethnographical research, even Reda (2007) posits that autoethnography offers "valuable ways of understanding a culture" (p. 180).

Although opinions and theories vary in the extent of the value of autoethnographic research in terms of enhancing conceptualization of self, Chang (2008) contends: "studying and writing of self-narratives is an extremely valuable activity in understanding self and others connected to self" (p. 33). Similarly, Chang posits that culturally based examination of self can provide a valuable framework for understanding the lived experiences of others, "Self-discovery in a cultural sense is intimately related to understanding others" (p. 34). By studying culture, we are naturally studying the story of our own lives, inclusive of our own ways of thinking and living. Individually lived experiences are fundamental to understanding culture, Chang (2008) continues: "this concept implies that the basic unit of culture is individuals who can actively interpret their social surroundings" (p. 44). Making sense of surroundings, culture, and life within it is a hallmark of autoethnographic research. Despite the intentionally self-reflexive nature of autoethnography, the understanding that results from this form of study transcends an understanding of self and can offer valuable insights and interpretative keys for understanding others.

Chang (2008) outlines the powerful embracing of personal story delivered through autoethnographic study: "Autoethnography celebrates rather than demonizes the individual story" (p. 2). The individual story is celebrated and dwelled upon in autoethnographic research and this methodology posits that the "self" can offer a valuable and perspective granting lens through which one can gain a deeper and more profound

understanding of a societal culture. It is of value to emphasize that all self-reflexive and self-focused forms of writing and research are not autoethnographic. Moving beyond the "descriptive" nature of various other genres of personal prose, deep analysis and interpretation separate autoethnography from other forms of self-narrative.

Potential Issues

Autoethnography offers a unique and powerful research methodology for understanding culture, self, and other individuals woven into one's story and lived experience within a given societal culture. As with many forms of qualitative research and more specifically, those focused on self-reflexive individual introspection, critics of the method abound. Similarly, significant issues exist for the prospective autoethnographer that must be considered before and during the research, analysis and interpretation processes.

As previously discussed, autoethnography differs from ethnography and this distinction must be drawn. Reda (2007) offers a warning to the autoethnographer who must work to avoid "blurring" lines between autoethnography and the more traditional ethnography. Self awareness, or lack thereof, of "researcher agenda" can lead to skepticism among critics: "Such positioning leads to another distinguishing feature of the autoethnographic project: the researcher's agenda" (p. 180). As intimately situated actors in the research and the story unfolding, every autoethnographer brings an inherent level of agenda into their work and the question of agenda influence demands its due attention in the planning and conducting of autoethnographic research.

Though considered an implicit strength of autoethnographic research, the notion and action of self-reflexivity still endures significant criticism and skepticism among

social science researchers and more specifically, within the field of anthropology. Chang (2008) speaks to this point in an effort to inform and warn would be autoethnographers "Despite the long-standing interest in self in anthropology, self-reflexivity has not been readily embraced by some anthropologists and social scientists" (p. 45).

Reda (2007) further problematizes the methodology of autoethnography: "Warning against ethnocentrism and mental baggage. One must be a member to observe the informants' representation of that culture to themselves, but one must obey the imperative to maintain distance to be able to observe these significant patterns" (p. 178). The balance between close and distant proximity ought to be of paramount concern to the autoethnographer. Social science research in general portrays the constant playing out of "scientific" legitimacy in research and the more subjective nature of researcher opinion, belief, and influence in a given context or research endeavor. Triangulation of data and self-disclosing efforts situate research, personal data, and analysis in light of this lived experience and with an understanding of the more than implied subjective nature of autoethnography is of importance.

Considering the potentially subjective nature of this genre of research, a similar debate exists even among autoethnographers. This consideration calls for an analytical, theoretical, and subjective stance. Ellis and Bochner (2006) and Denizen (2006) stand on the opposing end, arguing for "evocative and emotionally engaging, more subjective autoethnography" (Chang, 2008, p. 46). This discrepancy in the field can lead to greater confusion surrounding the intent of autoethnographical research.

Chang (2008) offers five potential "pitfalls" for autoethnographical research: "(1) excessive focus on self in isolation from others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than

analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self narratives; and (5) inappropriate application of the label "autoethnography" (p. 54). These warnings serve as a guide to bolster the likelihood of producing credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The notion of culture and interaction with others is an inherent quality of autoethnographic research. As noted by Chang (2008): "Autoethnographers should be warned that self-indulgent introspection is likely to produce a self-exposing story but not autoethnography" (p. 54). Chang goes on to note that culture is a "group-oriented" concept. When the autoethnographer misconstrues the methodological focus on self, they run the risk of not situating the research in a cultural context. Although self-focused, autoethnography remains rooted in cultural study and the co-mingling of self and culture cannot be ignored in the research. An autoethnographic research effort that errs on the side of self-focus without the aforementioned, culturally embedded and situated quality runs the risk of forfeiting significance, impact and understanding to readers and researcher alike.

Thoroughly developed cultural analysis and interpretation are essential outcomes of autoethnographic study. Storytelling is at the heart of biographical and narrative research and situating the story through deep analysis and interpretation is of paramount importance. The temptation for autoethnographers to become consumed by the role of storyteller is strong as this style of narrative is "engaging to writers as well as readers and listeners" (Chang, 2008, p. 55). A diligent focus on research agenda must be maintained throughout the investigative and writing process to hit the aim of autoethnographic

research, which is to produce deep cultural analysis and interpretation for reader and researcher.

The third pitfall outlined by Chang (2008) is the exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source. The reliability of memory as a data source has been widely disputed and has forced many to call into question the reliability of this classification of data. “Memory is selected and shaped, and is retold in the continuum of one’s experience (although) this does not necessarily constitute lying” (p. 55). Subjectivity or more specifically, the assurance of objectivity in autoethnographic research is a constant concern. This concern is compounded when data is limited to a primary source of personal recall and researcher memory. Accuracy and veracity in autoethnographic writing can be better achieved through the triangulation of diverse data points and a series of strategic checks and balances. External data sources ranging from interviews and journals to various artifacts and documents can balance the internal data provided by the autoethnographer and can aid in producing more exacting research.

Ethnographic research is by definition, a study of culture. In light of concerns of an ethical nature facing all forms of researchers, autoethnographers simply do not live or go about their work in a vacuum. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pose the question: “Do they own a story because they tell it” (p. 5)? As autoethnographers go about exploring and writing about their own lived experience, this experience naturally involves the experiences, interaction with and lives of others. As an example, an autoethnographical account of the life of a teacher will naturally include reflections on and influence of students and colleagues with whom the researcher has associated during their career and subsequent research. It is simply not possible to completely isolate the experience of self

from the surrounding culture and human beings cohabitating the culture with the researcher. To do so would negate the explicit intent of autoethnographical research, the study of life within a given cultural context. The autoethnographer must be diligent and innovative in their efforts to maintain ethical standards for their research and to protect the confidentiality of those included in the story to the best of their ability (Chang, 2008). Where concern for research subjects is of great concern in traditional qualitative research methodologies and in quantitative studies, this feature must not be overlooked or undervalued in autoethnography. "Auto" simply does not translate to "only."

The final warning issued by Chang (2008) is the frequent misunderstanding and misuse of the term "autoethnography." Autoethnography has been confused with biographies, memoirs, and has been used at times to discuss the study of one's own people as opposed to one's self within their culture. For the autoethnographer it is imperative to provide clarity to the reader on the definition of autoethnography and the specific, corresponding intent of the research methodology. Avoiding confusion in this regard allows the reader to make clearer connections with the research and more adeptly meet the intended purpose of the methodology.

Autoethnographic Data Sources

Autoethnography offers a diverse range of data to draw from in research efforts. Triangulation of data is of paramount concern to the autoethnographer interested in producing meaningful search. Autoethnographic data can be classified as "internal" or "external" information. Being of a self-narrative nature, autoethnography typically begins with self-observational and self-reflective data. Forms and examples of this specific data would include: journal records, diaries, field journal notes, and personal memory data. As

indicated in Chapter II, I will begin with an extended statement of self-disclosure by chronicling the past, more specifically, my past. The first step in this process will be to construct an autobiographical timeline of my life as a professional educator beginning with my undergraduate experience that led me to becoming a social studies teacher, coach, and eventually a principal. Within the self-disclosure will be my prior and emerging views about education in general, schooling in particular, my work as an educator and the values and beliefs I hold about these matters and the dissertation research itself. External data sources for potential examination and inclusion in this research might begin with textual artifacts including: newspaper articles, bulletins, concert programs, write-ups about the individual, personal letters, essays, poems, and memos. Additional external data sources offered by Chang (2008) would be: "interviews with others, shared experiences, official documents (diplomas, official letters, certificates, conscription papers, employment contracts, deeds, agency policies, meeting agendas and minutes, documented schooling practices in the form of public relations and promotional materials, and announcements" (p. 107). Photography and video images could also be used as external data along with the strategic interview of others in a given context or shared /similar experience to the researcher.

Planning the Research

The first step in autoethography is determining research purpose. Ethnographic research traditions are not "linear or sequential" and planning the fluid and simultaneous process of data collection and analysis are hallmarks of this methodology and should be kept in mind as the process progresses. An initial task to be undertaken is positioning self and others in the prospective study (Chang, 2008). Chang posits three unique possibilities

for actor positioning within autoethnography: "you can investigate yourself as the main character and others as supporting actors in your life story. Second, you can include others as co-informants in your study. Third, you can study others as the primary focus, yet also as an entry to your world" (p. 65). Research design will be affected by where a researcher decides to position her/himself in light of the aforementioned possibilities. Understanding the purpose of research is vitally important in making this decision and drawing a clear distinction in research positioning within autoethnographical research. Questions to consider are: Am I seeking to explore myself deeper within my culture and lived experience? Am I seeking to use the examination of my life within a given culture to better understand and conceptualize the experiences of other individuals? Am I looking to explore a specific topic through the lens of the lived experience of human actors within the "situation"? Asking and answering these questions will not only sharpen the research purpose but also will allow the autoethnographer to shape and develop a suitable research design. The diversity presented within these refining questions demonstrates the versatility of autoethnography as method.

Data Collection

Data collection within autoethnography might begin with the collection of personal memory data. Autoethnography relies on the researcher's recollection of their own personal memory where ethnography relies upon the personal memory of those interviewed by the researcher. Autoethnographers openly embrace and proclaim the use of their personal memory as a primary data source in their research. The value of personal memory data in autoethnography is found in the understanding of the past to provide context for the present and the future lived experience. It is this essentially unrestricted

access to the primary data source, which is of significant difference in comparison to other qualitative methodologies, where this degree of access can be in a best case scenario challenging to acquire. This aforementioned strength of access to self and personal memory also proves to be a formidable obstacle for autoethnographers to contend with. Chang (2008) along with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) address the "precariousness" of personal memory. Noting the tendency to produce partial truth and the fact that it is naturally unreliable as a data source (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Chang, 2008). Commonly memories are "smoothed out" over time and therefore, accurate recall can be compromised. Likewise, personal memory can trigger significant emotions inside the researcher and has the potential to provide the researcher with access to aversions and feelings associated with memories and past experiences thus distorting accurate recall. Autoethnographers can take measures to aid in credibility of personal memory data and should be strategic in this regard from the outset of the proposed research study.

Chang (2008) suggests a variety of writing exercises to spur on memory recall and to focus personal reflections among autoethnographers. Chronicling the past can be approached strategically and can begin with the construction of an autobiographical timeline. This timeline can represent the entirety of a life but is more often focused on the specific segment of a lived experience addressed within the research. Autobiographical timelines highlight the key events in a process or over a specific period of time. These events represent turning points or moments that signal change or alteration in process, activity, or behavior. At the very least, the events work to explain or add insight to the aforementioned changes in lived experience.

Building from the construction of an autobiographical timeline, documenting regular routines can offer keen insight into the day-in, day-out cultural experience of life. Rather than examining from a broad chronological perspective and highlighting turning points or key events, documenting routines within a selected cycle of time can assist in more thoroughly putting a face to experience. As an example, a study focusing on the lived experience of a secondary school principal may include a documentation of routine events in a given school year while simultaneously remaining sensitized and attending to the cultural aspects of setting and context both locally and more broadly cosmopolitan.

As in any qualitative research endeavor, coding and theming is essential to draw connections between potentially random pieces of diverse data. By establishing relevant "themes," the autoethnographer can inventory data as they progress through their research lending assistance in the processing, sorting, and clarifying usefulness and utility of various data (Chang, 2008). The voluminous and disconnected nature of the data collected demands a concerted effort on the part of the researcher for sense making.

In addition to the above-mentioned areas for collecting and sorting through self-reflection data, Chang (2008) offers additional writing exercises to sharpen the focus of the researcher. Proverbs are powerful cultural symbols communicating a group's wisdom and values (Chang, 2008). Listing proverbs in order of importance can be a valuable exercise for examining more deeply the collective values in a given cultural context and offers a starting point for reflection in this regard. Similarly to examining proverbs, rituals and celebrations can offer a revealing view of how communities and cultures partake in socialization, add to knowledge, and make sense of norms and personal identity. Therefore, listing key rituals as with listing proverbs, can be insightful in

attempting to understand and define culture. Other writing exercises and areas for focus listed by Chang (2008) include: listing of key personal mentors, chronicling cultural artifacts, and visualizing self. All of these practices work to stimulate and focus researcher thoughts. They serve as a structure to organize what might at first seem like an unreliable, random and insurmountable pile of data. However, with strategic planning, the autoethnographer can employ practices that bolster the sense making process and initiate the reliable collection of personal memory data (Chang, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Additional "self-observational" and "self-reflective" data can be used to conclude the internal data collection process. Self-observational data might include: occurrence recording or perhaps the completion of an activity log or the more traditional time log. This data is in essence, a systematic recording of specific activities, behaviors, and actions over a given period of time. Self-reflective data is inclusive of: personal values and preferences, assessing cultural identity and membership, and might include culture-grams and Venn diagrams comparing individuals in similar circumstances to the autoethnographer.

A common misconception of autoethnographical research is a fabled sole reliance on internal data sources. Although the clear intent of autoethnographic research is one of self-reflection, external sources prove to provide additional perspectives to allow the researcher to more adeptly examine subjectivity within the process. In speaking of the power of interviews within autoethnographic research, Chang (2008) notes: "they provide external data that give contextual information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (p. 104). This intentional juxtaposition of internal and

external data sources is particularly important when the focus of the research is on my role conceptualization as a principal. As such, role conceptualization (to be meaningful accurate) is viewed as a culturally formed and internalized process of being.

As in any qualitative research study, care must be taken to appreciate the role of researcher in interviewing subjects familiar with the researcher and how these relationships and the knowledge generated through interviewing might influence the quality of information received. Ultimately, external interviews allow researchers additional perspectives to reframe their study and to add depth, and in many instances aid in personal memory recall. The nature of the interview process within autoethnography can vary widely and should be strategically tailored to the specific research problem to be examined in the context of the grander body of scholarly work (Chang, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Writing Autoethnography

Chang (2008) offers several potential writing styles to be utilized by autoethnographers: descriptive-realistic writing, confessional-emotive writing, analytical-interpretive writing, and imaginative-creative. Though typology and writing style can vary widely in this genre of research, the selection of style ultimately lands on the shoulders of the researcher. The intent of autoethnographical research is to allow the researcher to interpret their own personal story and how that story interacts with the stories of others. As a result of this rendering, one's voice is both at the same time privileged and tempered by intentionality toward cultural meaning(s).

> Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community. The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all part of this

> process. Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of her/his experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4)

Autoethnography is a process utilized to garner cultural understanding and the writing style selected should provide the most effective medium for communicating the cultural significance stemming from the included personal stories and lived experiences. This selection is driven in large part by the research questions and the message to be conveyed.

Construction of the Study

With historical shifts in the expectations and responsibilities of school principals, it is crucial for legislators, policymakers, district leadership, teachers, parents, and the broader community to possess at least a rudimentary awareness of the requirements of the position. By examining the historical nature and context of the principalship, we gain a clearer picture of what the "changes" in the culture of the principalship really look like. To ascertain a more comprehensive picture of these shifts and the work of principals, a look to the past will simply not suffice. By grounding a study in a literature review documenting shifts in the principalship from a US and international perspective and viewing the condition of the role and its conceptualization through a variety of lenses including: general leadership theory, more targeted educational leadership theory, along with organizational and institutional perspectives, we can gain a much clearer picture of the resulting complexities of principals' work.

The Research Study

This study seeks to illuminate the experience of the school principalship and to provide in detail the human experience of a school principal and the personal process through which role conceptualization occurs within the position.

Research questions

1. How does my experience as a secondary school principal lead to a conceptualization of my role?
2. What implications exist for such a conceptualization in contemporary U.S. public schooling?
3. How do I make sense of the work I am engaged in and how do I prioritize both the wide and dense expectations placed upon me?
4. What implications exist for such sense making considering the professional practice of administrative leadership?
5. How does my lived experience of the principalship inform the ongoing role conceptualization and reconstitution of the administrative position in public schooling?

In construction of a qualitative research study, methodology selection ought to be driven by research focus. Autoethnography's cultural focus on interaction with others merges sufficiently with the theoretical lens offered by distributed leadership theory and the corresponding reliance on interaction on role conceptualization offered through the application of role theory. Furthermore, autoethnography presents the opportunity to take an in-depth and highly contextual look at the lived experience of a school principal "living" within a given occupational culture in transition. By addressing the research

questions and seeking to thoroughly construct the culture of the school principalship as a means to understand and conceptualize the work of school site-based leadership offers potentially powerful insights not only for me, but also for practitioners, researchers, and policy makers.

Positioning of Self

Within autoethnography, once the research topic is established, self and others must be appropriately positioned within the study. Consistent with the aim of autoethnography, in this study, I will be situated as the central focus of research and the perspectives of others as co-contributors will be used to verify and further inform my perspective. As noted by Chang (2001), research design will be affected by where the researcher elects to position themselves within the study. Understanding the purpose of research is vitally important in making this decision and drawing a clear distinction in research positioning within autoethnographical research. The purpose of this research study is to examine my lived experience as a school principal from a cultural perspective and to examine the influence of role expectations of various stakeholders comprising the broader culture on the behaviors, views, dispositions, orientations and assumptions of the school principal. Essentially, what is the experience of an individual living in this given culture and how does this culture influence the lived experience of the individual? Positioning researcher as the central figure in this regard is imperative to adequately addressing the research questions. However, the voices and experiences of others will be utilized to inform the recall of personal memory data, shape and inform the study, and to provide validity in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. In autoethnography, the researcher transforms himself or herself into a sociocultural

anthropologist studying a culture from within and as a living part of the respective culture (Chang, 2001). The traditional and requisite granting of permission for entry required of anthropologists in ethnographic research is a non-issue within autoethnography as the researcher is inherently embedded within the culture. Inclusion of additional and varied voices, perspectives, and artifacts is important within autoethnographic study as the methodology is cultural in nature and therefore, reliant upon the stories of and interactions with others. Within this dimension of the research tradition, standard IRB compliance procedures were followed and participant consent was obtained. Acknowledging my positionality as a white, Christian, middle-class, able-bodied, resourced male is of importance at this point. This dissertation is reflective of a perspective that is naturally and unavoidably tied to my advantaged background and socio-economic and cultural position. The accessibility of the principalship to diverse stakeholders and the lived experience within the principalship could look potentially vastly different through the eyes of minority, female, and other under-represented groups occupying or aspiring toward the position.

Data Collection

Initial data collection will begin with the acquisition of personal memory data. Autoethnography relies on the researcher's recollection of their personal memory (Chang, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). I began my research by chronicling the past, my past. The first step in this process was to construct an autobiographical timeline of my life as a professional educator beginning with my undergraduate experience that led me to becoming a social studies teacher and coach. The autobiographical timeline concluded at present day and is inclusive of the major moments and key events that I believe have

shaped or formed who I am as a principal and as an educator. Events discussed include: beginning of graduate study, acceptance of first administrative position, or the initiation of key mentorships that have guided or shaped my career.

Documentation of my regular routines can potentially offer insight into the everyday nature and cultural experience of life. Rather than examining from a broad chronological perspective and highlighting turning points or key events, documenting routines within a selected cycle of time can assist in more thoroughly putting a face to experience and can work to aid in memory recall and to organize recall in a sequential way. Additionally, this process can facilitate the processing and organization of data. I will document routines using the traditional calendar year and the cyclical nature of the activities of schooling as my unit of study in this regard. Classifying events in broad themes that occur over time can provide order in the research process. Key points to consider in the year of the school that might serve as "postholes" for reflection might include: start of year activities including scheduling, enrollment, back to school overviews and welcoming of students. Furthermore, considering the testing season in spring and graduation along with the planning and hiring practices that occur within the summer may be of value. These routine events can also present wide categories that can spur on reflection and can help to more effectively classify key events in the year of the principal. According to Chang (2008), personal memory data is absolutely essential to the autoethnographer and allows access to the very personal experiences of the past. However, accurately recalling the vast scope of this memory bank can prove challenging if not impossible without the appropriate tools to be applied in the process. Exploring regular routines can offer insight and access to memories specifically valuable to the

work of school principals in light of the cyclical nature of schools and the work occurring in them.

Additional writing exercises were utilized to sharpen the focus of research and personal exploration in an effort to ensure the most efficient and accurate recall of personal memory data. Other potential writing exercises and areas for focus were utilized and included the listing of key personal mentors and the acquisition and chronicling of cultural artifacts. By establishing a comprehensive list of past mentors and key colleagues throughout my career, I was afforded the opportunity to segment my life experiences and track different periods of personal and professional growth. All of these practices and exercises were designed to stimulate and focus researcher thoughts. They serve as a structure to organize what might at first seem like an unreliable, random and unstructured accumulation of data. However, with strategic planning, the autoethnographer can employ practices that bolster the sense making process and initiate the reliable collection of personal memory data (Chang, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994; Reda, 2007).

Additional "self-observational" and "self-reflective" data was used to inform this research. I completed a regular time log in written format along with an audio personal journal to be recorded through the use of a digital voice recorder. This data comprised a systematic recording of the activities, behaviors, impressions, thoughts, attitudes, viewpoints, and use of time over a specified bounded period of study. These journals provided the daily dialogue of my lived experience and provided the reliability of timely and regularly recorded documents and refined data. In the tradition of ethnographic research, these journals might be compared to the familiar field journal of the anthropologist. A distinction can be drawn as this field journal is the result of personal

study and monitoring, not primarily the study of others (Chang, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994).

Although autobiographical in nature and inherently, self-focused, the autoethnography should also utilize external interviews to provide cultural context to a study. As autoethnography is rooted in cultural lived experience, the stories and perspectives of others are crucial in understanding the story, perspective, and conceptualization of self (Chang, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Speaking to the power of external interviews within autoethnographic research, Chang (2008) notes: "they provide external data that give contextual information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (p. 104). As in any qualitative research study, care must be taken to appreciate the role of researcher in interviewing participants I interviewed colleagues within my district ranging from former and current supervisors, to similarly situated principals in other schools (Chang, 2008, Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). These external interviews more fully situate internal data in a cultural way. Chang (2008), outlines the value of external interviews in autoethnographic fieldwork:

> Through interviewing myriad informants, ethnographers gather information unavailable from participant observation. When applied to autoethnography, interviews with others fulfill a different purpose: they provide external data that give contextual information to confirm, compliment, or reject introspectively generated data. (p. 104)

Reda (2007) warns of researcher agenda in problematizing the methodology of autoethnography. Taking steps to ensure transparency and to fully disclose researcher bias is essential in this process. Also crucial in the process is to include rich external data sources to further verify researcher conceptualizations and perspectives, or to dismiss them when necessary and be transparent in the writing process about such clarifications.

Before research began, approval for this study was granted from The University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board, or IRB. Initial application was made for IRB approval in which I will list myself as the "Principal Investigator." Upon completion of the initial application, a faculty sponsor granted approval. Once the faculty sponsor is satisfied with the initial application, the full study was submitted to the IRB for full approval and approval was granted.

Additional potential external data sources suggested by Chang might include: documents, textual artifacts, photographs, and literature (Chang, 2008). In the case of this study, cultural artifacts to be included in the study are voluminous. Examples of external data sources to be systematically collected and analyzed are memos, meeting agendas from building and district level meetings, implementation documents from a variety of district and site initiatives, school performance data, newspaper articles, letters, e-mails, calendars, websites, student and parent handbooks and policy guides, and stakeholder survey results among other print and/or media sources.

More detailed examples of external data sources and documents to be included in this research study would be weekly administrative team meeting agendas within the school. These agendas are produced on a weekly basis and include standing meeting items along with various other pertinent and relevant topics. The inclusion of these data sources offers a variety of benefits and value to the broader goals of this research. External data sources such as these provide direct documentation of events, actions, discussions, formal and informal positions, and community issues that have occurred both historically and within the bounded timeframe of this study.

Four co-participants were interviewed in this research project. These participants were selected to provide an external voice in data collection and to provide both depth and breadth in the research process. Speaking of external interviews, Chang notes: "they provide external data that give contextual information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (p. 104). Each of the interviewees was a veteran educator. Ms. Holly Nevels is the Director of Secondary Education in a large, suburban school district. Ms. Nevels was a long-time middle school teacher and also served in the capacity of high school assistant principal and middle school head principal prior to her current appointment. She was selected for participation in this study based on her extensive experience and knowledge of the principalship along with her familiarity with my professional journey as she has acted as my direct supervisor in some capacity for eight of the past eleven years.

Mr. Jason Brown is the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services in the same school district in which Ms. Nevels and I work. Mr. Brown's experience is extensive both in specific role definition and in district context. Prior to coming to his current assignment, Mr. Brown worked in three other school districts ranging from a similar suburban setting to a large urban district. Roles served include: director of advanced placement, classroom teacher, assistant middle school and high school principal, and head middle school and high school principal. Though Mr. Brown doesn't have the same level of familiarity with my personal experience as Ms. Nevels, his diverse perspective of public schooling brought by his experience prompted me to include him as a co-participant in this study.

Dr. Nick Migliorino is the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services in the same district as Mr. Brown, Ms. Nevels, and I. Dr. Migliorino has served as a teacher, middle school assistant principal, high school assistant principal, high school head principal, and as a director of secondary education. This work has occurred over several districts ranging from suburban to rural. Additionally, Dr. Migliorino took a three-year hiatus from work in public schools to start-up his own company designing, marketing, and providing a free smart phone "app" for school districts/community communications purposes. While serving as director of secondary education prior to departing to begin his business, Dr. Migliorino was my supervisor during my tenure as an assistant principal and was in the position through my selection as principal and during my first year in this position. Dr. Migliorino offers extensive and in-depth knowledge of the principalship and possesses a thorough knowledge of my professional journey.

Dr. Debra Bendick serves as director of secondary education in a large, suburban school district demographically comparable to the district in which I am employed. Dr. Bendick has extensive experience including over thirty years of teaching and administrative work. This work is inclusive of classroom teaching in both public and parochial settings and assistant principalships and head principalships at the middle and high school levels. Dr. Bendick is serving in her second year as director of secondary education. She was selected as a co-participant based on her in-depth knowledge of the principalship and the perspective granted to the study from a practitioner with little or no working knowledge of my career or the inner-workings of our specific school district.

Invitations to participate in the study were issued via telephone. Research protocol was explained to potential interviewees and the conditions and expectations of

participation in the study were explained in detail. Interviews were conducted in a private, one-on-one setting and interviews were audio recorded. Interviews were scheduled to take no longer than ninety minutes with the understanding that an additional interview time might be scheduled at the participant's convenience if it was deemed necessary. Each participant was interviewed one time and the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes depending on the participant. Follow-up questions were given to participants as new thoughts arose during interviews. Participants spoke broadly about the principalship and in much greater detail about their own specific personal and professional histories. This development was possibly the result of the interview protocol itself, which prompted participants to speak philosophically about the role of the principalship. More detail-oriented responses emerged as questions were asked about participant perceptions of my experience leading up to and within the principalship.

Managing Data

Effectively utilizing data is essential in qualitative research. Data management can guide the research process itself. "While organizing data, you can see deficiency, redundancy, and irrelevancy in your data set" (Chang, 2008, p. 115). A file system was created that allowed for seamless retrieval of relevant data during the analysis and interpretation phases of research. This data management was on going in nature and an embedded part of the research process. Labeling data is a significant part of the data management process as well. "Labels" were attached to data as it was collected and inclusive of the "4-W's" who, what, when, and where of the data collected.

Classifying data includes the steps of coding and theming collected data that conform to the qualitative research categorization analysis standards of high quality

empirical research (AERA, 2006). Taylor & Bogdan (1984) note that this entails coding and sorting data into groups for analysis that comes at a later point in the research process. Refining of data is the fluid process of identifying areas of need in data collection, reframing of data collection, or perhaps the elimination of specified data. This formative and "dynamic" process of refinement feeds the emergent and iterative cycle of data collection, analysis and interpretation, and to a significant degree informs and guides further data collection.

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

In discussing the analysis and interpretation of data within qualitative inquiry, Denzin and Lincoln (1984) posit: "The processes of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are neither terminal, nor mechanical. They are always emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished" (p. 479). The process is in many ways a fluid one that is not necessarily systematic, procedurally speaking. The collection of data is typically ongoing even during the analysis and interpretation phases of autoethnographical research. As reiterated by Chang (2008), autoethnography is very ethnographic in intent. This is to say, autoethnographic research is engaged in to foster a greater cultural understanding. The dual nature of introspection and return to the study of others is the predominant feature of the methodology. In terms of data analysis and interpretation, this requires the researcher to work back and forth and back again between self and culture.

Data analysis and interpretation are at the very core of autoethnographical, qualitative research. Chang (2008) acknowledges: "Analysis and interpretation enable researchers to shift their focus from merely 'scavenging' or 'quilting' information bits to actively 'transforming' them into a text with culturally meaningful explanations" (p. 65).

Although often used interchangeably, analysis and interpretation are not necessarily synonymous. Analysis is a close examination of data that utilizes a critical eye to perhaps examine the "why?" of behavior, events or conceptions of self. Interpretation is the process through which broader cultural connection and meaning is achieved. If analysis answers the question of "why?" interpretation answers the question "so what?" Data analysis is data focused and interpretation is inclusive of awareness of data but in light of how it connects to the broader culture. Chang (2008) offers an explanation of this process and draws on the metaphor of "zooming in and zooming out" (p. 65). This too is a fluid process that is ongoing throughout the research study. A clear line of demarcation signaling the sequential end of analysis and the beginning of interpretation does not necessarily exist. The analysis and interpretation of collected data is where autoethnography derives its' identity grounded in the quest for greater understanding of self and ultimately, of culture.

Qualitative researchers, and even more specifically autoethnographers, must understand the potential pitfalls of their selected methodologies. Chang (2008) notes: "social science" cannot totally create a totally objective, value-neutral environment to study" (p. 129). The role of the autoethnographer is to address these concerns directly in the construction of the research study itself. The inclusion of diverse external data sources and utilization of strategic methods to verify and legitimize personal memory data is crucial. Greater value is paid to the product of autoethnographic research when the potential problems with the methodology are more thoroughly addressed.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline the importance of the trustworthiness of a research study in working to discern the worth of said research. Within this broader

expectation, the authors specifically address establishing four core tenets of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (p. 290).

Credibility speaks to the level of confidence in the "truth" of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2014). Techniques for establishing credibility include prolonged engagement by the researcher in the field of study. As a practicing principal, my prolonged engagement in this process is well documented. This engagement provides readers with confidence that the researcher possesses a keen awareness of the cultural and social setting in which the research exists. "If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). Persistent observation also aids in bolstering credibility and is a natural strength of autoethnographic research. The researcher lens viewing oneself can work to provide a richer and more authentic look at a given phenomenon. Triangulation of multiple data sources also serves to foster research credibility. This research project is inclusive of personal memory data, journals, e-mails, meeting agendas, and outside interviews thus allowing for a thorough cross-referencing of data to occur. Negative or deviant case analysis is one more strategy employed to establish credibility. This process involves seeking out data elements that do not support, or potentially contradict themes and patterns emerging from research and can broaden and confirm emergent patterns of analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 2014).

A priori codes were not established for analysis even though conceptual considerations related to role theory and distributed leadership informed the empirical investigation. Emergent codes were born of initial analysis and data were coded accordingly. Complete list of codes can be found in Appendix D. Once codes were

assigned to data, broad themes were identified, nine themes in all. These emergent themes represented spheres of activities and work that I engage in. These initial themes were: events, accountability, operations and facility management, teachers/personnel, students, professional growth, parent/community connections, and professional contributions. From these themes, and in light of triangulation with the calendar, formal work category themes were developed including: daily activities, formal activities, informal activities, impromptu issue management, and cyclical events.

These work themes were used as the structure for the following chapters. Chapter XII, "Perceptions of others," represents the presentation of findings from external interview data. Theming of interview data contributed to the narrative in the following chapters but also resulted in specifically emergent themes surrounding the work of school principals.

Transferability refers to evidence that the research project can be applied to other contexts. Thick description as termed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) aids in establishing external validity and thus bolsters transferability claims and is at the heart of ethnographical research. Prolonged field experiences provide the requisite detail in writing that permits readers to deem research as applicable or not across varying contexts inclusive of time, situations, and people. Rooted deeply in ethnographic fieldwork, this research project is inclusive of the characteristic thick description in prose consistent with the anthropological tradition.

The degree to which a study can be duplicated and repeated with similar findings is addressed by the study's dependability. Strategies to aid in establishing dependability in naturalistic research would include external or inquiry audits where outside researchers

are granted access to examine the process and product of the research study. In the context of this research project, the dissertation chair and committee have aided in this process. Feedback elicited through this auditing process facilitates deeper dependability of research. My committee chair provided in-depth feedback on iterations of this autoethnographical account. Initial iterations lacked the presence of requisite connections to literature and reference to collected and analyzed data. Furthermore, thorough description of specific coding and theming processes were absent in early drafts. Numerous opportunities to render deeper analysis from findings were identified as well.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which researcher emotion, bias, and motivation are removed from the work (Lincoln & Guba, 2014). Triangulation and reflexivity are strategies employed by researchers to establish confirmability in a study. As discussed earlier, triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources and is inclusive of varied perspectives and different points of view. Triangulation may also utilize a variety of theoretical lenses and theoretical frameworks within a research study. Distributed leadership theory according to Spillane et al. (2004) along with role theory work to provide a triangulation effect within this research study (Linton, 1937; Merton, 1957). Reflexivity demands a continuous and systematic process through which the researcher is acutely aware of bias, and personal position. Researchers are called to engage in reflexive practice throughout the naturalistic research process to aid in firmly establishing confirmability, this safeguard is embedded into the process of this autoethnography and is evident in the findings that follow. This process occurred through the continued reflection during data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

CHAPTER IV

Points of Emphasis

A big day lay ahead and one that I have been envisioning and dreaming about for weeks. Today is the day for Tiger Talks 1.0 and I am ready to go. In many ways, I feel like I am in my element, the buzz, the electricity, the excitement, finally getting to see all of the pieces come together. There is still much to be accomplished before teachers arrive for registration at 8:00. A registration table must be set-up with graphic organizers for note taking, nametags, pens, markers, and organized folders containing conference information with an agenda for the day. In the cafeteria, prep is underway as well as set-up has begun in earnest for the "world café" and sharing sessions that will be held after session one and immediately following lunch. All teachers have been placed into groups strategically and significant thought by administrators and other planners has occurred to ensure that participants engage in interaction with a diverse group of colleagues. Conversation prompts have been posted on each table along with specific instructions for each of the required activities.

In the theater things are beginning to take form. Microphones and sound are ready to go along with the lighting and technology required to ensure seamless transitions between speakers with invariably different technological needs for their respective "talks." Some speakers need only a microphone and the stage; others require presentation capabilities, while others require all of the aforementioned along with shifts in lighting and music.

The panel of speakers seems very impressive for a professional day for teachers at a local high school, and I had spent more than considerable time spreading the word

about how amazing the talks would be to anyone who would listen. I thought it was imperative to build in teacher, counselor, and student voice into the day so I invited three faculty members to give talks of their choosing along with a current student, all parties agreed to take on the challenge. Other individuals giving talks on this day included a university professor, an author and practicing psychologist, an educational philosopher and private school founder, a superintendent for a charter school, and an assistant superintendent within our school district. The complete agenda for the day with speakers and talk topics can be found in Appendix E.

The topics of the talks were broad and speakers were given great autonomy in selecting their message. Only two parameters were issued to speakers: the theme of the day is "challenge," and you have a maximum of 13 minutes. Topics to be discussed included: intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, the importance of feedback loops for students, the transformational power of international and cultural exchange on high school students, and teaching for "human flourishing". This was a day that was the culmination of several weeks' worth of work and considerable coordination, conversation, and planning. Every detail had been considered and thought through, every table was ready, everything was a go, and this was going to be a great day.

Tiger Talks 1.0 was born from a lunch conversation with a friend, mentor, and fellow doctoral student, Scott Martin. As we sat eating lunch at a favorite local spot, I listened to Scott speak passionately about teaching for human flourishing, about the brokenness he had witnessed in students, about chasing the wrong goals in education, and about developing architects of moral repair in the world. Scott is a deep thinker and always takes me to another level of thought as the standard for conversation and thought

in his presence just seems to be elevated. In many ways, engaging with Scott and many other mentors that I have had the opportunity to build relationships with, leaves me in a state of disequilibrium. These men are always one step ahead in their thoughts and in their vision. They seem to be able to peel away additional layers even when I think that I have pondered a topic deeply. These relationships and conversations on an almost daily basis have profoundly shaped how I think about my work, about education in general, about my role and purpose in my community and my life. These relationships and the corresponding dialogue reflect an aspect of the benefit to be garnered through supportive friendships. Critical Friend Theory posits that sustained and supportive professional relationships that are unthreatening but critically rich provide a powerful framework for engaging in professional reflection (Bryk, 2010).

Use of the word "men" in the previous passage occurred without initial thought. Upon further reflection, this occasion provides an opportunity for reflexive practice. Much of my work is conducted with women. Sixty-five percent of the faculty working at Norman High School are women. This number rises to over seventy percent when factoring in support staff. Ms. Nevels and Dr. Chesley have been strong influences in my professional career and for some reason I do not identify them as "women" when discussing this influence. So why then is the term "men" used to describe the individuals in my professional and personal mentorship? Have women not fulfilled this same role in my life? Considering women as "mentors" transcending the purely professional characterization of the aforementioned relationships was not present. Though I highly value these relationships and attribute much of my personal growth to these individuals, I have never worked to establish mentoring relationships that cast me as the mentee to

women leaders in a conscious sort of way beyond the professional setting. This degree of comfort engaging with male counterparts in the practice of driving personal growth while not doing so with females reveals potential bias in my conceptualization of both leadership and growth as a school leader and person. Prior to the writing of this dissertation, this is a question that never occurred to me to consider.

Scott shared an idea with me that he had been part of earlier in the year. A principal at a charter school in a dense urban area had used a professional day to engage the greater community in a conversation transcending the academic dimension of schooling. Community agency was harnessed as speakers and experts from the state department of mental health, universities, and assorted community outreach programs spoke to faculty about the broad issues affecting student and human development in the school and in the community (Dryfoos, 2014; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002).

I loved the idea immediately. A professional day of this design was an opportunity to develop awareness of the broader context of mass schooling in our faculty, to make a statement about the real purpose of our work beyond Advanced Placement enrollment and standardized test scores, this was about human development, this was about empathy, love, and bettering our community. It just so happened that the professional day was scheduled for April 26th, right in the heart of testing season, timing could not be more perfect. A comprehensive spring testing calendar for the school year can be found in Appendix F.

Tiger Talk 1.0 as it would become to be called, was a success. Faculty survey data indicated that teachers mostly found real value in the day and felt "renewed" and "energized." Though looking ahead, the impending challenge will be to sustain the

impact of the day and ensure that it manifests itself into real action for students and community. Quantitative and qualitative faculty survey questions can be found in Appendix G.

The parameters issued by the district for the April 26th professional day were fairly non-descript and schools are granted the autonomy to identify site-specific areas of need, establish site improvement goals, and to construct professional development plans to address identified needs. Site goals and plans for the 2013-2014 school year can be located in Appendix H. High expectations of meaninalgful experiences for teachers is implied in professional development offerings but Tiger Talks was above and beyond what the district might ask of building leaders. I willingly spent many hours on phone calls, in meetings with speakers, and in coordination with various parties to ensure the day was flawless and meaningful for all. I was not required to do any of this. In fact, a conscious decision had to be made to not discuss or engage in any number of emphasized district initiatives including teacher evaluation, curriculum alignment, new academic standards, and so on.

Tiger Talk 1.0 was born of a desire to engage in dialogue beyond standardized testing and teacher evaluation. That is to say, within the confines of neo-liberal educational reforms that comprise the bulk of contemporary principal life. Considering the point in the year when the professional day fell, the event was in many ways a reaction to the climate of the moment and the work and feel of the school in late April. A school climate survey had recently been distributed and feedback indicated that teacher morale was low at school (See Appendix I). I believed the timing was right to allow teachers the opportunity to think philosophically about their work and the greater purpose

beyond the scheduling stresses of testing season. Tiger Talk 1.0 in many ways represents my conceptualization of the role of principal. Inspiring others and investing in personal growth rooted in thought and reflection to drive professional and school improvement are consistent with the characteristics of transformational leadership. This inclination in my psyche runs in sharp contrast to the oft-necessary transactional paradigm more representative of the traditionally middle management nature of the position that I occupy (Bass & Avolio, 1996; Pepper, 2010; Popham, 2001). The means utilized by a leader to drive accountability could perhaps lend valuable insight into the philosophy of said leader. Social accountability structures are necessary in the life process of social organizations but can create conflict and friction for status occupants as oversight and privacy are reduced in the name of greater accountability (Merton, 1957). Some degree of anonymity in practice grants status occupants, in this case, teachers, the flexibility to negotiate the competing and overwhelming demands on their time and energy. Providing autonomy and discretion to teachers while balancing with adequate supervisory and accountability structures to ensure quality is a continual balancing act.

CHAPTER V

A Long and Winding Road

As is the typical Sunday ritual, shortly after mass and sometimes during, I begin to contemplate sitting down and attempt to put my head around the week ahead. With winter break looming five short days away I have a lot to get done. The checklist of tasks to be completed for this afternoon's work session is fairly straightforward: run through e-mail and reply when necessary, at the very least, prioritize e-mail and figure out what I am facing and what is deemed worthy of making the to-do list. After e-mail it will be time to peruse the calendar for the week and it seems quite full. "You know, it is going to be a busy week this week, the break is going to be nice but we will have to earn it." I say as Annaly and I carry the plastic grocery sacks from the car inside the house. At least the grocery shopping is complete. It is a blustery early afternoon slightly overcast and a grey breeze rustles through the leafless branches of the small tree in our front yard. "OK, what do you have this week so I can get the schedule straight in my mind?" She replies. "Well, remember we have orchestra winter concert tomorrow night and then Band on Tuesday, they both begin late, 8:15, remember?" "Yes" she replies in a dreadful and slightly exasperated tone. And then of course Wednesday we are meeting as an administrative team for dinner at 5:30 to exchange gifts and stuff, I think I will be home by 7:30 and I may just meet you all at Gabby's gymnastics practice after if possible. Thursday is the choir winter concert at First Christian but hey, at least it is a little earlier, it starts at 7:15, I can take Gabby if you keep Jens, does that work?" "Yes, I can probably get a little shopping done while you are at the concert." she replies. And of course, Friday is going to be a late one, I remark, the biggest basketball game of the year and you know the kids

will all be looking to get a little rowdy before we head into the break" I comment. "So yes, going to be a busy week this week." A schedule for the aforementioned week can be found in Appendix J. Once the groceries are in the house and put away and with lunch behind us it is time to get into comfortable clothes and get down to the business of what we do, catching up from last week and trying to cram for next week as best as is possible in a Sunday afternoon. With our three year old dozing off for an afternoon nap and our six year old completely immersed in a world of role-playing and make believe in her room and mostly everywhere else in the house, it is time to sit down at the trusty kitchen table and get to work.

As is the standard, I will begin this Sunday prep process with the crafting of a weekly administrative meeting agenda for the following morning. Each Monday I meet with my assistant principals for a standing meeting to touch base on miscellaneous items, follow-up on items that we are working on and so on. These meetings are a sort of tradition at Norman High School and certainly pre-date my tenure as head principal. The agenda that is built is as diverse as the work that we engage in on a daily basis. The agenda is broken into several sections: teaching and learning, scheduling, communication and events, school climate, student issues, and counselors (see Appendix K). Sitting at the table and reviewing the completed agenda it is undeniable that this principal thing is challenging work, daunting and quite frankly, overwhelming. At times I feel as if even on a good day I am simply spinning my wheels and hopefully completing the most routine and fundamental job requirements, "am I being effective?" I wonder to myself. "How long can I keep this up?" I think as I remove my glasses and rub my eyes with both hands. I know that I love my job and the work that I am engaged in and I believe in it too,

I am passionate about being a school principal. Is it different than what I expected? Yes, of course, at least I think it is, but I'm not sure. Nonetheless, here I am on a cold December afternoon trying to manage a loaded schedule and responsibilities. I find the prospects of the week ahead both exhausting and exhilarating, hence the life of a high school principal. Hard to imagine that fifteen short years ago I was a floundering undergraduate student trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life, and here I am, charged with the leadership of one of the largest and most successful high schools in the state (let alone its appearance on the recent development of national high school rankings). I am directly responsible for a large budget, 150 faculty and staff, and 1,850 students. One thing is for sure I muse to myself with a grin; the road to now does make for quite a story.

Major Changes

The room was serene, quiet, and serious, just as one might expect. The faces of students around me seemed to tell that they knew something that I didn't know, at least that was my self-conscious analysis of the situation. No human interaction for me existed; it was as if I were in an unknown world, in many ways I was. It was the fall of 1996 and I was an undergraduate student at the University of Oklahoma and attempting to absorb my first class period in college chemistry.

My college experience began at a small state school roughly an hour and a half from where I grew up. Where moving away to college takes many small town kids to large, bustling campuses, my experience was quite the opposite. Along with a group of five other high school classmates we elected to get away and head to the small state school and experience college life in a unique way. Why did I make this decision at this

time? As I reflect back I am not certain that I have a great answer. I knew that I was going to college and this was a given. I knew that it would be up to me to fund my college education. I knew that I had no idea what it was that I wanted to do with my life. Reflecting upon the thought process, or lack thereof in the way I approached college selection and planning, I now realize that my personal experience in this regard has profoundly impacted how I see my role as a school leader influencing similar decisions for my own students. In an age of "college and career readiness," students and families are left to grapple with vast amounts of information. Students confront rising tuition costs, large numbers of potential course offerings, thousands of institutions of higher learning to select from and extensive possible majors of study to navigate. Additionally, trade schools and paths directly into the workforce provide even more options for high school students. Advisement and guidance have been strong focuses of the work of Norman High School. Each of our students is assigned to a faculty advisor who they work with throughout their high school career. These advisers provide students with information on course requests, interest inventories, social and emotional supports, college selection, and beyond. Students and parents engage in face-to-face meetings with advisors each spring during pre-enrollment. In these meetings, teams discuss post-high school plans, establish goals to build for the student's academic and/or work future, and to make course selections and enrollment decisions. This process begins early in the high school process for our students, during early spring of eighth grade. Philosophically, we strive to provide all students with the information and guidance that result in increasing levels of equity in access to rigorous programs including Advanced Placement coursework and extra-curricular activities. Part of my passion in this regard is driven by

my own perceived lack of such guidance as a high school student. Curriculum from our advisory program can be found in Appendix L.

It didn't take long to realize that my decision to attend this smaller state school was not the right one for me so as the fall semester of 1995 began to wind down I worked on a transition plan to move back closer to home and to transfer my studies. I struggled with the setting and longed to be back with old high school friends and in a context that was familiar to me. I enjoyed high school and in many ways did not want to let go of this period of my life so I returned to that which was socially comfortable. To suggest that the decision was made based on extensive thought, planning, or in light of intentionality would be inaccurate. I was yet to formulate even the broadest plan for my future beyond "just go to college." After an ensuing semester "taking basics" at the local community college I applied and was admitted to the University of Oklahoma to begin my second year of college in the fall of 1996. By this time I felt like I had narrowed down potential areas of study and settled on a dual-focused track. Having worked alongside an optometrist's office since high school, selling, making, and fitting eyeglasses, I decided that optometry was the path for me. I would become an eye doctor. Seeing my future self as the owner of my own clinic, it was a natural fit to study business in conjunction with the requisite science curriculum to prepare me for a bid at optometry school following graduation.

As the professor began to dig into simple "review" concepts I along with classmates began to scribble notes. It didn't take long for me to come to a clear realization: this was in no way review for me and I have no idea what he is talking about, I can't do this. My pulse began to quicken and sweat began to build on my brow. Here I

was, taking my very first college science course and I find myself behind, “I can’t do this,” I think to myself. Immediately following class I made the decision to drop chemistry, a decision that would have a significant and symbolic impact on my life. Looking back now I see this situation differently. Knowing what I know now, thinking how I think now, would I have dropped chemistry? I am not certain, but I would have felt very secure in my ability to overcome the initial ill preparedness and to persevere if I had so chosen. This attribute of resiliency has been my ace in the hole for a long time but I certainly didn’t subscribe to the academic growth mindset sitting in that chemistry class. Intelligence as an open-ended concept and the role of effort in the shaping of intellectual growth stands in conflict with my paradigm at this point in my academic life. Educators possess a moral obligation to socialize intelligence in students. This process of growth can be facilitated through the praising of effort, grit, persistence, and resiliency and establishing structures and processes that reward hard work and are centered on providing high quality and “hopeful” learning experiences for all students. Positive psychology and the work of Carol Dweck, namely with the “growth mindset” have been of influence in my conceptualization of the work of educators over the last several years. Considering my own experience as a high school and college student I met resistance with a predictable reaction, one of aversion and abandonment. This personal shift has impacted how I view my potential both personally and professionally, and how I view these for my students. Resnick (1999) posits that strategic effort is socialized through interaction with others. Intelligence as a malleable quality that can be improved over time works against the traditional values in many schools relying on IQ tests and norm-based testing to rank students. Resnick further notes the self-sustaining nature of the plight of students with

lower perceived aptitude who generally do not have ready access to high standards and rigorous academic expectations (Dweck, 2006; Dweck, 2010; Resnick, 1999). Implicit in Resnick's work is the call for all segments of the student population in U.S. schools to receive equitable levels of critical thinking skill and opportunity to interact with consistently high academic expectations in this regard. This challenge battles against the "aptitude oriented" nature of many schools today and offers a considerably less deterministic view of achievement for all students (Resnick, 1999, p. 56).

I thoroughly enjoyed my high school experience. I attended a large suburban high school, a beautiful facility with all of the resources that a student could ask for: diverse course offerings, athletics, fine arts, and supportive teachers. Progressing through high school the idea of college preparedness or equipping myself with the ability to think creatively and critically or education as a means to find myself or my calling were foreign concepts. This simply wasn't the way school was coordinated where I grew up. Students had some opportunities to engage in rigorous and challenging coursework but these courses were reserved for the elites and if you had to ask, the classes weren't for you. I was a decent student, mostly B's, a few A's and some C's. I took the ACT test one time in high school and the score was high enough to provide access into any state school that I might have desired to attend do I took my 2.96 GPA and my satisfactory ACT and I headed out the door. I took three years of math in high school and the minimum level of science courses as well. I distinctly remember loading up on as many easy elective courses as was humanly possible. As a senior in high school I was enrolled in: Senior English, library aide, office aide, weightlifting, safety/first aid, and food and nutrition. This was certainly not the level of coursework necessary to prepare a student for rigorous

college-level work and expectations. I can't recall ever having a question about enrollment or advisement while I was a high school student and I know that I was never encouraged to enroll in more challenging coursework. In my case, the lazy high school student was left to chart his own academic future in a vacuum and free from the oversight or concerned eye of a process concerned with potential and growth and rooted in a long-term plan of study inclusive of college and graduate level studies and aspirations. My parents both held graduate degrees and a clear understanding was in place that obtaining a strong education was an expectation.

I lived with my mother from the time I was three years old until I was 14. Mom was a schoolteacher so life in the school building was second nature to me. I spent many days after school in her classroom. On days when I was ill I would attend school with her, sitting behind her desk and interacting with the much older middle school students. Despite the influence of school on our family as the result of my mother's occupation, conversations at home generally stopped with the message being made that it was important to do well in school. No clear connections about the fundamental arguments for an education were ever made beyond conceptualizing an education as a means to an end economically. Upon moving with my father in eighth grade, the nature of these conversations shifted dramatically. My father held a bachelor's and master's degree in economics and had become a computer programmer by trade following a career primarily in sales. I remember my father as an intellectual and analytical perfectionist. So much so that he often struggled to complete lofty projects as nothing ever seemed to be "good enough." Dad and I spent many nights on the back porch engaged in thoughtful and intellectual conversations ranging from faith to politics, to economic theory. Similar

conversations make up some of the warmest memories of my childhood. Visiting my paternal grandparents and extended family in Indiana was my favorite part of the year. Memories of my grandparents, father and family passionately debating foreign policy and the effectiveness of a given politician provided a stimulating contrast to life in front of a video game screen or television. We would stay up later than normal, play card games or trivial pursuit, talk Purdue basketball, eat homemade goodies, and engage in conversation. For the most part, I simply listened and became conditioned to enjoy a good debate. Many nights I would lay awake in the upstairs bedroom of my grandparent's home on Jeffrey Lane and listen to the conversation down in the kitchen drag on for what seemed like forever. I distinctly remember the sense of warmth, comfort, and family that came from these moments. Upon reflection, I also realize these interactions worked in hardwiring my future in so many ways. Additionally, this "hardwiring" as a distinctly *social process* lends insight into how powerful the notion of socializing intelligence can be realized in others.

My family was comprised of engineers, computer programmers, accountants, teachers, and military men. My grandfather graduated from Purdue University in the 1930's and was a classmate of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. This meant a deep love and passion for both basketball, and agriculture. Grandpa worked for the Farmer's Home Loan Administration in Indiana for years before making a career change later in life to the US Department of Agriculture that saw he and my grandma move to Taiwan, Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Vietnam. My grandparents were among the last civilians flown out prior to the fall of Saigon and the outbreak of the Vietnam War. My family history is made up of diverse and global perspectives; this fact works to

explain the deeply engrained and unquestionable expectations to follow in these footsteps educationally and through lived experience.

With science officially off of the table my dual major quickly became a solo one: business. I enrolled in a full slate of classic undergraduate business courses ranging from microeconomics to accounting and MIS (Management of Information Systems). As I engaged in my coursework I felt completely lost, it wasn't that I couldn't understand the content and concepts but I simply didn't possess a direction or a clear view of future self, I lacked passion. I progressed through my coursework and struggled mightily while holding down a job at the eyeglass establishment working 30-40 hours a week in addition to my coursework.

While the overwhelming bulk of my classmates were living the classic college life in the dorm or fraternity house and treating studies as a full-time job, I was working a full-time job, living in the same bedroom at my dad's house that I grew up in 25 miles away from campus, and allowing my classwork to take a backseat. Still unclear on my future I failed the only class of my academic career, microeconomics. It was the spring of 1997, I was nearly two years into college and I still had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. At these times of crossroads we often turn to those areas of our lives that are comfortable, where we feel safe, where we feel welcome. We search for cultures that seem natural to us, that feel like home. Athletics was a huge part of my life growing up and football specifically had occupied a disproportionate amount of my heart, soul and mind for years. The strongest relationships in my life were built around participation in football in junior high school and high school, my greatest memories, friendships, and moments of encouragement from teachers and coaches nearly all came on the gridiron.

Why had I never thought of this before? It just makes perfect sense; I am supposed to be a football coach and a teacher. I would never question my major, course of study, or future story again. Academic struggles immediately became a distant memory and with focus and purpose I directed myself toward establishing the relationships and resources necessary to become a great coach.

Entering college I believed that it was important for me to pursue a career that would be financially lucrative. After years of watching my father scrape by to make mortgage payments and to navigate the stresses of suburban poverty, I wanted to break the cycle. I had seen the lives of my friends and many of my extended family members as well and wanted to emulate what they had. This meant pursuing a career that would make this life a possibility for me and eventually for my family. I wanted my kids to go on fun vacations; I wanted a car that I didn't have to worry about breaking down. Most importantly, I wanted to be viewed as a success. After several years in college my perspective began to shift toward that which I would enjoy doing. I also possessed considerable self-doubt in my ability to become a businessman and an eye doctor. Though this was my "major," I never fully believed that I was capable of making the end goal a reality. I knew that I could become a teacher and a coach. Painful reflexive practice forces me to consider the possibility that I became a teacher and coach because I didn't think I could do anything else. This insight and reflection has impacted how I view the work of teachers as a school principal.

Perhaps I am the exception, but I have never backed away from considering the possibility that many others have entered the profession for the same reasons that I did. Further implications can be seen in my beliefs on teacher recruitment, interviewing

practices, and professional development. As long as an individual is hard working, and wants to positively impact the lives of young people, I believe that they can be mentored toward becoming an effective teacher. Absence of either of these two qualities is unacceptable, but if a candidate possesses these two qualities, there is hope as a teacher. As an alternatively certified educator I find myself very leery of alternatively certified candidates. However, I also believe that I see the potential in these individuals and we have had tremendous success utilizing this pathway to fill "high need" areas during my tenure as principal.

By volunteer coaching at my old high school I was able to rekindle several key relationships with some of my high school coaches and establish vital relationships with new individuals as well. I found that it was in these relationships that I would be able to gain an advantage and eventually gain the employment upon graduation that I was seeking. Looking back, I realized even at this point that the relationships that one establishes and cultivates are what provide professional opportunities. Bourdieu refers to this sort of relationship as social capital that is developed over time (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, social capital is developed and cultivated as networks of relationships among individuals begin to grow. These relationships and the corresponding ownership or entry into a group can potentially offer economic reward. Regardless of economic pay-off in the long run, group "members" are granted the backing of the collective party in a given social milieu. Development of social capital is linked with two other forms of capital as outlined by Bourdieu, cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Feeling confident that I would land a job upon graduation I elected to forego the traditional student teaching path and to instead earn a degree in history and work toward alternative teacher certification.

I earned a bachelor's degree in Education/General Studies and concurrently competed the necessary paperwork and certification exams to earn an alternative teaching certificate. By mid-summer a teaching and coaching position had come available in the school district where I was coaching. I met with the principal of the junior high school serving grades seven through nine and I was hired to teach eighth grade American history and ninth grade world history while coaching football.

My first official contract day as a teacher was two days after the start of school. I entered the main office and the head principal walked me to my classroom, a pre-fab building on the eastern perimeter of the campus. He unlocked the door as I patiently waited to enter the room behind him eager to see my new "office." We entered the door, he handed me the key and a teacher's edition of the textbook, firmly shook my hand, looked me in the eye and said "good luck, let us know if you need anything." The door shut behind him as he headed back toward the main building. I turned the lights on in the portable classroom, set my book on my desk and began my effort to turn on the window air conditioning unit as it was time to get to work. This experience lacked the critical network of supportive colleagues supported by research (Norman, Golian, & Hooker, 2006).

By the end of my first year of teaching several things became apparent: I loved teaching and coaching and I had no idea what I was doing inside the classroom. My passion for the work that I was engaged in was strong and the driving force was a desire

to advance in the field of coaching football; and so at that point, teaching was something that was an obligation, part of the job. My passion began each day after the last class when I could put on a visor and shorts and head to practice. I enjoyed the interactions with students inside the classroom to a great degree despite the fact that I lacked even the most rudimentary classroom management or pedagogical skill. I was in love with being a teacher and a football coach, and I was willing to do whatever I had to do to advance my career in this regard.

You're Not in Oklahoma Anymore

In the summer of 2001 a chance encounter led me a thousand miles away from Oklahoma. While working a football camp I met a man by the name of Daryl Jones who happened to be the head football coach at Wayne County High School in Jesup, Georgia. Daryl was the quintessential southern football coach. Bearing a strong likeness to Steve Spurrier with a considerably quicker speaking cadence, Coach Jones possessed boundless energy and a passion for the game of football that I had never experienced. I had long found myself daydreaming of chasing the elusive football coaching dream around the country, watching film until the wee hours of the morning and sleeping in the football office during the season. The adventure of it all was beyond exciting for a 23 year-old coach. As Daryl and I visited at camp one night I made a simple comment that would set into motion the next decade of my life: "I need to come down south where they play real football." The smile left Daryl's face and a serious look entered his eye, "You're a social studies guy, right?" "I have a wide receiver job open right now, come on down." "Are you serious?" I asked. "Yeah, not kidding come on down and take a look. Heck, I'll even throw in a coordinator title to make it look good on your resume."

Six weeks later I kissed my fiancé goodbye and headed toward the Georgia coast with a U-Haul trailer filled with all of my belongings hitched to the back of my black Mitsubishi Montero Sport. Though I would be making the return trip on this journey a short ten months later, the relationships forged and chain of events that unfolded resulting from my move to Georgia were instrumental in my career.

Keeping with the pre-fab classroom theme, I found my new home to be a step down from my first classroom and the interview process to land the position was even shorter. I would have three preps: world history, world studies (essentially a modified social studies course for students served on IEP's), and ninth grade economics. By mid-year, Annaly and I had decided that she enjoyed her work at the University of Oklahoma in Norman recruiting prospective students, and I could teach and coach anywhere, we might as well start our family in Norman.

I pulled the U-Haul back to Norman in May of 2002 and we were married two weeks later, we had already purchased our first home. The preceding December when we decided to move back to Oklahoma I began my job search in earnest. I sent out roughly 40 resumes and letters of reference to every football coach in the Oklahoma City metro area that I could think of. Given the process of attaining teaching and coaching jobs that I had experienced for the first two years of my career I was quite confident that a head coach needing an assistant was a good angle to play again. I was offered a position teaching social studies and coaching football and girl's golf at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in Oklahoma City. It was a relief to have a job upon my return, and the move to Georgia had seemed to pay-off as I would be starting my second season as a varsity football coach at a very reputable program.

Luck of the Irish

Culturally, McGuinness was quite different than anywhere I had been before. Obviously, this distinction was due in large part to the parochial nature of the institution. Similarly, standards were quite high academically at the school. Students at McGuinness, for the most part, had highly involved, highly educated, and very well connected parents. This vested interest and embedded emphasis on academic performance drove my students. Though my teaching was still less than exemplary I had finally begun to hone my skills of classroom management and maintaining student engagement. I felt that I was a highly appreciated and valued member of the school community. Why? Why did they think I was so great? I wrote my pre-determined notes on the white board while students copied them down as I lectured. We would engage in interesting but not necessarily relevant conversations, and then I would give my standard multiple-choice exams. It was as if the students and I had struck a deal: I would make life interesting and fairly easy on them and they would in turn "like me" (Edmundsen, 2013; Pepper, 2010; Spillane et al., 2004). Thus preserving my role in the school and affording me comfort in my position both teaching and coaching. It is important to note that I was in no way intending to not do a better job of challenging my students I simply didn't know what I didn't know. As is the case for so many, I taught the way that I was taught, it was all that I knew and looking back I realize that a case could be made that at this point in my life that I had never seen an expert teacher at work. In many cases, teachers rarely or never get the chance to see one another engaged in practice. "Good teachers" are the affable, likeable types who help out in the copy room, smile in the hallways, and whom the kids speak fondly of. I was made for this role, I excelled in all of the qualities that made a teacher an asset: I was

easy going, flexible, low maintenance, good natured, had a good sense of humor, was incredibly reliable and dependable, and loved the students while possessing a passion for helping them succeed. I had proven myself as a valuable commodity as a teacher and coach to any school that would have me. I was in many ways, a utilitarian necessity (Pepper, 2010).

As I continued to get more experience and credibility under my belt my desire to advance my career grew accordingly. In the spring of 2004 I applied and was admitted to the Master's program in Education Administration, Curriculum, and Supervision at the University of Oklahoma. I enrolled in one on-line course, Financing Education. At this point I wasn't pursuing a graduate degree for any purpose in the near future but thought it wise to begin the process early so I would have the appropriate credentials in place should opportunities open up later in my career. For now, I still wanted to be a head football coach and the best one at that, or at least most days I did. Long work hours at McGuinness seemed to take their toll as the idea of having a few more free hours seemed desirable. As much as I loved McGuinness and the people that I worked with it did require a significant 35-minute commute each way to work. Coupled with long hours in the evenings and on weekends, it just made sense to explore options closer to home.

While coaching at the State Golf tournament in May of 2004 I received a call on my cell phone. The caller ID said "Norman Public Schools," the call was to schedule a meeting with head principal Dr. Lynne Chesley and her interview team. At the time I didn't realize that this meeting would in many ways introduce me to a whole new world.

A Whole New World

In May of 2004, for the first time in my teaching career I had what I would call a "real interview." I remember being surprised to walk into an interview in the principal's conference room at Norman High School to see four smiling faces greeting me. The interview team consisted of the head principal, an assistant principal, a social studies teacher, and the social studies department chair. A warm, friendly greeting started things off and the team began to launch into questions about teaching philosophy, discipline philosophy, and student assessment. After a 45-minute interview I exited the building impressed with the professionalism of the interview panel and the conviction with which they executed the process.

As a new teacher who had never student taught, my experience as a teacher observing other teachers teach or working with other teachers was incredibly limited and in effect, non-existent. Almost immediately after being hired at Norman High School I experienced my first round of collaboration with other teachers. Specifically, I met with my fellow US History teachers to discuss and plan the calendar for the year and begin to develop common assessments and units of study. Much of the philosophy behind the structures and efforts going on at Norman High School were based on the work of Rick DuFour and professional learning community literature (DuFour, 1999). I clearly remember the supportive feel garnered through these interactions, the sense of being part of a team. In addition to distributing much of the curricular and logistic work of developing a course, I realized quickly that I would be called upon to provide input in these meetings. This accountability fostered a sense of urgency to remain focused and to engage in self-reflexive practice. I was for the first time, getting to see how effective

teachers thought and operated. Fundamental concepts like considering the viability of the curriculum and the scoring of essays utilizing rubrics were eye opening to me and I found myself eager to learn as much as possible concerning curriculum and instruction. In many ways, I was beginning to identify all of the things that I didn't know about teaching. As my self-awareness continued to grow so to did my passion for teaching and for learning, Norman High School was a whole new world. Entering the Norman High School faculty as a coach had its advantages. Namely, I had developed supportive social relationships at school. Conversely, several comments were made to me referencing my role as a coach and the surprise that some teachers experienced at my apparent commitment to excellence in teaching. "You are a very good teacher for a coach" and similar other sentiments struck me as offensive upon first glance. I realized early on that a negative stigma could be attached to coaches and their commitment to quality teaching. This became a perception that I sought to change among the faculty as a teacher.

A Future in Administration?

Much as observing and working with master teachers inspired me to become a better teacher, working with Mrs. Holly Nevels facilitated a personal reconceptualization of the work and role of a school administrator. She was caring, concerned, supportive, knowledgeable, and wise beyond her years. Holly was charismatic, funny, good-natured, steady in demeanor, and effective. Holly displayed many of the transformational leadership qualities that I would work to engender in my development (Bass & Avolio, 1996; Donaldson, 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 2008). She never walked thorough my classroom without leaving a personalized note offering encouragement and specific feedback. I

liked Norman High School, I was enjoying growing as a teacher, and I was fascinated by the work of the administrators in the building, they really seemed to care.

Transitioning to Norman High School coincided with another formative event in my career, the pursuit of my Master's degree that I began working on in my final semester at Bishop McGuinness. When my graduate work began I had no intention of utilizing an administrative credential for years to come but after two years in Norman my plans had begun to shift. I partook in an administrative internship with Holly in the fall of 2006 and completed my Master's degree the following semester. I had seven years of teaching under my belt, had successfully completed the National Board Certification process and had finally made the decision that I no longer aspired or desired to be a head football coach, my goals were shifting.

Sitting in Holly's office, an office that would eventually become my own, I asked her a simple question: "How will I know if the time is right to pursue administrative positions? I still love the classroom and I don't feel like I'm ready." Supportive as always, Holly replied "That is how you know you're ready. You're ready when you don't want to leave the classroom, those who become principals because they want out of the classroom become bad principals." I took my mentor's words to heart and when an assistant principal position opened at a middle school in town I decided to pursue it (Cooner, Quinn & Dickmann, 2008).

Norman High School was certainly unique at the time; at least my experience was unique. Dr. Lynne Chesley was the head principal and another key mentor in my career. I was fortunate to have a very open relationship with her and I always appreciated her availability and strength in emotional intelligence. Confiding in her about pursuing the

middle school position was intimidating. She had invested many resources in me; will she see this as betrayal? Norman High School had been a remarkable source of growth for me; was this mistake? Feeling like I knew Lynne pretty well, I assumed that at the end of the day she would be supportive just as she always was. Indeed she was supportive as I anticipated but equally honest, "You won't like it, you need to be patient." "You want to be here at Norman High School, give it time, but you have to do what you have to do." I agreed with her, an assistant principal job at Norman High School was my dream but how long would I have to wait for an opening and even if there were an opening there certainly was no guarantee that I would get the job, I decided to go for it.

For the first time in my career in education I didn't get a job that I applied for. Feelings of rejection and self-doubt began to creep in to my mind but the experience was humbling, and I entered the classroom in 2007 for another year of teaching, coaching, and growth. By the end of football season I found myself becoming further detached from coaching. The birth of my daughter in December of 2007 further compounded my sense of restlessness and my impatience grew to a fever pitch. By late spring I had decided that I would wait to see what openings developed in the district and that I would pursue them strongly, it was time. At the same time I made the decision to begin exploring doctoral coursework, GRE preparation and the like. In March of 2007 I told my head football coach that I needed to talk. "Butch, as you know, I am pursuing principal jobs and I have decided to not coach next year." "Scott" he replied, "I know you are and I support you, if something happens I wish you the best of luck. If it doesn't happen I know you will be back and will do a great job coaching next fall." "No Butch, I have made the decision to stop coaching, with or without a principal job." A look of surprise

and bewilderment came over his face. He processed my words and warmly smiled, “I understand friend, best of luck.” I had officially coached my last football game. I was tired of working the long hours every weekend and having essentially no control over my schedule. Additionally, knowing that I no longer desired to be a head football coach, this exhaustive time commitment seemed all the more unacceptable with a new baby and shifting responsibilities. Living the life of a high school football coach is a hard one. During the season I would return home about 10:00 PM on Mondays, after 7:30 Tuesdays through Thursdays, and midnight on game nights. Saturdays required film review for three or four hours and Sundays generally consisted of a seven to eight hour game planning session for the upcoming opponent. All of this came in addition to a load of four or five academic classes, grading, and planning. Seventy-hour workweeks were the norm and the time on the field proved to be both physically and emotionally exhausting.

It was mid-June and I received a phone call from an acquaintance, a former classmate who had recently completed her PhD and was working with an educational research group at the University of Oklahoma. “Scott, we have an opportunity and I think you would be great at this.” She said over the phone, “when could you come talk to us?” I was intrigued by the possibilities, a chance to move to a new challenge and to learn and the chance to pursue a doctoral degree in a supported environment. I didn’t know where this new path might take me but at least it would take me somewhere, a strong aversion to stagnation had seemed to develop in my psyche. Shortly after an interview with Leslie and her team I received a phone call with the offer of a position. A bit of a pay raise, fewer hours, and easy access to and flexibility in pursuit of a doctoral degree all worked together to make the offer intriguing to a young educator eager to advance, I accepted the

position. In late June 2008 I walked into Dr. Chesley's office to let her know that I had accepted a position at the K20 Center and that I would be leaving Norman High School, I intended to sign my letter of resignation. We talked for an hour or so and again, she was honest and unguarded, "You are going to hate it, you want to be around kids, you want to be here, be patient." She passionately persuaded. What was happening here? My mind was made up, I wasn't here to seek advice and guidance, and I had made my decision. "Scott, listen to me. Just wait for the board meeting next Monday night, I would hate to see you miss out on opportunities that you have waited for." I decided to wait until Monday night.

I tried in vain to put the whole thing out of my mind and go on with life and by Monday I almost had. "I have a feeling that tonight could be pretty interesting." I told my wife, "I wonder if that phone is going to start ringing about 7:30?" It was just after 8:00 and then a phone call came in, "Scott, it's Lynne. Listen, I know Holly is going to call you telling you how she wants you to go with her as an assistant but you don't want to, you won't like it, you want to be here. You have to be here." No sooner had I hung up the phone and another call came, "Scott, it's Holly. Listen, Lynne is going to be calling you and I realize that NHS is your dream but just give it consideration at least, think how much fun we would have together, just consider it."

What a twist it was, I had gone from feeling discouraged and impatient, certain I would never get an opportunity to be an assistant principal anywhere in the district to having the inside track to my choice of positions virtually overnight. I had gone from tendering my resignation to the district, reconsidering my career path, and accepting another position to having my choice of two assistant principalships all in the span of

several days. By Tuesday morning I had called Leslie to let her know that I couldn't accept the position at K20 after all, I would have to see what happens with the assistant principal position at Norman High School.

I will never forget the first e-mail I received from Lynne in my new role. I had not even received official word that the position was mine but I was one of four recipients of an e-mail reminding me to be prepared to discuss our department's staffing needs in Monday's meeting, I knew that I was an assistant principal at Norman High School. Perhaps more fitting was my new office, Holly's office. A small space that I had been mentored in, had vented in, been supported in, would now be mine. For the first time, I sat on the other side of that old desk, hung up a couple of pictures on the wall and wondered if I would be able to fill this 10' X 10' office space that metaphorically seemed so cavernous.

These People are a Lot Smarter than I Thought They Were

Transitioning into the role of assistant principal was challenging. Adding to the complexity of this change was the nature of my association with Norman High School. I had been a teacher and a coach there for the previous four years. Additionally, I had just turned 31 and was the junior to the bulk of the highly regarded faculty. These teachers had seen my progression and journey over the previous four years and to say I felt insecure would be an understatement. I distinctly remember worrying about how people viewed me in my new role. Did they respect me? Like me? Did they think I knew what I was talking about and what I was doing? I quickly gained an appreciation for the complexity of the role of principals. I was surprised by the degree to which the administrative team understood each faculty member, their personalities, traits, work

ethic, teaching style, what the kids thought of them and so on. I remember as a teacher questioning the decisions and plans of the administration frequently, "Why don't they just do this, or do that?" Within a month of becoming an assistant principal I had discovered that there were a complex set of factors that went into most decisions and that ripples were created with each new decision. There were reasons why things were the way they were and weren't the way they weren't. This realization was my first encounter administratively with the institutional factors that impact work within the role of the principalship (Wiseman, 2005; Merton, 1957). Listening to the administrative team hash through plans for the upcoming school year I couldn't help but remark in the middle of a meeting, "you guys are a lot smarter that I used to think you were." We shared a collective chuckle at my observation. As an administrator you make decisions based on the complex interaction of human stories and information that potentially only you have access to. Others may see components of the bigger picture but they are simply not privy to the broad perspective granted to those with administrative capacity. Becoming comfortable making decisions and standing behind them in the face of criticism was a particularly noteworthy challenge for me and continues to be so. My overly amiable nature and desire for everyone to be happy and to like me has proven to be a great strength in relationship building and the development of a human-centered and respectful school culture, but this aspect of myself as a person has continued to be a source of formidable stress as my role has expanded administratively. Saying "no" was not comfortable for me early on in my administrative career and this has been slow to change (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

As a classroom teacher my role was not typically one of conflict. Teachers serve as advocates and mentors for students and with the exception of standard classroom management issues can go years with minimal negative interpersonal interactions with other adults. As a teacher, I was able to avoid such uncomfortable confrontations. I treated kids fairly and respectfully, communicated cordially with parents when the need arose, engaged in reflection with my superiors, and simply avoided those colleagues who might serve as sources of confrontation. In essence, I was able to build a world that rarely necessitated stressful and awkward interpersonal interactions. The permeability of my role and the corresponding pressures that these role set inhabitants were empowered to enact upon me were significantly less than what was experienced as an administrator. To a degree, role conflict itself was the most challenging addition that came along with the "promotion" to assistant principal (Biddle, 1986; Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957). As a teacher I made less than ten phone calls home to parents over the course of eight years. Of these phone calls, only one or two required me to share negative news with parents and even in these situations I wasn't asking much from parents but was merely communicating an observation and seeking parental insight.

As a teacher I always felt like I was well liked by my colleagues. I didn't engage in negativity or the rumor mill and got along well with most people. I had many good friends at school. This too changed as I transitioned into the assistant principal role. Within two weeks of taking the position I found myself engaged in multiple, heated conversations with colleagues whom I had considered friends over the previous four years. I had eaten dinner at their homes and spent many evenings together at parties and functions, we collaborated together, they knew me and they knew my heart. How then?

How could they talk to me in this manner? As if I no longer cared, as if I was some new authoritarian bureaucrat who was attempting to take over the school. A change in position within the social structure of schools had placed me as an inhabitant in the role set of other adults, a position that I had never occupied before. For the first time I was a component of the structure resulting in role conflict and accountability pressures on my contemporaries. Naturally occurring friction that resulted from my desire to ensure improved instruction among the teachers that I supervised resulted in some feelings of resentment and defiance as new roles began to be sorted out (Biddle, 1986; Merton, 1957).

Tension does exist between my personality and the adversarial content that is often part of the position. This tension has been a source of consistent discomfort for me and has been a focus of professional development and personal growth. Reflecting back on my time as a teacher and coach, I was able to exercise personal control over situations that could potentially lead to interpersonal conflict, this is not a typical luxury afforded in my work as a principal. Upset parents and students must be worked with, however, adversarial interactions with faculty and staff have been particularly challenging for me. Equipping myself with strategies to engage in crucial conversations and to maintain focus on taking corrective action when needed have aided in my development in this regard. My discomfort with people being upset with me personally and the internalization of conflict has been a continual stressor and is a battle that I continue to fight on a daily basis. Perhaps more than any other challenge of the job, this has resulted in the most emotional weight shouldered as a high school principal. The very nature of the position and the interaction with so many stakeholders all but ensures that potentially adversarial

conversations and interactions will unfold. Possessing the wherewithal to navigate these encounters while remaining focused on the organizational mission is of particular importance (Biddle, 2006; Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957). The source of perceived unreachable demands, the school district simultaneously serves as my greatest source of comfort as autonomy is granted to cope with burdening conflicts, competing interests and pressures that are fixtures of the position.

Continuous exposure to stressful and uncomfortable situations has taken a toll on me. This impact is sometimes manifested in mood and attitude once I leave school. Excessive amounts of time are spent in worry and thought either in anticipation of or reflection of one of these encounters. I believe that this pressure stems from a deep desire to be liked by others. This ever-present necessity to gain the approval of others has proven to be one of my greatest attributes as a school principal. I take the extra time to work with families, I treat all stakeholders with deep respect and work tirelessly to ensure they feel valued, respected, and heard. Simply stated, I want to be liked by all. This burden has forced me to assume excessive amounts of stress and workload as extreme amounts of time might be spent in apologetically working with teachers, parents and students to try to "smooth things over". This component of the principalship is vastly different in my experience from what I encountered as a teacher, coach, and in other areas of my life where undesirable conflict has been essentially avoidable at most times. Nothing could be further from the truth for me now as a building principal and I have matured greatly in working beyond the attainment of mere approval from others as an indicator of a job well done.

My first discipline investigation as an assistant principal didn't go much better. I assigned a student to "in-school suspension" for his role in an altercation that occurred at a bus stop on the way to school one day. In the chaos of a school day, the investigation, and collection of student statements, I simply forgot to communicate with his parents. Less than two weeks into my new role I experienced a screaming mother tell me that I "made her nauseous" and "the fact that you are the type of role model my son has at school makes me want to vomit, how do you sleep at night?" This was the first time I had ever been spoken to in this manner in my entire life, much less at work in a professional setting. I was devastated. As a principal, making the tough phone call is a skill that I have honed over time but the initial shock of the experience was eye opening.

I gained a sensation of participating in the old football drill "bull in the ring", where one player stands in the middle of a circle and random players from around the circle charge the middle player to tackle him unexpectedly. I was the bull in the ring surrounded by hostile colleagues, angry students, and aggressive parents. The council and mentorship of my fellow administrators became my refuge and my source of strength (Cuban, 2001; Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005).

Right Hand Man

As I progressed as an assistant principal I began to feel more comfortable in my new position. Though my views of the position and my perceived role would certainly undergo significant evolution over the years to come, I was starting to get a feel for the job. I found that I had strength at synthesizing complex situations (Cuban, 2001). I could see the big picture and how smaller pieces fit together. My insights in administrative meetings were welcomed and quickly became sought after by the team. Lynne extended

great flexibility and room to grow as a principal. She granted me a significant degree of autonomy in the implementation of initiatives, designing professional development for the staff, hiring, and planning. This trust and her accompanying support were undoubtedly the keys to my development as a principal and I was allowed to think like a head principal long before I was granted the actual opportunity. In many ways, I was already becoming a principal. My role on the administrative team continued to broaden and my influence became apparent, even to me. I began to develop strong relationships with district-level personnel and took on more challenging and sensitive administrative functions relating to teachers and students as trust in my abilities grew among my superiors, my social capital was mounting (Bourdieu, 1986). By my third year as an assistant principal I found myself advising Lynne on matters within the school and it was quite common for me to personally contact assistant superintendents or the school district's legal counsel directly. I was the sole investigator and site contact for two high profile student situations in my third year as an assistant that forged strong relationships with district leadership. I gained credibility with a range of school administrators and with the school board, and this provided me with priceless experience in high stress situations. Exposure, experience, and credibility would prove to be a tremendous asset as other events began to unfold in May of 2011.

"I've Decided To Retire."

The request was a simple one but something about it seemed far from typical. Dr. Chesley asked the assistant principals to convene in the principal's conference room for an impromptu meeting. While gravitating toward what was a familiar setting for dialogue and school-related banter, what was about to unfold was a moment that I won't ever

forget. Quickly after sitting down, Lynne got right to the point, she looked at us with a gentle smile and what seemed like a look of sadness tempered with relief and told us that she had decided to retire at the end of the school year. It was early May and reality began to set in almost immediately that things were going to change dramatically. I had grown quite comfortable in my role at Norman High School. I knew that no matter what happened I had the unwavering support of my mentor who would buffer me from the outside world and would always be there. Metaphorically speaking, I had grown up at Norman High School and the very notion of a potential change in the "feel" of the school frightened me. My strong sense of devotion to the "feel" of NHS would go on to heavily influence how I operate as a building leader. This feel could more aptly be characterized as the culture of the school (Donaldson, 2006).

Leaving the room, my colleagues and I looked at one another in disbelief. What does this mean? The thought of professional life at Norman High School without Dr. Chesley wasn't something any of us had really spent much time considering even though I am certain that deep inside we all knew the day was coming sooner rather than later. My mind began to think about the potential opportunity that had just presented itself. I had often dreamt about being Dr. Chesley's successor but never really considered myself a viable candidate for the position. My original plan was simple and straightforward: complete my doctoral degree prior to her retirement, have five or six years under my belt as an assistant principal and maybe, just maybe I would have a shot at landing the job. Things had changed dramatically in the course of fifteen minutes and the time was now. Making the decision to apply for the position was not entirely easy even though I think I always knew that I would. Many conversations were held over the course of the ensuing

week with colleagues, mentors, and family weighing the pros and cons of applying for the position. Ultimately, I felt like I understood what made Norman High School a special place; I understood the predominant culture of the school. I understood the profound impact that the school community had on my professional life and as a person in general and in many ways felt it was my duty to seek the position. Having turned 33 just a few weeks earlier and really nowhere near the completion of my doctorate I didn't have any real sense of my true viability as a candidate. I had the relationships with appropriate people at the district office and I believed that I had the support of many within the school itself, but did this make me a realistic candidate? It is important to note that I did not believe that I was prepared or ready for the position.

The Selection and the Call

The interview and selection process seemed to lag on for an eternity. I had assumed that the process would be very detailed and inclusive of multiple interviews and screenings. In reality, quite the opposite occurred. I had one forty-five minute interview and then it was hurry up and wait. For nearly six weeks I heard absolutely nothing and then one day, I received the call. Many conversations were held up to this point with friends and colleagues and those led to much speculation and daydreaming. At some point in the process of seeking the position I got caught up in the idea of being a head principal, was I ready?

CHAPTER VI

The Man in the Principal's Office

> Administrators do not publicly declare their anxiety concerning role definitions among patron statuses like parents or teachers, and the extent of their dissatisfaction with the principalship is not usually made explicit to their central office superiors. But in the privacy of their own formal and informal conversations, discussions of role consume a substantial part of their time. (Wolcott, 1973, p. 296)

Chapter VI signals a shift in this dissertation and marks the beginning of a section that is decidedly more descriptive and traditionally ethnographic in intent. This chapter establishes context and background to the style of prose found in Chapters VII through Chapter X and is intended to serve as the entry point for understanding the construction of the narrative reflecting both the daily and yearly experiences of the principal.

Harry Wolcott's 1973 account of the principal life of Ed Bell serves as a seminal work in the cultural study of the principalship. *The Man In The Principal's Office* examines the life of an elementary school principal for an extended period of time and through a variety of lenses. This work provided an early account of the lived experience of the school principal from the perspective of a cultural anthropologist (Wolcott, 1973). Reading through Wolcott's portrait of the principal life is an engaging experience. Work within schools is highly contextual and the work of Ed Bell is not immune to this fact (Spillane et al. 2004). Bell leads a suburban elementary school and Wolcott's study began with observations of Bell in 1967. Despite the inherent contextual discrepancies between the work of Ed Bell in his elementary school in 1967 and me in my high school in 2014, many institutionally-driven consistencies still remain linking our respective work. These consistencies are noted in the work of sociologists such as Linton (1936) and Merton (1957) and referenced by Wiseman in the term "institutional isomorphism," or the

tendency for like-situated social structures to take on similar characteristics even across time and setting (Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957; Wiseman, 2005). Close examination and navigation of Wolcott's work provided me with a view and historical awareness of the progression and evolution within the principalship and depicts areas where practice, behavior, and role have been left almost completely unaltered as if they have been preserved in a time capsule of sorts within the field.

Wolcott (1973), produced a classic ethnography in his study of Ed Bell, but my study varies significantly in the autoethnographical nature of my analysis. Though the lens is different and the accompanying analysis and concessions must be made in this regard, I sought to build on the work of Wolcott. My research intent is different from my scholarly predecessor, and a more reflective tone has been adopted in the account of this research process in an effort to personally examine my role conceptualization within the lived experience of the principalship. *The Man In The Principal's Office* provides a blueprint for my examination of the unique work of the principal. Upon reading Wolcott's (1973) study I felt very comfortable following his path as a means to make historical and cultural connections within my own research work, thus more deeply grounding my reflection and observations in the highly institutionalized nature of the work of school principals (Wiseman, 2005).

Linking more recent research in the fields of occupational psychology to the work of Linton (1936) and Merton (1957) provides a richer perspective to inform occupational role socialization within the public agency of schooling as a contextual examination of principal life begins. Laying a foundation that bridges the connections between the

broader field of occupational psychology with the specific context of the principalship provides depth to this study.

Focusing on potential sources of role conflict within the principalship offers an example of insight gained through the merging of these fields and undergirds the deeper interest in the discussion of role socialization for school leaders. Tidd and Friedman (2002) examined conflict style as a coping strategy to role conflict and the accompanying stress. Traditional approaches to combating role conflict stressors have been couched in one of two schools of thought: addressing structural factors to reduce role conflict or accounting for individual differences in an effort to buffer status occupants from the impacts of role conflict-related stressors.

Tidd and Friedman (2002) offer conflict style as a response to aiding those impacted by the aforementioned stress. Conflict style refers to specific behavioral strategies that can be implemented to negotiate and cope with role conflict stress. Assertive approaches on the part of the status occupant can produce positive results in the process of effectively coping through the role conflict process. Understanding the power of specific and concrete behavioral actions provides building leaders and principals with a potentially powerful insight in addressing the impact of role conflict beyond a traditional reliance on "buffering" and re-structuring.

Examination of the very public life of school principals is incomplete without addressing the inherent uncertainties associated with the position. Beehr and Bhagat (1985) identified two important types of uncertainty in work roles that can work to create role conflict and stress upon the status occupant. Effort to performance uncertainty refers to the lack of clear comprehension of the degree to which effort on the job will lead to

performance recognition. Performance to outcome uncertainty addresses ambiguity in how job performance leads to rewards.

Ambiguity within the expectancies of the position can create high levels of uncertainties for school leaders. Compounding this issue is the lack of agreement among members of the role set on the specific job functions of the principal. The nature of the principalship in this regard connects deeply with the field of occupational psychology to provide a powerful example of work that is at its core, non-scientific. Technocratic shifts toward Taylorism and the scientific management tradition of public schooling in the latter half of the 20th century attempts in some ways to ameliorate this conflict but has proven ineffective in accounting for the very human , dynamic, and nuanced work of schools and those who lead them. (Beehr & Bhagat, 1985; Mehta, 2013).

Broader work in sociology and psychology are relevant and applicable to the work of school leaders. These fields lend insight to practice and illuminate institutional similarities across the boundaries of work contexts. When examined in light of highly contextual principal life in the chapters to follow these similarities are revealed along with contextual discrepancies and solutions tailored to the unique work of leading schools.

CHAPTER VII

A Day in the Life

Not surprisingly, the summer months have a different "feel" to them than the school year in my work as a principal. Much work remains to be accomplished, and I do work steady through the summer, but without students and with only a few office staff members on hand things aren't as physically lively as they might be from August to May. There is much to be done: hiring, shifting and assigning of rooms, planning the back to school in-service and professional development for the year, building calendars, editing faculty and student handbooks, enrollment preparations, attending conferences, and the list goes on.

As a high school principal I am highly visible in our community. The school represents access to the teenagers in a community and the principal often times serves as the gatekeeper to the students to various stakeholders who may desire to be granted access. It is not that this access is a negative thing, in fact, it is often a very positive and even necessary intervention but it must run through the principal's office regardless (Donaldson, 2006; Merton, 1957).

July 23rd began early with a breakfast meeting on the calendar with a community leader, my fellow high school principal colleague, and a good friend who aided in scheduling the get together between the principals and the community partner named Courtney. A complete view of my calendar from July 23rd is available in Appendix M. Though I had met Courtney previously this was my principal colleague and friend Peter's first encounter with him. Peter's recent hiring as principal at a neighboring in-district high school had prompted excitement in the community. Peter's and my friendship was

well documented and our collective energy seemed to prompt a positive community response, likely because we both occupied the principal position at the only two high schools within the district. Courtney was eager to sit down with us and discuss how we could all work together. As we gathered at 7:15 at the small Mexican diner on the west side of town we began to engage in friendly dialogue. Peter was the last to arrive for the meeting and blew into the restaurant with his signature ease and grin. Acting as if he had known Courtney for 15 years Peter launched into conversation, smiles, and jokes with the group.

Peter's ability to engage a room, to be present, and to make quick friends is almost legendary in our community. These qualities have routinely opened up opportunities for community partnerships and for relationship building (Day, 2007; Hoy & Miskell, 2008). For both Peter and I, an open willingness and the accompanying ability to effectively network and to build relationships is a perceived strength. Work within the principalship is people-oriented. Possessing an understanding of bureaucracy and developing the skill set and ability to navigate around that bureaucracy is vital to the work of the principal. If left merely to formal engagement and non-personal interactions, driving partnerships with community stakeholders becomes a grueling and challenging process. On the contrary, the ability to pick up the phone or send a text message to a friend who wields power and influence within the community can turn the principal from middle-level bureaucrat into an agent for change. Suffice it to say, the development of social capital within the community is valuable. Similarly, a re-definition of role that places the principal at the heart of community work and community agency can be effective in building trust and communication (Bourdieu, 1986; Khalifa, 2012).

Courtney was definitely a contact that was a good one to have for a high school principal. He knows everyone in town and beyond, he has ample resources, and he is committed to building a sense of community for students. This is precisely why we were meeting this morning, to establish relationships, to begin to establish real friendships between like-minded community stakeholders who all sit in different seats but when working together can make positive change in our community. In many ways, Courtney needed us as much as we need him. Where he has the resources, connections and influence to make things happen, Peter and I hold the keys to the proverbial kingdom, we are the gatekeepers of the schoolhouse and with it, the 4,587 high school students in town. Endless resources to help and no access to those who need help does not lead to community building, access to those who need help minus the requisite resources is challenging in similar ways.

Courtney was eager to talk about mentorships within our schools. He was instrumental in the development of a program that partnered men in the community with elementary students. Over 40 men had agreed to take on a student who they would meet with and mentor in an on-going basis. After breakfast and one last exchange of pleasantries, we agreed to schedule a standing monthly breakfast meeting to continue our dialogue and relationship forging. Within an hour I received an e-mail from Courtney: "excited to see where this goes, let's make it happen, we don't do things halfway." Breakfast had successfully helped to build relationships and further develop a network of change-minded community members, and perhaps more important, had facilitated an accountability measure and feedback loop monitoring how effectively we serve students in need of mentorship (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002).

I have come to view my work as a high school principal as one of community organizer and facilitator of change. I have a specific knowledge base, an expertise in learning and in high school students. As a principal I do not educate students in a vacuum but rather in concert with the broader community with all of the subtle nuances, values and contextually driven factors associated with a given zip code. Is the school principalship a position of maintaining the status quo, or becoming an effective agent for change (Epstein, 2011; Khalifa, 2012)?

Immediately after breakfast I jumped in my car and headed to school. I had a "grading practices/honor code" committee meeting to facilitate in the library. During the previous spring the school leadership team utilized an array of multi-dimensional data to identify several areas in need of attention in our school. Data analyzed included grade distributions, assessments, standardized test scores, attendance and behavior trends, and stakeholder survey data. Five key focus areas were identified and committees were formed, committees included: 9th grade transition, climate, interventions for struggling students, transition to college, and grading practices/honor code. I made the goal before summer to locate research to serve as a starting point for dialogue among faculty members and was committed to holding multiple meetings for each committee over the course of the summer. The objective was simple: build a solid, informed nucleus of faculty members for each committee over the summer who would be committed to sustaining the work once the school year began. Sample notes and thoughts stemming from a freshman transition committee meeting can be found in Appendix N.

Establishing leadership capacity among assistant principals is of value to me as a head principal. My campus is served by four assistant principals who have duties ranging

from: the creation of the master schedule, to planning open house, working with student discipline, grounds and facilities, communication with parents, and the list goes on. The nature of their jobs is extremely multi-faceted. Having served as an assistant principal for three years in the same building I am personally aware of the demands and time pressures of the position. Delegation has been a struggle for me at times. I often confront feeling of guilt when asking my assistants to engage in tasks beyond their traditional or more formalized roles. For example, asking the assistants to head a summer committee has posed a challenge for me. Feelings of guilt as a I put more and more on their plates coupled with a concern for follow-through as the rigors of their positions and the choking absence of "extra time" begin to set in. I made the decision to assume control over all five committees and provided the research, communication, planning, and coordination for all summer committee work.

My failure to delegate appropriately has not only kept me from engaging in tasks that only the head principal can engage in like meeting with community members and planning the budget, it has stifled the growth of my assistant principals. The sense of urgency for the visionary and programmatic work to be done and done well the first time makes the luxury of allowing someone to learn as they go just that, a luxury.

Keeping consistent with the other meetings held over the course of the summer, the morning went well. Our first grading practices/honor code meeting was the least attended session that had been offered and the decision was made to simply follow the agenda and structure of meeting number one as we had no returning members from the June meeting. In a school of just over 1,800 students we had 425 who failed at least one course the preceding spring semester as revealed in student eligibility and matriculation

data. Clearly, this data was concerning. Our objective for the work of the grading/honor code committee was to foster dialogue and awareness of the implications and impact of teacher grading practice. To deeply examine why we grade the way we grade and what's more, what does a grade even mean? The honor code component was added in light of a push toward emphasizing the teaching of non-cognitive skills in our school and the two topics seemed to go hand in hand. Perhaps the reason that students were not completing assignments and failing classes was the same reason that other students were simply cheating on their assignments to earn grades. Were grades running the way we conceptualized motivation and how we structure learning for our students? Had we reduced schooling to a game of hoop jumping and the students who bought in would cheat, lie and jump to earn the carrot while the students who did not buy in simply fail? While I had my own theories on the matter, my intent in entering into the conversation was more about student motivation and pedagogical practice than it was about grading, I was hoping that by asking the right questions and exposing teachers to the right research that the faculty would begin to make this broader and more complex connection (Bass, 1985; Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997).

Eight faculty members including assistant principals, early career teachers, and veteran teachers attended the grading meeting. Though an agenda was crafted prior to the meeting, the smaller group led to the abandonment the structure mid-meeting in favor of a more informal conversation and dialogue about the nature of the committee's work and narrowing down exactly what the focus should be as we moved toward the school year. Questions began to arise in the conversation including the purpose of grades, inconsistent grading practices school wide, and how best to enter into this conversation with the

broader faculty. I shared with the committee the number of students who had failed at least one class the previous semester: 415. The committee was unanimous in their belief that this number should not be shared with the faculty as it felt like administration was blaming teachers for the large number of failures (Cuban, 2001).

In 2005, the administration at Norman High School developed what was titled a "grade justification sheet" to be completed by teachers for any student receiving an "F" in their respective course at the end of a semester. This practice was met with strong criticism as faculty members voiced their concerns about having to justify why a student had failed a class. Though nine years prior to our current committee work, the practice had not been forgotten and was addressed during the meeting.

By the end of the meeting we had established next action steps. An afternoon had been devoted to committee work during the back to school in-service and the team agreed to stay away from leading with the number of failures from the previous year, to show a brief video to prompt discussions of why we do what we do with grades, and established the following objective for the in-service time: To foster deliberate reflection among teachers regarding their grading practices and to ask teachers to consider the relationship between learning and assessment. These actions were transformational at their core and generally reflective of the greater philosophy of Norman High School (Donaldson, 2006; Hoy & Miskell, 2008).

I headed straight back to my office as the meeting concluded at 11:00 a.m. and to another meeting with a teacher that was scheduled to begin at the same time. My next meeting was with a teacher who had resigned the week before to take a position outside of public education. As the position included extra-curricular duties as well, we were

meeting so critical information relevant to the functioning of the student activity could be communicated and eventually passed to the new applicant occupying the position. This meeting was brief and after about 15 minutes we shook hands, and I briefly reflected on the need to get the position filled as soon as possible.

Hiring during the summer months can provide many challenges. I emphasize hiring the highest quality candidates that we can find and then making the master schedule adjustments to accommodate the new hire. For example, if a teacher who taught 5 sections of Biology retires, there is no guarantee that we will hire a teacher who will simply slide into her/his vacated schedule. We will open up the position, find the best science teacher available regardless of specific certifications, and adjust accordingly on the back end to the greatest extent possible. This philosophy has allowed us to bring in some strong new faculty members but makes scheduling and teaching assignments a fluid process often into August.

Following my teacher meeting I grabbed a drink of water and awaited a group of students who had scheduled a meeting to discuss the selection of a new yearbook adviser. The students arrived and entered into the principal's conference room in the main office and pulled out notebooks with pre-determined questions for me along with pens. It didn't take long for them to launch into their questions: do we have a new sponsor yet? Will we be able to move forward with our ideas for next year's book? And, will we be able to attend the national conference? I appreciated their candor and their willingness to engage in the conversation. I was impressed by the direct manner in which they had seized control of the yearbook program in the absence of an adviser and I praised them for their efforts. I let the students know that I was very proud of the way they had conducted their

business and for the leadership that they had exhibited and that I would let them know as soon as we hired someone, I assured them that we would make a good hire (Friend & Caruthers, 2012).

As the students departed at about noon I checked in with the staff in the main office and headed off campus to grab a quick lunch. During the school year I generally bring my lunch to school with me. Lunch in my office is utilitarian in nature, very pragmatic. Often times I will bring rice, beans, and a spinach salad. I will also bring peanut or almond butter and tortillas, and an extensive offering of fruits and nuts to get me through the day. I am extremely sensitive to not getting in enough calories so I ensure I have the fuel needed to get through the day but more importantly, to be focused with great energy throughout the day. With what can seem like meeting after meeting and minimal down time to process e-mail and work on projects or paperwork, a quiet lunch is a luxury that is rarely afforded. Sitting down at my desk to eat for 10 minutes provides 10 minutes to scan the inbox, look at phone messages, or take a gander at the list of next action-required items (Hallinger, 2013).

Several days prior, Peter and I received an e-mail from a professor of education at the University of Oklahoma inquiring about our interest in a research proposal centered on the establishment of freshmen academies on both high school campuses and Carol Dweck's work on the Growth Mindset. A meeting had been set for today at 12:30 p.m. at Norman High School, Peter and the researchers arrived and the meeting got underway. The proposal was for students in 9th and 10th grade to complete a survey at the start of the year and then again at the end of the year. Freshmen were to receive an intervention that would take the form of a 55-minute class period and a writing assignment reflecting on

traits like perseverance, resiliency, and grit. A lively conversation occurred as we negotiated and worked our way through developing some ideas that we felt were agreeable from the perspective of a principal and after tailoring the time requirements to fit the typical expectations of teachers, we agreed on a tentative plan.

As a high school situated a mile from a major research university, it is not uncommon that we are presented with numerous requests to participate in research. These studies come to us in a variety of formats and from a variety of colleges within the university ranging from the College of Architecture to the College of Education. Researchers unfamiliar with the school district IRB approval process will often contact principals directly at the school as a first step. Those more experienced in the process begin at the district office where the Assistant Superintendent's office processes requests. The degree to which I get to accept or decline studies can vary based on the nature of the study, the time requirements of the study, and the relationships between researchers and the district or school. In the instance of this research process, prior relationships did exist between the lead-researcher and building level administration, this seems to expedite the process and can foster speedier compromise and negotiation thus resulting in deeper buy-in at the site.

In the summer of 2012 I attended a conference session about positive psychology and much attention was paid to Dweck's "Growth Mindset" work. I walked out of the session, immediately purchased the book and read it cover to cover. "Growth Mindset" had become a fixture at Norman High School and professional development had been provided to staff accordingly over the previous two years, this proposed study fit nicely with the work of our school (Dweck, 2006; Dweck, 2010).

The meeting with researchers ended just before 2:00 p.m. My next scheduled appointment was again with Peter at Norman North High School at 3:00 p.m. I now had about 45 minutes to scan through e-mail and check-in with the assistant principals who were working on general preparations for the school year including building the master schedule, interviewing potential teacher's assistants, and organizing offices.

I often reflect on the differences between the work that I engage in on a daily basis and what my role looked like as an assistant principal. As an assistant I was responsible for supervision of the World Languages and English departments. Additionally, I worked extensively with programming events throughout the school year like coordinating the annual 8th grade visit to our school, and also oversaw state accreditation. All of this was completed along with the standard student discipline and parent issues that might arise on a daily basis. The assistant principalship offered the sensation of flying a plane a couple hundred feet off of the ground, able to see the daily work, successes, and struggles of stakeholders in a more intimate way. As head principal I feel like I am flying at about 10,000 feet. Though I am able to make out the shapes of cars, houses, and people below, I have a much broader picture of the landscape, a more comprehensive vantage point. I am offered the chance to zoom in from time to time into the specifics of a situation but these occurrences are generally when an issue has escalated in the eyes of a given stakeholder. In many ways, it feels like a game where the object is to not allow myself to be pulled too deeply into situations with teachers, parents, and students. I am very aware of the impact that my involvement in a situation might have and this offers cause for reflection upon the topic of delegation. Rooted in the professional development of others, delegation provides opportunities for people to grow

in areas of interest to them. An example might be allowing an assistant principal to spearhead the development of a comprehensive dropout prevention plan. However, delegation also provides me with the value of being able to focus on those essential elements that only I can focus on. Position specific tasks and expectations exist for the head principal in a school building. Imagine these tasks requiring the 10,000-foot vantage point. Examples of such tasks would include reporting to district-level administration on school data, reviewing budgets, approving requisitions and purchases, and working with situations that have escalated from the teacher, counselor, or assistant principal level due to a variety of factors. If I abandon this perspective to drop in closer to the ground, nobody is left to man the elevated view. I spend significant energy keeping myself freed up enough to be available for requirements that can only be met by me. Maintaining this perspective requires significant trust in those serving as assistant principals (Jackman, 2009).

At 10 minutes to 3:00 p.m. I left the school and headed to Norman North High School. By the time that I arrived Peter had begun the meeting and was engaged in informal conversation with an individual who had just moved to town. The reason for this meeting was simple, our school district had recently passed a significant bond issue and a component of the bond was the construction of what was being dubbed a "University Center." This concept was built on the idea that the high school experience for juniors and seniors should look and feel different from the experience of incoming ninth graders. Within the University Center, tentative talks suggested the offering of concurrent enrollment university courses on our campus, soft seating areas for students to congregate

fostering a student union feel, and ample space designated for student collaboration with peers and with faculty both at the high school and representing higher education.

This meeting was with an individual who had worked extensively in in the building of an "early college" high school model out of state. We spoke for about 45 minutes and concluded the meeting without developing any future action steps. This is an important point to make in the discussion of any meetings that might serve as a proposal. Significant numbers of community stakeholders seek time to meet with me. It is not uncommon that I would have multiple such meetings in a given week. I sometimes feel pressured to commit to these on my schedule, especially when I can predict a lack of value to the organization, but it is not that simple. The political ramifications of offering a cold "no" to patrons with ideas and passions can be serious. Gauging when to give time to people outside of the school and when not to is a delicate balancing act. Though I realize that I have a scarce amount of time and spending several hours a week hearing pitches from community members that don't necessarily fit seamlessly with our current work can be costly. Ultimately, these conversations lend themselves to relationship building and grant me the opportunity to share the work of our school with the broader community, which might in turn result in positive dialogue regarding our work and direction (Bourdieu, 1986; Epstein, 2011; Khalifa, 2012).

I believe it is my responsibility to possess a clear sense of vision and direction for my school (Donaldson, 2006; Hallinger, 2013; ISSLC, 2008; Wallace, 2013). It is this awareness that serves as the filter when new proposals and constraints on time are brought to the schoolhouse door. Acute awareness of vision and direction allows me to

hear a proposal and quickly ascertain if the value to be gained is a good fit for the school at that time.

My final obligation for the day was to meet a friend of mine at a local restaurant to catch up, this friend happens to be the father of a student at my school. On this day the conversation stayed away from school business aside from the very general "how are things going at school?" remarks. We spent the late afternoon in an easy conversation about running, cycling, and our personal lives. By about 6:15 p.m. it was time for both of us to head home and to assume our places in another role in our lives, that of dad.

My work as a high school principal is diverse and varied. Each day can take on a life of it's own and the degree to which I have much latitude over what that day might consist of varies as well. Summer months can look different than the traditional August to May school year. Reactive behavior is reduced during the summer as planning, preparation, and hiring become the focus of the work. Day to day fires are not as regular at this time of year (Wolcott, 1973).

CHAPTER VII

What A Principal Does: Formal Encounters

> The greatest part of a principal's time is spent in an almost endless series of encounters, from the moment he arrives at school until the moment he leaves. Most of these encounters are face-to-face, tending to keep the principalship a highly personal role. (Wolcott, 1973, p. 88)

A considerable portion of time within the principalship is spent in the context of formal encounters. Within this account, formal encounters comprise interactions inclusive of faculty and staff observations, evaluations, and pre and post evaluation conferences, hiring interviews, standing meetings at a variety of levels, cyclical events like open house and parent-teacher conferences, professional development events, and various parent and community events (Cuban, 2001; Lortie, 2013; Wolcott, 1973).

Site Administrative Team Meetings

Standing meetings comprise a significant portion of the daily and weekly activities of my work. These meetings include formal encounters that occur at the site level and within departments, but also include district-level commitments. Each Monday of the school year begins with a site administrative team meeting. These meetings involve the four assistant principals and myself (see Appendix K). Meeting length can vary significantly depending on the agenda items to be covered, and the meetings begin immediately after the tardy bell signaling the start of 1st hour, which occurs at 9:05 each morning. Though the administrative contract day begins at 8:30, one principal is responsible for arriving in the building prior to 7:30 a.m. on Mondays through Thursday when "zero hour" meets. We have a flexible schedule that requires all students to partake in the legislatively mandated 6-class school day but permits flexibility in how these six classes are structured. The "regular" school day runs from 9:05 a.m. to 4:05 p.m. each

day. Students can take a zero hour class if they choose and therefore have the option to either leave at 3:05 following their six classes, or to stay through 7th hour thus taking an extra class each semester. Students often take an extra hour to accommodate a desire to squeeze in extra classes including fine arts activities, or elective Advanced Placement offerings that time would not permit in the structure of a regular schedule (See Appendix O).

On most days, the principals not on zero hour duty arrive on campus between 7:50 and 8:15 a.m. Activities prior to 9:05 a.m. and the start of the official school day are generally consumed with attendance in IEP meetings, parent meetings, substitute teacher coverage of absent teachers, and student issues that await the administrator once they arrive in the morning. These issues can range from bus and transportation issues to student discipline issues over the evening hours and beyond. The impromptu nature of pre-1st hour activities makes the scheduling of formal administrative meetings a complicated challenge so the practice of getting all students to 1st hour and the day running prior to meeting has been the norm even prior to my tenure as head principal.

Often times, the meeting begins with a book study. I have made the commitment to providing assistant principals with a variety of personal growth and leadership books and have developed book studies to foster team growth. Over the last several years our team has read *Mindset* by Carol Dweck (2006) *The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni (1998), *Drive* by Daniel Pink (2009), and *Developing the Leader Within You* by John Maxwell (1993) among others. Each week an agreed upon segment of the text is read by the team and dialogue typically begins with each member sharing "take away" ideas and reflections from the reading.

Beginning this school year, administrative meetings have begun with all five counselors present in addition to the administrative team. A lead counselor provides agenda items by Friday afternoon for the following Monday. This practice was born from a sense of lapse in communication and consistency in counselor practice. Topics covered with counselors in these roughly 45 minute meetings can vary dramatically. During these times we delegate responsibilities for upcoming events like student enrollment. Similarly, policy and practice confusion is often addressed: how are we handling schedule changes at this point in the semester? How are we communicating with students experiencing attendance issues? How are we coordinating completion of End-of-Instruction projects for students struggling to satisfactorily perform on state mandated graduation and End-of-Instruction exams?

Following the counselor portion and book study portions of Monday meetings, attention is turned to administrator-specific conversations. The week at a glance is covered and after-school responsibilities for the week are solidified. These after school events range from administrator coverage at sporting events, to board meetings, special events on the schedule, visitors to our school, meetings that will take (a) given principal(s) out of the building at some point and so forth. The process of delegating athletic duties requires balance, teamwork, and compromise. We are required to have an administrator present for all home athletic events and present at away varsity athletic events in sports like football and basketball. Unwritten rules exist in terms of what this coverage might look like and administrator discretion becomes the de facto policy for balancing coverage with life outside of school (Merton, 1957). District-level

administrators have remarked at times that if a school event is taking place, an administrator should be present.

Our high school participates in the following extra-curricular athletic events: football, boy's and girl's basketball, volleyball, fast pitch and slow pitch softball, cheerleading, pom squad, boy's and girl's swimming, wrestling, baseball, boy's and girl's track and field, boy's and girl's golf, and boy's and girl's tennis. Additionally, our students participate in band, orchestra, speech and debate, competitive acting, academic team, robotics team, National History Day, yearbook and newspaper competitions at the state, regional, and national levels along with student congress and numerous other clubs and activities. The breadth of offerings and activities makes administrative presence at events a daily challenge. The intent of this coverage appears to be multi-faceted. In high-attendance events like football, administrator presence is a necessity for student discipline and event management purposes. Additionally, the political nature of these very community-oriented events requires principal attendance as a sign of support for the school and the students and coaches/sponsors involved. Lack of administrator presence at events offers sending the potential message that the given event is not valued or supported. Attendance at extra-curricular events after school hours is a significant time commitment in our school for principals (Andreyko, 2010; Lortie, 2012; Wiseman, 2005). A sample of the school master schedule with select course offerings can be found in Appendix P.

After the week ahead has been charted out, administrative team meeting typically becomes topical and interwoven with the cyclical nature of events in a high school. Topics and agenda items can vary greatly depending on the time of the school year and

what issues happen to be going on at a given moment. Much time is spent in these meetings planning events and programming. The meetings also offer the opportunity for the administrative team to engage in brainstorming for future professional development and staff meetings.

In the fall semester, time is often devoted to school processes and policies: dress code, lunch and duty logistics, scheduling, and teacher evaluation processes. Once the momentum of the school year is underway the conversation begins to shift to site goal planning and information management. Information management can be daunting as new and revised policies and information continues to be presented via district mandate and district-level meetings. Monday principal meetings allow for the opportunity to share these updates with the team in an attempt to ensure administrative consistency. District administrative and instructional staff meetings leave principals with the task of filtering and then disseminating substantial amounts of information back to their teams in a timely manner. A further description and greater detail of these meetings will follow.

Administrative team meetings also allow for opportunities to ensure accountability among principals. Our administrative team is structured so each principal is responsible for students whose last names begin within a certain range of letters. Students are assigned to principals in the following manner: A-D, E-K, L-Q, and R-Z. Assistant principals are teamed up with an attendance secretary and a counselor to form what we have deemed student services teams. These teams will serve these students all of the way from grade nine through graduation. With this structure comes a comprehensive responsibility for all assistant principals. Though specific duties vary among assistant principals, all team members are responsible for student discipline within their alphabet,

academic and student affairs issues within their alphabet, attendance, dropouts, and so on. Additionally, all assistant principals hold instructional leadership duties with multiple academic departments. Core areas are divided among the four assistants (science, English, social studies, math) and additional departments are added and distributed in an effort to achieve a balance of responsibilities. Other departments include: special education, practical arts, business, world languages, and fine arts, which is the only department that I directly supervise as head principal. I made the decision to work directly with the fine arts faculty keeping with the tradition established by my predecessor. Lynne felt like this created a sense of balance in attention and school-wide focus paid to various student activities. High profile activities like basketball and football seem to be magnets for publicity and coverage while fine arts programs can become more anonymous amidst the backdrop of so many activities. Similarly, fine arts is inclusive of numerous after school and evening performances including: the school musical, the spring play, band and orchestra concerts, and art shows. Working with this group as department administrator seemed to be an efficient practice as attendance at the aforementioned events is expected of the head principal.

Administrative team meetings also include time to discuss what is occurring within these different departments and student services teams. Great autonomy has been granted to assistant principals and an intentional "big picture" representation of responsibilities has been built (Donaldson, 2006; Merton, 1957). This model was built on the idea that the role of the head principal is to develop other head principals among assistants. Instead of limiting the scope of assistant principal work to student discipline, or facility management, all principals are granted the opportunity to and the expectation

that they will grow holistically as principals in preparation for a head principalship. This model gives each assistant the simulated feel of running their own school and being well-versed in instructional leadership, teacher supervision and observation, working with parents, and programming and event management. Additionally, all assistants work directly with their own office staff and are responsible for the corresponding evaluations. Though the duration can vary from week to week, every attempt is made to conclude site administrative team meetings by 11:00 a.m., which marks the start of 9th grade lunch. If necessary, the meetings reconvene after 2nd lunch at approximately 1:00 p.m. Mondays are considered "dead days" and the practice is in place to not schedule any other formal meetings on these days. However, situations that arise in a given moment that require administrator assistance are sufficient for meeting interruption. The challenge of finding ample time for the site administrative team to meet is a daunting challenge. Before and after school is simply not possible in a consistent fashion as personal schedules and required meetings with teachers and parents must occur during these times as this presents the only non-scheduled time for these stakeholders. The struggle for school-wide consistency resulting from inadequate meeting time must be compensated for in other ways, that is to say, via e-mail, text messaging, and brief and frequent hallway meetings among principals. These forms of meeting and clarification seeking can lead to feelings of puddle jumping and reactionary practice (Cuban, 2001; Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005; Wolcott, 1973).

District Principal Meetings

District principal meetings occur on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the district administration office (see Appendix Q). These meetings include all head principals from

across the school district. Our district is made up of two high schools, four middle schools, 16 elementary schools, and an alternative school. Each high school has a head principal and four assistant principals. Each middle school has a head principal and 2 assistant principals, while each elementary has a head principal and the larger elementary schools also have an assistant. One head principal deemed a "director" serves the alternative school. Each secondary school is required to bring one assistant with them to district principal meetings and this duty is based on a rotation at our site. A similar rotation is in place for district administrative and instructional staff meetings that also occur once per month, these meetings will be discussed later.

District principal meetings can vary in length but the standard practice of "sacred Tuesdays" has been established with the expectation that no other formal meetings be scheduled on these days. These meetings are generally comprised of a general session when all principals from across the district receive information that is relevant to both elementary and secondary schooling. This portion of the meeting includes district-wide practices including teacher evaluation, district professional development, calendar issues, legislative updates and so forth.

District principal meetings are presided over by the Director of Elementary Education and the Director of Secondary Education. Meetings typically begin with an address from the superintendent followed by introductory remarks from the two directors before the agenda is turned over to various other district-level administrators. Frequent attendees and presenters at these meetings would include the Director Technology and Information Services, the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services, the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services and Chief Technology Officer, the Assistant

Superintendent of Instruction, the district Chief Financial Officer, and the Director of Professional Development and Student Achievement. Other district personnel who may at times make presentations include: the Director of Gifted and Talented Programs, the Director of Special Services, the Director of Federal Programs, The Director of Guidance and Counseling, and any of the district curriculum coordinators (social studies, math, science, literacy, world languages, etc.).

Topics addressed in district principal meetings are wide ranging and once again, reflect the cyclical nature of the school year. The meetings take on a different feel as the spring arrives and testing season approaches (see Appendix F). Similarly, as hiring begins and teacher evaluation concludes, time is allotted to the appropriate district administrators. The expectation is that the information received in these meetings will be communicated back to other administrators and appropriately disseminated to staff back at the site level. Presentations and time granted to presenters in district principal meetings can be extensive. At any given meeting 40% of our site administrative team is present. This leaves the attending principals with the task of ensuring that information is relayed in a coherent and consistent manner back to the site. Gaps exist in the time available for this communication to occur on a consistent basis (Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005; Wolcott, 1973). Site principal and counselor meetings are utilized to attempt to accommodate this necessity and weekly faculty meetings are also used to bridge this information gap. Significant opportunities exist for information to be lost in translation or simply not relayed back to the site, this is a constant time struggle.

Following the general session portion of principal meetings, principals are divided into two groups: elementary and secondary. These groups usually move to other rooms to

discuss topics of interest specific to the different levels. For secondary principals this might mean a discussion of credits toward graduation or curricular-specific items like Advanced Placement courses or a partnership with the local technology center or concurrent enrollment in university courses for junior and senior students.

District Administrative and Instructional Staff Meetings

District Administrative and Instructional staff meetings include personnel beyond building leadership (see Appendix R). These meetings include district curriculum coordinators and additional personnel inclusive of central service and custodial, transportation, and the district computer center. These meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month and are again subject to the "sacred" Tuesday policy where no additional formal meetings would be scheduled during school hours. Information distributed in these meetings might include legislative updates, bond issue updates, and other information generally relevant to the broader work of staff across the district in both instructional and support capacities. Administrative and instructional staff meetings tend to stray from the instructional and building-specific nature of principal meetings. Despite the discrepancy of intent between these two meetings, similar quandaries are created for principals in communicating and relaying information back to the site in a coherent and efficient manner. As a building leader, I am left to discern what is information to simply be aware of and what is information to be shared with others back in the building. As information management becomes more daunting, my principal colleagues and I are faced with the conundrum of giving too much information and overwhelming faculty and staff, and giving too little information and not being communicative (Cuban, 2001).

Upon completion of district meetings it would be typical for me to still have a portion of the workday remaining. Rarely would district principal or administrative and instructional staff meetings consume the entire workday. As no other formal meetings have been scheduled, the return back to the building that awaits is highly informal in nature. With my absence over the course of much of the day, e-mail and phone messages await along with any number of issues that have arisen over the course of the day requiring the attention of the principal. This lack of formal obligation exposes me to the impromptu work of tending to what meets me at the door on these meeting days. Though the meetings do not typically last all day, the impact on me to engage in a project or follow-through work upon the return to school is all but lost as full attention must be paid to what has been waiting since 8:00 in the morning. It would not be uncommon for me to remain at the district office to work on urgent items as opposed to returning to school on these days. A return to school is a near guarantee that urgent and project-oriented work will not be completed and the final hours of the day will be spent in impromptu conversations with teachers, on bus duty, and engaged in the fire of the day that seems to always be waiting the next morning but will demand attention if granted the opportunity today (Wolcott, 1973; Hallinger, 2013).

Faculty Meetings and Department Meetings

Faculty meetings are held every Friday morning from 8:10-8:45. The topics of these meetings can vary but they are generally focused on continuous improvement: improved instruction, the affective domain, etc. As a guiding principle, I strive to leave teachers and staff more excited about their work when they leave a meeting than when they arrived. With this theme, I almost never use these meetings to simply communicate

that, which could be communicated via e-mail, etc. During faculty meetings and in conversations with groups of faculty and staff members in general I focus intentionally on addressing only the very best teachers, I speak as if I am only talking to them. I do not believe that faculty meetings should be time for correction or ultimatum, but rather they present a time to bridge the department and classroom-specific, granular details of teaching and serving students with the broad perspective of whole-school improvement (See Appendix S).

Faculty meetings begin with "Tiger Tony's," these are recognitions given to faculty members who have gone above and beyond in some capacity. Faculty meetings are also used to meet numerous district and state requirements: ELL trainings, autism trainings, state testing training and so on. When the opportunity arises to utilize "open" or unaccounted for faculty meetings, teachers are often utilized to share best practices, talk about an initiative, or to drive professional learning. A spreadsheet containing all events for the school year to occur within faculty meetings can be found in Appendix T.

Faculty meeting time is also used at different points of the year to award grants by the local public school foundation and/or the PTA. Faculty and staff appreciation breakfasts are also held during these times as are other cyclical events like the unveiling of the yearbook each spring and performances by the cast of the school musical each fall. With a faculty eclipsing 100 and a campus spanning 40 acres and nine buildings with adults who have different schedules, the Friday faculty meetings provide a reliable and common time for the body of the school to come together on a regular basis.

Teacher Supervision and Evaluation

Teacher evaluation occupies a significant percentage my time. This requirement has seemed to intensify dramatically over the course of the last several years with teacher evaluation reforms. Time spent in this dimension is being classified as formal encounters because the evaluations are required and typically scheduled in advance. Career teachers are defined as teachers who have served in the school district from more that three years. Probationary teachers are teaches who have served in the district for less than three years. Per district requirement and consistent with legislative mandate, I am required to observe all probationary teachers once each semester and career teachers once each year (see Appendix U). An observation is comprised of a thorough pre-observation conference, an hour-long, in-class observation, a thorough post-observation conference, and the finalization of the evaluation form complete with scoring, comments, and resources for teacher improvement. Pre-observation conferences range from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the context and the teacher with post-observation conferences typically lasting a full hour. Additionally, I am required to engage in a minimum of one "walk-through" observation with every teacher each semester. I am responsible for the evaluation of 13 classroom teachers, one counselor, four assistant principals, an athletic director, a career and community liaison, two librarians, and six support staff members who have significantly reduced expectations for time engaged in supervision and evaluation. All certified staff members require the same standard as teachers complete with pre and post-observation conferencing. Final evaluation meetings must also be held with all staff in late spring at which point final evaluation scores are discussed and final evaluations signed. This meeting can vary in amount of time required ranging from a 10-

15 minute conversation to as much as an hour depending on the outcome of the evaluation, concerns, and the processing of the score by the faculty member.

It would be safe to estimate a total of three and a half hours of formal interaction in this process for each career teacher and six hours for each probationary teacher. With 21 certified staff members to evaluate; total time spent can be as high as 81 hours over the course of the school year from September through May when considering three probationary and 18 career faculty members on an evaluation load. This number does not include time spent in the evaluation of support personnel and secretarial staff. I am responsible for supervising six staff members in this regard and 20 to 30 minutes of time is the typical time spent in evaluation and conference with each of these individuals for each evaluation cycle, which includes additional evaluations for support employees within the first year of employment with the district.

Personnel: Hiring and Interviews

With a certified faculty of 115 and support staff of 35, hiring and interviewing take up a sizeable portion of my time at certain points of the year. Though highly cyclical for the most part, much time can be spent in the formal encounters of interviewing prospective faculty members. Over the course of the last five years our school has averaged 18 new certified hires each school year. When considering employment requirements, this can mean as many as three or four interviews for each certified position. Occasionally the same applicant pool serves to fill the needs of multiple openings. For example, interviewing the same five applicants may fill two English teacher openings. Likewise, more challenging to fill areas like special education and math may not present three or four quality applicants to fill a position so only one or two

candidates may be interviewed. All told, an average of about three applicants per open position are interviewed before a position is filled. Time requirements for this process can fluctuate slightly but interviews generally last between 35 and 45 minutes. With 18 positions to fill on average and three applicants per position, this can mean as much as 36 hours in interviews over the course of a hiring season. This time requirement does not factor in the time spent in screening applicants, scheduling interviews, assembling interview panels, checking references, or recruiting highly desirable candidates. Additionally, time must be allotted for recommending the applicant for approval to be employed, submitting paperwork to post positions, clarifying job descriptions with the personnel office and so forth. I believe that hiring the best possible candidates when we have an opening is my most important job as a principal and therefore insist on being present for all interviews. This emphasis requires additional formal meeting time obligations (Loeb, Kalagrides & Beteille, 2012).

A more extensive inclusion of formal encounters will be discussed in Chapter X: The Annual Cycle of the Principalship. The highly cyclical nature of my work makes this a more natural place for discussion of formal encounters ranging from open house to parent/teacher conferences. Beyond this conversation of encounters included in Chapter X, additional examples of formal encounters would include: community events and board meetings, professional learning and conference attendance, professional training events, and participation in a wide array of site and district committee work.

CHAPTER IX

What A Principal Does: Informal Encounters and Daily Routines

> The time that Ed Bell spent in formal, pre-arranged meetings restricted the time available in his total day at school for handling other routines. The net effect was that the busier a day was with scheduled meetings and appointments, the busier were the unscheduled moments available for handling daily routines. Conversely, on days with few meetings or appointments scheduled, Ed sometimes seemed at a loss about what to do. Thus, the time he spent at the routines described in this chapter was a function of a sort of Parkinson's Law in which the amount of available time was a critical factor in determining the extent of his involvement with the multifarious problems brought to his attention. (Wolcott, 1973, p. 123)

Although much of my workday is accounted for in formal encounters and scheduled meetings, informal encounters and daily routines hold a major claim to my life as principal. Informal encounters include: daily and weekly management (physical plant, finances, etc.), daily information management (e-mail, phone calls, mail, etc.), and impromptu issue management (student discipline, hallway conversations, other "pop up" items).

Daily and Weekly Management

As principal, I must address a number of items on a regular and recurring basis. Each Monday begins with a weekly financial review. This review consists of a quick run-through of budgets from the prior week. Though not highly detailed in nature, this process reacquaints me with the spending patterns of our school and keeps me in touch with the budget. Similarly, I must approve every requisition for every dollar spent from our site. Our district utilizes an on-line management and approval system and a daily check of this system to review and approve or deny purchase requisitions is required. This process can take from five minutes to thirty minutes per day depending on the number of entered requisitions and the nature of the requisitions. If I have a question

regarding a particular requisition I follow-up with the financial secretary and this can lengthen the process. No distinction is made in this process of approving requisitions between general school budget and student activity purchases.

Each Friday an eligibility or "failing" list is produced indicating the number of students and the names of students who are currently failing a class. This list is reviewed as is grade distribution by teacher and by course. This process is intended to allocate resources to students in need of tutoring or extra help and to look for abnormalities in grading practice and distribution. The list serves to communicate to coaches and sponsors which students are not eligible to compete in extra-curricular activities for the following week. If a student is failing a course for one week they are on probation. If a student is failing any courses for consecutive weeks they are ineligible to compete the following week. Counselors also use this list to facilitate conversations with students failing courses and to intervene as necessary. Each teacher at our school serves as a faculty advisor who works with 20-25 students for the student's entire high school career and many of these advisors seek access to this list to aid in conversations with struggling students.

Attendance percentages are also reviewed on a daily basis. A report is run and the total number of days absent for the student body is divided by the total student enrollment on a given day to produce an attendance percentage. Student discipline, academic achievement, and attendance all must be monitored on a regular basis as the expectation of data-driven decision making is highly present in our district and adds to the daily/weekly management imperative.

Daily Information Management

With as many as 125 e-mails received on a daily basis throughout the week, processing and making sense of electronic correspondence can take several hours per day. Much of the e-mail load does not require direct action on my part but filing and delegation are a constant necessity. The incessant and perpetual nature of e-mail during the school day, the evenings, and even the weekends leaves tasks to be tended to at all times. My practice has become decidedly more strategic in this regard as management of information overload has created daily stress accompanied by an expectation of immediacy from different stakeholders. I now attempt to convert incoming e-mail into actionable items. E-mails are deleted, deferred to a later date, delegated, or done. If an item can be completed in less than two minutes, I complete it immediately. A version of my personal actionable items can be found in Appendix V.

Similar to e-mail, phone calls arrive on a continual basis and must be prioritized and responded to accordingly. Student and parent issues are given highest priority alongside requests from the district office. Other matters ranging from solicitations to non-specific requests are placed on the "when/if I have time" stack. These calls and e-mails do not typically receive a response unless multiple inquiries are made. I find it necessary to carve out time each day to return phone calls and to work through e-mail and more traditional mail. This information management requires a strategic system and organizational and processing skill. Information management can take hours out of each day and often gets pushed to hours when people are not in the building. That is to say, at night after my kids go to bed or early mornings before anyone wakes up.

Much of my work requires the presence of others: teacher evaluation, interviewing, meeting about curriculum, planning cyclical/annual events and long-range improvement planning, and thus making the work day an often inefficient time to engage in information management with the exception of any number of phone calls that must occur during traditional business hours (Schmidt, 2008).

Impromptu Issue Management

Impromptu issue management includes any and all of the non-scheduled happenings that occur over the course of a school day. This category of events would include but is not limited to: student discipline, student and faculty medical issues, physical plant issues (air conditioning, heating, etc.), faculty/staff discipline, parent concerns, technology failure, safety concerns, emergency situations (tornado, intruder, etc.), district office request, teacher requests, and student requests (Wolcott, 1973).

Time spent on impromptu issue management is determined by the seriousness and nature of the issue and the time available to engage in the issue. On a day where formal meetings account for much of the schedule, very little time is left to discuss the ordering of additional novels with English teachers. In contrast, days where the calendar is free of formal encounters, there is ample opportunity for impromptu conversations and issues to occupy my time. On heavily scheduled days, more serious impromptu issues still have the ability to demand my attention but the burden for principal involvement is much lower on days where I am unaccounted for in a formal manner for a number of hours. On some days I am never involved in student discipline as my time is tied to meetings, evaluations, and formal planning. At these times I can have what feels like a stunning disconnect from seemingly serious impromptu issues (a student bringing a knife to

school, drug offenses, etc.). While on other days I can find myself engaged in much less serious issues like working with a student who has had their phone taken in class or who is tardy to 5th hour. The degree to which I am engaged in these activities seems to be driven much more by how committed I am to formal encounters on a given day than the degree of seriousness of the impromptu issue.

CHAPTER X

The Annual Cycle of the Principalship

> The fact that principals put in more days each year than do pupils or teachers does not of itself make it difficult to identify the beginning and end of their annual cycle. What does complicate defining the cycle is that months before the present school year will terminate, a principal starts directing some of his attention to the school year that will follow. (Wolcott, 1973, p. 178)

Many of the activities I engage in seem at odds with the focus of much of the faculty and students of the school at a given moment in time. This sensation can be exaggerated at different points throughout the year. A natural and obvious example of this phenomenon occurs in May during testing season and in preparation for commencement activities in a high school. While faculty and staff are concerned with the preparations for prom, graduation, final exams, and state tests, I find myself consumed by hiring for the following school year. Wolcott (1973) notes that a period requiring "major attention" for the upcoming school year begins for a principal in April with matters requiring "some" attention beginning as early as November. By April, the mind of the principal is fully focused on the upcoming school year. A review of my calendar, e-mail, and journal data reveals a clear cyclical pattern to my work that repeats annually but also extends the "school year" beyond the traditional nine-month calendar.

By November each year, significant work has been done in preparation for the following school year. The bulk of this work involves the pre-enrollment and student advisement process. Dates have been set for the 8th grade visit to the high school and 8th grade parent nights have been scheduled for each middle school that resides within our feeder pattern. This is also the point when administrators, counselors, and teachers begin to review the course catalog and course offering for the following school year. As

students return from winter break in early January, enrollment materials are sent to print and final planning for pre-enrollment, advisement, recruitment into various programs (athletics, performing arts, etc.) are well underway. In early February students are provided course catalogs and enrollment cards, enrollment conferences are scheduled for early March and cards are due to counselors prior to spring break. 8th grade students from the middle schools visit the high school in February and engage in a process very similar to the upperclassmen. Soon-to-be freshmen meet their advisors, tour the schools, are informed about enrollment and begin to select their courses for the following August. The Spring pre-enrollment schedule can be found in Appendix W.

By mid-March personnel conversations are beginning to take place with the district office. Potential retirees have generally made public their plans to move on and other faculty and staff members have voiced their plans regarding the following year to continue to remain at the site, seek a transfer to another district site, or to leave the district altogether. All of these events work together to lay the groundwork for the opening of hiring season. By mid-April positions have been posted and interviewing is underway at most sites. Staffing at this point in the year demands almost exclusive attention as principals across the district and the area including me seek to secure the best applicants for positions. This hiring season will often times last up to the start of school in August as life circumstances change for people and teachers move out of the building for any number of reasons ranging from the impending birth of a child, a late decision to retire, or the employment-based relocation of a spouse.

As soon as pre-enrollment is complete in early March, counselors begin to enter course requests which gives the preliminary numbers and requests for course offerings.

This is the point when faculty feedback on scheduling is elicited and construction of the master schedule begins. An example of the faculty schedule preference survey can be found in Appendix X. Master scheduling duties are handled primarily by the assistant principals but my involvement is ongoing and this process will last through the start of school with adjustments sometimes coming as late as a week into the next school year. The constant adjustments made to the schedule occupy significant administrator meeting time through the summer months. As faculty members depart and new hires enter, certifications can shift resulting in a chain reaction of "who" teaches "what" and "when."

Late spring and early summer presents the last time to make any site policy revisions for the following school year. By mid-June, all adjustments to student and faculty handbooks have been completed and sent to print. Summer also presents a key time for planning and dialogue with faculty members. Much of this engagement happens by way of conference attendance. Each summer a team of teachers and administrators attends several conferences including: AVID and High Schools That Work. As new initiatives are added so too are conference and training requirements over the summer months. Assistant principals go off contract in mid-June and do not return until mid-July. Though much of this time is spent at conferences for me, my role shifts as I am left to tend to the business of a given day. This summer business might include master schedule adjustments, serving students seeking transcripts and diplomas, and working with teachers who are restructuring curriculum. The summer presents fewer formal obligations and encounters but the stress of staffing shortages and turnover in key positions generally makes up for the lighter schedule along with the scramble to finalize plans for the return

of teachers and students. A sample summer workday is illustrated previously in Chapter VII.

When assistant principals and counselors return in late July, attention turns to finalizing all master scheduling and planning the back-to-school in-service. Additionally, the professional development calendar for the school year must be finalized along with the site goals and site improvement plan for the upcoming year. With the start of the school year fast approaching the focus of my work turns toward site improvement evaluations and supervision, and the state accreditation process. As October departs the finalization of spring pre-enrollment begins in earnest along with the assessment of new teachers and planning of personnel for the following year.

In many ways the cycle of my work year is six months ahead of the rest of the school population. Different seasons lend themselves to different responsibilities and expectations. A shift in volume and frequency of formal vs. informal encounters does occur throughout the year but the pattern of activity is highly predictable as evident in an analysis of e-mail and calendar events. All calendar entries since the day that I was named head principal were subjected to coding, theming, and analysis. Additionally, all e-mail folders over the same time period underwent the same process. In many cases e-mails and calendar events repeat almost to the day each year with only minor details changing from year-to-year. This cycle offers a predictable pattern of experiences and lends itself to potentially benefitting school administrators in the form of an “at-a-glance” style organizer (Wolcott, 1973).

CHAPTER XI

Critical Incidents

I have experienced several critical incidents over the course of my career that have had the most profound impact on how I conceptualize my role as a school principal and how I behave accordingly. These incidents are subtle in nature and happened over some course of time. Though institutional and role pressures stemming from a variety of sources aid in shaping me as a principal, the following three "incidents" appear to me to be most insightful and telling.

"Scott, I believe in You"

From the day that I arrived at Norman High School, Lynne Chesley's trust in my ability to become a principal never wavered. Beginning very early on she granted me tremendous latitude to work and more importantly, to grow. My work, specifically as an assistant principal provided me with the experiences and the confidence to run my own building as a head principal. Lynne was very clear that her chief responsibility was to grow leaders and to build her assistants into head principals; this explained how she constructed her expectations for us.

My role as an assistant principal was not unlike being the principal of a smaller high school. I was responsible for teacher supervision, curriculum and instruction within several departments, hiring of teachers and support staff, student discipline, and overseeing events ranging from enrollment to accreditation. Assistant principal responsibilities for my staff can be found in Appendix Y. This holistic range of responsibilities stands in contrast to some models for distributing principal responsibilities that work to create highly specialized roles. Familiar roles such as the

dean of students who handles only discipline or the "academic principal" who works solely with teacher supervision, curriculum and instruction define the way many schools operate. Lynne believed that it was important for an assistant principal to possess a broad perspective that more closely represented the comprehensive scope of the work of the principal. This philosophy was rooted in the belief that she was indeed preparing us to be principals and mentoring us in this regard was her professional and ethical obligation.

Lynne trusted me to make the difficult decisions and to navigate the challenging waters of high profile situations involving district administration, the board of education and even attorneys. Through these situations I developed confidence in my ability to function and communicate and to balance the emotional stress and workload of the position. Lynne's mentorship helped me to become grounded in the reality of the high school principalship and although the transition to the role of head principal required some adjustments, I never had the sense that I had entered blindly. In so many ways, Lynne molded me into a head principal long before I ever accepted the position, "You have to *be* the principal well before you ever walk into the interview" she told me.

Dr. Chesley also possessed a strong sense of internal locus of control in how she conceptualized her role (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). She believed that she could make a difference in her school and in the lives of the students that she reached and was vehemently opposed to the idea of ever working at the district level. She would lament: "How can they go to work over there? Not fun at all, no students, what difference could you make over there? I would never do that." She never did. This attitude was similarly reflected in how she embraced the separation and division between the district office and the school building. Lynne was never defined completely by the expectations espoused

by the district but understood the importance of filtering mandates and making sure things were packaged to be the right "fit" for Norman High School. She championed the work of her school and kept her teachers free to do their work while always pushing high expectations (Donaldson, 206; Hallinger, 2013; Merton, 1957). Her influence on how I conceptualize my role as the head principal at Norman High School is beyond significant. I believe that I possess many of these same attributes. I was socialized into school administration in a culture that valued transformational leadership and deeply valued the work that happened behind the classroom door. Lynne has always remained a teacher at heart, even while physically occupying the main office; I like to think that I have as well (Cuban, 2001; Hoy & Miskell, 2008).

With Our Best Teachers in Mind

As previously noted, my professional relocation to Norman High School in 2004 as a teacher serves as a key moment in my career. Additionally, the relocation was key to my conceptualization of public education and its leadership. This process of influence occurred gradually but the effect was nonetheless, profound. My teaching experience up to this point had mirrored the teaching that I had been exposed to as a student at the university and predominantly, while in high school. Norman High School signaled an entrance into a world with apparently different standards, expectations, and constitution for what it meant to "teach." Where did this sense of culture come from? The administration? The tradition? Perhaps, it came from the teachers themselves. If this was so, what was the role of the principal in this process?

This inclination can best be explored by considering the school culture of Norman High School and my exposure to it. When I began to form relationships at NHS I

remember feeling quite intimidated by many of the faculty members. It wasn't that these teachers were not likeable, friendly, and encouraging, almost without exception they were very helpful to a new faculty member. These teachers really knew their stuff, they were veterans, they asserted their voice, and they challenged administrators and most of the time in a respectful and productive manner. Dr. Chesley expressed her thoughts on the matter in a conversation with me: "Scott, this is not a faculty that you can push around, they are too smart for that. You must include them in decisions, you must listen to them, that is the way it is around here." Reflecting back, this pro-teacher voice inclination has been one of the most influential forces in how I came to view teachers and therefore, how I view my work as a principal working with and serving teachers (Cuban, 2001). This non-authoritarian orientation is a cultural staple at Norman High School.

Norman High School teachers were professionals and they worked to further the field of public education and their craft. These professionals held advanced degrees, many of them doctorate degrees. Large numbers of these faculty members had completed the rigorous National Board Certification process, over twenty faculty members at one point held this credential. These teachers went to trainings in the summer, conferences throughout the year, and had legendary followings from current and former students alike.

I came to deeply respect the legendary teachers of NHS: Betsy "Doc" Ballard, Sandy Bahan, David Askey, Gayle St. John, the Hemphill's, the list goes on. I owe much if not most of how I conceptualize the role of teacher to the iconic examples of these giants. Though some of these individuals have since retired, many are still on staff. When I speak at faculty meetings I speak to these teachers. When I work to implement a new

policy, I think of these teachers. When I receive a mandate from the district office and I am asked to implement it, I filter with these teachers in mind. Knowing the autonomous, wondrous work that happens in their classrooms I operate to keep them as free as possible. I believe deeply that the personal level of excellence that they will aspire to will far exceed the outcomes of any technocratic, neo-liberal accountability measure that might be applied to them (Bass, 1985; Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997; Mehta, 2013). I refuse to limit the freedom of these life-changing teachers to compensate for pedagogical or classroom management struggles by more novice teachers (Donaldson, 2006).

When we have been successful in transitioning new teachers into Norman High School it has often been by way of the mentorship by and collaboration with our best teachers. These veterans not only possess decades of wisdom and expertise but are also continually learning and growing, welcoming newer teachers into the fold and including their voice as they possess a deep internal sense of the role of voice and autonomy in the classroom. This source of motivation has worked to drive and re-create their careers over and over and aligns with Donaldson's suggestion of action in common opposed to common action and the standardized culture that can result from this style of educational leadership (Donaldson, 2006).

My belief in and respect for the teacher culture at Norman High School drove me to reflect on my work in the classroom and has created in me a passionate and protective sense of maintaining this culture at all costs, despite reforms and pressures driven by other members of my specific role set (Merton, 1957). Edmundsen (2013) writes of the "scholarly enclave," where Shakespeare can still be studied and fawned over and "the

academic" still has a home, I defend these teachers and administer Norman High School with them in mind. A discussion and analysis of my conceptualization of the principalship would be incomplete without a firm understanding of the powerful influence this cultural experience has had on how I view the work of the "good high school" (Lightfoot, 1983).

What I think About While Running

I met Peter in 2005 following my first year teaching at Norman High School. I taught social studies while Peter taught band, we had the opportunity to room together at a conference we both attended. Over the course of the next several years our friendship would grow. Peter transitioned into an assistant principal position at a middle school in the district in 2007 and quickly became a mentor. Peter advised and guided me as I began to pursue administrative positions in May of 2007. In 2008 we became neighbors and our friendship began to grow. Critical friend research indicates that schools in which practitioners engage in persistent and sustained and supported learning can have positive effects on student learning, (Bryk, 2010) Fahey & Ippolito (2014) notes: "Principals are expected to build school-wide professional communities without participating in such a community themselves. The culture in which principals work generally conspires against this work" (p. 6). Fahey goes on to note that principals can work to "de-privatize" their work when they share their work and are allowed to receive feedback in a safe setting (p. 6). Peter's friendship has provided this sort of sustained structure.

My collaboration and dialogue with Peter has provided the forum for this sort of rich conversation and reflective practice. The honest nature of our friendship and the willingness to provide direct and unfiltered insight into practice has offered a highly

valuable lens for examining my work and corresponding professional development and personal growth.

Beginning in 2009 Peter and I began running together virtually every morning. This morning ritual quickly grew into what we both would deem to be meaningful professional development. We would talk through situations we were facing at school and grapple with the broader questions of education and the potential of mass, compulsory schooling. Over the course of the last five years, Peter and I have spent in excess of 1,500 hours together on runs and bike rides. A brief sample of an exercise log reflecting time spent together in this regard can be found in Appendix Z. This extensive amount of time in dialogue and conversation with a fellow principal in a similarly situated circumstance has served to shape my personal philosophy of schooling as our work contexts possess many similarities (Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005). As Peter conducted research on community schools and completed his doctoral dissertation we would talk at length on Bourdieu's theoretical offerings of social capital development and beyond. This shaping process has forced me to sharpen my thoughts while considering another perspective that is emotionally removed from my specific circumstances. Furthermore, our runs have provided opportunity for the emotional support required to endure the rigors of the position of principal (Honig, 2012).

The sense of support and community that I derive from my relationship with Peter offers potentially valuable insight to other principals and to those who supervise them. Rich and safe friendships provide opportunities for principals to de-brief and share in the collective struggle of their work while maintaining the proper perspective. The myth of the "hero" principal can take a toll on those who occupy the position and create an

inclination to not engage in deep reflection with colleagues about the overwhelming nature of expectations associated with the position as this sort of questioning might be viewed as weakness and undermine the administrator's chances of climbing the ladder or making the move to the district office later in their career (Cuban, 2001; Honig, 2012; Ishamiru, 2013). Critical Friend networks and similar structures can provide principals with needed outlets for support, professional growth, and a sustainable conceptualization of the role (Byrk, 2010).

Reflection and identification of the critical incidents in my career can project to the wider field of educational leadership. Amidst the current climate in U.S. public education, schools are being held accountable for the "achievement" of all students as determined largely by high stakes, standardized testing. Pressure for schools, principals, and teachers to perform in this arena can be overwhelming (Ishamiru, 2013; Giroux, 2012). School districts are left to develop job descriptions and expectations for school principals that strategically balance the pressures brought forth by narrow technocratic, neo-liberal policies, while placing ethical, student-centered interests at the heart of the school's work, providing for an increasingly long list of traditionally non-academic student needs (Frick, 2013; Hallinger, 2013).

Providing principals with structures and communities of support can assist in establishing sustainable work. Greater district-level awareness of competing role pressures and comprehending the required balance between accountability structures and principal autonomy / "privacy" can also work to provide some sense of sanity to school principals who are left to negotiate these unrealistic and sometimes conflicting expectations (Merton, 1957; Shivers-Blackwell, 2004).

Much of the work of the principal is pre-determined based on the theoretical principle of institutional isomorphism and the universal demands of the position and the nature of the work (Wiseman, 2005; Wolcott, 1973). Role conceptualization is manifest not always in "what" behaviors principals engage in, but rather "how" they engage in these behaviors. Day (2007) notes that the way leadership behaviors are applied in a "contextually-sensitive" manner are of paramount importance within the principalship (p. 7). Understanding and reconstituting the principalship in light of current reform efforts and political trends must occur deliberately and realistically. These deeper moments of dialogue allow school leaders to shape and construct their role in an intentional manner and in accord with a sense of purpose that moves beyond the practice of simply enacting the next mandate or initiative in a context neutral and generic manner (Spillane et al. 2004).

CHAPTER XII

Perceptions of Others

Four external interviews were included in the research to add balance to the findings and to aid in triangulation of data in an effort to build credibility. In speaking of the value of external interviews in the writing of autoethnography, Chang (2008) notes: "they provide external data that give contextual information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (p. 104). Potential interviewees were selected based on an extensive familiarity and understanding of the principalship. Three of the interviewees have deep knowledge of my experience in the principalship and have worked directly with me in some professional capacity. The fourth interviewee was from a similarly situated district, and though we knew one another in an informal capacity we were not deeply acquainted. This final interview was included to provide an additional perspective to aid in triangulation of data and to provide a more comprehensive balance to my personal reflections, artifact data, and the perspectives of those individuals within my district. The interview protocol for all four interviews is found in Appendix C.

Several key themes emerged through an analysis of interview data. Once all interviews were transcribed, the data were coded and then categorized into patterns and themes that provided a basis upon which to address the research questions posed in this autoethnographic study. A complete list of codes from interviews can be found in Appendix D. *A priori* codes were not used in this process, as I wanted to allow for themes to emerge from interviewee voice. Specific traits, characteristics, and ideas were coded by interview question initially and initial themes were identified. Next, the data were viewed comprehensively across interviewee response and question and emergent themes

were identified. Five emergent themes developed through this process of coding and theming, these themes were representative of the qualities, characteristics, and perceived roles of the high school principal according to the interview sample. The five dominant themes include: student-centered, instructional leadership, effective communication, passionate and enthusiastic, and work ethic.

The first interview was with Mrs. Holly Nevels, my current Director of Secondary Education. Holly knew me in a variety of professional contexts and was the interview subject most familiar with my journey to the principalship. When I came to Norman High School in 2004, Holly was in her first year as an assistant principal at the school. Holly happened to serve as my assistant principal all four years that I taught at Norman High School and was responsible for supervising me as a teacher during this time. When I completed my principal internship it was under the supervision of Holly as well. In 2008 it was Holly's promotion to a middle school head principal role that opened up the opportunity for me to move into the assistant principalship. Making the link even tighter, I moved into her vacated office, Holly's impact on my professional life over the course of the previous decade is undeniable.

Holly grew up in what she describes as a "very suburban area." She described her community as tight knit and she deeply enjoyed school. Her upbringing was stable, school was enjoyable and numerous leadership and academic experiences were afforded her. As the daughter of an educator and as a student who had a positive K-12 experience, life as a teacher seemed like a natural fit. Holly was a middle school English teacher and excelled at her craft, being selected as the district teacher of the year. With money won by being named teacher of the year, Holly elected to begin work on her master's degree.

A self-proclaimed “teacher at heart,” Holly struggled with the idea of leaving the classroom and with it, abandoning relationships with students. After consultation with a mentor who in no uncertain terms told her that schools needed leaders who were not ready to leave the classroom but were excellent teachers, she began the pursuit of an advanced degree in education administration. Mrs. Nevels went on to serve as a high school assistant principal for four years where she earned state assistant principal of the year accolades, four years as a middle school head principal, and is now in her third year as Director of Secondary Education.

Holly indicated that she prioritized expectations as a principal based on student, parent, and teacher needs. She believes it is the job of the principal to serve these stakeholders as needs arise and these issues, as they developed, helped to establish priorities in her work. She went on to explain how her role has now shifted significantly and serving principals is where her current focus resides, tending to their issues, and aiding them in putting out fires if need be. She also discussed the increasing meeting time expectations in her current position along with more time that could be devoted to project-oriented tasks in comparison to what she experienced as a building principal (Ishamiru, 2013).

In discussing how she identifies potential or prospective principals, Ms. Nevels indicated, “It’s hard to qualify but there are people with innate skills. I think it’s kind of like when you were a classroom teacher and you might have student interns and you could figure out pretty quickly those who were going to be good teachers.” Holly spoke of the areas that cannot be taught stating that “you can teach someone how to suspend a kid but I can’t teach you how to love a kid, I can’t teach you how to love a teacher.”

Holly emphasized the importance of knowing how candidates approached their work and the skill set to take a district directive, "internalize" the directive, and turn that around to their staff. Embedded in this response is a subtle acknowledgement of observational privacy granted to principals to conduct their work. Merton (1957) postulates that a degree of privacy affords status occupants (principals in this case) the ability to maintain sanity in balancing competing role expectations that are at times, contradictory (Merton, p. 376). Similarly, this marked the first point that the theme of optimism is broached: "If they [principal] cannot sit across from a parent, a teacher, or a kid and turn what could be a very negative situation into the most positive version of it and do that intentionally but also sincerely then they will never make it as a school leader because it is so much about outreach and getting buy-in and getting people to trust us." This theme of finding the silver lining, seeking the "most positive" outcome in a given situation would be re-visited in later interviews as well (Day, 2007).

According to Holly, the primary function of the high school principal is to serve as an instructional leader with one caveat, "But here's the kick: at the high school level, in a community you are the flagship, these schools truly represent in my opinion, everything we do as educators from pre-K through 12th grade." This pressure on the role of the high school principal espoused by the district is something that has been made apparent to me since I took my current position. When the school district proposed a 112 million dollar bond issue in the spring of 2014, 24 million dollars were earmarked to go to each of the two district high schools. In theory, the construction of freshman centers and university centers at each high school will assist in tailoring the educational experience to fit the specific needs of divergent groups of students. This new construction

also will serve to provide a vision of the future to all students in the district with the high school experience serving as the culminating moment in the K-12 process. It is common for me to be asked to speak on behalf of promoting bond proposals and new initiatives, the district calls on high school principals to fill this role and possessing the ability to articulate a vision for programmatic implementation to the school board and the broader public (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Holly also discussed fostering college and career readiness in students and building on elementary and middle school foundations:

> Principals are the face of the high school. Again, they are communicating what the philosophy of the school is to teachers to community members, to parents and again, to get that buy-in and trust, like 'why wouldn't you want your kid to go to school here? And when you're in a multiple high school town this becomes even more important. Principals have to be advocates for their students and their teachers and that boils down to knowing their population. They have to be very clear about what the focus of their school is and yes, that must come from data but also from informal conversations and dialogue.

Built into this response along with others is a reflection of what Giroux terms the "corporatization" of schooling consistent with broader neo-liberal political influences and cultures being more deeply interwoven not just into the work of higher education, but common education as well. Principal as marketing director and image protector mirrors the advent in higher education of campus recruitment and marketing efforts displayed via development of offices on campus to the aforementioned end and extensive efforts to sell image to parents and would-be students (Giroux, 2002; Edmundsen, 2013; Hallinger, 2013).

When asked to expand in more specific detail about the primary function of the school principal, Holly spoke of the "Type A" personalities of many building leaders and the importance of knowing both strengths and weakness with an emphasis on continual

improvement. She concluded her response by outlining the need for the principal to be a "visionary" and possessing the ability to "get everybody to move along with you." This comment connected with Donaldson's (2006) notion of streams flowing together, "action in common" (p. 49). A clear inclination toward transformational leadership was evident in this response. Shivers-Blackwell (2004) explains transformational leadership as the ability to articulate a vision and possessing the ability for a leader to both satisfy superiors and to "excite" subordinates in this casting of said vision (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004, p. 43). This definition of leadership operates in contrast to the transactional style of distributing rewards for the accomplishment of specific work or tasks. Holly repeatedly expressed the importance of fostering buy-in among teachers and the necessity of getting people "on board." This transformational inclination within the district has significantly influenced my work as a leader and how I view teaching and the principalship. She went on to emphasized the importance of being intentional about what your role is as a principal and being intentional about what actions you engage in.

As Holly talked about her views of the principalship in general she transitioned to her recollection of my own developmental journey into the job. She noted:

> "I would say that I noticed you had strong relationships with students. You were excellent when it came to dealing with parent situations whether it was in your classroom or had to deal with athletics. You also had great relationships with your colleagues. So a moment that I remember was in a world history meeting when you finally said, with mostly veteran teachers sitting around the table, "Why are we covering this? Why don't we stop here and go beyond here?" We often times put you in front of the faculty to the face of the administrative vision because we realized that it's a lot easier for people to hear from their peers, you were received well by the faculty."

Moving beyond the reflection on my time as a teacher at Norman High School, Holly addressed my move into administration indicating that the transition was a natural progression in light of my perceived ability to move different stakeholders in a similar or

common direction. Holly emphasized the quality of charismatic leadership as a strength for me thus further connecting her perceptions of a successful principal and tendencies toward a transformational leadership inclination (Bass & Avolio, 1996).

My second interview was with Nick Migliorino who serves as Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Chief Technology Officer. Nick returned to the district several months prior following three years working in the private sector. Similar to Holly, Nick holds a fairly personal knowledge of my experiences as a school administrator. Nick held the position of Director of Secondary Education in the district during my three years as an assistant principal and was in the same position when I was named head principal and through my first year in the position.

Nick grew up in a small town and was the son of educators. His mother taught kindergarten in the same classroom for thirty-two years and he cherished his experience as a student in a public school setting. Nick recalled vividly and with affection his experiences in the schoolhouse and extra-curricular activities and the corresponding influence he felt from his parents in this regard and in shaping him as an educator. Nick proceeded into a major in education and mathematics and began teaching math at the middle school level. His professional experiences turned to administration as he served as an assistant principal at both the middle and high school level prior to accepting his first high school head principal position. Dr. Migliorino entered into administration to broaden his influence on students and to assist other teachers in thinking "outside the box" as they constructed curriculum and engaged in instruction with students.

In discussing the prioritization of broad expectations placed upon school administrators, Nick stated that he established priorities based on what he ascertains will

make the most "immediate impact" for students and what is most time sensitive for the school as a whole, this student-centered theme was consistent throughout the interview. Similarly, a return to a transformational style of leadership was highly evident. In discussing the primary function of the high school principal, Dr. Migliorino noted the importance of not being caught in a management rut but rather being a "leader." As he expanded on this thought he more precisely addressed what this meant noting management functions being direct supervision, processing of paperwork and reports, and what Lortie describes as "administrivia" (Lortie, 2013, p. 32). Nick mirrored Holly's call for the ability to take people to a common goal, a common vision, which is tightly linked with the attributes and characteristics of transformational leadership and Donaldson's theory of cultivating leadership in schools (Donaldson, 2006).

In discussing the specific attributes that he prioritizes when selecting high school principals, Nick again emphasized transformational leadership qualities but quickly moved into discussing the ability for the prospective candidate to weather the workload and time rigors of the position. He spoke of the "24-7, 365" nature of the position and the importance of a strong work ethic. Speaking beyond work ethic, the idea of balancing work and home life was approached as well: "Realistically, you want to ask a person in an interview how are you going to balance your family with this job because it's really hard" (Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Ishamiru, 2013; Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005).

Nick indicated that his conceptualization of the high school principalship has shifted over time and was very clear in his perception of the daunting nature of the position: "The high school principalship is the toughest job in the district. Your basically a small school superintendent, you have to know little bit about everything, you have to

know everything that's going on everywhere and you have to be everything to everybody for the most part." Specifically, the time demands of the position were reiterated and he postulated that the increase in availability could be the potential demise of many potentially strong school leaders. Andreyko outlines this increasing time commitment in her work as well and references the time pressures of the position as technology and connectedness of have exponentially increased the degree to which principals are "available" (Andreyko, 2010). Dr. Migliorino was clear in the district expectation of uncensored cell phone connectivity and access to principals as simply, "part of the job."

A consistent theme throughout the interviews is the elevated time commitment and increasing levels of expectations placed upon high school principals. Though an awareness of the rigors of the position was reflected in responses, little insight was offered by interviewees in an effort to ameliorate or mitigate said pressures from building leaders. This notion of "just the way it is" strikes me as not overly optimistic in terms of constructing a sustainable and clear expectation of the principalship. Alongside increased accountability structures, ambiguous and excessive job expectations work to create an environment with increased scrutiny in the name of accountability along with an increase in expectations thus exaggerating conflict of role expectations among principals (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004; Merton, 1957).

Shifting from general conversations of the principalship to my specific path, Dr. Migliorino emphasized my ability to communicate with people, my work ethic, and my personal ownership and responsibility within the position as my greatest strengths. He also returned to the ability to tailor a message be it a positive or negative one to specific audiences in a way that fosters buy-in and "togetherness," further reflecting an inclination

toward transformational leadership practice (Hoy & Miskell, 2004; Donaldson, 2006; Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). Dr. Migliorino concluded his interview by authoritatively stating that the high school principalship is: "by far, the hardest role in the district, any school district."

The third interview was with Dr. Debra Bendick, Director of Secondary Education in a comparable school district to mine in terms of size and academic performance. Though I have never worked directly with Debra, we met each other on several occasions and in professional development settings. Debra served in a variety of roles in both public education and in private schools over her lengthy career and her perspective seemed to offer potential value representative of deep knowledge of the principalship as a practitioner and a supervisor of principals. Additionally, the granted perspective of a professional from a district removed works to add depth to interview data.

Debra grew up in the 50's and 60's and similar to other interview subjects shared warm and supportive sentiments from her childhood, adolescence, and schooling experience. She indicated that teaching was a natural fit for her and has enjoyed a lengthy career spanning numerous states and a variety of positions within education. Debra's experience is inclusive of work in parochial and public schools at a variety of levels ranging from middle school to high school and assistant and head principalships in diverse contexts as well.

In speaking of prioritizing on the job, Debra immediately spoke of the common occurrence of not having time to prioritize but rather reacting to what is directly in front of you, "Sometimes it's just get your mitt up in front of your face right before you catch

the ball" (Cuban, 2001; Wolcott, 1973). As a long-time English teacher, Debra stressed her personal mantra of continuous improvement. Furthermore, prioritization of job task stemming from a deep consideration of long-term teacher growth and long-term school growth; how will this decision impact the long-term growth of this institution?

Debra emphasized that much of what principals do sounds like an exaggerated contradiction, "fast on your feet but a slow dancer." Not quick to react but rather deeply reflective as a leader and the theme of optimism was broached as well: "They [principals] have to believe in the potential for change and hope and progress" (Day, 2007).

Transformational leadership was again echoed by Debra as the primary function of the work of school principals. The idea of "bringing adults along" is reflective of fostering a sense of buy-in, of common purpose. This is to say: not common action, but rather action in common according to Donaldson (Donaldson, 2006). Dr. Bendick emphasized spending the bulk of time with key adults who then in turn work with students to drive system-wide growth and continuous improvement. She also spoke of the concept of original thinking and the perceived "superficial" nature of the way many principals operate. Her belief was fairly straightforward: engage in deep, personal reflexive practice and growth and this will lead to original thinking school-wide and in others. She noted the need to find "what if" as opposed to "yeah, but" leaders as optimism as a leadership trait was reiterated throughout the interview (Hallinger, 2013)

In conclusion, Debra noted:

> I think the high school principalship is the most challenging job in the district, bar none. It's physically exhausting, the average Joe has no idea how many hours that the principal is on his or her feet and then the emotional exhaustion paired with the physical exhaustion because it is such a significant responsibility to be watching out for the care and safety and ongoing learning of so many kids and adults. It can be depleting. And

> so I think we need to encourage our principals to find whatever balance they can. I don't think we do enough for health in our field, for physical and emotional health. So I do say that the principalship, the high school principalship is a young man or woman's job.

Debra e-mailed me several days after our interview to express her appreciation for talking to her. She also stated that she would like a statement about the importance of emotional intelligence within the principalship to be reflected in her thoughts.

The final interview was with Jason Brown, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services in the district that I am employed. Jason was just entering his 2nd year in his current role when we met. We had worked together rather extensively for the previous year and Jason was selected as an interviewee as he had served as a head high school principal and as a Director of Secondary Education in a comparable district.

Jason had what he described as a very positive educational experience growing up. Though he did not come from a highly educated family, he expressed a sense of support from loving and caring teachers. More specifically, his apparent strong regard for key educators in his life is a clear influence on how he operates professionally in the context of the work of schooling. Jason spoke of the desire to destroy what he deems the "educational lottery" where the quality of student experience is based upon which classroom they happen to find their way into.

Jason's professional experience is multi-faceted to say the least with work ranging from classroom teaching to his current position of assistant superintendent. Jason also worked in diverse contexts from urban to suburban, middle to high school, and assistant to head principalships. This broad range of experience alongside his familiarity with my work made his voice potentially valuable.

Discussing prioritization within the principalship, Jason began with an emphasis on ensuring students feel safe both physically and emotionally. He went on to speak about placing the needs of the individual student above the needs of the school, the willingness to give "grace" to a student who has made a mistake. Jason spoke of possessing the courage to "do right by a kid," even in the face of impending criticism from other stakeholders (ISLLC, 2008; Wallace, 2013).

In seeking out potential head principals, Mr. Brown addressed the need to "juggle many plates at the same time" but also outlined the necessity of loving kids and possessing the passion to both lead and manage a high school. This notion of passion and the requisite energy to fulfill the job requirements would be revisited throughout the interview. Consistent with the previous remarks of other interviewees, the deliberate discussion of both emotional and physical readiness for the position was emphasized. The blending of transformational and the more managerial-laden transactional style of leadership was expressed articulately (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004; Pepper, 2010; Popham, 2001).

> You just have to have the physical and emotional stamina for the job. It is a physically and emotionally exhausting job and I guess I knew that but that was not high on my list I just thought hey if you love kids and you have a passion for kids and you're a good instructor then you can be a good principal. But if you can't stand up to the pressures of it emotionally and physically, then it doesn't matter how much you care if you can't last.

Jason believes that the primary function of the principal is to be the school's "#1 fan," the school's biggest cheerleader. Additionally, Jason stressed a teacher-centric paradigm demanding the principal to be one of the best teachers in the building. Mr. Brown's discussion of instructional leadership and being the face of the school seemed to undergird his perspective of the principalship, enthusiasm and optimism included. He

believes that a strong work ethic, passion for students, and a sound knowledge of what quality teaching looks like are integral to the role of principal (Hallinger, 2013; Taylor, 2007; Wallace, 2013).

Speaking to my perceived strengths as a principal, Mr. Brown noted that he believed that I possessed instructional leadership credibility and was an adequate spokesperson for all students in my building, that I knew what was going on all over the school at a given moment: "I think you have the uncanny ability that any kid in the school would think that you are their number one fan." Jason concluded that ultimately the principalship is about relationships, positive and healthy relationships with students, faculty, and parents (Epstein, 2011; Honig, 2012).

Implications for My Role and That of the School Administrator

Interviewees most often emphasized the importance of principals being "kid-" or student-centered when asked how principals prioritize both the wide and dense expectations placed upon them. Nick responded: "I think it's pretty simple; it's cliché, but the target analogy, you take a bulls eye put it up there. Making decisions is real easy if students are the bulls eye." Holly expanded on this comment when discussing her former role. "When I was an administrator at the high school and the middle school, kids came first." She continued to discuss the importance of being student focused in later comments about the intangible qualities demanded by the principalship, "I can teach you how to do a suspension, but I can't teach you how to love kids." Jason's comments closely mirrored Nick's. "I think you have to place kids first." More subtle and nuanced insights included possessing a willingness to "offer a break" for a student when needed in the face of criticism when dealing in disciplinary situations. The notion of placing

students at the heart and focus of the school leader's work is both a legal obligation associated with the position and a "personal issue of integrity" reflective of a lofty moral aim (Frick, 2013, p. 133).

Effective communication served as an emerging theme from interview data. This communication takes several forms including both verbal and written. Beyond the ability to relay events and information in a timely manner, communication in this context includes the ability to "tailor" communication to fit the audience. Holly remarked: "You must be able to sit across from a parent, teacher, or kid and turn what could be a very negative situation into the most positive version that it can be." This insinuation of "filtering" information, including mandates and initiatives from the district office were mentioned as well. Similarly, the quality of optimism in demeanor, outlook, and communication was repeatedly present in responses (Hoy & Miskell, 2008).

Passion and enthusiasm emerged from comments including: "You must be the #1 fan of the school," and "if you don't sing the school song, who will? If you don't cheer for the football team, why would the kids?" This sense of passion moves beyond the cheerleader role and includes an awareness of the different facets, programs, and work of the entire school. Interviewees were clear that passion, enthusiasm, and excitement about the school and the work of the school were imperative as the school begins to "take on the personality" of the principal. I spend significant effort in maintaining a balance in equitable distribution of my energies as it relates to the various student programs within the school. The intentional decision for me to supervise the fine arts department was made to ensure an emphasis and attention in this regard. Similarly, space and time are offered to broad student organizations in recognition via social media, newsletters, and

daily announcements and recognitions. Examples of note in this regard is the placement of the state champion Speech and Debate banner hanging above the main entry of the school building and publicity via social media surrounding a Kickstarter project to construct an aquaponics garden by environmental science students.

Each of the four interviewees deemed the high school principalship to be the most difficult job in any school district. This claim is of importance because they were not prompted nor asked this question directly or indirectly. Nick spoke of the 24/7 nature of the job and stressed the importance of having a supporting family situation that possessed a realistic awareness of the time and emotional rigors of the position. Jason commented that he used to think that passion, love for kids, and competency were all that was needed to be a great principal but now he includes emotional and physical stamina in this list of essentials. Jason had direct experience working with a principal that he deemed to be passionate, caring, and competent who wilted under the pressure of the position and left after just one year on the job. I am an exercise enthusiast and run, ride my bike, or swim most mornings. Similarly, I make dietary decisions based on fueling my body and mind to avoid energy dips and the afternoon crash. Despite the challenge of evening activities, I focus on getting to bed at a decent hour and consciously make the decision to opt for rest in lieu of that extra late night hour of work. Finding time and the patience to slow down long enough from e-mail and to-do items to engage in prayer, quiet time, reading, time with family, and rest can be very challenging. This balance provides me with the energy and focus to be effective during the times that I am working. I am more efficient when my personal and professional lives are in balance; this process requires significant planning on my part. The luxury of having a head principal colleague has been of great

benefit as much analytical processing has occurred while exercising. That being said, mental rejuvenation and respite is lost when an hour run is spent discussing job responsibilities. This trade-off captures what interviewee Dr. Debra Bendick refers to as the "tangled lives" of principals who struggle to establish boundaries between their personal and professional selves (Andreyko, 2010).

In discussing areas of potential improvement in my practice, Holly discussed "keeping all of the balls in the air" and sustaining through the overwhelming nature of the position. All interviewees spoke directly about the need for a strong work ethic and a willingness to put in extremely long hours and to endure the physically and emotionally taxing work of the principalship.

Through an analysis of interview data I was able to put to words what those individuals closest to me professionally believe are the most important qualities and characteristics of a high school principal and by understanding what these stakeholders value in their respective conceptualizations of the principalship I am better suited to connect with how these conceptualizations fit with how I view and construct my role. Though these themes do not specifically spell out role expectations in detail, implications and conclusions can be drawn from the data. Applying Role Theory to examine interviewee responses to the divergent nature of the position offers potentially valuable insight. Influence of the role set is undeniable within social structures; this is in many ways a naturally occurring force. Players comprising the role set are those stakeholders and actors who wield influence and power into the decision-making and therefore the actions of the status occupant working to shape the nature of a role. Within the context of this set of interviews, the role set is comprised of the interviewees while I, as principal,

reside within the position of status occupant (Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957; Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). Regardless of the convictions and personal beliefs of the status occupant, unequivocal and comprehensive autonomy is not possible if any semblance of social order is to be maintained within the given context, role pressures are a given.

Though my superiors, who in this case comprise a given percentage of my role set, (parents, students, media, etc. also work to populate this grouping) offer professional autonomy and support to my office, there beliefs are nonetheless indelibly connected to my conceptualization of role. It is of importance to note that a comprehensive conceptualization cannot be derived solely from superior interviews as subordinate and parent influences also contribute in this regard. Specific influences that seem to inflict weight in my behaviors stemming from superior interviews are the expectations of positive and optimistic communication to stakeholders, the filtering of mandates and requirements in a manner that meets the district needs while remaining contextually palatable to the school site, and preserving the ideal of "student-centeredness." Much of the influence felt in these areas has come by way of positive affirmation for actions and behaviors on my part. Role theorists posit that pressures are exerted and applied not only through accountability structures and mandates but also by way of approval and praise for certain actions and behaviors (Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957). It is in this way that I have deeply embedded the aforementioned qualities into my practice and they potentially work together to explain my attractiveness as a candidate for the position initially, not to mention my entrance into administration in 2007. My personality traits and communication skill set coupled with a broader perspective and instructional leadership credibility make my messages clear, consistent with district aims, and agreeable to

various members of the school community. These personality traits seem to make me a desirable head principal candidate who can reduce conflict, ease transitions and make mandates and accountability pressures a more reasonable pill to swallow for teachers, students, and the broader community. This inclination toward "maintaining calm organizational waters," alongside apparent student-centered conviction are on display as strong examples of superior and/or district influence into my personal role conceptualization (Day, 2007; Giroux, 2002; Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005).

I am a formally officed school administrator and public official who views my work through a prevalent and privileged filter, that is to say: white, middle-class, male, Christian, healthy, and so forth. I represent the invisible norm through which contemporary society judges all others. The inherent advantage and attributes that I possess potentially work to explain my initial desirability as a candidate for the position of principal and further work to shed light on the attributes and characteristics that are valued within the position.

Deep and reflective awareness of these unwritten and highly valued characteristics is important for school leaders seeking to champion true equity in an aspiring democracy. The origin of these beliefs and assumptions along with the institutional discrimination that can occur as a result of this cultural code has resulted in the formation and solidification of barriers that reward privilege and maintain the status quo while excluding marginalized and historically under-represented groups. Schools as institutions naturally gravitate toward this end when leadership does not possess a nuanced understanding of the role of social privilege and the accompanying daily reflection and scrutiny of close examination in an effort to truly serve and represent all

students and families. As a principal of privilege I am not called to operate apologetically for my background but I am obligated to continue to explore the impact and assumptions inherent in who I am and how this definition of self connects with the lives and stories of those whom I serve who come from different backgrounds, ideologies, and belief systems. My decisions and actions matter and they result in both intentional and unintentional consequences that impact the lives of students and families for generations. District hiring practices and the valuing of certain traits and characteristics in applicants must be filtered carefully. Through an awareness of the aforementioned privilege and honest conversation surrounding the effect of such practices, district leadership is better armed to make increasingly thoughtful and socially just hiring and recruitment decisions.

CHAPTER XIII

Conclusion and Implications

My experience as a secondary school principal has led to a conceptualization of my role in a variety of ways. Mentorships, deep and sustained dialogue and school culture have shaped how I define my work and this work is at its core, teacher-centered and transformational. Institutional forces have contributed much of the scaffolding that forms my role. Broader political and economic trends have created additional pressures that explain demands that arise from the district office and my superiors, my role set. Ultimately, I am left to balance these factors with the reasons that I believe my work to be a vocation. This means that I operate as a principal armed with an awareness of the contemporary culture in which I exist and the anchored belief in the institution of public education in a Jeffersonian way: a communal necessity, a societal obligation, a democratic birthright (Henderson, 1970).

How We Do the Job

Considering the fixed nature of so many principal tasks and expectations, much of the principal's day, week, and school year is accounted for before the first student misbehaves or the first parent becomes upset (Lortie, 2013; Wiseman, 2005; Wolcott, 1973). Formal encounters, informal encounters, and impromptu issue management work together to form the primary load of the principal's work schedule. In the context of the high school principalship, a wealth of after-school and evening events can be added to the plate as well. Non-negotiable occurrences ranging from required district meetings to teacher evaluation are inescapable. Institutional theory posits through the notion of institutional isomorphism that institutions tend to take on similar characteristics over

contexts and settings (Spillane et al., 2004; Wiseman, 2005). Institutional theory offers insight to the predictable and stubbornly regimented work of the principalship. The contradiction is obvious, how can the routine work of a principal be so predictable yet the specifics of each day vary so greatly?

Given the fixed nature of principal expectations, we cannot rely merely on tasks to aid in an analysis of principal role conceptualization and left with institutional theory alone to rely on the outlook becomes overly deterministic. Left to entertain meetings with parents, suspending students, and hiring teachers alone, the role of all principals would be similarly situated. Nothing could be further from the truth. This leads to another point: perhaps role conceptualization within the principalship is revealed not through the tasks that principals engage in so much as it is in how principals engage in these tasks (Day, 2007). Every principal supervises teachers, however, great discrepancies exist in how principals carry out this function. Every principal has suspended a student, however, great discrepancies exist in the degree to which these administrators conduct investigations, communicate with students, act fairly and ethically, and provide restorative approaches when administering student discipline. All principals meet with parents but some simply stick to black and white policy burning bridges while others seek to build productive relationships with these vital stakeholders (Khalifa, 2012; Epstein, 2011). This paradigm is not a requirement of the principalship but reflects a distinct conceptualization of the role held by some number of principals.

Reflecting on my work and experience as a high school principal, I have asked the question: how do I conceptualize my role and what process has led to this conceptualization? For the past decade I have worked in a school that values professional

development and has exceedingly high expectations for professional learning and growth. Mentorships and friendships that I developed as a teacher and later as an assistant principal and principal have made an indelible mark on the course of my career. These "critical friendships" and the corresponding transformational leadership culture in which I have resided have utilized autonomous work as the chief motivator in teacher and administrator practice and development (Bass, 1985; Byrk, 2010; Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997).

I was fortunate to be mentored by highly skilled and caring administrators who focused on my strengths, and I have always felt supported in this regard. Most importantly perhaps, as a teacher I had the opportunity to view firsthand the work of excellent principals. In many ways this made my transition an easier one, and I have always had a sturdy crutch to lean on: "what would Lynne and Holly do?" As a teacher I received a personalized, hand-written note every time I was observed. These notes were affirming and supportive, I have never forgotten them and now am committed to continuing this practice with my teachers.

Relationships and influences in our professional lives make a difference. For the past five years Peter Liesenfeld and I have run, ridden our bikes, and swam thousands of miles side-by-side. A partnership born of Peter seeking to run faster quickly turned into a daily, rich, professional growth experience. I have made few decisions of any consequence over the course of my principalship that have not been vetted to some degree on morning runs. These runs have challenged me, sharpened my thoughts and decision-making, and have focused my mind and my mindset on what matters most which is to say, on grappling with the bigger question of "what is the point of all of this

work in the end?" The tone of these conversations has progressively moved toward the development of social capital and teaching for human flourishing beyond the tenets of corporatized and neo-liberal themed standardization of thought and schooling (Bourdieu, 1986; Giroux, 2002). A return to the scholarly enclave and helping students and adults to find a sense of self, a sense of purpose in their lives, viewing public education as a communal and socially necessary function at heart (Edmundsen, 2013; Giroux, 2012). Peter and I have refined and pushed one another to continually ask the question: "but why?" This process has driven us to continually find a deeper meaning undergirding our work; the impact on how I view mass compulsory schooling and my role therein has been profound. Peter and I have spent over 2,000 hours in direct conversation about principal practice and education philosophy, and I often wonder how differently I would conceptualize my role without this investment of time and sharpening of thought.

Distributed leadership as outlined by Spillane et al. (1994) grants a contextually rich lens to view the work of leaders. In the instance of this study, closely examining context and situation from a variety of perspectives offers a greater degree of complexity for the researcher and the reader. This comes in contrast to the context-neutral approach, which often neglects extending the opportunity for practitioners to determine transferability and find relevance within the scope of their work. This study speaks directly to the practice of the principalship within a highly nuanced context; transferability is aided in the granular details of the autoethnographical account. Baker and LeTendre (1995) note the deterministic nature of institutional theory and recognize despite strong institutional forces creating similarities in the work of principals, contextually sensitive practice is essential.

Distributed leadership theory offers a different lens to view the work of the principalship, a less deterministic approach that connects principals with context in deep and profound ways that allow for sense making as a key product in the work of schools considering leader, followers, and situation. Traditional leadership theories that fail to recognize schools as diverse structures, serving diverse communities and diverse students lack the requisite complexity to fit the needs of the principal wishing to engage in self-reflexive praxis.

Implications

Providing a template for self-reflexive practice is of value to school principals. Facilitating a process of professional review by which a principal closely examines their upbringing, their life story, and their professional history in an effort to understand why they do what they do could be of value. As important as self-reflection can be for the principal, similar reflections among district leaders can potentially put a name to the often non-descript and ambiguous qualities and characteristics that are sought after in principal candidates. Tailored communication, physical and emotional stamina, passion and enthusiasm, instructional leadership, and a student-centered approach could work together to provide a potentially robust interview rubric for principal candidates. This study also offers implications for higher education and specifically, principal preparation programs. Continued progression to job-embedded professional development and highly contextual study present opportunities to foster an appreciation for complex and varied circumstances in the preparation of soon-to-be school leaders (Cuban, 2001; Spillane et al., 2004).

Role Theory offers a lens for principals to consider the reasons and forces behind decision-making and the pressures that they face (Linton, 1936; Merton, 1957). This study provides greater clarity in addressing who constitutes the role set of the secondary school principal and how this role set wields power and influence on the work of principals (Merton, 1957; Shivers-Blackwell, 2004). Ultimately, the study works to reveal how these forces work together to aid in development of a role conceptualization. The highly permeable nature of the principalship grants role set entry to any number of parties and actors as the school leader manages in the public sphere (Wiseman, 2005). Furthermore, this study grants insight to principals and district leaders as they more transparently acknowledge the overwhelming role conflict resulting from divergent expectations within the role set placed upon the status occupant. This acknowledgement forces a more sustainable and reasonable set of expectations for principals to be developed. Additionally, acknowledging the impact of heightened supervisory presence on the work of principals in light of accountability reforms has only worked to intensify the aforementioned role conflict (Merton, 1957).

Not only is the work of principals more complex, they are also being held more tightly to these new and ever-expanding expectations. Again, the root of this pressure stems from a broader neo-liberal influence and the corporate accountability pressures to produce "results" that are present in contemporary U.S. schools (Giroux, 2012). The resulting pressure to do more and to do it better while simultaneously being subjected to greater scrutiny and less autonomy to cope with the role conflict can work to make the demands of the position unbearable. Regrettably, concessions at this point made by principals are done so in accordance with rigid, standardized accountability-laden

reforms in mind thus furthering the unmistakable advance toward corporatization and sterile learning environments. Providing principals and their colleagues with a nuanced understanding of the forces weighing on the position and couching this understanding within the context of contemporary culture can aid in establishing realistic expectations for the position and more importantly, free the principal to confront the most pressing question of our day: corporate high school or scholarly enclave?

I find myself very uncomfortable as a school principal. Each day brings a new adventure and the more that I learn the more I realize how much I don't know. The complexity of the work is astounding and it pushes me to the absolute limits of my intellectual and emotional stories. The flood of energy does not happen without interruption. Natural periods of decreased activity make the position manageable but knowing you are one phone call at any moment from being thrust into overload is a constant part of the job. I am uncomfortable as a high school principal and I have reflected deeply and possess a keen awareness of this fact. Furthermore, I also now realize that I am in love with the position and that my sense of discomfort is what I love most. I am in love with the challenge, the fluid and complex nature of the work, I am in love with the students. I have the ability everyday to directly impact the lives of countless people ranging from faculty and staff members to most importantly, students. Everyday lends itself to countless opportunities for meaningful interaction. The ambiguous nature of the position and the resulting expectations for me also produces a wealth of unexplored and undefined possibilities. As a principal I have the ability to dream big, I have been empowered with the latitude to make change for the better and to inspire others. It is this quality of the position that is most appealing and exhilarating to me. Am I

uncomfortable? Highly. Have I mastered the principalship? Absolutely not. Do I come home exhausted and questioning everything? Most nights. Becoming a high school principal is not a life that I live in a vacuum, it is not a job at all. I would contend that this work is very much a vocation.

My wife, my kids, our conversations, and many of our richest moments come with the backdrop of Norman High School. This challenge, this pursuit to make a difference helps to define the fabric of our family. My kids are Tigers, they go to games, go to musicals, build tight relationships with students and faculty alike and can recite the fight song by heart.

Such is my life as a principal. At times it is very difficult to discern where Scott the principal ends and Scott the father/husband/friend begins. The more that I progress through this journey the more I realize that one doesn't ever really end and the other begin. The principalship is a way of life, it means caring deeply for those you work with and for. It means late nights supporting, cheering, helping, and worrying about any number of young people. It means spending personal reading time and long bike rides racking my brain about a better way to help students feel connected to our school.

I work with 1,937 young people and every one has a story. Each student brings a beautifully unique backstory with them when they walk through the doors on Main Street. As principal I must serve them, all of them. But serve to what end? Toward success? What is "success"? Ivy League matriculation? A 34 ACT score? All-State honors in football? The lead in the school musical? Perhaps pursuit of an answer to this question reveals much about the principalship; highly complex in nature and in service to a true cross-section of the community. Everything to everyone? Absolutely, as it should

be. I do not operate merely as a principal; that is not what the work is all about. I am a member of this community engaged in a vocation of hope, possibility, and drafting of the narrative of the future for young people. More importantly, the manner in which I approach this effort will determine in large part how Norman High School seeks to answer the question: what is success for a large, comprehensive, public high school. Concern for the other, pursuit of a life of passion and purpose, and becoming an informed and discerning citizen in an aspiring democracy are the aims that I hope to pursue. As school principal a leader must inspire thought and personal reflection and work to eliminate barriers to the aforementioned for all community members. Living a life worthy of emulation, a life of service, a life in nearly constant disequilibrium, this is the principalship. At NHS we encourage students to challenge themselves and to question everything, including their own perceptions and ways of thinking. Perhaps the role of the principal is to foster these ideals but make no mistake, it must occur within the leader first and we must be the model of this line of thinking and way of being. We must never stop questioning, reflecting, considering, and working diligently toward addressing issues with an awareness of their inherent complexity and with deep concern for the other in mind.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Approval of Study Modification – Expedited Review – AP0

Date: January 06, 2015 **IRB#:** 4691

Principal Investigator: Scott Albert Beck **Reference No: 635244**

Study Title: Principal. Me. An Autoethnographical Analysis of Role Conceptualization Within The Principalship

Approval Date: 01/05/2015

Modification Description:
Revising consent form to allow participants to give permission for the researcher to include their actual names. The researcher will re-consent all four participants.

The review and approval of this submission is based on the determination that the study, as amended, will continue to be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46.

To view the approved documents for this submission, open this study from the My Studies option, go to Submission History, go to Completed Submissions tab and then click the Details icon.

If the consent form(s) were revised as a part of this modification, discontinue use of all previous versions of the consent form.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the HRPP office at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu. The HRPP Administrator assigned for this submission: Sierra Smith.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Office of Inspections Informed Consent For Social Science Research

701-A-1

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Principal. Me. An Autoethnography
Principal Investigator: Scott Beck
Department: EACS

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. You were selected as a possible participant because of your experience as a school administrator.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study
The purpose of this study is to examine role conceptualization within the principalship.

Number of Participants
About 4 people will take part in this study.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer several questions based on your experience as a school administrator.

Length of Participation
1-2 hours.

Risks of being in the study are
None

Benefits of being in the study are
None.

Compensation
You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this study

Confidentiality
In published reports, information that will make it possible to identify you will only be included with your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the OU Institutional Review Board.

Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. The data you provide will be retained in anonymous form unless you specifically

IRB APPROVED
IRB NUMBER: 4691
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 01/05/2015
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 08/31/2015

agree for data retention or retention of contact information beyond the end of the study. Please check all of the options that you agree to:

I consent to being quoted directly. ___ Yes ___ No
I consent to having my name reported with quoted material. ___Yes ___ No
I consent to having the information I provided retained for potential use in future studies by this researcher. ___Yes ___ No

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty.

I consent to being audio recorded _____Yes _____No

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at (405) 823-2527, scott.a.beck-1@ou.edu; William C. Frick – 405-321-1081, frick@ou.edu)
Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions, or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

IRB APPROVED
IRB NUMBER: 4691
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 01/05/2015
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 08/31/2015

701-A-1

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Participant Signature	Print Name	Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

IRB NUMBER: 4691
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 01/05/2015
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 08/31/2015

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer: _____

Other Topics Discussed:_____

_____

Documents Obtained: _____

_____

_____

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

_____

Role Conceptualization Within the Principalship

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate our note taking, I would like to record our conversations today with this digital recording device and saved in an encrypted computer file. Please sign the release form. For your information, only committee members and I will be privy to the recordings, which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than two hours. Should it be deemed

necessary to further our conversation beyond this prescribed time allotment, another interview session will be scheduled.

Introduction

You have been selected as an interview subject for this project because you have a deep and experienced understanding of the work of public schools and the leaders who lead them, the principals. Similarly, you have a personal and in-depth knowledge of my journey from classroom teacher to the role of head principal. This research seeks to examine role conceptualization within the principalship and is comprised primarily of my personal recollection and analysis of data ranging from personal journals, notes, e-mails, calendars, and similar sources. Your role as an interview subject in this process is intended to add greater depth to my personal reflection and in the examination of my own role conceptualization.

1. Please describe your own experience growing up and as a student in school. The setting and so on.
2. Outline your professional experiences that have led you to your current position.
3. How long have you worked as a school administrator?
4. Why did you elect to enter school administration?
5. How do you prioritize both the wide and dense expectations placed upon you as a public school administrator?
6. How do you identify potential in prospective principals?
7. What is the primary function of the high school principal?
8. What professional and personal attributes do you prioritize when selecting high school principals?

9. Has your conceptualization of the role the high school principal shifted as you have gained experience? Explain.
10. In your words, outline my journey from classroom teacher to high school principal.
11. What do you believe are my greatest assets as a high school principal?
12. What do you believe are the areas that offer me the greatest opportunity for improvement as a high school principal?

    Post Interview Comments and/or Observations:

Appendix D: Codes

Codes:
Pers: Personnel
Sft: Safety
Awa: Awards
Pt: Parent
Fr: Fundraising
Col: Collaboration
Aca: Academics
Tch: Teachers
Stu: Students
Imp: Improvement
Eve: Events
Rem: Remediation
Tst: Testing
Adm: Administration
Cul: Culture
Con: Conferences
Ath: Athletics
Ld: Leadership
SI: School Improvement
Alu: Alumni
Co: Community
Pc: Professional contribution
Comm: Communication
Ptrait: Personality traits
Ltrait: Leadership traits

Themes Related to Principal Tasks:
Daily/weekly management
Daily information management
Teacher supervision
Hiring/Personnel
Formal encounters
Informal encounters
Impromptu issue management
Cyclical events
Professional learning/Service
Parent/Community connections
Visioning

Themes Related to Principal Attributes:
Instructional leadership
Communication
Work ethic

Enthusiasm/Optimism
Endurance/Stamina
Emotional Intelligence
Student-centered

Appendix E: Tiger Talk 1.0 Agenda

Tiger Talks 1.0 - *Challenge*

Teacher - Norman High School - “Internal vs. external motivation - It’s not about Marzano”
Professor - University - “Growing Educational Opportunity in Red Dirt: How We Can Flourish in the 21st Century”
Superintendent – Outside District - "Empirical evidence that we do not love children in Oklahoma."
Teacher - Norman High School - "What a Loosened Fabric of Space-time has to do with the Future of AP Seminars"
Student- Norman High School - “Argentina, Soccer, 2 months that changed how I see everything”
Assistant Superintendent - Norman Public Schools - “Standing in the gap”
Professor – University - “Purpose, passion, play”
School Founder – Outside District- “Teaching for human flourishing”
Counselor - Norman High School - “Feelings are not a requirement”

8:00 - 8:30 - Registration and Welcome - Coffee & Doughnuts in Commons
8:30 - 8:45 – Speaker #1
8:50 - 9:05 – Speaker #2
9:10 - 9:25 – Speaker #3
9:25 - 10:25 - “Unbreak/Break” - dialogue, processing and implications - Commons

1. Specific session content prompt

2. Immediate reaction

3. What challenged you? / What made you think?

4. What are the implications you see for the work of your school/classroom?

10:30 - 10:45 – Speaker #4
10:50 - 11:05 – Speaker #5
11:10 - 11:25 – Speaker #6
11:25 - 1:00 - Lunch with colleagues on your own (process, dialogue, share)
1:00 - 1:45 - Processing - Commons
1:45 - 2:00 - Break
2:00 - 2:15 – Speaker #7
2:20 - 2:35 – Speaker #8
2:40 - 2:55 – Speaker #9
2:55 - 3:45 - Conclusion, accountability, where do we go from here?

Appendix F: EOI Testing Schedule

OKLAHOMA
STATE DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
JANET BARRESI
STATE SUPERINTENDENT of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Oklahoma School Testing Program
2013 – 2014 Test Dates
State Law Title 70 O.S. § 1210.508 and Federal Law H.R. 1

Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Secondary Level End-of-Instruction (EOI)
Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)* Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)* Writing, Reading, Mathematics, Science, and U. S. History	*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)* Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)* Mathematics, Reading, and Geography	*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)* Writing, Reading, Mathematics, Science, and U. S. History	*Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)* ACE Algebra I, ACE Algebra II, ACE Biology I, ACE English II, ACE English III, ACE Geometry, and ACE U.S. History
Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP) Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)* Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)* Mathematics, Reading, and Science	*Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)* Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)* Mathematics and Reading	*Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)* Mathematics, Reading, and Science	*Oklahoma Modified Alternate Assessment Program (OMAAP)* Algebra I, English II, Biology I, and U.S. History
Multiple-Choice Testing Window: Thursday, April 10, 2014–Tuesday, April 29, 2014	**Multiple-Choice Testing Window:** Thursday, April 10, 2014–Tuesday, April 29, 2014	**Writing Test Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2014 Multiple-Choice Testing Window: Thursday, April 10, 2014–Tuesday, April 29, 2014	**Multiple-Choice Testing Window:** Thursday, April 10, 2014–Tuesday, April 29, 2014 Online testing window for Grade 6 Mathematics and Reading is extended through Friday, May 2, for flexibility in scheduling computer time.	**Multiple-Choice Testing Window:** Thursday, April 10, 2014–Tuesday, April 29, 2014 Online testing window for Grade 7 Mathematics, Reading, and Geography is extended through Friday, May 2, 2014, for flexibility in scheduling computer time.	**Writing Test Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2014 **Multiple-Choice Testing Window:** Thursday, April 10, 2014–Tuesday, April 29, 2014 Online testing window for Grade 8 Mathematics and Reading is extended through Friday, May 2, 2014, for flexibility in scheduling computer time.	**Winter:** **Optional Retest Window** (OCCT online tests only) Monday, November 18 – Friday, November 29, 2013 **Multiple-Choice Testing Window** Paper/pencil accommodation: Monday, December 2, 2013 – Friday, December 20, 2013 Online is extended through Friday, January 10, 2014 Writing Test on Tuesday, December 10, 2013, and Wednesday, December 11, 2013 **Trimester:** **Multiple-Choice Testing Window** Paper/pencil accommodation: Monday, January 20, 2014 – Friday, February 7, 2014 Online is extended through Friday, February 14, 2014 Writing Test on Tuesday, January 28, 2014 and Wednesday, January 29, 2014 **Spring:** **Optional Retest Window** (OCCT online tests only) Monday, March 31 – Friday, April 11, 2014 **Multiple-Choice Testing Window** Paper/pencil accommodation: Monday, April 14, 2014 – Friday, May 2, 2014 Online is extended through Friday, May 9, 2014 Writing Test on Wednesday, April 23, 2014 and Thursday, April 24, 2014 **Summer**: Monday, June 2, 2014, through Friday, August 1, 2014

Note: March 17-21, 2014, Suggested Coordinated Spring Break Week

Appendix G: Tiger Talk 1.0 post-survey

1. I found the day relevant to my work.1 being lowest, 5 being highest
2. Communication was clear during the day1 being lowest, 5 being highest
3. Expectations and objectives were clear during the day1 being lowest, 5 being highest
4. Communication was clear during the day1 being lowest, 5 being highest
5. I found the day to be well-organized overall1 being lowest, 5 being highest
6. I found the day to be engaging1 being lowest, 5 being highest
7. I found the "unbreak/break" / processing times to be meaningful1 being lowest, 5 being highest
8. I would like to have similar professional days in the future1 being lowest, 5 being highest
9. What did you feel went really well or was particularly meaningful
10. What suggestions for improvement might you offer?

Appendix H: Norman High School Site Plan Goals 2013-2014

Goal #1: Advisory: Norman High School will develop a comprehensive advisory program geared toward providing academic advisement to students along with affective and developmental support.

Goal #2: "Extra Help": Norman High School will provide a system of extra help to ensure all students will successfully engage in rigorous academic content.

Appendix I: Spring 2014 Faculty Climate Survey

*Items scored from 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

1. I feel like I belong at NHS
2. I feel like the staff cares about me
3. I feel like I am recognized for good work.
4. I feel intrinsically rewarded for doing my job well.
5. I am clear about what my job is at this school
6. I work with people who treat me with respect
7. I work with people who listen if I have ideas about doing things better.
8. My administrators treat me with respect.
9. My administrators are effective instructional leaders.
10. My administrators facilitate communication effectively.
11. My administrators support me in my work with students.
12. My administrators support shared decision-making.
13. My administrators allow me to be an effective instructional leader.
14. I love working at this school
15. I love seeing the results of my work with students.
16. Morale is high on the part of teachers
17. Morale is high on the part of students
18. Morale is high on the part of support staff
19. Morale is high on the part of administrators.
20. What is one area where NHS is leading and succeeding? (open response)
21. What is one area where NHS has an opportunity to improve? (open response)

Appendix J: Winter 2013 Evening Events Calendar

Monday December 16, 2013

8:15 PM – Orchestra Winter Concert

Tuesday December 17, 2013

6:30 PM – Vo-Ag Chili Cook-off

8:15 PM – Band Winter Concert

Wednesday December 18, 2013

5:30 PM – Administrator Christmas Party

Thursday December 19, 2013

7:00 PM – Winter Choir Concert

Friday December 20, 2013

6:00 PM – Norman High vs. Norman North Basketball Game

Appendix K: Norman High School Administrator Meeting Agenda

April 28, 2014 – Administrative Team/Counselor Meeting Agenda

Teaching & Learning:

1. *Drive* - chapter 4 share

Scheduling/Communication/Events

2. Assigning Administrator Duties
3. Friday - teacher appreciation breakfast
4. Set-up interviews now for posted positions
5. Tiger Talks debrief
6. Master Schedule
7. Posting positions - double check our postings
8. Observational rounds reminder
9. Video reminder and end-of-year focus reminder to departments
10. Roster verification - plan
11. Graduation update
12. AVID visit - 29th at 9:00 AM
13. Advisory books from Technology Center
14. Finishing Evaluations
15. EOI scores - discussion

School Climate:

16. Dropout updates

Student Issues:

17. At-risk student data dashboard

With Counselors:

18. EOI projects completion
19. Testing updates / needs

Appendix L: Sample Advisory Curriculum

August 28, 2014 - Advisory Curriculum: Sophomores

Digital Safety & Citizenship

Introduction: "Digital Citizenship Survey/Discussion Questions

- Lesson 1 "What is a Digital Footprint?"
- Lesson 2 "My Digital Footprint"

Get-to-Know-You: "CATEGORIES"

Advisors call out a category (see examples below); students move to stand next to others who belong in that category.

Category: Lefty or righty thumbs? Everyone fold hands together. If their left thumb is on top, gather with other lefties; all righties gather together.

Category: born in the same month.

Category: which leg goes into pants first when you get dressed?

Category: eye color.

Category: fix hair with brush, comb, or fingers?

Category: most difficult school subject?

Category: strongest school subject?

Appendix M: July 23, 2014 Calendar

7:15 – Breakfast with Peter, Sean and Courtney

9:00 – Grading Practice/Honor Code Committee

11:00 – Yearbook advisor meeting

11:30 – Yearbook meeting with student staff

12:30 – 9th Grade Academy meeting / Growth Mindset study planning

3:00 – Early College High School information session at Norman North with Peter

5:30 – Meet with Adam

Appendix N: Freshman Committee Meeting Notes

Notes and ideas:

- Establish expectations
- Establish school-wide culture embracing freshman transition
- Grading considerations
- Advisory is key - using upperclassmen as mentors for freshmen
- Connecting AVID to the transition
- Establishing a freshman boot camp
- Middle school / High school teacher swap
- Parent nights at middle schools in spring

Challenges:

- Establishing stakeholder buy-in
- Freshman stigma
- 9th grade teacher turnover
- Pace of school year makes planning difficult
- Scheduling
- Grouping isn't by grade w/ the exception of English classes
- Finding time in advisory at the beginning of the year
- Class sizes
- Different lunches
- Different departments, different policies and expectations

Appendix O: Norman High School Daily Class Schedule

Freshmen		Soph./Jr./Sr.
7:35-8:40	0 Hour (not on Friday)	7:35-8:40
8:35-8:55	STRETCH (not on Friday)	8:35-8:55
9:00-10:01	1st Hour	9:00-10:01
10:07-11:04	2nd Hour	10:07-11:04
11:04- 11:59 (lunch)	3rd Hour	11:10-12:07
11:59-12:56	4th Hour	12:07-1:02 (lunch)
1:02-1:59	5th Hour	1:02-1:59
2:05-3:02	6th Hour	2:05-3:02
3:08-4:05	7th Hour	3:08-4:05

Appendix P: Master Schedule Sample (English Dept.)

	zero hour	1st hour	2nd hour	3rd hour	4th hour	5th hour	6th hour	7th hour
Teacher		Eng 1	Eng1	LUNCH	Eng 1	PLAN	Eng 1	Athletics
Teacher		Eng 1	Eng1	Eng 2	LUNCH	PLAN	Eng 2	Eng2
Teacher		Eng 2	Literacy	Literacy	LUNCH	PLAN	Literacy	Eng 1
Teacher	Eng 2	Eng 2	Eng 1	LUNCH	Eng 1	Eng 1	Eng1	PLAN
Teacher		Eng 1	Eng 2	Eng 2	LUNCH	Eng 1	PLAN	Athletics
Teacher		Eng 1	Eng 1	LUNCH	Eng 1	Eng 1	Newspaper	PLAN
Teacher		Creative Writing	Advanced Eng 3	Advanced Eng 4	LUNCH	PLAN	Eng1	Eng1
Teacher		Eng 2	Eng 2	Eng 2	LUNCH	Eng 2	Eng 2	PLAN
Teacher		Eng 2	AP English 4	PLAN	LUNCH	Eng 2	AP English 4	Eng2
Teacher	AP Eng 4	Eng 4	PLAN	Eng 4	LUNCH	Eng 2	Eng 2	
Teacher		AP Eng 4	PLAN	Eng 4	LUNCH	Eng 4	Eng 4	AP4
Teacher	AP Eng 3	AP Eng 3	Eng 4	PLAN	LUNCH	Eng 4	AP English 3	Eng 4
Teacher	Eng 3	Eng 3	Eng 3	PLAN	LUNCH	Eng 3	Eng 3	Eng 3
Teacher		PLAN	AP Eng 3	Eng 3	LUNCH	Eng 3	Eng 3	AP Eng 3
Teacher		Yearbook	Yearbook	Reading for Pleasure	LUNCH	PLAN	PFL	Journalism
Teacher		PLAN	Sheltered Eng 2	Linguistics	LUNCH	Sheltered Eng 1	Resource	Resource

Appendix Q: District Principal's Meeting Agenda

August 4, 2011, 1:00 p.m.
Principal's Meeting Agenda

1:00 - 1:15 Norman Police Dept.
1:15 - 1:30 My School's Cool Program
1:30 - 2:00 Accessing Student Portal
Student Portal at NPS
10-day Drop Rule, Infinite Campus Discipline Procedures

- Procedure for Entering Behavior Information into Infinite Campus
- Behavior Incident Codes for Infinite Campus
- Home Language Survey
- Homeless Residency
- Home Language Survey Procedure/Homeless Information

Elementary (E) / Secondary (S) Discussion Items

- Notice of Suspension (E/S) Review procedures: Principal must sign, parent should be called and the document either handed to them, mailed, or e-mailed
- National Weather Museum
- Student Start and Stop Times/Workday Schedule
- Principal Meeting Dates
- Grading Timelines
- August and September At-A-Glance (E/S)
- Principal Procedures (E/S)
- FYI -- Activity Trips and Van Usage (E/S)
- Parent Notification System: Steps to make a parent call (E/S)
- Using the parent notification system.
- Goals (E, S)
- Science Information (E)
- Absence Times (E)

Appendix R: Administrative & Instructional Staff Meeting Agenda

September 9, 2014
7:30 AM – 3:00 PM
ASC Conference Rooms

Morning Agenda

7:30 - 8:00		Arrive and Eat
8:00 - 9:00	Directors	Leadership Map and Connection to Site Goals Deliberate Practice Plans/Self-Assessments Tipline Posters IC – Discipline Report Reminder (and Suspension Notice reminder)
9:00-9:10	Technology	Insight360 Training
9:10-9:20	Special Education	Improvements in SPED Reports/Mary Margaret PBIS Information
9:20-9:30		Break
9:30-10:00	Chamber	Partners in Education
10:00-10:15		Break
10:15-10:30	Technology	Security Cameras & Tech Replacement
10:30 - 10:35	Supervision	Entry Year Teachers

Elementary Discussion Items:

11:00 Literacy Information

11:15 Science Kits

11:30 Share Your Shelf

11:45 Price College Service Day

Secondary Discussion Items:

11:00 Safety

11:15 Homebound Policy Changes

Appendix S: Faculty Meeting – Friday October 7, 2014

1. Tiger Tony presentation
2. WICOR – AVID strategies – AVID site team
3. ELL – Sheltered testing procedures and protocol
4. United Way pledge drive information and deadlines
5. English remediation information and interventions
6. Announcements

Appendix T: Faculty Meeting Calendar

	2014-2015
8/22/2014	Advisory training
8/29/2014	Fine Arts / Marzano
9/5/2014	Post Football Game - No Meeting
9/12/2014	Department Meeting
9/19/2014	AVID Instructional Strategies Training
9/26/2014	Site Goals
10/3/2014	Department Meeting
10/17/2014	AVID Strategies / ELL Testing / United Way Drive / English Remediation
10/24/2014	Advisory Training
10/31/2014	ELL Training
11/14/2014	Musical Performance from students / Presentation of Faculty Grants
11/21/2014	Department Meeting
12/5/2014	Student-Driven Recycling Program
12/12/2014	Help for Students with Children / Indian Education Services
12/19/2014	No Meeting
1/9/2015	Department Meeting
1/16/2015	Advisory Training
1/23/2015	Autism Training
1/30/2015	Advisement Overview (Moore-Norman Technology Center)
2/6/2015	Department Meeting
2/13/2015	ELL Training
2/20/2015	AVID Strategies
2/27/2015	EOI Monitor training
3/6/2015	Department Meeting (3/2)
3/13/2015	Research Across Curriculum
3/27/2015	Testing Proctor and Administrator Training
4/3/2015	Department Meeting
4/10/2015	Literacy Strategy Training
4/17/2015	Faculty Recognitions by Students
4/24/2015	Department Meeting (4/20)
5/1/2015	Faculty Appreciation Breakfast
5/8/2015	Yearbook revealed to faculty
5/15/2015	Breakfast of Champions

Appendix U: Principal Evaluation Requirements

Status	Formal Observations (Announced)	Informal Observations (Announced or Unannounced	Walkthroughs (Unannounced)	Summative Evaluation	Targeted Observations (Announced)
	REQUIRED	RECOMMENDED	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL
Category I Teacher (Probationary) New Teacher (1-3 years of service) or new to district*	2 (One 1st semester, One 2nd semester)	1	1 per Semester	1 (Last day of school) Not to be completed until 4th quarter	As needed for deliberate practice.
Category II Teacher (Career) (4 or more years of service)	1	1	1 per Semester	1 (Last day of school) Not to be completed until 4th quarter	As needed for deliberate practice.

Appendix V: Sample “To Do” List

1. Set committee "next steps" for freshman transition and grading policy
2. Review dropout plan
3. Send letter to Rotary thanking them for pancake this year
4. Review notes and follow-up on PBIS meeting and plan next step
5. Construct “other academic measures” spreadsheet for teachers
6. Order book for teachers
7. Review applicants for math interventionist position
8. Review AdvancEd accreditation documentation
9. Identify and send all surveys for AdvancED accreditation visit
10. Read Chapter 4 for Tuesday

Appendix W: Spring Enrollment Calendar

January 31 - Student advisement training in faculty meeting

February 3 - 8th grade parent night @ Irving (6:30-7:30)

February 5 - NHS students receive transcripts, course catalogs, and enrollment cards in advisory

February 17 - 8th grade parent night @ Alcott (6:30-7:30)

February 13 - NHS course fair (6:00-8:00 in commons) / AP night (7:30 in theater)

February 18 - 8th grade visit to NHS (9:40-noon in theater and classrooms)

February 19 - NHS course request cards due in advisory

February 19 - NHS coaches visit middle schools: (IMS - 8:15, AMS - 10:30)

February 28 - 8th grade course cards due to middle schools

March 13 - Advisory conferences with students and parents (5:00-8:00)

March 14 - Advisory conferences with students and parents (8:00-noon)

Appendix X: Faculty Preference Survey

What is your first preference of courses to teach next year?

What is your second preference of courses to teach next year?

What is your third preference of courses to teach next year?

What is your fourth preference of courses to teach next year?

Which schedule would you most prefer?

Which schedule is your second choice?

Which schedule is your least preferred choice?

If any of the above schedules would impose a hardship on you, please let us know and the reason. (Example: I can't teach 0 hour because daycare doesn't open until 8 AM)

What is your name?

Which department are you in?

Who is your department administrator?

Appendix Y: Norman High School Administrator Responsibilities

WHO TO SEE ABOUT WHAT: NHS ADMINISTRATORS

SCOTT BECK, PRINCIPAL

Professional Development
Athletics Budget AdvancED
Site Improvement Plan New Teacher Orientation
Faculty Meetings Curriculum Council
PTA Fine Arts Department

SHAYNA KUTT, Assistant Principal A-D Students HSTW GearUp Data (All Subjects) Breakfast of Champions Freshman Class Open House Fall Parent Conferences School Safety Committee/Bullying Social Studies Department World Language Department ELL Advisory Program 8th Grade Visit	**Dave Gibson, Assistant Principal** E-K Students Parking Technology Building Maintenance/Work Orders Substitutes Service Learning Coke Product Truancy Board Transportation Emergency Drills Pancake Breakfast Keys & Codes Police Task Force Sophomore Class Special Ed Department Business Department
KRISTY BENARDELLO, Asst. Principal L-Q Students Lockers Student Handbook 9th Grade Orientation Counselor Watch List Assist with Accreditation Junior Class Counselors English Department Math Department Master Schedule	**CLINETTE FRANKS, Asst. Principal** R-Z Students Accreditation--State Report Student Teachers & Mentors Textbooks August Enrollment Graduation Senior Class Secretaries Indian Ed School Grounds Custodial Services Practical Arts Department Science Department
Tom Ballenger, Athletic Coordinator Supervises all NHS coaches Assists AD in programs at NHS Plans & Coordinates athletic events Prepares and maintains reports Reports maintenance needs to AD Supervises game/event management Athletic bus requests Other jobs as needed	**Tom Ballenger, Activities Director** Coordinates Facilities Requests Tech Set Up Master Calendar Schedules school assemblies Assists with special events Other jobs as needed

Appendix Z: Cycling Log

Date	Type	Distance (mi)	Duration	Average Pace
12/21/14 14:00	Cycling	12.77	47:06:00	3:41
10/25/14 6:31	Cycling	21.02	1:24:05	4:00
10/16/14 5:01	Cycling	16.01	55:19:00	3:27
10/9/14 5:15	Cycling	16	54:59:00	3:26
9/24/14 5:04	Cycling	16.29	57:40:00	3:32
9/20/14 6:08	Cycling	21.03	1:12:00	3:25
9/16/14 5:18	Cycling	15.65	55:10:00	3:32
9/9/14 5:16	Cycling	16.05	53:47:00	3:21
9/7/14 6:05	Cycling	24.33	1:23:20	3:25
9/3/14 5:05	Cycling	16.27	54:36:00	3:21
9/1/14 7:05	Cycling	16.39	58:07:00	3:33
8/27/14 4:47	Cycling	16.3	56:10:00	3:27
8/23/14 5:32	Cycling	37.75	2:05:45	3:20
8/21/14 5:02	Cycling	16.1	56:13:00	3:30
8/16/14 5:36	Cycling	32.29	1:51:50	3:28
8/13/14 5:18	Cycling	13.94	47:32:00	3:25
8/12/14 5:31	Cycling	16.34	56:41:00	3:28
8/9/14 5:36	Cycling	30.94	1:46:34	3:27
8/6/14 5:27	Cycling	16.1	55:38:00	3:27