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DISSATISFACTION THEORY AND SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER:

An Exception to the Rule

by

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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ABSTRACT

The cycle of change and superintendent replacement in a public school district was documented and later named Dissatisfaction Theory by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970). Since then there have been multiple studies that have further documented failed relationships between the values of the community, the school board, and the superintendent. The research has demonstrated that dissatisfied voters replace school board members who in turn replace the superintendent with someone who will reflect the ideology and policies desired by the community.

The purposes of this study were to a) Better understand the dynamics of the position of superintendent, b) Inform superintendents, school boards and community members to extend their knowledge, and c) Advance the knowledge of Dissatisfaction Theory. The purposes were accomplished by investigating events that occurred in a single school and community. In that community, incumbent school board members were replaced during several periods of politicization. The propositions of Dissatisfaction Theory predicted that the school board would have replaced the superintendent but they did not, and instead the superintendent retained his position until retirement.

The conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory developed by Iannaccone and his student Lutz, based upon the writings of Mosca, Michaels, and Key, prompted the researcher to consider exploring further a situation that appeared to be an exception to the theory. The study utilized a research methodology based upon the perspective of the interpretivist paradigm. The Parson and Thompson conceptual model for the study of an organization; institutional leadership activities, managerial activities, and technical activities were considered to examine and make sense of the data.

The multiple eras of the Portage area; beginning with the Potawatomi Indians through the retirement of the Superintendent in 2002, were investigated and described. The earlier eras were used to better understand the final era, when the exception to the rule seemed to occur. Data analysis of primary and secondary source documents, interviews, and participant observations indicated that the area was dominated by two primary groups, the Yankees who arrived first and later the Dutch who together formed the dominant culture. As the area grew, it changed but still retained a strong presence of the Yankees and Dutch. The agricultural economy changed to a community of professionals that expected an educational system that provided elite academic, athletic, and fine arts programs.

The research concluded that Dissatisfaction Theory did hold in Portage but that it was delayed through a skilled superintendent who employed a variety of tactics to manage conflict at all organizational levels and by the lack of action by the board. The research also concluded that dissatisfaction occurs at all levels of the organization -- institutional, managerial, and activity -- and that all contribute to the removal of the superintendent. Finally, the study concluded that if a board fails to act, powerful community members will eventually come forward to force their values on the superintendent.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In a public school district, the democratic process allows the policies of the school to reflect and transmit the values of the community. If the relationship among the values of the community, the school board, and the superintendent fails, then voters become dissatisfied and replace school board members. In turn the school board will replace the superintendent with someone who will reflect the ideology and policies desired by the community. The cycle of change and superintendent replacement was documented and later named Dissatisfaction Theory by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970). This research examined the circumstances that fit the definition of Dissatisfaction Theory within the community of Portage, Michigan; and its school system, Portage Public Schools (PPS).

Purpose of the Study

How and why public school superintendents maintain or leave their positions is a topic that is familiar in communities throughout the United States. School districts are one of only a few political arenas where the leadership of an organization is determined by a board elected by popular vote. The intense interest parents have in their children's education, combined with the ownership that communities have in their schools, provides a formula for schools that predominantly reflects the wants and desires of their community. The common link is viewed in many forums: the civic pride behind the outstanding achievements of athletic teams, large crowds at important events such as graduations, and the outrage that is displayed when school programs or incidents at the local school diverge from the values of the community. In Portage, incumbent Board members were replaced during several different periods of politicization. Dissatisfaction Theory predicted that the

Board would have replaced the superintendent. The superintendent was not replaced as predicted but instead retained his position until retirement.

The purpose of this study was three fold: a) to better understand the dynamics of the position of superintendent b) inform superintendents, school boards and community members to extend their knowledge to improve practice c) to advance the knowledge of Dissatisfaction Theory. More specifically:

Professional Self-Development

As an assistant superintendent; this researcher was interested in this topic as a mechanism for professional self-development to become a more professional school administrator through a better understanding of the role of the superintendent in a school system. The opportunity that the researcher had to observe and participate in the inner workings of a school system provided an inside view of how things work and what happened in a variety of situations. The researcher wanted to explore the theoretical propositions that might help explain the inner workings and allow an administrator to anticipate events or ramifications of choices required in administration as well as inform others of actions or behaviors that lead to more effective school administration. In addition, the researcher wanted to understand the strategies and tactics that led to the remarkable longevity of the superintendent in PPS.

Inform Superintendents and School Board Members to Improve Practice

The researcher sought to enhance superintendents' knowledge of the importance of the relationship between them and their community and of tactics and strategies that may be effective mechanisms for accomplishing their goals and maintaining their position. Further, the researcher intended to inform school board trustees of the importance of the superintendent selection process and the principles and effects of strategies such as

privatization. Finally, the purpose was to inform trustees of the costs to them and the school associated with retaining a superintendent who does not fit the community.

Generalize Knowledge about Dissatisfaction Theory

Through a class in a doctoral program, the researcher learned about Dissatisfaction Theory and observed that it appeared as though it did not match what happened in PPS. The researcher wanted to check the generalized knowledge versus the propositions of Dissatisfaction Theory to see if PPS was an exception or if the theory was applicable to PPS. Testing the propositions would allow the researcher to advance Dissatisfaction Theory by examining this specific case.

Background of the Study

The community of Portage began as a settlement of Yankee settlers in 1860 that were joined by Dutch celery farmers in 1890 and overtime became a suburban community of professionals. The formal education of children began with one-room schools built by early settlers who recruited teachers from the Eastern United States' Yankee settlements. The local schools were loosely organized until 1922 when the schools joined together so that they could offer a high school program. It was then that the community elected a Board of Education who hired a superintendent. The structure of the schools remained unchanged until the growth of the area required bonding to build new schools and the formation of the Portage Township Schools. A new superintendent was hired to lead the revised organizing structure in 1947 and served through 1970, a period of time in which the District experienced a growth in enrollment from just over 1000 students to over 10,000 (District documents). That growth required multiple building projects and the hiring of hundreds of teachers. The next superintendent was hired in 1970, retired in 1986, and was extremely popular despite the fact that he presided during the end of the baby

boom that resulted in a decline in enrollment in PPS of 3,000 students. The enrollment decline resulted in the closing of school buildings and the redistricting of students. In 1986 the Board used the assistance of their attorney to hire a new superintendent who maintained the position for 16 years until his retirement in 2002.

Significance of the Study

This research is useful for both internal and external audiences. This research is useful for residents of Portage because it can assist them in understanding the relationship that the community has had with the schools and provide a perspective about how the PPS are what they have become today. Miles and Huberman (1994) lumped internal validity, credibility, and authenticity together. They asked if the study made sense, if it was credible to others, and if it was a clear, authentic look at what was being studied. They cited Maxwell's (1992) work as important to consider and helpful for them when they wrote:

[Maxwell's] thoughtful review distinguishes among the types of *understandings* [emphasis added] that may emerge from a qualitative study: descriptive (what happened in specific situations); interpretive (what it meant to the people involved); theoretical (concepts, and their relationships, used to explain actions and meanings); and evaluative (judgments of the worth or value of actions and meanings). (p. 278)

The researcher knew that the findings of the study made sense for the context in which it was studied and that they were accurate. The concepts had clear reference within empirical data in the reality of Portage. The relationships between the steps of Dissatisfaction Theory were accurate for the community of Portage. The research provided a high degree of what Goetz and LeCompte (1984) defined as an important component for internal validity, "authentic representations of some reality" (p. 210). Other researchers

could have another understanding of the meaning of various data and their impact on what happened in Portage; however, their alternate interpretations would not make the findings of this study invalid.

The question of whether this study could be generalized to another setting and therefore was useful for external audiences, in other communities, can be answered two ways. This study is not generalizable at the empirical level because each community is unique. However, in terms of analytic generalizability, the conceptual theoretical framework of Dissatisfaction Theory did apply to Portage, and therefore the framework itself is analytically generalizable elsewhere. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) wrote: “External validity refers to the degree to which such representations [authentic representations of some reality] can be compared legitimately across groups” (p. 210). This study fit what Firestone (1987) described as theory-connected or analytic generalization. Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to the work of Maxwell (1992):

...theoretical validity and the abstract explanation of described actions and interpreted meanings [that] gain added power if they are connected to theoretical networks beyond the immediate study. Generalizability, he suggests, requires such connection-making, either to unstudied parts of the original case or to other cases. (p. 279)

The external validity of this research is confirmed by the inclusion of connections with other studies conducted with the analytic framework of Dissatisfaction Theory. In addition, the research resulted in the discovery of new information that added to the body of knowledge of Dissatisfaction Theory, and therefore it does “inform and improve educational practice.”

This study informs readers of the importance of the democratic process in selecting a superintendent who matches the values of their community. It provides the following:

1. Examples of the ramifications for one community and school when community mandates are ignored.
2. The factors in Portage that led to community dissatisfaction with the superintendent and Board.
3. A demonstration to superintendents of the importance of understanding and determining the nature of the relationship between themselves and their community.
4. Superintendent candidates information about the importance of the political climate and school board stability in districts seeking new leadership.

This research informs the reader of how these issues manifested themselves in Portage, Michigan. Through understanding the theory and what happened in Portage, the reader can generalize the analytic framework to other schools and communities. Through careful study of a school in another community, the framework may be used in a predictive manner. Ultimately as Wehlage (1981) noted, “The consumer of the research, not the author, does the generalizing....It is up to the consumer to decide what aspects of the case apply in new contexts” (p. 216). It is important that the reader understand the complexity of school, community, superintendent, and board relationships and take these multiple variables into consideration before attempting to interpret another setting.

Research Design

This study examined a single case that appeared to be an exception to Dissatisfaction Theory by inspecting specific circumstances that resulted in the periods of politicization and what happened after to determine if the proposition was verifiable. This

research also involved a sustained look at this single case. The sustained research allowed the researcher to look deeply into this case with the following limitation as described by Benney and Hughes (1956):

The sustained researcher who burrows deeper and deeper into a single situation is faced with the danger of emerging so impressed with the complexity and uniqueness of “the one dear case” that he may have difficulty in thinking abstractly about his materials or in attempting to generalize from them (p. 90).

The sustained method did result in some infatuation with the situation but also allowed the researcher to observe patterns of activities and interactions and explore this single case in depth.

The research was conducted in an open manner. The individuals who were selected as informants were aware of the research and agreed to participate. However, a significant amount of data was obtained through public documents. The public documents allowed the researcher to ask questions of individuals who had been involved in the organization when some of the events occurred and who were in a position to have an impression of the events that transpired.

The PPS were selected as the site for this research because the researcher recognized the mismatch between what happened in PPS and Dissatisfaction Theory studied during doctoral program studies. In addition, the researcher had the benefit of viewing Portage from multiple perspectives as a community member, civic board member, parent, committee member, and school administrator. As an administrator within the PPS, the researcher was privy to the workings of the school administration and Board, first as a high school principal and then as an assistant superintendent. The multiple roles and a 30-year history in the community provided the researcher unique opportunities to, as Glesne

(1999) described, observe the "...multiple, socially constructed realities or qualities that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables..." (p. 5) to which others may not have had access.

In order to understand the events that transpired during the period of 1985 through 2002, it was necessary to conduct a longitudinal study. The large volume of data dictated that this would be a single site study. In addition, the questions that initiated this study were based upon specific knowledge of the community of Portage, Michigan. Examining events over time provided the researcher with a foundation for interpreting the complex myriad of data gathered during the research phase of this study.

The problem was examined through qualitative research methods chosen because the researcher discovered that this was a multifaceted problem that could not be explained through quantitative measures. Glesne (1999) described qualitative research by stating "Qualitative methods are supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is constructed, complex, and ever changing" (p. 5). Qualitative research examines many ever changing variables and requires research written with a great deal of detail by observing and creating meaning out of the words and actions of others, examining written documents and other artifacts and combining them into a descriptive narrative that teaches others what you have learned.

Data were collected from multiple sources. It was the goal of the researcher to collect as much relevant data, from as many sources as possible, to weave the complex myriad of information. The data collection included the following official documents: Board of Education minutes from 1947- 2002, District Policy and Regulations, personnel evaluations, census figures, and City of Portage development and planning information. Print materials included the following: "Portage and Its Past" (Potts, 1976), "A Century of

Caring, The Upjohn Story” (Carlisle, 1987), and “Kalamazoo, The Place Behind the Products” (Massie & Schmitt, 1998), an archive of interviews with past Superintendents and Board Presidents from the Portage District Library, *Kalamazoo Gazette* articles, and printed documents from the District that included newsletters, internal memos, meeting minutes, and email correspondence. Interviews were conducted with several individuals that the researcher believed would enhance the study; and as the research continued, several individuals who were familiar with the topic offered their thoughts and insights. A record was also kept of informal conversations and statements made during meetings and other gatherings that contributed to providing an accurate portrait of events. Finally the researcher’s personal observations were used as data.

The collection of data revealed eras and events that were divided into distinct categories and segments of time developed. They were:

1. The Early Years
2. 1833 -- Yankee Settlers Arrive
3. 1840 -- Yankees Expand
4. Peasants Arrive
5. 1885-1945: Dutch Relocate and Combine with the Yankees
6. 1947 -- Wilkinson Era: Period of Quiescence
7. 1956 -- Wilkinson Era: Changing Demographics and Shifting Values
8. 1967 -- Wilkinson: Period of Politicization- Involuntary Superintendent Turnover
9. 1970 -- Conti Era: Period of Quiescence
10. 1979 -- Period of Politicization-Conflict-Return to Quiescence
11. 1985 -- Voluntary Superintendent Turnover and Selection
12. 1986 -- Ridders Era: Conflict Revealed

13. 1990 -- Period of Politicization #1
14. 1994 -- Period of Politicization #2A
15. 1995 -- Period of Politicization #2B
16. 1996 -- Period of Politicization #2C
17. 1997 -- Period of Politicization #2D
18. 1998 -- Period of Politicization #2E
19. 1999 -- Period of Politicization #3A
20. 2001 -- Period of Politicization#3B
21. 2002 -- Superintendent Turnover During Politicization

Definition of Relevant Terms

Arena Board -- Debate issues publicly and make decisions publicly by majority vote (Bailey, 1965).

Board -- The elected school board in Portage, Michigan. The Board consists of seven trustees who are elected for four-year terms in non-partisan elections. Four-year terms result in the election of no more than two full-term trustees in an election. If a trustee resigns before the end of his or her full-term, the remaining trustees vote on a replacement until the next election. At the next election, the remaining year(s) of the seat is placed on the ballot. When a partial-term seat is placed on the ballot, there may be more than two trustees elected in a single election.

Elite Board -- Reach decisions in private with little or no public debate and most often vote unanimously (Bailey, 1965).

Informant -- Individuals who provide information to a researcher.

Period of Politicization -- A segment of time that includes a change in Board membership and an increase in factors associated with dissatisfaction.

Privatization of Conflict -- Keeping conflict or situations that might create conflict private or out of the public eye.

Resources -- revenue, programs, professionals, and time.

Socialization of Conflict -- Making conflict public to involve the democratic process.

Values -- principles, standards, morals, ethics, and ideals.

Summary

The researcher discovered that despite several periods of politicization during the time period from 1986 through 2001, the Superintendent of PPS was not removed. The researcher's discovery resulted from an exhaustive search of documents and materials and hours of personal conversations with the individuals who were involved in the school district. The researcher examined the community of Portage by dividing eras and events into categories and segments of time beginning with its early Potawatomi Indian residents in the 1800s through 2002. Finally the researcher examined and analyzed the data through the lenses of the conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannacone and Lutz, 1970) to determine why the results in Portage diverged from the expected outcome.

Chapter 2 presents the literature that supported this research, Chapter 3 the research methodology, and Chapter 4 an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 provides a conclusion along with a summary of the research and implications for practicing leaders and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Mosca (1939) and Michels (1911) wrote about long periods of quiescence in political systems followed by short periods of politicization. Mosca (1939) wrote that the consistent pattern of leadership and the inertia of those in control generally continued for long periods of time, often over centuries, until eventually a short period of politicization resulted in a change. Mosca explained the basis of the battle for control of leadership this way:

The whole history of civilized mankind comes down to a conflict between the tendency of dominant elements to monopolize political power and transmit possession of it by inheritance, and the tendency toward a dislocation of old forces and insurgence of new forces. (p. 601)

As examples, Mosca (1939) cited the history of Roman aristocracy, the period of the Roman Low Empire, India's caste system, and Oriental societies. These societies were stable for long periods of time and ruled by those who inherited their position. Mosca generalized his examples to all societies and claimed that, "All ruling classes tend to become hereditary in fact if not in law" (p. 599).

Eventually, all societies experience "A period of renovation, or if one prefer[s], of revolution" (Mosca 1939, p. 602). According to Mosca, these periods may be caused by a variety of factors including those that are, "driven from power by the advent of new social elements who are strong in fresh political forces" (p. 602). Mosca described the process of renovation as a "society that gradually passes from its feverish state to calm" (p. 602). The feverish state that results in renovation is a reflection of dissatisfaction with the policies presented by the ruling class. Mosca stated that the "human being's psychological

tendencies [that are] those who belong to the ruling class will begin to acquire a group spirit” (p. 602). That group spirit results eventually in a chasm between them and the “fresh political forces” and the inevitable renovation. The renovation is followed by quiescence because as stated by Mosca: “[is] mankind happier or less un-happy, during periods of social stability and crystallization... [or] during the directly opposite periods of renovation and revolution?” (p. 602). In other words, Mosca deduced that mankind preferred and would be inclined toward stability versus the discomfort of conflict.

Mosca (1939) explained what caused the political conflict that he described as the dislocation of old forces and insurgence of new forces in this statement:

Ruling classes decline inevitably when they cease to find scope for the capacities through which they rose to power, when they can no longer render the social services which they once rendered, or when their talents and the services they render lose in importance in the social environment in which they live. (p. 601)

Michels (1911) explained the tendency of the ruling party to represent themselves despite changes in the society. His words became known as Michels’ Iron Law of Oligarchy:

It is organization which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, or the delgates over the delegators. Who says organization says oligarchy. (p. 15)

Lipset (1962) wrote that an oligarchy is “the control of a society or an organization by those at the top, is an intrinsic part of bureaucracy or large-scale organization” (p. 15).

Michels (1911) stated that complex organizations have a bureaucratic, hierarchically organized structure. The statement that organizations mean oligarchy is a reflection of the idea that “the price of increased bureaucracy is the concentration of power

at the top and the lessening of influence by rank and file members” (p. 16). Michels discarded the notion that elected officials of a bureaucracy could continue to remain as representatives of their constituents and wrote, “Whilst belonging by social position to the class of the ruled, have in fact come to form part of the ruling oligarchy” (p. 17).

According to Michels, once an individual became part of the bureaucracy he or she became a part of the oligarchy. Therefore, that individual would look out for his or her own interests ahead of the ideals of the organization he or she was supposed to represent. Lipset (1962) wrote that Michels predicted “the party leaders would reflect bureaucratic conservatism rather than adherence to ideology or defense of their members’ interests” (p. 19). Lipset noted that Michels’ prediction was validated when “The Great German Social Democratic Party...which opposed the policies of the Kaiser’s government and promised to call a general strike in the event of war, supported the war as soon as it was declared in 1914” (p. 19). Lipset further contended that:

Michels’ view of power rests basically on the assumption that the behavior of all dominant minorities, whether in society at large or in organizations, must primarily be interpreted as following a logic of self-interest of exploiting the masses to maintain or extend their own privilege and power. (p. 35)

Key (1949) wrote of elections “in which voters are...deeply concerned, in which the extent of electoral involvement is relatively quite high, and in which the decisive results of the voting reveal a sharp alteration of the pre-existing cleavage within the electorate” (p. 4). Key’s writing was a tangential expansion of what Mosca (1939) referred to when he wrote of “renovation or revolution” (p. 602) Key wrote further that these realignments “seem to persist for several succeeding elections” (p. 4). Key also questioned the “consequences [that] flow from an electorate which is disposed, in effect, to remain

largely quiescent over considerable periods” (p. 18). He further questioned what conditions were present when voters maintained quiescence versus the “conditions [that] permit sharp and decisive changes in the power structure” (p. 18)

Connection to the Politics of Education

Iannacone and his student, Lutz (1970), first used the work of Mosca (1939), Michels (1911), and Key (1955) to explain the episode of political turmoil that resulted in changes in the leadership of a school system. According to Iannacone and Lutz, school board members move toward protecting their own interests regardless of the reason they were elected. School board members who come into the position with the intention of creating an open system for all stakeholders eventually succumb to the inertia of the organization that will incrementally move it toward more conservative positions. Eventually, the members of the new organization will be faced with deciding between their own interests and those of their constituency, and they will choose their own interests. The school board will seek stability and protect the elite interests as they were elected to do. The community may change over time and the new citizens will expect schools to change, reflecting their values. As the gap between what the community expects and interests of the board expands, the result will be increasing dissatisfaction and eventually the initiation of a new cycle of change. As Michels asserted, members of the bureaucracy [school board] would represent their own interests at the expense of those they represent. Mosca contended that eventually the “talents and the services they [the school board] render lose importance in the social environment in which they live” (p. 601). Key wrote about critical elections that featured large voter turnout and that “readjustments occur in the relations of power within the community [school board members are defeated] and in which new and durable electoral groupings are formed” (p. 4). The combination of these explain the

results of dissatisfaction that trigger a period of politicization; school board members are removed by new social forces, the superintendent is removed, a new superintendent is hired, and the new superintendent and board create a new policy mandate. The next election when no incumbent board members are defeated results in a period of quiescence when the community moves from a “feverish state to calm” (Mosca, p. 602).

In 1962 Lutz conducted a case study utilizing 25 years of historical data, an 18-month participant observer experience, and a three-year follow-up observation. The Lutz dissertation was conducted at Washington University in Saint Louis. Two years later the research continued at the Claremont Graduate School, where Iannaccone and Lutz (1994) made the theoretical argument that they later named Dissatisfaction Theory. Using the theoretical basis described in the writings of Mosca (1939) and Key (1955), they focused on a key component that they named the Turning Point Election Period (TPEP).

Iannaccone and Lutz described a TPEP as a multi-step process that they tested and validated. Subsequently, many other researchers followed with studies that have validated and further developed the theory. Iannaccone advised several students that conducted studies on school boards and incumbent defeat. Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) built on Lutz’s (1962) dissertation when they conducted an additional seminal study that discovered the connection between dissatisfaction and local school district elections in the Midwestern school district of Robertsdale.

The Robertsdale District had been in conflict for several years in the mid-1950s which resulted in defeat of incumbent school board members. The Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) research was an ethnographic description of theoretically derived assumptions that became known as the Robertsdale Case. The researchers viewed the school board as a local example of a social system that functioned within larger social systems. The researchers in

the Robertsdale Case used observation, informants, public records, and other official documents to understand and verify what happened in the school district. Finally, they combined their findings to formulate and develop Dissatisfaction Theory as a means to explain superintendent turnover, as it related to incumbent school board member defeat. Dissatisfaction Theory was further validated by three studies in California. Although the original explanatory model was developed through ethnographic inquiry, the validation studies were designed to incorporate statistical measurements to determine levels of significance. Those studies were longitudinal including data from 1951-1965 in 117 Southern California school districts (Walden, 1966).

Progressive Steps of Dissatisfaction Theory

As additional research was conducted, the body of knowledge about Dissatisfaction Theory expanded. Progressively, Iannaccone (1982) described the steps in more detail.

1. Social, economic, and political change in the community.
2. (A) Increase in attempts of community members and groups to influence school board members to alter policy.
2. (B) Special interest groups in the community believe they have little or no influence on school board policy.
3. Sharp increase in voter turnout for school board elections.
4. Increase in number of candidates competing for positions on the school board.
5. Election defeat and/or the retirement of school board incumbents (Turning Point Election Period, TPEP).
6. Second election defeat and/or the retirement of school board incumbents (solidifying election).
7. Superintendent turnover (retirement, resignation, or firing).

8. New school board hires a new superintendent and a new policy mandate is developed (adjustment of old policy to be in tune with community).

9. Final test election followed by a period of quiescence.

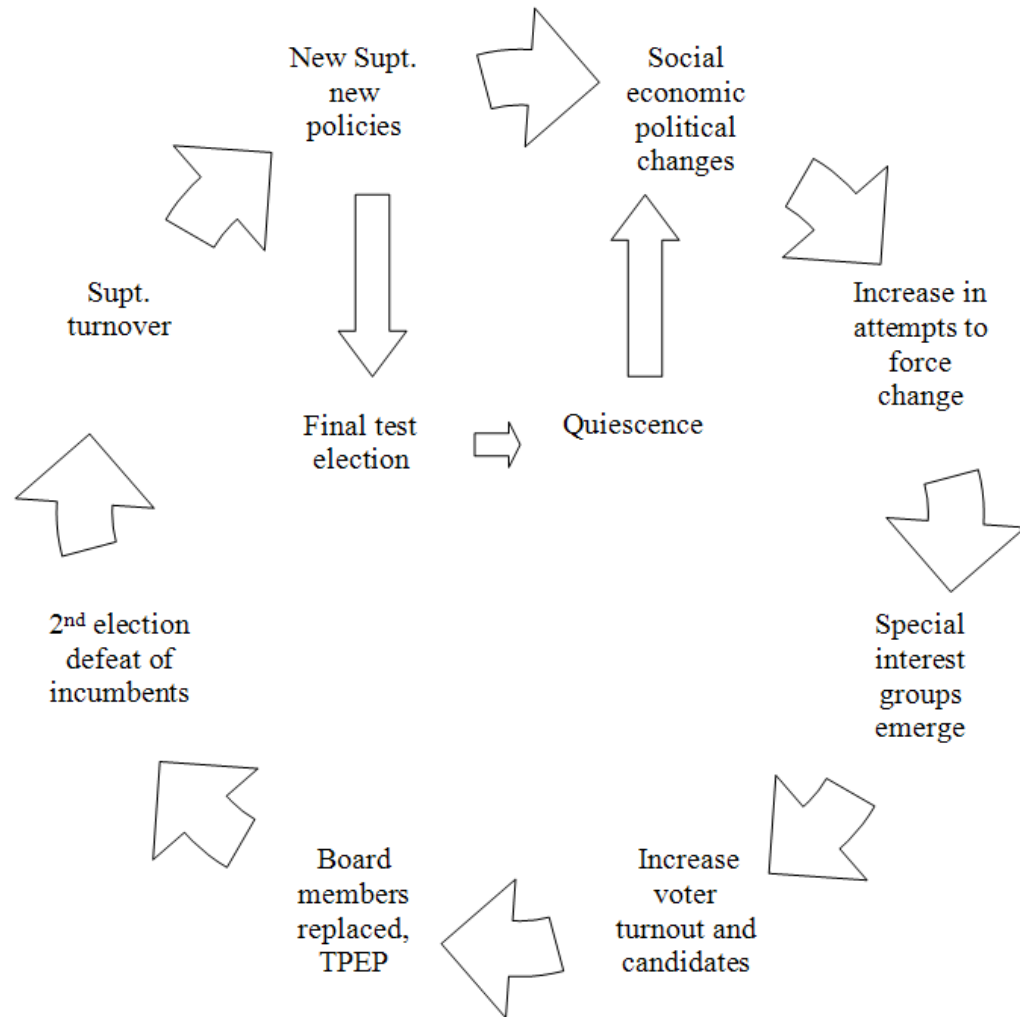


Figure 1: Progressive Steps of Dissatisfaction Theory

Step 1: Social, economic, and political change in the community

Social, economic and political changes in a community include, as Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) cited, "...in-migration or out-migration, changing property values, and economic shifts, to mention but a few indices" (p. 107). Iannaccone and Lutz wrote that

specific economic, social, or political factors were, in all likelihood, symptoms of a condition and not a cause. They stated, "...these indicators can be shown to be related to incumbent defeat and superintendent turnover, but no one really expects that those variables are the ones that affect or cause the conflict and political changes" (p. 101).

Kirkendall (1966) discovered that in districts where property values were increasing, the socioeconomic change was the strongest indicator of social, economic, and political change in the community. Kirkendall also examined the number of votes that challengers received versus the total number of votes cast and found the combination of socioeconomic and political factors had the maximum impact on school board incumbent defeat.

Ledoux and Burlingame (1973) examined both decreasing and increasing enrollment and declining and increasing socioeconomic status and the effect on school board elections in New Mexico. They discovered that Dissatisfaction Theory was not useful in predicting school board incumbent defeat when there was a combination of decreasing enrollment and declining socioeconomic status. Gaberina (1978) expanded the LeDoux and Burlingame research by adding a "demand-response indicator" (p. 56) as an addition to probing incumbent defeat through socioeconomic class and political trends. The demand-response indicator examined changes in the tax rate of school districts. Garberina examined the demand-response when there was one of three conditions: when there were no incumbent defeats, during upward socioeconomic trends, and during downward socioeconomic trends. Garberina discovered that increasing tax rates were significantly correlated to school board incumbent defeat.

Step 2 A: Increase in attempts of community members and groups to influence school board members to alter policy

When a community changes, there are new citizens who expect their schools to adopt policy to reflect their wants and needs. Lutz and Garberina (1977) studied Massachusetts' school districts using data from a nine-year period. They focused on indicators such as tax rate to determine whether school boards responded to community demands. The fact that incumbents were defeated when community demand was ignored supported Dissatisfaction Theory. A study by Weninger (1987) that supported Dissatisfaction Theory studied 50 years of data in Arizona. Weninger determined that 50 years of data were necessary to collect results because many schools in the study were alert to changes in community and reacted appropriately. Weninger's research concluded that incumbent turnover occurred when the superintendent and board failed to respond to community needs.

Step 2 B: Special interest groups in the community believe they have little or no influence on school board policy

If changes are not made, the new citizens eventually band together and form special interest groups that attempt to influence school policy. The groups represent issues that suit their private interests and seek to influence other community members to join them. Eventually, in the absence of action to change by the superintendent and the board, the group will attempt to get a member elected to the governing board.

Step 3: Sharp increase in voter turn-out for school board elections

The added interest in school affairs results in an increase in the number of voters. The special interest groups will attempt to get more voters to the polls in support of their candidate or to vote for those who may be sympathetic to their interests.

Step 4: Increase in number of candidates competing for positions on the school board

As the changing community attempts to take control of their schools, the number of candidates will increase. The cleavage between the new community and old will result in candidates from both groups seeking to gain new seats or hold on to seats on the board.

Step 5: Election defeat and/or the retirement of school board incumbents (Turning Point Election Period, TPEP)

A change in board trustees through defeat in an election signals a TPEP.

Iannaccone (1982) first identified a TPEP and created the label. Walden (1966), Freeborn (1966), and Kirkendall (1966) validated the relationship between incumbent board member defeat and superintendent turnover. After a TPEP, an elite board will attempt to indoctrinate the new member into the culture of the board. The new member will be taught that it is his or her responsibility to represent all students and not special interest groups. According to Iannaccone and Lutz (1970, p. 87), when an incumbent is defeated, the results are:

1. open conflict on the board
2. an increase in non-unanimous votes on the board
3. a change in board leadership, initiation, and interaction patterns
4. conflict between the new member and the leadership group...particularly the superintendent
5. marginal members of the old board will probably align themselves with the new member and influence the board's decision making with the superintendent receiving confrontational questions during open meetings

If the new board member fails to comply by buying into the elite culture, he or she will continue to seek support from other board members. If the new trustee lacks regular

support from the majority of the board (and the superintendent), he or she will continue to express dissatisfaction and carry forward concerns. Because the new board member does not comply with indoctrination, with or without the occasional support of other board members the climate of discontent will continue to grow. The superintendent and the majority of the board will continue to defend and support decisions they made earlier as they are challenged by the new board member. The rigid defense of past policies of the superintendent and board is viewed by the voters as a lack of responsiveness to their changing needs. The new board member becomes the community's advocate willing to listen to what they want in their schools and responding by questioning past practice and current policies.

Most states maintain non-partisan school board elections; therefore, a majority of studies have been conducted in that format. However, studies have also validated Dissatisfaction Theory in partisan elections. Moen (1971) found that "More than half of all incumbent defeats...took place in the primary election [indicating that] if there is dissatisfaction with an incumbent school board member, the chances are good that he/she will be eliminated at the first opportunity by the voters" (p. 41).

In 1976, Thorsted and Mitchell tested the length of time for dissatisfaction to develop into turnover as an eight to ten-year cycle. They also studied school board members who chose not to run for re-election in districts with significant conflict. They found when two or more incumbent board members were replaced, superintendent turnover followed.

In 1977, Lutz and Garberina studied Massachusetts school districts using data from a nine-year period. They focused on indicators such as tax rate to determine whether

schools boards responded to community demands. They found that incumbents were defeated when community demand was ignored.

Alsbury (2001) conducted a study in Washington State that took into consideration several studies that did not support Dissatisfaction Theory including Lopez (1976), Simon (1980), Flynn (1984), Rada (1984), and Kitchens (1994). In Alsbury's study, both quantitative and qualitative measures were used, and they revealed a statistically significant correlation to support Dissatisfaction Theory. Alsbury focused on incumbent school board replacement. Because preceding studies did not determine why school board members left, only that they did, Alsbury narrowed the focus to only those who were defeated or left due to political reasons. Alsbury wrote, "Defeat was not presumed if the board member moved, died, or expressed that they left the board for personal reasons of family illness, or like problems" (p. 63). Alsbury concluded that because each school district is unique, strictly quantitative measures may not be adequate. In his study, he found that in the State of Washington, using strictly quantitative measures, Dissatisfaction Theory could not be an effective predictor of superintendent turnover. Because each school district has unique characteristics, those qualitative measures must too be considered. Alsbury wrote, "This study suggested the necessity of in-depth qualitative data analysis of all districts that do not seem to follow Dissatisfaction Theory model before making conclusions regarding the efficacy of the theory" (2003 p. 237).

Step 6: Second election defeat and/or the retirement of school board incumbents (solidifying election)

The second election presents another opportunity for the district to return to a period of quiescence. Danis (1984) discovered that if socioeconomic changes were not present, if the second election did not focus on policy issues, and if incumbent board

members were re-elected instead of challengers, a return to quiescence is possible.

However, if the superintendent and board fail to adjust school policy to the wants and needs of the community, discontent will continue to escalate. If the new trustee is unable to gain the recognition of the board to influence their actions, the public will continue to question the legitimacy of the board and superintendent, and the next election results in the replacement of another incumbent school board member. If an incumbent is not defeated, the cycle of dissatisfaction can continue when, as Iannaccone (1982) stated, "A decision by two incumbent board members not to seek reelection has the same effect as an initial incumbent defeat after a period of political quiescence" (p. 108).

Step 7: Superintendent turnover (retirement, resignation, or firing)

The replacement of another incumbent board member in the second election results in involuntary superintendent turnover. Walden (1967) reported that data indicated that there was "...little doubt that a significant relationship existed between the two events...significantly more turnover in the superintendency occurred after an incumbent school board member was defeated for re-election." (p. 27). Furthermore, the level of significance was established at the .01 level. After establishing the statistical significance, the researcher explored whether the superintendent turnover was voluntary or involuntary. Again, the link between involuntary turnover and incumbent defeat was established as significant at the .01 level. Further analysis was conducted on voluntary and involuntary turnover in stable districts where there were few incumbent defeats and few if any controversial issues. The research indicated that in stable districts there were fewer changes in superintendents, and when they did leave, they left voluntarily. Moen (1971) found that "...that incumbent school board member defeat in the primary election was a strong predictor of future superintendent involuntary turnover" (p. 40). Moen wrote that

“...incumbent defeat ...was in fact the most significant predictor examined” (p. 41).

Moen’s results are supportive of the fact that involuntary superintendent turnover follows incumbent school board member defeat. Moen explained that the defeat of an incumbent in the primary “...represents the first opportunity for dissatisfied voters and district residents to initiate the process leading to the dismissal of the superintendent” (p.41).

Step 8: New school board hires a new superintendent and a new policy mandate is developed (adjustment of old policy to be in tune with community)

The board hires a new superintendent from outside of the system who will put forth a policy mandate that they desire. Freeborn (1966) found that, in the absence of incumbent defeat, insiders are appointed to replace existing superintendents when the board has determined that the schools are appropriately administered. However, after the defeat of an incumbent school board member, the new board would select an outside candidate as their superintendent. Carlson (1961) stated that “School boards will tend to select insiders to the superintendency only when the judgment has been made that the schools are being properly administered” (pp 69-70).

Step 9: Final test election followed by a period of quiescence

A final test election occurs after the board and the new superintendent define the policy direction for the district (Innaccone, 1982). If voters are in support of the new policy, they either support the incumbent school board members, defeat additional school board members, or don’t vote. The absence of defeat of additional school board members is viewed as supportive of the policy mandate. If incumbent school board members are defeated, it is a rejection of the policy mandate. If the final election yields a low voter turnout, it is viewed as supportive of the policy mandate. Freeborn (1966) wrote that when

a trustee is replaced as the last step of a completely new school board, the change may follow the replacement of the superintendent.

A final test election that does not result in the selection of a new board trustee is followed by a period of quiescence. Quiescence is characterized by low political conflict much like the calm that follows a storm. The TPEP created a disruption in the school organization because the realignment of policy disrupted the previous quiescence and its incremental policymaking. The length of quiescence is influenced by two other factors: subsequent changes that occur in the composition of the community and the inertia quiescence possesses as a preferred state.

After the replacement of a superintendent and board, additional policy changes are more gradual. Lindblom (1968) described the policy adjustment during quiescence as incrementalism that created change with low political conflict. Incremental policy changes build consistently upon previous decisions and precedent. Since incrementalism occurs during periods of quiescence, the policy maker can determine that new policy based upon consistent interpretation and precedent should be equally well accepted by the community. In the absence of dissatisfaction, the policies that come from incrementalism benefit from the credibility of the new board and administration. With each subsequent policy change, the precedent creates the next policy change incrementally. After a TPEP, incrementalism continues but can no longer be used as “settled fact” (Iannaccone, 1982, p. 106). Therefore the credibility of incremental decisions must earn their place and “compete with other assumptions for a place in the next political paradigm of interlocking assumptions” (1982 p. 107).

School Board Connections

The method in which the school board functions is necessary to understand in order to thoroughly understand Dissatisfaction Theory and the circumstances in Portage. The public behavior of a school board is determined by whether they function as an elite board or an arena board. Lutz and Iannaccone (1978) revealed that both Blanchard and Edgren discovered “The vast majority of school board members believe that they are under no obligation to behave as school board members, based on the wishes of the public” (p. 102). Lutz and Iannaccone also wrote that “He [Blanchard] found that “87% of the school board members he surveyed in Kentucky said they voted as they felt best even if that was opposed to what the public wished” (p. 102). In general, elite school boards operate under the long held premise that public education is too important of an issue to involve politics and thus should be apolitical. Lutz and Iannaccone wrote that “...school board members are trustees for the public, not representatives of the public” (p. 102). Without politics, school board members become trustees of the school instead of representing the public in the education process. The elite school board begins to indoctrinate new members into their culture soon after an election. The indoctrination admonishes board members not to represent single interest groups; instead, they should consider the needs of all students. School board members tend to come from higher socioeconomic status (SES) groups, therefore their perspective of what all students need is based upon middle to upper-middle class values. Using large amounts of data, Zeigler, Jennings, and Peak (1974) determined that the turnout in school elections is often below 15% of eligible voters. Since a higher SES increases the likelihood that an individual will vote, there is little chance that candidates from under-represented groups (low SES, minorities, special education) will be elected to a school board. Furthermore, when board members resign between elections and

are replaced via an appointment, the board will replace outgoing members with someone like themselves.

As trustees for and not representatives of the public, “The [elite] board is admonished by its cultural norms to seek consensus in private and to avoid public conflict and the public debate of controversial issues” (Lutz and Iannaccone 1978, p. 102).

Individual trustees or interest groups who attempt to move the elite board in a new or different direction are identified as single issue or “on the fringe” with the inference that the community as a whole does not support their cause. Even when a board member(s) supports an external group, elite board votes are often unanimous in support of the status quo. Support for the group is voiced through questioning during an open meeting often followed by praise for the group’s efforts. The practices of the board reduce public conflict or debate between board members and members of the community. Bailey (1965) and other anthropologists studied boards; placing them on a continuum of elite to arena councils, which they defined as follows:

Elite Councils:

1. Reach decisions in private, the minority acceding to the majority to preserve consensus, and enact the decisions in public by unanimous vote
2. Think of themselves as trustees, apart from and separate from the public for whom they are the guardians of the trusteeship
3. Operate with the executive-administrative function being an integrated part of the council so that consensus is required if anything is to get done (Figure 2).

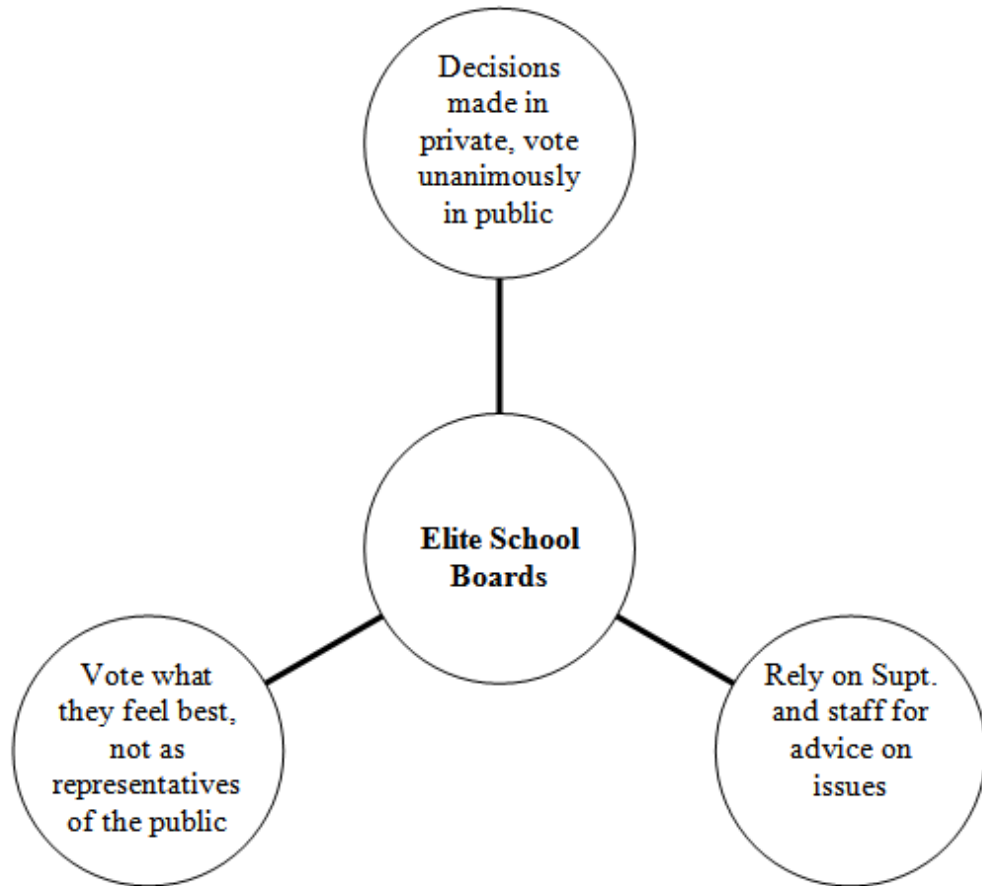


Figure 2: Elite School Boards

Arena Councils:

1. Debate issues publicly and decide publicly by majority vote
2. Think of themselves as representatives of the public and act as “community in council”
3. Constitute the executive function apart from the council, holding administration responsible for effecting the majority decision.

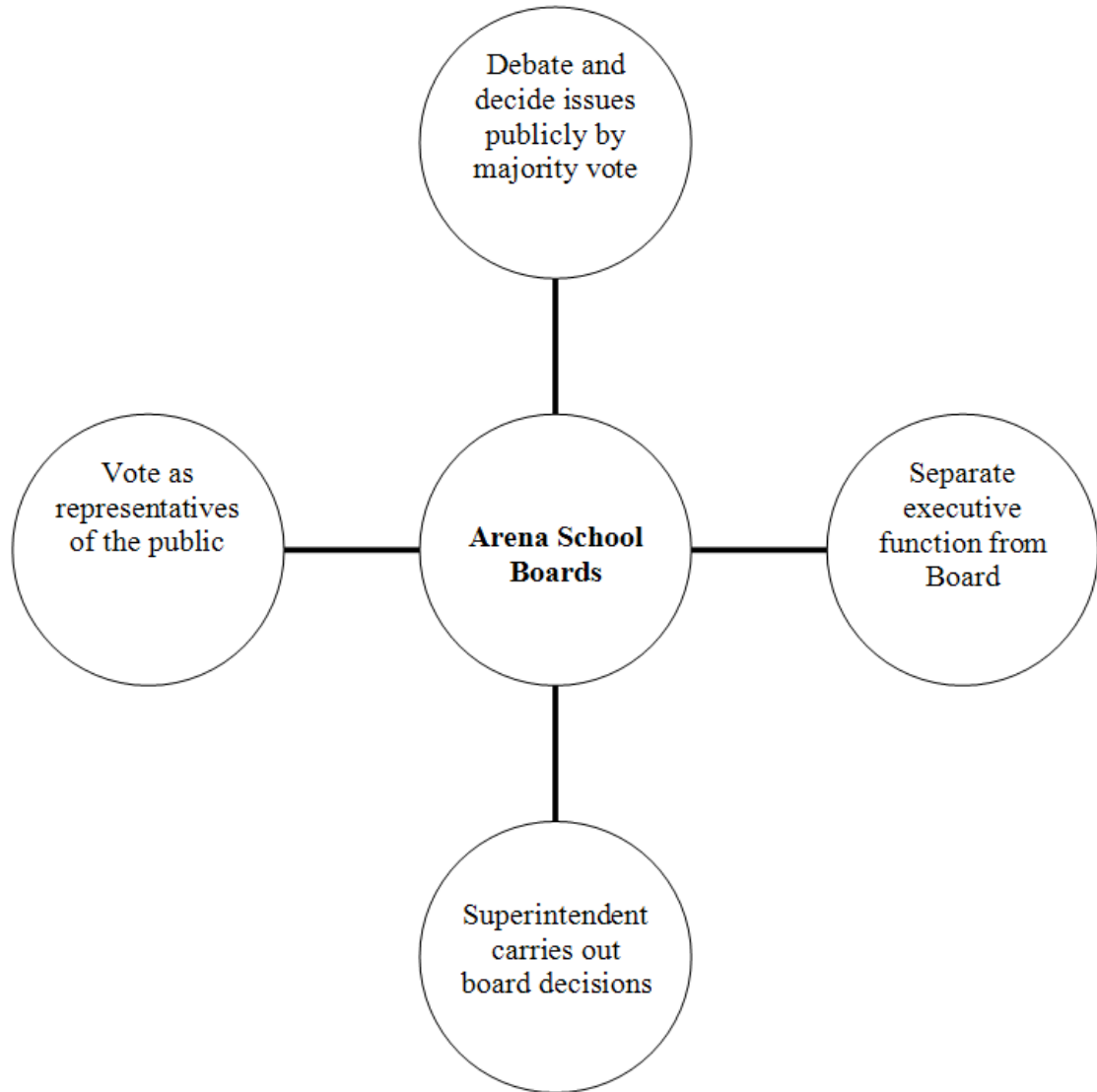


Figure 3: Arena School Boards

Gresson (1976) observed two boards over a six-month period. Gresson’s research clarified the behaviors of elite and arena boards through a qualitative approach. The elite board relied heavily on the superintendent and his or her staff for advice on issues. Gresson recorded comments by the elite board members such as “If we see a thing is going to be problematic, we just don’t bring it up in a [public] meeting. We just leave it. When we bring it up, we know it is going to pass” (p. 105). From the same board another member said, “Sometimes a guy will vote that way [against a majority decision] if one of his

constituents is present. But he will only do that if he knows the motion is going to pass. You'll never see a fight or conflict. We always vote together. We meet in executive session" (p. 105).

Gresson's research provided evidence that arena board members do not necessarily enjoy public debate but do so because of conflict within the board, combined with a lack of trust of each other and/or the superintendent. One board member stated, "Just when you think you can rely on a board member, they go right in there and vote differently than you had agreed" (p. 105). Another board member declared "I refuse to discuss anything in private" and explained further that "[it] wouldn't bother me in the least if every decision was a 5-4 vote...but I think that most members would prefer a 9-0 decision" (p. 105). An arena board will disagree and publicly express their opinion. However, even on arena boards the members will attempt to gain agreement behind the scenes and tend to have aspirations toward elite board behavior as expressed by the member who stated "...most members would prefer a 9-0 decision" (p. 105). A 1985 survey by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) reported information about changes in school board members. The IEL developed a self-assessment process with a large number of state school board associations. They discovered that "Traditional board members most often saw themselves as institutional trustees" and that "greater numbers were serving for more personal reasons" (1986, p. 17). The report also divulged that more recent board members were more likely to be from the baby boom generation, were more educated than earlier generations of board members, and were likely to wield a strong influence through activist behavior and eschew the status quo. According to McCurdy (1992), "Baby boomers reared in an environment of instant gratification often insist on satisfying all desires at once. They believe firmly in participatory management, but if they don't own a policy

decision, they tend not to support programs to implement it” (p. 52). The baby boomer generation forms a large voting block. In addition, since new board members are more educated, they are also likely from higher SES, which further enhances their ability to be elected or appointed to a board of education. Even if, as McCurdy stated, “Their sophisticated and time-consuming demands are draining the energy and patience of school executives” (p. 52), the baby boomer board member(s) will continue to make policy decisions that reflect their interests. Until there are social, economic and political changes in the community, the voters will continue to return them to office. However, baby boomer generation board members “...have difficulty working together...can be impatient, demanding and value-conscious...[and are] quite used to getting their own way” (p. 52), and this is a factor in Dissatisfaction Theory. Since the board reflects the community, the faction of voters who support baby boomer board of education members will reflect a community that is equally impatient, demanding, value-conscious, and used to getting their own way. In turn they will expect the same thing from their superintendent and board.

As Michels (1911) stated, in an oligarchy members will represent their own interests first. To maintain the ability to control requires what Schattschneider (1975) referred to as the privatization versus the socialization of conflict: “...political literature shows that there has indeed been a long-standing struggle between the conflicting tendencies toward the privatization and socialization of conflict” (p.7). An elite board seeks to privatize conflict or to limit the scope of a conflict. According to Schattschneider, “A tremendous amount of conflict is controlled by keeping it so private that it is almost completely invisible” (p. 7). Privatization of conflict is a preferred strategy of an elite board. Conversely, an arena board, by virtue of their public discussion of issues, socializes conflict. Minority interests lack voice on elite boards and therefore seek to socialize

conflict; as Schattschneider wrote, "Like all chain reactions, a fight [conflict] is difficult to contain" (p. 2). If an argument is to gain traction, it is in their interest to socialize the conflict because "conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it" (p. 4). Every citizen participates either actively or passively in the political process; Schattschneider (1975) claimed that conflicts compete with each other and people must choose between them. Therefore, groups seek to have their voice heard, and those that are effective define which conflicts will be significant enough to pursue. Once a group successfully presents a conflict, other groups and their conflicts are marginalized until another opportunity presents itself. Pfeffer (1981) contended that different groups who bring conflicts are mutually dependent; therefore, the system allows these conflicts to occur without destroying the organization. The results of conflict create order because they are used to determine the structure and rules of the school community. When conflict occurs, the order is not violated; instead they are solved based upon the structures established earlier. Allison (1971) stated that "It is presumed that most of the behavior is determined by previously established procedures" (p. 79). As new conflicts are resolved, they create new structures that are used in future conflicts. Schattschneider (1975) stated, "All forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and suppression of others because organization is the mobilization of bias" (p. 71).

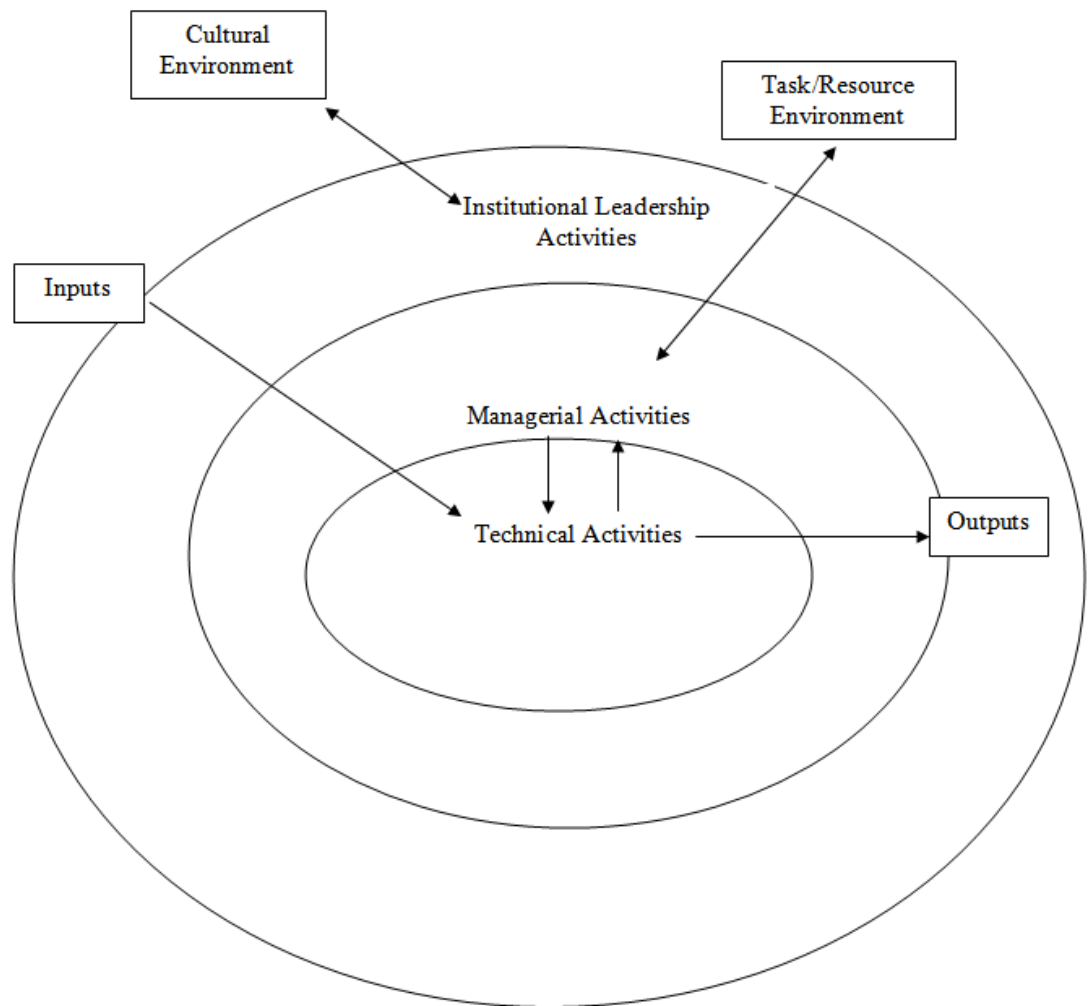


Figure 4: Conceptual Model for the Study of an Organization

The structure of organizations was examined by Parsons (1960) and Thompson (1967). They explained organizations by dividing them into three levels of activities and controls: the institutional activities, the managerial activities, and the technical activities. Their research explored the relationships and inter-dependency and the difference in functions between the three activities. The technical activities of the organization transform inputs into outputs. According to Scott (2003), “Technology refers to the work performed by an organization” (p. 231). The outputs are the tasks that provide the services and or

products necessary to satisfy the needs of the cultural environment (1967). In a school system, those tasks would include teaching students, and the outputs would be the education that the students matriculate with. The managerial activities direct the technical activities and act as a buffer between the technical activities and the institutional activities as well as providing direction (e.g. curriculum). The managerial activities obtain the resources necessary from the task environment to produce the desired outputs (funding and students). The managerial activities and technical activities are assisted in providing the desired results through the legitimacy provided by the institutional activities. Stanko (2006) stated, “The institutional level [activities] provides the source of meaning or legitimization for the organization” (p. 24). The source of meaning for a school are students who are taught the values and tasks deemed important to the community (task environment).

The institutional activities are open to the environment. Stanko (2006) stated, “The environment refers to everything outside of those activities controlled by the organization” (p. 25). In effect, the institutional activities are the buffer between the organization and the community (Thompson, 1967). Because the organization and the environment are dependent on each other (communities need schools to teach the children and transmit their values, schools need students and finances), the superintendent interacts with the environment and therefore must understand what outputs are required to satisfy the needs of the environment. Stanko stated, “The domain consensus defines a set of expectations both for members of the organization and with whom they interact, regarding what the organization will and will not do” (p. 26). The interactions from the institutional activities provide legitimacy for the organization and are important to maintain the inputs necessary for the success of the organization. Conversely the outputs provided by the organization

are critical for the environment because they are what allow the culture to continue. Stanko paraphrased Pfeffer & Slancik (2003) when he wrote, "Management must also recognize the social context and constraints within which the organization must operate" (p. 27). It is the control of the context and constraints that result in the development of curriculum and standards (be they academic or behavioral) that facilitates the ability for "the organization to continue making transactions of input and output" (2006, p. 28).

Summary

School districts and what happens within them reflect their community. When social, economic, and political changes occur in a community, the school will reflect those changes. Because they view it as their responsibility to make decisions based upon what is best for children, elite board members may be viewed by members of the community as not responsive to their needs. Bailey (1963) wrote about elite board members as the guardians of the public interest. The elite board and superintendent and board function in a system with a closed decision-making style that does not seek input from the public and therefore are less likely to recognize changes in their community. As the community changes they fail to realize the significance of the changes or understand that the new community may want something different for their schools until eventually conflict occurs. The conflict is often met with defensiveness by the superintendent and board or they might attempt to marginalize the conflict as being from a minority of special interest stakeholders. If they are correct, the conflict will eventually dissipate; if they are not, the disgruntled public will replace them in what Key (1955) described as a critical election. If board members are replaced and the superintendent continues to align with the remaining veteran board members, the new members will likely ask for him to be removed (Lutz, 1980).

The writings of Mosca (1939), Michels (1911), and Key (1955) explain the inevitable results when the public becomes dissatisfied. The empirically demonstrated episodic cycle that is Dissatisfaction Theory presents a conceptual framework for superintendents and boards to use to better understand the political process. Through regular examinations of their community, it is possible to detect dissatisfaction. According to Iannaccone (1985) and collaborated by Kirkendall (1966) and LeDoux and Burlingame (1973), the first of the nine steps “appeared some years before evidence of discontent appears in voting behavior” (Iannaccone, p. 9). Therefore, the time necessary for the development of this first step is an opportunity for a school board or a superintendent to adjust school policy to align with changes as they are observed.

Conflict within communities and the dissatisfaction that leads to changes in both leadership and school policy support the nature of the democratic process. The grassroots political action that defines Dissatisfaction Theory is at the core of a democracy. A democracy removes leaders who do not reflect their values. It is the capability to democratically select new leadership that spawned Dissatisfaction Theory as a vehicle to understand changes in leadership.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will explain the study's purpose and also describe the research methods that were used to answer the research questions. My background is presented so that the reader will better understand the perceptions and experiences that contributed to the analysis of data. In addition, this chapter also describes how I addressed issues of reliability and validity.

My interest in this topic began through an Eastern Michigan University doctoral program class that involved the study of the politics of education. The readings and class discussion for that coursework included study of Dissatisfaction Theory. Politics have been an interest area for me since childhood when I was influenced by my father's intense interest in political issues combined with lively discussions that occurred during gatherings of my mother's large extended family. It was through these early influences that I began to look at the world around me and how it was influenced by political forces. It was also during those family gatherings that the rituals and history of my family were transmitted via the telling of stories. Although as a child and young adult I was not conducting research, it was tangential to what I later learned: "Research relationships are the vehicles through which the researcher comes to understand a social system" (Berg and Smith, 1988). The content of the stories were also training in the interpretation of information. It required me to consider, as Simmons (1988) stated, "Self report data were valuable not only for what was there but for what was left out" (p. 293). In addition, for the family gatherings I attended, it required interpretation of what might have been *added* to the story and might not have been of a factual nature. Later that training would serve me well as a school administrator when it was part of my job responsibilities to investigate student

discipline issues and later staff discipline issues. I found all of these experiences to be contributing factors to my comfort with the data collection and analysis required of conducting qualitative research.

During my years as a resident of the community of Portage and through my employment as an administrator in PPS, the researcher routinely used a political lens to observe the environment. The researcher's observations raised many questions, and the formal training provided by the doctoral program began to provide possible explanations for use during my reflections about my community and profession.

As I reflected on the application of Dissatisfaction Theory to PPS and other schools where I had been employed, it appeared that the propositions of the theory did not hold true in Portage. It was that observation, combined with the other factors described above, that prompted my desire to explore further what had happened in PPS. As supported by Denzin (1994), it was consistent that the researcher would choose to study what he had observed and experienced.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was three fold: a) To better understand the dynamics of the position of superintendent; b) Inform superintendents, school boards, and community members to extend their knowledge to improve practice; and c) To advance the knowledge of Dissatisfaction Theory. More specifically:

Professional Self-Development

As an assistant superintendent I was interested in this topic as a mechanism for professional self-development to become a more professional school administrator through a better understanding of the role of the superintendent in a school system. The opportunity that I had to observe and participate in the inner workings of a school system provided me

an inside view of how things work and what happened in a variety of situations. I wanted to explore the theoretical propositions that might help explain the inner workings and allow me to anticipate events or ramifications of choices required in administration as well as informing myself of actions or behaviors that lead to more effective school administration. In addition, I wanted to understand the strategies and tactics that led to the remarkable longevity of the superintendent in PPS.

Inform Superintendents and School Board Members to Improve Practice

I sought to enhance superintendents' knowledge of the importance of the relationship between them and their community and of tactics and strategies that may be effective mechanisms for accomplishing their goals and maintaining their position. Further, I intended to inform school board trustees of the importance of the superintendent selection process and the principles and effects of strategies such as privatization. Finally, the purpose was to inform trustees of the costs to them and the school associated with retaining a superintendent who does not fit the community.

Generalize Knowledge about Dissatisfaction Theory

Through a class in a doctoral program, I learned about Dissatisfaction Theory and observed that it appeared as though it did not match what happened in PPS. I wanted to check the generalized knowledge versus the propositions of Dissatisfaction Theory to see if PPS was an exception or if the theory was applicable to PPS. Testing the propositions would allow me to advance Dissatisfaction Theory by examining this specific case.

Research Tradition

Several research studies used quantitative methods to test hypotheses or propositions regarding Dissatisfaction Theory: Walden (1966), Kirkendall (1966), Thorsted and Mitchell (1976), Lopez (1976), Ledoux and Burlingame (1978), Gaberina

(1978), Simon (1980), Flynn (1984), Rada (1984), Weninger (1987), and Kitchens (1994). However, Alsbury (2001) concluded that because each school district is unique, strictly quantitative measures were not adequate and that a study that utilized qualitative methods would enrich the findings.

Qualitative methods were used because they provided me with data that were “rich in description of people, places and conversations” (Bogdan and Biklin, 1992 p. 2). I learned that the circumstances in PPS were multifaceted and could not be adequately explored and explained through quantitative measures. Qualitative research examines many ever-changing variables and requires research written with a great deal of detail by observing and creating meaning out of the words and actions of others, examining written documents and other artifacts and combining them into a descriptive narrative that teaches others what was learned. Glesne (1999) related that “It [qualitative research] reminds me of a dot-to-dot exercise that I use with my first graders...One dot of information leads me to another dot, and in the end some sort of pattern becomes evident” (p. 15).

This research utilized a field study approach based upon the sociological perspective of the interpretivist paradigm as the research tradition. Glesne (1999) described qualitative research by stating “Qualitative methods are supported by the research tradition of the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (p. 5). Glesne also wrote that “Qualitative inquiry is often used as an umbrella term for various orientations to interpretivist research” (p. 8). As stated by Flowers (2006)

The meanings attached to objects, events, and people do not exist external to the individual to be discovered ‘out there’ but are internally created by human beings. To understand these meanings, the process by which these meanings are

constructed must be understood. It is the intersection between the individual's biography and the social world that needs to be examined if one wants to understand the meanings that contribute to social reality. (p. 21-22)

The multiple perspectives gathered through interviews and participant-observation along with the examination of documents were significant ingredients in revealing information about the research questions.

The challenge of selecting this tradition was determining whether my position as a high level administrator in the District would provide problematic based upon as Scott (1965) stated "...relations between researcher and subject take on increased importance in an organizational study. The effects of relations linking subjects may, however, work to the advantage of the researcher" (p. 262-263). Not only were the subjects linked in this study, but they were also linked to me. My familiarity with the organization, though, was helpful in taking into account the necessity of understanding group culture and how it might impact the behavior of the subjects (1965).

I conducted this research as a participant observer as described by Scott (1965), "[most researchers]...observations in organizations do so in a nonsystematic and unstructured manner-employing an approach commonly called 'participant observation'" (p. 286). Spradley (1980) defined the researcher role as "complete participation" (p. 61). He wrote of the distinct advantages of the observer maintaining a low profile. As a high-level administrator with a high-profile position in the District, it was critical for the researcher to heed Spradley's advice to keep the research as low profile an endeavor as possible.

Conceptual Framework

Dissatisfaction Theory

The review of literature revealed multiple studies that tested hypotheses and propositions that validated Dissatisfaction Theory. The conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory described earlier (Iannaccone and Lutz 1970) explained the cycle of political turmoil that resulted in the replacement of school board members and eventually the superintendent before the school system returned to a period of calm. The political turmoil that became a period of politicization was the result of social, economic, or political changes in a community and the subsequent new expectations for adjustments in the schools to align with what the community wanted.

The diagram and bullet points below (Figure 5) represent the standard flow of events that occur during a period of politicization. However, not all social, economic, or political changes in a community result in the removal of board members and the superintendent; but rather, it depends upon whether the leadership of the school continues to reflect what the community wants from their schools.

The stages include the following:

- Social, economic, or political changes occur in the community
- The groups involved in the changes expect changes in their schools and attempt to alter or influence school policy individually or as special interest groups
- Dissatisfaction results in changes in school policy and the return to quiescence or
- Special interest groups emerge; the number of candidates running for seats on the board and voter turnout increases
- Incumbent school board members are defeated or replaced (TPEP)
- Superintendent is replaced

- New superintendent and board create a new policy mandate
- Final test election, no board members defeated or replaced signify an endorsement of the new policy mandate
- School returns to a period of quiescence.

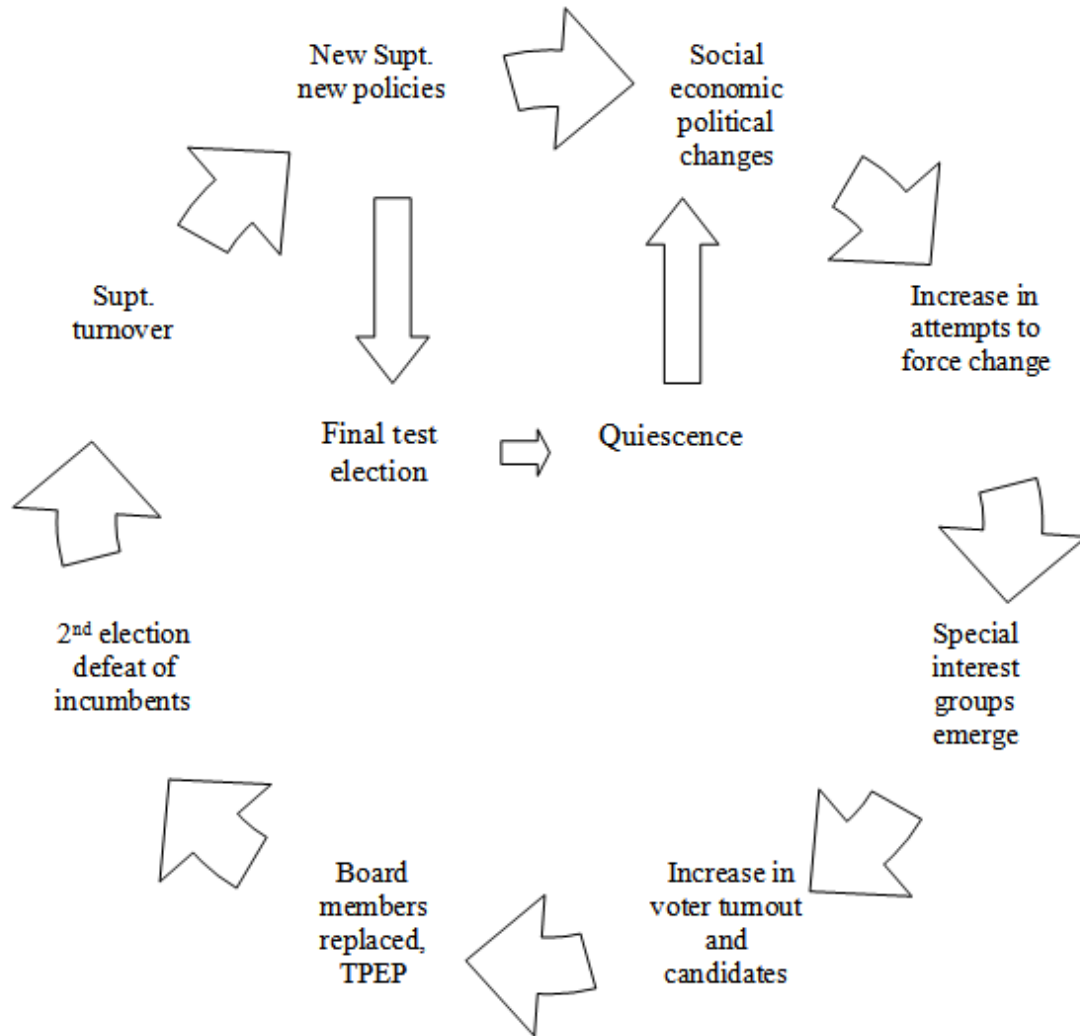


Figure 5: Flow of Events During Politicization

Research Questions

1. In Portage, did the community experience economic, social, or political change, and were school board members replaced?
2. In Portage, did special interest groups emerge?
3. In Portage, did the changes in school board members result in the removal of the superintendent?
4. Did the PPS superintendent adjust school policy when school board members were replaced?
5. Did the PPS superintendent take specific actions to retain his position after the removal of school board members?
6. Did the selection process for the PPS superintendent result in the selection of the candidate that would have been predicted by previous research on Dissatisfaction Theory?
7. Does dissatisfaction reveal itself in institutional, managerial, and technical activities of an organization?
8. What happens in the community if replacing school board members does not result in the removal of the superintendent?
9. Did the propositions to Dissatisfaction Theory hold in PPS or was it the exception to the rule?
10. If the propositions to Dissatisfaction Theory did not hold in PPS, why not?
11. If the propositions to Dissatisfaction Theory did hold in PPS, why did it appear as though it did not?
12. What is the impact on the schools if a superintendent remains in a position but does not fit the values of the community?

Design of the Study

This study examined a single case that appeared to be an exception to Dissatisfaction Theory. By inspecting specific circumstances that resulted in the periods of politicization and what happened after, I sought to determine if the proposition was verifiable. Descriptive studies such as this one, as Scott (1965) stated, “define and portray the characteristics of the object of research or determine the frequency of various occurrences and examine their interrelations” (p. 267). This research also involved a look at this single case. The study allowed me to look deeply into this case with the following limitation as described by Hughes (1956):

The sustained researcher who burrows deeper and deeper into a single situation is faced with the danger of emerging so impressed with the complexity and uniqueness of “the one dear case” that he may have difficulty in thinking abstractly about his materials or in attempting to generalize from them. (p. 90)

The sustained method although it did result in some “infatuation by the uniqueness of the situation” (Scott, 1965 p. 270) also allowed the researcher to observe patterns of activities and interactions and explore this single case in depth (1965).

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The study began with researching who and what was in Portage for 150 years beginning in the 1800s through 2002. The collection of that data brought an understanding of the people and culture that were the underpinnings of the study. The information learned from examining the 150-year period was instrumental in creating a depth and breadth of understanding about where the people came from, what they valued, how demographics changed over time, how new groups who settled in Portage impacted the community and

schools, and how as the tasks (or work) that were the primary means of support for the people in Portage changed it impacted the community and schools.

Data collection involved studying secondary source documents in the form of several books that were written about Portage, Kalamazoo County, and the major employer in the community, the Upjohn Company. Reading those publications provided me with a broad understanding of the cultural and social construction of the environment. The research continued by studying primary source documents about schools in Portage. To better understand the inner workings of the PPS, I examined census figures, demographic information, aerial maps of the area, PPS Board meeting and committee meeting minutes, PPS internal correspondence, newspaper articles, the annual City of Portage survey, and narrated oral histories as told by several former PPS Board Presidents and Superintendents from the archive at the Portage District Library. In addition, I read the Board Minutes from the beginning of the modern schools in 1947 through 2002. The volumes of Board Minutes were useful to understand the workings of the schools and also to gather data about the results of elections, dates of specific events, an official reporting of occurrences, how the Board voted, Board interactions with the public, and as a tool that was useful later to select subjects and develop interview questions. Other primary source documents were studied, including election records, minutes of committee meetings, and information from a variety of files and other communications.

As an employee of PPS beginning in 1997, I was a participant observer, so personal observations became a part of the research. The researcher was present for many significant events that later became part of the data used to evaluate the research questions. Personal observations were also used to select another key component of data collection, interview subjects (informants), and assist in determining who might provide the most

useful information. In addition, as a high level employee of PPS, I was in a position to understand the workings of the organization and how to best access information. The examination of documents and interviews created an information spiral. In addition, multiple individuals who learned of the study approached the researcher with useful information and tips that continued to point toward more contacts and resources that were helpful to the research.

Spradley (1980) defined the researcher role as “complete participation” (p. 61). He wrote of the distinct advantages of the observer maintaining a low profile. As a high-level administrator with a high-profile position in the District, it was critical for me to heed Spradley’s advice to keep the research as a low profile endeavor. As the research progressed and more individuals became aware of the topic, it became ever more difficult to maintain a low profile for the study. However, most informants did not inquire a great deal about the purpose of the research other than to learn that it was related to a doctoral program, so questions revolved more around anticipated completion dates than outcomes. As an observer of the Portage community for the past 30 years, I viewed Portage from multiple perspectives as a member of the community and civic boards. In addition I viewed PPS through the lens of a parent and, had been privy to the inside workings of the school administration and Board as a high school principal and an assistant superintendent. Through those roles in the District, I understood what official documents were available and how to access them and discovered sources of information that may not have been contained in official documents. Therefore, my profile may have been somewhat of a disadvantage but familiarity with the culture of education and of PPS was a distinct advantage. Spradley (1980) emphasized the importance of understanding the culture where research is conducted in order to learn what people know. He stated that level of

understanding is best accomplished by becoming enmeshed in the culture of the organization that is being studied.

Observations and document examination were the core of data collection and were the basis for forming general interview questions with informants. The topical interview questions were constructed to focus on local school district events, issues, or processes in order to gain an understanding of how and what decisions were made. Interview questions became more sophisticated as the data collection continued revealing new strands of information that required follow-up.

Recording information accurately was an essential component of data collection. I both tape recorded and took notes during interviews and later developed transcripts made from the tapes. Once the taped interviews were completed, additional information was recorded in word files and backed up on a secure network and a thumb drive. The initial interview tapes were retained for future reference in a locked file. The number and categories of informants was extensive. More than 20 former or current staff members including administrators, teachers, and secretaries from PPS, three superintendents, 14 current or former Board members, and numerous community members from varying backgrounds, which included city employees, parents, and members of the business community, all contributed relevant information. Information from official documents such as Board Minutes were recorded by which page in the official document books the information could be located on. Information gathered from the Portage District Library were copied when not an infringement of the law and retained in files. Other District Library materials that could not be copied such as aerial photos that measured one meter by one meter were photographed and retained in files. Notes from encounters at informal events were written down as soon afterward as feasible and retained on word files backed

up on storage devices. Some sources of information such as books were purchased and retained in a library of information along with notebooks that contained copies of information that the researcher included in the final research document.

Selection of Informants

The selection of informants was especially important because they were the critical sources of information in an environment where it was important to have access to and understand what was stated publicly and how they may have differed from private interactions. I had the advantage of observing which interview candidates had credibility and were likely to provide rich information most meaningful to the research. Being personally involved in the research was deemed important by Lofland & Lofland (1995), who wrote:

We have exhorted researchers to: (1) collect the richest data possible, (2) achieve intimate familiarity with the setting, (3) engage in face to face interaction so as to participate in the minds of the setting's participants. That is, we have counseled involvement and enmeshment rather than objectivity and distance. (p. 17)

Through familiarity with those who were interviewed, the researcher was in a position to determine which informants might be likely to distort information and to structure interviews accordingly. Simmons (1988) stated, "Self-report data were valuable not only for what was there but for what was left out" (p. 293). Therefore, because insider status provided access to people, documents, and information that would otherwise be difficult to retrieve, I determined the benefits to be an extraordinary advantage for conducting this research. Furthermore, the working relationship provided an opportunity to select subjects with consideration for Miles and Huberman's (1994) advice, "Choices of informants, episodes and interactions are being driven by a conceptual question, not by a

concern for representatives” (p. 29) and Spradley’s (1980), to “...locate informants who do not analyze their own culture from an outsider’s perspective” (p. 54). The informants were used to describe events and circumstances that could not be validated by documents and other sources of information. Whyte (1960) described informants he found most useful this way: “The best informants are those who are in a position to have observed significant events and who are quite perceptive and reflective about them” (p. 358). Scott (1965) wrote that “Interviews with informants are utilized primarily for obtaining their accounts of interpersonal events” (p. 292). The researcher found Scott’s comment to be relevant because it was those conversations that were not otherwise available.

I selected informants who offered the greatest potential for significant, accurate information. Those factors, combined with the personal and professional relationships and the professional trust that had been developed over time, created an openness that allowed for a free exchange of information. The relationship with the informants was critical because as Berg and Smith (1988) wrote, “Research relationships are the vehicles through which the researcher comes to understand a social system” (p. 23) and therefore any research without that relationship would be less complete. The free exchange of information provided multiple opportunities to explore the research in depth. While the conversations with informants and reading Board Minutes and other District documents was an important source of data, it was necessary to look beyond those sources to confirm or clarify what was learned. Because of his position in the District, the informant attended functions with past Board members and school employees. It was at those functions during informal conversations that the researcher would often encounter individuals who, in the course of conversation, would provide information useful to the study. After informing subjects that they had offered a comment that might be useful to this study and acquiring

permission to use the information, I had an additional opportunity to ask questions to clarify and verify data. Often an individual would inquire about the nature of this research and then proceed to eagerly share personal perceptions and memories that were not revealed in official documents. The multitude of background information and the spiral of information that I had already acquired allowed him to ask additional follow-up questions. The information that they revealed often provided leads for new informants and sources of data and therefore contributed to the information spiral that continued to add to the story and expand the data. Each of these interactions also required careful evaluation of the information that was provided.

The interview process and data collection procedures were critical. Glesne (1999) wrote of interviewers, “Clearly some people take to it naturally” and stressed the importance of “...learning how to probe and wait with silence” (p. 80). Throughout this study, I searched for collaborating evidence. Equally important was the necessity for the researcher to examine what appeared to be correct and look for evidence that disconfirmed the perceived truths. The researcher discovered that his experience as a school administrator where he was required to conduct numerous investigations was helpful in the process of probing for information.

Moral, Ethical, and Legal Issues

The researcher weighed the risks associated with conducting the study as a participant observer: personal bias affecting the results, the subjective nature of the study, the possibility of offending members of the community, and a potential for a conflict between his responsibility to the District and the research. The researcher determined that the advantages were significant enough to outweigh the potential negative consequences.

However, the closeness of the researcher to the participants required continuous reflection and self-scrutiny during the study.

The importance of the issue of subjectivity and bias required substantial ongoing self-scrutiny. The self-scrutiny was crucial as new information was revealed during the examination of documents and throughout the interviews. Subjectivity, though, was, according to Glesne (1999), potentially useful when recognized by the researcher and could potentially "...contribute to the research" (p. 105). Glesne wrote:

You learn more about your own values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs. You learn that your subjectivity is the basis for the story that you are able to tell. It is the strength on which you build. It makes you who you are as a person and as a researcher, equipped with the perspective and insights that shape all you do as a researcher. (p. 109)

The research was conducted in an open manner, described in the human subjects review, and approved. The human subjects involved in the research required careful consideration, were selected for their ability to add significant valuable information, were aware of the research, and agreed to participate in the study.

Individuals were informed that their responses were to be used in a dissertation and that I would not use their names. However, many of the informants invited the researcher to use their names along with their comments. In many instances statements included in the research were made in public forums and were public information and, as such, those individuals were not informed about the research or that their comments might be included in this research.

I also considered whether it was appropriate to utilize information gathered when an individual was not selected as an interview candidate but provided input (in a non-

public forum) that served to enhance the research. Those comments were included in the study after receiving their permission. It was critical that the information from this study, as the American Anthropological Association guidelines caution, “does not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom they work, conduct research, or perform other professional activities...” (1998, p. 5). I continually contemplated which information from which sources was appropriate to consider, especially when it involved access to specific information that others in the general public would not have the ability to obtain. In one such example, during the course of carrying out my duties as an assistant superintendent, the researcher came across a file of Closed Board Meeting Minutes. The file included information that confirmed what the researcher had learned through his research and also included new details that would have further enhanced the research. The additional information and the confirmation of several findings from official documents were extremely tempting both to add to the story and to provide additional validity to previously obtained data. There were two obvious conflicts for me: a District policy that minutes from closed meetings were to be held for one year and then destroyed, and, because they were minutes from a closed session, they were not available to the public under the rules of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The question was what could or should the researcher ethically include from the minutes into this study? On one hand it was factual information that was obtained through serendipity as a function of his job; on the other hand, the information should have been destroyed previously and except for human error should have been unavailable. Perhaps more significant, because the information was protected under FOIA, it was intended to be private and out of the public view. Even though they were meeting minutes of the Board that contained verified factual information (the minutes were approved by the Board), I determined that it was

information that should have been disposed of and was protected from public view via FOIA and therefore ethically could not be used in this study. Subsequently, as per District Policy, the files were destroyed by the appropriate person. Although the information was destroyed, it did provide an opportunity for the researcher to confirm the validity of comments made by informants and disconfirm comments made by another so in effect, while the information was not included in the study it did serve a purpose.

Data Analysis

According to Glesne (1999), data analysis involves “organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p. 130). I used Glesne’s advice to “Consistently reflect on your data, work to organize them, and try to discover what they have to tell you” (p. 130). This process led me to compare the data that described the events that occurred in Portage to the conceptual framework. The data were then used to inform the conceptual framework, which, in turn, was used to give meaning to the data. The iterative process formed a spiral of information. As I examined the steps of dissatisfaction and the events that occurred in Portage, I discovered new information that added to the conceptual framework. The magnitude of information was a contributing factor in the length of time that was required to complete the study. Much like a child consuming a mammoth multi-colored jawbreaker, as each new layer of information melted away, I examined what was there before proceeding to the next layer. The examinations required further exploration of what was observed and learned to clarify the data, thus the interactions. The process included corroborating what appeared in each layer, determining how useful it was to the data, and then either discarding it or connecting it together within the matrix of the research.

I used critical analysis to make adjustments in the study and create general views. Reflecting on the general views created a spiral that provided more specific thoughts and then placed them into the data verification procedures. These thoughts were shared with peers, translated and organized with previously collected data, and then spiraled into volumes of notes, files, and documents that eventually comprised the final product. Using these data validation procedures, I looked for patterns of responses from informants, official documents, and observations that Wolcott (1994) referred to as identifying patterned regularities (Creswell, 1997). Further, I relied on what Dey (1995) termed the three I's: insight, intuition, and impression.

Over time the quantity of information and the variety of sources became extensive and a part of the ever-expanding spiral of information that served to validate or invalidate the data. Eisenhart and Howe (1992) referred to Denzin's (1989) writings when they wrote:

Analytic induction requires that a researcher consider every piece of data before inferring causality. Support for (read: the validity of) the inferences advanced is strengthened by demonstrations that the researchers have searched for data expected to severely test or negate inferences and that the researchers' emerging inferences accommodate, explain, or account for the variations discovered. (p. 646)

The process of recording and analyzing the research resembled Creswell's (1999) model of a Data Analysis Spiral. The model depicts qualitative research in "analytic circles" [instead of a] "fixed linear approach" (p. 142) where data such as interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed and then emerged as a narrative. The narrative included other artifacts, tables, and diagrams that described the findings. Then after data were collected, investigated, checked and confirmed, it was interpreted and then used to

spiral more questions and research until finally it was sufficient to answer the research questions.

The data analysis began immediately after first data were collected and continued through the final rewrites. While reading the primary and secondary source documents described earlier I collected notes and marked the documents so that the items that seemed relevant or that might be useful could easily be accessed later. The notes included questions that needed further clarification. Each new piece of information was compared with what was already known, and then the researcher determined if it was relevant to the study. Based upon information gathered from informants, questions for interviews were modified to seek deeper meaning. Several informants were also able to point me in the proper direction to locate relevant documents and additional sources of information. In addition, occasionally individuals who were not selected as informants would, in the course of professional duties, make a comment that provided me an opportunity to check previously gathered data against a new-found source and provide another occasion to search for disconfirming evidence to previous findings. In addition, the new sources of information were useful in providing for the triangulation of data.

An unanticipated benefit of the extended time it took to complete the study was the opportunity for the researcher to continually broaden the informant base who added beneficial information and who were also useful in verifying previously collected data. Over time, data that seemed relevant and important in the beginning became less important as the researcher refined the focus of the research and better understood the results.

The multitude of design factors described earlier moved the research toward comprehending the information most critical to interpret the specifics of the study (Stake, 1995).

Verification

Data collection involved eight verification procedures described by Creswell (1997, pp. 201-203). These included

1. Prolonged observation to learn the culture, gain trust, and follow multiple leads
2. Triangulation that uses multiple sources, multiple perspectives, and multiple groups of data
3. Peer review from external sources for input on the work
4. Negative case analysis or the search for disconfirming evidence in order to test the conclusions against exceptions
5. Clarification of researcher bias so the reader can use that information in helping determine the usefulness of the work for them
6. Member checking by soliciting the informants views of the credibility of the findings
7. Rich, thick descriptions that provide the reader with detailed description that will assist them with understanding to allow for possible transferability
8. External audits by looking at field notes, listening to tapes, reading journals and checking data to provide inter-rater reliability to the study.

The “how” of the eight verification procedures was critical to later validating the results of the research. As mentioned earlier, my length of service to the District and years in the community were important to verifying the research. As the research continued, the number of years the study encompassed contributed to the ability to verify the research because through time, new sources of information regularly became apparent. The availability of so many official and unofficial internal documents and informants, as well as years of personal and professional observations, was important to verifying information.

Multiple colleagues were willing to provide their services to read documents and provide input to the researcher about the study. The researcher was fortunate to have access to so many individuals who were involved in the District and community during the period of time that constituted the major focus of this study. They proved to be not only valuable for verification but also to point me in the direction of information valuable for data collection and verification. The same dynamic allowed for multiple opportunities to check for disconfirming evidence. The informants and others in the District were almost eager to confirm aspects of the story as presented to them. Typically the individual would contribute additional information from what was presented, which, in turn, required additional verification. As the study was pared down through several iterations, it required repeated reference to data in the form of notes, tapes, and documents as well as asking others about how they interpreted certain information.

The information spiral was useful not only in data analysis but also because each new piece of data provided an opportunity for the researcher to look for disconfirming evidence as a means of severely testing information. When new data were gathered, they were compared with previous information. I looked for inconsistencies in the information and analyzed the differences, asking questions such as: “Why was this person the first to mention this? Which information was correct and how shall that be determined? Was the informant’s perception accurate or did he or she have information that no one else would have? Was this individual in a position to observe what others could not? Was the previously gathered information a result of urban legend or a myth and the new information the ‘real’ story? Was the informant distorting the facts? Did the informant have a reason to provide inaccurate information? If previously gathered information was incorrect or misleading, why was it provided and what did that mean? Was the new

information consistent with what was found in other documents? Did the new information make sense? Was the information relevant? Was the informant recounting how they believe events should have been versus how they actually were?" These factors allowed the researcher to ferret out information that would inhibit the authenticity of the data analysis.

Reliability and Validity

My ability to conduct a study that was authentic and trustworthy determined the legitimacy of the work. The core of determining reliability is the ability of someone to replicate the work that the researcher completed. In other words, could someone audit what I had done?

Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote, "The underlying issue here is whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods" (p. 278). The detailed descriptions of the methods and procedures that were used to gather data, as well as the self-disclosure by me about my role in the organization, revealed how the research could be replicated. The connection between the research design and theoretical research paradigms, as well as the multiple verifiable sources of data, substantiated the reliability of the study.

The researcher questioned who the research would be useful for and whether the study would be internally and/or externally valid. Miles and Huberman (1994) lumped internal validity, credibility and authenticity together. They asked if the study made sense, was it credible to others, and was the study a clear look, authentic, of what was being studied. They cited Maxwell's (1992) work as important to consider and helpful for them when they wrote:

[Maxwell's] thoughtful review distinguishes among the types of *understandings* [emphasis added] that may emerge from a qualitative study: descriptive (what happened in specific situations); interpretive (what it meant to the people involved); theoretical (concepts, and their relationships, used to explain actions and meanings); and evaluative (judgments of the worth or value of actions and meanings). (p. 278)

I knew that the findings of the study were accurate and made sense for the context in which it was studied. The concepts had clear reference within empirical data in the reality of Portage. The relationships between the steps of Dissatisfaction Theory were accurate for the community of Portage. The research provided a high degree of what Goetz and LeCompte (1984) defined as an important component for internal validity, "authentic representations of some reality" (p. 210). Other researchers could have another understanding of the meaning of various data and their impact on what happened in Portage; however, their alternate interpretations would not make the findings of this study invalid.

The second variation is whether or not the research provided external validity. The question of whether this study could be generalized to another setting in other communities can be answered two ways. This study is not generalizable at the empirical level because each community is unique. However, the analytic generalizability in that the conceptual theoretical framework of Dissatisfaction Theory did apply to Portage, and therefore the framework itself is analytically generalizable elsewhere. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) wrote: "External validity refers to the degree to which such representations [authentic representations of some reality] can be compared legitimately across groups" (p.210). This

study fit what Firestone (1987) described as theory-connected or analytic generalization. Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to the work of Maxwell (1992),

[Maxwell] concluded that theoretical validity and the abstract explanation of described actions and interpreted meanings [that] gain added power if they are connected to theoretical networks beyond the immediate study. Generalizability, he suggests, requires such connection-making, either to unstudied parts of the original case or to other cases. (p. 279).

This study demonstrated connections to other studies conducted with the analytic framework of Dissatisfaction Theory and the discovery of new information that added to the body of knowledge surrounding the theory. The study did “inform and improve educational practice” and had a worthwhile connection to external audiences that confirmed its external validity.

Summary

I was confident that the mixture of methods to check and validate the information cited in this chapter provided data that were reliable. The data that were verifiable through public documents and those which were verified by me through interviews and observation combined to form broad and deep data that were utilized for analysis. The data were given meaning through interpretive data analysis driven by the analytic framework of Dissatisfaction Theory. Official records were used to confirm information provided by the informants. Details provided by the multitude of informants were compared and when inconsistencies were detected, they were pursued to a logical conclusion to either confirm or disconfirm information. The informant pool was broad and deep. Many informants were primary contributors to decisions and I was able to compare their recollections through the

triangulation of data between a combination of informants, official documents, and observable behaviors. In addition, the perceptions shared by informants were used to formulate questions for other stakeholders involved, which, in turn, spiraled continuously into more valuable, verifiable, information.

The variety of methods for data collection and verification, referred to by Miles and Huberman (1994) as “the convergence of data gathered by different methods” (p. 97), resulted in data that I analyzed and verified. The manner in which data were gathered used several methods. As Warwick (1973) stated, “Every method of data collection is only an approximation to knowledge. Each provides a different and usually valid glimpse of reality, and all are limited when used alone” (p. 190). For the purpose of providing as many “glimpses as possible,” this research followed many paths and pursued many different angles, creating the spiral of information that in turn led to ever more glimpses until it culminated as this research. This, however, is not the end of the story but rather a contribution to what Vidich and Bensman (1968) stated: “At best [the researcher] ...can feel he has advanced his problem along an infinite path...[to which] there is no final accumulation and no final solution” (p. 396). This study has included a large amount of data that have been verified by the variety of methods described earlier. The design of this study resulted in advancing the problem through the description and analysis of what happened in Portage looked at through the analytical framework of Dissatisfaction Theory. I believe that through the verification of information presented here, it can reasonably be concluded that the findings in this study are accurate and valid.

CHAPTER 4: PORTAGE THROUGH THE YEARS

The Early Years

Information about the early years of the Portage area are based upon the artifacts that they left behind. According to Massie (2006), the areas history can be traced back thousands of years. He wrote that:

Notched projectile points document the Early Archaic Indian presence some 9,000 years ago...By 5,000 B.C. Indians of the Late Archaic culture leave behind distinctive 'turkey tail' spear heads, banner stones and mysterious bird stones...Members of the Early Woodland culture construct conical earthen burial mounds and mold broad-mouthed pottery containers beginning 2,500 years ago...Four to five hundred years later they have been supplanted by the Hopewell Indians, mound builders who bring to the area elaborate ceremonial motifs, finely wrought grave offerings and the first agricultural traditions. By 800 A.D. the Late Woodland period ...an era of dramatic cultural diversity that contributes effigy mounds, stone pipes and distinctive pottery (p.11).

Massie (2006) wrote about archeological finds in an area of Portage named Indian Fields that is now the location of an International airport, about "garden beds [that resembled] formal flower gardens that wealthy European horticulturalists once laid out on their estates" (p. 11). The origin of the garden beds was explored by archaeologists that could not agree on their purpose but resulted in speculation as Massie wrote, "Some archaeologists continue to advocate an agricultural use, others a ceremonial function. One reputable scholar suggested in 1957 that the beds were a hunting aid over which bison stumbled" (p. 14).

The first written records were of French and other Europeans inhabitants who came to the area for furs and fought wars over them (Massie, 2006). Beginning in the 17th century and for the next two hundred years, the transient explorers, fur traders, missionaries, and voyageurs-described by Massie as “devil-may-care French Canadians, often with Indian blood” (p. 15), crisscrossed the area. Eventually the Potawatomi Indians arrived in Southwestern Michigan and the Portage area. In 1805 Michigan was established as a territory and the Potawatomi were in possession of the land (Massie & Schmitt, 1998). The Potawatomi formed several villages, including those in Saint Joseph, Prairie Ronde, and Pokagon (Sultzman, 1998). Potts (1976) wrote:

We know that the Potawatomi Indians roamed all through southwestern Michigan and that they were related to the Ottawas and Chippewas farther north. It is believed that they were all descended from the Algonquin tribe which inhabited large areas of New York State and Canada. We know that Portage Township was one of their favorite spots. (p. 11)

The Portage area contained six lakes: Austin, West, Gourdneck, Sugarloaf, Hampton and Long, all connected by streams and eventually the St. Joseph River. The Portage Creek flows north and connects with the Kalamazoo River. Surrounding parts of the lakes and along Portage Creek were numerous acres of marshland. Forty-five miles to the west of Portage is Lake Michigan. The prevailing westerly winds created lake effect rain and snow, both of which contributed to the lush landscape. Because the water flowed two ways, in the southern portions of the area south into the St. Joseph River and in the northern portions north into the Kalamazoo River, the Portage area was ideal for travel via waterway. The Potawatomis used the vast water resources for the travel, but in order to do so, it required them to carry their canoe or flatboat from waterway to waterway, thus the

name “Portage.” In addition to travel by water, the Potawatomi also developed several prominent trails through the area that ran north to south and connected to east to west trails. In the south, the Sauk Trail connected what later became Detroit and Chicago and in the north the Potawatomi Trail. The trails that followed the north and south routes were each about a mile apart and wound around the swamps so prevalent in the area (Figure 1). One of them passed through the local Potawatomi village named Indian Fields (Potts, 1976).

The Potawatomi trapped animals in the winter and transported them to Saint Joseph where they were traded the pelts for material items such as tools, cloth, beads and firewater. They used the meat for food immediately or preserved it for eating later. In the summer months, they moved to locations on the prairies yet close to swamps. They planted crops on the prairies, wove baskets from the rushes along the rivers, and picked berries from the swampy areas. The braves paddled down the river to the Lake Michigan (or as the Native Americans called it, Mishigam) and caught fish, paddling back up stream in the fall in time to pick the harvest (Potts, 1976). Later in the fall, they would move to another camp where they would spend the winter trapping until the next spring.

Although the Potawatomi undoubtedly taught their children their customs, culture, and methods of survival, they did not participate in formal schooling.

After the War of 1812 ended in 1814, the U.S. government signed treaties with several Native American tribes so that they could sell the land to pay off war debts. One such treaty with the Potawatomi, signed in 1817 by Territorial Governor Lewis Cass, made the U.S. Government the owner of the land in Portage (Potts, 1976). The Native Americans continued to live on the land and “it is doubtful if the Indians raising their corn and other food on the Indian Field even realized that according to the treaty they were on American

government land” (Potts, p. 13). Because land to the Native Americans was like air, something that could not be owned because it belonged to nature, the statement is likely true.

The Potawatomi were not connected via a central organization. Sultzman (1998) described their governance this way:

The Potawatomi followed the Ojibwe pattern of tribal identity with little central political organization. The independent bands were bound to each other by a common language and a shared clan system which cut across band lines. Although their political structure was not what Europeans expected, it functioned quite well, and Potawatomi bands rarely fought each other and could cooperate when the situation required. However, it created problems for the Americans in negotiations. Separate treaties were needed with each band, and before they were finished, the Potawatomi had signed forty-two separate documents with the United States. (p. 6)

The leader of the independent band of Potawatomi in the Portage area was Chief Pokagon. The Chief was influential enough that he was invited to Washington to confer on issues with the government and Potawatomi (Sultzman, 1998). Chief Pokagon was described by Potts (1976) this way:

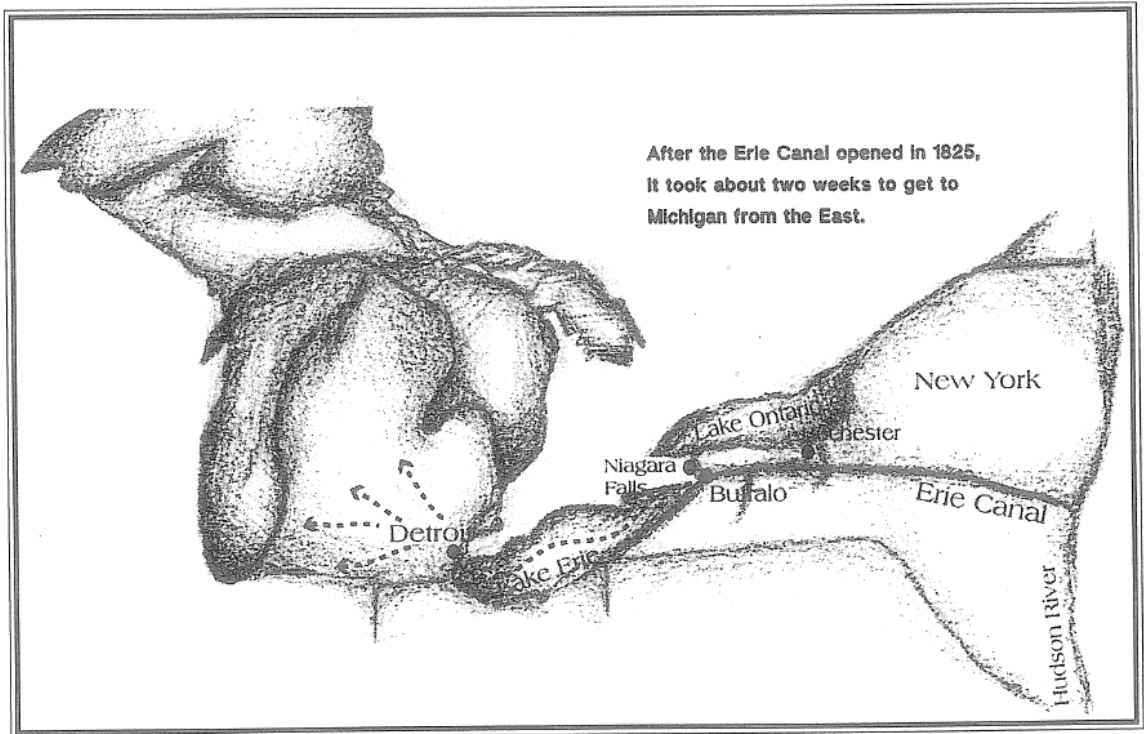
Chief Pokagon from near White Pigeon is said to have been a frequent visitor [in Portage] and had a special regard for some of the early settlers. He and a small group of the Potawatomi were so well thought of that in 1840 when hundreds of them were deported farther west he and his group were allowed to stay in Michigan. (p. 14)

1833-Yankee Settlers Arrive

The first white settlers arrived in the Portage area in the early 1830s from northern New York when the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 provided a greater opportunity for westward migration. Portage was located in southwest Michigan, just over 100 miles west of Detroit and 100 miles east of Chicago. It was nearly the geographic center between these two major metropolitan areas. Kalamazoo bordered Portage to the north, and fifty miles further to the north was the city of Grand Rapids.

The migration of settlers was described by Elazar (1994) as “cultural streams” and as the “geology of human settlement” and that each migrational stream possessed “unique cultural characteristics” (p. 215). He described the streams that flowed through New York, Northern Ohio, Michigan, and westward this way: “The Yankee subculture originated in New England and was based on Puritanism, with its emphasis on individual enterprise within the context of an organized and powerful community” (p. 216). The Yankees who settled in Portage Township were Protestants, specifically Methodist. As Elazar described the “Yankee current,” the majority of the settlers came from New York State and “...moved into the states of the upper Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley. There they established a greater New England in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa” (p. 241). Potts (1976) wrote:

It seems that when word traveled back East about the beauty of the landscape, the productiveness of the soil and the cheapness of the land, several were anxious to sell their farms and join their former friends. Some of them came to see the place for themselves; others instructed their friends to buy the land for them. (p. 22)



Michigan History for Kids, 2001

Figure 6: Erie Canal Opens Michigan to Settlers

The portion of the Yankee current described by Elazar that ended up in Portage came from the State of New York, specifically Genesee and Canandaigua Counties (Potts, 1976). Elazar explained the phenomena of friends and family following others this way:

By and large, people who intended to settle permanently in the West moved in family groups. These families groups, whether they originated in other parts of the United States or overseas, generally moved with other families from the same place of origin and with similar interests and attachments. Whether this movement took the form of formal colonization in which a group of families would actually form a colonization company to promote the settlement of a particular site, or whether it was simply a matter of friends attracting other friends in a less systematic manner, settlements usually developed along relatively homogeneous lines in their early stages. From then on it was often a matter of like following like. (1994, p. 218)

The Yankees were hard working people, who most always had a tremendous excursion just to arrive in the area. A description of the journey was provided by Moses Austin, one of the first Yankees in Portage and purported to be the man who named the community (Potts, 1976). He described the trip from New York to Portage Township like this:

The trip of the party from New York had been an exciting one, especially for the youth. They made their way through the 'Cattaraugus Swamp,' and at Dunkirk embarked on the steamer 'Sheldon Thompson' – the first the junior member of the trio had ever boarded. In due time they reached Detroit, and then the real difficulties of the journey began. They had brought along a team of their own, and started with it toward the setting sun; and, indeed, it seemed the sun would set upon their career as emigrants, and leave them fast in the mud of Eastern Michigan. The 'going' from Detroit to Ypsilanti was fearful beyond description; seas of mud disrupted their advance everywhere; but finally the distance was passed between the two points, and from Ypsilanti westward they bowled along at the rate of thirty or forty miles a day, through woods and openings, and across streams and prairies, reaching the embryo city of Kalamazoo on the day previously stated. According to B.M. Austin's recollection, the place then contained about a dozen houses. (Potts, p. 19)

Many early settlers told similar stories of their journey. Some arrived in the area alone, built shelters, and then returned for their families. The only way west for settlers was to travel the Sauk or Potawatomi Trails. By 1830 those two Native American trails had been renamed by the Yankees, the Territorial Road on the north and the Chicago Road

on the south. These two main paths to the area were often described as “mud roads” (Potts, p.20).

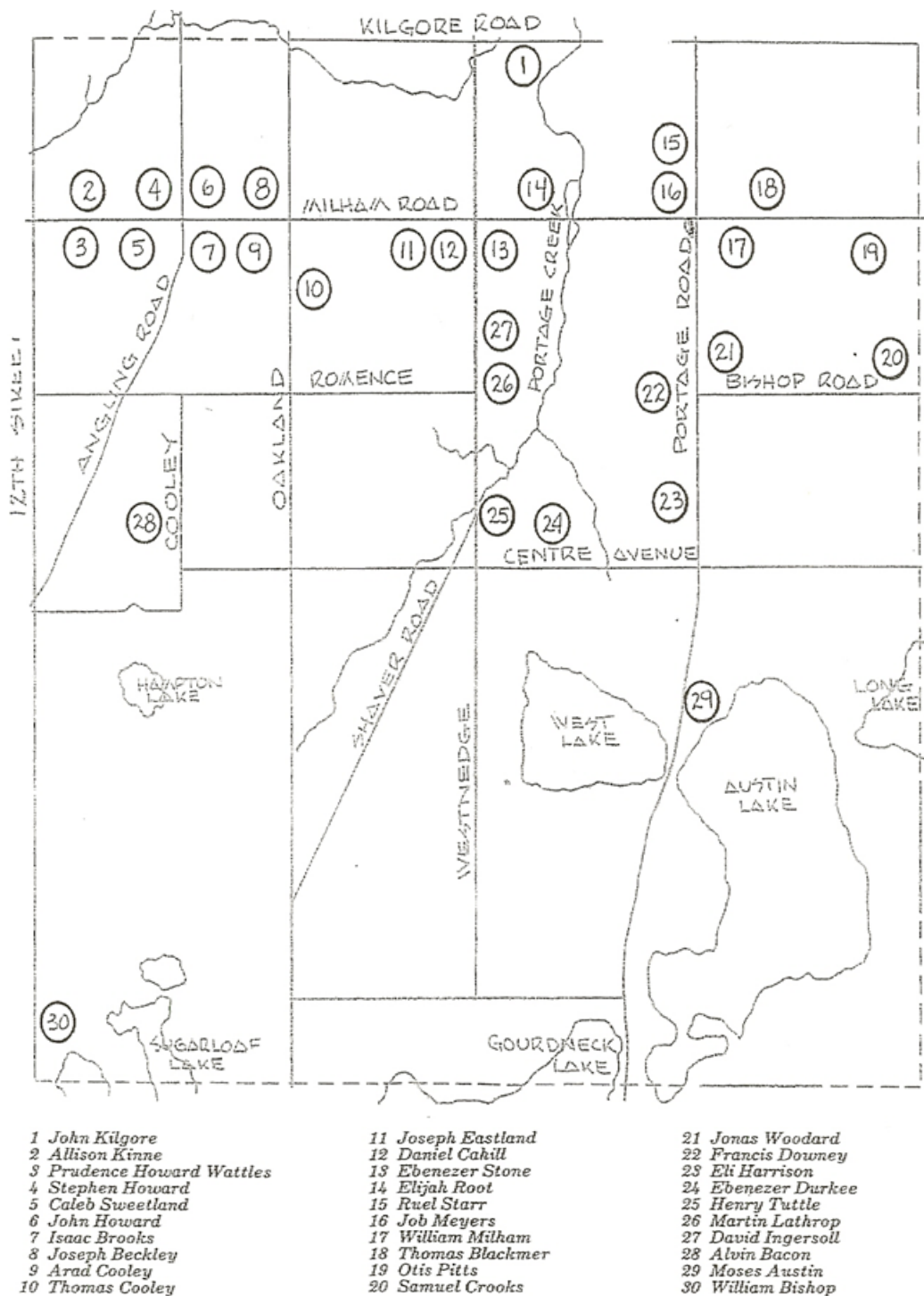


Figure 7: Earliest Portage Settlers

Yankee Settlers Create Schools

The Yankees' first schools were started in the homes of Elijah Root and Caleb Sweetland in 1833 (Potts, 1976). The first teacher was hired from Vermont. Within a year a small rustic school was built and soon after another. Potts described these first schools:

There were no blackboards in those early schools: a crude wood-burning stove supplied the heat; and the rough floor was swept by the teacher everyday with a rush broom. The children supplied their own slate and slate pencil and bought their own readers. The older students were required to furnish their own copy books. (1976, p. 65)

The schools initially were funded through money from the State Primary Fund. The level of funding was insufficient to operate a school and therefore required supplementing. The schools used a rate system to supplement the fund. "Each family would pay a prorated amount per pupil and contribute a fair share of wood to heat the school. The wood was to be cut and neatly stacked by mid-November" (Potts, 1976, p. 66). Winter was when schools were in session because it did not conflict with the majority of work in the agrarian economy. Students attended for five and one half days a week and for a duration of three to four months. The District school instruction ended at grade eight; therefore students who continued into high school applied for admission at the high school in Kalamazoo on a tuition basis.

Community

The Yankees tamed the terrain and the elements and dominated the economics and jobs in Portage Township. The winds off Lake Michigan, cooled by winter ice

accumulation, delayed the spring growing season, reducing the likelihood of frost damage on crops. In the fall, wind off the lake, heated by the warmth of summer, protected the

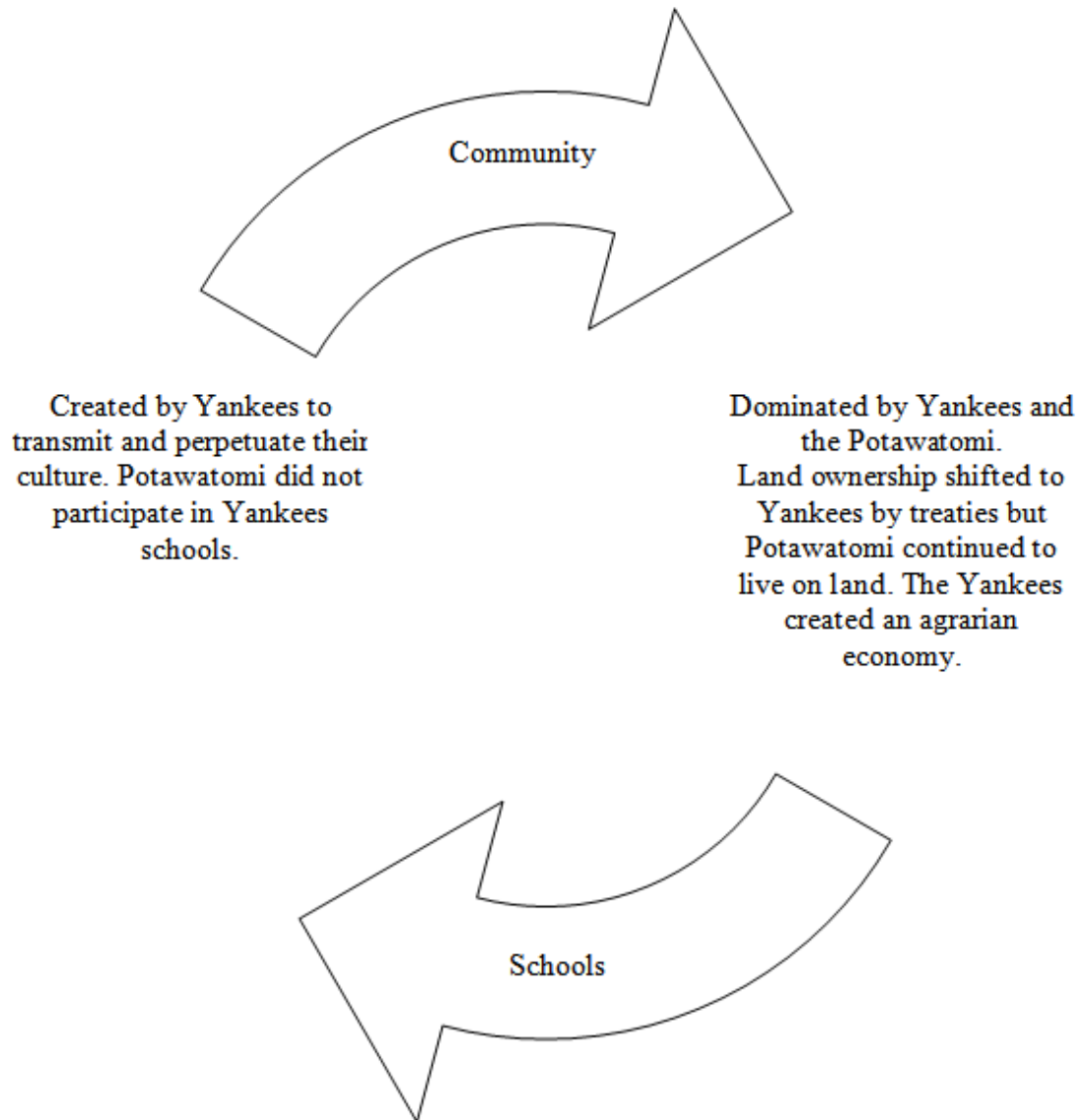


Figure 8: Yankees Arrive and Create Schools

crops from damaging early frosts and extended the growing season. Those conditions proved exceptional for their primary task, agriculture. The farms raised corn, wheat, and livestock, mostly sheep. The farmers also demonstrated a tendency toward new ventures

and developed several new businesses. An example was Elijah Root, who constructed a sawmill on Portage Creek in the 1830s (Potts, 1976). Beginning then, homes built in Portage Township were not log cabins; instead, they were frame construction. Other members of the Yankee settlers opened businesses too. Thomas and Arad Cooley bought and improved a gristmill, and the Lathrop family opened “a sizeable hotel in the middle of the township on what is now called Westnedge Avenue” (Potts, 1976, p. 21). The Dunham family opened the first nursery. In terms of livestock farms, sheep were the most prevalent animals raised in Portage. Another farmer, William Cobb, took advantage of the plentiful local supply of sheep. He purchased wool from other farmers and shipped it by railroad to mills. Leroy Cahill operated a pig farm, but he also opened a plow factory in Kalamazoo that sold over 75,000 plows (Potts, p. 43). Cahill also was a “Director of the Cone Coupler Carriage company, the Chicago, Kalamazoo and Saginaw Railway company, the First National Bank and was president of the Electric Light company” (p. 44). The Austin family owned a tavern, and one son, Benjamin, ran a dry goods store and did a “thriving business manufacturing Jackson Wagons” (p. 22). He sold to local farmers and shipped others out of state. Five farmers joined with three other individuals and formed the Kalamazoo County Farmers Mutual Insurance company. The company grew to 8,850 policyholders and eventually “Richard Sykes...because of the pressure of the business sold his farm to devote full time to the company” (p. 45).

After Michigan became a state in 1837, the Yankees established their local governance in 1838 when they met at the home of Moses Austin. Potts (1976) wrote, “Apparently all participants were in full agreement [about forming a township] with Austin’s proposal. Even his suggestion of naming the new township ‘Portage’ had their approval” (p. 101). The request was approved by the state legislature and the first meeting

of the new township was held at the home of Elijah Root. Potts wrote this about the first meeting:

Perhaps conditions were a bit crowded, for after electing Moses Austin chairman and Caleb Sweetland clerk they moved on to Ebenezer Stone's tavern about ten rods farther west. After electing officers the citizens of the new township of Portage proceeded to take care of the problems facing them...they turned their attention to a never ending problem of early rural life, damage to property by animals. Wolves drew a bounty of five dollars each but domestic animals were also a source of destruction [so] a strict law was enacted which stipulated that all fences must be four and one half feet high with no more than four inches between the rails. (p. 101)

At that same meeting they appointed people to monitor the condition of the fences. Additional laws were enacted to address recourse for farmers who had stray animals outside of their fences. Fines were assessed and eventually brands were issued so that farm animals could be identified.

1840-Yankees Expand

By 1840, "Some of the Indians had become a nuisance to the pioneers" (Potts, p. 14). The Native Americans continued to use the property as always, but eventually this led to conflicts between the pioneers and the Native Americans. Potts described the situation this way:

Not accustomed to the ways of the pioneers and not understanding the treaty and ownership of property, they continued using the land as in former days. This led to a good deal of trouble between the two groups. When valuable animals disappeared or hunting braves overran new plowed fields, there was considerable

objection by the pioneers. So the Indians were sent to new lands in Wisconsin and Iowa. As they gathered on the banks of the Kalamazoo River to start the long journey west, there was a great deal of wailing and rebellion. There was much hardship along the way and many died. Others escaped and found their way back to Michigan. (Potts, p. 14)

Schmitt (1998) quoted George Torrey, a resident of the area in 1840 when he wrote, “Whatever may be said as to the justice of the act [removal of the Potawatomi], there is no doubt but their removal was devoutly wished for by the whites” (p. 34). It is likely that Torrey was correct: the early pioneers moved to the area to create a community that reflected the values of the Yankees, not those of the Potawatomi.

After the removal of the Potawatomi, the Yankees continued to develop the area. The trails that the Potawatomi had developed were given names and developed as roads. The eastern most north-and-south trail was named Portage Road, about a mile to the west another north-south trail was named Westnedge, and a third trail about another mile west was named Oakland. The new roads continued north and intersected other trails developed by the Potawatomi and renamed by the residents of Kalamazoo. The Yankees also began to open more businesses such as a grocery, post office, general store, sawmill, gristmill, and a hotel. Church services were held at four different district schools. Not surprisingly, their church congregations consisted of the same families that attended the school (Potts, 1976).

Peasants Arrive

A financial depression struck the United States and Europe in 1837. In search of jobs and other freedoms in the new world, European peasants immigrated to the United States. When they arrived in New York late in the 1830s they discovered the lack of jobs

due to the depression, which forced them west in the search of employment. Their migration was described by Elazar (1994) this way:

These groups arrived from Europe, mainly during the nineteenth century, and have had to be integrated into the three primary subcultures [Yankee subculture in Michigan]. They effectively formed themselves into nine 'European streams.' The settlement and migration of these groups can be viewed as laid on top of, fitted to, and affected by the bedrock of the three broader subcultures. (p. 217)

In the 1840s the first stream of peasant immigrants arrived in Portage Township and were hired as laborers. The township was a small portion prairie while another portion was lakes and swamps; the largest area was nearly three-fourths hardwood forest (Potts, 1976), and the farmers in Portage Township were in need of workers to clear their land. Potts described Portage Township during the depression this way:

Many of the immigrants of the 1830's and 1840's found their way west. A goodly number of them became hired men and worked hard to help clear the farms owned by the early pioneers. They were used to hard work, knew how to handle animals and were willing to work for small wages. The food was plentiful, if not varied. They had adequate lodging and were able to save what they made. Salaries were about \$7.00 or \$8.00 a month plus room and board. The married ones often occupied the log cabins abandoned by the owners after they built their own frame dwellings. Therefore, in spite of the panic [depression] and with hard and frugal living, Portage Township began to grow and prosper. (1976, p. 21)

The new peasant immigrants found a steady wage and were able to work year-round by hauling timber to the sawmill during the winter months (Potts, 1976). The peasants did not become land or business owners. The early school records included only the names of the

Yankees; therefore, it did not appear as though the children of the peasants attended school. They also lacked the means to create their own schools. The peasants were welcome in the area due to their contribution of hard work at a cheap rate that assisted the Yankees to build their dreams.

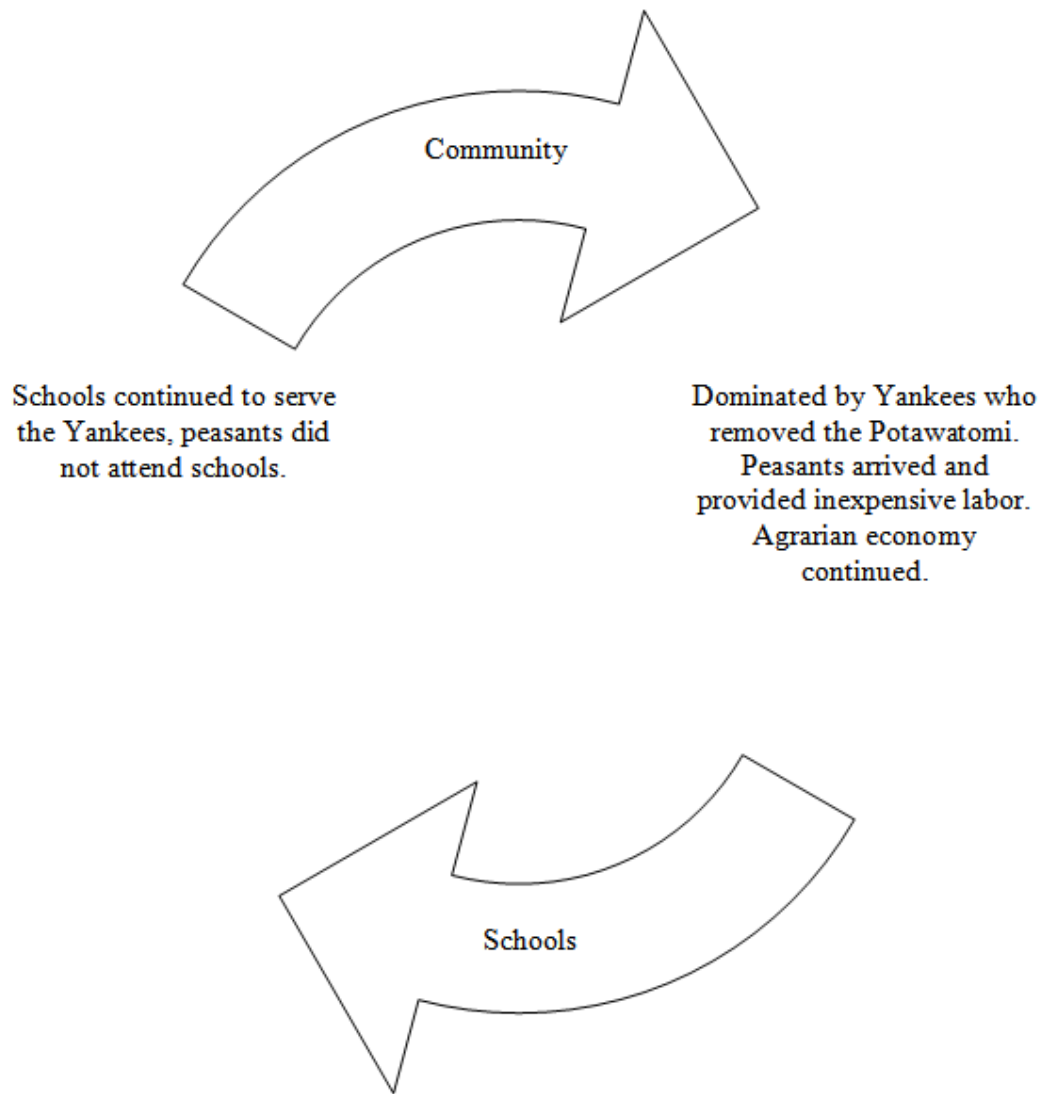


Figure 9: Potawatomi Removed, Peasants enter Community

As the Yankees became established, they began to raise their families and their children married their neighbor's children, forming a myriad of interconnecting family trees. Potts described one family and how they married:

Pioneer John E. Howard had brought his seven children with him when he moved to Portage. Of these children Stephen, Rossiter and Prudence seem to have been the most prominent in Portage history. Stephen and his neighbor Allison Kinne were related by their marriage to sisters. Stephen's daughter, Harriet, married Isaac Brooks' son, Albert; Stephen's son, George, married Pearlle Prouty; and Isaac Brooks' other son, Henry, married Galeta Prouty. Rossiter Howard lived on the farm in Section 5 also occupied by his father, John; and Prudence Howard Wattles and her sons lived on sizeable farms in Section 7. When Stephen Howard passed away, his daughter, Amanda, continued to occupy the brick home he had built in 1859. Allison Kinne's son, Henry, continued to live on the Kinne farm (p. 19).

According to the census in 1850, "There were 120 families living in Portage Township [including] seven carpenters, three blacksmiths and a bricklayer" (p. 22). A map of Portage Township (Figure 4) indicated most of the earliest settlers were in the northern half of the county. They lived in close proximity to each other, married endogamously, sustained the normal pattern of religious attachment, and continued to exhibit behaviors common in American culture.

1885-1945: Dutch Relocate and Combine with the Yankees

The Dutch, immigrants from Holland, first arrived in West Michigan in 1847 with Dr. A. C. Van Raalte, a secessionist pastor. The pastor, along with 53 other Hollanders, arrived in the United States the previous year and settled in the Grand Rapids area. After arriving and staying several years in Grand Rapids, eventually in 1885 ten members of the

group moved south into Portage. The Yankees sold them their marshland along Centre Street, Westnedge Avenue, and Schuring Road, which was of little value to a traditional farmer but perfect to grow celery. Celery farms required only three to five acres so the limited property within Portage Township fit the needs of the new farmers. Before it could be used for growing celery, the marshland had to be drained by digging ditches ten to fifteen feet apart, and because of the wet swampland, the work all had to be done by hand. In addition, a greenhouse had to be built to sprout the seeds necessary for planting. The 200 celery growers in the Kalamazoo area controlled the national celery market. Eventually, the farmers began to use their greenhouses to grow other plants when they were not being used for celery. Ultimately as the Yankees sold the Dutch their property, the two populations merged. Elazar (1994) wrote about the relatively minor differences of the European groups this way:

The truth is, most of them had little that was distinctively ethnic to hang on to. A few foods, shared myths, and their own historical experiences in the United States did not add up to cultural differentiation in any significant way. (p. 213)

Both the Yankees and Dutch came from the moralistic political culture. Both groups were conservative with strong religious preferences. Their churches served to reinforce what they valued and created social situations for their respective groups. By combining their social interactions, the two groups were assimilated. Eventually the integration of the cultures resulted in new generations of combined Yankee and Dutch offspring.

After the turn of the century, the Yankees and the Dutch continued to dominate the Portage area. The two groups used schools as a place to conduct church services, the Reformed Church in the morning and the Methodists in the afternoon. In 1902 two of the

District school congregations built a Methodist Church; then in 1903, a new Reformed Church pastor arrived and they began to build a parsonage and a sanctuary. The two churches were constructed less than a block apart (Potts, 1976). They also developed several businesses, the Dutch their celery-related enterprises but also more general merchandise stores, grocery stores, hardware stores, and eventually, as automobiles came of age, a service station (Potts, 1976).

After 1900 the Kalamazoo area became a Mecca for the paper industry with the “world’s largest concentration of paper mills” (Massie & Schmitt, 1998 p. 142). According to Massie & Schmitt, “By World War I Kalamazoo had become the largest paper-producing area in the United States. Fully one-half of the city’s labor force found employment in paper and allied industries” (p. 149). The economy of Portage continued to be dominated by agricultural interests aided by the industrialization and population increases of Kalamazoo, its contiguous neighbor, that presented a growing market for agricultural products. Perhaps more importantly, the industry in Kalamazoo required a system of distribution that the farmers in Portage used to ship their products to larger markets in Chicago and Detroit (Potts, 1976). When the Great Depression arrived in the 1930s Portage suffered but, due to its agricultural base, not as severely as industrialized cities. The invasion of Poland by Hitler in 1939 and the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 resulted in many young men from Portage joining the war effort. Throughout the early 1940s the community continued to be dominated by agricultural interests; however, the war effort resulted in more women and men working in factories in Kalamazoo.

Yankee and Dutch Develop Schools

When the Dutch arrived, they attended schools located around their property. A school photo taken in 1899 at District School number five (attachment from p. 65 District

5 Westnedge at Centre) depicts a school attended mostly by Dutch children. The large Dutch families stretched the enrollment the District schools, requiring new school construction. According to Potts (1976), “There is no record of the dates when Districts No. 4, No. 5 and No. 6 were established but District No. 8 was the last one organized” (p. 65).

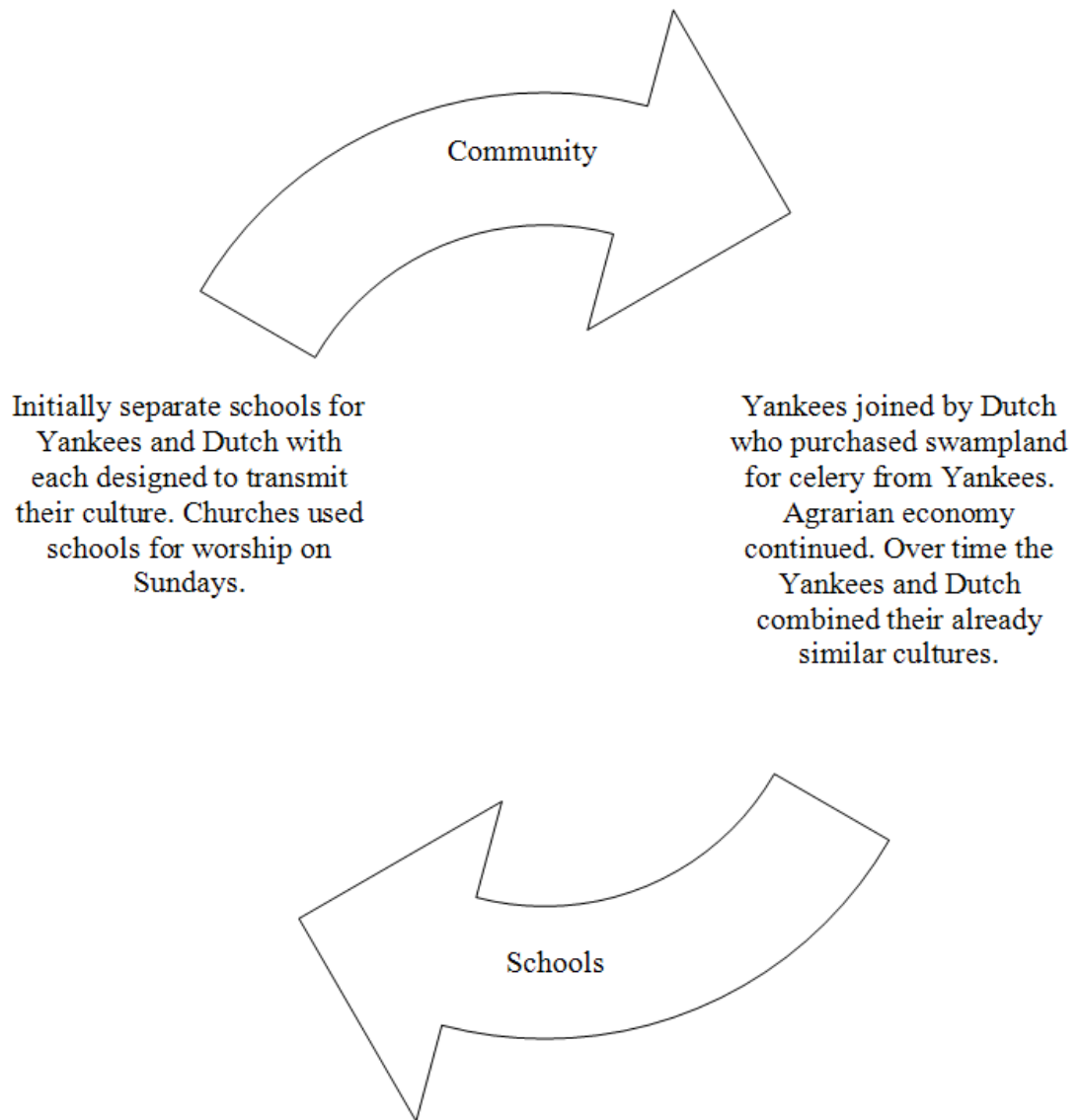


Figure 10: Dutch Enter Community Establish Schools

In 1920, the Western State Normal College (Western Michigan University after 1955) sought a place for teacher training. At the same time, the most central part of the Township where District School number five was located was bursting at the seams because of expanding enrollment. In addition, residents were requesting a high school education for their children. Two other District Schools, District Two (also named Carpenters Corners) and District Four annexed with District Five, and together they signed a 25-year agreement with the college. The agreement required the college to pay for the teachers and equipment for a new school and for the District schools to construct a facility (Potts 1976). The agreement led to the first bond approval, and construction was completed “In the fall of 1922 the Portage Agricultural School opened with five teachers and 183 students” (p. 70). The Board of the Agricultural School hired a woman, Cleora Skinner, to the position of superintendent and teacher. In 1923 the new school building required an addition of a gymnasium, meeting room, and several classrooms (1997). By 1924, school records indicated that the school had 51 high school students.

The curriculum of the schools included writing instruction and added other non-academic programs such as home economics. The home economics program in turn led to a hot lunch program. In 1926 athletics were introduced, with basketball and baseball for both boys and girls. By 1932-33 there was also a track team, and that year the boys’ basketball team won the state championship. In addition, there was a Mother’s Club with, according to a photo, more than 50 members (Potts, 1976). The schools had several after school organizations and clubs; an Agricultural Band, Yearbook staff, Girls’ Glee Club, Art Club, Girl Reserves (YWCA), Hi-Y (YMCA), and a Civic League.

After 17 years as superintendent, Cleora Skinner retired in 1939 and was replaced by Hugh Archer. Then in 1943, Archer was drafted into the military. A principal, Lewis Crawford, became the acting superintendent and served in that role for the next three years.

The school enrollment continued to increase, and the 1940 enrollment totaled 475 students (School Records, 1940). However, due to the depleted resources brought on by first the depression and then the war, new school construction was not possible. At one point in the mid-1940s due to overcrowding, “students were taught in classrooms converted from a vacant tavern at the corner of Portage Road and Centre Avenue” (Potts, 1976, p. 76). Consequently, the Portage Agricultural Schools were not able to accommodate all of their students and were “forced to cut the eleventh and twelfth grade program” (Portage Public Schools, 1997). The 11th and 12th grade students had a choice among Western’s Campus School, Kalamazoo Central High School, and Kalamazoo Christian High School. The continual problems with overcrowding and the cut to the high school programs led Crawford to pursue consolidation of the District schools. In addition, the five district schools that were not a part of the Portage Agricultural Schools repeatedly requested annexation, but it had been denied by Western (Potts, 1976). The Portage Agricultural Schools had five board members: Stuart McCamley, Paul Romence, Clair Branch, Tony Schuring, and Gardner Garlick, all of whom were either part of or related to the Yankee or Dutch settlers, four of the five surnames are streets in Portage. The Board agreed to a consolidation plan that was approved by Western and the State Board of Education. The result was the beginning of the Portage Township Schools.

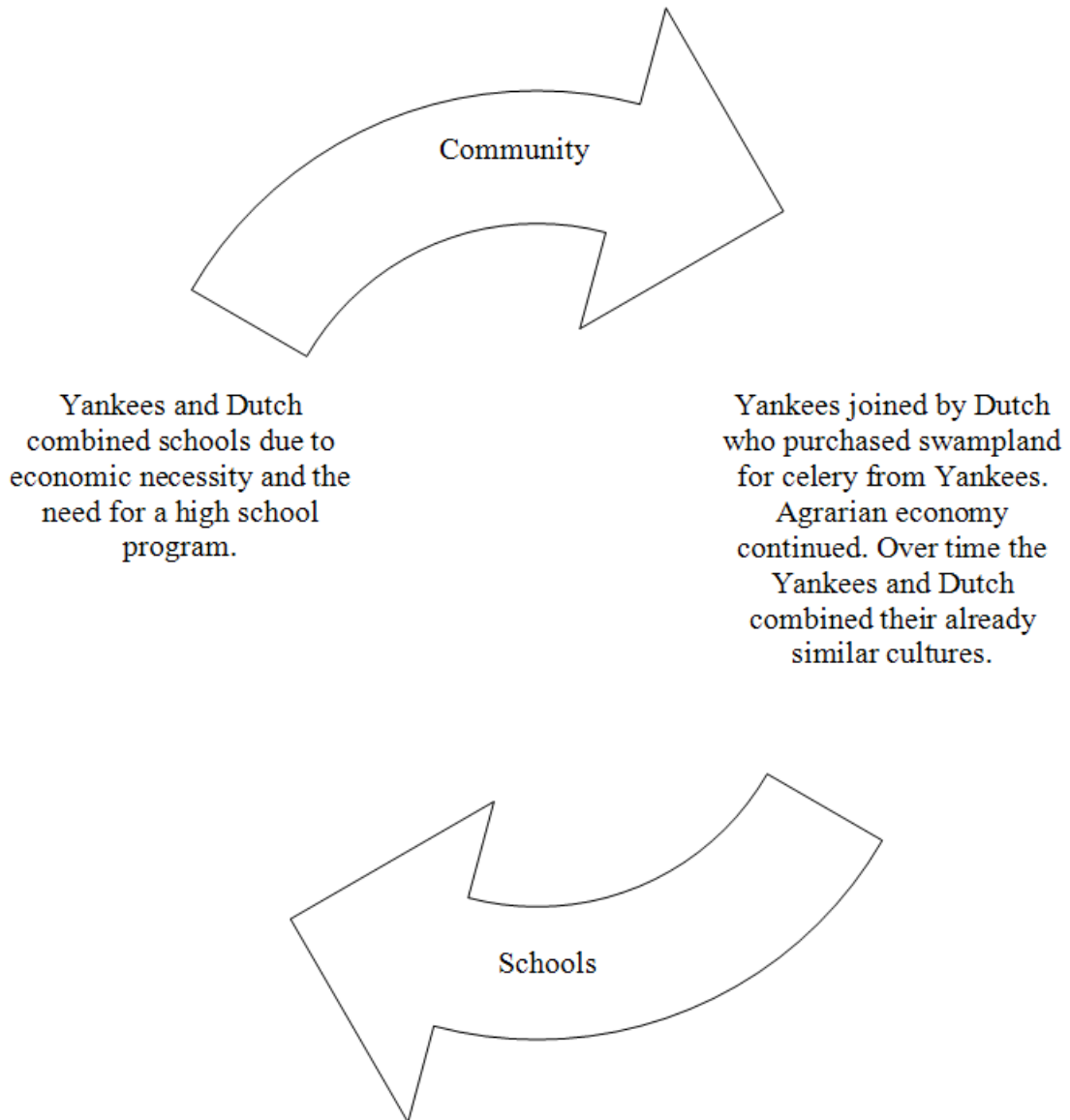


Figure 11: Yankees and Dutch Combine Schools

Summary

The Potawatomi inhabited the Portage area and were the only inhabitants until the Yankee settlers entered the area in 1833. The Yankees purchased their land from the U.S. government who had acquired it via treaties. By 1840 the Yankees desired to continue their expansion without the discomfort of co-existing with the Potawatomi so they were forcibly

removed from Portage Township. The Yankee citizens attended church, provided schooling for their children, built farms and homes, and developed businesses. Once the Potawatomi were removed, the Yankees had the land to themselves to parcel it off to others who were willing to share their norms and purchase their goods and services.

Soon after the Potawatomi were exiled, European peasant immigrants moved to the area and worked for the Yankee settlers. The peasants did not own land, send their children to school, or participate in the governance of Portage Township.

When the Dutch arrived in the 1880s they purchased the swampland that the Yankees did not want and created a thriving market for the celery and later bedding plants they were able to grow on the small muck farms and in the greenhouses that they built. Because there were few actual differences between the cultures of the Yankees and the Dutch, the two groups quickly assimilated. In short order they elected members from both groups to govern the township that they shared.

Immediately after the Yankees arrived, they started schools in their homes. Within a year they began to construct separate structures that were used as schools and on Sundays as churches. When the Dutch arrived they too immediately sent their children to school and constructed school buildings near the small celery farms they bought. These early schools of the Yankee and Dutch settlers were in session during times of the year that children were not needed to work on the farms. When the peasants arrived they did not have the means to establish their own schools, and therefore their children did not attend school. It was not until 1920 that the demand for a more complete education system, including a high school program, resulted in the cultural environment determining that they needed an employee at the institutional activity level to represent their schools. They hired a teacher, Cleora Skinner, to provide legitimacy for the schools as their first superintendent. The

technical activities of the schools provided a curriculum that included home economics and extra curricular programs such as athletics, as well as band and choir programs.

After the Portage Agricultural Schools could no longer accommodate all of the students though the 12th grade and children began attending school in a tavern, pressure from the five remaining district schools caused the Board of Education devised a plan to consolidate.

In Portage the Yankees and Dutch created their schools to perpetuate and transmit their culture. Therefore at the technical activities level the schools in Portage taught children to read so that they could read the Bible that reinforced their values and moral basis (e.g. “Thou shall not steal” etc.). The tasks that provided the employment in the community required knowledge of buying and selling livestock, celery, bedding plants, and calculating board feet of lumber, all of which made the study of mathematics important. The cultural environment dictated that there was no school during the planting of crops, the summer, or during the fall harvest seasons. The schools and churches also maintained the Yankees and the Dutch as homogeneous groups. It wasn’t until the Yankees and Dutch lived in the same community for 40 years that enough changes had occurred that required a more comprehensive school program. They then determined that they could continue to transmit their culture in schools that they attended together.

The Yankees came to Portage and established their culture. In order to protect and perpetuate their culture, they removed the Potawatomi (and their culture) from the area and started schools and churches. The Dutch soon moved into Portage and with the Yankees dominated the community and controlled the education system that served their children. Since schools exist to transmit the culture of the community, as the community

environment changed, the community changed the schools to reflect their needs to continue to transmit and perpetuate their culture.

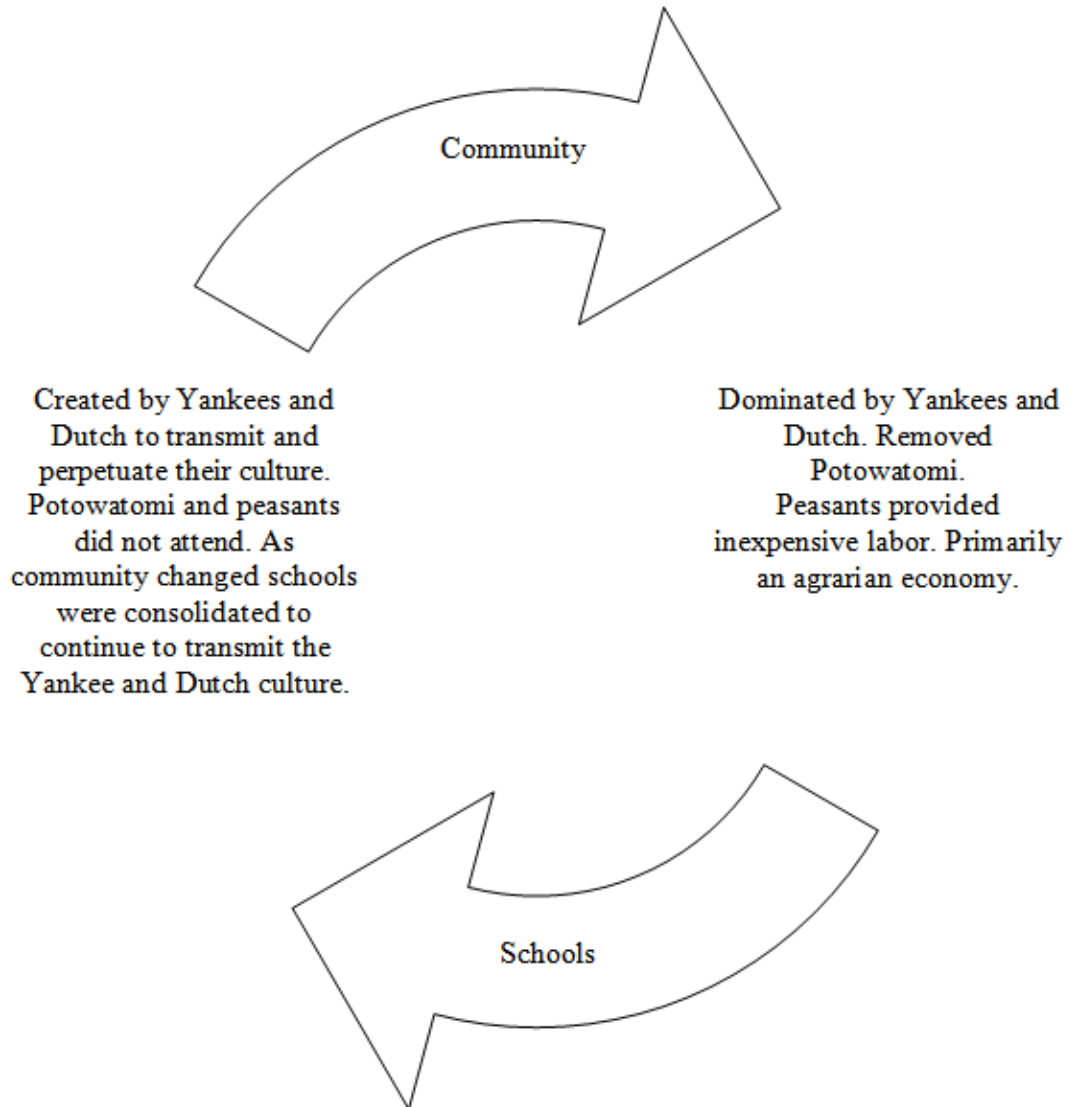


Figure 12: Portage Township Combined

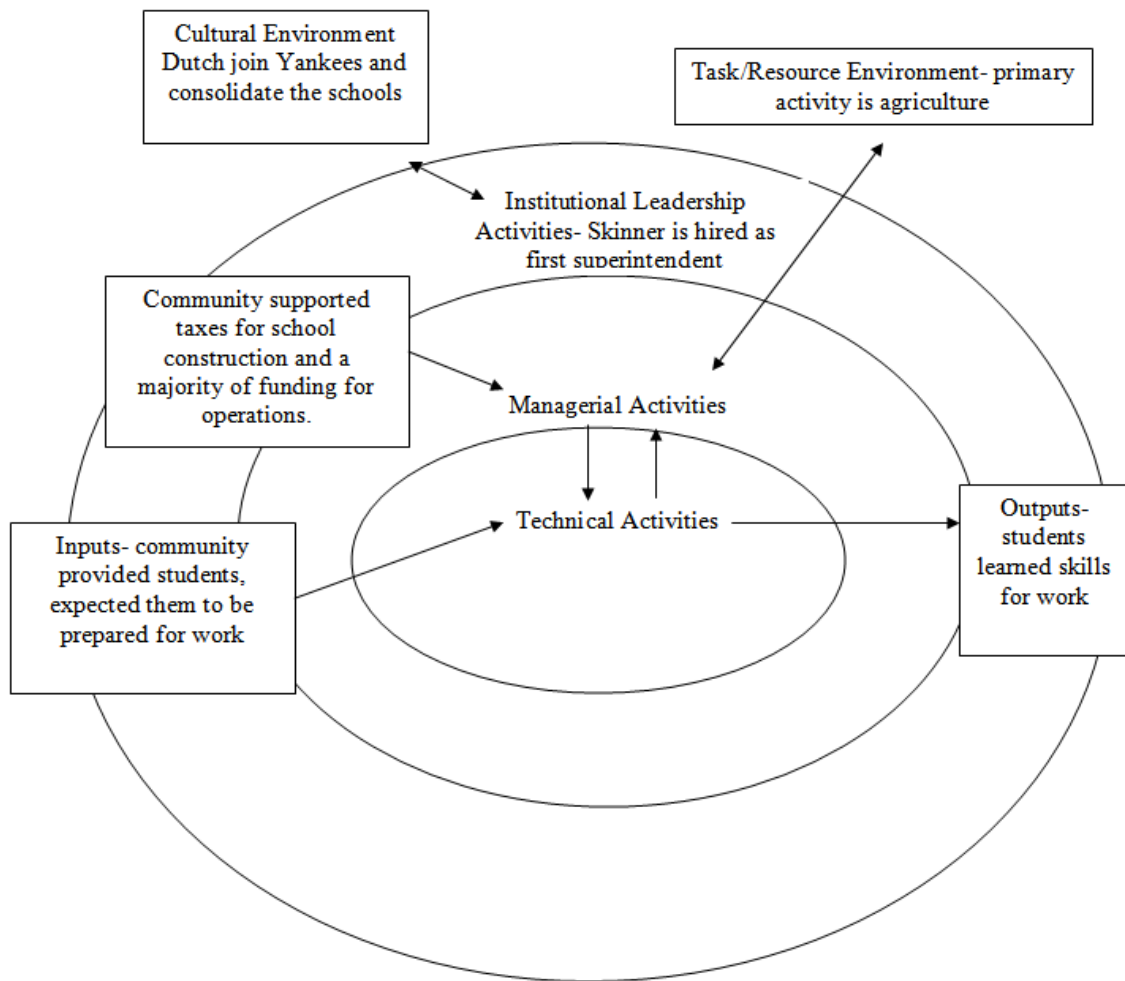


Figure 13: Conceptual Model of an Organization- Skinner Era

1947-Wilkinson Era: Period of Quiescence

Community

In 1945 Portage was a growing community welcoming home their servicemen and women from World War II. Another event in 1945 also occurred that became a defining moment in Portage history. The Upjohn Company, founded in Kalamazoo in 1886, purchased 1,500 acres of land on Portage Road. They built a facility that consumed 33 acres with over 1,400,000 square feet under one roof. It was described in *Architectural Forum* this way: “to a remarkable extent the mammoth new plant...is like some precision-

engineered laboratory instrument” (Carlisle, p. 98). The plant was the largest pharmaceutical manufacturing facility in the world.

From the first day of production in the new facilities, the Upjohn Company became the largest employer and taxpayer in Portage and was the primary stimulus of the local economy. Before the Upjohn building projects, the most prominent employment in Portage Township had involved the core activity of agriculture or the numerous enterprises that had developed to service that industry. The new Upjohn facility, combined with the post-World War II baby boom, confirmed that Portage would experience a “phenomenal boom in its population, its economy and almost every other area of its development” (Potts, 1976, p. 128).

Superintendent Selection during Quiescence

Immediately after consolidation in 1945, Superintendent Crawford retired. The Board-Stuart McCamley, Paul Romence, Clair Branch, Tony Schuring, and Gardner Garlick-hired Varl Wilkinson as superintendent. Wilkinson was raised in west Michigan where he worked in his father’s grain and feed store until he matriculated to Western State Teachers College (WMU) and graduated in 1939. Previously Wilkinson had been the war-time superintendent in Ortonville, Michigan, where he coached basketball and baseball, drove a bus, and taught four classes. He was recommended to Portage by Dr. Verge from WMU, who paid half of his salary and in turn had to approve his selection (2004). In remarks made about his selection, Wilkinson stated:

I remember interviewing with Stuart McCamley out in his barn. Paul Romence at the greenhouses, Tony Schuring over at Schuring [greenhouses], so it was a

different type of thing and I did meet with the whole board when they offered me the contract (2004, oral history document, p. 2).

Wilkinson (2004) related that when he moved to Portage, “South Westnedge (today the main artery through Portage) was pretty much celery farms” (p.6). An informant described Wilkinson as soft spoken, an honorable man, someone not comfortable in the public eye, quiet, and loyal to a fault (personal correspondence, March, 2003). Those personal characteristics reflected the attributes that were valued by the Yankees and Dutch.

School Board

The Board of Education remained stable from 1947 through 1952; then, over the next six years through 1958, six new members were elected to the five-member Board but only one incumbent was defeated, Hayes Whisler in 1956, by Dr. Robert VanderRoest. Dr. VanderRoest explained why he decided to run and how he talked with Wilkinson about running for the Board this way:

I asked Varl on the golf course. I said, ‘Varl, I’m kind of interested in running for the board.’ He looked at me and said ‘Well do you have a complaint?’ I said, ‘No, not at all.’ I just wanted to feel that I can be a part of the community and with my educational background I thought I could be of service (VanderRoest Oral History, August 18, 2004 p. 1).

Schools and Superintendent

During Wilkinson’s first year, the school enrollment was 1273. Due to a lack of space, the District no longer offered a 11th and 12th grade program. Wilkinson immediately re-established the 11th and 12th grade program when the community approved a bond (517 in favor, 387 opposed) to construct a 12-room high school addition. As soon as the

addition was completed, the space was again insufficient. Two years later, in 1949, the District constructed Portage High School. The Portage High School yearbook, titled *Roundup*, contained statements of pride about Portage and the schools such as: “Portage Township Schools, although comparatively young, is growing rapidly, and our recent expansion and the plans for the future will further the development of the community in the years to follow” and “...our school has expanded into one of the most beautiful for miles around” (Roundup yearbook, 1951).

During the 1950s, enrollment expanded and construction continued. Lake Center Elementary was expanded in 1951 and 1956, and three new elementary schools were constructed: Milham and a new Pershing in 1951, and Waylee in 1955. The last three years of the decade resulted in the construction of Portage Junior High School (now Central Middle School), Ramona Lane Elementary, and Amberly Elementary. By the spring of 1960, school enrollment had increased to 5,571 students.

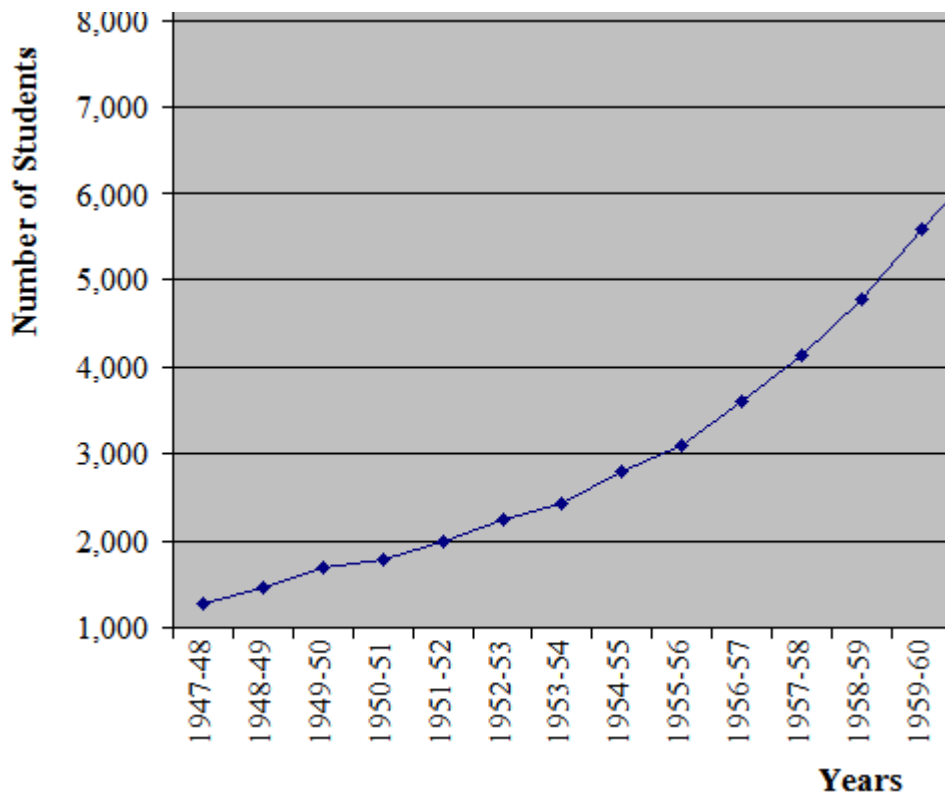


Figure 14: School Enrollment 1947-1960

Summary

In 1947 Portage was a growing community with the servicemen and women returning from World War II starting families and building new homes. A company with local world headquarters, the Upjohn Company, elected to build major structures in the community and provide thousands of high-paying jobs for professionals and laborers alike. The School Board hired Wilkinson, a man from a small town with an agricultural background that fit the Portage of the late 1940s perfectly. Wilkinson presided over rapid growth of the schools and incremental changes in the operations of the schools. As the community evolved from an agricultural economy to a business and professional economy, the residents continued to support bond millages to build the infrastructure required to educate their children in Portage Township Schools.

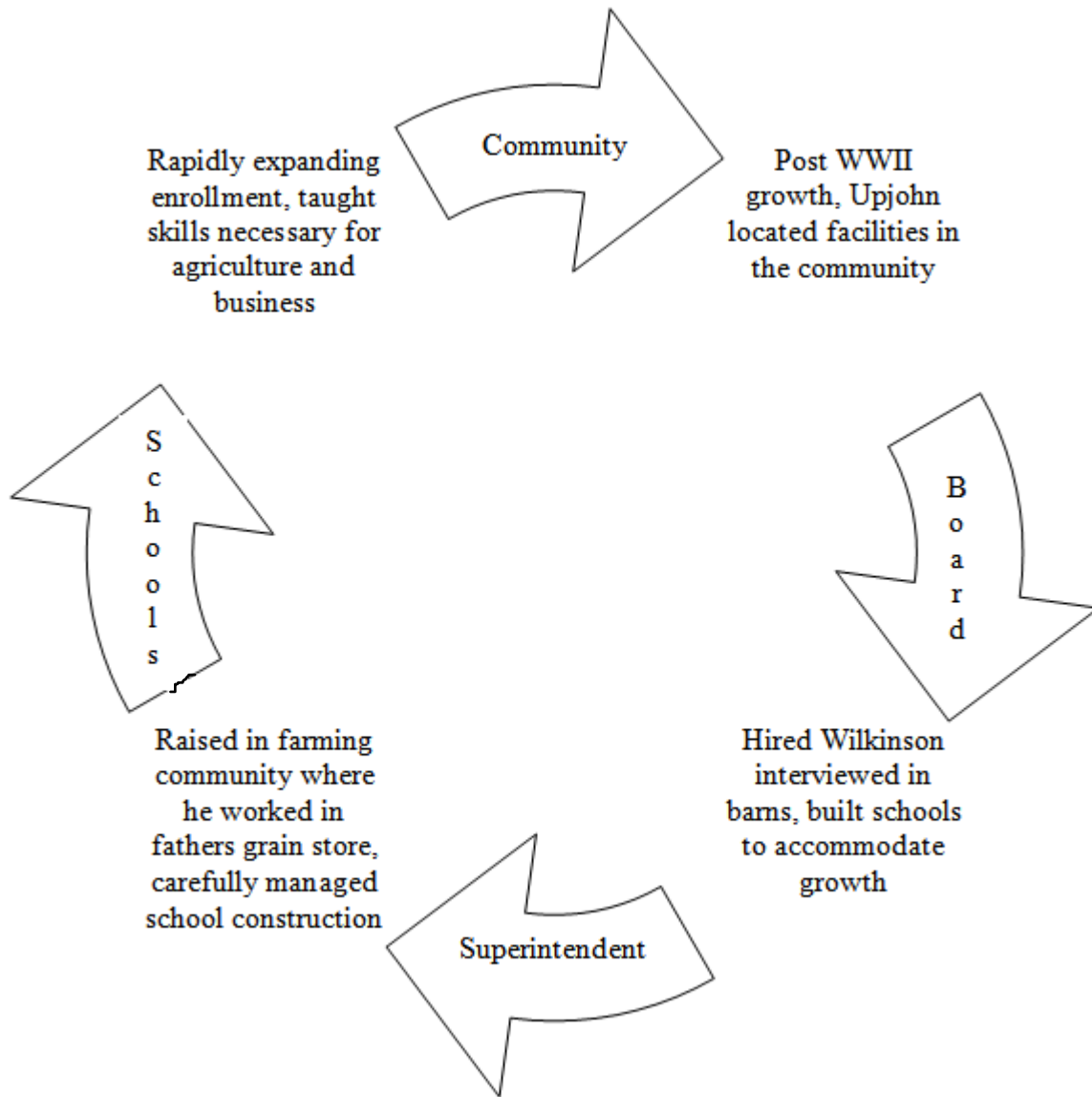


Figure 15: Quiescence-Wilkinson Era

1956-Wilkinson Era: Changing Demographics and Shifting Values

Community

Township Politics

In 1956 the Portage Township Supervisor was Stuart McCamley, who had served in that capacity since 1936. Residents of the area in the 1930s and 1940s recall that most of the roads were gravel and that road maintenance was a constant struggle. In 1956

McCamley was running for re-election for supervisor but faced opposition from John Plantefaber, who was opposing him in the Republican primary. Their differences revolved around whether the Township should encourage or discourage growth. Township Board meeting minutes reflected remarks made by McCamley that “if more improvements were made to the roads, the heavier the traffic would be” (Potts, 1976, p. 112). At that same meeting, citizens were demanding improvements. They wanted paved roads instead of gravel, more traffic signals, and signage denoting speed limits and curves. At the age of 79, McCamley, the incumbent Township Supervisor, was defeated in the Republican Primary by John Plantefaber. In one of his first actions Plantefaber appointed three committees: one to study an expansion of the fire department, a second to determine whether to create a township police department, and a third to study the need for a building code (1976). The socioeconomic change in Portage was, according to research conducted by Kirkendall (1966), a strong indicator of social, economic, and political change and a step in Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone, 1982). The defeat of the incumbent McCamley also signaled a significant value shift, from a mostly rural, agricultural-driven population to a suburban community driven by professionals who favored Plantefaber.

The Township continued to approve new plats, traffic signals, water mains, street lights, and paving projects (1976). Aerial photographs from 1955 depict the expansion of nearly every segment of Portage Township (District Library photo archive).

Early in the 1960s, U.S. 131 and Interstate-94 (I-94) were both completed. The two highways intersected within the city limits of Portage. Interstate 94 was an east-and-west corridor that linked Detroit and Chicago. U.S. 131 ran north and south and linked Grand Rapids through Kalamazoo and Portage to Indiana. The completion of these roads provided easy access to Chicago, Detroit, and Grand Rapids, as well as quick movement

throughout the Kalamazoo area. The highways created another real estate boom with new plats and roads springing up. In addition, the highway system provided a new retail opportunity for hotels and motels. Aerial photos illustrated the changes that those thoroughfares helped create. The tree-covered landscape of 1955 became a mosaic of streets connecting plat after plat (District Library photo archive).

Upjohn dwarfed any other company in terms of economic development in Portage Township. Not only was it the largest employer and taxpayer but it also generated economic benefits in construction because its perpetual building projects required skilled trades such as pipe fitters, electricians, and masons as well as the suppliers of chemicals and other products and services. In 1961, across the street from their main production facility, the company opened a new office complex for upper management of the company. Soon other professional occupations such as legal, marketing, and regulatory affairs (liaison with the United States Food and Drug Administration) were also located in Portage.

As the Township of Portage and then the City of Portage continued to grow, it attracted white-collar workers from several different companies and organizations: American National Bank's world headquarters in Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, Bronson Medical Center, Borgess Hospital, and, 20 miles to the east in Battle Creek, the Kellogg Company's world headquarters (Massie & Schmitt, 1998).

In 1962, the area faced an economic threat when the City of Kalamazoo developed plans to annex the Upjohn property. The Township Board drew up a petition to vote on the incorporation for Portage as a city. As soon as petitions were prepared, copies were circulated and in less than two hours, 400 signatures were obtained. By 12:30 p.m., the Township filed petitions to establish an election for the purpose of determining whether the

Township of Portage should become the City of Portage. The Portage Township Schools had a significant interest because in the event of annexation by Kalamazoo, they stood to lose a large amount of tax revenue. A Portage Schools administrator recalled that staff members were walking up and down halls of schools getting signatures on petitions from teachers and 18-year-old students. The administrator stated that it was a race to see who could act first, the City of Kalamazoo or the Township of Portage. According to the administrator, the school district played a significant role in winning the race by collecting well over half of the petition signatures (personal communication, October, 2003).

In February 1963, the Township citizens voted. Incorporation was supported with 3,762 voters in favor and 2,315 against (61% yes, 39% no). The election was supported in 90 percent of the precincts, failing to gain a majority in only one.

The newly formed City of Portage developed a charter and elected a council and a mayor. The first mayor was Bernard “Bud” Mein, a Portage High School graduate and the grandson of Ben Kannegieter, one of Portage’s earliest celery farmers. The other council members, all men, included John Schuring (celery farmer), Jack Bartley (Bell Telephone foreman), Okko Brouwer (industrial engineer), Anthony Lemmer (Bell Telephone lineman), Carroll Staffen (owner fuel distribution firm), Clair Branch (Upjohn Co. department head), and Kenneth Fricke (judge).

School Board

In 1960, the Board expanded from five to seven members. That election resulted in four new Board members; therefore, in a single election, the incumbent Board members became a minority; however, after the 1960 election, the remaining members maintained the leadership positions on the Board. The July 1960 Board minutes indicated that the new

seven-member Board unanimously elected Okko Brouwer, a descendant of the earliest settlers, to the position of Board President. A year later in July 1961, Brouwer left the Board when he was elected to the Township Board, and they elected a fifth-year trustee, Dr. Robert VanderRoest, to President, a position he maintained until he left the Board nine years later (PPS documents). From 1961 through 1967, there was only one change in membership on the Board, in 1962, when a member left the community. Alsbury's research in 2001 supported the fact that not all school board changes were involuntary. He wrote, "Defeat was not presumed if the board member moved, died, or expressed that they left the board for personal reasons of family illness, or like problems" (p. 63). The changes in Board membership from 1967 fell into the category of voluntary turnover and, as supported by Alsbury's research, were considered voluntary changes.

Schools

In 1965 Wilkinson encountered a new challenge when a change in labor law resulted in the advent of collective bargaining for teacher associations. Previously the Board and Superintendent defined salary and benefits for teachers and presented it to them. Informants stated that Wilkinson did not appreciate interactions with the Portage Education Association (PEA) and that it was difficult for him to adjust to teacher demands created by collective bargaining (personal communication, March 2003). A teacher informant declared that when Wilkinson was superintendent, not only was the school district growing by leaps and bounds, but there was also "a significant increase in unionism by the teachers" (personal communication, March, 2003). Wilkinson described the new dynamic of collective bargaining this way:

I was there [Portage] when the first collective bargaining began in 1965, which changed the superintendency. Previously you went in and fought for teachers

raises, but now you had to represent the board in negotiating those raises; sort of changed the situation. (Wilkinson Oral History, 2004 p. 3)

The change resulted in the position of superintendent changing from an advocate for teachers to, in some instances, an adversary. The change in dynamics proved difficult for Wilkinson and his values.

The school enrollment continued to increase, and plans were made for the construction of two more elementary schools. By the beginning of the 1966 school year, the student enrollment had increased to 9,871, an increase of nearly 8,600 students since Wilkinson became superintendent in 1947.

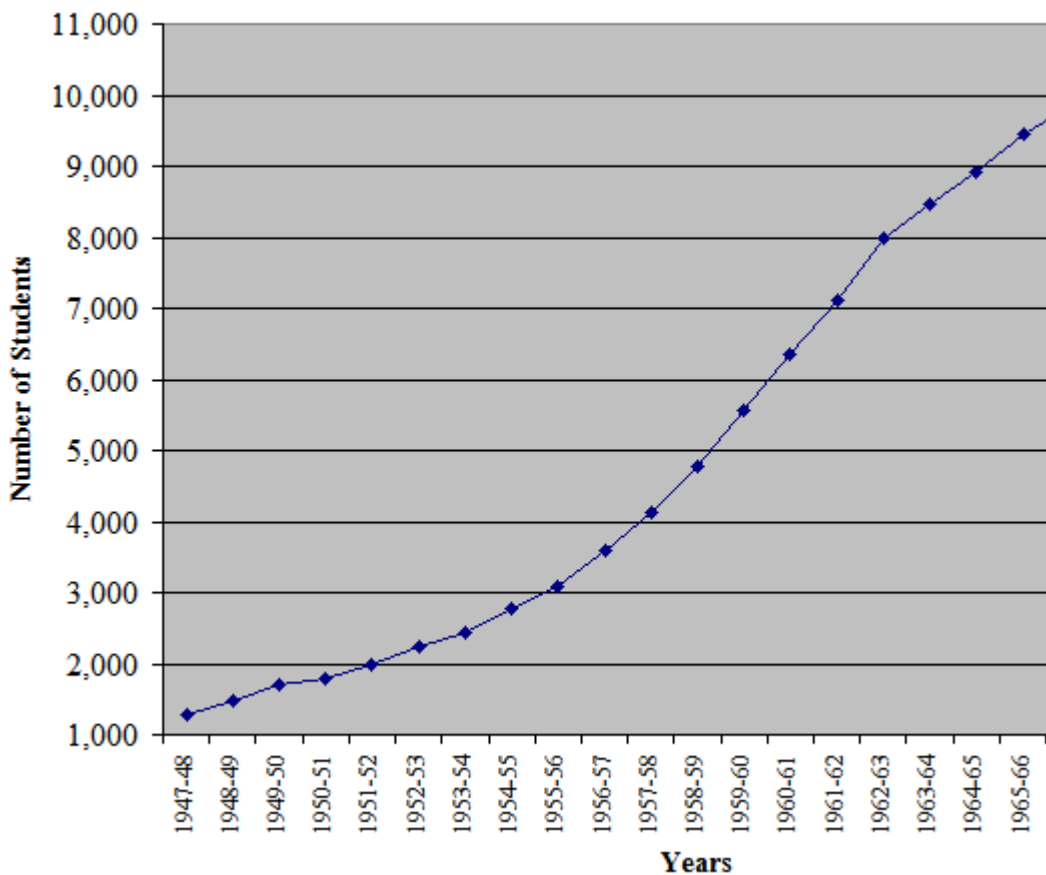


Figure 16: School Enrollment through 1966

Summary

As the community continued to expand, tension grew between those who wanted to discourage growth and maintain the agricultural and agricultural business focus and those who wanted Portage to expand to accommodate the needs of the rising population of professionals who resided there. The primary election of 1956 resulted in the election of the more progressive candidate, so the citizens favoring expansion and progress prevailed. The community prospered, demonstrated by economic development and rapid increase in the population. The defeat of the incumbent McCamley also signaled a significant value shift, from a mostly rural, agricultural-driven population to a suburban community of professionals who favored progress and thus elected Plantefaber. The socioeconomic change in Portage was a strong indicator of social, economic, and political change (Kirkendall, 1966) and a step in Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone, 1982). In 1962, the community continued to establish its identity by becoming a city and in the process trumped Kalamazoo's attempt to annex the township as part of their city.

By 1965, Wilkinson had supervised the construction of twelve new school buildings and four projects that added additions to existing structures. As the community changed from primarily agricultural into one dominated by business and industry, so too did their demands for the schools. The industrial revolution, World War II, and the baby boom had transformed Portage from a community of farmers and business related to agriculture to a suburban community with a rapidly expanding population dominated by Upjohn employees and other professionals. The professionals who resided in the new Portage required a change from the agricultural emphasis of the schools to a college preparatory program for their children. The advent of aggressive teacher unions who gained the right to collectively bargain changed the dynamics within the schools for the

superintendent. Wilkinson was required to contend with not only a community that had changed dramatically and their congruent expectations for the schools but also the changes within the schools when teachers gained the right to bargain their salaries and benefits. The Board had changed from trustees such as McCamley, who discouraged growth in the community and expected the schools to transmit the values that emphasized agriculture, to professionals who wanted their children exposed to a rigorous curriculum that would allow them to matriculate and attain professional degrees and employment.

In 1956, when Plantefaber defeated McCamley, unlike the community, Portage Schools was in a period of quiescence. Members of the community demanded changes in infrastructure such as paved roads, traffic signals, and other amenities from their elected leaders, and when the Township Supervisor, McCamley, blocked those changes, they replaced him. The election was an indicator of changing expectations that Wilkinson and Board would need to observe and react to so that Portage Schools would continue to represent the values of the community. The changes that were occurring in the community of Portage in 1956 eventually would affect the schools. Thorsted and Mitchell (1976) tested the length of time for dissatisfaction to develop in a school system before turnover in board members occurred. They discovered that dissatisfaction grew over an eight-to ten-year cycle, after which incumbent trustees would be defeated or otherwise leave the board.

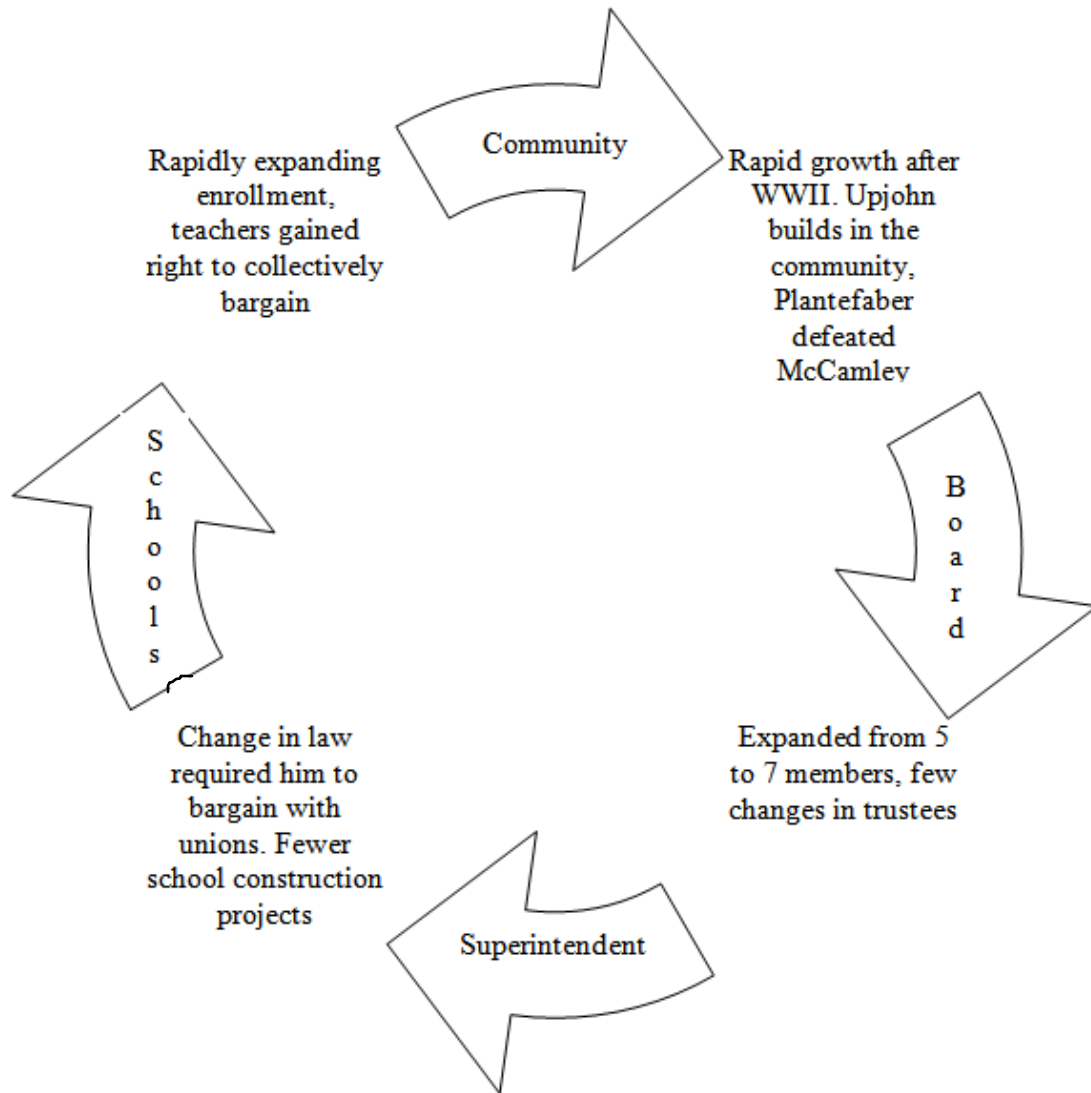


Figure 17: Wilkinson Era- Dissatisfaction Revealed

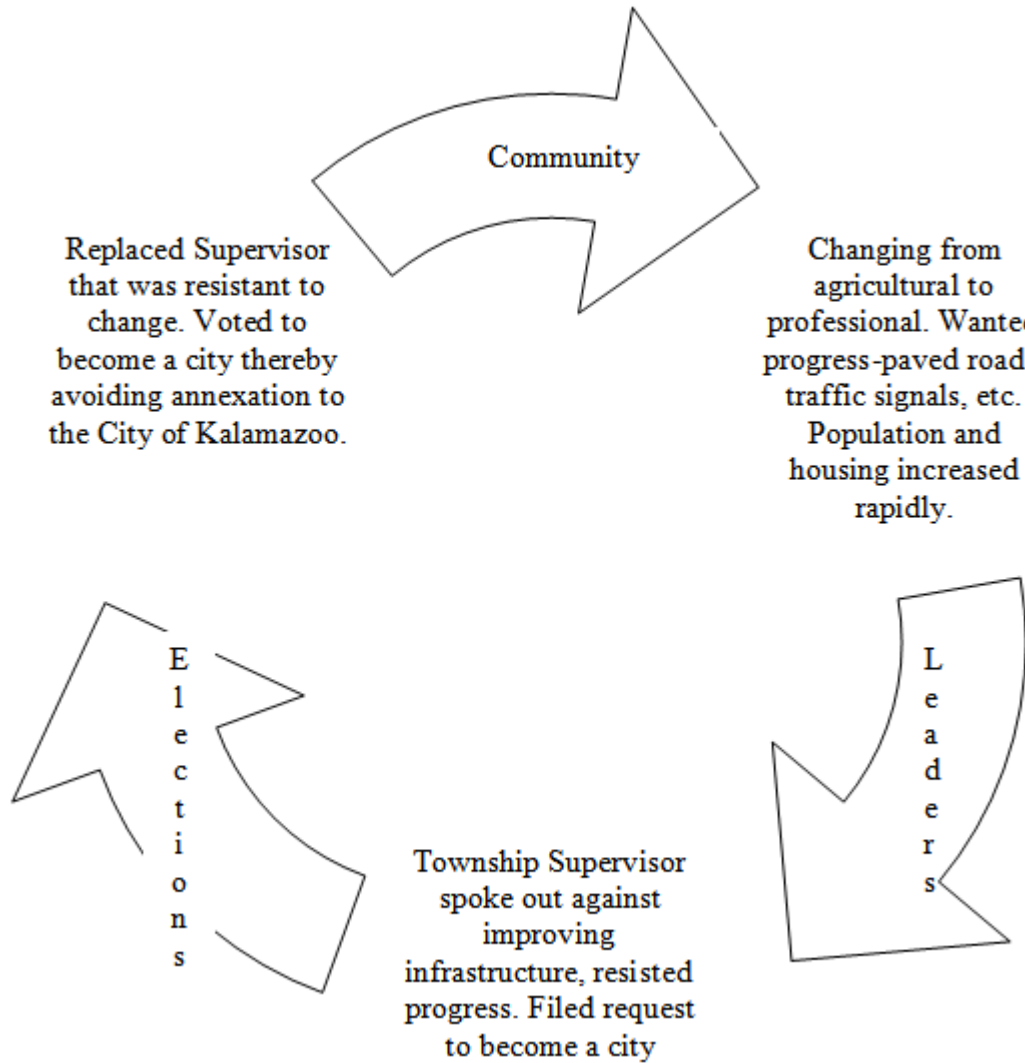


Figure 18: Community of Portage Political System

1967- Wilkinson Era: Period of Politicization-Involuntary Superintendent Turnover

Community

Throughout the 1960s the City of Portage was changing and growing. The Upjohn Company built professional offices that brought professionals to work in their legal, marketing, and regulatory affairs divisions to Portage. The new access provided by the completion of I-94 and U.S. 131 encouraged growth and also resulted in a convenient commute for executives who worked at the Kellogg Company World Headquarters in

Battle Creek. The result was a local economy that continued to grow even with state and national economic problems such as the Vietnam War, inflation, a high unemployment rate, the oil embargo, and the subsequent high interest rates. The changing demographics in the community from agricultural to professional resulted in the Township becoming a City and the election of a group of professional to serve as the Portage City Council.

School Board

The 1967 School Board election produced the first changes in five years when two new members were elected. One, Dr. L. William Boyer, later became President of the Board and served a total of 20 years. The other, James Beardsley, served one four-year term and was elected Vice-President for the final year before deciding not to run for re-election. The following year two more trustees were elected: Ben Burk, who resigned in 1971, and James Johnson, who stayed for one four-year term, his last year as vice-president. After the 1968 election, a trustee left and was replaced by Gayl Werme who remained on the Board for 13 years, leaving the Board when she was elected to city and then county-wide offices. After the changes in 1968 there were five new Board members in two years (District records). Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) identified the link between dissatisfaction and a change in board trustees through the election process as a Turning Point Election Period (TPEP). In addition, a cycle of dissatisfaction can be indicated if an incumbent is not defeated when, as Iannaccone (1982) stated, "A decision by two incumbent board members not to seek reelection has the same effect as an initial incumbent defeat after a period of political quiescence" (p. 108). The Board changes that resulted from the elections of 1967 and 1968 indicated a cycle of dissatisfaction in the community.

In 1969 an operation millage failed. In Michigan, operations millages were the source of local revenues (taxes) that schools used to fund themselves beyond the basic resources provided by the State. When a community failed to support additional funding through a millage, schools were required to reduce their expenditures to match the level of their funding. Therefore as a result of the failed millage, PPS was faced with a sizable budget deficit that required major cuts in spending. The “no” vote on the millage was another indicator of dissatisfaction and an attempt on the part of the voters to influence the Board to alter policy. Lutz and Garberia (1977) studied data from Massachusetts school districts from a nine-year period, focusing on tax rate. In PPS the failure of the millage supported their findings. Citizens dissatisfied with their schools do not support tax proposals.

The week following the election, the Board held a Special Board Meeting to receive suggestions from the superintendent on “curtailments” (Board Minutes, August 11, 1969). Special Board Meetings were typically called to address a specific crisis that required scrutiny beyond the time allotted during the Board’s twice monthly regular meetings. The Board’s minutes provided the details: “The curtailments suggested, including a cutback to 1.5 miles in bus transportation, amounted to a savings of \$521,610 or \$20,000 to \$30,000 short of the amount that had to be cut” (Board Minutes, 1969). That evening a motion was passed “...that elementary and secondary students be transported to and from school, via bus, only if they live 1.5 miles or more from the school they are attending” (Board Minutes, 1969). The Board also passed a motion “...to send all elementary students home for lunch who live within one mile of the school they are attending. Those permitted to stay are requested to carry their lunches” (1969). The Board further moved “... to approve the remainder of the curtailments as presented by the

superintendent” (1969). Two weeks later on August 28, 1969, the Board convened for another Special Board Meeting. They approved a motion to remove itself from sponsorship of crossing guards. They approved a second motion to use the \$200,000 savings from the crossing guards to increase noon hour supervisions and reinstate the hot lunch program in all phases. According to an informant, a former District Office administrator, Wilkinson sought the opinion of his principals on what cuts he should suggest to the Board. The principals recommended cutting transportation and school lunches because the public “had to feel the cuts” (personal correspondence, March 25, 2003). The informant stated that even though Wilkinson did not agree with cutting transportation and school lunches, his principals were so strongly united in their recommendation that, against his better judgment, he brought them as the suggested cuts (personal correspondence, September 2003).

Special Interest Groups

Following the 1968 Board election, members of the Board encouraged a committee of citizens to provide them with changes they wanted to see in the schools, and shortly after, a group called Cit-Com was formed. The Board encouraged the creation of the Cit-Com as a tool to create community-based recommendations for the changes that they wanted for the schools. The Cit-Com involved 100 community members who produced a list of 33 recommendations. The scope of their requests touched nearly every facet of the District including hiring a person to handle public relations, improving student services in a variety of areas, calling for better alignment of the organization, demanding more accountability, increasing the curriculum research and development budget and program, and increasing the emphasis on student interest criterion in the selection of teachers (Board

Minutes). The recommendations provided the Board with specifics that they could use with Wilkinson and still keep the conflicts relatively private.

After the defeat of the millage and the Board approval of the budget cuts recommended by Wilkinson, several new special interest groups emerged. The groups included Citizens for Recall, People against Recall, and School Buses for Portage, created to raise funds independently to pay for busing students (Board minutes, 1969). The PEA, the Portage Child Safety Council, local clergy, Kalamazoo County Labor Coalition, and the Greater Kalamazoo Council all took positions on various aspects of the recommendations. School records indicated that there were nine Board meetings from August 12 through December 15, 1969. Meeting minutes reflected an extraordinary amount of public comment and audiences large enough to move the meetings to alternate sites. Unlike the Cit-Com Committee that was organized as a tool of the Board, at least one of the new groups, "Citizens for Recall," was a community group organized in opposition to the Board. The Special Board Meetings, large audiences at Board meetings, and the special interest groups that emerged were further indicators of dissatisfaction (Iannaccone, 1982). Whereas the Board had formed the Cit-Com as something they could control and as a tool to keep conflicts privatized, the new group(s) were formed to socialize their conflicts and influence the recommendations of Wilkinson. It was in the citizens' interest to form a group that would socialize the conflict (their desire to re-instate transportation) because "conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it" (p. 4, Schattschneider, 1975).

Involuntary Superintendent Turnover

The Board held a Special Board Meeting on January 12, 1970. At that meeting, Varl Wilkinson submitted his resignation. The Board minutes indicated that a "Motion

made by Dr. Boyer, seconded by Mr. Beardsley, to accept reluctantly the resignation of Varl O. Wilkinson as Superintendent of Schools, effective June 30, 1970, Motion carried” (Board Minutes, 1970). After leaving the District in July of 1970, Wilkinson accepted a position as the Director of the Michigan School Board Association. As Walden (1967) reported, data indicated that there was “...little doubt that a significant relationship existed between the two events...significantly more turnover in the superintendency occurred after an incumbent school board member was defeated for re-election.” (p. 27). The replacement of Board members was followed by other signs of dissatisfaction: the defeat of a millage and special interest groups that socialized their disagreements with the cuts recommended by Wilkinson.

Wilkinson described his last year as “the lowest point” (Wilkinson Oral History, 2004 p. 7) of his career. He indicated that he brought several recommendations to the Board and stated that “one of the items I listed was cutting transportation” (p. 7). He stated that he told the Board:

I don't recommend we do this, because I don't think we save enough for the hassle it's going to cause. And, of course, I was right. So, that was the thing and the public didn't care about increasing the class size but cutting the transportation. From about the time the board approved that up until Christmas time or earlier we'd have a couple hundred people at board meetings. And, of course, who got the blame? The superintendent. It's always bothered me that some board members never came out and said Mr. Wilkinson didn't recommend this, but the board thought if we're going to cut programs, we should cut services. But that always kind of bothered me a bit, that I was up there defending, and so on, and no one said well, it wasn't Mr.

Wilkinson's recommendation. So I guess that would be one of the times that I felt a little discouraged (p. 7).

Wilkinson stated that "I almost cried when I left, in fact I think I did" (Oral History, 2004, p. 9). He further stated, "As I say, we hated to leave. Sometime after I decided I was going to do this, I'd wished I hadn't..." (p. 9). The Board President when Wilkinson resigned, Dr. Bill Boyer, described Wilkinson as "a very very able superintendent [who] was involved in everything, had his hands and mind in everything that was being done. He ran a very tight ship" (Boyer Oral History 2004, p. 1). Another Board member, Dr. Robert VanderRoest, said of Wilkinson, "We were very impressed with Varl. He was an exceptionally good one [superintendent]. I can't think of any problems we had with him except we hated to see him retire" (VanderRoest Oral History, 2004 p. 3). VanderRoest responded to the question "Would you say the highlight of your board service was replacing Varl Wilkinson and the growth of the schools over that time?" by stating, "[yes] I would say that..." (p.2).

An informant commented on the resignation of Wilkinson by stating, "There was a lot of parental pressure" (personal correspondence, March 19, 2003). When questioned further about what kind of pressure, the informant stated that the transportation issue was not the only problem. Another informant who was an administrator involved in the recommendation to suspend transportation stated that it was a serious mistake. The informant stated that the community had blamed Wilkinson and eventually the pressure from the community over the recommendations and the criticism of his administration by Cit-Com a year earlier led to the resignation. Commenting about the recommendation in

hindsight, the informant peered down at the ground and stated, “A lot of us are still hanging our heads over that one” (personal communication, November 2003).

Summary

The Board that hired Wilkinson interviewed him in greenhouses and a barn. They represented a community of farmers and agriculture-related business owners. The Board expected Wilkinson to develop technical activities (curriculum) to support the agricultural tasks that students needed. They also expected his managerial activities to financially support a K-12 program for 1273 students and to construct and maintain adequate facilities. A degreed professional with previous experience as a superintendent, he brought the professional credibility required by the Districts partner, WMU. In addition, because he had grown up working in his father’s feed and grain store, he provided the legitimacy for the schools with institutional activities that were accepted by the citizens of Portage. During his tenure the enrollment increased by over 9,500 students, and he led the District through the construction of 14 new school buildings and the renovation of several others.

When Wilkinson resigned in 1970, the Board represented a community of residents who had obtained college degrees or worked in professions that required technical expertise. Using the conceptual model for the study of an organization (Figures 4 and 22), the community (environment) expected the schools to provide their children with programming at the technical core that would allow them to attend college and obtain professional degrees. The environment in Portage had changed, and along with it outputs from the technical core required by the community had, too.

In 1967 and 1968 the Board membership reflected five new members, making it apparent that the community was seeking a different direction for their schools. In 1968 the

Board encouraged the creation of the Cit-Com. The Cit-Com became an expression of dissatisfaction when they produced 33 recommendations that requested “more, better, expanded” (Appendix A), thereby communicating a message that the current practices in the school were not acceptable. In 1969, another expression of dissatisfaction occurred when the millage to support operations failed. The failed millage required reductions to balance the budget with the lost revenue. Wilkinson recommended cutting transportation, and the Board approved the recommendation. The recommendations by Wilkinson reflected that his managerial activities that allocated the resources did not match what the community wanted and thereby created more dissatisfaction. Later, in the face of the public outcry, the Board demonstrated a lack of support for Wilkinson by failing to shoulder some of the blame for the recommended cuts. Their lack of support indicated that the community was dissatisfied and that Wilkinson no longer presented the image desired by the community at the institutional level. The public outcry required scheduling Special Board meetings in venues large enough to accommodate the large crowds that attended. The recommended cuts flamed dissatisfaction that spawned special interest groups from the community that, unlike the Cit-Com, emerged on their own. Schattschneider (1975) wrote “Like all chain reactions, a fight [conflict] is difficult to contain” (p. 2). He wrote further that “Conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it” (p.4). The size of the audience and the multiple groups that formed were evidence that the audience was involved. The Board that a year earlier had encouraged the Cit-Com Committee that the Board could use as a tool lost control of the conflict (the disagreement over the proposed cuts) and the privatized conflict became socialized. Eventually the cuts recommended by Wilkinson were revised and transportation was not impacted.

During the final years of Wilkinson's superintendency, the elements that Iannaccone (1982) identified as dissatisfaction were evident. The community had changed significantly; agriculture as the primary focus was replaced by professional and technical employment as Upjohn relocated major operations to Portage and the population increased dramatically. New members of the community and special interest groups attempted to influence decisions concerning the schools, the Cit-Com Committee, Portage Education Association (PEA), and Citizens for Recall. A bond issue to fund the schools failed, the administration recommended cuts that were not acceptable to the community, the Board held special meetings with large crowds to hear complaints, and, beginning in 1967, school elections resulted in five new Board Trustees in two years. Finally, despite the fact that he had two years remaining on his contract and a daughter who was a junior in high school, Wilkinson resigned. The dissatisfaction from the community was evident with the institutional activities. Wilkinson, who was hired after interviews in barns and grew up in an agricultural community, found himself the superintendent of a much different place than it had been 20 years earlier. The Board that encouraged Cit-Com recommendations reflected a population that desired students prepared to pursue professional occupations. After the failed operations millage, the dissatisfaction from the community with the managerial activities was evident by the protests about cutting transportation to cover the loss of the millage. Finally, the technical activities desired by the community, producing students prepared to pursue professional degrees and occupations, required changes in the school program that were reflected in the Cit-Com recommendations.

During the Wilkinson era, a new sign of dissatisfaction for superintendents and boards to consider became evident. Dissatisfaction with the schools was preceded by dissatisfaction in local politics. In Portage the dissatisfaction was evident when Plantefaber

replaced McCamley as Township Supervisor. When the community asked for progress in the form of a modern infrastructure and were rebuffed by McCamley, the Township Supervisor, they subsequently elected a new supervisor. A superintendent and board can observe changes in local politics and understand that following adjustments in that venue there will also be adjustments expected in the schools. The dissatisfaction in the non-school election occurred in 1956; eleven years later, in 1967, dissatisfaction began to manifest itself in school elections. Thorsted and Mitchell (1976) tested the length of time for dissatisfaction in a school district to develop into turnover of board members as an eight-to ten-year cycle. The number of years between dissatisfaction in a community's non-school election and in a school election has not been tested. Effectively interpreting local non-school politics provides a superintendent and board with another tool to adjust their schools to reflect community values.

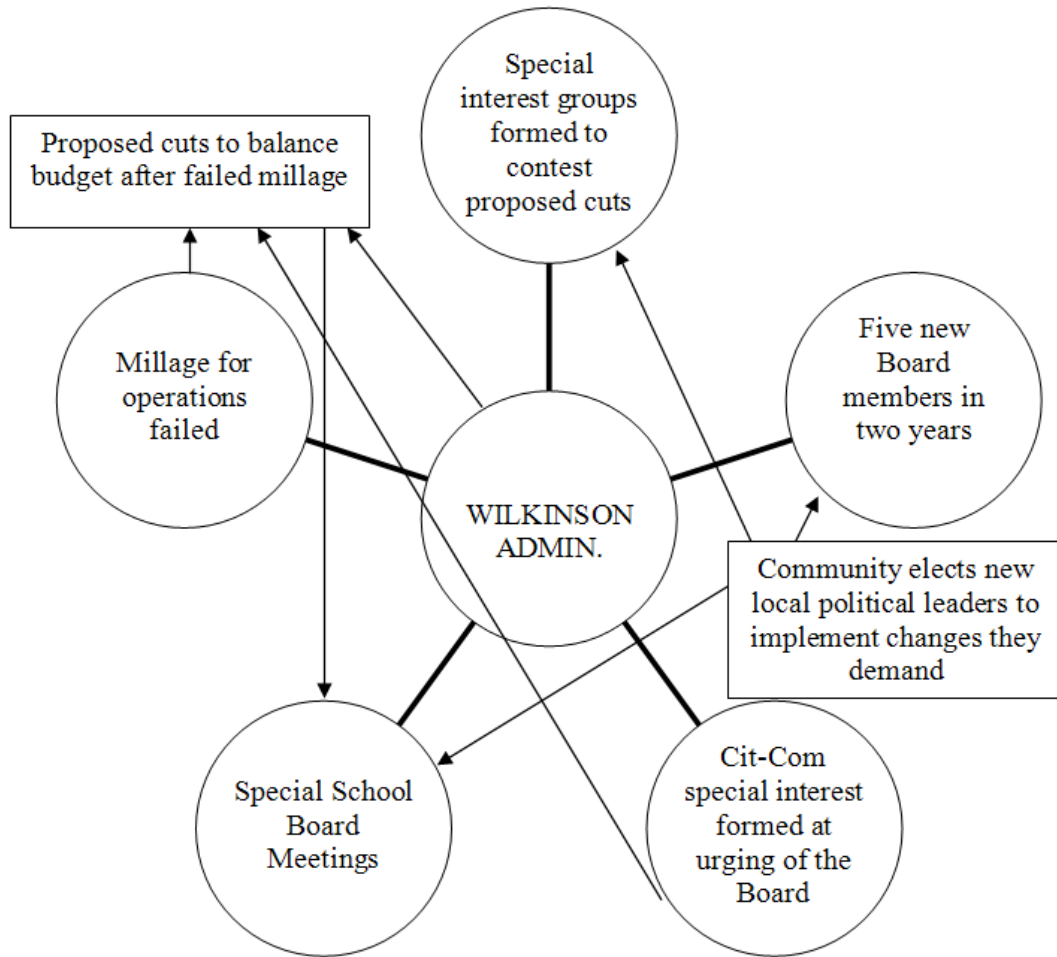


Figure 19: Dissatisfaction from Community-Wilkinson Period of Politicization

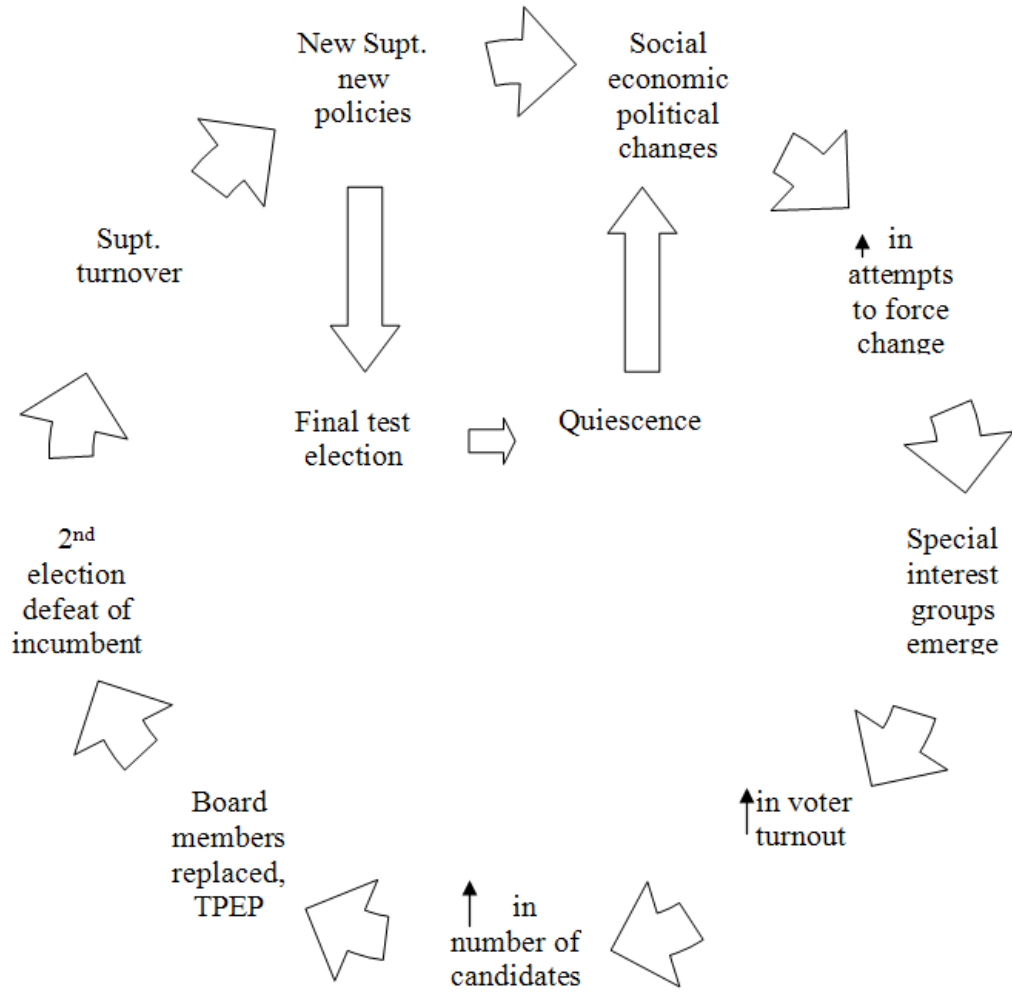


Figure 20: Period of Politicization-Involuntary Superintendent Turnover

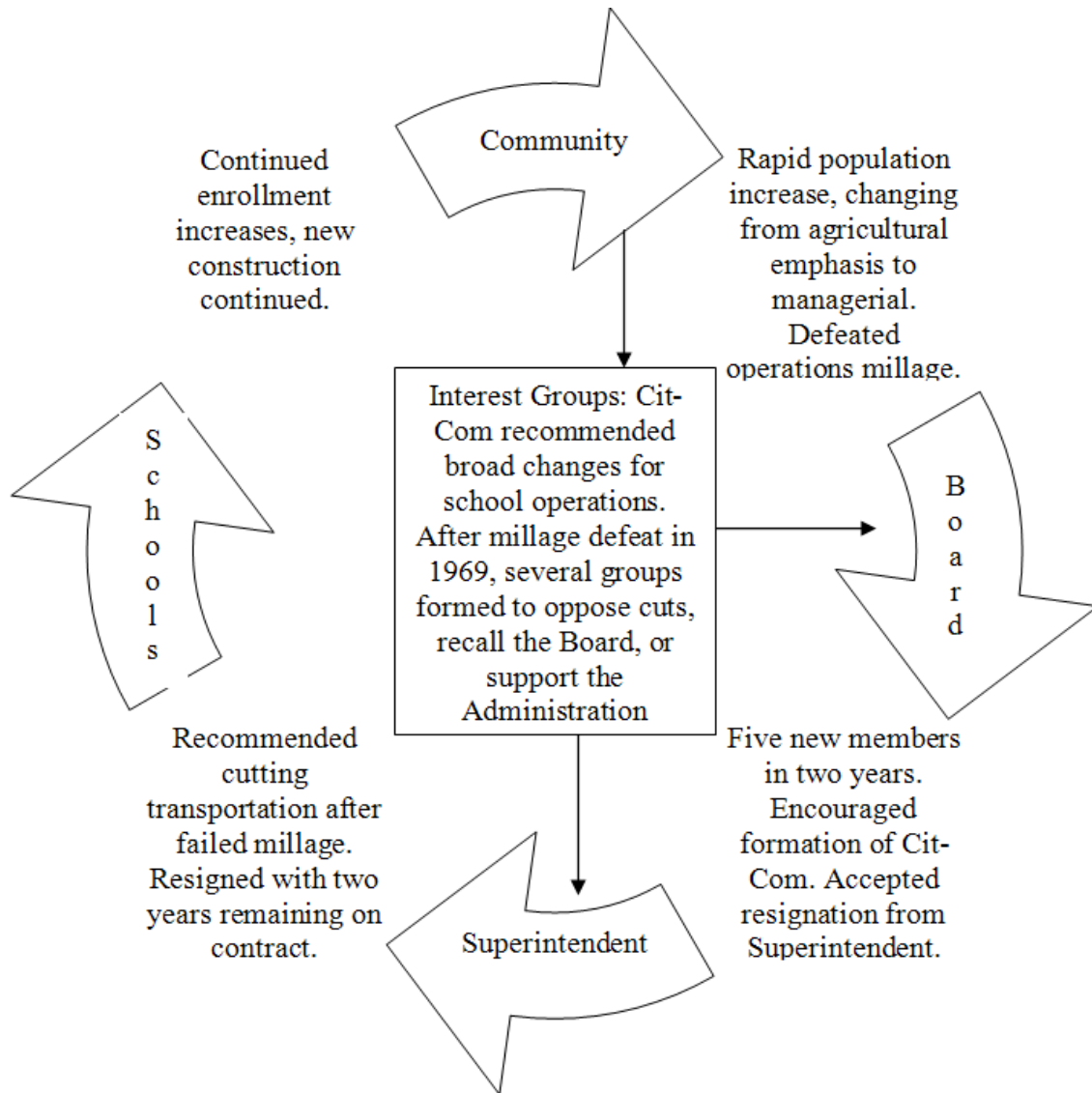


Figure 21: End of Wilkinson Era

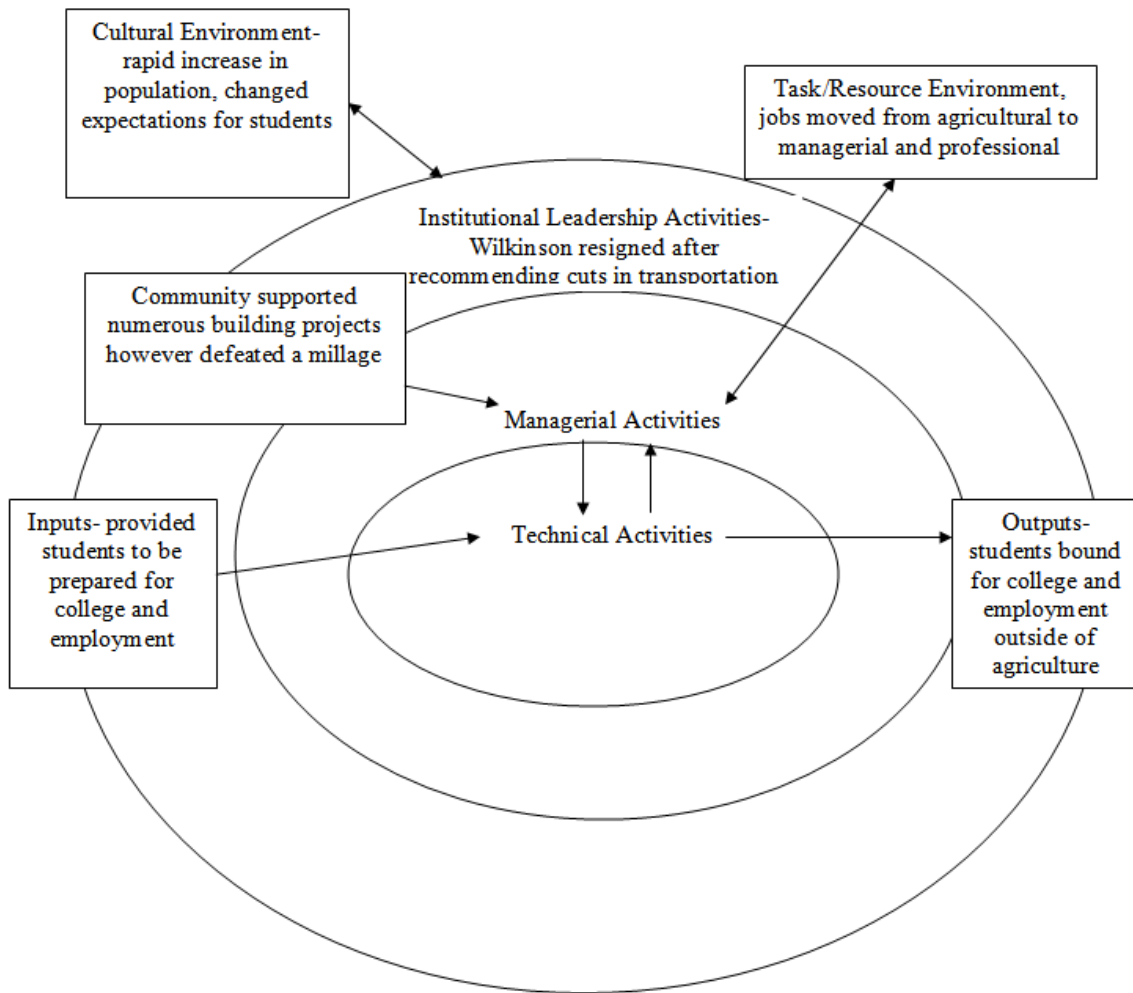


Figure 22: Conceptual Model of an Organization-End of Wilkinson Era

1970 Conti Era: Period of Quiescence

Community

By 1970 the City of Portage had grown into a thriving suburban community that continued its demographic shift from farming to professionals. The emphasis for employment was on professional careers. The values of the community reflected the professional emphasis; as the tasks changed, so did the values of the community. Despite the economic problems outside of the Portage area, Upjohn added professional employees

in the areas of marketing and legal affairs and continued to grow their research and development operations in Portage. According to Massie & Schmitt (1998), by 1980 “...approximately 6,400 local residents worked for Upjohn and the company predicted an increase to 10,000 by the century’s end” (p. 207).

The presence of industrial jobs available at Upjohn, the paper mills, Durmetallic, and General Motors was important to the overall employment in the community. However, the expansion in the professional workforce was the dominant factor in employment statistics. In 1977 the total county employment was 105,600. According to Massie & Schmitt (1998), “only one-third produced manufactured goods, approximately one-half worked in non-manufacturing capacities in the private sector and the remainder received their paychecks from burgeoning governmental units” (p. 207). The major employers were Upjohn, General Motors, Stryker Corporation, paper mills, and several smaller companies. The decline in employment in the industrial sector could be attributed to Checker Motors discontinuing making cabs after 60 years of production, the relocation to Tennessee of the Gibson Guitar Company, and Eaton Corporation closing their Kalamazoo plant.

The reduction of manufacturing jobs had a minimal economic impact for Portage because the primary blue collar employers in Portage, Upjohn and General Motors, continued to provide steady employment. In addition, Portage had become the bedroom community for other white collar workers who were employed at the Kellogg Company world headquarters in Battle Creek and other professionals employed at Bronson and Borgess Hospital and at WMU. The prosperity in Portage was reflected by the expansion of retail establishments through the late 1970s and into the 1980s along the Westnedge corridor.

Superintendent Selection Following Involuntary Turnover

In 1970 the Board hired Dr. George Conti to replace Wilkinson. Before coming to Portage, Conti was a superintendent in a small community in Ohio. He had a doctorate, an outgoing personality and a reputation as a well-liked charismatic character and was known to walk up to people, shake their hand, and say, “Hi, I’m George Conti” (personal correspondence March, 2001).

The selection process for replacing Wilkinson involved the Board seeking an external candidate. Freeborn (1966) indicated that after incumbents were replaced on a board, the new board replaced the superintendent with an external candidate. A board that has not had a recent change in the membership seeks an internal candidate. In the event of a recent turnover, the board seeks external candidates. In Portage, the Board sought external candidates, conducted interviews, determined which candidate fit the characteristics of the community, and then, after hiring the candidate, set about creating schools that reflected the expectations of the citizens. The flowchart that follows illustrates a process for replacing a superintendent.

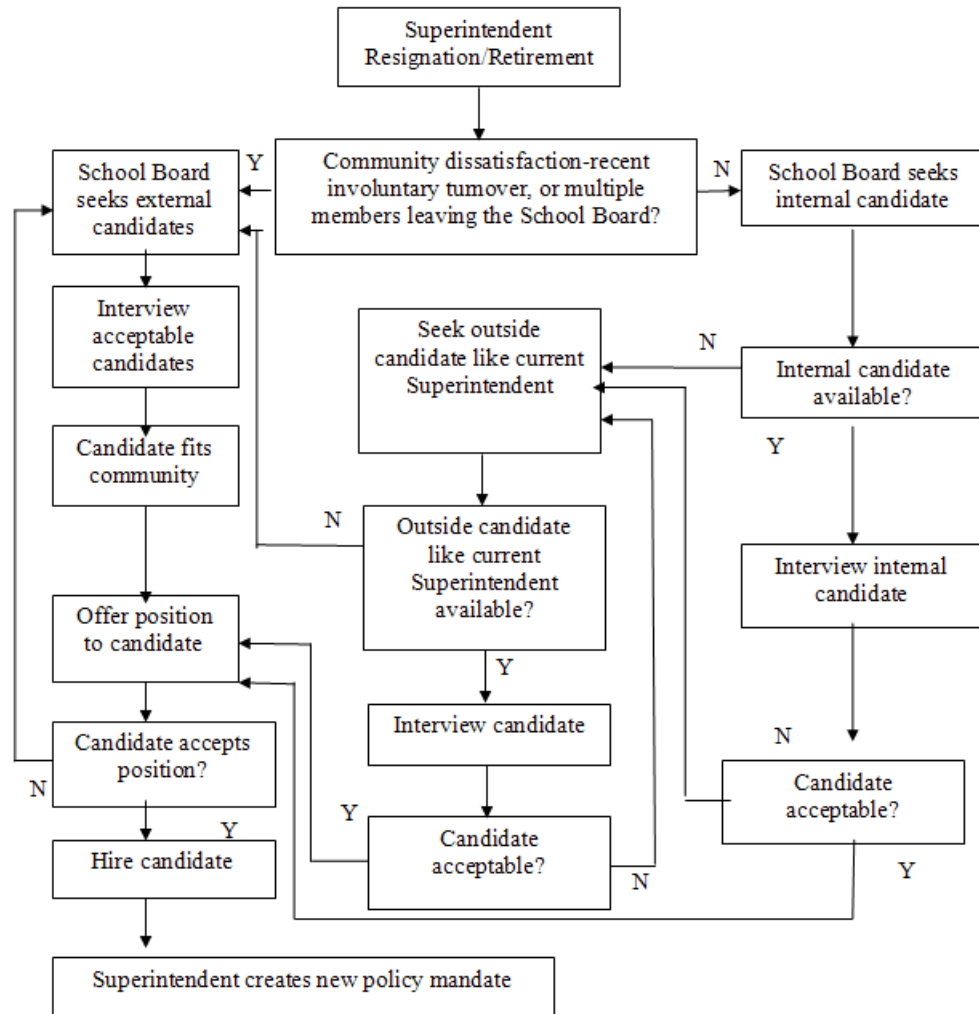


Figure 23: Superintendent Selection Process

School Board

After Wilkinson resigned and the Board named Conti to replace him, in 1971 the Board membership changed again. The new trustees were, Don Overlander, who served nine years before leaving to join the City Council, and Lois Snyder, who served only until the election the following June. In 1972 Robert Lockwood was elected and served two four-year terms, as was Robert Orr, who served three years before leaving the area. Another trustee moved from the area and was replaced by James Ellinger, who remained on the Board for 14 years. The changes involving these individuals resulted in a total of

four new members in a two-year span. The first two elections after Conti became superintendent resulted in new trustees and therefore did not constitute a final test election (Iannaccone, 1982). The final test election did occur a year later in 1973 when the election produced no changes to the Board, and with the exception of replacing Orr in 1974, there were no future changes until the 1979 election.

School Board Sub-committee

In September of 1975, Dr. Boyer, the immediate past Board President, stated that “he had received some suggestions from citizens to appoint a new Cit-Com Committee [and questioned] maybe we should consider doing it now, before a millage defeat” (p. 211). The Board members invited public comment and indicated they “had received few calls” (p. 212). The Board President, Mrs. Werme, recommended a Cit-Par (Citizen Participation Committee) as a sequel to the Cit-Com. She described her recommendation for the Cit-Par by stating:

A steering committee could be named by the Board and that this committee could recruit sub-committees. The primary purpose would be that of assisting the Board in making and implementing decisions by suggesting and implementing improved, two-way communications. If the Board desired, the concept of such an organization could be approved immediately. At the December 15 meeting, the Board could adopt the Cit-Par in principle, name the steering committee, and set the charge for Cit-Par. (p. 213)

At the December 15, 1975, meeting, the Board released general objectives for the steering committee.

At the February 23, 1976, Board meeting the Cit-Par provided their first report. The Cit-Par Committee provided several comments to the Board. One of the committee chairs

stated, “[I] was disappointed that so few people attended Board meetings [...] does the Board really want citizen involvement” (Board Minutes, p. 300). Several Board members commented that they “welcomed participation and encouraged attendance at Board meetings” (p. 300). The Board asked several questions of Cit-Par. “What kind of participation are you getting?” A Cit-Par representative responded, “about 40-50 people are involved at the present time” (p. 301). Dr. Kettner informed the Board that the committee had been “thinking in terms of cuts” because they realized due to financial constraints they “probably don’t need recommendations for additions at this particular time” (p. 301). The Board President thanked the committee and, according to the minutes, “encouraged each of them to review the four questions included in the original charge from the Board” (p. 301).

The Cit-Par next addressed the Board in April of 1976 and gave a status report. They also requested \$2,800 to complete the community survey. After Board discussion and some dissension from a teacher in the audience, the Board supported their request. At a January 10, 1977 special meeting that lasted over three hours, the Board received the recommendations of the Cit-Par Committee. The chairperson, Dr. Kettner, in his remarks stated that the committee had “been walking on a tight rope between the Board, the Administration and staff, and the Community” (p. 423).

Superintendent

Board members and school employees described Conti as a gregarious and friendly man, but also related that he was direct and firm and let people know what he thought. One informant stated that as he was sitting in Conti’s office, the conversation turned to a topic that required privacy. Conti closed the door via a switch on his desk, and the informant

remembered thinking, “Oh shit, am I in trouble? But I knew better because I was just there to talk” (personal communication, March 2001). Another informant recalled being in Conti’s office and that, “he would smoke that pipe” (personal communication, November 2002). The same informant spoke of Conti as a “great superintendent, you saw him in the buildings, he would come eat lunch with us, you could talk to him, he knew who you were” (personal correspondence, July 2002).

Administrators who worked with Conti described him as a leader who set high standards but also gave them the latitude to make their own decisions. One remarked, “He let you work, but if he thought you messed up he would come over and talk to you. You always knew if something didn’t sit well with George” (personal communication, November, 2003). The individual also recalled a time in the early 1970s when the Portage Education Association (PEA) chose to picket during contract negotiations in front of the Administration Building. According to the administrator, Conti photographed each of the picketing teachers from his office window, “then every chance he got he stuck it up their ass” (personal communication, November 2003). The administrator went on to say:

George was great to work with but he also made it clear that if you weren’t going to be cooperative with him he wasn’t going to help you either. It is safe to say that the teachers he photographed didn’t get any favors from George. (personal communication, November 2003)

Another former administrator stated, “George was wonderful, he was everything you wanted in a superintendent” (personal communication, 2003).

A community member provided a negative perspective about Conti, saying, “Conti’s legacy was you don’t change anything in Portage, you don’t rock the boat. You

don't make waves and you don't tell the board much of anything" (personal communication, 2001). A former Board member expressed a different opinion of Conti:

There was a lot of hero worship for George, but he truly was a very effective superintendent. He was a very open and public communicator. He welcomed communications, one on one, and not always with a smile on his face. He loved a good fight. He set very strong clear messages, strong not negative, but he didn't always deliver what people wanted to hear. (personal communication, 2001)

Another Board member recalled, "We were impressed with George [Conti] because he was a very knowledgeable person with a personality that was a plus. I think he did a very very fine job when he was here" (VanderRoest Oral History, 2004 p. 2). Bill Boyer, a former Board President, stated:

Dr. Conti was a more delegator type of superintendent. He was a very good public relations man. He knew everybody by their first name. He was a remarkable individual and a tremendous personality and he wasn't afraid to delegate, as opposed to the Varl Wilkinson style. (Boyer Oral History, November 2004, p. 1)

Finally, a former Board President related the following about Conti:

George Conti was really one of the great men of Portage and that goes much broader than just the fact that he was an outstanding superintendent. He was fair, he was strong. I can remember one situation with Dr. Conti that will always stand out. It was when I was in the classroom and there was a millage election. It was one of those rare times when it got voted down and it lost by a very narrow margin, and I can't remember the votes, but it was, let's say, a couple hundred votes. The day after the election he had a special meeting in the auditorium at Portage Central

High School and all teachers had to show up at 6:30, 7 a.m., and he was a strong powerful speaker and he had a very simple speech. He said the teachers here have a vested interest in the millage election in terms of their careers and their jobs, but more importantly in terms of what they do, in so far as the millage supports the school district in a way to allow the teachers to be more effective in the classrooms and to do what they do best under their tutelage. He said the election went down by X number of votes, and he said 'I want everybody in this room to know, I don't know how you voted, but I know if you voted – that's public record' – and his punch line was, the number of votes that lost the election, there were twice as many teachers who had not voted in the election. To me that's one of those defining moments in your life. And fortunately I had voted, but I could have missed it...George Conti, he wasn't picking on anyone, he was just making a very valid point. And I guarantee that he voted in every election. He was a great guy and I think when he decided to retire, he gave us enough warning that we were able to come up with a superintendent. (Sheldon Oral History, November 2004, p. 4)

Conti was a supporter of college preparatory curriculums required for success in college and gifted and talented programs, elected to keep them and close elementary schools when enrollment declined and finances were tight. He also was a fervent supporter of athletics and arts programs (a fund in his name through the Portage Education Foundation still provides support for music programs).

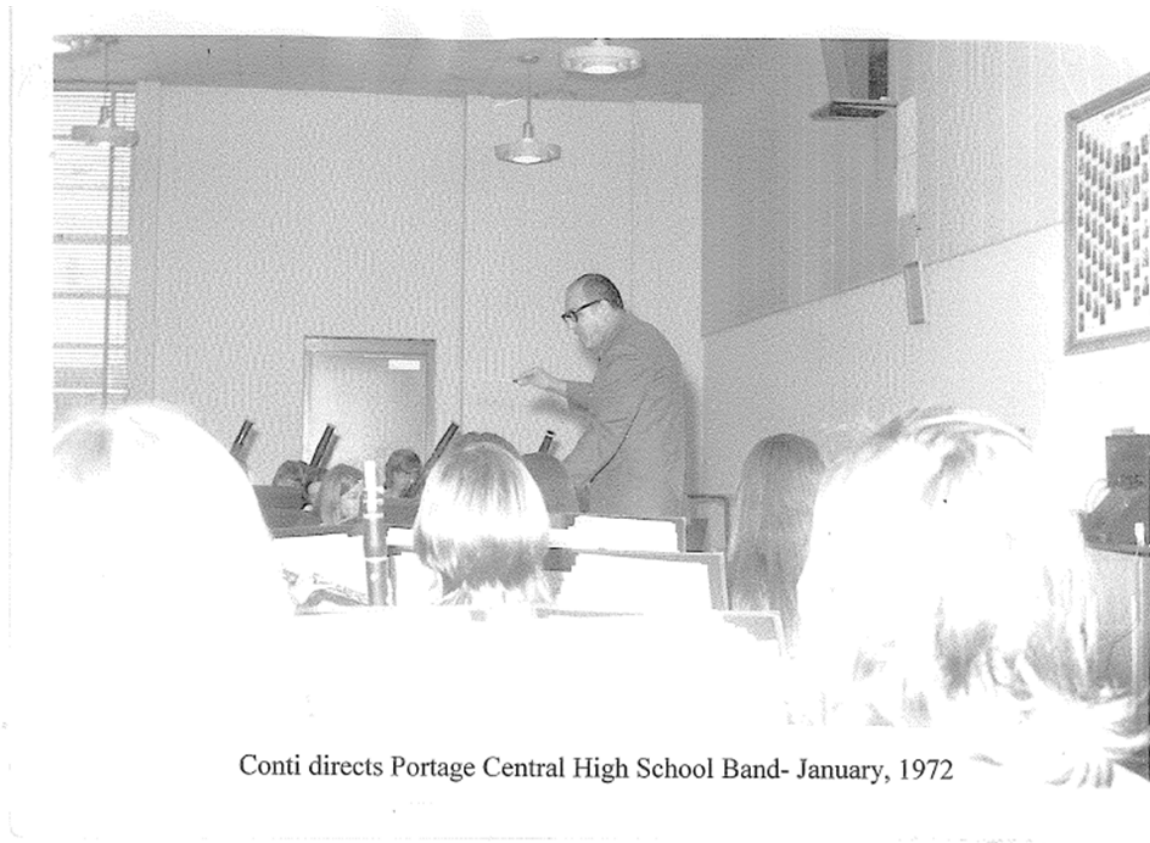


Figure 24: Conti Directs Portage Central High School Band

Schools

In 1971 the school enrollment peaked at 10,932 and West Junior High, the last school from the enrollment boom, opened. Shortly after West Junior High opened came the end of the baby boom, and as the last large classes proceeded through the grades, Conti was left with a steady enrollment decline. The declining enrollment and subsequent surplus of classroom space along with a budget deficit resulted in Conti informing the Board that it was necessary to consider closing school buildings in the next few years. Conti continued to inform the Board of enrollment figures and their potential impact and informed them that his administrators were doing an analysis on which schools would be most logical to close. Eventually in 1980 the administration recommended closing two elementary

buildings, Ramona Lane and Pershing. Pershing was located on a 37-acre tract of land in the southeast corner of Portage. The rationale included these factors: the District owed very little on the property; it was the furthest elementary building from the center of the District, thereby increasing the cost of delivering students to the site; and the entire Pershing school population could fit into one of the other elementary schools (Board Minutes). Ramona was selected because it was not a neighborhood school and was surrounded by Upjohn property. Upjohn bought Ramona Elementary and tore it down.

Summary

Portage had become entrenched as an elite community and they elected a school board of professionals to represent them. To replace the quiet, reserved, detail-oriented Wilkinson, the PPS Board hired Conti, a gregarious individual who had a doctorate and the ability to generate positive public relations with his outgoing personality. Conti created a policy that was a match for the dominant values of the community by promoting programs to prepare students for higher education and the pursuit of professional careers. He also supported an accentuation of programming for students involved in gifted and talented, fine arts, and athletic activities.

Conti's style, positive image, and his understanding of the dominant values of the community allowed him to lead the District through a time of contraction and economic downturn during 1970s. Instead of Conti contending with a negative special interest group as Wilkinson had with the Cit-Com, Conti and the Board selected a sub-committee named Cit-Par, defined the committee's task for them, and monitored their progress. Conti and the Board created the Cit-Par as a tool to recommend cuts. They managed the Cit-Par so the committee did not escalate into the conflict that became the legacy of the previous Cit-Com. The Cit-Par was formed during a period of quiescence, which contributed to a

comment in Board minutes from one of the chairpersons who lamented the fact that so few people attended Board meetings. The Cit-Par did not understand that the lack of citizen participation was a direct result of the period of quiescence that PPS was experiencing. The lack of participation was also instrumental in privatizing conflict that might have been created by Cit-Par. Conflict involving few people is private, conflicting involving large numbers of people as was the case after the failed millage becomes public and difficult to control. Whereas just a few years earlier a similar committee (Cit-Com) had brought out multiple complaints about the schools that eventually led to the removal of Wilkinson, the Cit-Par Committee was used as an effective tool by Conti and the Board to make recommendations for cuts due to declining enrollment. Lutz and Garberina (1977) studied Massachusetts school districts and determined that incumbents were defeated when community demand was ignored. Conti was able to cite Cit-Par recommendations and the Board support for them when he recommended closing schools and preserving the programs that were important to the community.

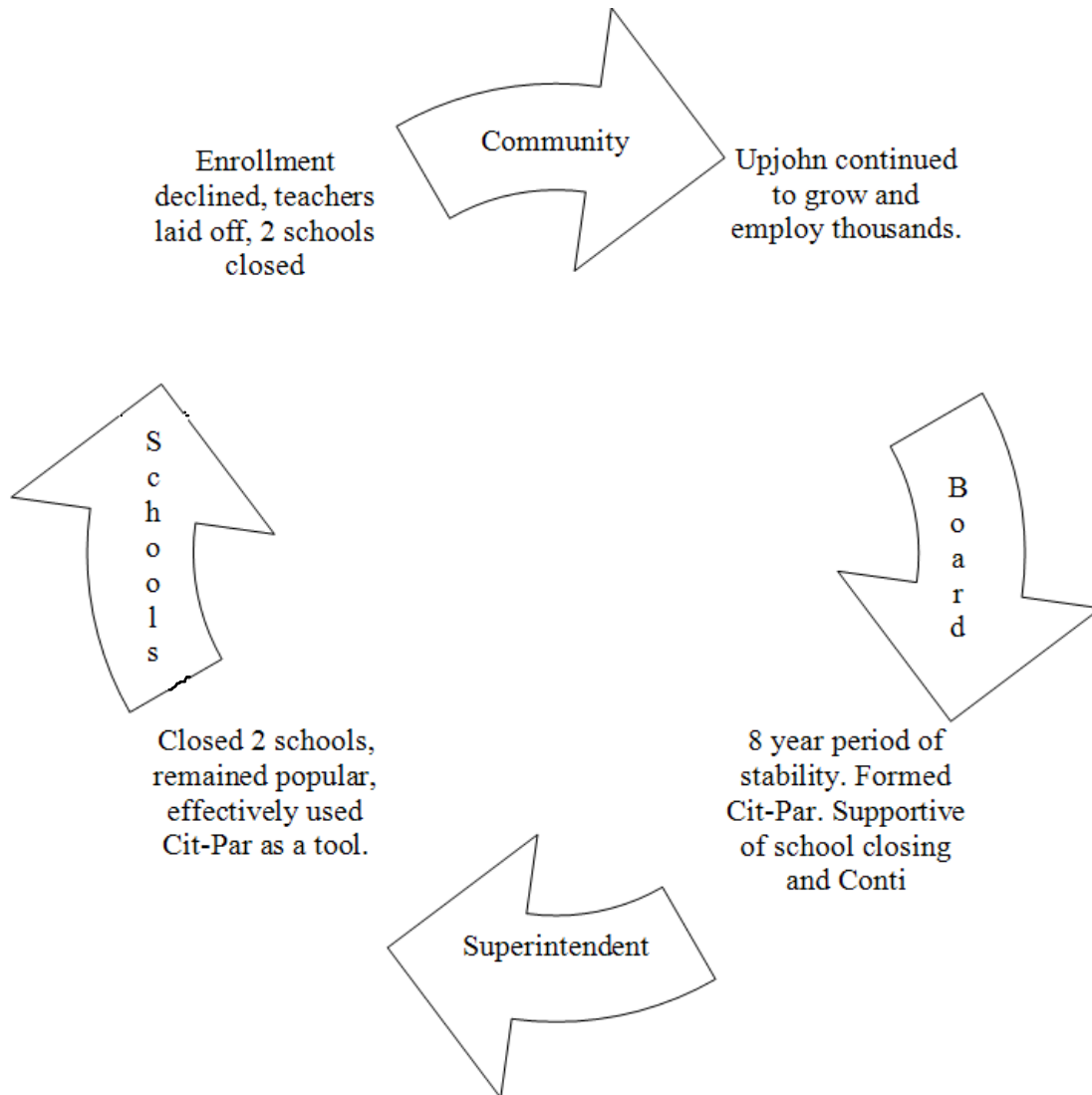


Figure 25: Conti Period of Quiescence

1979-Period of Politicization-Conflict-Return to Quiescence

Community

In the 1980s, Upjohn continued to be the primary economic force in Portage. Upjohn experienced a pause in their growth in 1983 when the company announced its first ever sales decline and a subsequent reorganization; however, after the approval of the painkiller ibuprofen in early 1984, they began to expand again (Massie & Schmitt, 1998).

The baby boom had ended, so there were more homes in the community with fewer children.

School Board

The Board membership had remained stable for eight years until 1979 when there were four years through the election of 1983 with a new member elected. The changes occurred without the defeat of an incumbent. Werme and Overlander both left the Board because they were elected to city and county offices that could be described as promotions. Another Board member did not seek re-election after his children graduated. In 1983 Liggett, elected in 1981, left the area and was replaced. If an incumbent is not defeated, dissatisfaction can occur; as Iannaccone (1982) stated, "A decision by two incumbent board members not to seek re-election has the same effect as an initial incumbent defeat after a period of political quiescence" (p. 108). The Board members left due to promotions to other positions or for reasons other than a defeat in an election. While four new members joined the Board, none of them left at the same time. Reflective of elite board behavior, the PPS Board was able to indoctrinate new members into their culture with no apparent instability or signs of arena board behavior (Bailey, 1965).

Schools

Closing two elementary schools in 1980 alleviated PPS financial concerns for a short period of time. However, the enrollment in PPS continued to decline to 8,600 students or approximately 2,000 fewer than only five years before, and in 1982 Conti recommended that it was necessary to close two additional elementary schools, Milham and Lexington Green. The administration selected Milham because students could attend another nearby elementary school within walking distance of their homes and Lexington Green because it had a declining enrollment of 300 students, substantially lower than the

other PPS elementary schools. Lexington Green was a neighborhood school attended by students who lived in a tract of low cost homes that were built primarily with Housing Urban Development loans. In addition, the only trailer park in the city of Portage, Chateau Estates, was in the same attendance area within walking distance of the school.

The years immediately following the school closings in 1982 lacked the controversy of closing schools and redistricting students. For two decades, from 1966 to 1986, there were few changes in administrative personnel, one in the early 1980s when Dr. Kenneth Harper left his position as Assistant Superintendent to become a superintendent in Zeeland, Michigan and a second in 1984 when the business manager, Wartner, was elected to the State House of Representatives.

Special Interest Groups

Parents formed a group, Save East Portage (SEP), to support keeping schools open in the eastern quadrant of the District. They argued that the first two schools that were closed, Ramona and Pershing, were both in east Portage. If the Board voted to close Lexington Green Elementary, the result would be only two elementary schools, Lake Center and Waylee, remaining in east Portage, and one of those, Waylee Elementary, was one block away from the dividing line of Portage, Westnedge Avenue.

Milham Elementary parents were equally adamant about the reasons for keeping their school open. Their parent group pointed out that they had raised funds to develop the school playground and that they had supported PPS in the past, and now they requested that the District reciprocate. Despite the pleadings of Lexington Green and Milham Elementary parent groups, PPS closed the two schools in the summer of 1982.

During the debate about closing schools, an interest group consisting of the parents of gifted and talented students spoke passionately about the needs of their “minority” students (Board Minutes). They requested assurances that, no matter how difficult budgetary times were, the Board would keep the Personal Enrichment Program (PEP) intact.

Summary

In 1980 Conti was able to successfully close two schools with a minimum of upheaval in the community. However, following the first two closures, the Board experienced a turnover that may have indicated dissatisfaction. The nature of the turnover, though, revealed that although special interest groups had emerged, the Board members who departed were not defeated in an election, and two departed to run for other elected positions.

The special interest groups that approached the Board during the school closures indicated a struggle between factions in the community. The factions, by virtue of their appearance before the Board, attempted to socialize their conflict (Schattschneider, 1975). Throughout Conti’s years as superintendent, the Board maintained elite board behavior. On five different occasions when members were leaving the Board, they did so at a time when their replacement could be selected by the Board and not through a popular election. Board minutes and informant accounts both reveal that there was little disagreement among Board members. The elite Board favored the suppression of and privation of conflict. The SEP group was countered by other values of the community to maintain academic programming and services for the gifted, athletics, and the arts. For Conti and the Board to satisfy the wants of SEP and the parent teacher organizations would have required severely damaging the educational system favored by a majority of the community. Conti correctly

represented the dominant values of the community when he recommended closure of schools in areas of the community that had the least impact on the most influential members of the population. This was Lipset (1932) claimed, “a logic of self-interest of exploiting the masses to maintain or extend their own privilege and power” (p. 35); in other words, the oligarchy would first represent their own interests (Michaels, 1911). Closing Lexington Green in an area where the enrollment included trailer houses and low income government housing and two other schools that were not located in neighborhoods demonstrated again that Conti recognized the predominant values of the community. Conti’s actions at the institutional level reflected that he projected legitimacy for the organization. His managerial activities continued to direct resources toward activities most valued by the community: academics, athletics, and the arts. The technical activities at the core continued to produce students who graduated to pursue professional degrees and professions. Conti’s decisions allowed the District to maintain an educational system that transmitted the values of the community. Board minutes reflected that during the closure of Lexington Green and Milham, the SEP and parent groups did increase attendance at Board meetings. The citizens, though, were not able to gain traction in their interest to socialize their conflict. As Schattschneider stated, “Conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it” (p. 4). For their cause, keeping two schools open on the east side of Portage, the SEP could not, and therefore the conflict that they hoped to create was unsuccessful. The result of Conti’s action was verified in the next election when there were no changes in Board membership, signifying a final test election (Iannaccone, 1982) and a return to quiescence.

Conti served as superintendent for 16 years. The first ten years, PPS was undergoing a period of quiescence followed by three years of conflict and then the final three years with a return to quiescence.

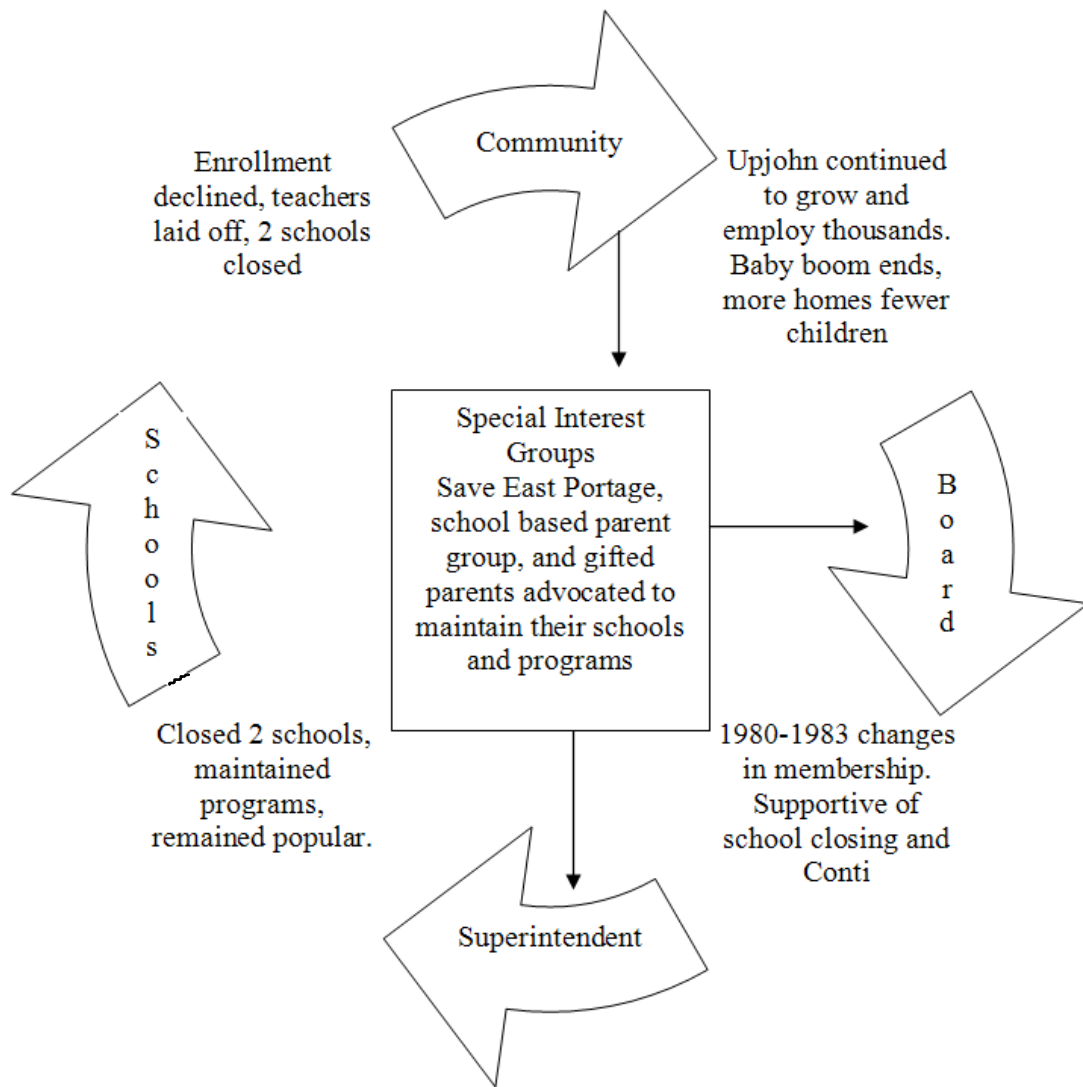


Figure 26: Conti Period of Politicization, Return to Quiescence

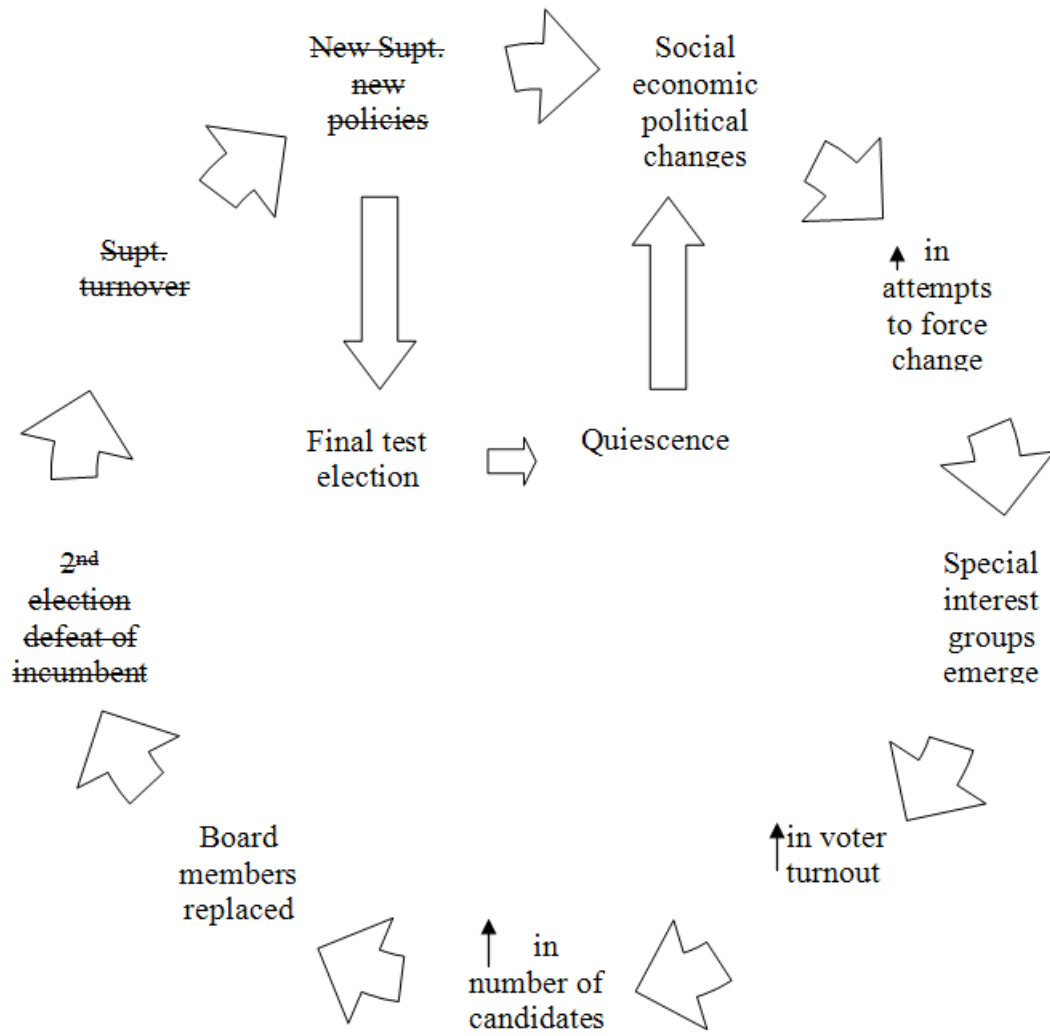


Figure 27: Conti Era Dissatisfaction and Results

Voluntary Superintendent Turnover and Selection

Superintendent

In 1985 Conti announced to the Board his intention to retire. The Board minutes documented his statement like this:

Dr. Conti announced his intent to retire at the end of the 1985-86 school year, or at the very latest at the conclusion of the 1986-87 school year. He said his plans called for his return to the Portage Schools as its superintendent for the coming year, but that the second year remained an uncertainty. He spoke to the importance of the working relationship between the Superintendent and the Employee Relations Director, and suggested that the Board proceed to name a “superintendent-elect,” a person who would immediately assume the position of Employee Relations Director, but would become the Superintendent. (Board Minutes, April 1985, p. 313)

That evening the Board voted to support the hiring of a superintendent-elect. The Board minutes reflected these comments:

The Board discussed this suggestion [hiring a superintendent-elect], expressed appreciation to Dr. Conti for making his retirement announcement in a timely manner which permitted an orderly transition. They also acknowledged his leadership contributions to the school district as its superintendent over the past 15 years...A motion was offered by Mr. Flynn and was supported...that the position of superintendent-elect be created...[and that] the search committee be comprised of Board officers... Dr. Boyer suggested that the Board should retain as much flexibility as possible. Considerable discussion occurred on this issue, prior to the question being called on the motion, which carried. (Board Minutes, April 1985, p. 313)

The District was in the midst of a period of quiescence, and the Board was supportive of Conti and the direction of the schools. Consequently, Conti was able to retire on his terms, which included a transition where his successor would be selected before his retirement.

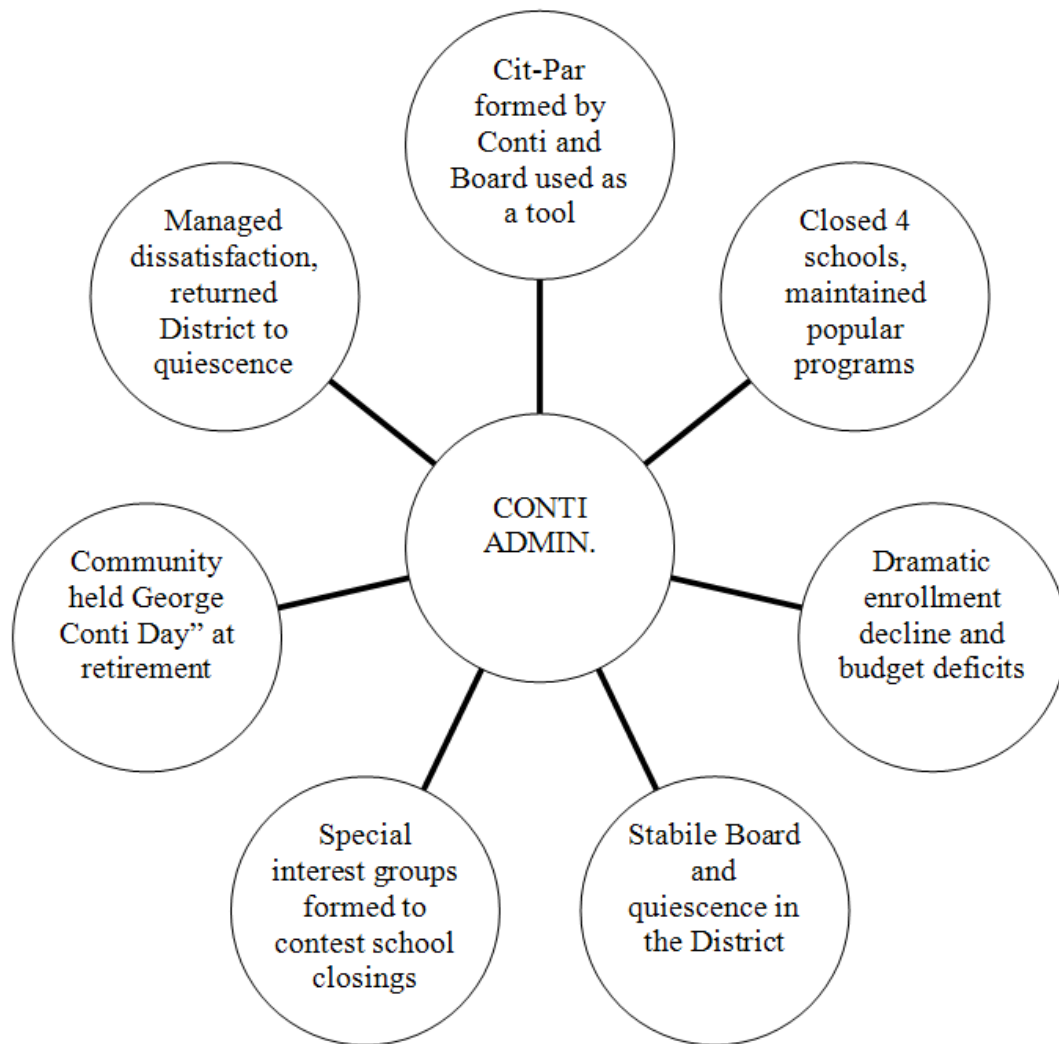


Figure 28: Conti Era

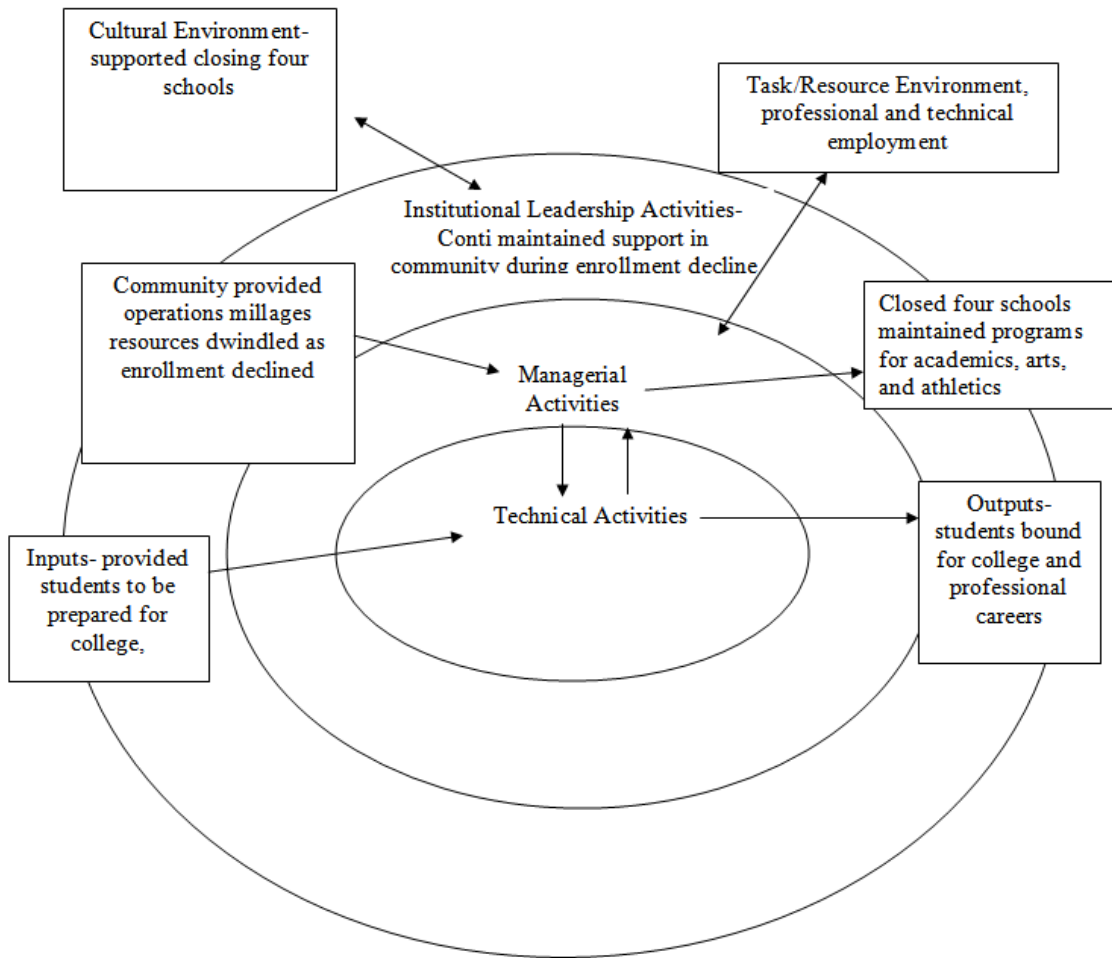


Figure 29: Conceptual Model of an Organization- Conti Era

School Board

The PPS Board had not experienced a change in membership for two years, and the majority of the Board, including its leadership, had been in place for five years or more: the President Ellinger (1972), Boyer (1967), Dolan (1979) and Atkinson (1980). The remaining three members had joined the Board two to three years before; in 1982, Sheldon was elected when he defeated a 12-year member of the Board, Glass, in 1983, Flynn after Baker did not seek re-election, and then the same year Wisser was named to replace Liggett, who left the community. The two consecutive elections without a change in Board

membership signified that after the period of conflict they had returned to quiescence.

Danis (1984) wrote that if socioeconomic changes were not present, if the second election did not focus on policy issues, and if incumbent board members were re-elected instead of challengers, a return to quiescence was possible. The changes to the Board occurred one at a time and were not contested elections. The superintendent and Board had recently experienced conflict from some parts of the community when they closed two additional schools. The new trustees were not members of the groups who had contested the closings, nor were there any other indicators that the new members sought election to make changes to the schools. In addition, Board minutes reflected no arena behaviors on the part of the new trustees, and therefore it appeared as though they quickly assimilated to the culture of the elite Board.

Superintendent Selection during Quiescence

After Conti announced his plan to retire, the Board of Education named a special Selection Committee to seek his replacement. According to informants, the Board had a preferred candidate that they considered to be a perfect fit. In 1985 there was little political conflict, a period of quiescence when the board and community have determined that the schools were appropriately administered (Iannacone and Lutz, 1994). During quiescence Freeborn (1966) found that, most often, insiders are appointed to replace existing superintendents.

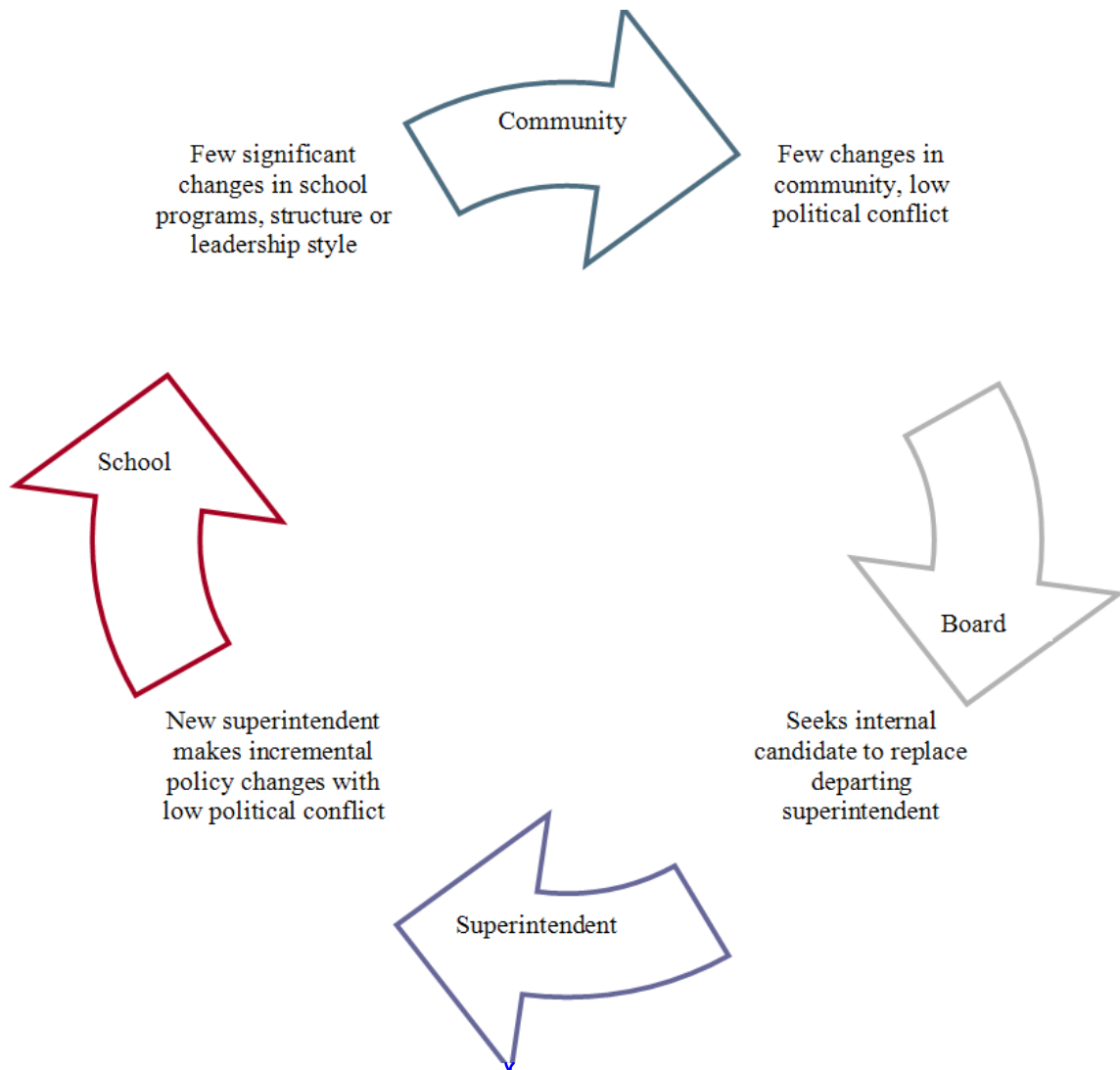


Figure 30: Superintendent Selection During Quiescence

The Board Committee reviewed “several sets of credentials for the position and had interviewed three candidates” (Board minutes, June 1985, p. 350). Board minutes and informants indicated that the Board expected a sizeable field of candidates; however, the applicant pool was small likely because, as one informant stated, “The word was out that the job was wired for a former assistant of George’s, so no one else bothered to apply” (personal correspondence, March 2003). The inside candidate was Dr. Kenneth Harper, who had left Portage a few years earlier to gain experience as a superintendent in a smaller district, Zeeland Public Schools.

The Board of Education Selection Committee stated that it was their intention to bring two candidates to the full Board for the final interview process (Board Minutes). The Selection Committee started with three candidates and nearly immediately deemed one of the three candidates as unacceptable. The two that remained were Harper and Mr. James Ridders from Parchment, a small district in Kalamazoo County. Ridders had been the superintendent in Parchment for three years, a position he accepted after he had been the high school principal for one year. He had relocated to Parchment from Walled Lake, in the Detroit area, where he left a position as an assistant principal at a larger high school.

According to an informant, Ridders was at first reluctant to apply. The informant stated that after a Board meeting in Parchment, he went out for a beer with Ridders. The informant recalled the conversation; he said to Ridders, “You should apply for the Portage job” (personal communication, March 2003). According to the informant, Ridders responded that he wasn’t interested. After they talked for a while longer over another beer, he convinced Ridders that he had a legitimate chance at the job, and Ridders eventually decided to apply. The informant, who was involved with the Selection Committee, described the selection process for replacing Conti this way:

He [Conti] was doing a great job and the Board was looking for someone exactly like him to take over. Everybody knew Ken Harper because he had been George’s assistant and was well liked. He also had experience as a superintendent at a smaller district and he was definitely Dutch – he was a perfect fit. The bottom line was that he was flat out their choice, no question. All he had to do was come down and do the courtesy interview and the job was his. Instead, he came in for his interview and wanted the Board to know that he was going to be his own man. In the interview, he told them that the curriculum wasn’t good, that there was this

problem and that problem and that they [Portage] were not as good as they thought they were. That made the Board so angry, they didn't even want anything to do with him after that. They were so mad; they didn't want to bring him in for the second interview. After some convincing by me and a few other people they finally decided to bring him in for the second interview, but they knew they weren't going to hire him. Harper knew they weren't going to hire him either, so to save face, he withdrew. The reason he gave us was that he had not told his Board he was interviewing and the interviews were going to be conducted live on cable access television so he had to withdraw. (personal correspondence, March, 2003)

In the end, the Selection Committee was left with one candidate to bring before the Board for a final interview. Ridders related his story of how he was selected to become superintendent in Portage:

The Board narrowed it down to the superintendent from Zeeland and me. They set up the second interviews that they were going to televise on cable access. The day before the interviews, the guy from Zeeland withdrew because he had not told the Board in Zeeland he was interviewing for the job. (personal correspondence)

Harper's administrative assistant in Zeeland was aware that he had moved to his position there from Portage. When the researcher asked her about her recollections about Harper interviewing in Portage in 1985, the administrative assistant paused and asked, "Where are you from" (personal correspondence, April 2003). When informed again that the caller was from Portage, she stated, "Well that stinker, wait until I talk to him, he didn't tell anyone here he applied for another job" (2003). She went on to describe Harper as a fine person who was "loved" in Zeeland, adding he recently retired from there after serving as superintendent for 16 years (2003).

An informant described the PPS superintendent search and the selection of Ridders this way, “We had a friend of ours on the selection committee, and Ridders was not the first choice of the committee” (personal correspondence, 2001). A former District administrator described Dr. Harper as a “fine person” and added that most everyone in Portage thought he would be the next superintendent. When asked what happened and why Harper did not become superintendent, the informant stated that the word was that the Board wouldn’t meet his salary demands and therefore he withdrew. After making that statement, the informant looked around so to know he could not be overheard and stated “I don’t think Jim [Ridders] was their [the Board’s] first choice” (personal correspondence, November, 2003).

After Harper withdrew, the full Board was faced with the dilemma of whether to interview the remaining candidate or to open the process up and seek additional applicants. They elected to interview the remaining candidate. The Board minutes reflected the interview this way:

Mr. Ridders was present, and an interview of about 45 minutes followed. Board members asked questions on educational philosophy; background and experience of the candidate; comments and reactions to the study, “A Nation at Risk”; leadership style; familiarity with such programs as Young Fives and Academically Gifted and Talented; curriculum planning; residence in the Portage School District; and the role of public education in American society. Mr. Ridders responded to each of the questions, elaborating on some and answering others more briefly...Mr. Ellinger then brought the interview to a close. (Board Minutes, June 1985, p. 350)

Shortly after the interview, the Board named Ridders superintendent-elect and he began working for Portage Schools in that capacity during the summer of 1985.

There was one official complaint about Ridders being hired as superintendent.

Board minutes reflected the following:

He voiced concern over the procedure used to recruit and select the superintendent-elect. He criticized the Board for not being more public in its efforts, not only to keep the public informed but to gain input as well. He said that the Board appeared to be in a “great, big hurry” and that a slower, more carefully planned approach may have resulted in attracting someone from out of the geographical area “with fresh ideas.” He also criticized the Board for not announcing the names of the other finalists, and for not conducting more interviews publicly. (Board Minutes, July 1985, pp. 355-356)

The Board President responded that there had been ample communication through the media and Board Minutes. He added that “advertising of the position was extensive” (p. 356). He further stated that “The search committee had intended to present two candidates to the Board for final consideration, but one of the final two had withdrawn in the last few days prior to the Board meeting” (p. 356). A motion was offered to name Ridders superintendent-elect with a two-year contract. The motion passed unanimously. Ridders began work in Portage during the summer of 1985, and in the fall Conti announced that he would be retiring July 31, 1986.

Summary

Consistent with what could be expected during a period of quiescence, in 1985 the Board coveted a new superintendent whom they knew fit the characteristics that they desired, someone similar to the retiring Conti. The Board had already identified Harper as the likely successor to Conti but still designated a committee of three trustees to consider candidates so that they could bring two finalists to interview with the full Board.

According to several informants, the candidate pool was stifled due to the perception that the Board preferred Harper (personal communication). The Board created a process that appeared open, advertising the opportunity and accepting applications; however, whether intentional or not, the process was tilted in the direction of their preferred candidate and thereby became a symbolic process. This became problematic when Harper withdrew and the Board selected the remaining candidate, Ridders, who did not fit the characteristics they admired in Conti and desired in a superintendent. Ridders was not an outgoing person or a great communicator; he did not possess Conti's charisma, nor did he have the same level of education or experience.

The consequence of the Board's action was that the new superintendent was selected using a closed process that did not result in the type of candidate that they desired. The Board had the option of altering the selection procedure to create an open process when so few candidates applied for the position. The Portage Board disregarded a second opportunity to convert from a symbolic closed process to an open process after Harper withdrew, and by doing so they failed to remedy the problem caused by the shallow applicant pool. The fact that the Board chose to conduct the initial interviews in private through a small selection committee provided further evidence that they were not interested in an open democratic process for replacing Conti.

Democracy is a socializing event, not a privatizing event, with conflict being the primary organizer (Schattschneider, 1975). A Board that identifies a cluster of candidates who embody the characteristics they desire and then conduct public interviews is more likely to select a candidate who represents their values. In Portage the Board privatized the superintendent selection, thereby circumventing the democratic process, which, in turn,

resulted in the selection of a superintendent who was mismatched with the community and its values.

When the Board identified Harper as their preferred candidate, they could have elected to interview him and complete the process necessary to interview and negotiate a contract with him. That process would have allowed them to confirm that he was the proper fit to become the Portage superintendent and determine if he would accept the position. Freeborn (1966), Carlson (1961), and others have established that a district in the midst of a period of quiescence, one in which the board is satisfied with the administration, operation, and direction of their schools, would be expected to select a candidate from within. Harper, who had left only a few years before to gain experience as a superintendent, was considered the internal candidate. Instead, the Board elected to convey the message that the selection was open to outside candidates. Eventually when the Board determined that they no longer wanted to hire Harper and Harper withdrew, their alternative choice was limited to Ridders. They ignored democracy, which would have resulted in opening the process and collecting a group of candidates representative of their values, and instead selected Ridders as their superintendent.

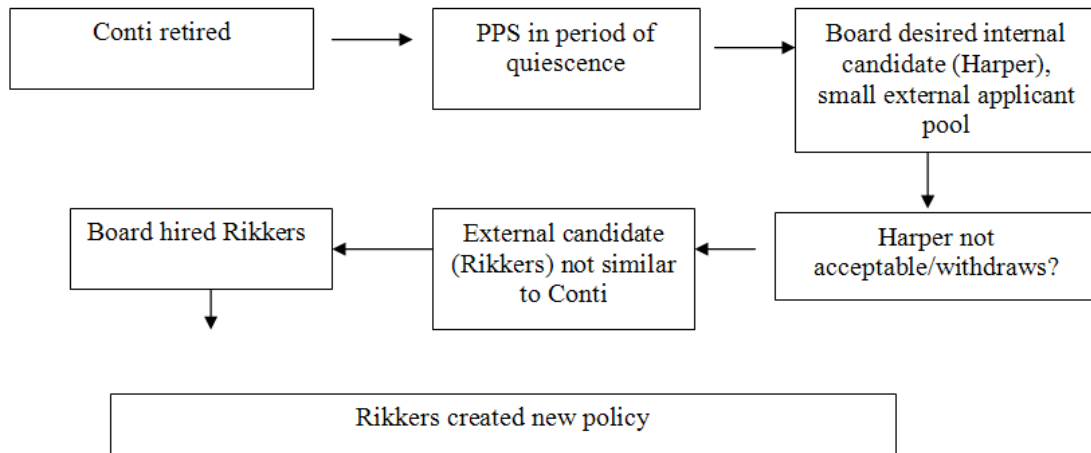


Figure 31: Selection of Ridders

1986-Ridders Era: Conflict Revealed

Community

Led by the Upjohn Company, the community of Portage continued to thrive. The residential housing market was strong and Portage continued to benefit as the preferred place in the area for professional families to reside. The City of Portage developed its infrastructure and through zoning changes encouraged commercial construction on South Westnedge, where the opening of new large stores was nearly an annual event (Massie & Schmitt, 1998). In 1988 the City of Portage celebrated its 25th anniversary by opening a new city hall building. The City Hall was constructed in a location that included the library, police and fire stations, and other municipal facilities, forming the city center.



Figure 32: Portage City Hall

School Board

The first contested election of Ridders superintendency occurred in 1987; three individuals ran for two seats, and a new trustee was elected to the Board. Boyer, an incumbent, did not seek re-election. The other incumbent was re-elected, and the second seat was won by Garling. An informant stated that the new trustee was a good friend and that she ran to “shake things up” (personal correspondence). Later in the year another Board member left and was replaced by Sheldon, who, due to work commitments, had not sought re-election and left in 1986.

The 1987 election followed new policy put in place after Conti retired. Since the District had been in a period of quiescence when Conti left, the first election following his

departure would not have been considered a test election. In addition, since the election did not result in the defeat of an incumbent and the Board gained only one new member, it did not fit the criteria as defined by Innaccone (1982) for the rejection of a policy mandate. However, since one of the candidates ran to “shake things up” (personal correspondence) it was an indicator that at least one member of the Board was less than satisfied and supported by a sufficient portion of the community to be elected.

School Administration

Ridders made several administrative changes during the first two years of his superintendency. Ridders announced when he was still Superintendent-elect that there would be a “reorganization of the administration with an emphasis on curriculum” (Board Minutes, 1986, p. 425). The reorganization included hiring of new administrative staff: an Employee Relations Director, Coordinator of Curriculum, and a Director of Building and Grounds (1986). The Board approved Ridders’ first recommendation after discussing whether they should delay their decision to provide an opportunity for community input (1986). Within a year after Ridders became superintendent, several key administrators began to depart. The first was Vliek, a member of the District Office Administration and the Board secretary for 18 years. He stated that his reason for leaving was that “it was just so different [after Conti left] that I couldn’t take it any more” (personal correspondence, 2003). The second was Pellowe, another long time administrator who had been a high school principal before becoming a member of Conti’s District Office Administration, who announced his plans to retire in April. In May of 1987, Ridders again changed the administrative structure when he recommended Mike Collins as an Administrative Assistant (from his position as Assistant City Manager of Portage) and Marsha Wells as Director of Instruction. Board members questioned Ridders about why Wells needed to be

hired so quickly and Ridders explained that “he needed to bring her on board now so she could be present for an administrative in-service scheduled for June 9” (Board Minutes, May 22, 1987 p. 119).

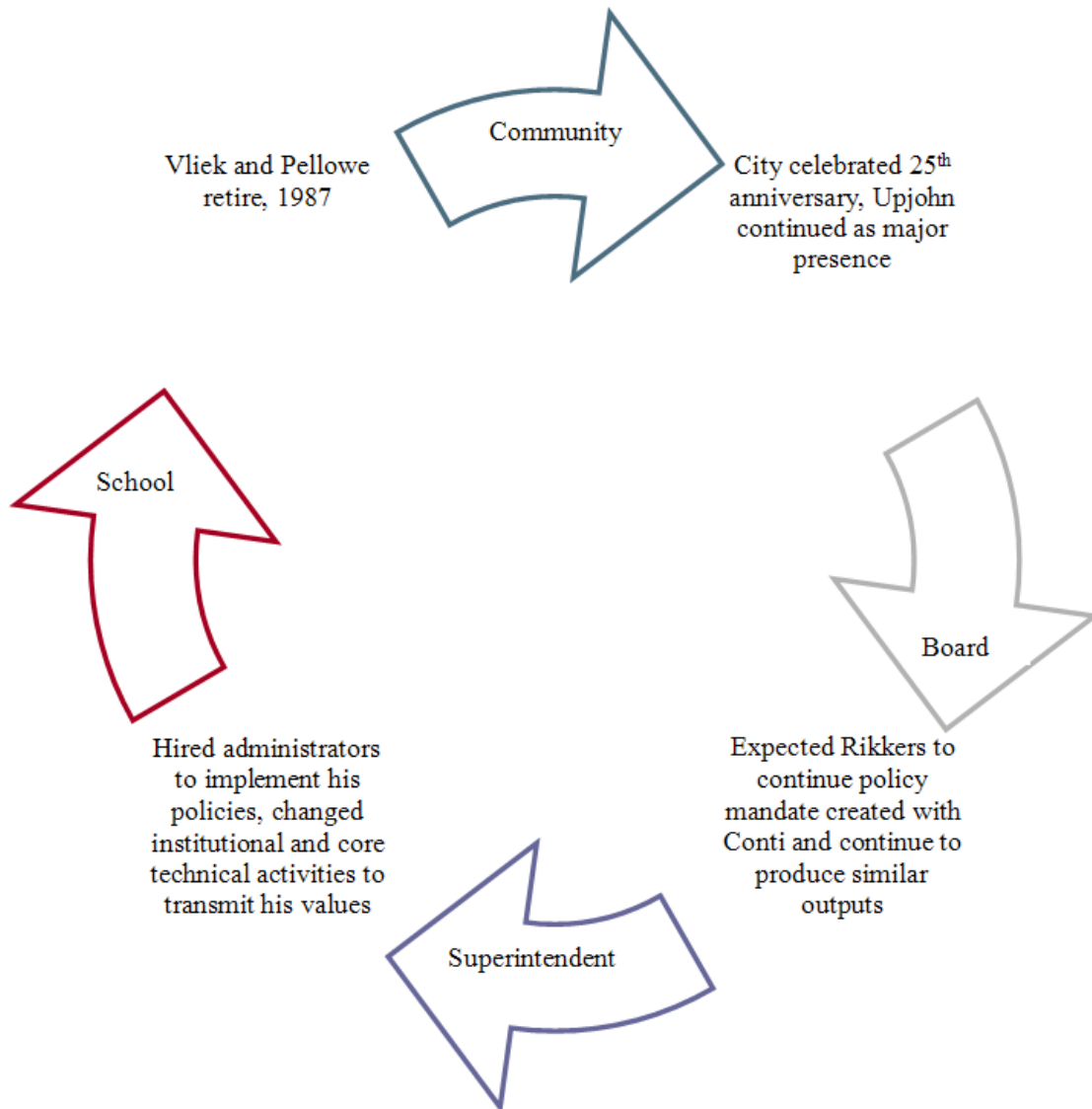


Figure 33: Vlieg and Pellowe Exit the System

Schools

Portage Schools entered into two agreements, one to join Education for Employment (EFE), the county consortium for vocational education, and a second to participate in a new venture with start-up funds provided by the Upjohn Company, the

Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center (KAMSC). KAMSC was a half-day program held at a building in Kalamazoo Public Schools for the education of the top high school math and science students in the county. The program provided a limited number of slots for each county school district where selected students received their math and science instruction. In return, the sending district paid KAMSC half of their state funded per-pupil allotment. Portage Public Schools did not create or control the curriculum in either EFE or KAMSC. The District also started Community High School, an alternative education program primarily to serve high school dropouts. The EFE consortium had been in place for a few years, but Conti had declined to participate. Joining the EFE consortium was an institutional decision that changed the outputs of the organization. The opportunity for PPS students to attend KAMSC fit the technical output expected by the environment, advanced academic opportunities to prepare students for college. In addition, the sponsorship of Upjohn provided immediate legitimacy. For the institution, providing the resources for the KAMSC, where PPS students could learn with the brightest math and science students from throughout the county, was a popular decision. In effect, the cultural environment, dominated by Upjohn, presented Ridders an opportunity that he could not refuse. On the other hand, EFE did not fit the output demanded by the environment. By electing to join the EFE consortium, Ridders was allocating resources to a program that was not viewed as college preparatory. In addition, because of the consortium, PPS students would attend EFE programs in other schools, and non-PPS students would be coming to PPS schools for EFE programs. The environment provided resources for PPS students, not for other students throughout the county.

By creating the alternative school, once again Ridders allocated resources to a program that did not support the output desired by the environment.

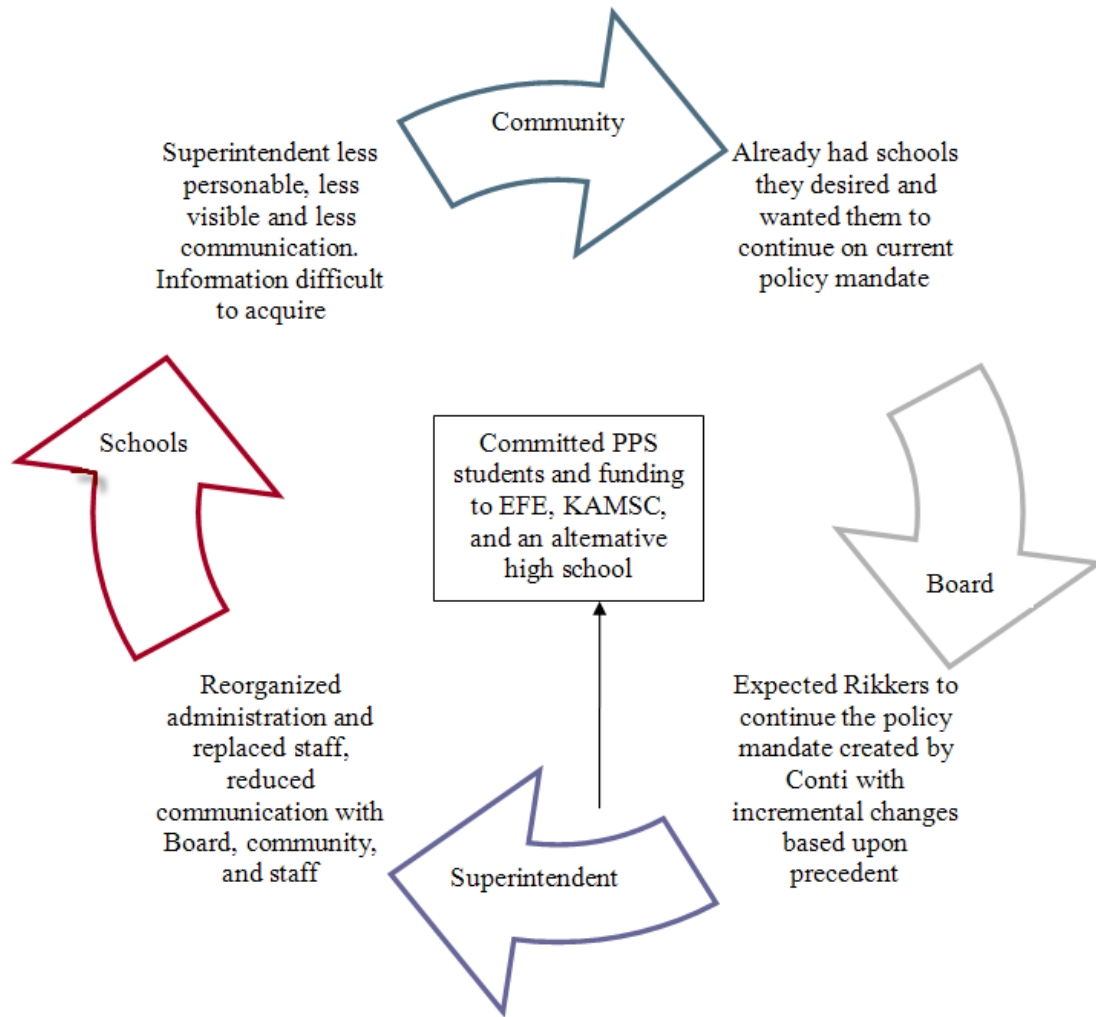


Figure 34: Rikker's First Policy Adjustments

Summary

The Board hired Ridders during a period of quiescence. Lindblom (1968) described the policy adjustment during quiescence as incrementalism change that resulted in low political conflict. Incremental policy changes build consistently upon previous decisions and precedent so that during a period of quiescence, the superintendent can predict that a new policy based upon consistent interpretation and precedent should be well accepted by the community. In the absence of dissatisfaction, the policies that come from incrementalism benefit from the credibility of the board and administration so that with

each subsequent policy change, the precedent creates the next policy change incrementally. In a community that is not exhibiting social, economic, and political changes when a superintendent and board adhere to a process that creates gradual changes in policy that transmit the values of the community, they could anticipate a continued period of quiescence.

The application of Parson's (1960) and Thompson's (1967) theory of organizations would indicate that the institutional leader of the organization would continue to support managerial activities that supported the outputs, that were demanded by the community that would in turn allow the institution to continue to receive the inputs from the environment. By continuing to provide the desired outputs, the institutional leader would provide the legitimacy necessary for the organization to continue to attract the inputs as it had under Conti. From the beginning, though, Ridders began to make decisions that changed the allocation of resources by the managerial activity. The departure of Vlieg and Pellowe, along with Ridders' reorganization of the administration, revealed a superintendent who was at odds with the expectations of the Board. As would be expected, the Board was hesitant to approve the managerial changes and consequently nearly delayed their decision before reluctantly approving Rikker's first reorganization. In the event of involuntary turnover, the Board and Superintendent together create the new policy mandate (Iannaccone, 1982); however, during a voluntary turnover, policy change occurs incrementally and is a cooperative effort between the board and superintendent (Lindblom, 1968). In Portage the Board desired the policies created with Conti; therefore, consistent with acceptable change during a period of quiescence, they expected incremental versus wholesale changes. Furthermore, the changes recommended by Ridders appeared to surprise the Board and therefore were not a cooperative effort (1968).

When Ridders committed PPS to join the EFE consortium and started the alternative school, he allocated PPS resources to areas that were not supported by the environment. Furthermore, they were not incremental policy changes consistent with previous decisions and therefore were met with resistance. Ridders was hired as a public servant to do what the community desired: maintain a school program that featured elite academics, athletics, and fine arts. When he began to change the administration, direction of the curriculum, and the allocation of resources away from the desired outputs as they were defined by the environment, he did what the community did not want done: instituted change. In effect, Rikker's changes resulted in the allocation of resources to create an output in vocational education in direct opposition to the values and ideology of the community, which were to direct academic resources to college preparation and other resources to the arts and athletics.

The initial period of conflict revealed some of the tactics that Ridders used throughout his superintendency: the departure of two key administrators, a decrease in communication evidenced by the Board's surprise when Ridders recommended hiring Wells, new programs, and creating new administrative staff positions. It is likely that the administrative resignations were not serendipitous. Ridders replaced individuals who recognized the contrast in styles between himself and Conti with those who would be loyal to him. Ridders expanded the number of District Office personnel and hired Collins, who was a well known Portage native, as well as an Employee Relations Director who was recommended by the Board attorney. The tactics fit the policy that Ridders desired: a privatized administrative structure that controlled the flow of information to the Board and community.

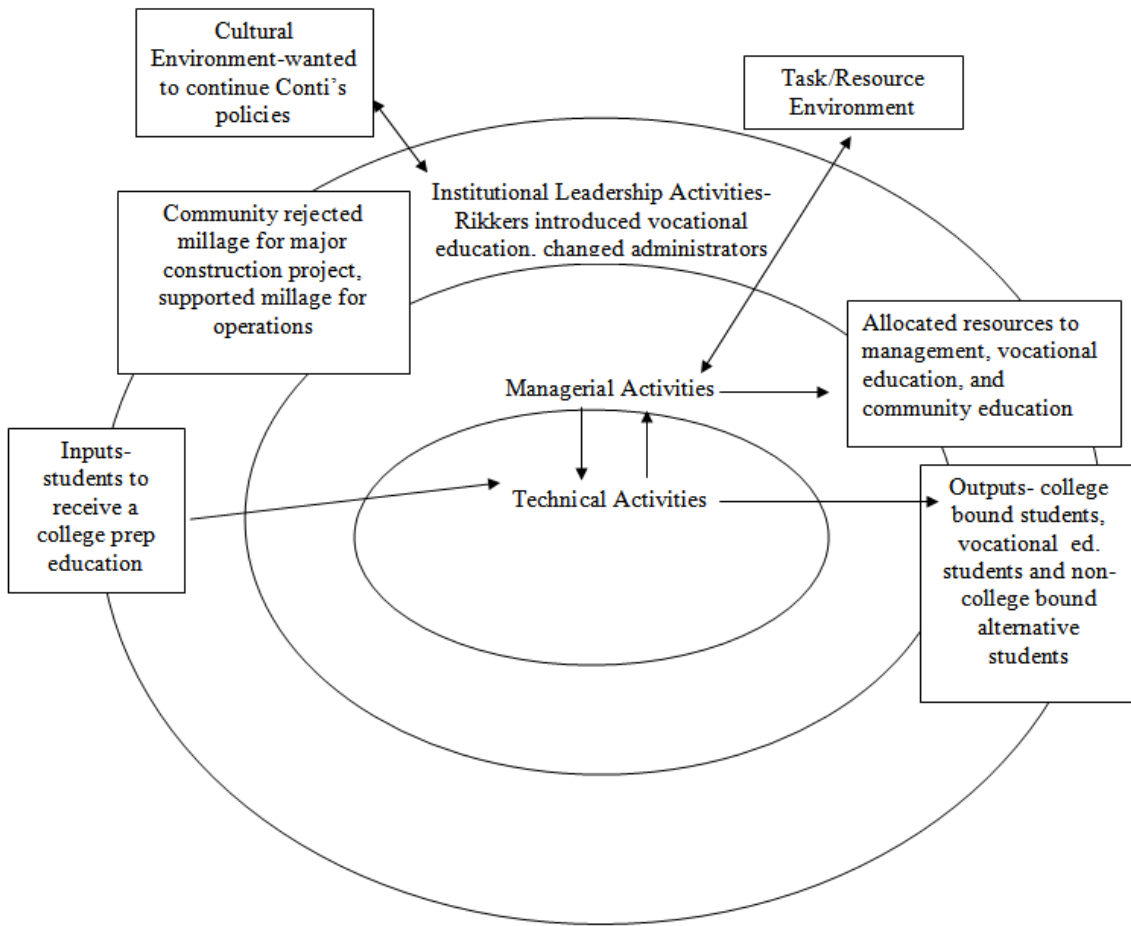


Figure 35: Conceptual Model of an Organization- Early Rikers Era

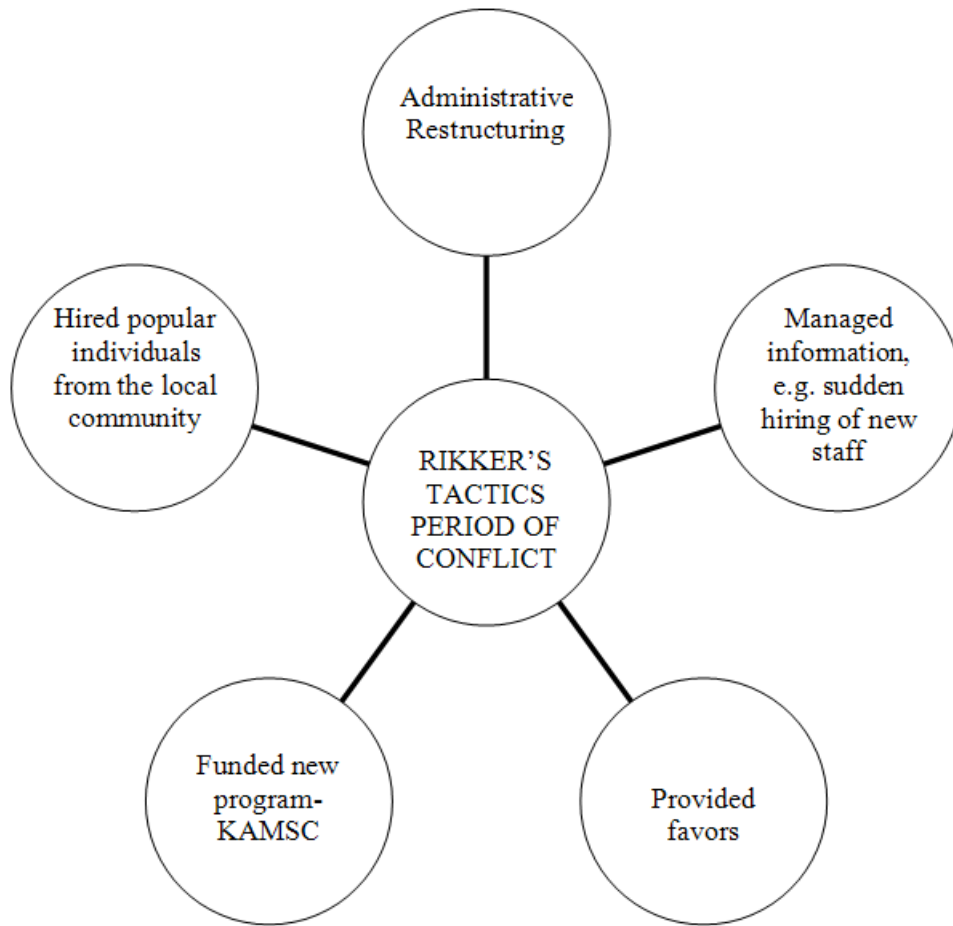


Figure 36: Rikker’s Tactics: Period of Conflict

1990- Rikker’s Era: Period of Politicization #1

Community

The national economy continued to improve through the 1990s, but in Portage, corporate decisions provided several setbacks. In 1992, General Motors (GM) announced they would phase out their operation in Kalamazoo County, a loss of 3,000 jobs. The plant closing removed a \$27 million payroll (Massie & Schmitt, 1998) from the local economy and adversely impacted businesses that supplied the plant. In addition, in 1991 Checker Motors moved their production machinery to a non-union facility in the south, and Nazareth College, a small Catholic school, announced it would close. Upjohn also was in

the news when claims surfaced that the blockbuster sleeping aid Halcion was responsible for bizarre behavior including a police officer shooting a friend. Soon after, sales of the drug dropped 45% and the company offered retirement incentives to reduce costs (Massie & Schmitt, 1998). Despite the poor economic news locally, employment records indicated that the area's unemployment rate was 4% compared to 6% statewide (1998).

School Board

In January 1990, the Board Vice-President, Sheldon, asked Ridders during a Board meeting about the status of the athletic program audit that had been promised by the administration. A Board trustee inquired if it was going to be a complete audit. Ridders assured the Board that the audit "is an overall review, currently in progress [and that] a written report will be provided to the Board at the first meeting in February" (Board Minutes, January 22, 1990 p. 1). In September 1990, a Board trustee stated again that the Board was still awaiting the audit of the athletic program. Ridders stated that "Dr. Parsons and Mrs. Wells are looking into the review and a written report would be coming in December" (Board Minutes September 24, 1990 p. 137). Over a year after it was promised, in February of 1991, the athletic program audit was presented to the Board.

In April of 1990, a teacher who was the basketball coach at Portage Central High School (PCHS) was fired from his coaching position. He complained that he was dissatisfied with the way the firing was handled. In his comments to the Board, he related that the Principal and the Athletic Director were behind him 100% and that they had talked to him the previous year about some friction that was going on that he worked to correct, and that he was given nothing but good feedback. He named a District Office Administrator and stated that she appeared to be the person who said he needed to be fired and that he had been told that there were four parents who were not happy and that there

was a negative perception [of the basketball program and his performance]. He stated that he was told “I have no Board support and that I should not come speak with them [the Board, and that] the administration did not want the parents coming to the school Board and they [the Board] did not want bad publicity” (Board Minutes, April 1990, p. 74). The Board President asked Ridders to do an investigation and bring a report back to them. At a later meeting, the Board president read a statement on behalf of the entire Board that they had never discussed whether or not to extend the employee’s coaching contract and that it would be inappropriate for them to function in that capacity.

In the June 1991 election, four candidates ran for two available seats on the Board of Education, and an incumbent was defeated. Pellowe, one of the two new Board members, read this statement at his first meeting as a Board member, “I chose communication as one of the themes of my campaign” (Board Minutes, July 8, 1991 p. 314). He characterized the current method of communication within the school district as “Me [the administration] speak, you [the public] listen” and that the key to improved communication begins with the “me listen, you speak” approach (p. 314). Pellowe also expressed his opinion that the superintendent should make long-range planning a priority. Pellowe, a former subordinate of Ridders who retired after a reorganization of the administration, made critical statements about the planning and communication of the Ridders administration indicated he was dissatisfied with the current status quo. Pellowe’s comments were another indicator that when Ridders began making decisions such as those to join EFE, he was not listening to the community.

At the July 8, 1991, organizational meeting, the Board elected Sheldon President. Sheldon was quoted in the minutes: “The job description of the Superintendent... was first drafted about four years ago and has not been re-evaluated or brought up to date” (p. 308).

The President further stated that the Board would be looking at a new evaluation tool and that the “Board felt it would be good to have both an internal and external evaluation of the superintendent’s position” (p. 309). During that same meeting, the Board voted to retain Ridders on a three-year contract through June 30, 1994.

In the 1991 school year, the Board approved a bond vote for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Ridders first presented a plan that included \$70 million of expenditures that were reduced to a ceiling of \$50 million. The Board struggled to agree on whether to approve the cuts suggested by the administration. One Board trustee stated she “could not support anything that exceeded \$50.2 million” (Board Minutes). Another trustee, Pellowe, expressed his concern about the CIP but also stated that to do nothing was not a realistic option. Eventually the Board approved a \$50 million bond proposal recommended by Ridders.

In November of 1991, the community defeated bond for the CIP by a margin of 40% yes, 60% no. In the presentation to the Board recommending the CIP, Ridders stated that they [the administration] collected information about what should be included in the bond proposal from a variety of stakeholders and prioritized the items. The final plan included major demolition and construction to the classroom instructional spaces, and the athletic and auditorium facilities were to be partially renovated at PCHS, an intense cross town rival of Portage Northern High School (PNHS). It also proposed adding classrooms at most of the elementary and middle schools, activity spaces at elementary schools, and new classrooms and air conditioning in the media center at PNHS. One of the major issues in the community and a source of friction in the District, adding a football stadium at PNHS, was not included in the proposal, so therefore PNHS would continue to play their home games at the stadium across the street from PCHS and three miles from their school.

As one long-time coach from PCHS related, “We knew that once that project was approved we would never get the facilities we needed” (personal correspondence). From the beginning, the project had significant opposition from the families that would attend PNHS and little support from the supporters of athletics at PCHS.

On August 12, 1991, Ridders presented to the Board a new high school grading regulation that had been promised in 1990. After presenting the regulation, he requested that the Board offer additional direction “which will allow the proposed regulation to be modified to meet the Board’s intent” (p. 332). The regulation brought controversy when parents expressed concerns that weighted grades were not considered for honors courses or for KAMSC students. In addition, students with a perfect a Grade Point Average (GPA) under the old regulation would, because the new regulation calculated less than a 4.0 for A- grades, reduce their overall GPA. Board members were concerned about the potential for confusion over the regulation and how that was going to be resolved by the administration. For several Board meetings, parents continued to express concerns about the new grading regulation, and throughout the discussions, Board members questioned the administration’s recommendation. The citizens requested the regulation be amended for several reasons: poor communication, the regulation was presented too soon before school started, students who took more rigorous classes had no opportunity to raise their GPA through weighted grading, and their belief that it should not impact students who were already in high school or their grades from previous years. Early in 1992, Ridders presented a report wherein he stated that in 1990, the Board had asked the administration to develop a grading regulation, and after a long discussion he interceded and directed the new regulation to go forward as written, but that plusses and minuses should be removed.

In June 1992 the Board extended Rikkers' contract through June 1995. Before the contract was renewed, the Board held a number of closed meetings to talk about the superintendent evaluation, and after the vote, they released the following statement:

Overall, Superintendent Rikkers' performance meets the Board's expectations for what is expected for the job as defined by the job description, job standards, and objectives. New goals were set for the superintendent including to define and improve the District's planning process and implement the final plan. To develop and implement a consistent evaluation process for all District employees. To establish competent support staff at all levels within the District and to establish consistent open-relationships with all facets of the school community and maintain effective lines of communication with each group. (Board Minutes, June 1992 p. 49)

In 1993, for the fourth time, the President of the Board, Sheldon, asked Rikkers about when a music report he had promised would be forthcoming. Rikkers explained the delay in the report by stating "there had been several job changes during the reorganization of the administrative team and that with resignations and new team members he now had his new administration in place so the report would be forthcoming in the near future" (Board Minutes, p. 171).

The defeat of an incumbent and two new Board members signified a Turning Point Election period (TPEP) and the beginning of a period of politicization (Iannaccone, 1982). In the 1991 election there were four candidates competing for two openings, whereas for the past three elections, there had been no contested elections (District records). According to Iannaccone (1982), an increase in the number of candidates competing for positions on

the board is a sign of dissatisfaction. Later in 1991 the bond issue defeat by a margin of 40% yes to 60% signified further dissatisfaction.

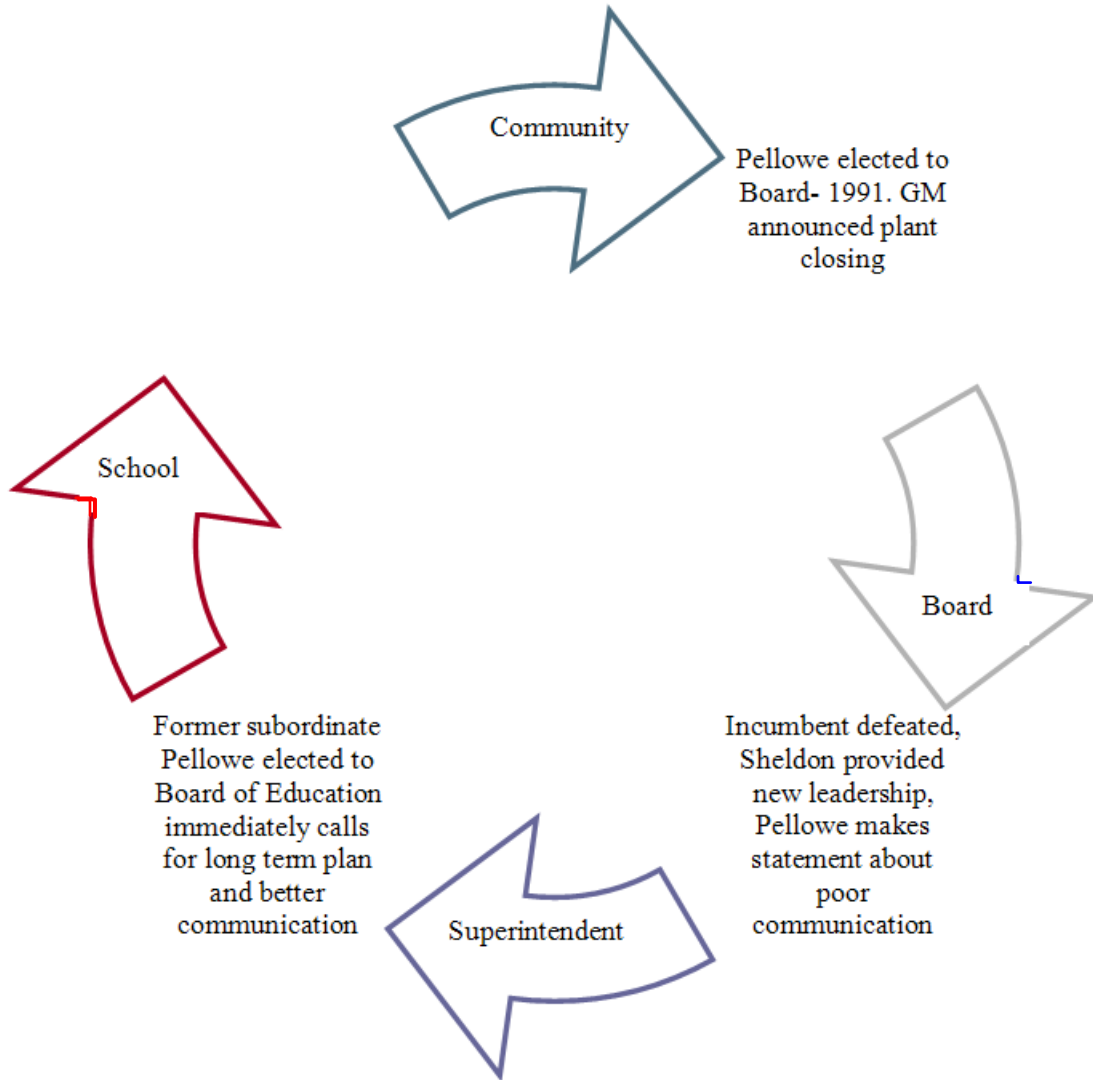


Figure 37: Pellowe Re-enters System

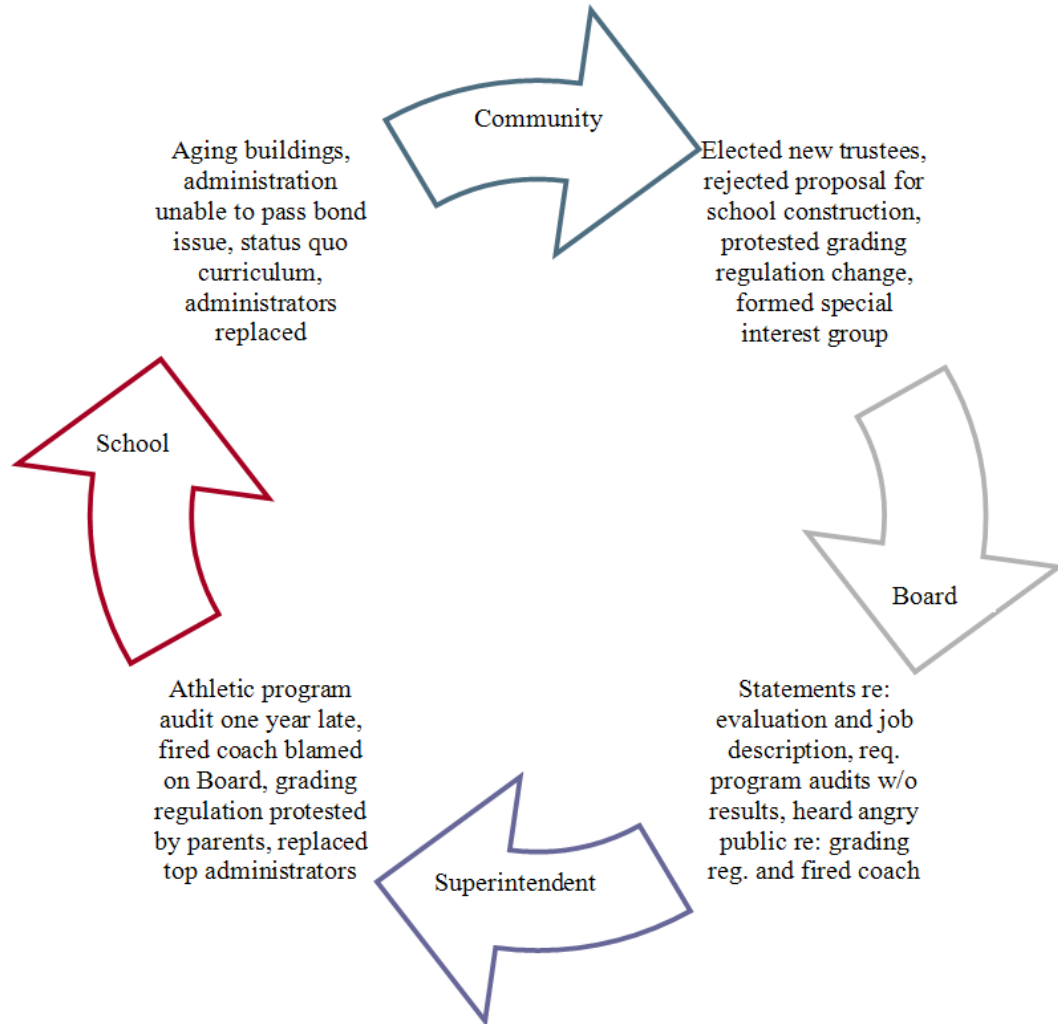


Figure 38: Dissatisfaction, Period of Politicization #1

Special Interest Group

Soon after the resolution of the grading regulation issue, a group of approximately 100 parents formed an Academic Boosters Club (ABC). The ABC was a coalition of parents of gifted, honors, and special needs students (personal coorespondence). The group attended Board meetings, and leaders of the group outlined the objectives for elementary and middle school education as defined by the ABC (Board Minutes). As Ridders continued to make decisions that were not reflective of the output desired by the environment, the ABC emerged as a special interest. The ABC was representative of an

environment that required elite academics so that their children could attend highly selective universities. Their organization was created to interact with the institutional activity to assure the outputs that they demanded.

School Administration

In 1992, the Director of K-12 Instruction, Wells, resigned. At the same meeting Ridders outlined his plans for reorganization in the District Office. He stated the new plan “would more appropriately and adequately support the District’s building based efforts” (Board Minutes, June 1992). He proposed hiring a Director of Elementary and Middle School Education and a Director of High School Education and School Improvement. The timeline and title changes were:

- June 1, 1992 -- Wells, Director of K-12 Instruction resigned effective June 30, 1992.
- July 27, 1992 -- McGonigle hired as Director of High School Education and School Improvement (formerly Principal at Kentwood High School, Michigan) and Frederick as Director of Elementary and Middle School Education (promoted from elementary principal position within PPS).
- September 17, 1992 -- Parsons, Curriculum Director, resigned, effective October 9, 1992.
- Retired PPS principals Garlick and Marsiglia hired as Communications Assistants.

Summary

Pellowe gained a seat on the Board in a contested election. His election completed a loop, from being in the schools as a building and District Office administrator, returning to the community when he retired, and then re-entering the schools as a member of the

Board four years later. In addition, Pellowe understood the inner workings of the District and, as a long-time member of the community, possessed a legitimacy with the citizens.

Pellowe made two public comments at his first meeting that indicated he was dissatisfied with Rikkers administration. He referred to the manner in which the administration communicated with the public as “me speak, you listen” (Board Minutes, July 8, 1991 p. 314) and the need for the development of a long-term plan by the Superintendent. Pellowe was a member of the old guard who previously had worked for Conti. He was elected by a community that had a great deal of respect for Conti, and his election indicated support from the community to place into a policy-making position someone who understood what they expected from their schools and superintendent. Pellowe came from the community, and by electing him, they provided a resource that knew what outputs they desired. His “me speak, you listen” comment informed Rikkers that by funding vocational and alternative education, he was not listening to his community.

The failed bond issue in 1991 was another indicator of dissatisfaction and further revealed that the institutional level did not reflect what the cultural environment would support, further demonstrating the cleavage between community expectations and the administration. Rikkers indicated in his presentation to the Board that they had collected information about what to include in the bond request from stakeholders in the community. However, the defeat, 40% yes – 60% no, proved that the plan developed by the administration did not reflect what the community wanted or misinterpreted the information. The elite Board, as Bailey (1963) described them as guardians of the public interest, failed to recognize the error in the recommendations. It further demonstrated the lack of understanding of a significant community value: they did not want to make do; they

lived in the community because they expected excellence. When the plan was reduced, the administration framed it as an effort to be fiscally responsible; however, in reality the vote indicated that was not what the community wanted. The outputs demanded by the environment were equity between high schools for elite academics, athletics, and fine arts. The plan that was put to the voters did not reflect those outputs; rather, it provided advantages in facilities that would translate into advantages in programming for certain parts of the community but not others. The community would not settle for the plan that Rikker's presented, and the proposal was defeated.

The grading regulation proposal generated more dissatisfaction and further underscored the divide between Ridders and the community. The regulation was not brought to the Board until long after it was promised and not presented until just before it was to be implemented at the beginning of the school year. When Ridders presented it he asked that the Board "offer additional direction ... which will allow the proposed regulation to be modified to meet the Board's intent" (Board Minutes, p. 332). His comment and the public discord over the new regulation revealed another tactic. Ridders presented the grading regulation, asked for comment, and then watched the discussion. The introduction of the regulation was such that the Board had little time to consider it because the beginning of school was imminent. As Schattschneider (1975) wrote, "The spectators are an integral part of the situation, for, as likely as not, the *audience* [emphasis added] determines the outcome of the fight" (p. 2). There appeared to be an attempt to both control information and delay the release of the information, and then, when the problem became socialized, Ridders followed what Schattschneider stated when he wrote: "The moral of this is: If a fight starts, watch the crowd, because the crowd plays the decisive role" (p. 3) when he adjusted the regulation in an attempt to placate community members (who later

formed the ABC) and quiet the situation. The regulation contained several components that parents considered flaws that they proceeded to point out at Board meetings over the next several months. Ridders failed to recognize that the regulation would penalize the very students that the community (institution) wanted supported the most, elite students. In effect, the new regulation penalized any student with all A's because each minus would decrease the overall GPA and, at least in the mind of their parents, make it more difficult to matriculate to highly selective colleges and universities. The administration had presented a regulation that would result in a competitive disadvantage for its own students. The lack of input and communication about the grading regulation came within months of Pellowe's opening statements as a Board member citing a lack of communication and the "me speak, you listen" attitude of the administration. Furthermore, the discord over the grading regulation came at a time when the District was asking their stakeholders for support for a major building project. When the ABC group formed their special interest group, it was a clear sign of dissatisfaction and another step in the cycle as described by Iannaccone (1982). Members of the ABC group cited the grading regulation as the factor that became a genesis for forming their organization (personal correspondence).

Period of Politicization #1 included multiple indicators of dissatisfaction from the community and Board. They were:

- Defeat of an incumbent BOE member
- Defeat of bond proposal by a large margin
- Citizen protest over sudden change in grading regulations
- Staff protest over firing of basketball coach and subsequent public BOE statement that they were not involved
- Special interest Academic Booster Club formed

- Newly elected BOE trustee comment about the attitude of the administration, “me speak you listen”
- Multiple candidates for BOE elections
- Trustee comments during BOE meetings requesting promised audits
- Multiple closed sessions of the Board to discuss the superintendent’s evaluation

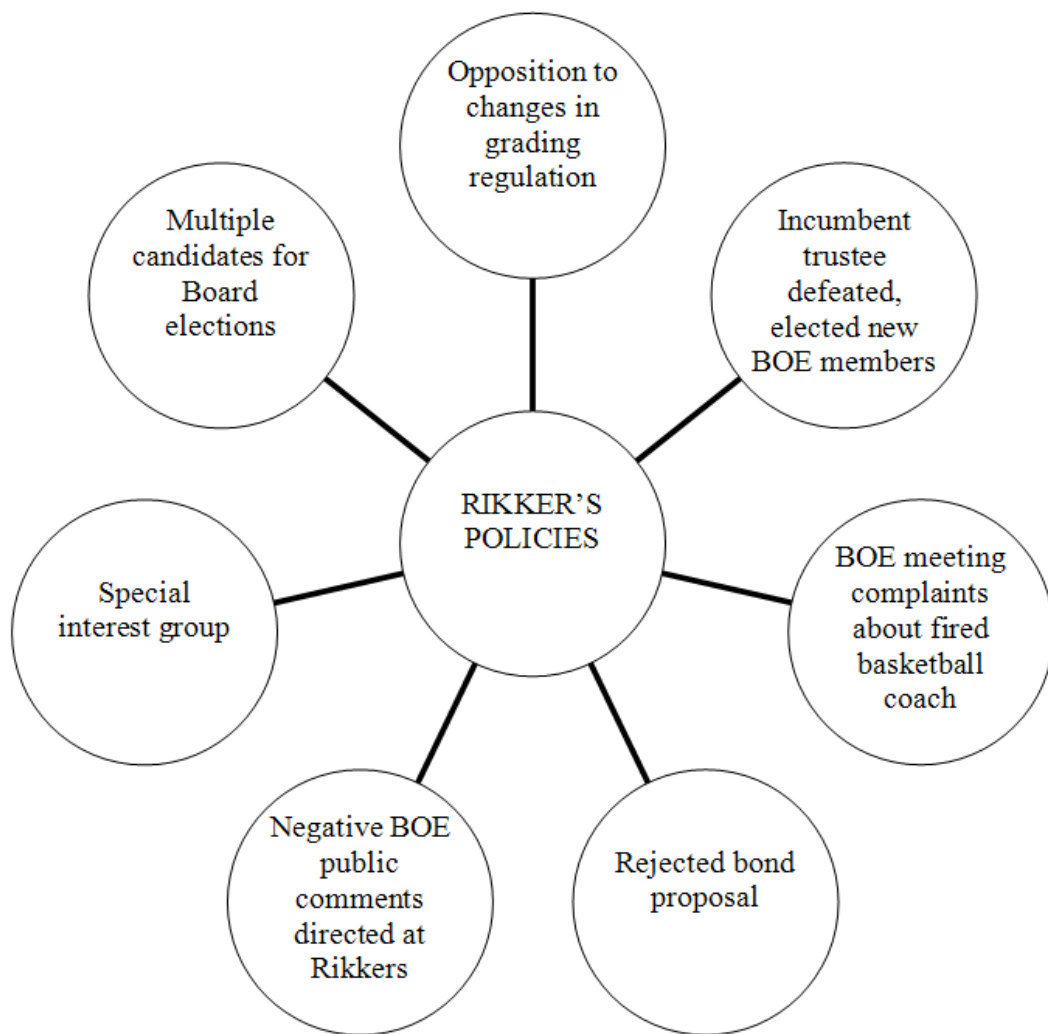


Figure 39: Indicators of Dissatisfaction Period of Politicization #1

Before Ridders' contract was renewed in June of 1992, several administrative changes occurred. A number of administrators (Wells, Parsons, and Howard) who were involved in unpleasant and difficult to explain situations -- coaches' dismissal, athletic program audit, grading regulation change, and the failed bond issue -- resigned. The timing of their departure raised speculation and hearsay about the reason. Reorganization of his administration was a tactic that Ridders used on several occasions during his tenure as superintendent. In this instance it appeared as though the reorganization and changes in administrators indicated the use of a finger pointing tactic by placing blame for shortcomings on others in the administration. The administrative changes included Ridders hiring two retired administrators, Garlick and Marsiglia, as "Communications Assistants," neither of whom had any experience in communications. However, both of these individuals were retired from positions as principals in the district, and Garlick's father had been a board president during the early years when Wilkinson was superintendent. The hiring of Garlick and Marsiglia, with their credibility and longevity within the school and community, appeared to be a tactic Ridders used to establish more legitimacy for his administration.

The status of the music program audit was requested by the Board four times in 1993. Ridders stated the reason for the delay was that "there had been several job changes during the reorganization of the administrative team ... [that he] now had his new administration in place so the report would be forthcoming in the near future" (Board Minutes). Therefore, Ridders used the reorganization of the administration to explain the reason for the belated report. The expectation by the Board was made clear three years earlier when a similar situation was evident, the athletic program audit that was not produced until a year after it was promised. At that time the Board signaled their

displeasure when they asked about the status of the program audit several times during public meetings; each time Rikkens responded that it was forthcoming. As an elite board, the questions about the audit would have typically been asked outside the public eye. Requesting the information in public revealed to the public the Board's expectation and displeasure with the superintendent. Bacharach (1981) and Wright (1983) both wrote about the importance of the board and superintendent to work together and of the community seeing that the two were united. The changes in membership on the Board also played a role. As Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) wrote, new trustees who are elected during a period of politicization will "change...interaction patterns" and "Conflict will arise between the new member...[and the] superintendent himself" (p. 87). The arena behavior by the Board was endemic of a board that was in the midst of conflict with the superintendent. Furthermore, by not providing information on a program highly valued by the community, Rikkens again demonstrated he did not understand that the community expected him to allocate resources that supported elite academics, athletics, and fine arts.

When the Board President indicated that they would be looking at a new evaluation tool, it was presented as a foregone conclusion, one that the Board had discussed and agreed upon. The fact that they had discussed the job description and evaluation tool indicated that in elite board fashion, there had been discussions outside of the public meeting about the role of the superintendent and how they evaluated his effectiveness. The public statements were messages that the Board had questions about Rikkens' performance and his policies.

In a study exploring superintendent turnover, Thies (1980) discovered that the number one indicator of impending superintendent turnover was poor relations with school

board members. The interactions during this period of politicization indicated a significant strain in the relationship between Ridders and the Board.

The contrast between the results of Rikker's actions and Conti's were significant. Conti had closed schools and ruffled feathers by taking strong stands on a number of important issues, but was able to avoid periods of politicization because his decisions reflected what was important to the community and continued to provide the outputs that they desired. Ridders' decisions often appeared to be less controversial than those of Conti but created a greater furor because they did not match the outputs desired by the community. When the Board asked for better communication from Ridders, it was likely because the communication they did receive did not include support for outputs they wanted. Ridders made decisions based upon what he knew (he had worked a few years earlier in community education) that did not reflect what the community desired. Ridders failed to recognize that in a democracy, public servants provide what the people want, that they serve the will of the community, and if they do not, the result is dissatisfaction.

According to Dissatisfaction Theory, the events of this first Period of Politicization -- the defeat of Incumbent Board trustees, special interest groups complaining to the Board, and an elite board participating in arena board behavior by publicly confronting the superintendent -- would predict superintendent turnover. However, Ridders was not removed and continued as superintendent. Because he remained, there were costs to the community. For example, the failed bond issue resulted in substandard facilities for students, which was detrimental to attracting families to the District. Further, the reorganizations of the administration and the alternative education and EFE programs resulted in allocating District financial resources.

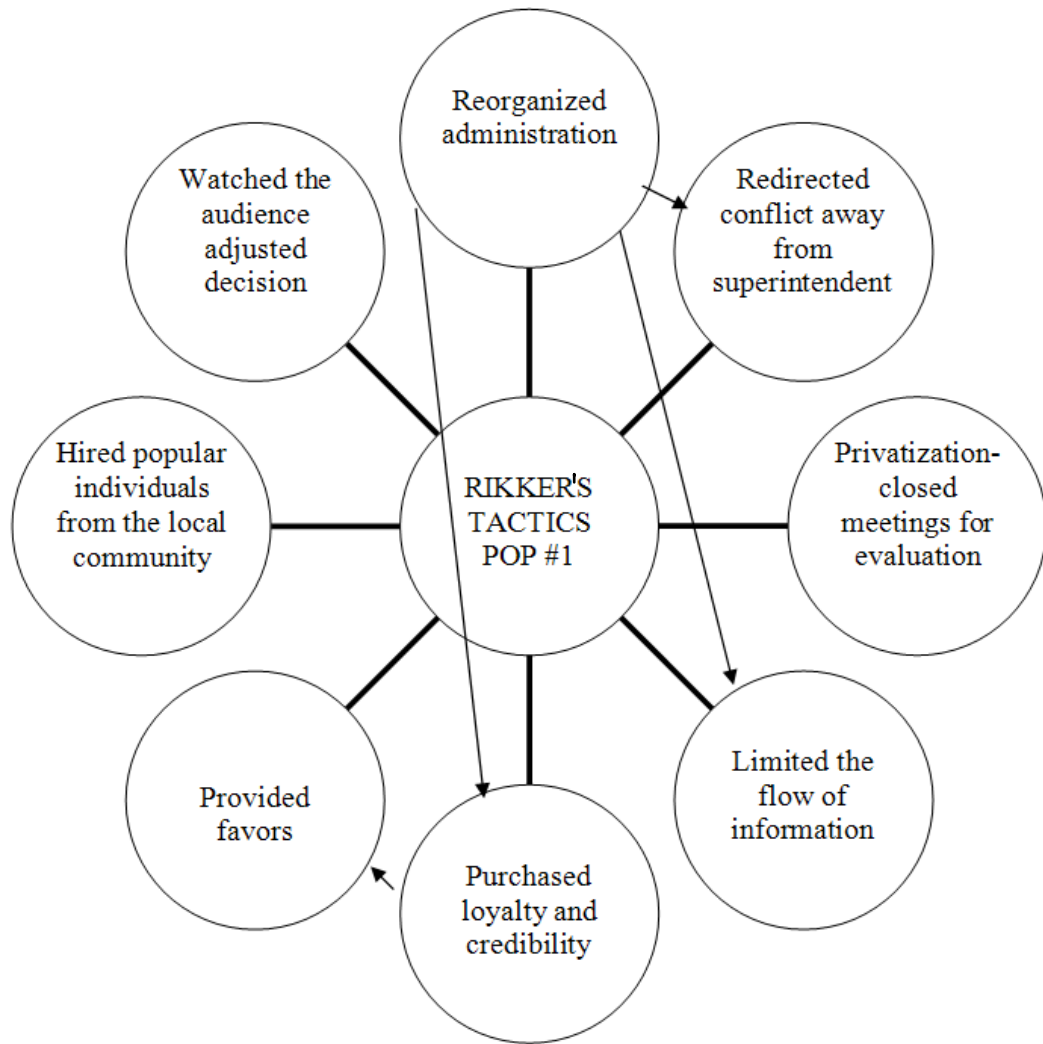


Figure 40: Tactics During Period of Politicization #1

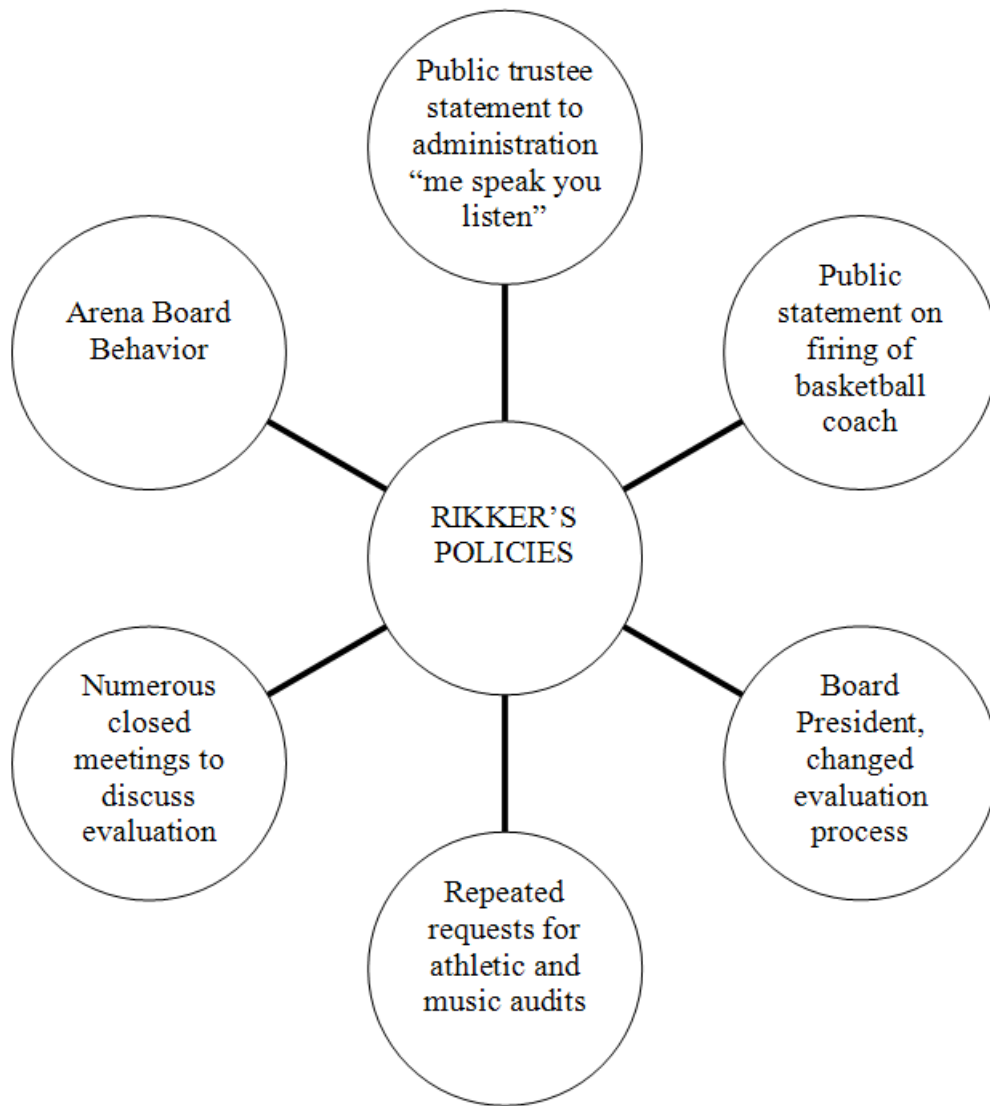


Figure 41: Dissatisfaction from the Board, Period of Politicization #1

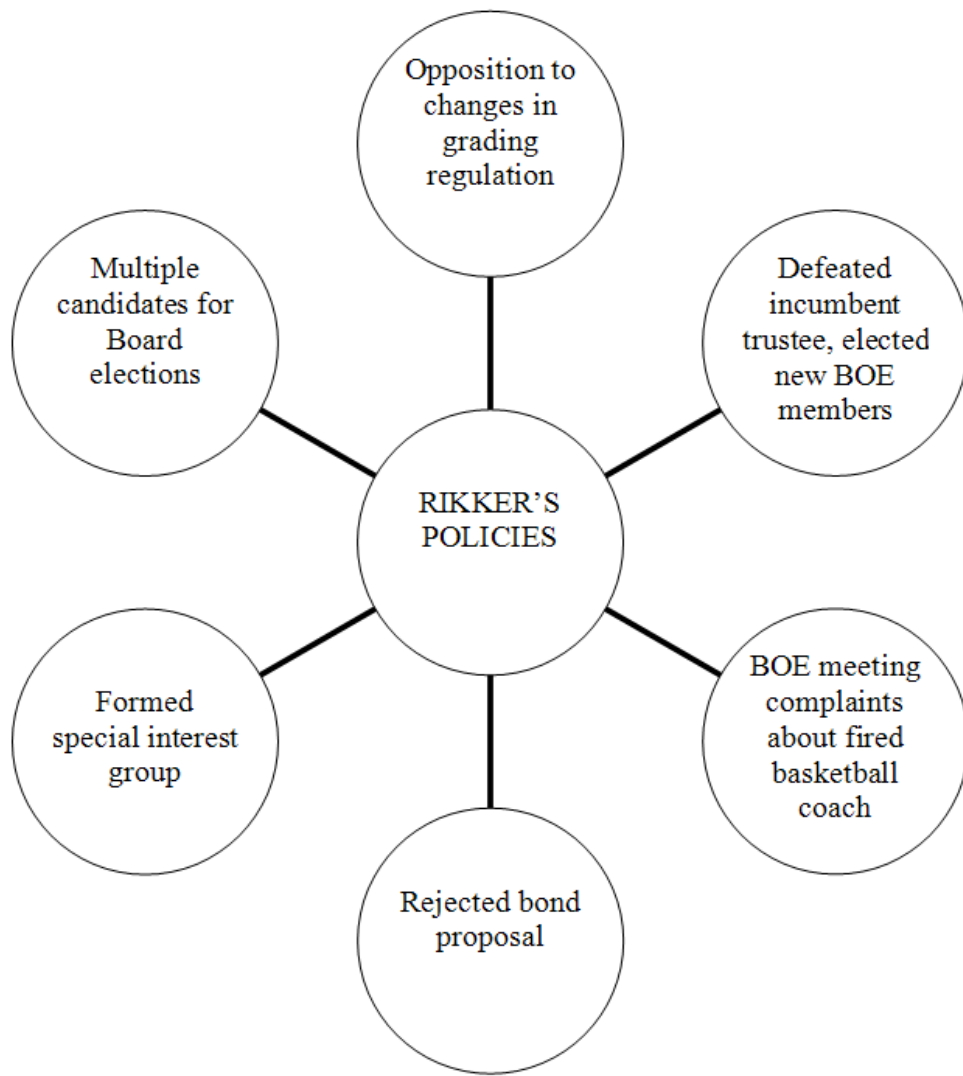


Figure 42: Dissatisfaction from the Community, Period of Politicization #1

1994-1998-Rikker's Era: Period of Politicization #2

Community

The City of Portage continued to grow as a cosmopolitan and upscale community of predominantly professionals. The library was rebuilt with a distinctive design, City Hall was an attractive modern building, and the areas surrounding the two buildings were decorated with thousands of tulips in the spring, annuals in the summer (including a canoe that reflected the area's heritage), and with a multitude of lights during the Christmas season. The City continued to initiate projects throughout Portage, each with attributes that portrayed an upscale community: a fountain in the summer/outdoor ice arena in the winter, ornate stone pedestrian bridges, streets redesigned as boulevards, traffic signals changed to extended metal structures with lighted street signs attached, and city welcome signs with fountains that shot high in the air. In addition, the City constructed playgrounds and recreational facilities such as bicycle trails that allowed cyclists, rollerbladers, runners, and pedestrians to move throughout the city.



Figure 43: Flower Covered Canoe at Portage City Hall



Figure 44: Pedestrian Walking Bridge on Milham Road



Figure 45: Portage District Library



Figure 46: Traffic Signal with Street Sign, Brick Sam's Club in Background



Figure 47: Fountain at One City Entrance

In 1994 the citizens in the State of Michigan approved Proposal A. Proposal A was the result of political maneuvering that occurred after the State legislature removed all property taxes for school operating purposes, which were the primary source of funding for education in Michigan. As a result, the legislature placed a proposal before the voters to fund schools through a dedicated two percent sales tax increase and a six-mill basic property tax with an additional 18 mills for business and non-homestead property taxes. Proposal A established a minimum amount that each school received from the State for each pupil enrolled. The Proposal moved the primary responsibility for funding schools to the State from local boards. Previously, local boards had the latitude to raise funds locally by passing a millage for operations. Proposal A radically modified the manner in which schools were funded, virtually removed any ability for local communities to add funding for their schools, and increased the control that the State had over local school districts. The change in funding was followed in a few years by the Upjohn merger, the National City buyout, and the General Motors plant closing that led to a decline in school enrollment.

In 1995 Upjohn, following a trend in the pharmaceutical industry, merged with Pharmacia. The new company moved the world headquarters and, with it, the executives to London, England. The merger resulted in significant changes to the Upjohn Company and resulted in several influential executives leaving the community.

Two years later, corporate decisions again impacted the local economy when in 1997, the Pharmacia and Upjohn Board replaced the CEO with Fred Hassan, who changed the structure of the company and moved another 1,000 positions from Portage to New Jersey. In December of 1997, First of America Bank was bought out by National City Corporation, who announced they would move the operations to their home base in

Cleveland. The buyout impacted over 3,000 jobs in Kalamazoo County (Massie & Schmitt, 1998). In addition, the GM plant continued to move toward shutdown and was shuttered in 1998.

Because Portage had regular increases in student enrollment, the net result of Proposal A was an increase in funding. When the changes began to occur with Upjohn, it initially negatively impacted the enrollment; however, because the State continued to increase the amount it gave schools for each pupil, PPS did not experience a net loss of revenue (District Records). There was, however, another change that occurred. As Portage lost high-paying jobs, the demographics of the community began to change as vacated homes were filled with individuals with a lower socio-economic status. In addition, the movement of professionals from the community also impacted the School Board when in 1995, President Sheldon departed to accept another position in New York. The overall enrollment pattern in the District is depicted in the chart below.

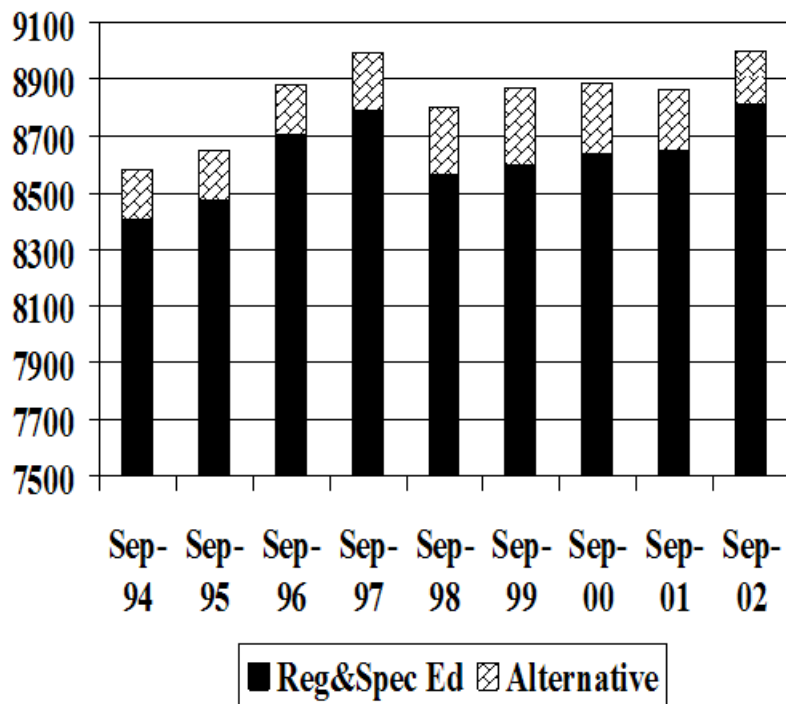


Figure 48: Portage Public Schools Enrollment (filed DS 4061 report)

1994- Rikker's Era: Period of Politicization #2A

School Board

In the contested election of 1994, five candidates vied for two positions. The election resulted in the selection of two new Board trustees, Buechler and Hollenbeck, who were original members of the special interest group the Academic Booster Club (ABC). The 1994 election corresponded with what Iannaccone (1982) described as two steps in the progressive process described by Dissatisfaction Theory: an increase in the number of candidates competing for positions on the school board and the defeat and/or the retirement of school board incumbents (Turning Point Election Period, TPEP).

Research by Lutz and Garberina (1977) used data from a nine-year period in Massachusetts to determine whether school boards responded to community demands and, if not, the result was the defeat of incumbents. Their study revealed that incumbents were defeated when community demand was ignored, thereby supporting Dissatisfaction Theory. In Portage, the grading regulation change contributed to the formation of a special interest organization, the ABC group. When the ABC group became impatient with the Board and administration or desired more input into the direction of the schools, they placed candidates on the ballot. In their first attempt, the 100-member ABC group was successful in getting Hollenbeck and Buechler elected to the Board.

When citizens move into a community, they expect their schools to adopt policy to reflect their wants and needs. Initially, the newcomers attempt to seek changes by expressing their opinion to the administration; if they do not get what they want, they eventually band together into special interest groups and attempt to influence school policy. The special interest groups pursue agendas that benefit their children and seek to

influence other community members to join them. Weninger (1987) conducted a study involving of 50 years of data in Arizona. Weninger determined that many schools in the study were alert to changes in community and reacted appropriately, and that incumbent turnover occurred when the superintendent and board failed to respond to community needs. It appeared as though in Portage, there was an absence of action to change by the Superintendent and the Board and the ABC group responded by getting two members elected to the Board.

In the fall following the 1994 election, Board Minutes indicated multiple closed sessions to discuss the superintendent's evaluation. The Board announced that they would be in closed session on January eighth to discuss the Superintendent's evaluation (Board Minutes). An informant who was a member of the Board and at the January eighth meeting stated that Ridders was informed his contract was not going to be extended. According to the informant, Ridders asked for and was granted a year before the announcement was made in order to assist him in finding another job (personal correspondence). Another informant declared that after the 1994 election, "Ridders had a three-four Board" (personal correspondence). A "three-four board" referred to the fact that Ridders had three votes in his favor and four against him.

The action by the Board to not renew Rikker's contract was consistent with what would be expected following a TPEP (Iannaccone, 1982). The action was also consistent with what had happened previously in Portage when Wilkinson resigned. Rikker's policy mandate was: promoting vocational programming and reorganizing his administration and replacing long-time employees of Conti with new people from outside the community. The ramifications of his actions: the emergence of a special interest group following the controversy of the grading regulation change and the election of two members of the

special interest group to the Board confirmed what had been repeatedly demonstrated in schools and communities throughout the country. When the superintendent fails to transmit the values of the community and provide the outputs desired by the environment, the community will replace board members and the superintendent will be involuntarily replaced. The slight majority of the Board in favor of his removal explained the decision to not renew his contract and may have also explained Rikker's ability to ask for a year to find another job before their decision became public.

Leadership Vacuum and Coalition Collapse

At the end of January 1995, Sheldon, the President of the Board, accepted a new position as a CEO of an international public relations firm and moved to New York. The Board selected an Upjohn employee, Kathy Derr, over seven other applicants to replace him. Significantly, Derr was selected instead of Ted Hartridge, a founding member of the ABC club and extremely active in the schools. As President, Sheldon had demonstrated his leadership and firm guidance of the Board. He was a charismatic leader who had graduated from Portage Schools, returned to PPS as a teacher, and became a leader in the Portage Education Association. Conti was the superintendent both during Sheldon's teaching career and then later when he was named to the Board as a trustee. Sheldon expressed his admiration for Conti when he stated, "George Conti was really one of the great men of Portage and that goes much broader than just the fact that he was an outstanding superintendent. He was fair, he was strong" (Sheldon Oral History, November 2004, p. 4). As President of the Board, Sheldon had been vocal about the need to conduct an effective evaluation of Ridders, in asking him repeatedly for the athletic program audit that was over a year late and for questioning him in open meetings about other topics. Sheldon was the

leader of the four votes that opposed Ridders (personal correspondence), and when he departed, it left the Board with a leadership vacuum.

When Sheldon departed, Vice-President Dolan replaced him as President. Pellowe was nominated for Vice-President, and his nomination was immediately followed by Buechler nominating Hollenbeck for the same position. The vote resulted in neither candidate receiving a majority (there were only six voting members since Sheldon had not yet been replaced) and the President scheduled another vote for the next meeting. At the next meeting, Pellowe was the sole nominee and was elected Vice-President. The fact that Buechler nominated Hollenbeck for Vice-President after he had been on the Board for six months indicated that the newest members were seeking control of the leadership of the Board. The inability of the Board to select a candidate indicated that the normal elite board was, at least momentarily, demonstrating arena board behavior. The new trustees' arena board behavior appeared to catch the incumbent elite board members off guard. Eventually a resolution was reached and Pellowe became Vice-President. The fractured process for selecting the new Vice-President indicated that with the loss of Sheldon, the coalition that had banded together to inform Ridders that he would not be removed had lost their majority.

Administration 2A

On February 13, 1995, at a Board meeting, Ridders announced that several positions would be posted that would result in additional District Office Administrators. The timeline and positions filled were:

- February 13, 1995 -- posted Professional Development Coordinator, Human Resources Assistant, Information Systems Manager, Curriculum Development Coordinator, and Testing and Evaluation Coordinator
- April 24, 1995 -- Nemitz (from a PPS teaching position) selected as Curriculum Development Coordinator
- April 24, 1995 -- Washburn (from a PPS middle school counseling position) selected as half-time Testing and Evaluation Coordinator
- April 24, 1995 -- Teare reassigned to the position of Professional Development Coordinator

Superintendent 2A

On May 9, 1995, four months after Ridders was given a year to seek another job, the Board offered and he signed a new three-year contract (District Documents), which was approved unanimously.

Ridders was able to take advantage of the leadership vacuum created with the departure of Sheldon. The departure changed the three-four board into three-three, and then the fragile coalition dissolved when Derr was appointed as Sheldon's replacement. Derr stated that she decided to seek a spot on the Board because she had been a supporter of the schools and wanted to give something back to the schools and the community (personal correspondence). Derr's comment indicated that she was not a candidate who was appointed with an agenda to change the schools. The three-year contract that followed Derr's appointment indicated that the coalition was not able to gain her support in their effort to remove Ridders. The significance of the selection of Derr, an Upjohn employee, illustrated the Company's influence because it is likely that there was a split between Hartridge, who would have been favored by the other ABC members, and Derr, who

would more likely have been favored by Rikkers and his supporters, and therefore the Upjohn connection most likely swayed the Board's decision in favor of Derr.

The action of the Board in May of 1995 may also be partially attributed to other influences: the Board had demonstrated over time that they were interested in maintaining their elite board behavior and were willing to settle for compromise over conflict; the trustees who remained after Sheldon left may have been preoccupied positioning themselves to take over leadership of the Board and lost focus on the removal of Rikkers; Upjohn merged with Pharmacia and moved many their executives from the area, creating a sense of instability; the changes Rikkers introduced in his administration nearly all revolved around academic issues; and the introduction of four new coordinators for Professional Development, Testing and Evaluation, Curriculum Development, and Technology. The academic issues that Rikkers focused on included a new Board Committee for Curriculum and Accreditation, the Curriculum and Instruction Council, and a site-based decision making initiative which gave parents more say in what happened within the District and in individual school buildings. It could have been that these changes by Rikkers convinced the Board that he had adjusted his policy to effectively transmit the values of the community.

1995-Rikker's Era: Period of Politicization #2B

Board

In the 1995 election, Pellowe ran unopposed and was re-elected. Following the election at the July 1995 organizational meeting, Pellowe nominated Dolan for President, and Hollenbeck nominated Whyte. Pellowe read a prepared statement; in it, he stated that he supported consistent leadership and objected to voting against any candidate. Buechler then nominated Hollenbeck for Vice-President. There were no other nominations and

Whyte became President, Hollenbeck Vice-President. The statement that Pellowe read indicated that he was not in agreement with the rapid changes on the Board and that he favored elite board behavior. Later that school year, on March 11, 1996, Ridders signed an extension of his contract through June 1999.

The statement by Pellowe made it apparent that the Board was still divided. However, unanimous selection of Hollenbeck as Vice-President and Whyte as President created the appearance that the Board had begun to create new working relationships. The elite school board began to indoctrinate new members into their culture soon after an election. Lutz and Iannaccone (1978) wrote, “The [elite] board is admonished by its cultural norms to seek consensus in private and to avoid public conflict and the public debate of controversial issues” (p. 102). It was apparent that the newest members, who had previously demonstrated arena board behavior, had begun to adapt to the cultural norms that had preceded them. Rikker’s contract extension in March 1996 indicated that he continued to have the support of at least a majority of the Board. Research by Walden (1966), Freeborn (1966), and Kirkendall (1966) validated the relationship between incumbent defeat and superintendent turnover. Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) first identified that superintendent turnover occurred within two years following a TPEP. The uncontested election following the TPEP in 1994 could be considered a move back toward quiescence. However, that would not be supported by the Board’s continued wrangling for leadership of the Board.

1996-Rikker’s Era: Period of Politicization #2C

Board

The leadership and control of the Board was completed in 1996 when Hollenbeck was elected President of the Board. At that same meeting, Pellowe was elected Vice-

President. The aggressiveness of Hollenbeck to assume authority was contrary to previous Board members who waited their “turn” before moving into leadership roles. In addition, in 1996, a new trustee, Tom Eddy, was elected when another long-term member, Atkinson, left after 16 years on the Board. Eddy ran unopposed and, in the same election, the voters approved a bond for modest renovations by a margin of 1,993 to 1,595 (District records).

District records also indicated much less public discussion by the Board. That, along with their unanimous election of officers, indicated that they had returned to the elite board behavior similar to earlier years before the ABC members were elected. It appeared as though when Hollenbeck became President, the coalition that had informed Rikkers that he should seek another job had resumed their majority and therefore it was likely that they would complete what they started in January of 1995. However, they did not; instead Eddy, the newest member of the Board, was supportive of Rikkers. Because the Board had resumed their elite board behavior that resulted in the privatization of information, it resulted in the loss of the public conversations that revealed the thoughts of the members. The election indicated that the District was returning to a period of quiescence. Danis (1984) revealed that if the second election did not focus on policy issues, and if incumbent board members were re-elected instead of challengers, a return to quiescence was possible. The resumption of elite behavior, the ascension of Hollenbeck to President, and the uncontested election cast the appearance that the Board and community were beginning a period of quiescence.

It appeared as though the new leadership lacked the will to remove Rikkers or believed that under their leadership they could move the District in the direction they desired without removing him. It was apparent from Board minutes that few individuals were coming to the Board with complaints, which would support the notion that the

District was experiencing a return to quiescence. The primary source of earlier complaints had been the ABC, which had dissolved after the election of Hollenbeck and Buechler. The ABC Board members either were not able to sustain the pressure without the special interest organization or that once Hollenbeck became the President of the Board they determined they would effect the changes they wanted without removing the superintendent.

Administration

In the spring of 1997, both Portage Northern and Portage Central applied for admission into the International Baccalaureate Organization (IB). The IB operated a world-wide program that provided an international curriculum to over 1700 schools in 122 countries (IBO.org). In Michigan there were two IB schools, both located in suburban Detroit: the International Academy in Bloomfield Hills, a consortium of affluent Oakland County Districts, and the Country Day School, an elite prep school. Following the application in the spring, both schools were accepted into the program in the fall of 1997 and were approved to begin offering the program at the beginning of the 1998 school year.

Acceptance into IB was a major change that immediately increased the rigor of the curriculum in PPS. The prestigious IB program was the type of change that the environment in Portage desired, a curricular offering that no other school district in the area had the ability to offer, one that would offer a competitive advantage for the children in the university admissions process and provide the type of prestige that defined Portage as an elite community. It also indicated that Ridders had adjusted the managerial activities to align with what the community wanted. Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) wrote that a

superintendent can make adjustments that will align with community expectations and avoid dismissal.

1997-Rikker's Era: Period of Politicization #2D

Board

Derr ran unopposed in 1997 and was re-elected, with a total of only 162 votes cast (District records). The small number of votes cast and the lack of opposition for the Board seat indicated that there was a lack of issues significant enough to generate interest in the election and that the District was returning to a period of quiescence.

1998-Rikker's Era: Period of Politicization #2E

Superintendent

Just before the June election, on June 1, 1998, Rikkers signed a new four-year contract. The contract contained a provision that the District would:

...purchase on behalf of the Superintendent one (1) year of 'generic' retirement credit with the Michigan Public Employees Retirement Fund. Said purchase of additional retirement credit is being made by the District so as to assure that the Superintendent is rewarded if he fulfills the full term of his Employment Agreement. If the Superintendent voluntarily resigns from the District prior to June 30, 2002, he shall be obligated to repay to the District the cost associated with the purchase of such additional retirement credit (Contract June, 1998).

The election that followed within a few days of Rikkers signing the new contract resulted in the re-election of Hollenbeck and Buechler. There were three candidates for the two spots and a total of 2662 votes cast. The election also resulted in the renewal of a

Building and Site Sinking Fund (BSSF, a fund earmarked for building maintenance) millage by a margin of 1,538 – 1,124.

The re-election of Hollenbeck and Buechler and the success of the BSSF millage were both indicators that the District had returned to quiescence. Although Ridders signed his contract a few days before the election, it was not revealed until afterward, and the details including the District purchasing a year as an incentive were not revealed to the public.

Administration

At a Special Board meeting on June 8, 1998, Ridders announced “a recommendation for administrative reorganization for the Board’s consideration” (Board Minutes, p. 409). The changes resulted in a one-year contract for the Director of Secondary Education who was reassigned to a new position, an undefined role in special projects and several promotions for current administrators. In his statement Ridders indicated that the reorganization was necessary for financial reasons to save the District \$100,000 in administrative expenses and create more efficient operation for the schools. The new job responsibilities and pay grades were noted in the June 8th minutes on page 409; however, there was no evidence of a decrease in administrative expense:

- Director of Community Education and High School Education to Grade 12 from Grade 11.
- Director of Professional Development and Middle School Education to Grade 11 from Grade 8.
- Curriculum Innovation and Development Director to Grade 10 from Grade 8.

Primarily during the summer of 1998, curriculum was rewritten in all core subject areas and foreign language. The May 11, 1998, Board meeting minutes indicated that “Curriculum Coordinator Art Nemitz and Professional Development Coordinator Linda Teare presented an update on curriculum writing activities” (p. 391). The Board recognized the curriculum writing teams with a resolution at their August 17, 1998, meeting. The minutes indicated:

A motion was offered by Mrs. Dolan, supported by Mrs. Derr, that the following resolution be adopted recognizing the great effort and outstanding product of the many district curriculum writing teams. Whereas; Beginning in the fall of 1995 through August of 1998, over 40 curriculum writing teams, grades K through high school, Participated in developing new K-12 district core curriculums, and Whereas; Beginning in the fall of 1995 with the District Curriculum Audit, over 20,000 faculty-hours (500 40-hour weeks) have been devoted to new curriculum development... Whereas; At each grade level, quarterly (9-week) district assessments and culminating activities have been developed to assess student mastery of grade level benchmarks in each core content area from which the district can gather data to measure student achievement against identified standards.... (p. 432-433)

The outstanding product referred to in the introduction for the resolution was considered less so by some of the teachers who participated in the process. The teachers related that they were given multiple forms to fill out that recorded the changes in the curriculum and were often left on their own to write curriculum and create assessments, which they believed they were not adequately trained to do. In some instances they turned

in documents that included requests for items such as Karaoke machines for language arts to determine if anyone was overseeing the process (personal correspondence). According to the teachers' collective bargaining agreement, the participants in curriculum writing were compensated at \$26 (\$20 plus benefits) per hour; therefore, the 20,000 hours to develop the curriculum administration cost the District \$520,000. In addition, there was administrative expense for facilitating the process and professional development necessary to carry out the curriculum. The building administrators and instructional staff indicated that the final product did not allow the District to "assess student mastery of grade level benchmarks" or to "gather data to measure student achievement" (personal correspondence). Given the cultural environment in Portage, it appeared as though the Board sought the curriculum rewrite and that Ridders reorganized the administration in 1995 to accomplish that task. The reality of the rewrite, though, was it did not occur over a three-year period but in fact was nearly all completed within a short period of time in 1998. The resolution made it apparent that the Board was not aware that the rewrite was conducted in a short time span and was of questionable quality. However, in the absence of that information, it appeared to the Board that Ridders had delivered the curriculum changes that were reflective of what the cultural environment desired.

Summary of Period of Politicization #2

Hollenbeck and Buechler were elected in 1994. Because they were original members of the special interest group the Academic Booster Club (ABC), they were in effect elected to bring about the outputs that the environment desired. Although at first the ABC included special education interests, the club quickly evolved in to a group with a primary purpose to increase academic rigor in the District.

The nine years between 1986 when Ridders became superintendent and the ultimatum he received from the Board in 1995 was consistent with the eight-to ten-year cycle that Mitchell and Thorsted (1976) tested as the length of time for the signs of dissatisfaction to emerge and the subsequent turnover. As the Board had done in the selection of Ridders in 1986, they privatized the non-renewal process. Ridders responded by reorganizing his administration and using a delay tactic of asking the Board for a year before the decision was announced. In the meantime, following the election of the two new trustees, there were few citizens approaching the Board with their complaints. It appeared as though the community, having done their job and elected new members who reflected their values, were waiting for the Board to take action.

The community had indicated their desire for change by replacing numerous Board trustees and attending Board meetings to voice their displeasure with District policy. The Board had demonstrated their displeasure with the superintendent through tepid evaluations, numerous discussions during closed session regarding the cleavage between the policy they expected and the one that was provided, socializing conflict by bringing up issues concerning the superintendent during public meetings that would have previously been discussed in private, and, finally, informing the superintendent that they did not intend to renew his contract. The delay tactic that Ridders used provided an opportunity to take advantage of a situation when the departure of Sheldon created a leadership vacuum on the Board, and without his leadership, their narrow four-three majority dissolved. When a new member was named to replace Sheldon, in an either fortuitous coincidence or through a calculated maneuver, it provided Ridders with additional support, which allowed him to sign a new three-year agreement on May 9, 1995 (contract document), only months after he was informed he would not be renewed. Ridders also deployed another tactic

nearly immediately after he was informed he would not be renewed when he reorganized his administration and hired individuals who would provide changes in the curriculum. His aggressive approach, along with the changes in leadership and Board membership appeared to influence the Board enough to renew his contract.

On June 1, 1998, Ridders signed a contract that provided him with an incentive to stay through 2002. Hollenbeck, the President of the Board, also signed the contract. The incentive to stay rather than encouraging his resignation was a significant departure from the events of 1995 and may be attributed to several factors; in 1995 Ridders made administrative changes that added coordinators for curriculum, testing, evaluation, professional development and technology, created a Board Curriculum and Accreditation Committee, and gave parents more of a voice in their schools through site-based decision-making. It was likely that the cultural environment viewed those changes as significant progress. By 1998 two former members of the ABC group had been elected as Board trustees, and one of them had become President of the Board. Further, the two high schools were accepted into the prestigious IB, and they both began to offer the highly rigorous curriculum that identified PPS as an elite organization. Even though the majority of the new curriculum and assessments (the portion produced by PPS not IB) were completed hastily over the course of months, presented to teachers too late to be useful at the beginning of the school year, and did not accomplish the goals cited in the Board Resolution on August 17, 1998, the perception of the Board and likely the cultural environment was that the District had created a quality product. Regardless of the quality, the adjustments provided by Ridders cast the appearance that the direction of the District had changed and that technical activity at the core was providing the outputs (IB program, new curriculum, and new assessments) desired by the community. The combined changes

were likely to have persuaded the Board members to grant him a new contract along with an incentive.

The combination of changes at Upjohn, First of America, and the closing of the General Motors factory created a great deal of economic uncertainty and resulted in a momentary decrease in the primary funding source for schools, enrollment. The uncertain times may have created reluctance on the part of the Board to change superintendents when they were faced with what appeared to be a severe economic crisis.

Three years had passed since the election of Hollenbeck and Buechler, providing sufficient time for them to become indoctrinated into the elite school board culture and a part of the power structure or oligarchy that, as Michels (1911) contended, would first represent their own interests. Later, Lipset (1962) wrote about an oligarchy and its impact as “the control of a society or an organization by those at the top, is an intrinsic part of bureaucracy or large-scale organization” (p. 15). Therefore, if the Board believed that retaining the superintendent was the most effective way to represent their interests, they would have offered him the new agreement.

The Board’s action may be attributed to a number of other reasons: that they were seeking the social stability that Mosca (1939) referred to when he wrote “...mankind is happier -- or less unhappy --, during periods of social stability and crystallization” (p. 602) and thereby avoided unpleasantness associated with a forced resignation; Rikkens offered a retirement date in return for the four-year contract, allowing the Board to plan on a transition and inform their constituents that he was leaving; another agreement was struck in exchange for the contract; the reconstructed Board determined that Rikkens was the appropriate fit as their superintendent; the Board was able to represent their own interests and through elite board behavior were able to indoctrinate new members before the

superintendent could be removed; a Board President, who believed that he was controlling the organization, had sufficient control or influence with the other trustees to suggest the contract was appropriate.

Period of Politicization #2 included multiple indicators of dissatisfaction from the community and Board. They were:

- Multiple candidates for BOE elections
- Special interest ABC formed
- ABC members at BOE meetings seeking changes
- Replacement of multiple BOE members including two new members from the ABC
- Multiple closed sessions of the Board to discuss the superintendent's evaluation
- Ridders informed his contract would not be renewed

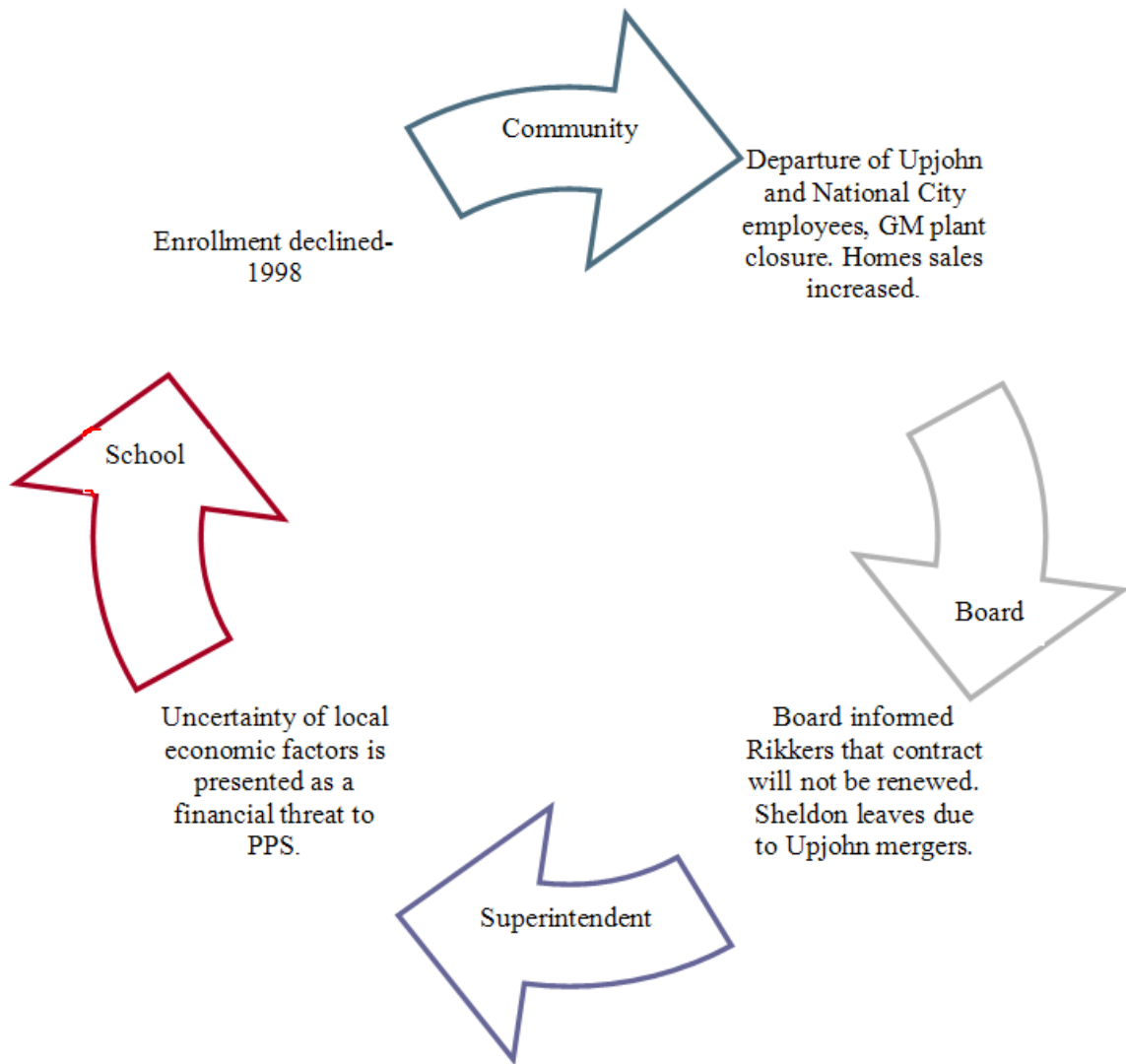


Figure 49: Corporate Mergers and Plant Closings

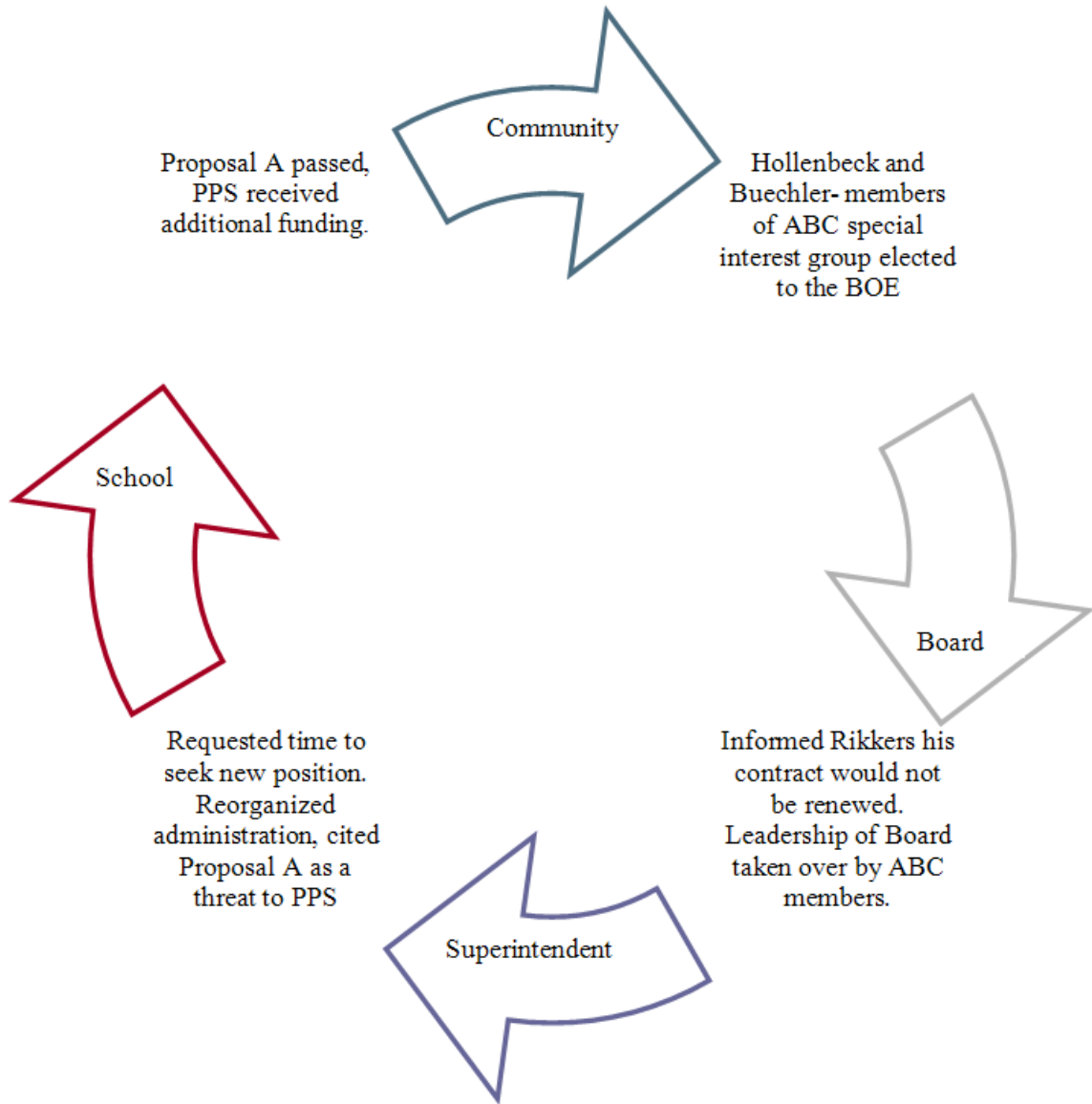


Figure 50: ABC Members Elected to the Board

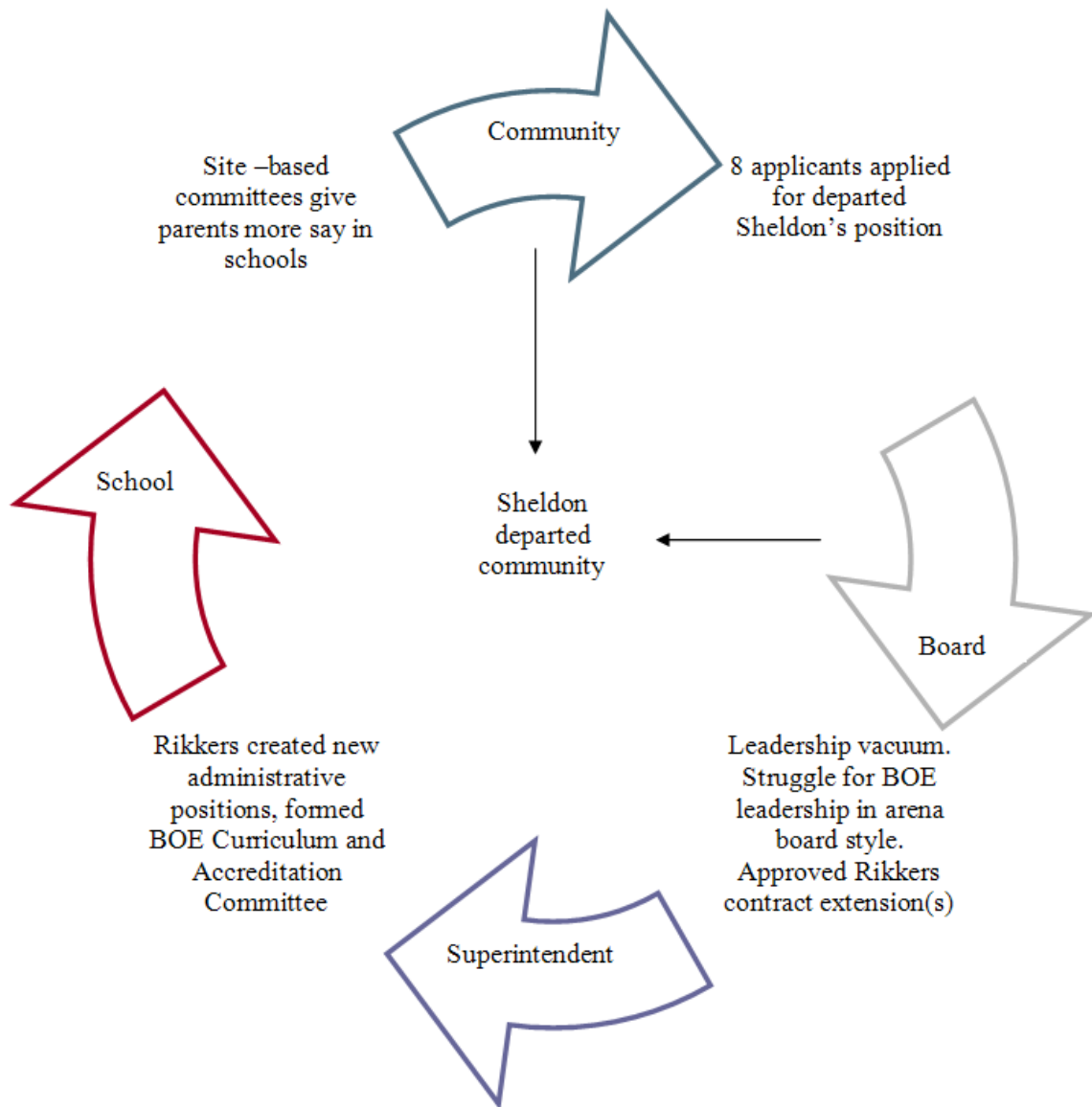


Figure 51: Sheldon Departed; Rickers Received New Contract

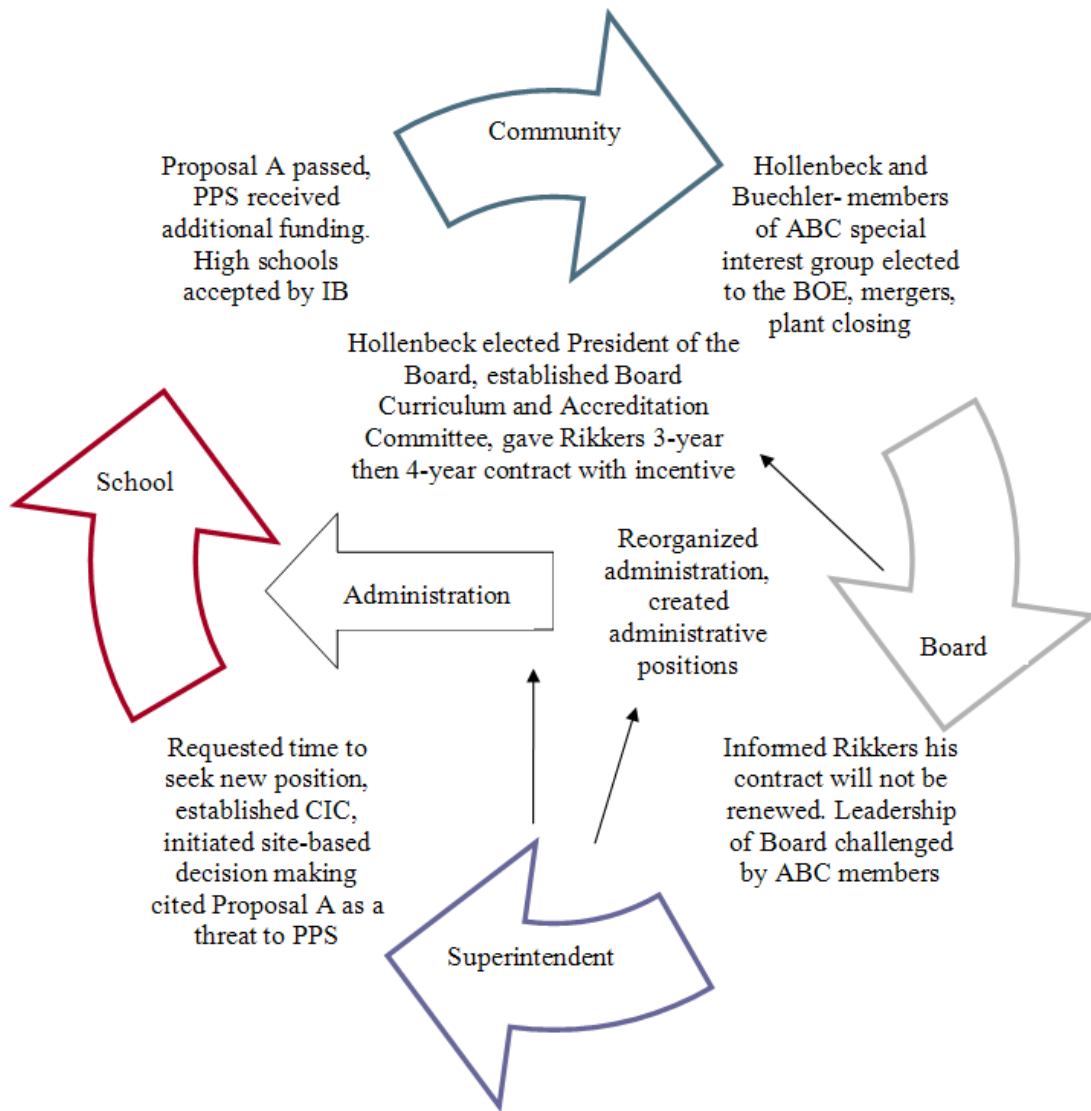


Figure 52: Dissatisfaction Period of Politicization #2

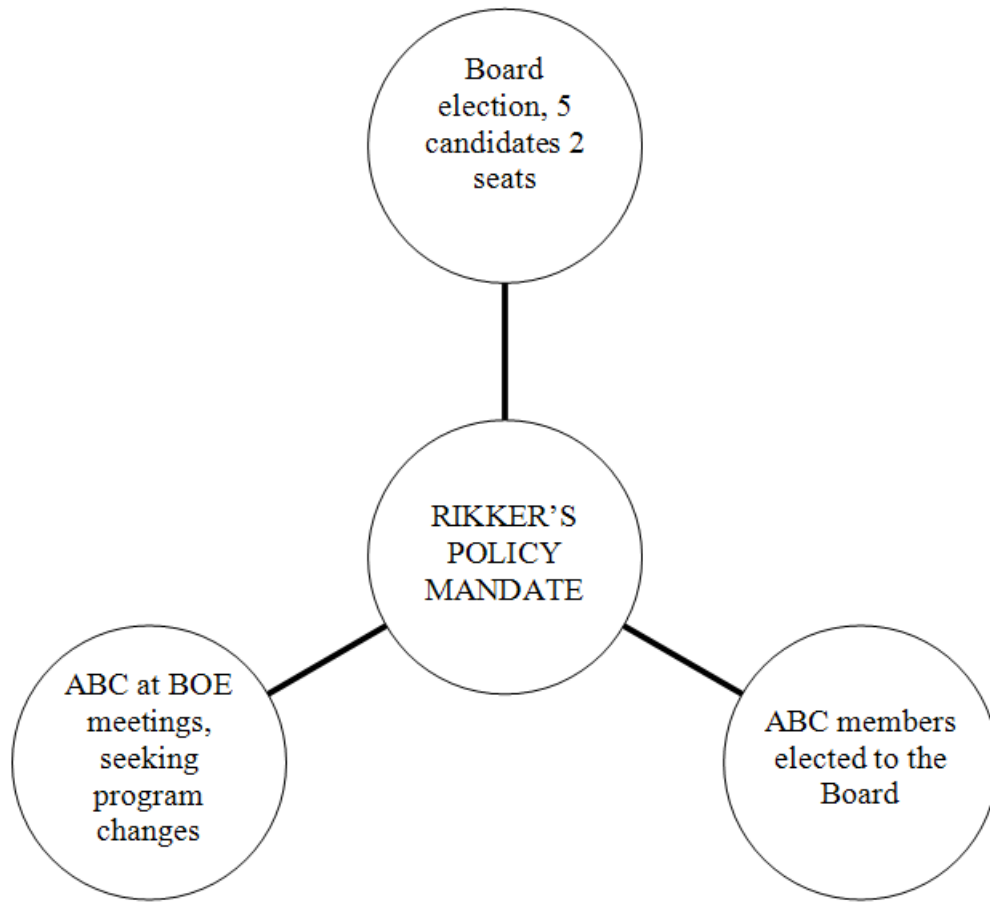


Figure 53: Dissatisfaction from the Community Period of Politicization #2

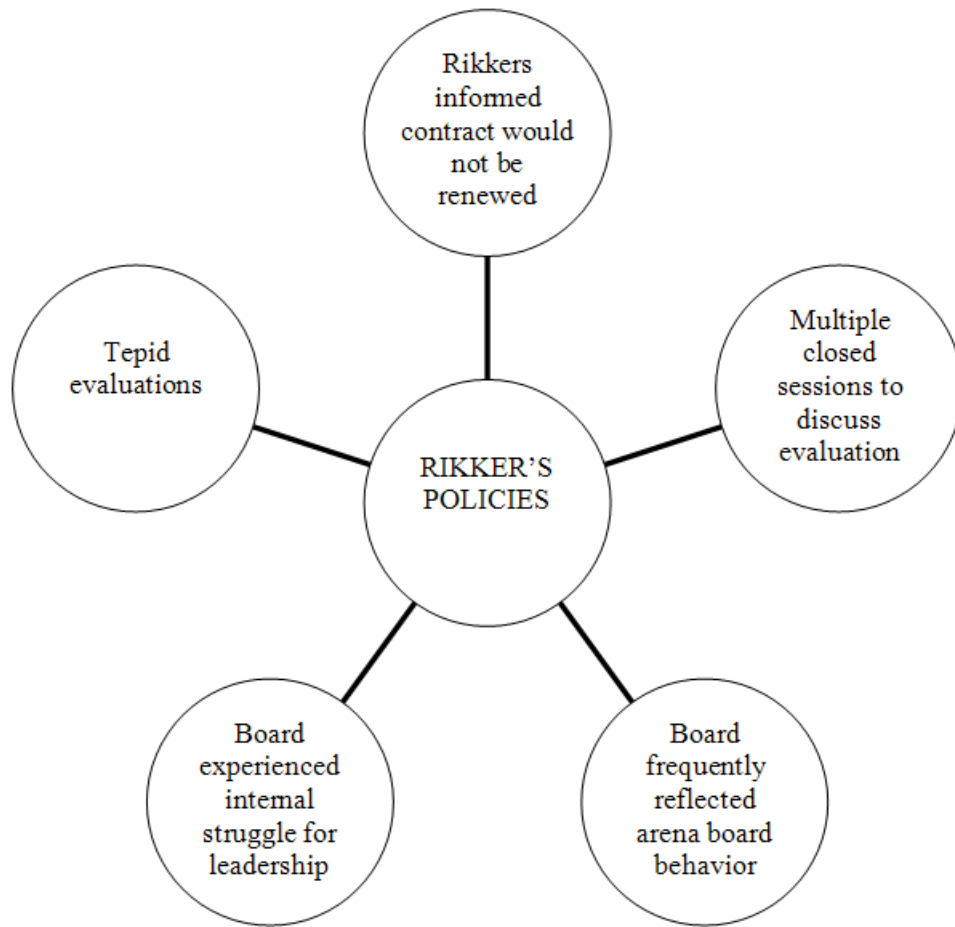


Figure 54: Dissatisfaction from the Board, Period of Politicization #2

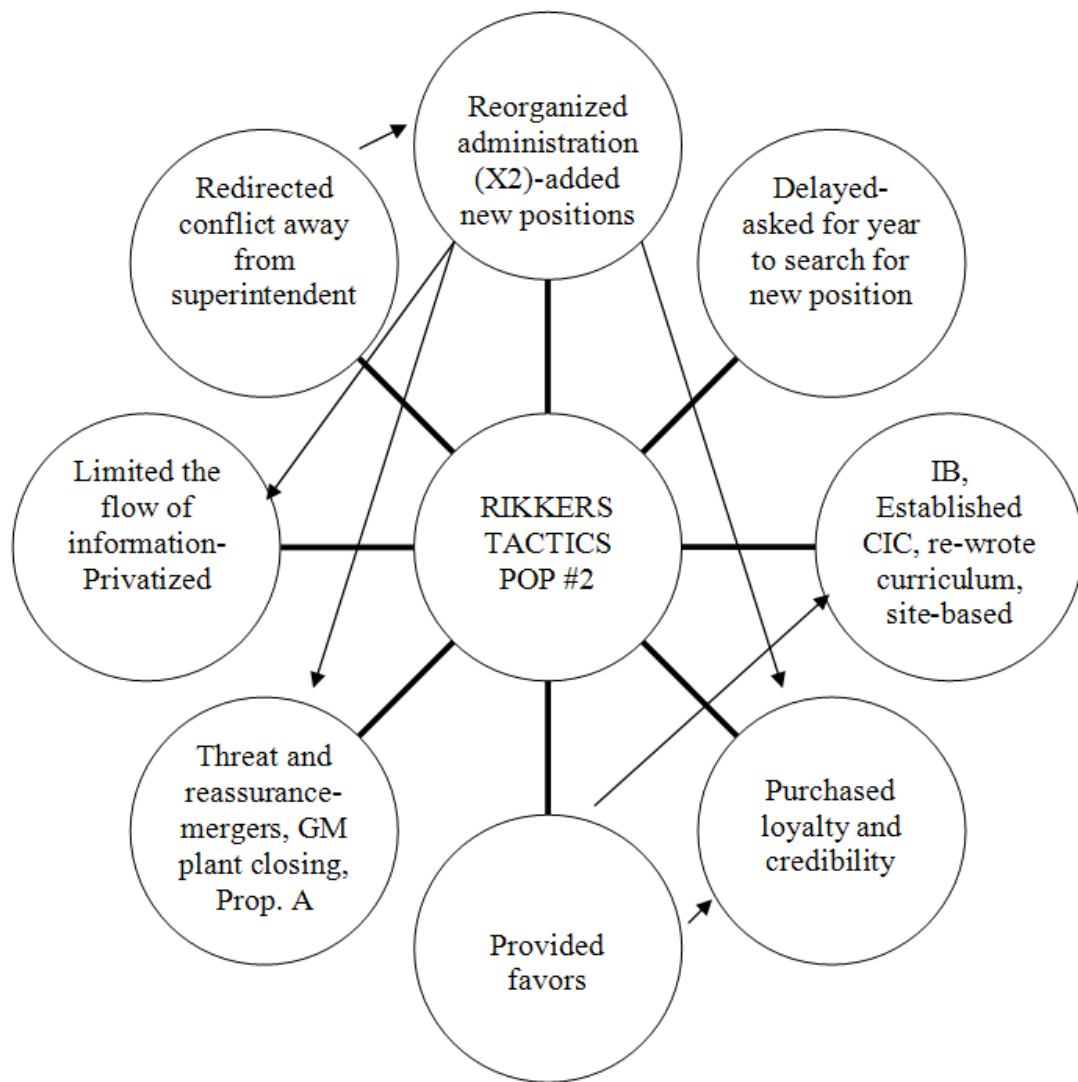


Figure 55: Rikker’s Tactics, Period of Politicization #2

1999-Rikker’s Era: Period of Politicization #3A

School Board

During the 1999-2000 school year, Ted Hartridge, a founder of the ABC group, was named to replace Buechler (until the 2000 election), who left when her husband relocated. That same year, Jerry Whitaker was elected when Derr declined to run for a new term because she was relocated by Pharmacia. In the June 2000 election, two new

members were elected to the Board: Allan Reiff to a two-year term (the remainder of Buechler's term) and Ann Woolley to a four-year term. Reiff defeated Hartridge, and Woolley ran unopposed, replacing Dolan who retired after 21 years on the Board. An informant claimed that Reiff was prompted to run for the two-year term specifically to oppose Hartridge. A District Office Administrator when asked to verify that claim would not comment but instead responded with a smile (personal correspondence). Two new trustees in one election fit what Iannaccone (1982) stated, "A decision by two incumbent board members not to seek re-election has the same effect as an initial incumbent defeat after a period of political quiescence" (p. 108). However, since Reiff was apparently persuaded to run for the two-year term against Hartridge, this situation seemed to be a variation on the Iannaccone statement. It was not apparent if Reiff was aware that he was recruited to oppose Hartridge. Personal correspondence with Hartridge indicated that it was clear to him that he was set up for defeat. The response by the District Office Administrator indicated that more than likely Hartridge was correct, that Ridders had utilized another tactic. When Hartridge was named to replace Buechler, it indicated that the former ABC influence was still a force on the Board, and when there was a move to defeat him in the next election, it indicated that Ridders viewed him as a threat.

2001- Rikker's Era: Period of Politicization #3B

School Board

In June 2001, Shirley Johnson was elected in an uncontested election. She replaced the incumbent who decided not to run because of work commitments. In that same election, a Building and Site Sinking Fund millage passed 1958 to 1504. The next spring, Linda Lueth was named to replace Pellowe, who resigned for health reasons. Johnson, a spouse of a Blue Ribbon Committee (a special interest group described later) member,

appeared supportive of the District. It appeared as though she was elected because she represented the cultural environment in Portage. As such she could be expected to require the institutional activity to reflect those values. When Lueth replaced Pellowe it was the second year in a row that there were two new Board members. Iannaccone (1982) stated, “A decision by two incumbent board members not to seek re-election has the same effect as an initial incumbent defeat after a period of political quiescence” (p. 108). The four new members on the Board in a two-year period indicated that PPS had entered a new period of politicization.

Special Interest Groups

Two special interest groups formed: Parents for Excellence in the Performing Arts (PEPA) and a Blue Ribbon Committee. The PEPA group came to a few Board meetings, introduced themselves, and read statements about the importance of arts education and the significance of the District’s support for them. The Blue Ribbon Committee consisted of major business and social constituents in the community.

Blue Ribbon Committee

Marc Schupan	Schupan & Sons
Jeff Gardner	Gardner Management
Joshua Weiner	Meyer C. Weiner
Nicholas Clementi	Paper Industry
Bill Johnston (Rhonda Stryker)	Greenleaf Trust – Stryker Corporation
Si Johnson	Stryker Vice President

Ron Molitor	Owner of manufacturing company
Tom Winkel	Stryker
Tom Murch	Murch's restaurant chain
John Bowers	Bowers Manufacturing
Jerry Stifler	Owner, Continental Construction (commercial real estate developer)
Tim Stack	President- Borgess Hospital
Bob Borsos	Attorney
Joe Gesmundo	Developer
Mike Seelye	Seelye Auto Group
Mike Williams	Owner, Sign Art- billboards and business signs
John Cooper	Attorney
Doug Raedy	Physician
Russell Rathburn	Owner, Rathco
Dan Canavan	CEO, Triple S Plastics

Figure 56: Blue Ribbon Committee

The Blue Ribbon Committee requested a meeting to address school facilities upgrades that they believed were overdue. They held a pre-meeting where, according to an informant, one of the members assured the group that he had spoken with Ridders and he had agreed to pursue a millage to finance building projects (personal correspondence, Acker-Smith). Ridders and one of his Directors attended the meeting where the Blue Ribbon Committee informed them that they expected him to seek a millage to add athletic

practice facilities. In addition, the Committee requested Ridders to aggressively pursue the updating of school facilities and informed him that the current facilities did not match the standards of a community such as Portage. They insisted that the current school structures were not adequate to attract families or businesses in order for Portage to continue as *the* place to live in Southwest Michigan. The Blue Ribbon Committee members stated that the District had not asked for new taxes for building projects and they contended that when it did, the community would support the request(s) (meeting notes, 2001). Ridders responded that he would explore a plan to pursue a millage and thanked them for the suggestion. Ridders notified the group that there was also a need to renovate the auditoriums at both high schools, something that another group, PEPA, expressed as a need. After the meeting with the Blue Ribbon Committee, Ridders met immediately with two District administrators and asked what the minimum millage that would be required to build the auxiliary gyms and renovate the auditoriums would be. The money he initially decided to request was one third of the total necessary to complete the project. Ridders contracted an architect to develop plans for the scaled down version of the project. Subsequently the plans were reviewed and summarily rejected by members of the Blue Ribbon Committee and building administrators. In response to the initial plans, one administrator stated, "If this is what we are going to get, let's save our money until we can do this right" (personal correspondence, 2001). After the plans were rejected, the project was expanded to meet the approval of the Blue Ribbon Committee, PEPA, and building administrators. The millage vote for the two new practice facilities and auditorium renovations were authorized and approved by the voters, 1958 yes (56%), 1504 no (44%). A year later another 12 million dollar bond to update facilities further was successful, but a second bond issue for a new football stadium that was not supported by the District failed.

The members of PEPA were very involved with the arts programming in the schools but not as socially influential as the Blue Ribbon Committee. Also, Ridders' three children (triplets) had been involved in the arts programming and not athletics, and therefore PEPA represented something that he understood and valued personally. Ridders was able to satisfy their support for fine arts as well as placate the Blue Ribbon Committee until his retirement.

The Blue Ribbon Committee was the community. They represented the same interests as the ABC, elite academics and athletics, but they also represented the cultural environment that wanted their school facilities to reflect the same high quality as the rest of the community. Due primarily to their connection with athletics, the majority of the group were familiar with how far the facilities in PPS had lagged behind other communities. In addition, as business people, they recognized how the lack of action on facilities was impacting the ability of the community to be competitive when recruiting new employees or expanding the business base. They established their expectations with Ridders, that he focus on upgrading District facilities. If Ridders had planned to continue as superintendent past the end of his contract in 2002, the emergence of the Blue Ribbon Committee made that unlikely unless he was willing to aggressively pursue what the community wanted, updated facilities.

The Blue Ribbon Committee became dissatisfied not only with Ridders but also the Board, as evidenced by the fact that they took matters into their own hands when the Board would not. They utilized their collective influence to accomplish what they wanted, and, in the process, usurped the authority of the Board by meeting directly with the superintendent and demanding changes.

Involuntary Superintendent Turnover

Ridders announced he would retire effective July 1, 2002. The Blue Ribbon Committee represented the community. They demanded, for the financial good of the community, that the superintendent aggressively pursue updating the outdated school facilities, something that would require a great deal of leadership at the institutional level of the organization. His retirement was a result of the Blue Ribbon Committee setting a standard for what they wanted the District to pursue for facilities that Ridders was not willing to meet.

Dissatisfaction Theory studies indicated that the changes on the Board in 1994, 1999, 2000, and 2001 would have led them to hire an external candidate as his replacement (Freeborn, 1966). The Board selected the Michigan Leadership Institute as the firm to do a national search for Ridders' replacement. Several months later after interviewing five candidates, four external and one internal, the Board narrowed their choice to two candidates: a current superintendent from a neighboring district and an assistant superintendent from Naperville, Illinois. A cordial discussion of the two candidates revealed that the Board was split, four to two in favor of the candidate from Illinois. After more discussion, as would be expected of an elite Board, the vote was unanimous, 6-0 for the candidate the majority supported.

Summary

After the changes on the Board in three consecutive elections, as Dissatisfaction Theory would predict, there was an involuntary superintendent turnover in PPS. The turnover, however, was different because in effect the Blue Ribbon Committee, representing the cultural environment of the community, did not depend on the Board to seek change. They recognized that there was a mismatch of values, and Ridders was not

going to understand what they wanted and upgrade facilities on his own. They also were a group that had grown impatient with the lack of action by the Board, so they went directly to Ridders. Ridders attempted to finesse the Blue Ribbon Committee by presenting a scaled down version of what they immediately were requesting (new practice facilities for athletics) but was rebuffed. The rebuttal indicated that Ridders' tactic that had been successful with the Board in the past was not effective with the Blue Ribbon Committee.

In a small city such as Portage, it was likely that the change in expectations that came directly from the cultural environment via the Blue Ribbon Committee was known to the Board. It may be that the Blue Ribbon Committee went directly to Ridders at the request of the Board or specific Board members, but it is more likely that they were dissatisfied with the Board's lack of recognition about the importance of new facilities. Since Ridders already had a contract set to expire, it is likely that if there had been an inclination on the part of the Board to extend the contract, it ended with the encroachment of the Blue Ribbon Committee. It can only be a presumption that Ridders may have continued as superintendent without the influence of the Blue Ribbon Committee. The earlier changes that appeared to be effective at extending Ridders' career, such as affiliating with IB and re-writing curriculum and assessments, were accomplished by subordinates. A major building project would have required an active role by the superintendent, building consensus over a plan, conducting public presentations, and, after a successful bond, a multitude of decisions and months of intense work. The Ridders era demonstrated that he preferred to make smaller improvements to facilities and make do with aging buildings. In addition, he was uncomfortable in the public eye. A major project such as a bond would have required an enormous personal commitment that Ridders was unwilling to undertake. As such, Ridders, who had reached a point where he had the choice

to do so, retired. There were no public statements by the Board asking him to remain as superintendent. When he retired, the school put on a community event at a local park for staff and community members.

The costs to the community for Ridders remaining as superintendent continued to expand the longer he served. The facilities that were out of date in 1991 received only minor improvements through his departure in 2002. The exception was a new elementary school that was constructed in 1994; even then, the school was only constructed after Ridders first recommended re-opening a school that was built in the early 1950s. The long neglected facilities were addressed by the next superintendent; the needs to bring all of the schools to current standards totaled over \$250 million (construction manager meeting 2005). The District citizens approved a \$119.5 million bond program with a long range plan for additional funding in three years and again in six years to complete the plan. In addition, the inadequacy of the curriculum development process required a new process and considerable expense in both human and financial resources. The long term impact to the District budget created by Ridders' multiple reorganizations, an above-the-market pay structure for several positions and legal services agreements, and his unwillingness to address difficult financial structural deficits before departing require many years to remedy.

The dissatisfaction during Ridders' era was specific to each level of the organization. When Ridders created his first policy mandates they involved technical activities that the cultural environment did not ask for. The vocational education consortium required cooperation with other schools in the county, which Portage considered unnecessary. The people in Portage chose to reside there because they wanted excellence for their families. In the schools, excellence required first class academic,

athletic, and arts programming for their children. Alternative education brought students to the schools who had dropped out of not only Portage but also surrounding school districts. The managerial activities were also immediately at odds with how the cultural environment wanted to spend their resources. Ridders allocated resources to pay for more managers and to fund programs for high school dropouts and vocational education programming, none of which were important to the community. The cultural environment wanted things to continue as they had under Conti, allocating resources to excellent academic, athletic, and arts programming.

As the Ridders era continued, he was able to maintain his employment through a variety of tactics; the ABC group was placated through processes such as curriculum rewrites, gaining leadership on the Board, and entrance into the prestigious International Baccalaureate Program. The Blue Ribbon Committee that consisted of members of the dominant culture emerged and insisted on excellence throughout the school system, including facilities that they could be proud of, facilities that represented the first class community they believed they were.

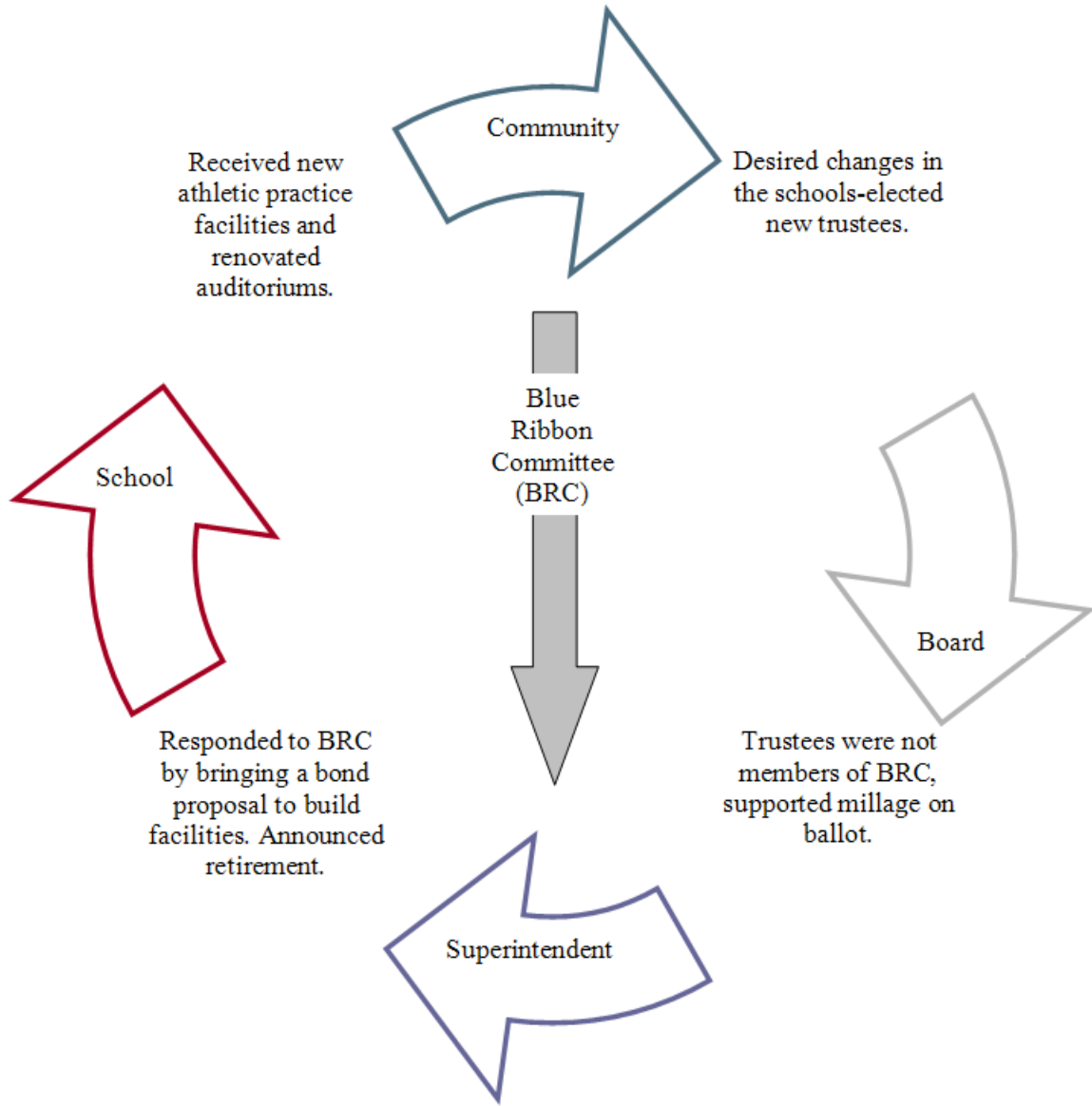


Figure 57: 2001 Blue Ribbon By-Pass of the Board

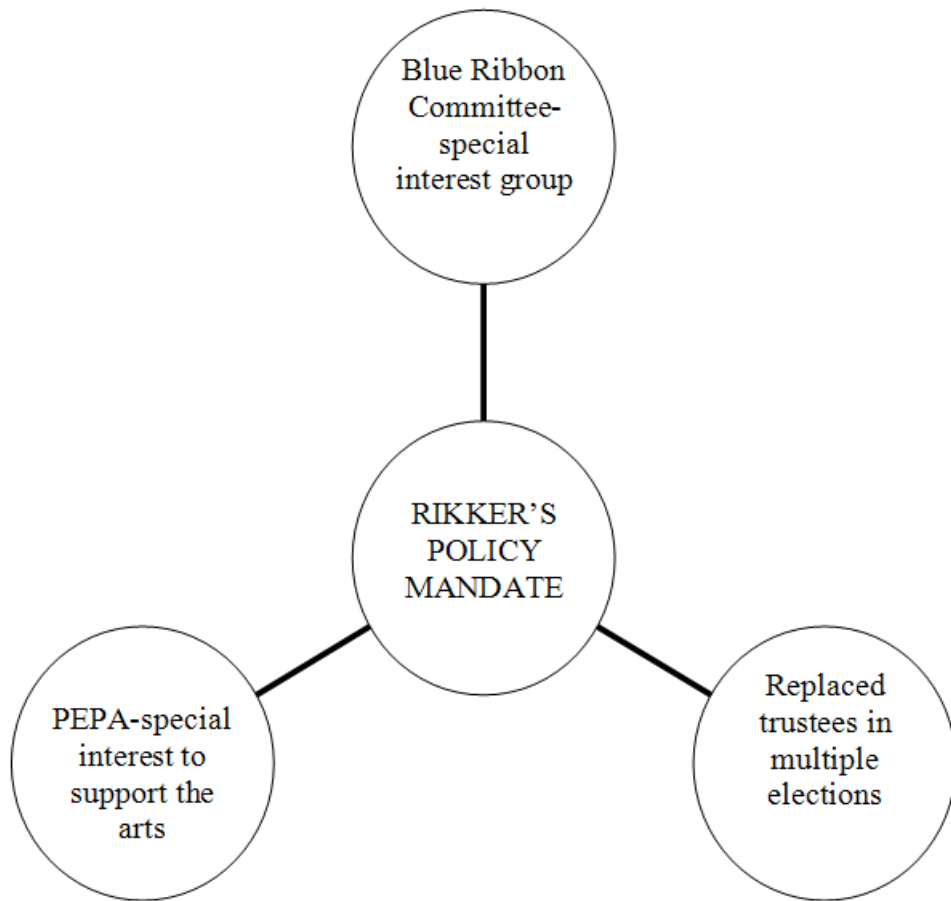


Figure 58: Dissatisfaction from the Community, Period of Politicization #3

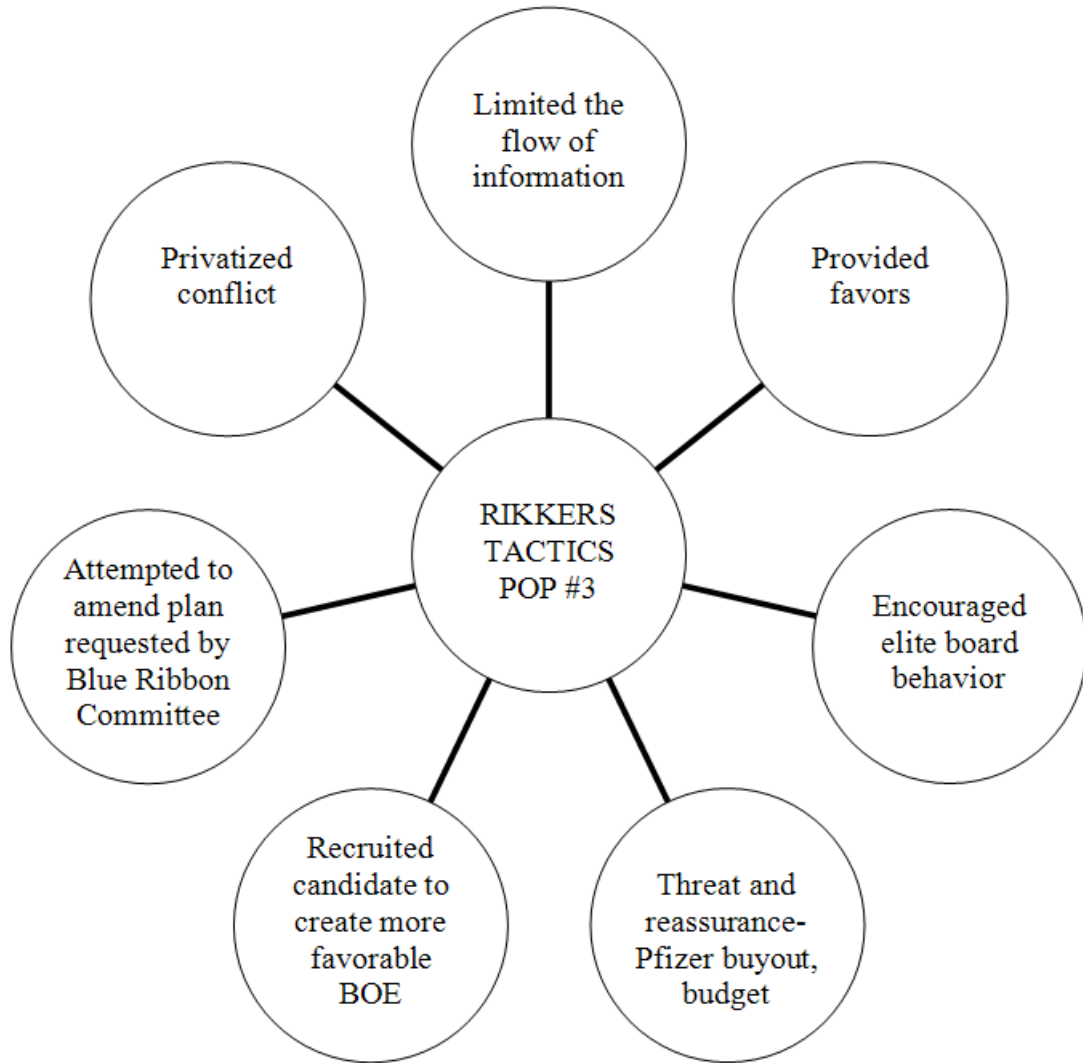


Figure 59: Rikker's Tactics During Period of Politicization #3

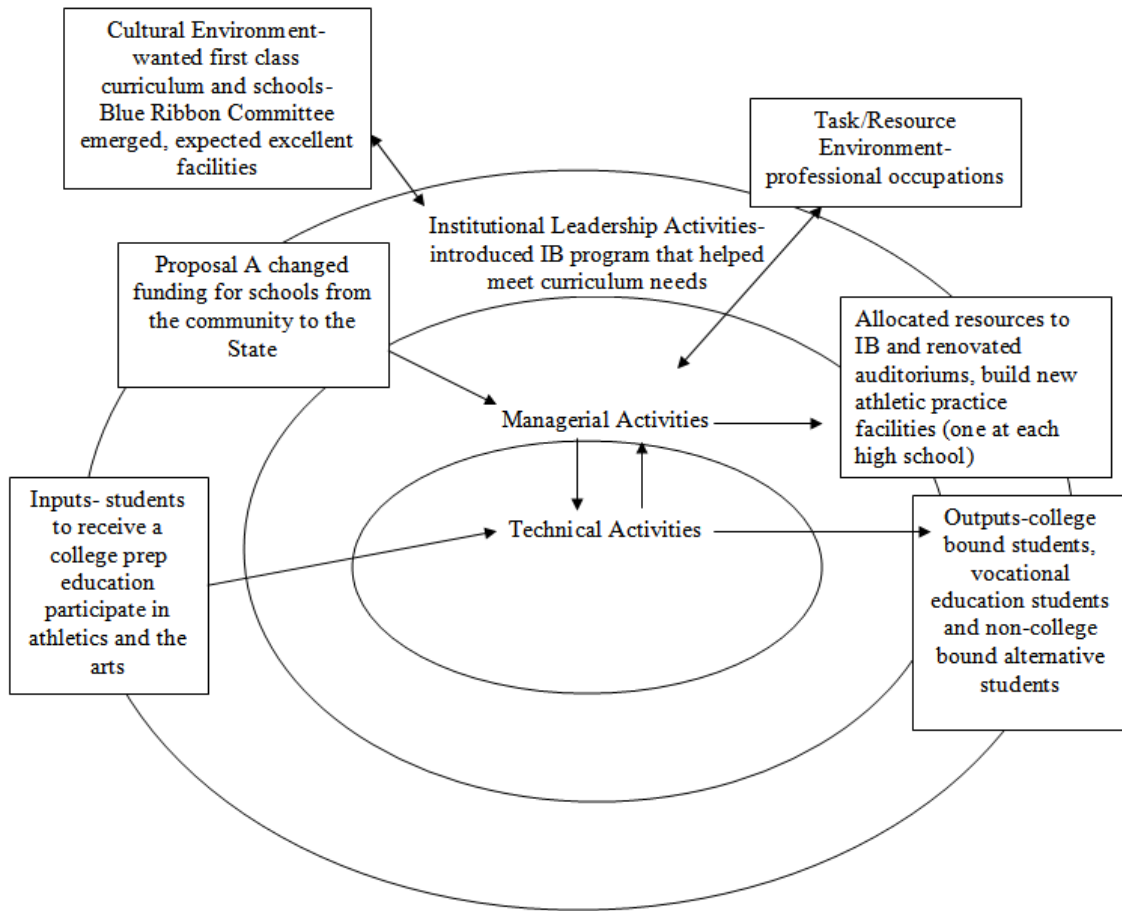


Figure 60: Conceptual Model of an Organization- End of Ridders Era

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was threefold: a) To better understand the dynamics of the position of superintendent; b) Inform superintendents, school boards; and community members to extend their knowledge to improve practice ; and c) To advance the knowledge of Dissatisfaction Theory. More specifically:

Professional Self-Development

As an assistant superintendent, this researcher was interested in this topic as a mechanism for professional self-development to become a more professional school administrator through a better understanding of the role of the superintendent in a school system. The opportunity that the researcher had to observe and participate in the inner workings of a school system provided an inside view of how things work and what happens in a variety of situations. The researcher wanted to explore the theoretical propositions that might help explain the inner workings and allow an administrator to anticipate events or ramifications of choices required in administration as well as inform others of actions or behaviors that lead to more effective school administration. In addition, the researcher wanted to understand the strategies and tactics that led to the remarkable longevity of the superintendent in PPS.

Inform Superintendents and School Board Members to Improve Practice

The researcher sought to enhance superintendents' knowledge of the importance of the relationship between them and their community and of tactics and strategies that may be effective mechanisms for accomplishing their goals and maintaining their position. Further, the researcher intended to inform school board trustees of the importance of the superintendent selection process and the principles and effects of strategies such as

privatization. Finally, the purpose was to inform trustees of the costs to them and the school associated with retaining a superintendent who does not fit the community.

Generalize Knowledge about Dissatisfaction Theory

Through a class in a doctoral program, the researcher learned about Dissatisfaction Theory and observed that it appeared as though it did not match what happened in PPS. The researcher wanted to check the generalized knowledge versus the propositions of Dissatisfaction Theory to see if PPS was an exception or if the theory was applicable to PPS. Testing the propositions would allow the researcher to advance Dissatisfaction Theory by examining this specific case.

Portage experienced episodic periods of politicization when the policy mandate provided by the superintendent did not match the values of the community and incumbent Board members were replaced. Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970) would have predicted that the Board would remove the superintendent. The Board, however, did not and the superintendent continued in his role for many years until he retired. This study examined what appeared to be an exception to the theory in order to better understand whether in Portage Dissatisfaction Theory did not apply and therefore was an exception to the rule. To conduct a thorough assessment of what happened in Portage, the researcher examined the community of Portage from its beginnings and the transformation of the community and the school system through 2002.

Research Method

This study examined a single case that appeared to be an exception to Dissatisfaction Theory by inspecting specific circumstances that resulted in periods of politicization and what happened after to determine if the propositions were verifiable. The research employed principles of a field study. To provide multiple perspectives, this

descriptive study involved gathering data through interviews with an extensive network of informants. The informants were selected because of the likelihood that they might have been in a position to contribute information relevant to the research. The researcher scrutinized primary sources including reading all Board Minutes from 1947 through 2002, election records, and enrollment information. Secondary source documents were also examined. The secondary sources, books about the history of Portage, Kalamazoo, and the Upjohn Company, revealed an important historical perspective about the heritage of the area and its most influential and major employer. Finally the researcher was an administrator in the District and functioned as a participant observer. His personal observations were useful for the selection of interview subjects because he was in the position to understand who might be in a position to provide the most useful information. The examination of documents and interviews of informants were used to compare information. The comparison revealed new strands of information that required follow-up. The follow-up resulted in more sophisticated and useful interview questions and contributed to a spiral of information that was placed into the data verification procedures. The information spiral was not only useful in data analysis but also because each new piece of data provided an opportunity for the researcher to look for disconfirming evidence as a means of severely testing information. The data were critically analyzed to compare the events in Portage to the conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory.

This chapter will summarize the research and then, using the conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory, explain and summarize the conclusions.

Summary of the Study

The Early Years Through 1885

Evidence exists that for over 9,000 years there have been inhabitants in Southwestern Michigan and the Portage area. The written record of the area began in the 17th century when Europeans crisscrossed the area mainly because of the fur trade. In 1805 Michigan was established as a territory, and by then the Potawatomi Indians were in possession of the land (Schmitt, 1998).

After the War of 1812 ended in 1814, the U.S. government signed treaties with several Native American tribes so that they could sell the land to pay off war debts (Potts, 1976). Following the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, the first white settlers arrived in the Portage area in the early 1830s from northern New York. The new settlers were Yankees whom Elazar (1994) described as "... a subculture originated in New England and was based on Puritanism, with its emphasis on individual enterprise within the context of an organized and powerful community" (p. 216). The Yankees started schools soon after they settled that met in homes and taught reading, penmanship, and mathematics, the academic skills necessary to sustain their culture. The Yankees' presence intruded on the Potawatomi culture. The community established their governance system and when they found the Potawatomi to be a "nuisance," because of the treaties signed years earlier and the subsequent purchase of the land by the Yankees, the Potawatomi were denied the legal right to live on the land and were removed.

In 1837 when Michigan became a state, the constitution included a mechanism to regulate education and provide resources through the state primary fund to create public schools. The District Schools' instruction ended at grade eight, so students who continued

into high school attended in Kalamazoo on a tuition basis. The schools provided instruction in handwriting, reading, and arithmetic (Potts, 1976) so that students could communicate, read their Bible, and do arithmetic necessary to sustain their culture. As could be expected, school was in session when children were not needed to perform agricultural tasks.

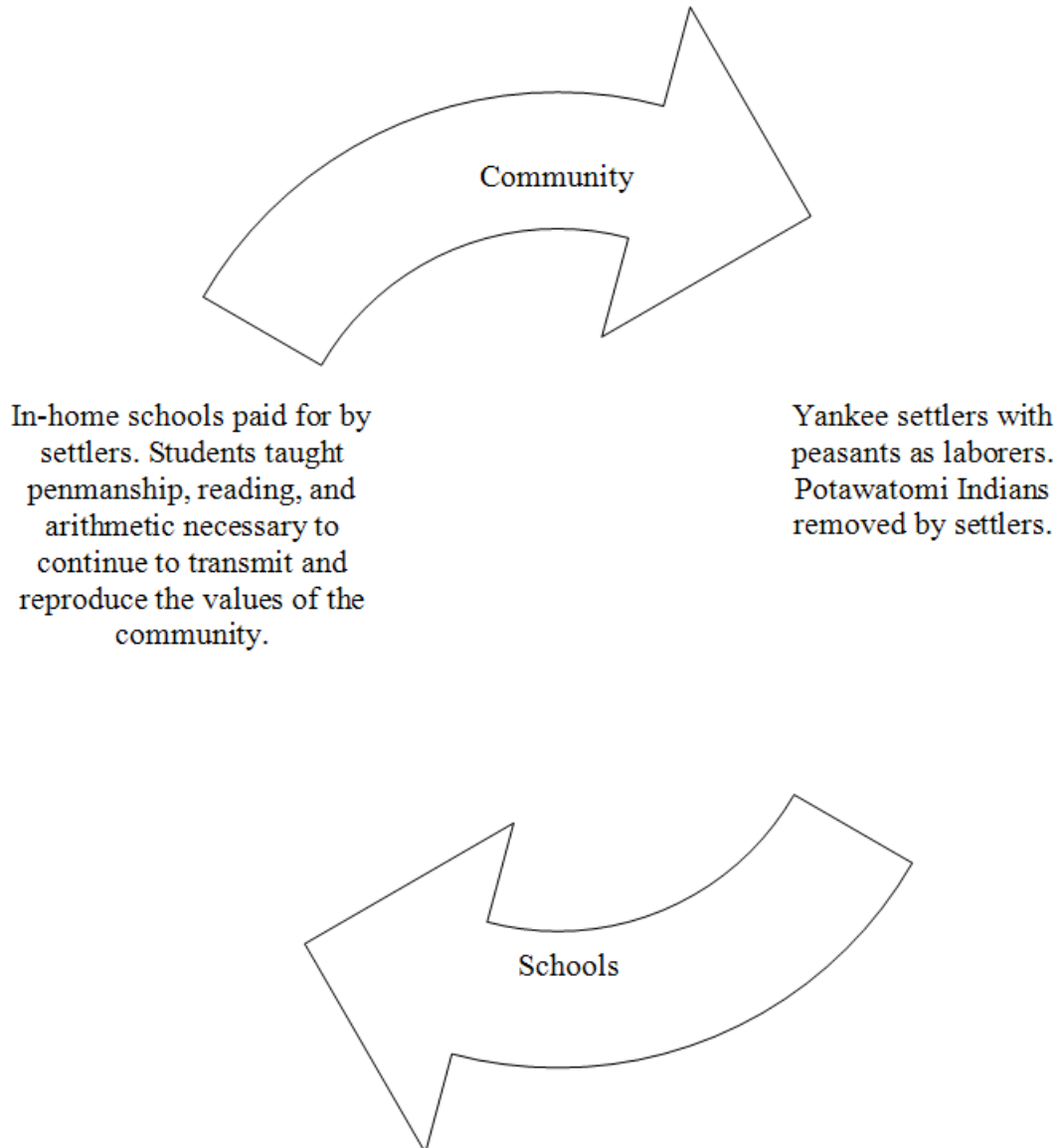


Figure 61: Early Years through 1885

1885-Dutch Relocate and Combine with the Yankees

Dutch immigrants from Holland first arrived in West Michigan in 1847 with Dr. A. C. Van Raalte, a secessionist pastor. Several years later in 1885 ten members of the group moved south into Portage. They bought marshland from the Yankees that was perfect to grow celery. As the Dutch established their celery farms, they integrated populations with the Yankees. The two cultures were remarkably similar; both came from the moralistic political culture and were conservative with strong religious preferences that they used to reinforce what they valued, and as a result the two quickly assimilated. In short order the governance of Portage reflected members from both groups.

The Dutch children attended school in buildings they constructed near their celery farms. In 1920 the growth of the population and the demand for a more complete education system that included a high school program created a need for the Yankees and Dutch to raise additional revenue by consolidating their schools. The Board hired a graduate of the Western State Normal School, Cleora Skinner, as superintendent. District documents from 1924 indicated that there were 330 students in kindergarten through grade 12. The high school offered English, Latin, algebra, botany, chemistry, physics, art, history, economics, physical education, and agriculture. The document also indicated that school began on September 22 and was in session for 36 weeks. The academic offerings and length of the school year are examples of the technical activities made possible through Skinner's institutional and managerial activities.

For the first time the Board hired an agent (superintendent), Skinner, to represent them to provide schools that would transmit the culture of the community. By hiring Skinner, the Board formalized the school organization. It became the Board's responsibility to monitor their agent and Skinner's to provide legitimacy for the school.

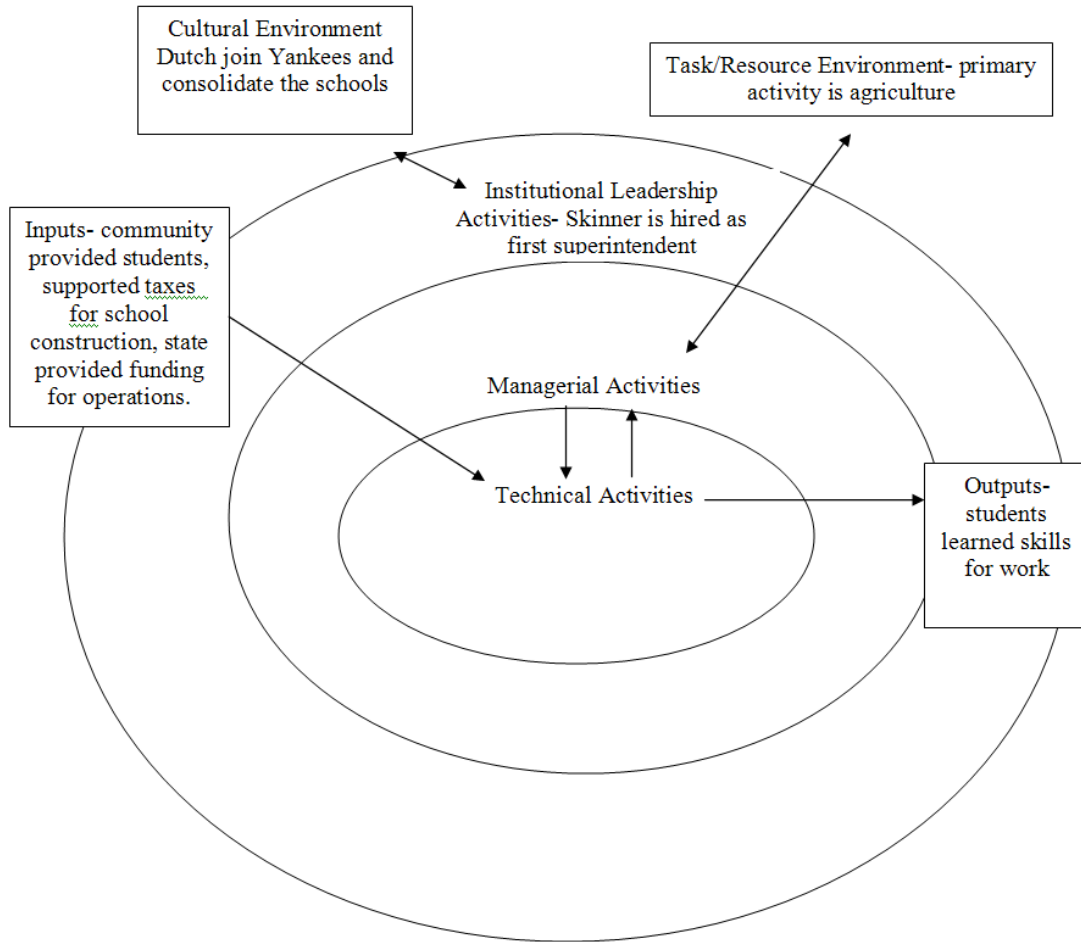


Figure 62: Portage Conceptual Model of an Organization-Skinner

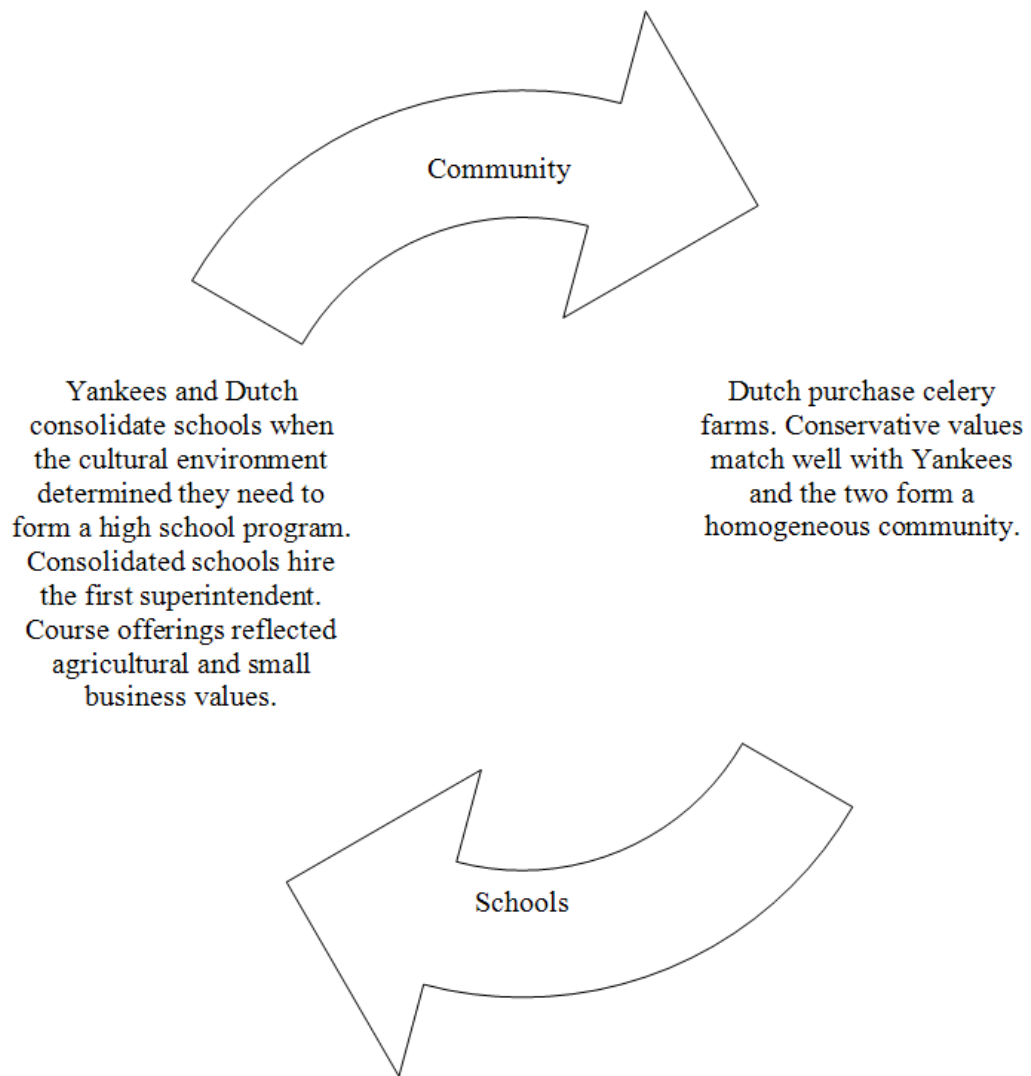


Figure 63: Yankees and Dutch Combine 1885-1945

1947- Wilkinson Era: Period of Quiescence

In 1945 Portage was a growing community with servicemen and-women returning from World War II and the Upjohn Company electing to build in the community. In 1947 the School Board hired Varl Wilkinson as superintendent. Wilkinson, the son of a feed store owner, was hired after he was interviewed by individual Board members in their

barns and greenhouses (Wilkinson Oral History, 2004). He understood the culture of Portage and was able to provide the outputs desired by the environment.

From the beginning, Wilkinson was required to address the problem of too many students and too few schools. Because of the shortage of supplies caused by World War II, new construction for schools and other facilities had been placed on hold. To provide enough classroom space, students met in a variety of buildings, including, in one instance, a bar. The beginning of the baby boom added to a rapidly increasing population and school enrollment in Portage. Choices had to be made: either eliminate the high school program or construct new facilities. Wilkinson determined that the community was willing to fund new construction projects to create adequate instructional space for students and immediately began to lead the District through multiple projects to construct new schools.

1956-Wilkinson Era: Changing Demographics and Shifting Values

As the community continued to grow, there was a conflict between those who wanted to keep Portage small and those who wanted Portage to progress into a modern community with paved roads and more commerce. The primary election of 1956 resulted in the defeat of a long-term incumbent Township Supervisor when the cultural environment (community) elected the progressive candidate who favored expansion and progress. Then in 1963 the community trumped Kalamazoo's attempt to annex the township as part of their city when they voted overwhelmingly (61% yes, 39% no) to become the City of Portage.

Upjohn continued to expand as the largest employer and taxpayer and, in addition, continued to generate economic benefits in construction trades. In addition the company opened a new office complex in Portage for its upper management.

The dramatic increase in population brought a new demographic to the community of Portage. As the population changed, what the cultural environment required of their institutional leadership changed as well. When the incumbent Portage Township Supervisor was defeated, it presented evidence of dissatisfaction with the status quo. The community changed the leadership to someone who would more likely deliver them what they wanted: progress in the form of paved roads, traffic signals, and the like. Kirkendall's (1966) research indicated that socioeconomic change was a strong indicator of social, economic, and political change and a step in Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970). This dissertation concerns dissatisfaction in the schools; however, when the community demonstrated dissatisfaction as defined by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) by removing the supervisor, it provided the researcher with an initial indicator that their theory held true in the community of Portage.

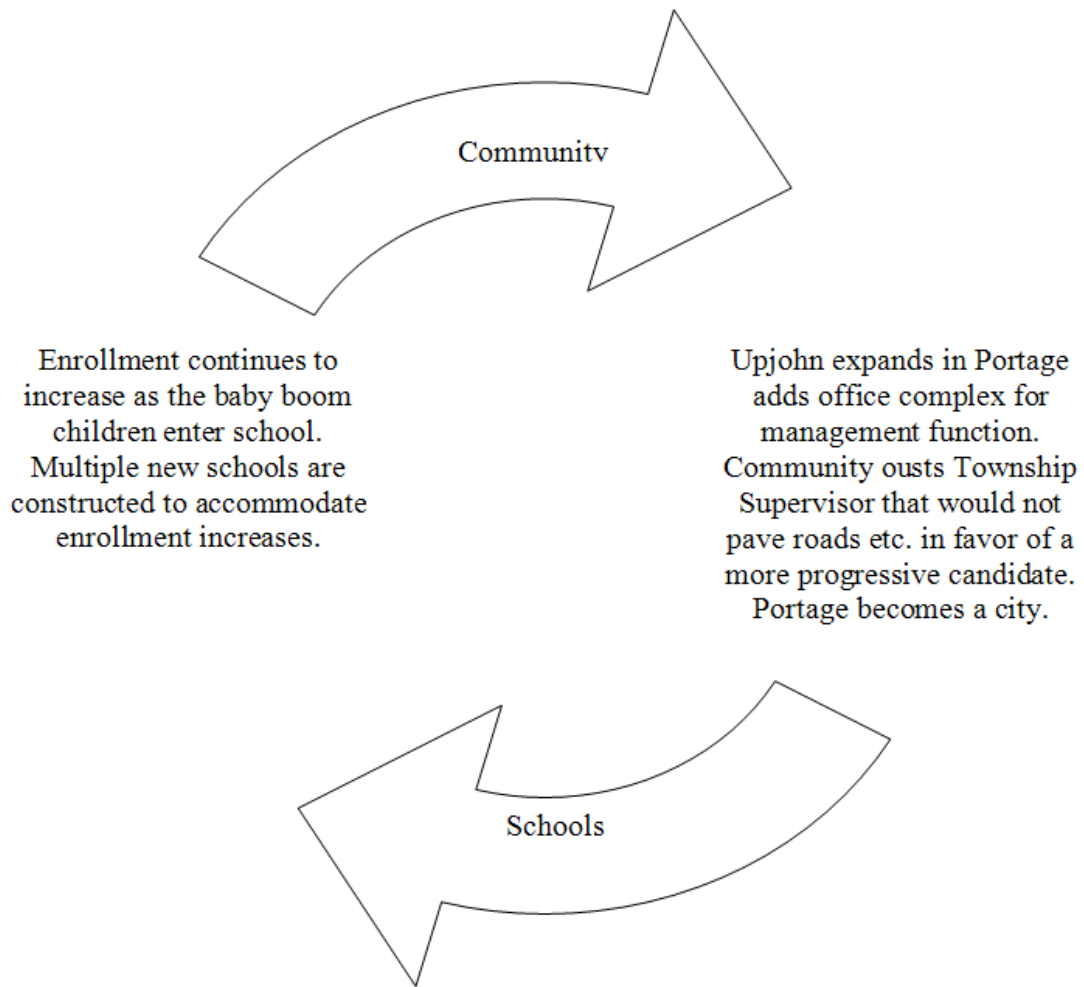


Figure 64: Wilkinson Era-Changing Demographics and Shifting Values

1967-Wilkinson Era: Period of Politicization

The 1967 School Board election resulted in two new trustees in an uncontested election. Iannaccone (1982) identified the link between dissatisfaction and a change in board trustees through the election process as a Turning Point Election Period (TPEP). Iannaccone (1982) stated, “A decision by two incumbent board members not to seek reelection has the same effect as an initial incumbent defeat after a period of political quiescence” (p. 108). Therefore the election of 1967 was an indicator of dissatisfaction and the end of the period of quiescence. The following year two more trustees were

elected, also in an uncontested election, and after the election, another trustee was replaced and therefore by 1968, there were five new Board members in two years (District Records) and further dissatisfaction .

Following the 1968 Board election, a special interest group named Cit-Com emerged. The Cit-Com was a group of 100 community members that was encouraged to form by members of the Board; they produced a list of 33 recommendations that requested changes in nearly every facet of the District. The Cit-Com was another display of dissatisfaction: that aligned with one of the steps Iannaccone (1982) attributed to dissatisfaction, an increase in attempts of community members and groups to influence school policy.

The year following, in 1969, the source of local school revenues in Michigan, an operations millage, failed and resulted in major reductions in expenditures. The defeat of the operations millage signified that the institutional activities were not successful in transmitting to the cultural environment technical core activities that they were willing to support financially. The failed millage was an additional indicator of dissatisfaction as supported by research by Lutz and Garberia's (1977) findings that citizens dissatisfied with their schools do not support tax proposals.

Because of the failed millage, Wilkinson was forced to initiate cuts. One of the cuts attributed to him was a recommendation to make up the deficit by cutting transportation. The proposed cuts riled the community and resulted in several emotional Board Meetings and Special Board Meetings and the formation of multiple special interest groups either in support of funding transportation, recalling the Board, or in opposition to recalling the Board. The new groups were formed to socialize their conflicts because "conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience

involved in the fight or in excluding it” (p. 4, Schattschneider, 1975). Getting others involved increased the possibility that they could influence the Board.

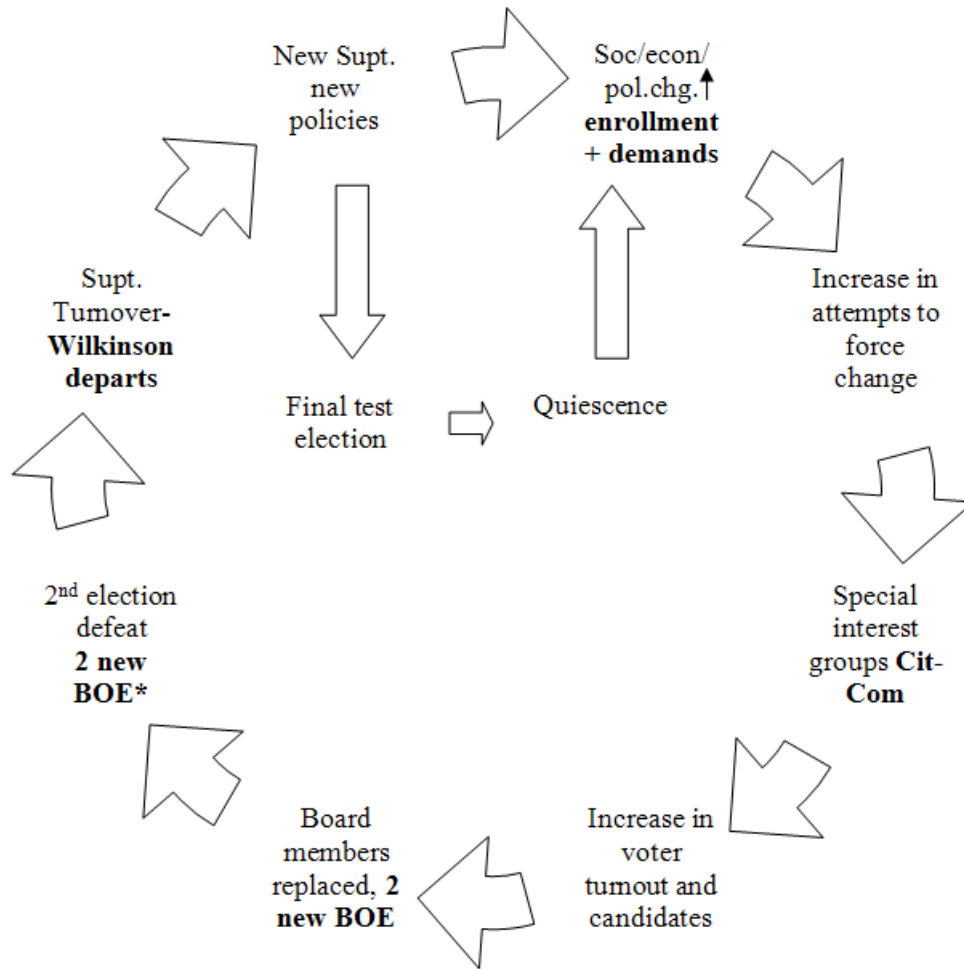
The Special Board Meetings, large audiences at Board meetings, and the special interest groups that emerged were all indicators of dissatisfaction (Iannaccone, 1982).

Wilkinson had failed to provide the output that the community wanted, and the result was multiple indicators of their dissatisfaction.

Involuntary Superintendent Turnover (IVST)

The School Board held a Special Board Meeting on January 12, 1970. At that meeting, Varl Wilkinson submitted his resignation. The Board minutes indicated: “motion made by Dr. Boyer, seconded by Mr. Beardsley, to accept reluctantly the resignation of Varl O. Wilkinson as Superintendent of Schools, effective June 30, 1970, Motion carried” (Board Minutes, 1970).

The departure of Wilkinson answered one of questions that was the purpose of this study: Was Portage different, or did the research supporting Dissatisfaction Theory hold true in Portage? The answer was that dissatisfaction did hold true, that changing demographics and shifting values required a shift in outputs by the technical core, and that, in the absence of appropriate adjustments, school board members would be defeated and eventually the superintendent would be removed.



* Operations millage defeated – Wilkinson recommended cuts to transportation

Figure 65: Period of Politicization, Involuntary Superintendent Turnover

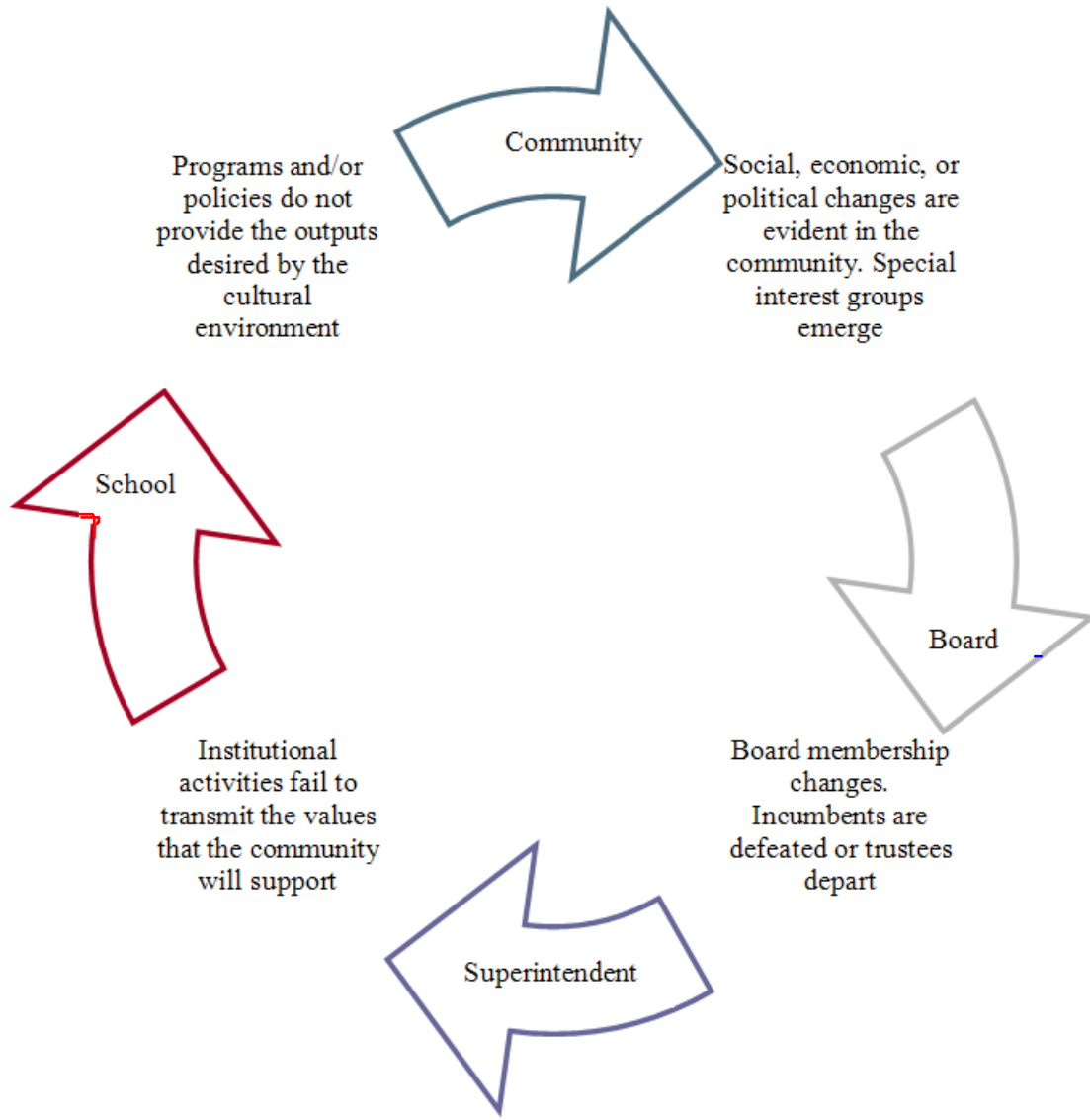


Figure 66: Dissatisfaction Leading to IVST

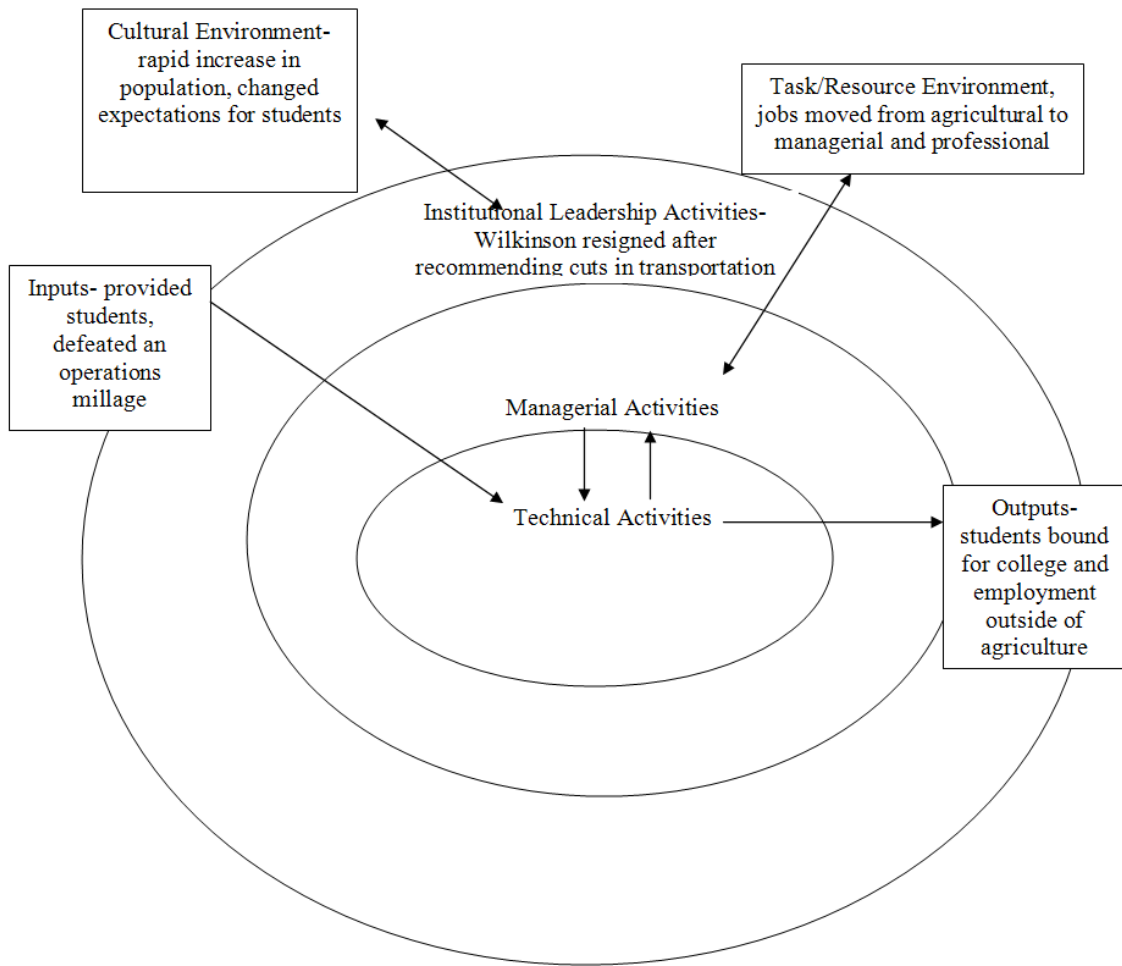


Figure 67: Conceptual Model of an Organization- Wilkinson Era

Superintendent Selection Following IVST

After the departure of Wilkinson, the Board hired Dr. George Conti, a superintendent from Ohio. He had a doctorate, an outgoing personality, and a reputation as a well-liked charismatic character (personal correspondence March, 2001). Freeborn (1966) indicated that when incumbent superintendents were replaced during a period of dissatisfaction, the board sought an external candidate.

Portage had become entrenched as an elite community, and they elected a school board of professionals to represent them. Conti created a policy that transmitted the

dominant values of the community by promoting programs to prepare students for higher education and the pursuit of professional careers. He also supported an accentuation of programming for students involved in gifted and talented, fine arts, and athletic activities.

The flowchart that follows illustrates the process used by the Board for replacing Wilkinson.

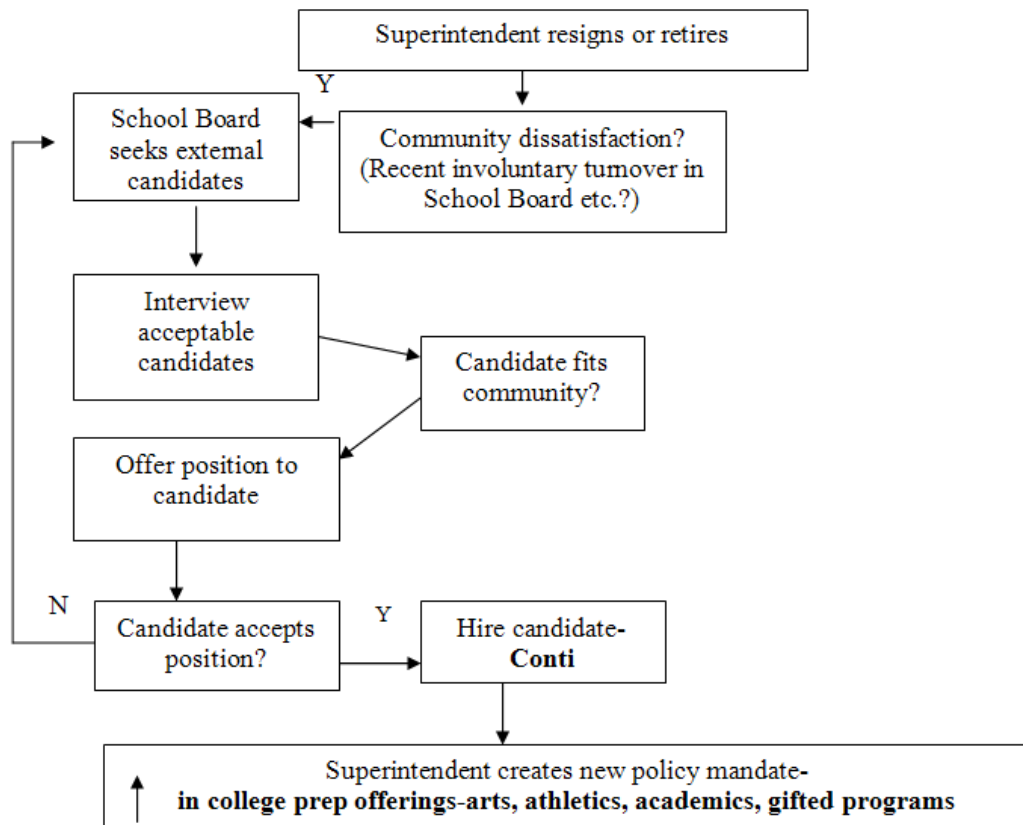


Figure 68: Superintendent Selection Following IVST

Conti Era: Quiescence

After Conti became superintendent in 1970, the final test election that signified a return to quiescence did not occur until 1973 when the election produced no changes to

the Board. For the next six years there was only one change (1974), when a trustee left the area and was replaced.

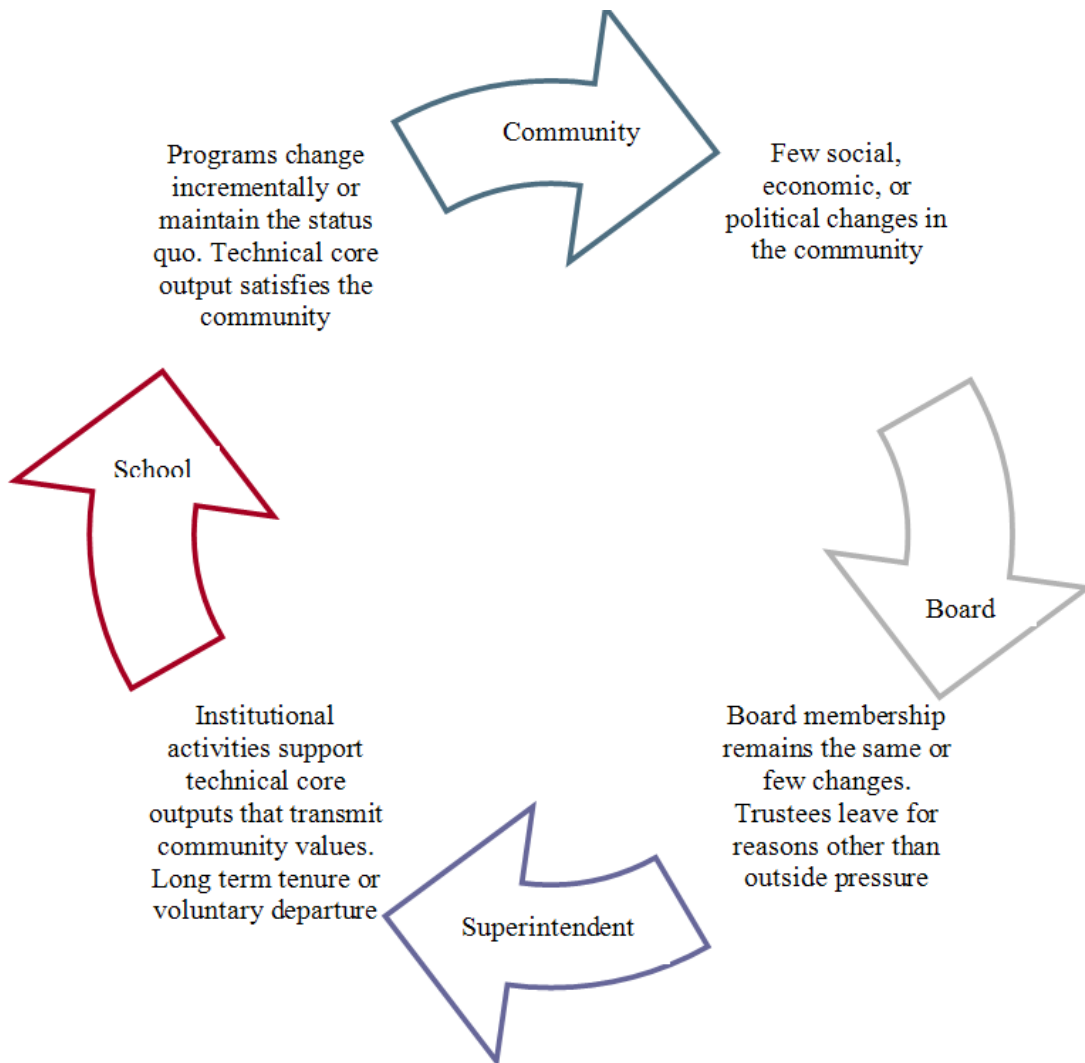


Figure 69: Diagram of Quiescence

1979- Conti Era: Conflict-Return to Quiescence

The District entered a time of conflict that was triggered by a severe economic shortfall caused by declining enrollment, which concluded with the closing of two elementary schools in 1980 and two more in 1982. The process of closing the schools

resulted in advocates for schools and programs attending Board meetings and a new special interest group, Save East Portage (SEP).

Beginning with the 1979 election just prior to closing the first elementary schools, one new trustee joined the School Board each year through 1984. The six new trustees included four who were elected in contested elections. In 1979, six candidates ran for two seats; the incumbent Boyer was re-elected and one new member, Baker, was elected; in 1980, five candidates ran for two seats; the incumbent Dolan was re-elected and one new member, Atkinson, was elected; in 1981, three candidates ran for one seat, no incumbents ran; in 1982, three candidates ran for two seats and an incumbent, Glass, was defeated by Sheldon, and Ellinger retained his seat; and in 1983, three candidates ran for two seats; the incumbent Boyer was re-elected and one new member, Flynn, was elected. Two additional members were named by the Board as replacements after a member departed. Two of the trustees who departed did not seek re-election to the Board but instead ran for and were elected to positions on the City Council and the County Board of Commissioners.

The multiple candidates running for the BOE, subsequent election of new BOE members, and the emergence of special interest groups were all indicators of dissatisfaction. Conti effectively allocated resources at the managerial level because he understood the community and therefore was able to determine what outputs were desired the most by the community and closed certain schools in lieu of cutting programs such as gifted and talented, music, and athletics. Conti's actions at the institutional level projected legitimacy for the organization, which allowed him to lead the process that resulted in closing the schools. His managerial activities continued to direct resources toward activities most valued by the community academics, athletics and the arts. The technical activities at the core continued to produce students who graduated to pursue professional

degrees and professions. Even though a new special interest emerged, the group was not successful in engaging enough others in socializing their conflict to keep their schools open. In 1984 when no incumbents were defeated, the District returned to a period of quiescence (Lutz & Garberina, 1977). By recommending closing the schools, Conti made decisions that accurately transmitted the values of the majority of the community, and the result was that the District returned to a period of quiescence.

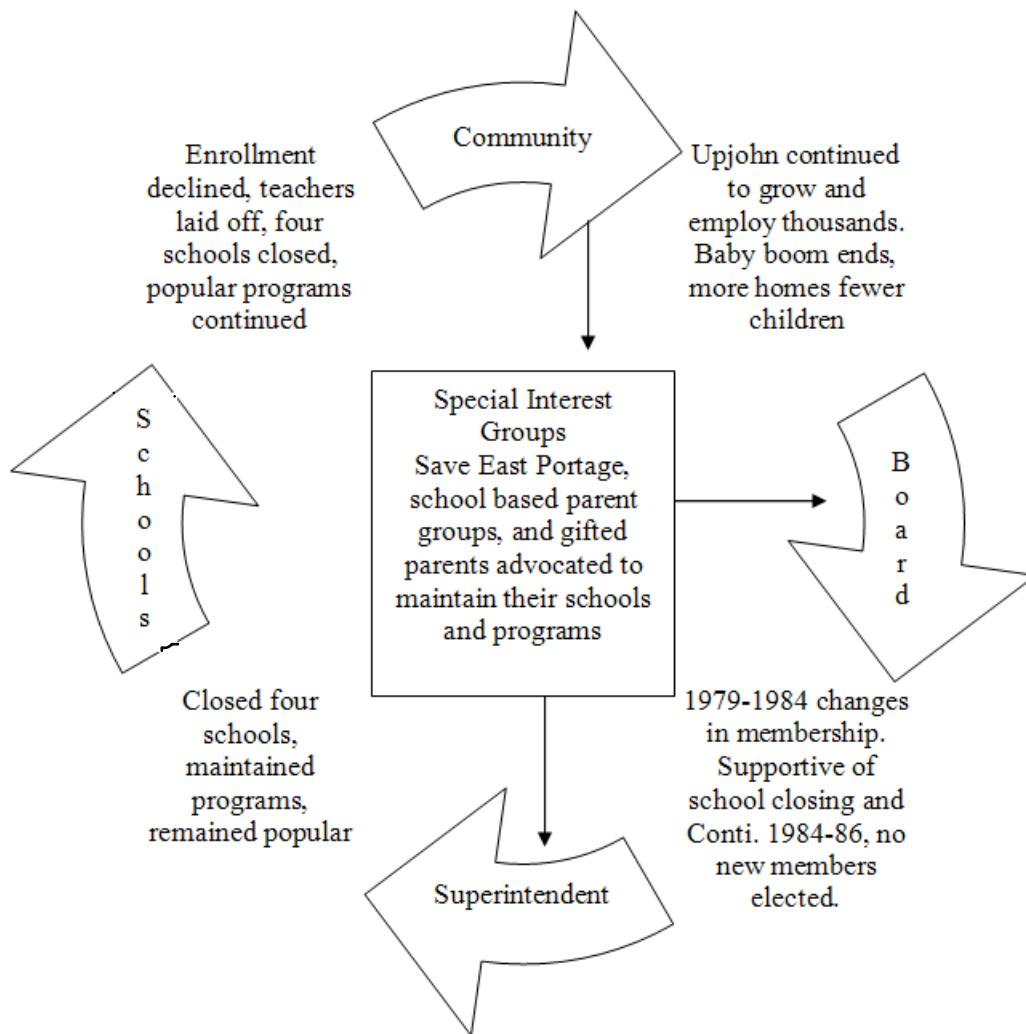


Figure 70: Conti Era, Conflict-Return to Quiescence

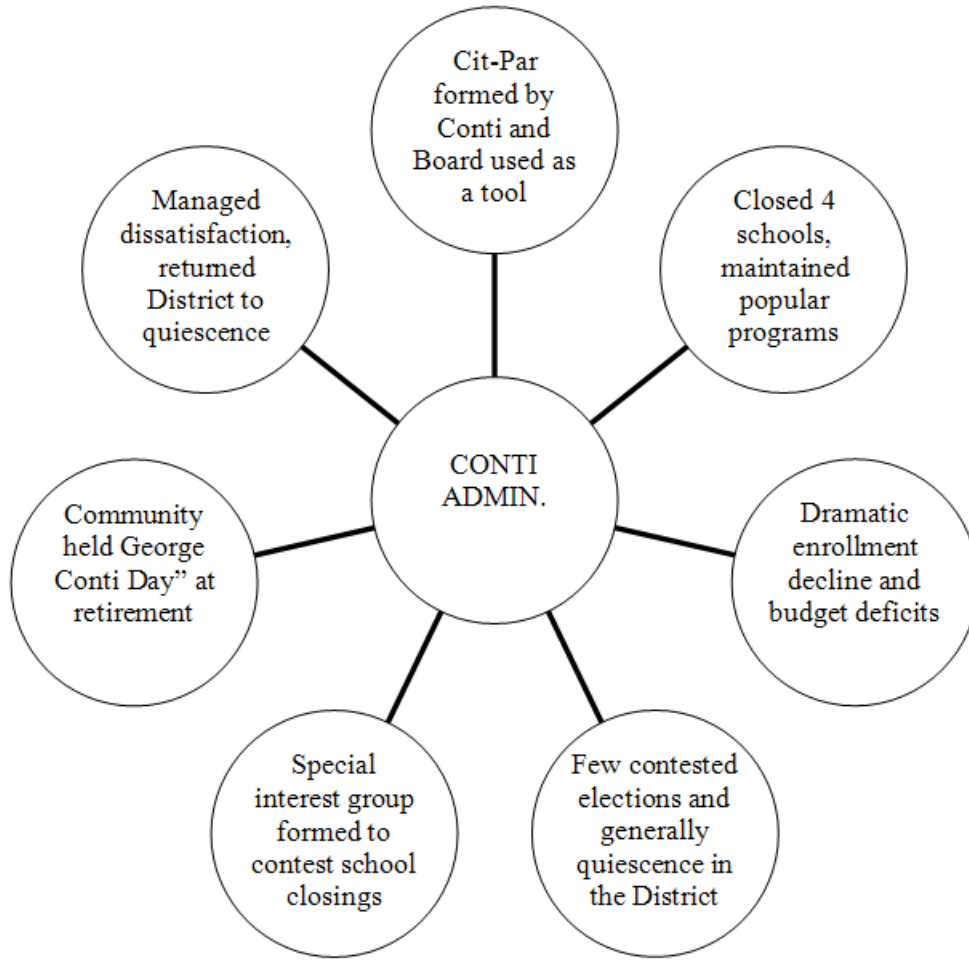


Figure 71: Conti Era

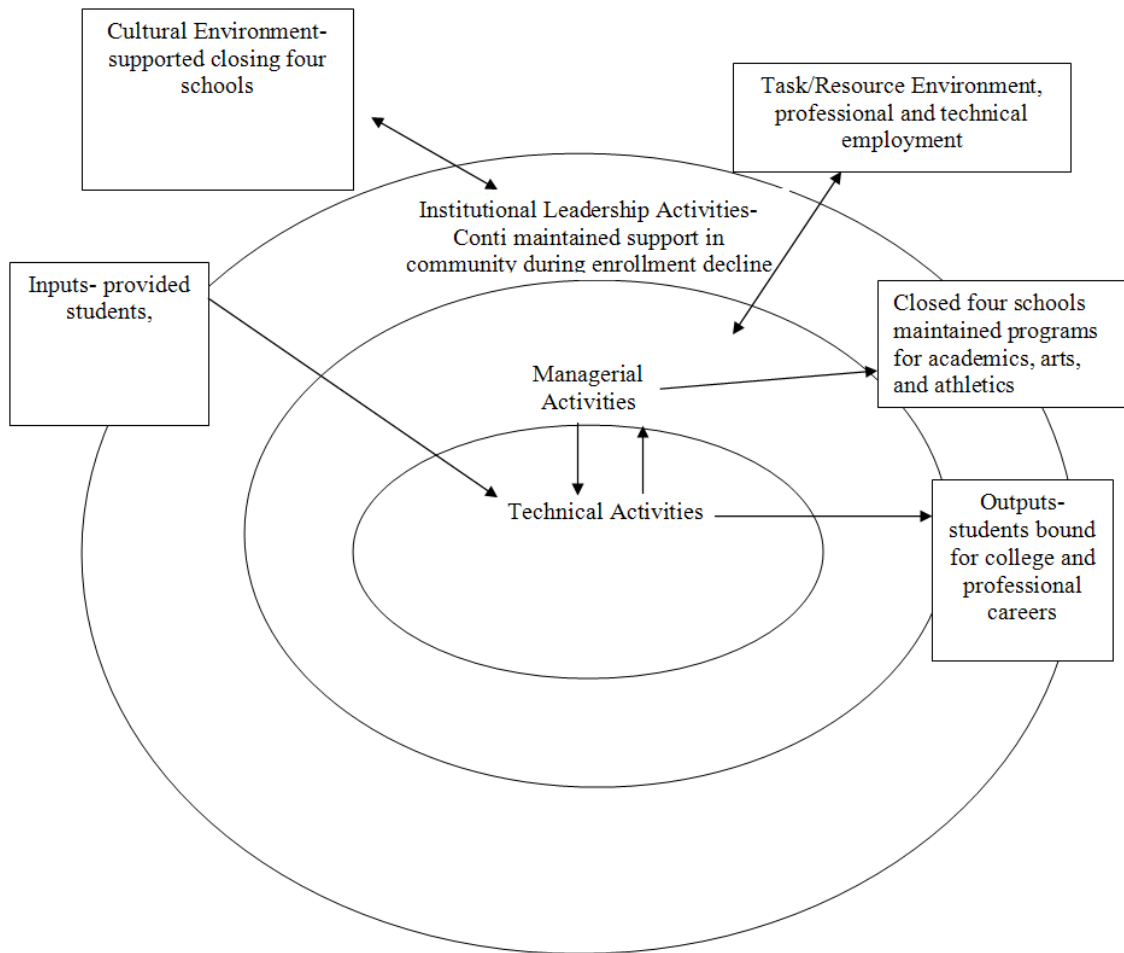


Figure 72: Conceptual Model of an Organization- Conti Era

Voluntary Superintendent Turnover and Selection

The District was in the midst of a new period of quiescence, and the Board was supportive of Conti and the direction of the schools when he announced in April of 1985 that he was going to retire. The Board minutes reflected the following: “Dr. Conti announced his intent to retire at the end of the 1985-86 school year, or at the very latest at the conclusion of the 1986-87 school year” (April 1985, p. 313). The Board agreed with Conti’s recommendation to hire a superintendent-elect to facilitate a smooth transition.

The history of PPS had demonstrated that, through the time that Conti announced that he was retiring, the changes within PPS had followed the steps of Dissatisfaction

Theory. That is, after a period of politicization, the community had replaced a superintendent (Wilkinson) in 1970 when the schools failed to produce the outputs that they wanted. That event demonstrated that Portage, to this point in time, was not unique. The conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory -- when schools fail to produce the outputs that are desired by the community, it is followed by a period of politicization that results in the replacement of the superintendent with someone who will reflect their values -- held true. Another indicator that Portage was not unique occurred in local Portage politics when, in the mid-1950s, the community replaced a long-term township supervisor and local icon (McCamley) when he rejected their requests to upgrade roads, traffic signals, and other services.

The Board named a special Selection Committee to seek Conti's replacement. According to informants, the Board preferred Dr. Kenneth Harper, who had left the District a few years earlier to become a superintendent in Zeeland, MI (personal communication). In 1985 Portage had little or no obvious political conflict either in the community or the schools. After closing the last two schools, the District was in a period of quiescence, signifying that the community had determined that Conti was adequately transmitting their values and producing the outputs from the schools that they desired. During quiescence, Freeborn (1966) found that most often insiders are appointed to replace existing superintendents. Consistent with what could be expected during a period of quiescence, the Board coveted a new superintendent who they knew fit the characteristics that they desired, someone similar to the retiring Conti.

Although the Board had identified Harper as the likely successor to Conti, they still designated a committee of three trustees to consider candidates so that they could bring two finalists to interview with the full Board. Their process appeared open, advertising the

opportunity and accepting applications; however, because they had a preferred candidate, what they created was a closed symbolic process. The symbolic process became problematic when Harper withdrew and the Board selected the remaining candidate, Ridders.

The democratic process is a socializing open process. The board's role was to use the democratic process to select a superintendent who would transmit the values of the community. However, instead they created a process that appeared open but was not and, as a result, they generated few candidates for a position that was widely recognized by viable candidates as already earmarked for Harper (personal correspondence). The process backfired when Harper withdrew and they were left with only one candidate. When the applicant pool was small, and later when Harper withdrew, the Board had the option of altering the selection procedure and re-opening the search to an open process. Instead they continued moving forward and eventually interviewed only one candidate during the final interview.

The Board could have decided to select the superintendent in a manner consistent with an elite board, in private, and selected Harper or they could have elected to conduct a search with an open process; however, they did neither. The selection of Ridders demonstrated a lack of a democratic process on the part of the Board. They had neither an internal or external candidate who represented their values, and they selected the individual who was recruited to legitimize the selection of Harper. The diagrams below depict the selection of Ridders: a diagram depicting a selection format for an open democratic process and a diagram illustrating the conditions that led to the selection of an internal candidate along with the community expectations for a superintendent selected during quiescence.

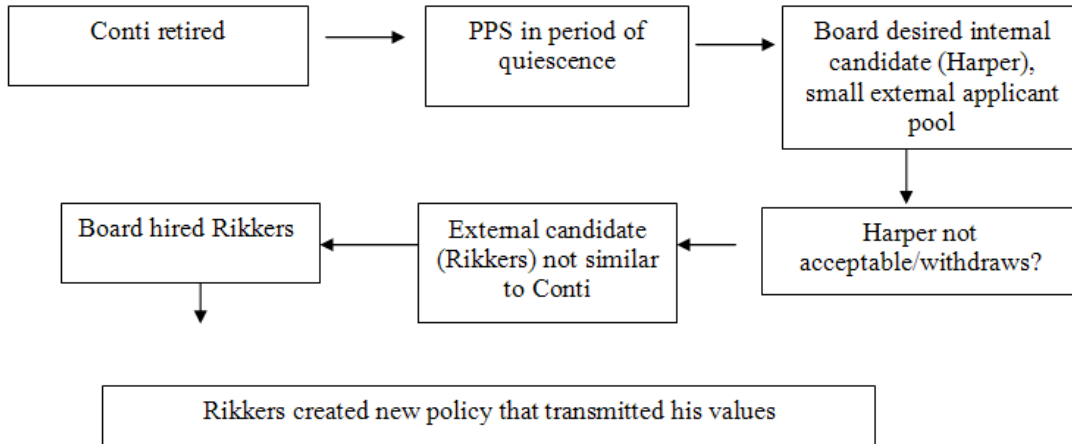


Figure 73: Selection of Ridders

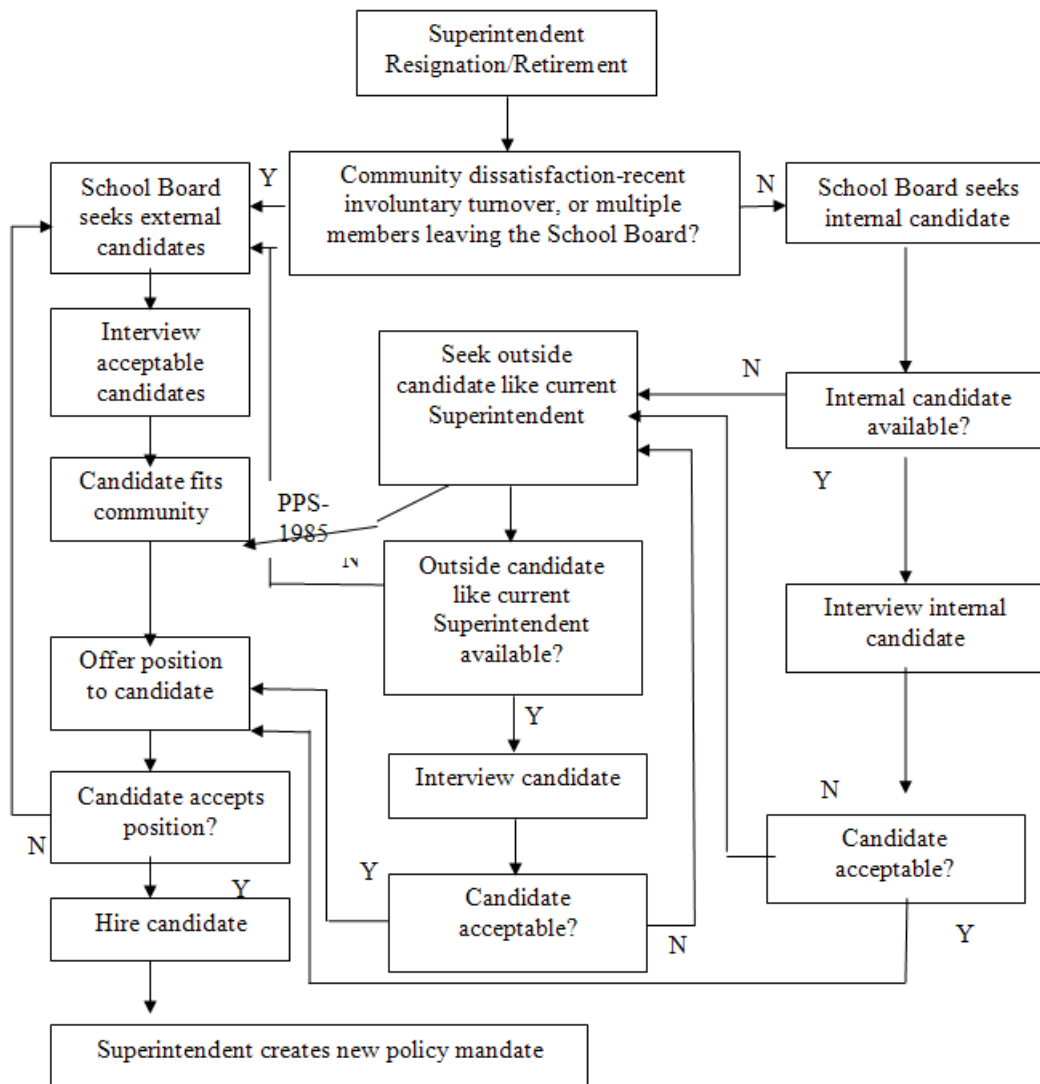


Figure 74: Democratic Superintendent Selection Process

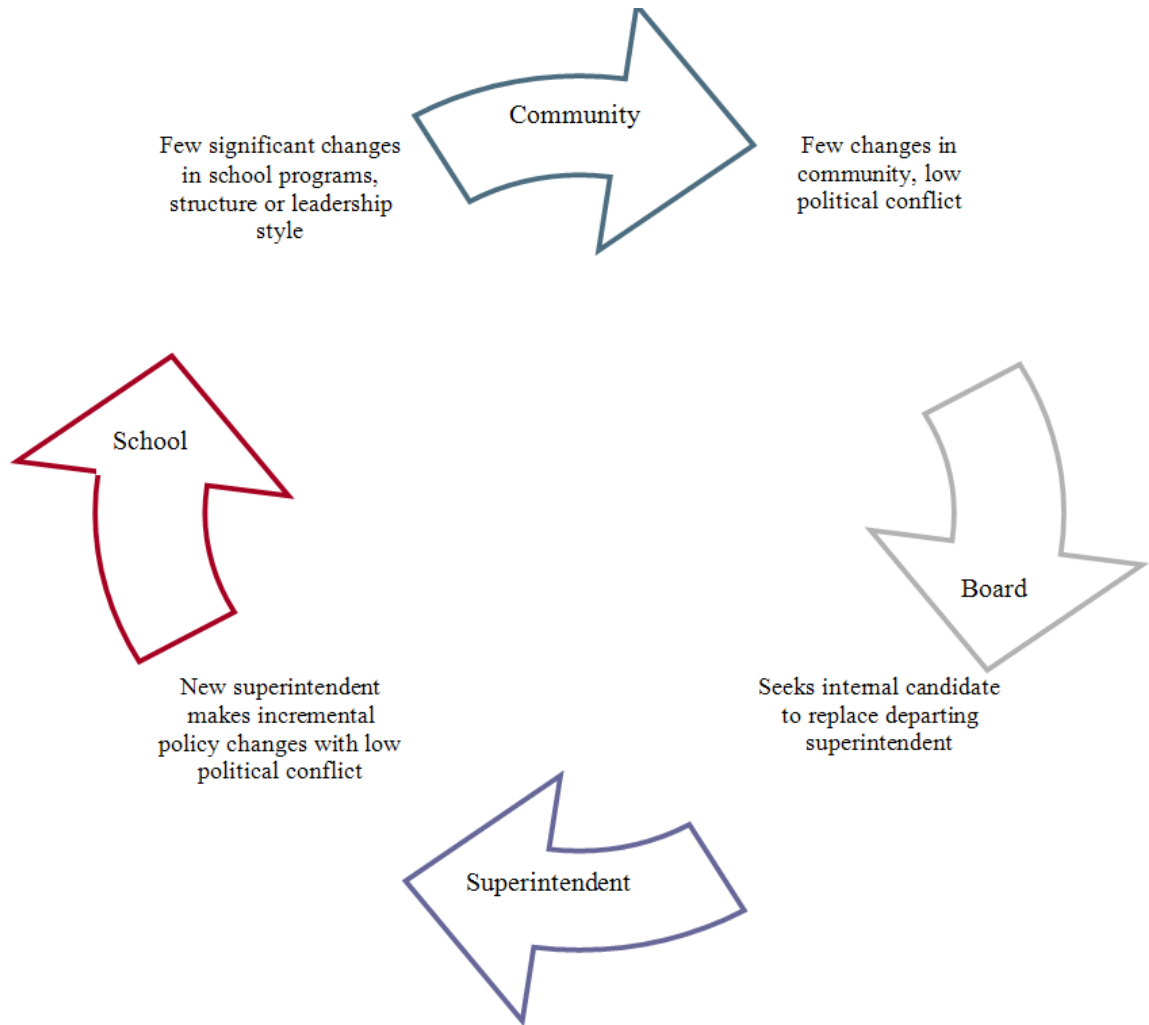


Figure 75: Superintendent Selection During Quiescence

1986-1988 Ridders Era: Conflict Revealed

In 1987, the first election after Ridders became superintendent, three individuals ran for two seats and a new trustee was elected to the Board. Boyer, an incumbent, did not seek re-election; another incumbent who did run was re-elected. The second seat was won by Garling, who an informant (a self-professed good friend of Garling) stated ran to “shake things up” (personal correspondence). Later after the election another member left the Board and was replaced by a former Board member, Sheldon.

The 1987 election did not result in the defeat of an incumbent; however, the Board gained two new members fitting the criteria as defined by Innaccone (1982) as the beginning of dissatisfaction.

Ridders made several changes during the first year of his administration. He announced a “reorganization of the administration with an emphasis on curriculum” (Board Minutes, 1986, p. 425). In addition, Portage Schools entered into two agreements with other county schools: first, to join Education for Employment (EFE), a consortium for vocational education, and second, with the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center (KAMSC) where in return for half of the District’s per-pupil funding allotment, selected students received accelerated math and science instruction. Ridders also recommended the creation of Community High School, an alternative education program that primarily served high school dropouts.

Ridders’ reorganization of the administrative structure resulted in the departure of several key administrators. The first was Vliek, a member of the District Office Administration and the Board secretary for 18 years who stated that he left because “it was just so different [after Conti left] that I couldn’t take it any more” (personal correspondence, 2003). The second was Pellowe, another long-time administrator who was a part of Conti’s District Office Staff who in early 1987 announced his plans to retire. Through his managerial activities, Ridders had begun to transmit his values and those activities resulted in dissatisfaction. The Board desired incremental changes that would continue to transmit the values and produce the outputs that they had established with Conti and dissatisfaction from the cultural environment.

By electing to join the EFE consortium, Ridders allocated resources to a program that produced outputs that were mismatched with local cultural values. Ridders’ action

resulted in PPS students' involvement in a program that would prepare them for vocational careers. He did so in a cultural environment that desired a college preparatory output from their schools. In addition, it resulted in supporting a program that was not unique to Portage students but one that could be accessed by all students in the county. The consortium required PPS students to attend EFE programs in other schools and non-PPS students to come to PPS schools for certain EFE programs. The alternative school allocated resources that could have been used to support the output desired by the community, college preparatory curriculums with elite arts and athletic programs, to high school dropouts, not only from Portage but from other area schools. The actions by Ridders demonstrated a transmission of his values, that of a former vocational education administrator, and confirmed that the Board had selected a superintendent who did not reflect the values desired by the community. The following diagram depicts the conceptual model of an organization, followed by a description of how Ridders' policy mandates impacted each level of the organization.

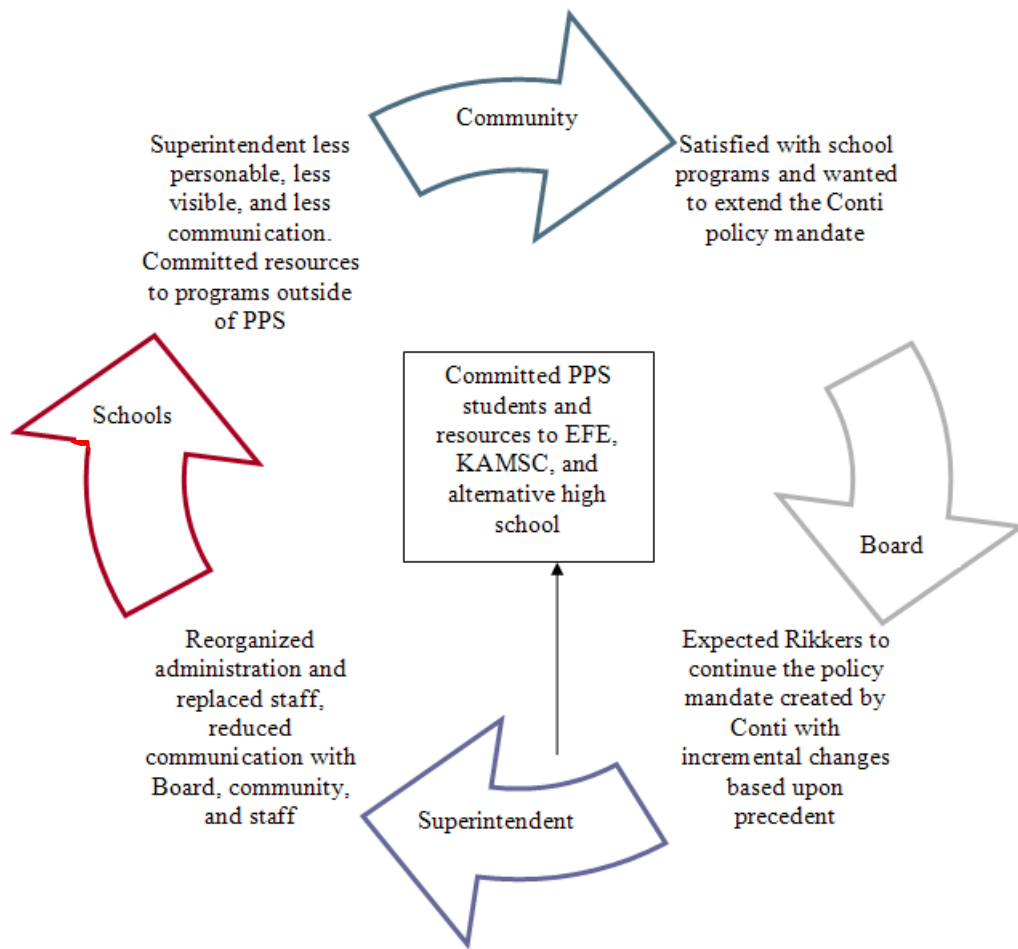


Figure 76: Ridders' First Policy Mandates

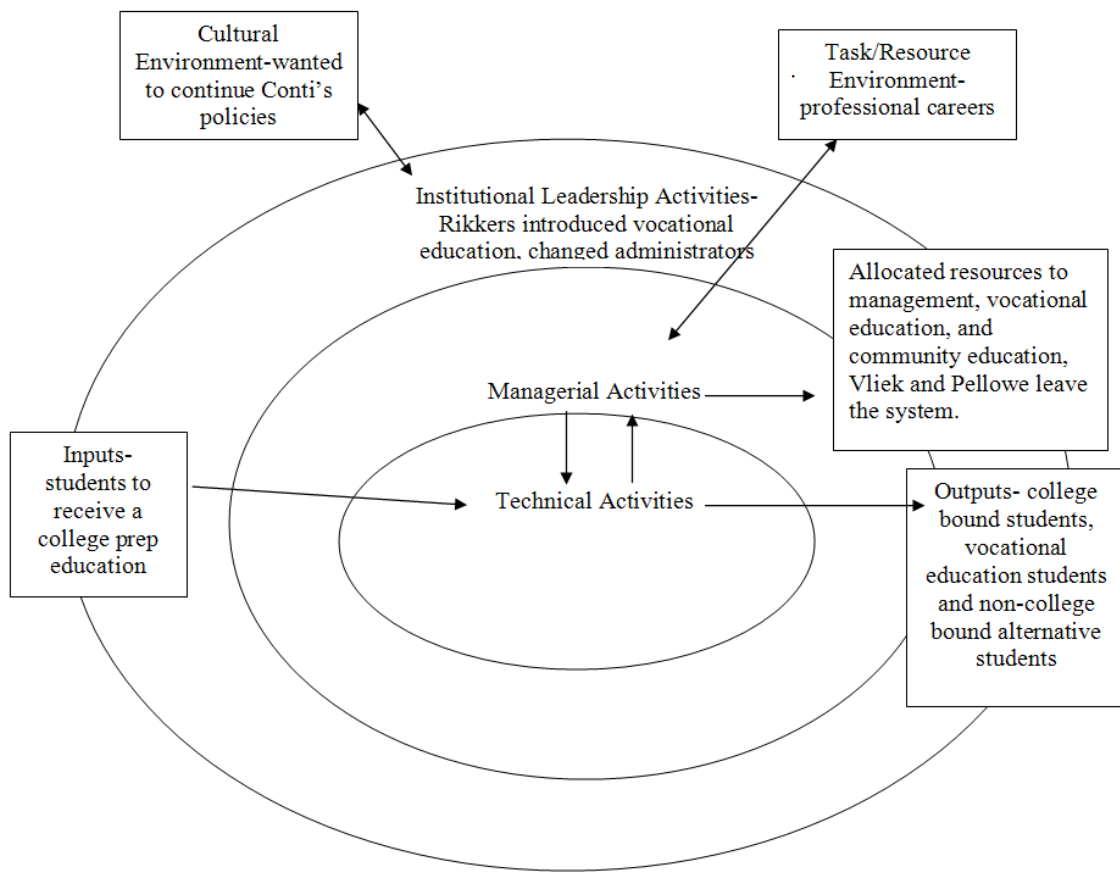


Figure 77: Rikkers' Organizational Changes

Rikkers implemented changes in policy that created dissatisfaction at every activity level of the organization and required him to manage a system filled with conflict. Rikkers changed the interactions at the institutional leadership activities level by providing fewer communications and less information to the cultural environment (community). By entering the EFE Consortium and starting the alternative education program, he implemented extensive adjustments, not the incremental changes that are desired during a period of quiescence by a Board and community that were satisfied with their schools. Rikkers' managerial activities committed resources to new programs that did not transmit the values of the community. The reorganization of his administration created further

changes at the managerial activities level when Vliek and Pellowe both left PPS. The reorganization resulted in an increase in the number of administrators and an increase in management expenses (also not a core value of the community), which reduced the resources available for technical activities. At the technical level, KAMSC was embraced by members of the community who valued high level academics; however, the program was not popular with staff because it resulted in the siphoning off of the best math and science students to a program outside of the high schools. Alternative Education, EFE, and KAMSC further impacted current programs by permanently diverting resources previously devoted to technical activities. Finally, the community's desire for modern school structures was not a part of Rikker's policy mandate, and therefore the quality of the school buildings steadily declined during his tenure as superintendent.

Multiple Periods of Politicization

In 1990 Ridders' institutional activities indicated dissatisfaction when the Board repeatedly requested an athletic program audit and at the technical core when a coach who was fired came to the Board and informed them he was told he "had no support from the Board" (personal correspondence). Four candidates ran for two seats in the 1991 election, with one of the new trustees being Pellowe, who announced at the first meeting he wanted more communication and a long-term plan (board minutes). Later in 1991 parents protested a grading regulation change and a \$50 million bond issue was rejected 40% yes – 60% no. In 1992, the Academic Booster Club (ABC) special interest group was formed, indicating dissatisfaction. The managerial activities of the organization were also impacted in 1992 when two administrators hired by Ridders, Wells and Parsons, resigned. Ridders replaced them and in addition hired two former principals as Communication Assistants.

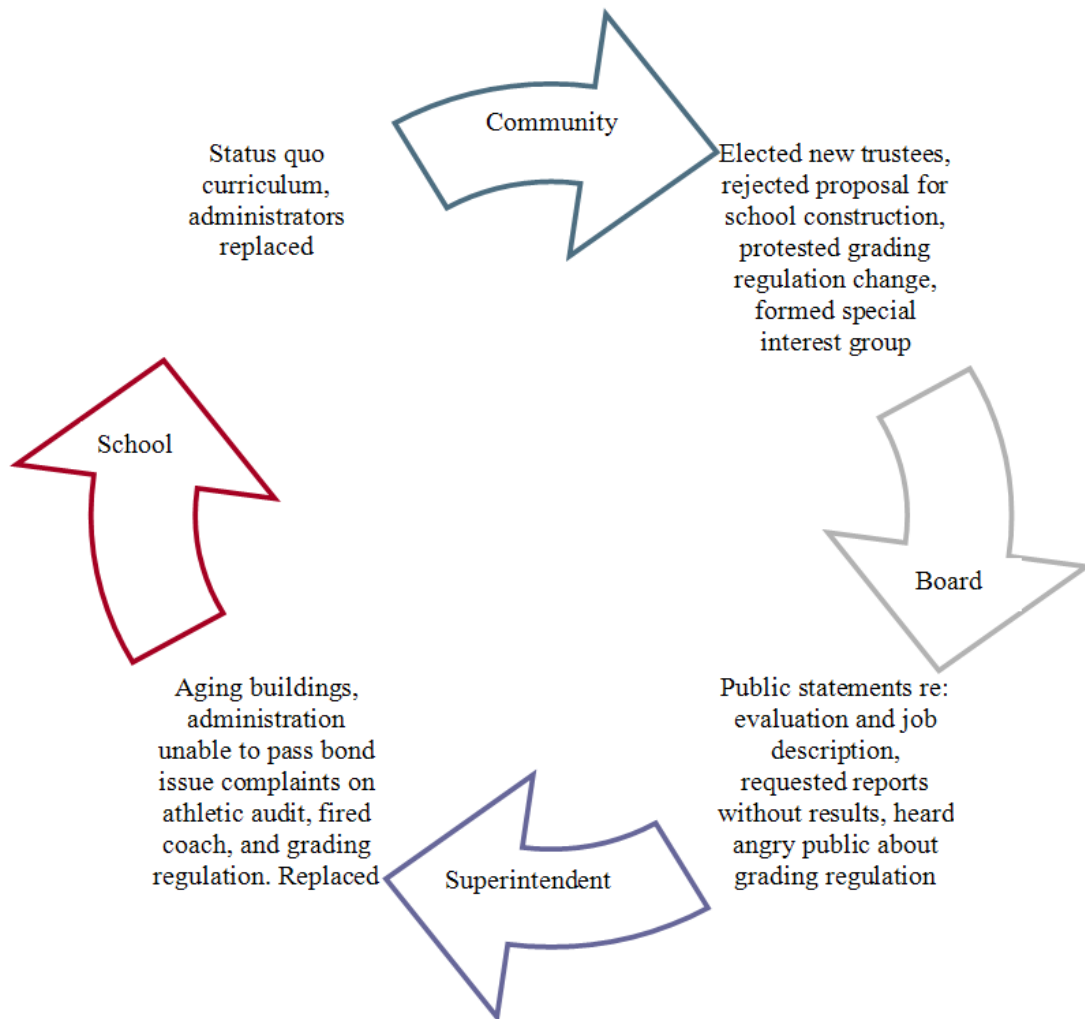


Figure 78: Dissatisfaction, Period of Politicization

Dissatisfaction at the institutional activity level was evident when, in 1990, the Board requested repeatedly in open meetings for the athletic program audit. The audit took over a year to produce after it was promised by Ridders in a month. This was followed by the grading regulation change that prompted multiple contentious Board meetings with angry members of the community, the coach who was fired and the Board inaccurately blamed, the rejection of the bond issue, a contested election that resulted in a former administrator being elected, and the emergence of the special interest ABC group. The managerial activity dissatisfaction was evident through the inability to produce the athletic

audit, the grading regulation change, the sticky situation with the fired coach, and the resignation of administrators. The technical activity dissatisfaction was evident through the grading regulation change and the firing of the basketball coach, who was also a teacher.

The continued dissatisfaction throughout the organization led to Ridders employing strategies to manage the conflict. After the delayed athletic program audit and basketball coach firing, District Office administrative responsibilities were reassigned and then, a short time later, were followed by the resignation of two administrators. Ridders' change in administrators apparently placated the community and Board. When Pellowe was elected and requested more communication, Ridders hired two former principals who were well respected in the community and former colleagues of Pellowe's to positions as Communication Assistants. In response to Pellowe's request for long range planning, Ridders hired McGonigle to create a Strategic Planning Team. Ridders eventually removed the main component of the grading regulation change (the inclusion of plus and minus in the calculation of the GPA). Ridders compensated for his values mismatch with the community by manipulating the organizational activities at each level.

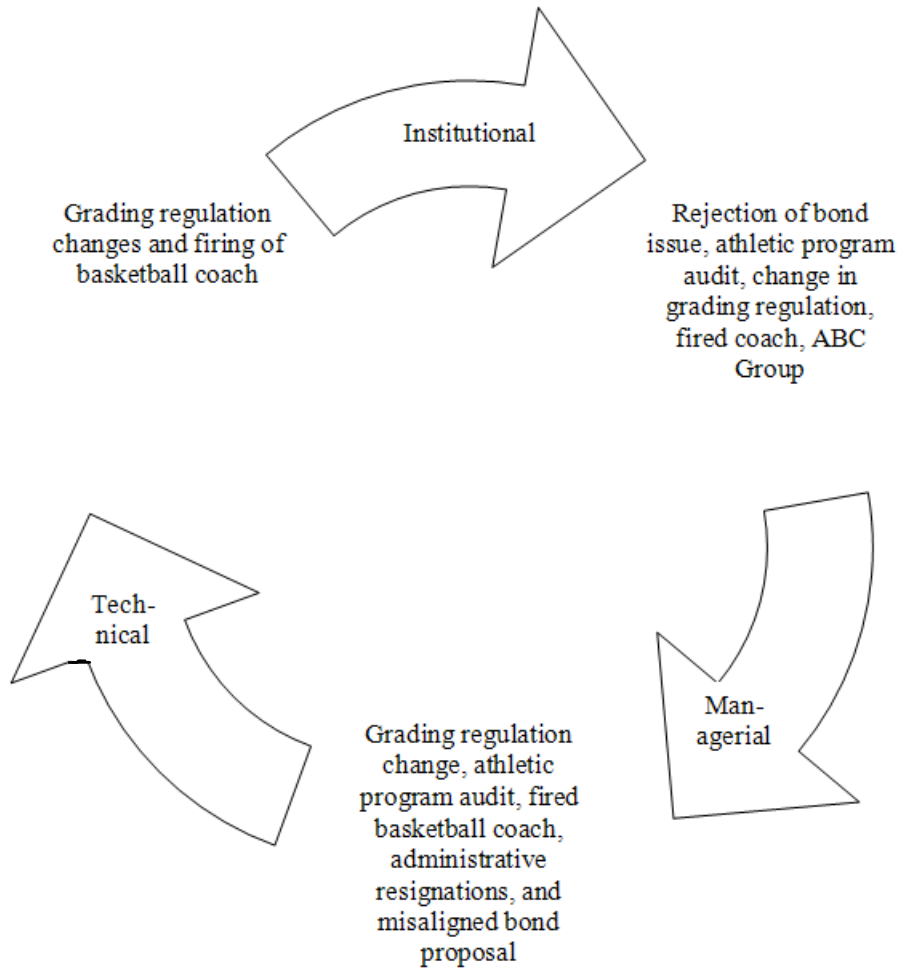


Figure 79: Dissatisfaction with Institutional, Managerial, and Technical Activities

The mismatch continued for several years through multiple changes on the Board and frequent criticism of Ridders and his administration. In 1994, two leaders of the ABC special interest group were elected to the Board and shortly after, Ridders was informed he should seek another position. However, after the President of the Board left the area, Ridders was able to acquire a new contract and continued as superintendent. Ridders continued making various changes to his top administrators, and then in 1998 Ridders signed a four-year contract.

Finally in 2001 a group of major business and social constituents in the community formed a Blue Ribbon Committee that met with Ridders. They informed Ridders that the District's facilities did not match the standards of a community such as Portage and that they expected him to pursue bond millages so they could enjoy facilities that Portage deserved.

Several months after the Blue Ribbon Committee meeting, Ridders announced he would retire effective July 1, 2002. The Blue Ribbon Committee did not demand Ridders' removal; rather they made clear that the community was going to insist on a focus on improving school facilities that would represent the community Portage. Ridders, who had made many adjustments in the past that extended his career, was in a position to retire and chose that option. The Board hired a firm to conduct a search and proceeded to hire a superintendent from Illinois who possessed many of the same characteristics as the late Dr. Conti.

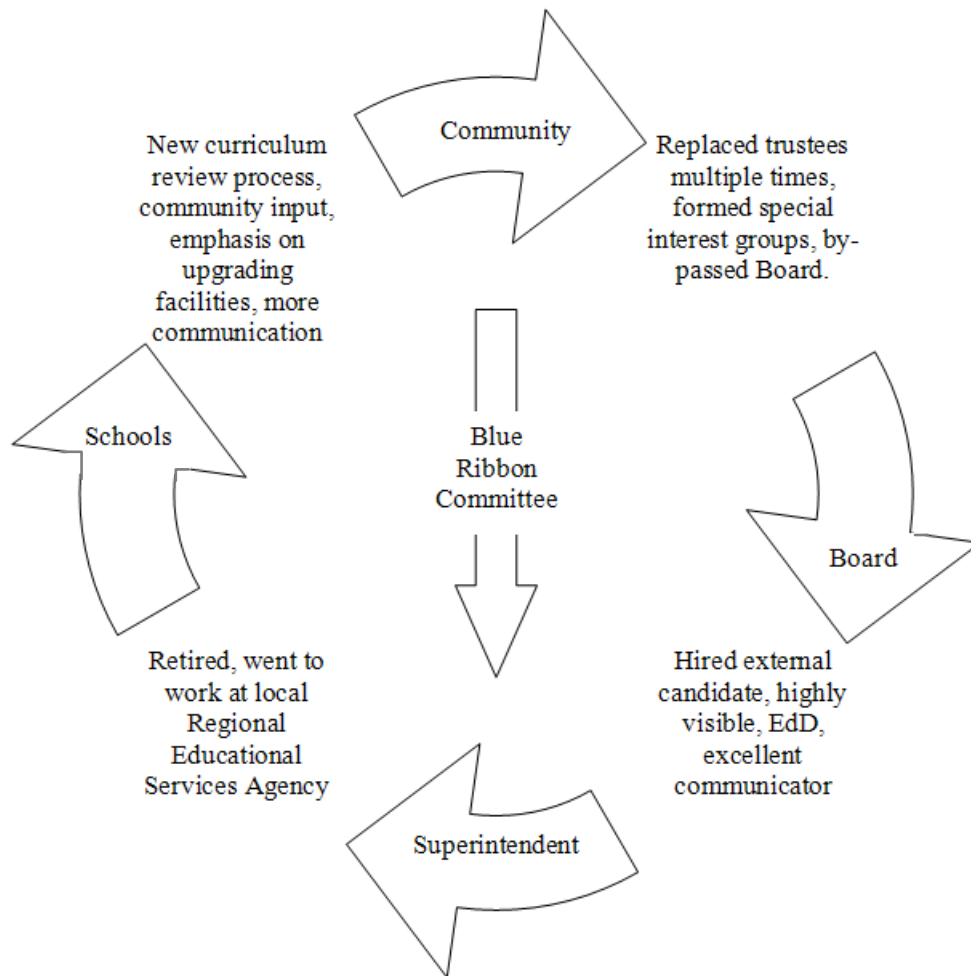


Figure 80: Involuntary Superintendent Turnover, Rikkers

Conclusions

This study focused on the conceptual framework and stages of Dissatisfaction Theory. Did the episodic periods of politicization when incumbent Board members were replaced lead to, as Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone and Lutz, 1970) would have predicted, removal of the superintendent in Portage? The answer was yes, the steps of Dissatisfaction Theory did hold in Portage just as the propositions and patterns had been tested and validated in multiple previous studies (Innaccone and Lutz 1964, Walden, 1966,

Kirkendall 1966, Freeborn 1966, Walden 1967, Moen 1971, Thorsted and Mitchell, 1976, Lutz and Garberina 1977, Gaberina 1978, Weninger 1987, Alsbury 2001).

The first documented dissatisfaction in PPS occurred at the end of Wilkinson's tenure and led to his resignation. The resignation of Wilkinson was followed by the Board hiring George Conti. The PPS Board functioned as an elite council for the 16-year period while Conti was superintendent. During his tenure there was an episode of politicization; however, the Board continued to exhibit elite behavior during that period of conflict. A year before Conti's retirement, the Board hired his successor, Jim Ridders, in 1985 when they continued to function as an elite council and as such privatized the superintendent selection (Bailey, 1965, Gresson, 1976). The privatization of the selection process went awry when they did not hire the candidate whom they pre-selected and they were left with hiring Ridders or re-opening the search, which, in turn, would have socialized the selection process. The Board, operating during a period of quiescence, demonstrated a behavior that was consistent with what might be expected in a community such as Portage. As Lutz (1978) stated, "The [elite] board is admonished by its cultural norms to seek consensus in private and to avoid public conflict and the public debate of controversial issues" (p. 102). According to Schattschneider (1975), socialized processes broaden conflict and privatized processes narrow conflict. In this instance, the Board would have reflected a more democratic process by opening the process; instead, they chose to maintain a closed process which led to their selection.

The stages of Dissatisfaction Theory indicated that the first election after Ridders became superintendent, which resulted in the election of new Board members, was the first indicator that Ridders' new policies were unwanted. The election was the first of many instances when the community provided the Board with an indicator of conflict and

dissatisfaction. The research on Dissatisfaction Theory has not yet accounted for superintendent resignations such as Wilkinson's, which occurred in a culture that consistently avoided conflict. When Wilkinson believed he was not supported by the Board, giving him a message [he believed] that he was not wanted, he left, albeit under pressure. However, during multiple periods of politicization when Ridders was given a similar message by the same community, he took a different approach and used counter forces that allowed him to remain as superintendent.

Privatization of the governance of PPS was a major factor in sustaining Ridders' longevity in Portage. Schattschneider (1975) wrote "political literature shows that there has indeed been *a long-standing struggle between the conflict and tendencies toward the privatization and socialization of conflict* [emphasis added]" (p. 7). Superintendents and other leaders have an interest in privatizing conflict to one degree or another. Because socializing broadens the scope of a conflict, in effect bringing it into the light of day, it results in a loss of control. Once a conflict extends beyond the few individuals at the center, an audience becomes involved. Schattschneider wrote that the audience determines the outcome of the conflict. He described it this way: "If a fight starts, watch the crowd, because the crowd plays the decisive role" (p.3). A superintendent can use his or her ability to privatize conflict as a management tool that may have a great impact on decisions by the Board. In Portage, the superintendent created a structure that allowed him to effectively privatize most conflicts. In a democracy not all conflicts can be completely privatized, so a superintendent must also be effective at limiting the scope of conflict. Schattschneider wrote:

...the outcome of every conflict is determined by the *extent* [emphasis added] to which the audience becomes involved in it. That is, the outcome of all conflict is

determined by the *scope* [emphasis added] of its contagion. The number of people involved in any conflict determines what happens; every change in the number of participants, every increase or reduction in the number of participants, affects the result (p. 2).

Later Schattschneider wrote, “The most important strategy of politics is concerned with the scope of conflict” (p. 3). Therefore it is important for a superintendent to recognize the importance of the scope of conflict and the impact that it might have on his or her ability to lead. By and large privatization of conflicts and multiple management tactics made possible by privatization allowed Ridders to continue as superintendent. However, the privatization also continued to increase what Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) described as “the differences and distance between the macro system (community) and the central subsystem (school board)” (p. 86). As the school board allows the superintendent to expand privatization, the decisions of the board and superintendent become further removed from what the community wants. The gap between the board and community is accelerated when the community is rapidly changing. When the community becomes dissatisfied enough, the system will eventually use the election mechanism to open the system (1970).

Ridders managed conflict at all of the organizational levels. The tactics that he used were his tools. For example, at the managerial activities level, where resources were allocated, he used the tactic of threat and reassurance. Ridders used events at the State level such as the passing of new school funding legislation Proposal A in 1994 to convince the community that the financial well-being of PPS was in jeopardy. In so doing he distracted the focus from the areas of dissatisfaction as defined by the community on to other issues.

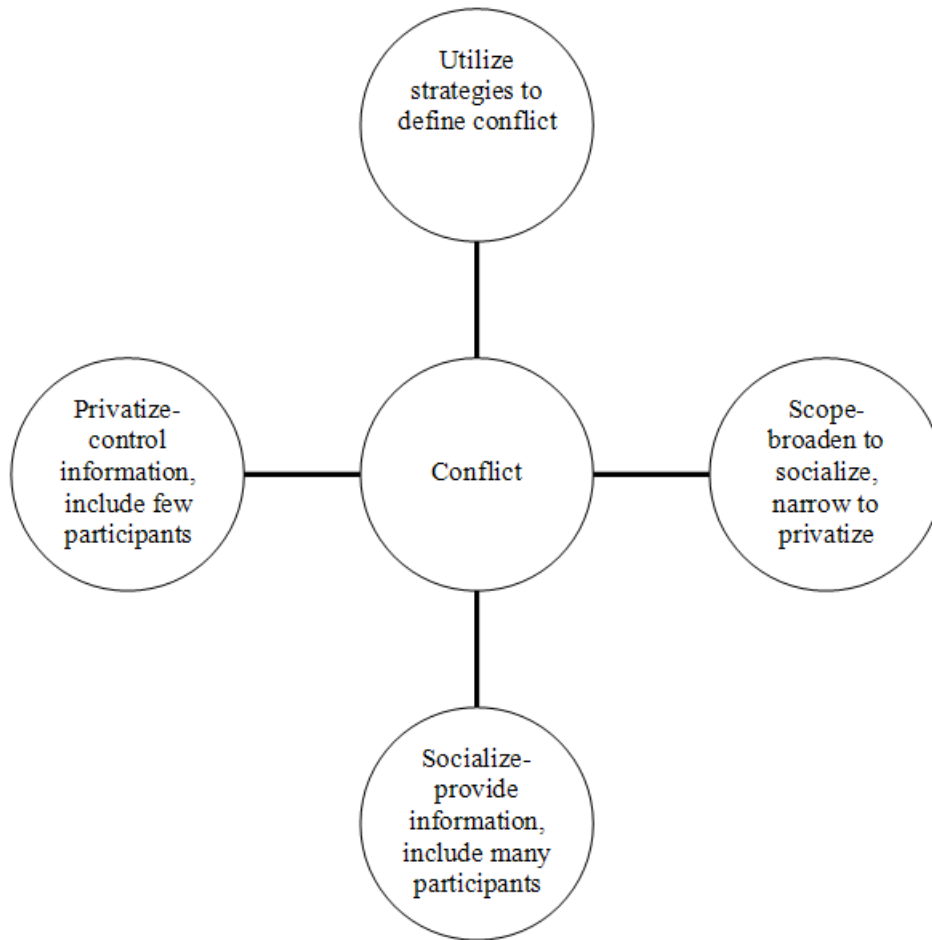


Figure 81: Conflict Diagram

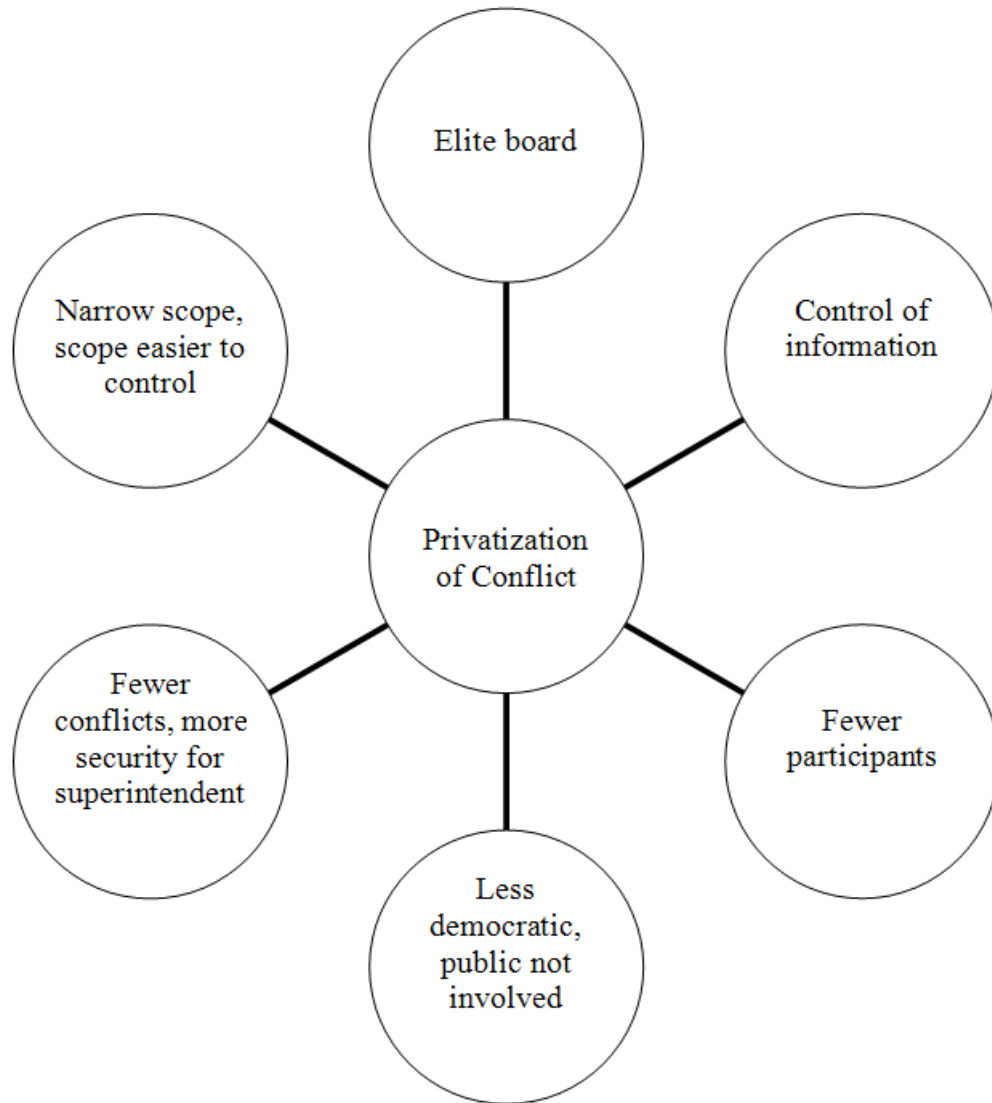


Figure 82: Conflict Privatized

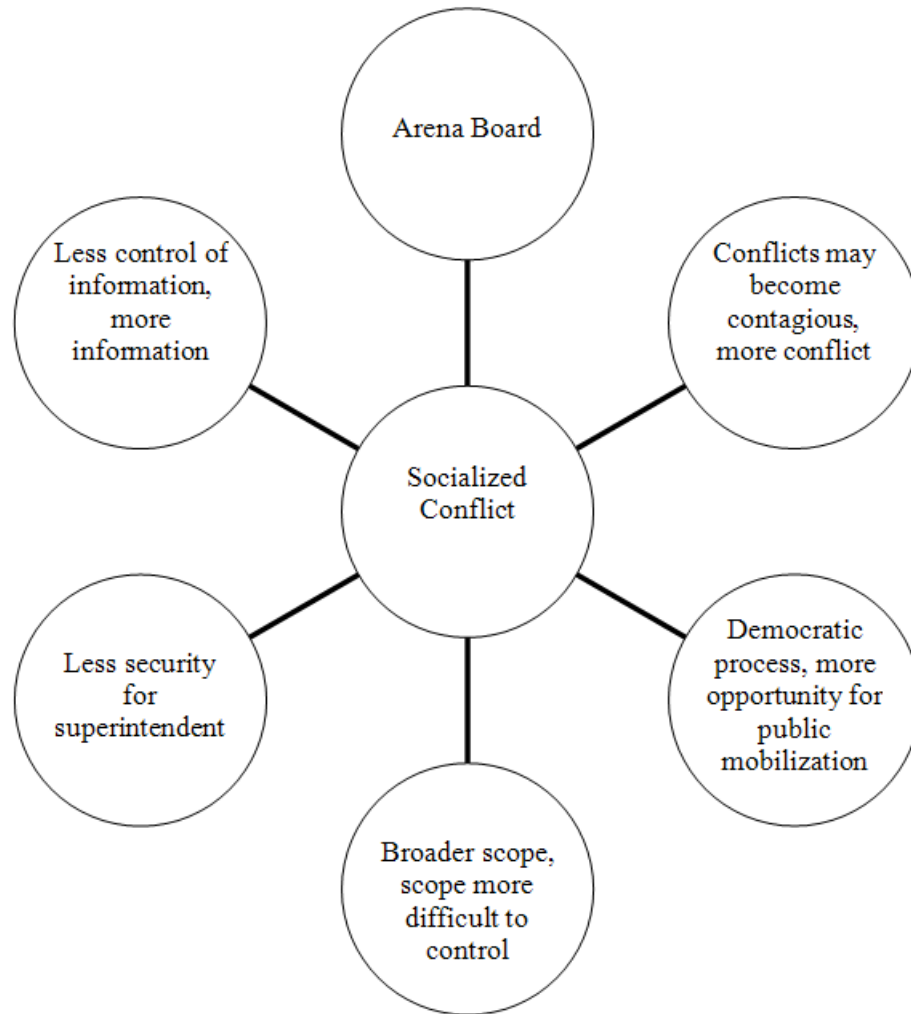


Figure 83: Conflict Socialized

The superintendents' ability to utilize the counter forces of privatization ultimately will offer an opportunity to delay removal as predicted by Dissatisfaction Theory. However, periods of politicization are characterized by socialized conflict that makes privatization difficult. In Portage, a politically savvy superintendent effectively privatized conflict as quickly as possible during periods of politicization and by doing so was able to limit the scope of conflict and delay his removal. During and after each period of politicization, he used a system of privatization that he had established to create

circumstances that allowed him to manage the scope of the conflict so that he could maintain his position.

Findings and Implications for School Boards

Board members would benefit from an understanding of the stages and conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory depicted in this flowchart that includes:

- Social, economic, or political changes occur in the community
- The groups involved in the changes expect changes in their schools and attempt to alter or influence school policy individually or as special interest groups
- Dissatisfaction results in changes in school policy and the return to quiescence or
- Special interest groups emerge, the number of candidates running for seats on the board and voter turnout increases
- Incumbent school board members are defeated or replaced (TPEP)
- Superintendent is replaced
- New superintendent and board create a new policy mandate
- Final test election, no board members defeated or replaced signify an endorsement of the new policy mandate
- Return to quiescence

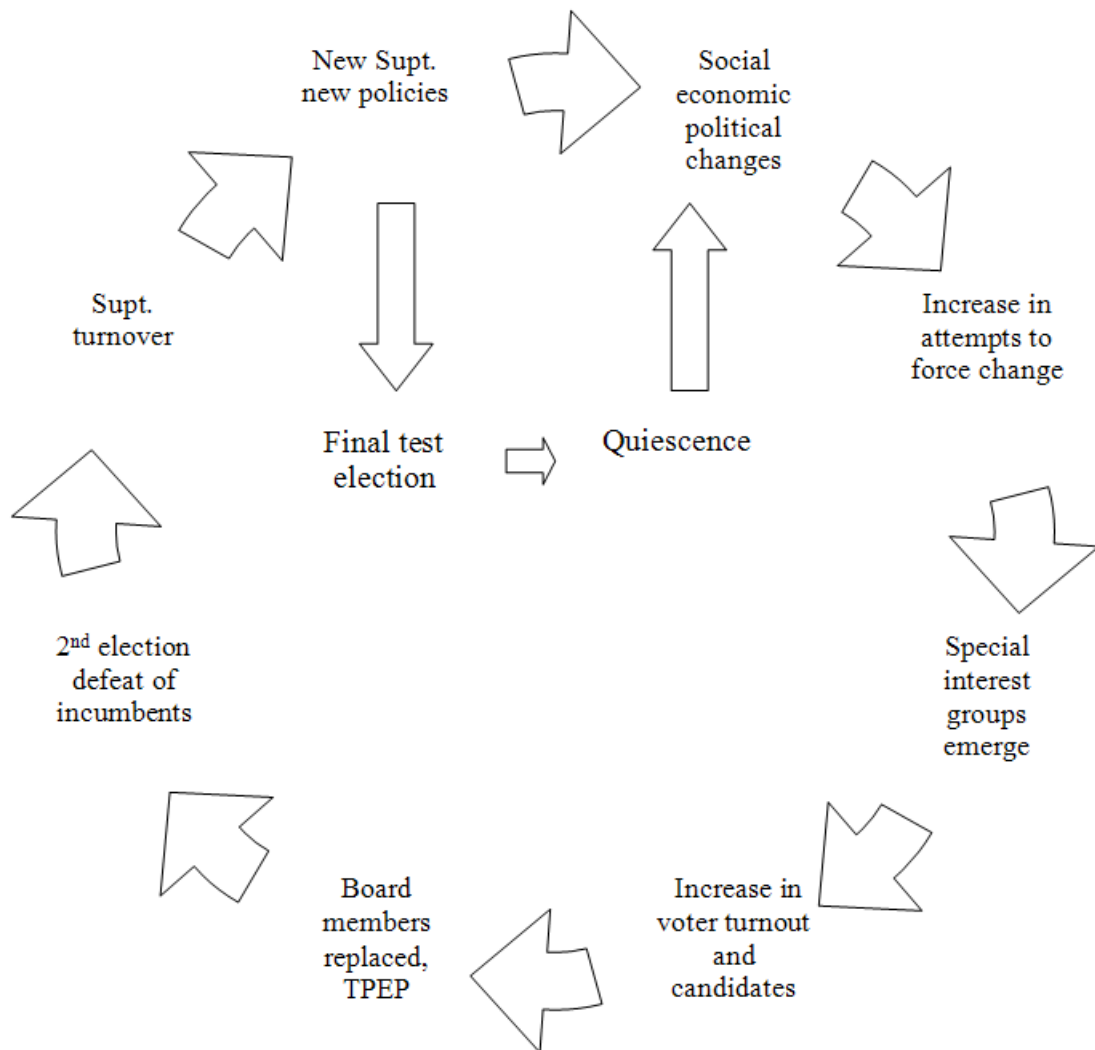


Figure 84: Conceptual Diagram of Dissatisfaction Theory

Board trustees can apply this research by understanding the principles of the privatization versus socialization of governance practices. Most board members are familiar with but do not appreciate conflict that accompanies some of their decisions (personal correspondence). It is unlikely they understand the principles of the privatization vs. socialization of conflict, that they are familiar with the strategic role of controlling the scope of conflict, or that they understand the costs associated with delaying the inevitable cycle of Dissatisfaction Theory. In general, elite school boards, such as the one studied in

Portage, operate under the long held premise that public education is too important an issue to involve politics and thus should be apolitical. Because they tend to operate under that premise, understanding that their decisions might be swayed by an employee who may be inclined to use the counter forces of privatization to influence their decisions would be a useful tool for a board member. The job function of a superintendent involves privatization practices, some of which are supported by legislation. For example, students and their families are protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), employees are protected by contracts and rights to privacy for most issues, and public school buildings, while funded by taxpayer money, are maintained for a private purpose and therefore access to the general public can be limited. There are multiple situations for which privatization is an option for a superintendent but not mandated by law: A staff member is caught accessing inappropriate sites on a school computer, with the cooperation of the staff member, an issue that could reflect poorly on the school and superintendent can remain private and avoid public scrutiny.

The amount of privatization that is acceptable or appropriate depends upon the community. On boards dominated by professionals from the private sector, the level of privatization is likely more prevalent and more acceptable to the board. As Schattschneider (1975) wrote:

The system of free private business enterprise is not merely a system of private ownership of property; it depends even more for its survival on the privacy of information about business transactions. It is probably true that the business system could not survive a full public disclosure of its internal transactions. (p. 12)

Therefore because of their familiarity with the value of privatization, a school board consisting of private industry professionals would likely be more amenable to or at least

understanding of a superintendent who encouraged privatization. A working class board would likely be less favorable to privatization. For example, bargaining for employee groups in the public and private sector involves a common union strategy to socialize the process. Because the majority of citizens in most communities are not managers but rather workers who likely would be sympathetic toward an increase in worker wages and supporting employee benefits, increasing the scope of public involvement is a powerful motive for a labor union. A superintendent who has a majority of “workers” as board trustees should be cognizant of their possible sympathy or tendency toward socialization rather than privatization of conflict involving contract issues. However, even with a board of “workers,” the superintendent should consider the longevity of the trustees because over time a board becomes part of what Michels (1911) explained as the tendency of the ruling party to first represent themselves and their own interests:

It is organization which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, or the delegates over the delegators.

Who says organization says oligarchy (p. 15).

Lipset (1962) added that an oligarchy, “the control of a society or an organization by those at the top, is an intrinsic part of bureaucracy or large-scale organization” (p. 15). The longevity of a board member is important because new trustees will tend to begin by representing those who elected him or her but over time come to first represent their own interests. Lutz wrote that research by Edgren (1976) revealed that “The vast majority of school board members believe that they are under no obligation to behave as school board members, based on the wishes of the public” (1978, p. 102) and that Blanchard “...found that “87% of the school board members he surveyed in Kentucky said they voted as they felt best even if that was opposed to what the public wished” (p. 102). In addition, turnover

of board members indicates dissatisfaction, and when a board has infrequent changes in membership the superintendent is more secure and the board is more likely to demonstrate elite privatized behavior. Another consideration is that the tendency of mankind to, as Mosca (1939) indicated, prefer stability versus the discomfort of conflict, in fact encourages a board to seek quiescence over conflict. Quiescence is easier to maintain for a board that practices elite board behavior and privatizes the majority of conflicts.

A board member who understands the stages and conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory, recognizes strategies such as privatizing and limiting the scope of conflict, and understands the potential of delay tactics by their employee is better prepared to act as a trustee for the public. The board member would also be in a position to understand the costs associated with elite board behavior and the privatization of conflict. That is, they would recognize that socialization of conflict is a key component of democracy and understand that conflict is characterized by an increase in socialization of issues. In effect, democracy is the ability to overthrow the leader through the socialization of conflict. They will understand the costs that occur when they delay acting on the policy mandate desired by their community and that the costs will likely impact their community immediately and potentially far into the future.

In Portage, several costs are evident because of the processes and cultural conditions that developed over Ridders' 16 years. For example, a white collar community such as Portage would be expected to have first rate school facilities much like those that they enjoy for city services, their workplaces, and churches. In Portage, though, Ridders preferred making do with older school facilities, and therefore the majority of schools lack the characteristics that define most quality learning environments. In addition, the esthetics of the schools are not a favorable recruiting tool for business or new families and are

perceived as a factor in declining enrollment in the District. A construction consultant informed the Board that in a community like Portage, the school facilities should be here, signaling above his head with one hand, and instead are here, and signaled with the other hand at waist level (Board Work Study, 2006). Beyond facilities there are other impacts. Ridders used a tactic of purchasing loyalty that created a pay structure for several positions that are above typical salaries in the same markets, and he committed the District to a 10-year contract for legal services, both of which were managerial level allocation of resources that resulted in fewer resources for technical activities. In addition, he further impacted the technical activities by authorizing a system that resulted in rushed curriculum work that had to be discarded, which not only diverted financial resources but damaged the credibility of the administration with staff as well (personal correspondence).

The statements that follow are consistent with the theoretical propositions of Dissatisfaction Theory and this research:

- Schools reflect their community.
- When board members no longer reflect the citizens they were elected to represent, they will be replaced.
- New board members who are elected during the replacement election will be expected to significantly change policy or remove the superintendent.
- If the new board fails to remove the superintendent they will be voted out or something else like a Blue Ribbon Committee will by-pass them and do it for them.
- Privatization practices insulate a board from their community.
- There is a direct relationship between the democratic process of socializing conflict and the ability of a trustee to provide decisions that reflect their community.
- Socialization of conflict broadens the conflict and makes it less predictable.

- Elite board behavior narrows discussion and involves fewer citizens.
- Privatization of issues beyond the requirements of the law denies citizens the opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

Findings and Implications for Superintendents

The statements that follow are consistent with the theoretical propositions of Dissatisfaction Theory and this research:

- Schools reflect their community.
- When considering employment, the superintendent would be well served to study the history and culture of the community.
- If the superintendent is not well suited to a community, he or she would be advised to not pursue the position. For example, a community that over time had placed a high value on athletics would not be a good match for a superintendent who did not value athletics and was unwilling to provide resources to support them.
- Interviewing and being selected for a superintendency by a board are independent from being an effective superintendent; therefore, an individual should not be misled into thinking that if selected by the board, he or she is a good fit for the position.
- If the superintendent cannot deliver the policy mandate that the community desires, he or she will be removed.
- A superintendent involved in a period of politicization should re-examine the community and compare the steps of Dissatisfaction Theory with recent history.
- A superintendent may be able to delay but not prevent removal.

- A superintendent who wishes to maintain employment for the long term must observe his community and change with them.
- A superintendent should embrace newcomers to a board and consider adaptations that reflect the changing community.
- A superintendent unable to recognize the need to adapt to a changing community will result in board member defeat and eventually his or her removal.

This research contributed to the Dissatisfaction Theory by identifying that dissatisfaction occurs at three levels of an organization, technical, managerial and institutional. Therefore, it is important for the superintendent to support the technical activities that the community values and, at the managerial level, to manage district finances consistent with what the community wants whether that be survival or growth. Finally, to satisfy the institutional level, it is critical that the superintendent present symbolically and categorically the image and to promote the technical activities that the community wants for the schools

The exemplars that Ridders provided to maintain his employment are relevant for superintendents. A superintendent who understands the stages and conceptual framework of Dissatisfaction Theory and the privatization of conflict can utilize that knowledge to understand what actions are necessary to extend employment. A proactive superintendent should carefully observe his or her community to recognize changes as they occur. Thorsted and Mitchell (1976) determined the time for dissatisfaction that led to a turnover as an eight-to ten-year cycle, so therefore, by observing changes in the community, the superintendent has the opportunity to adjust his or her policy mandate before a Turning Point Election Period occurred. However, once a period of politicization begins, a

superintendent can utilize the counter forces of privatization in a number of ways. A

superintendent can use this study to learn how one superintendent delayed his removal:

- Carefully managed information that was released to the board and the public.
- Compensated key administrators and others around him/her well to help assure their public loyalty.
- Frequently reorganized administrative structures and replaced administrators.
- Utilized the strategy of threat and reassurance and an atmosphere of uncertainty.
- Encouraged elite board behavior.
- Created a management system that allowed for privatization.
- Provided advantages or favors to selected individuals or groups.
- Redirected the responsibility for socialized conflicts on to subordinates.
- Recruited favorable Board candidates.
- Participated in Rotary and as a member of a dominant church and choir.
- Re-aligned his position with the controlling majority when decisions proved unpopular.
- Used delay tactics to his advantage.

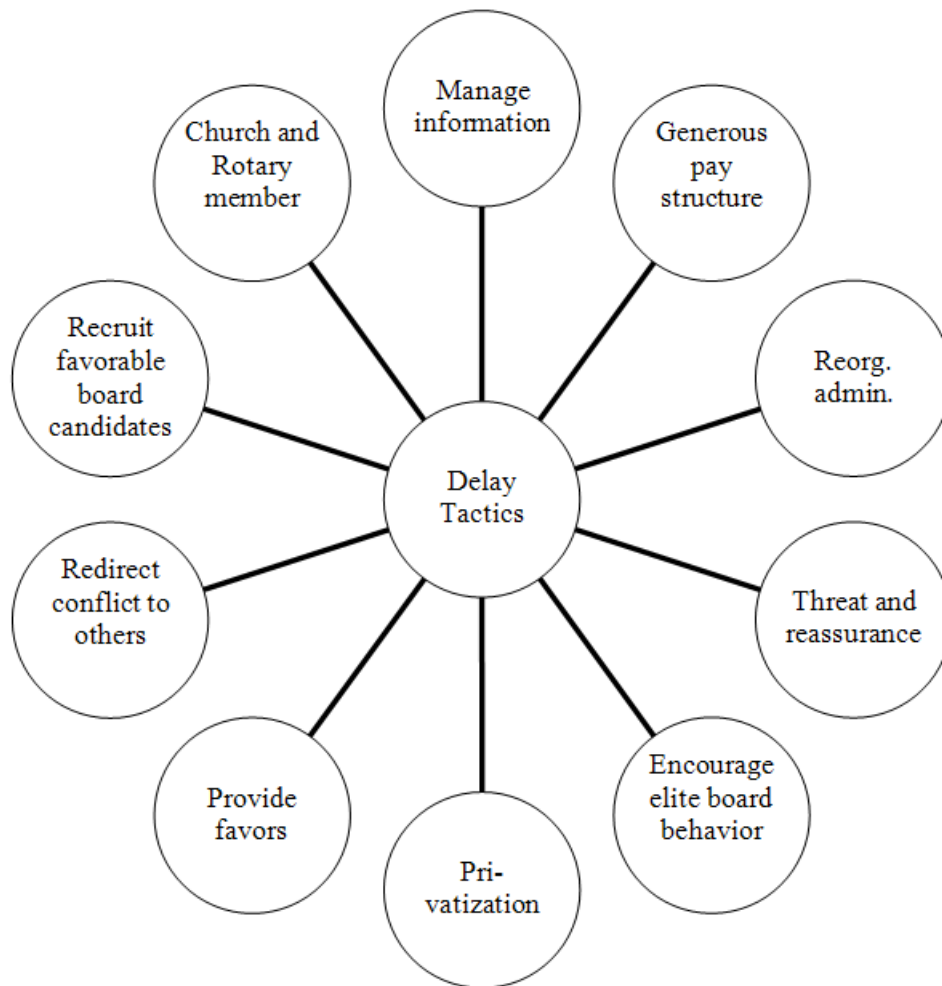


Figure 85: Rikker's Tactics

Following are explications of tactics and strategies:

- Carefully manage information that is released to the board and the public.

Information provides the seed that can provide an opportunity for the public to question. In Portage, the superintendent was effective at controlling information. He did so by keeping information private, available to only a few District Office administrators. In addition, not all top level administrators were provided all or even the same information. District office administrators recognized that if information was to be provided to others, it was necessary to first inform the

superintendent. In general it was incumbent on the administrator to understand which information was acceptable to share and which was not. (The reorganization of his administration was another factor to keep information private that is cited in a later bullet.) Limiting the flow of information to the Board and others reduced the scrutiny on incidents and decisions. Further, when issues became socialized such as the grading regulation, the coach being fired, or delays in providing reports, it confined the amount of evidence in the form of confirmed information.

- Compensate key administrators and others around him/her well enough to assure their loyalty (purchase loyalty). Attractive compensation makes finding a lateral position for similar compensation difficult, thereby limiting options for employment and encouraging administrators to follow the superintendent's direction.
- Reorganize administrative structures and replace administrators. Reorganization and replacement is an effective manner to control information. Individuals new to positions lack the history of previous decisions and incidents and the ability to observe the organization over time. Former administrators who may have acquired sensitive information are no longer in a position where the information can damage the superintendent. Furthermore, the honeymoon period during the adjustment in responsibility after reorganization can provide additional benefit to a superintendent. In Portage, Board Minutes reflected Rikkers' statements regarding the need for an adjustment period while individuals learned their new positions.
- Utilize the strategy of threat and reassurance and the resulting atmosphere of uncertainty. External elements such as state funding, unions, charter schools, private schools, and state and federal mandates can create an "us versus them"

environment. A board concerned about outside influences is likely to shift their attention away from internal issues. In Portage, the mergers and buyouts involving Upjohn, the GM plant closing, and decisions at the State level such as the passage of Proposal A (a financial benefit to PPS) were communicated by Rikkers to the Board and community as significant financial problems (Board Minutes).

- Encourage the board to maintain elite board behaviors. A superintendent who can keep the workings of the board and/or his administration private provides fewer opportunities for public scrutiny or public dissent. In Portage, potential Board members were indoctrinated into the elite board culture even before the election, when the Board and Superintendent held an orientation for candidates. Soon after a new member was elected, the process continued through meetings with the Superintendent, Board President, and key administrators. When a new trustee violated the elite culture, he or she was spoken to about the contravention by the Board President or the Superintendent. In addition, Board members frequently offered comments that defined their elite [privatizing] behavior at Board meetings or other official functions that reminded each other and the public about their role.
- Create a management system with the board that allows for private discussion. In Portage, the Board committee structure provided an opportunity for the discussion of issues where the media and public could not attend. In addition, the committee structure allowed the Superintendent to control which District Office administrators were privy to which information. The committee process effectively reduced the amount of information that that was shared between BOE members and allowed the Superintendent an additional opportunity to control the flow of information.

- Create opportunities with important stakeholders to encourage private interactions. Some examples might include favors or privileges to selected individuals or groups such as additional financial support for programs they value, employment for family members, authorizing new programs, supplying privileged information, or trips to conferences and/or other outings that involve social events (such as golf or the theatre) with board members or influential citizens.
- Redirect socialized conflicts away from the superintendent position. The responsibility for staff belongs to the superintendent; however, when conflicts arise and information is tightly controlled, assigning “blame” to a subordinate is more easily accomplished. In Portage administrative reorganization and the departure of key administrators often occurred following socialized conflicts.
- Recruit board candidates that are favorable to the superintendent’s policy mandate. As documented earlier, schools reflect their community so it may be possible for a superintendent or his/her designee to encourage a well-known or connected member of the community to run for the board opposite a candidate who is less desirable or less favorable to the superintendent.
- Get involved in organizations such as Rotary and a dominant religion. Clubs such as Rotary provide access for influential citizens and create a brotherhood effect. In Portage the Superintendent was a member of Rotary and the Methodist Church. Wednesday evenings were reserved for choir practice and generally not available for school business.
- When conflicts arise observe the contestants; “the audience determines the outcome of the fight” (Schattschneider, 1975 p. 2). If politically feasible, the superintendent can align or re-align him/herself to the position of the majority.

- Delay. Time allows the opportunity for the attention of the Board and/or community to be diverted away from an issue(s), provides an opportunity for events to realign priorities, and/or moves the superintendent closer to the next contract renewal, new position, or retirement. In Portage, this tactic was deployed when the Superintendent asked for another year before the non-renewal of the contract was announced, waiting to provide reports such as the athletic and music audit until pressed to do so, waiting to release the changed grading regulation until the beginning of a school year, and not attempting a major building project after the 1991 bond issue defeat.

Final Summary

This study contributed to knowledge by identifying that dissatisfaction occurs at three levels of an organization: the institutional, managerial, and technical. It contributes to practice by informing superintendents that they must acknowledge and satisfy the cultural and task environment with actions at all three levels of an organization. It is important for the superintendent to support the technical activities that the community values, manage district finances consistent with what the community wants, and present symbolically and categorically the image as well as provide the technical activities that the community wants for their schools. In Portage the community had defined what they wanted: elite academic, athletic, and arts programs. Ridders initially introduced new programs in vocational and alternative education that were not priorities for the community. Later he adjusted to the wants of the community and responded by introducing the International Baccalaureate program, a program that reflected the excellence expected by the community. At the managerial level the superintendent must also fund the schools as the community wants. Beyond the appropriation of funds for low priority programs cited previously, Ridders used

Proposal A and a lack of understanding about what the results might be for PPS funding as well as economic uncertainty due to mergers and plant closings to his benefit. In essence he presented bleak economic forecasts as a threat and reassurance strategy that became a reason that he was needed to see the schools through economic peril. Finally it was the institutional activities that provided the symbolic images and legitimacy of the schools that led to Rikkers' retirement. It was there that the Blue Ribbon Committee acted. They demanded that Rikkers make PPS look like the first class school district that they wanted. For the Blue Ribbon Committee, Rikkers' method of operating the district was not acceptable. They informed him he needed to seek a millage to create first rate school facilities that reflected what other schools in quality communities already had constructed. Rikkers did not consider the construction of new school facilities a high priority and did not seem to understand that school buildings and other facilities are symbols of what a community values and therefore he did not provide facilities consistent with the standards of excellence visible throughout the community. The powerful Blue Ribbon Committee represented the true values of the community. When that group made their demands and held firm to their expectations, Rikkers retired a short time later.

This research revealed that satisfying dissatisfaction at one level was not sufficient. Adjustments may be made to satisfy an initial wave of dissatisfaction such as Rikkers was able to do by reorganizing his administration to gain legitimacy and then later by adopting processes and programs that satisfied the ABC special interest, but in the end that would not be enough. Dissatisfaction at the technical or core level was demonstrated by the reaction of the coach who was fired, the lack of quality work by the curriculum writing teams (that consisted primarily of teachers), the negative reaction of the teachers to the grading regulation change, and the band instructor who came directly to the Board to

complain about his schedule. At the managerial level, this included the allocation of resources to programs that were not important or wanted by the community, the athletic director who came to the support of the fired coach, the District Office Administrator who retired because it was “just so different I couldn’t take it anymore” (personal correspondence), the former administrator who came back and gained a seat on the Board and announced that he was elected to change the “me speak you listen” attitude of the administration, and finally the plethora of off the record opinions that demonstrated dissatisfaction expressed by District administrators about Ridders. A multitude of dissatisfaction was expressed at the institutional level including many changes in the Board, ABC, Blue Ribbon Committee, parents protesting the grading regulation change, the failed bond issue, Board comments about late reports, tepid evaluations, and the decision to not renew the superintendents contract.

A board and/or a community that allows the privatization of conflict must also understand the costs associated with their choice. There is a level of necessary (legally required) privatization and beyond that an amount that varies by community and varies depending on the type of conflict. It may also depend upon the amount of conflict that a board or community is willing to endure. It may well be that after a contentious issue is resolved in a school community, the public wishes for quiescence and will tolerate a greater degree of privatization even at the expense of a more democratic process. The cost of privatization is the suspension of democracy. In Portage, an example of the suspension of democracy occurred when the Board utilized a process to select the superintendent that resulted in few applicants for the position. Because the District was in a period of quiescence, it was likely that the community was willing to accept the mostly privatized selection process. Nearly immediately, though, the Board was confronted with actions by

the new superintendent that indicated their selection did not meet community expectations. The selection was followed by multiple periods of politicization over 16 years where the community repeatedly revealed their desire for a change in their schools.

Each period of politicization during Rikkers' era did not result in the removal of the superintendent, and that led to the other significant contribution to knowledge of this research. If a school board does not follow the direction of the community, a community group will by pass them and take action themselves. In Portage, the community replaced Board members, voted against millages, and formed special interest groups, but through these demonstrations of dissatisfaction the elected officials did not remove the superintendent. However, a group of powerful community members formed the Blue Ribbon Committee and by passed the Board. They forced his retirement by insisting that the superintendent comply with their community standard for providing facilities that reflected excellence that they could be proud of and that would contribute to the economic vitality of the community. Their expectations contributed to Rikker's announcement of his plans to retire.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research focused on a single school district and community in Portage, Michigan. Portage Public Schools is a suburban district in a community that has a long history of elite board behavior. Therefore it would be useful to conduct a study examining the ability to delay removal in a district where the superintendent utilized the counter forces of privatization and other tactics in an urban setting with a Board that has a history of arena behavior.

A meta-analysis of districts included in previous studies confirming or rejecting Dissatisfaction Theory should be done to determine if privatization, limiting the scope of conflict, and other tactics were factors in decisions to remove superintendents.

Research city or county politics to see if the same steps in dissatisfaction are generalizable to elected offices outside of the realm of education.

Examine districts in previous studies confirming or rejecting Dissatisfaction Theory to determine if dissatisfaction was evident at all three activity levels of the organization: core, managerial and institutional.

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APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL



EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

February 21, 2002

Mr. Richard Perry
Department of Educational Leadership.

RE: *"A Study of Superintendent Retention Following School Board Change in Portage Public Schools."*

The Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Eastern Michigan University has granted approval to your proposal, "A Study of Superintendent Retention Following School Board Change in Portage Public Schools."

After careful review of your application, the IRB determined that the rights and welfare of the individual subjects involved in this research are carefully guarded. Additionally, the methods used to obtain informed consent are appropriate, and the individuals are not at a risk.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the IRB of any change in the protocol that might alter your research in any manner that differs from that upon which this approval is based. Approval of this project applies for one year from the date of this letter. If your data collection continues beyond the one-year period, you must apply for a renewal.

On behalf of the Human Subjects Committee, I wish you success in conducting your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick Melia".

Dr. Patrick Melia
Administrative Co-Chair
Human Subjects Committee

C: Dr. Denise Tanguay, Faculty Co-Chair
Dr. James Barott

APPENDIX B

CIT-COM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An improved overall communications.
2. A reduced pupil load per teacher.
3. An increase in the number of guidance counselors.
4. An increase in the use of outside resource people.
5. Extend the sphere of vocational training.
6. Increase the use of schools during non-school hours.
7. Enlarge the reading improvement program.
8. Improve the library facilities.
9. Improve the motivation of the middle-track student.
10. Make the in-service training of teaching staff more vital and more extensive.
11. Increase the curriculum research and development budget and program.
12. Increase the emphasis on "student interest" criterion in the selection of teachers.
13. Increase the amount of time available during the school day for extra-curricular activities.
14. Increase physical education activities for girls.
15. Increase speech therapy services.
16. Increase psychological services.
17. Improve current use of homebound teacher services.
18. Add to present number of social workers.
19. Improve publicity on special services.
20. Establish a post-graduate vocational guidance service.
21. Minimize duplication of some vocational education services in the two high schools.

22. Improve the kitchen maintenance program.
23. Establish an improved teacher evaluation program.
24. Develop a plan for the motivation of teachers of superior talent (merit pay plan).
25. Improve fringe benefit plan for all employee groups.
26. Increase the visual media usage in the educational process.
27. Realign the organizational chart for a more clear-cut delegation of authority, accountability, and precise administration discipline.
28. Be more precise in establishing job descriptions.
29. Establish clear-cut criteria for evaluating the school system and maintain a periodic re-evaluation program.
30. Establish a systematic preventative maintenance program for all buildings.
31. Present a more graphic and understandable budget for public consumption.
32. Retain a consulting firm for reviewing the organization and work flow within the system.
33. Hire a qualified public relations man with the sole duties of a PR man.