Three Newly Appointed Vice-Principals' Perceptions of Their Identity Formation and Interaction With School Culture: A Qualitative Study of the VP Role Transition

Sarah Jo Pereira, BA (Hons), B.Ed

Department of Educational Studies

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Faculty of Education, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

This generic qualitative study explored the process of administrative identity formation from the perspective of 3 newly appointed secondary school vice-principals. It also explored participants' perception of how vice-principals influence and are influenced by school culture. Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Findings suggest that in their first years of transitioning into the role of vice-principal participants faced challenges in forming new identities. With respect to their ability to influence school culture, participants found that other responsibilities of the job consumed their time and subsequent abilities to make changes. Participants revealed their duties, responsibilities, and the ways in which they both prepared for their role and were supported within them. Participants found that their VP experiences upon appointment and within the first years of transitioning largely focused on the various challenges they faced in assuming the new responsibilities, navigating the changing dynamics amongst staff, and managing the vast quantity of work in limited time restraints. Despite these challenges participants continued to work towards finding a balance in their management of the VP role, where with time and experience they might further develop their administrative identity formation, and may impact school culture as a whole.

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To my participants: thank you for sharing your stories with me. This experience was more than I ever expected, and your insights mean more to me now as an educator, than I ever knew they would when I began this journey. Your passion, dedication, and commitment are admirable.

Dedication

To my grandmother, Maria Pereira, who passed during the completion of this project, thank you for supporting everything I ever ventured to do.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

My interest into the role of the vice-principal (VP) first began when I was a student in a teacher education program. I developed an interest in the VP role through a few different experiences. One was early on in this program, when one of my professors introduced himself to the class and brought us through his teaching experiences to explain how he became a VP. Through this story of his transition from teaching to the VP role, I was surprised at the new knowledge I had learned surrounding this critical change, its subsequent effects on his identity, and how what I perceived about this role was not what was lived. The challenges associated with this transition were new to me, not having ever realized this in my experiences as a student, volunteer, or teacher candidate. This professor explained his love of teaching, and how his motivation as a teacher was always student-centered, causing him to be involved in many different aspects of the school, ultimately contributing to its culture. However, in his transition to the VP role, he lost this passion and his sense-of self. He became less people-focused, as he became overwhelmed with the weight of the expectations associated with his new role and responsibilities. He could no longer relate to the teaching profession and the things he once loved in that role, and struggled to find ways to make his new VP role more fulfilling, thus causing him to leave the VP role prematurely, seeking early retirement.

The second experience that exposed me to the realities of the VP role occurred when I was in my first teaching placement of my teacher education program. Being eager to make the most of this experience, I had many ideas about how I could contribute to this school community. Upon meeting the VP and sharing some of my ideas, I was told that she was not looking for anything new for her school, in terms of extracurricular clubs

or activities, and that I would not be able to contribute in any way outside of my classroom. This experience was devastating to me, as I was an overly involved student myself, and wanted to share my passions and interests in this new role as a teacher. This was made increasingly challenging for me, when I heard of all the amazing ways my classmates were becoming involved in their school communities, as I felt that I was missing out on a crucial aspect of this learning opportunity. My experience with this VP gave me insights into the repercussions that VPs' choices had on the school community, impacting student morale and school spirit. I also saw how this one decision defined the VP's identity, and how it distanced the VP from the school community, impacting their relationships with teaching staff, students, and parents. I saw how this decision said more about the VP's role, their influence, and their legacy, than anything else they ever did for the school community. Through these two experiences I became interested about the VP role, and wanted to explore connections between these individuals, their roles, and the outcomes that their choices and influences have on the underlying school culture.

When I began to review the literature, I discovered that within the field of education, and specifically the area of administration and leadership, the role of administrators is discussed and researched widely. However, I found that most research in this field focuses on the principal role, or on school administrators in general. Although my research is about VPs, I refer to research in these two areas because that is what was vastly available to me as the researcher.

This study investigates a gap in the literature that addresses the specific experiences of novice vice-principals who have been newly appointed within secondary schools. This study identifies that this gap groups all administrators' experiences

together, regardless of their roles and responsibilities, as well as their rank within the administrative team. The terms VP and assistant principal (AP) are used interchangeably and refer to the same position, because this title varies in the literature depending on the country where the research was conducted.

This chapter outlines the background of the problem and the statement of the problem situation. It identifies the purpose of the study, the research questions, and describes the underlining theoretical framework. Lastly, it reveals the importance of the study in addition to the scope and limitations of the study.

Background of the Problem

The VP role is vast and constantly changing (Matthews & Crow, 2003; Pollock, 2017). Yet, little attention is being given to this critical transition period, and the effects it has on those who have been newly appointed to these roles. In their study focused on school culture, and the changing role of the secondary school VP, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) found that "over the past five to ten years, secondary schools in Ontario have undergone significant changes with regard to curriculum, assessment, the introduction of standardized testing and increased accountability" (p. 4). In a Canadian study of support and guidance practices for new school principals and vice-principals, Giroux and Gauthier (2006) also determined that "school administrators in Québec have experienced significant changes in the past decade" (p. 12). They further explained that Canadian provinces were among many Western Nations to have "undergone a general restructuring of its school system in the past few years … [in response to] changes resulting from the adoption of the *Education Act*, curriculum and education reforms" (Giroux & Gauthier, 2006, p. 7). Melville, Bartley, and Weinburgh (2012) support that

"the education reforms of the past two decades, in Canada and elsewhere, have seen increasing emphases being placed on accountability, student learning, the curriculum and teacher quality" (p. 1). In his discussion of American policy in the United States, Heck (2004) explained that because of ongoing educational reforms, "public schools in the 21st century are expected to do more than schools in past eras" (p. 5). Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, and Davis (2014) agreed how in the U.S., "the changing economy, more rigorous standards, and increased accountability have placed new demands on our students, schools, and leaders" (p. 7). According to Melville et al. (2012), these "educational reforms are liable to be dampened and absorbed, resulting in negligible changes to the underlying structures and beliefs of schools" (p. 2). Consequently, this focus on change is imperative to understanding the VP role, and how those assuming these roles serve their schools amidst their own role transitions.

Subsequently, in two international studies conducted by Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) and Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012), VPs were called upon to evolve in order to meet the complex needs of 21st century schools. They argued that "in order to meet these [21st century] needs, schools require a new generation of leaders who can transform schools and provide instructional leadership unlike previous generations" (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 265). Giroux and Gauthier (2006) similarly held administrators responsible for these transformative changes, in their argument that "school administrators undoubtedly play a strategic role when it comes to implementing such changes and are called upon to take action, regardless of the type of reform that is taking place" (p. 7). Melville et al. (2012) reiterate these findings pertaining to educational reforms, in that they believe these changes "provide a sense of meaning …

and it is this sense that informers [staff] identities and practices" (p. 2). However, amidst these changes Giroux and Gauthier (2006) identified that "this type of restructuring also leads to profound changes in school administrators' duties, rendering them more complex" (p. 7). In their study of 45 American APs' lived experiences, Petrides, Jimes, and Karaglani (2014) agreed with Giroux and Gauthier stating, "today's urban school leadership brings with it complex, challenging requirements" (p. 173). The reality of administrative roles, as outlined by these relevant studies, shows the importance of understanding and redefining the VP role. Defining the VP role will ensure that those pursuing administration can successfully transition to their new roles and responsibilities and be better equipped to serve their schools and fulfil their responsibilities amidst these evolving circumstances.

In their research surrounding the transition from a teaching role to a principalship, Matthews and Crow (2003) reported that the role of the administrator was expanding due to the changing needs of society, as well as the changing social demands of schools. These findings suggested that as educational leaders, administrators needed to adapt to meet these wider needs, while their defined roles had yet to change to reflect these new responsibilities. Consequently:

> Any attempt to identify the role conceptions of the principalship suffers from one major difficulty. The society in which schools exist and the schools themselves are in a state of constant change. It is not surprising, then, that the role of principals also must change. (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 300)

In their research focused on VPs in secondary schools, Harris, Muijs, and Crawford (2003) concluded that administrators were accountable "to meet the many demands and

requirements imposed externally upon schools and generated internally within schools" (p. 2). When applied to an Ontario context, administrators need to enforce Ministry of Education (MOE) policies, while maintaining school board standards, in addition to understanding the specific expectations of their schools and considering the needs of their local communities. Matthews and Crow (2003) further explained that "as demographic and technological changes continue to occur … principals will need to think in new ways about how leadership is enacted and how leaders influence changing cultures within the school" (p. 293).

Administrators need to balance the managerial tasks which maintain the daily function of the school, with leadership tasks such as how to "know and help every student, cope with parental and political demands and ensure that their school scores highly on standardized tests" (Alphonso & Bradshaw, 2018, para. 1). Petrides et al. (2014) also recognized that school leaders were expected "to engage their staff and local communities, communicate a strategic vision for teaching and learning, and diffuse daily crises at their school sites - all while implementing instructional strategies that improve overall student performance for an increasingly diverse student body" (p. 173). In the Canadian context, Giroux and Gauthier (2006) explained that administrators were "assuming more complex duties, in a context of declining enrollments … professional practices under review and schools that are constantly evolving" (p. 12).

The enormity of the administrative role "encompasses increasing pressure to do more in less time, to be responsive to a greater range of demands from external sources and to meet a greater range of targets, accompanied by impatient deadlines to be met" (MacBeath, O'Brien, & Gronn, 2012, p. 422). Satisfying administrative roles and

responsibilities to these extents has become increasingly challenging, ultimately causing negative repercussions (Barnett et al., 2012; MacBeath et al., 2012). In their six-nation study of 22 education systems, Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008) reported that “in many countries, the men and women who run schools are overburdened, underpaid and near retirement. And there are few people lining up for their jobs” (p. 199). Despite this range of expectations, Mitchell and Castle (2005) found that administrators “placed most emphasis on building an affective climate in their schools” (p. 419), as they believed that this focus “had a number of payoffs” (p. 421). Collectively, the findings of these research studies suggest that the changing role of school administration is one that finds administrators in overburdened roles, where they are responsible for a multitude of tasks which are demanding, and underfulfilling.

These repercussions are partly occurring because the VP role has remained static despite these evolving demands. Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) found that the VP role had been largely unchanged in the past 30 years, and that despite the nature of their responsibilities being varied and multiplied, they have remained “managers at a time when the need for leaders in our schools continues to grow” (as cited in Chute, 2008, p. 2). These findings remained consistent in research conducted more than 10 years later, where Chute (2008) found the VP role to be similarly unchanged, with his results being unanimous in that the current tasks and roles expected of VPs “force them to be a manager rather than a leader in their schools” (p. 4). Today the VP is found to be in “a middle role, veiled in ambiguity, requiring the vice principal to be both a leader and a follower, driven by a juggling act of creative, practical and political demands” (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 746).

Within the administrative team the role of the VP is often seen as “being ‘second in command’” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 15). This is widely reflected in the literature where, “to date, the majority of educational research has focused on teachers and principals, and assistant principals’ stories still remain largely untold” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 7). In their study of three Ontario VPs, Rintoul and Goulais (2010) also reported that the VP position “receives scant attention in scholarly writing” (p. 745), indicating that “there is even less available literature concerning the subtleties of the … challenges vice principals must grapple with on a daily, and often hourly basis” (p. 746). Furthermore, newly appointed VP experiences have been grouped together with those of more experienced administrators, where “findings about principals are generalized to VPs” (Armstrong, 2012, p. 400). As a result, the realities of VP roles are rarely revealed because, “conflating these two roles overlooks the complexity of the vice principalship and inadvertently skews our understandings of the unique leadership challenges faced by new VPs” (Armstrong, 2009, as cited in Armstrong, 2012, p. 400). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) revealed findings specific to this study’s focus on VP impact on school culture, explaining that “existing research on school culture and change processes in schools focuses on the role of the principal. Rarely can one find comments on the role of the vice principal in effecting change within the context of school culture” (p. 3). In addition, Rintoul and Goulais (2010) conclude that the lack of authentic VP insights in current literature is due in part to how we research, determining that “available research, for the most part, involves normative surveying tasks, which do little to capture the essence of the vice principal role” (p. 746).

The newly appointed VP is the focus of this study, thus, findings surrounding this

unique transition from teacher to administrator emerge. Scholarly research surrounding the school administrator is vast, but a greater emphasis on the VP is necessary. Because the gap in the literature related to the VP is especially pronounced for those who are just assuming this position for the first time, this study will focus on these specific experiences. As roles evolve to meet the diverse needs of schools, research needs to be focused on administrator identity formation, and the ways they perceive they interact with their school culture. This will ultimately generate insights about who they are and consequently, what they do in these roles.

Statement of the Problem Situation

The research suggests that ideally VPs should have a better understanding in undertaking their new roles and responsibilities. In ensuring a successful transition from a teaching role to a VP role, teachers should first experience these administrative roles in practice, and be supported in their critical change. The VP role should be defined so that new candidates can be better prepared for this change and can more easily adjust. This change would also assist VPs in situating themselves within this new role, and in finding meaningful ways to contribute to school culture.

The reality of the VP role is that it is undefined, ultimately causing tension for new VPs transitioning to these roles (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010). Presently, there is a gap in understanding the critical transition period when a teacher moves into a VP role. This gap contributes to a lack of clarity between perceived roles and what VPs actually do in practice. The discrepancy surrounding VP role conceptions causes a shock when new VPs assume these roles, ultimately impacting their lived experiences and identities as administrators.

A gap in understanding also exists in understanding administrator interaction with school culture, in how they personally influence it, and in turn are also impacted by the existing culture of their school. A greater understanding of the connection between the VP and the school culture is pertinent in understanding who they are in their administrative roles, and reveals the interplay between the self, and the role. Therefore, in investigating VP identity formation during this transition to administration, and their consequent interaction with school culture once assuming their roles, we must first understand the intricacies of how they transition to their new roles and how they develop their administrative identities throughout this process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the process of administrative identity formation from the perspective of three newly appointed secondary school VPs. This study investigates the transition from teaching roles to VP roles, and consequently inquires into the interaction between newly appointed VPs and their school's culture. The study is intended to promote a greater understanding of this transitional stage, contributing to an aspect of administrative literature within the field of education by identifying a gap in the current understandings that do not recognize the experiences of teachers transitioning into VP roles. This study recognizes novice VP voices so that in the future exploration of these roles, understandings will better "meet the lived realities, needs, and aspirations of those who have been silenced" (Heck, 2004, p. 33). The complex roles of school administrators are examined to better understand how they interact with school culture, to show how they perceive that they influence their school

culture, and additionally, how they perceive they are shaped by the existing culture of their school.

Research Questions

In order to understand the process of identity formation during the transition into a VP position, and the extent to which VPs perceive they interact with the school culture, by both influencing their school culture, or by being influenced by an existing school culture, the following questions guided this research:

1. What is the process of moving from a teaching role like for three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals who work in large, urban school boards in Ontario?
2. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals describe their process of forming an administrative identity?
3. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals perceive that their identities influence their school cultures?
4. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals perceive that their identities are influenced by their school cultures?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework draws from literature on the administrative role and on identity formation amidst role change. VP role and identity are deconstructed to understand the ways newly appointed VPs function within a school. Armstrong (2009) states that "the promotion from teacher to administrator opens up a complex internal and external landscape which is characterized by unexpected crossroads and boundaries and requires them to make critical pathway choices" (p. 54). Acknowledging this critical

change in a VP's professional identity suggests the framework for this research and supports the notion of transition. The focus on change within the administrative role is discussed, both in the sense of identity transition from teacher to VP, and in the perceived interaction between a VP and their school's culture.

The proposed framework for this study is also based on a synthesis of theories related to change, both in the sense of personal identity formation, and in the ways individuals evoke change. Erik Erikson has been identified as the most influential theorist on the study and development of identity, with his contribution of eight psychosocial development stages (Marcia, 1980). However, from his original works other theories have developed that utilize his ideas about identity, to bring the concepts forward in more concrete and practical ways. This application of Erikson's theories can be seen in Marcia's (1980) four identity statuses: achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion, which are four stages of dealing with identity issues. Although Erikson's theory predominantly focused on youth, these ideas were applied to all situations where there was crisis and change, as "those classified by these modes are defined in terms of their presence or absence of a decision-making period (crisis) and the extent of personal investment (commitment) in two areas: occupation and ideology" (Marcia, 1980, p. 161). This understanding of change is similar to the experience that newly appointed VPs face, as their role transition prompts them with "growing occupational and ideological commitment … [where] they are required to synthesize [past] identifications in such a way that [they] can both establish a reciprocal relationship with [their] society and maintain a feeling of continuity with [themselves]" (Marcia, 1966, p. 551). This

connection between the self and the collective community was echoed in Erikson (1956/2008) through his definition of identity:

> Expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others … [where an] individual must learn to be most himself where he means most to others. (p. 224)

In Marcia's (1980) study of identity, identity is described as "an existential position, to an inner organization of needs, abilities, and self-perceptions" (p. 159). Although Marcia (1980) recognized that "identity has been called a 'sense,' an 'attitude,' a 'resolution,' and so on … [he] proposes another way of construing identity: as a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (p. 159). Marcia (1980) also stated that "identity formation does not happen neatly … [and] in the ongoing construction of an identity, that which one negates is known; what one affirms and chooses contains an element of the unknown" (p. 160). This aspect of his theory clarified why some newly appointed VPs "either do not form an identity or form only a partial one … [as] they cannot risk saying 'no' to elements of their past of which they are certain and make the affirmative leap into an uncertain future" (Marcia, 1980, p. 160). Marcia (1980) also indicated that "although some identity crises are cataclysmic and totally preoccupying, identity formation usually proceeds in a much more gradual and nonconscious way. It gets done by bits and pieces" (p. 161). However, "each of these decisions has identity-forming implications … [but] there are ways in which one can circumvent the decision-making process" (Marcia, 1980, p. 160). To avoid decision-making and ultimately prolong the identity formation process,

Marcia (1980) provided alternate routes to role conception, such as letting previously incorporated, values of others, determine one's actions (p. 160). Similarly, permitting "oneself to be pushed one way or the other by external pressures" (Marcia, 1980, p. 160) would eliminate decision-making.

In understanding the desire to evoke change, and the ways in which changes are proposed, Thomas J. Sergiovanni's research on change forces are explored. Sergiovanni describes how different forces can be used to leverage change within schools. Sergiovanni (1998) "proposes six change forces, which rely on different change practices, which can be deployed to effect change" (as cited in Melville et al., 2012, p. 2). These six change forces are: bureaucratic forces, personal forces, market forces, professional forces, cultural forces, and democratic forces. According to Sergiovanni (1998), the following change forces are defined by these parameters: bureaucratic forces rely on rules, personal forces rely on personality, market forces rely on incentives, professional forces rely on standards of expertise, cultural forces rely on shared values, and democratic forces rely on shared commitments (p. 299). Exploring how change is driven, and by whom, enriches an understanding of who VPs are, why they do what they do in their roles, and how effective they are in doing so in the short and long term.

Sergiovanni (1998), Erikson (1956), and Marcia (1980) provide the theoretical foundation for this research. However, it is through Armstrong's (2009) insights on the administrator that the two elements of the person and their role transition connect to become the focus of this research. An in-depth exploration of these theoretical frameworks develops in the following chapter and is applied in the data collection and analysis of this research study.

Importance of the Study

This study is important because there is a lack of literature on vice-principals, particularly on how vice-principals effectively transition from teacher to administrator. Additionally, there is little literature on what happens to their professional identity during this transition, and how they situate themselves in these new roles once appointed. Literature connecting newly appointed VPs and school culture is also very scant. Without these insights into the VP role, little can be done to improve these roles and support these candidates in their current practices in Ontario.

Presently, the literature discusses how VP positions in Ontario are viewed as less desirable, with the number of teachers seeking this advancement declining (Castle & Mitchell, 2001; Coe, 2008; Hancock, Black, & Bird, 2006; Kwan & Walker, 2012; MacBeath et al., 2012). As a result, this study gives insights to reveal teachers' motivations for transitioning to VP roles under these undesirable circumstances. The roles and responsibilities of newly appointed VPs are vast, yet their stories are seldom reported in literature. This study is important because it will give testimony to VPs' lived experiences during this specific stage of their career.

This study is important because it investigates this transition process, and the subsequent perceived interaction with school culture. Gulsen and Gulenay (2014) determined that a strong school culture had positive repercussions on the school community; because of this positive correlation, they revealed that school culture "has recently become considered as important in educational organization, because the product of education institutions is people" (p. 94). Consequently, this study may ultimately be important both for research purposes and for practical applications within the field of education.

This study is important due to the changing role of administrators, and therefore provides relevant information surrounding their roles and influences within schools. This study is also important because of its focus specifically on VPs, therefore separating their experiences from those of other stakeholders involved in schools. By focusing on the role of newly appointed VPs, this study also provides insights as to how these individuals' experiences are distinct from those of their more experienced administrators. Additionally, due to the administrative shift in Ontario, which is considering changes such as downsizing and modifying the VP position to compensate for the shortage of teachers pursuing these roles, this study is important in showing the benefits of maintaining these positions in the future (People for Education, 2011). This study is also worthwhile because of research that shows that the "well-being of VPs should therefore be of central concern for maintaining the important societal functions that schools perform in the twenty-first century" (Schermuly, Schermuly, & Meyer, 2011, p. 253).

In summary, gaining understanding about the experiences of newly appointed VPs, their identity formation during this transition, and their subsequent interaction with school culture can contribute to theory. This study is also important because it has the potential to contribute to the literature on the VP role and on the lived experience of VPs. It can also contribute to our practical understanding of how we can better recruit and support vice-principals within Ontario.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to three secondary school VPs in large, urban school boards in Ontario. Each participant has between 1 and 3 years of VP experience, ultimately being considered newly appointed to this role. This duration of participant

experience was selected due to findings from Giroux and Gauthier (2006) which identified that the training of school administrators while integrating into their positions is marked by experts as taking “from three to five years” (p. 12). Seeking to capture the VP in transition to their new role, this study focuses on the 1st year to the 3rd year of their administrative experience.

One limitation of this study is that due to the number of participants, the findings are restricted to novice VPs from large, urban school boards in Ontario. Having a small sample size will provide an in-depth understanding of this topic, through which I will seek more detail from fewer participants (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). In doing so, I will ensure that my research achieves an “in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 252), which is seen with qualitative studies. However, the small number of participants is a limitation of the study because it reduces my ability to generalize the findings to a larger group of VPs. This study is also limited due to the specific time frame outlined for this project, allotting for only one face-to-face interview, and one follow-up conversation, with each participant. Consequently, the number of interviews I conducted was imposed by limited access to VPs and time restrictions. My methodology is likewise limited because participants were selected by using purposeful sampling. These limitations decrease the generalizability of the findings, because the results are defined by the shared experiences that were set by these specific participant parameters. As in all qualitative studies, the findings could also be subject to other interpretations. Another limitation of my methodology is my use of face-to-face interviews, where the participant stories were filtered through my lens as the researcher, leaving it open to my bias and perspective.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

The remainder of this document includes a review of relevant literature, methodology and procedures, presentation of results, and discussion and implications. Chapter 2 includes a review of related literature pertaining to administrator personal and professional identity, VP identity formation, role transition, roles and responsibilities, and challenges surrounding the VP role. Attention to school climate and culture in relation to the VP is also reviewed, identifying VP interaction with culture, and subsequent impact on VP identity. Chapter 3 outlines the method used, as well as site and participant selection, data collection and data analysis procedures, dependability and credibility, methodological assumptions, and ethical considerations employed in this research. Chapter 4 presents the results of this study, organized by the overarching themes of VP role transition, duties assigned to the VP, insider perceptions of VP experiences, VP identity and lived experiences, relationships, and school culture. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a summary and discussion of the findings in connection to the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and the reviewed literature. Recommendations for future practice, theory, and research are also included.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of literature relating to administrative identity, to deconstruct how it is formulated during transition periods. These concepts are described in relation to school culture in order to situate the VP's role and perceived interaction with it. This chapter investigates a body of literature within the field of administration and leadership in education in order to support current ideas in this area of interest, and to assist in revealing new findings. This chapter first reviews literature surrounding the school administrator, exploring both their personal and role identities, deconstructs the transition period from a teaching role to a VP role, and outlines the responsibilities facing administrators in today's schools, specifically those which are both defined and undefined within the VP role. Lastly, this chapter reviews literature pertaining to school culture and climate, comparing the two concepts and outlining their importance and their perceived interaction with the VP role. Throughout this chapter, references are made to administrators and principals, in addition to VPs, as the body of literature in this field often generalizes findings to include all school administrators.

Administrator Personal Identity

Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) defined identity as the "description that provides contextually appropriate answers to the question 'Who am I?'" (p. 327). Personal identity is defined as an individual's unique self, which encompasses his/her "attributes, traits, abilities, and interests" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 327), and is "constructed within" (Hall & du Gay, 1996, p. 4). Perry (1975) contributed to this understanding noting that personal identity is a combination of one's "life or personal history as a process, a sequence of events … intimately associated with the concept of a

person" (p. 10). This notion of personal identity is important to understanding the VP role because it "helps capture the essence of who people are and, thus, why they do what they do" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 334), therefore providing insight about an administrator's motivations and actions. Turner, Reynolds, Haslam, and Veenstra (2006) further supported this understanding of personal identity in relation to behaviour in their explanation that:

> The ways in which an individual perceives, defines and feels about himself or herself determines the way in which he or she will behave in any given situation … [reflecting their] past experience, learning and socialization and … [influencing their] motivation, values, beliefs and knowledge. (p. 12)

Because individuals' personal identity is used to "navigate their lives" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 334), it enters the workplace and influences the role contexts, impacting the way people act, live, and perceive their roles and responsibilities. As a result, individuals' personal identity will influence their behaviour, leading to the emergence of their personal traits within the workplace, as they use their "individual characteristics … [to] interact with the particularities of the situation" (Turner et al., 2006, p. 18). In maintaining personal identity within an organization, Lorenzi-Cioldi (2006) explains that "individuals must move away from the group … in order to attain a sense of uniqueness" (p. 94).

In the context of schools and newly appointed VPs, these individuals attempt to situate themselves into their new environments, so that even when they conform to new norms, "they construe that behavior in ways that emphasize their autonomy or uniqueness" (Prentice, 2006, p. 46), and negotiate between their personal identities and

those of their role. Administrator personal identity is particularly relevant in the context of the ever-changing needs of schools, and consequent demands on the VP amidst these changes. Giroux and Gauthier (2006) connected the lived experience for new VPs in their administrative roles, to their personal selves, identifying the significance of the "demographic changes as a group (e.g. rejuvenation, feminization and rapid replacement)" (p. 12) as dynamic factors of the self that interact with their roles in the workplace. Giroux and Gauthier (2006) show the significance of these demographic changes such as gender dominance and age, as they impact and change the administrative experience. In this study, personal identity is understood as reflexive on the role context, meaning that administrators' unique attributes contribute to and influence their roles and presence within their schools.

Administrator Professional Identity

Role identity within the context of the workplace "roots the individual in the organization" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 359), as it promotes a sense of collectivity that causes individuals to behave in ways that fulfil their roles, leading to positive outcomes for the organization. This occurs when individuals move into new roles, because "occupations serve as major identity badges for situating individuals in the organization … [where individuals] frequently define themselves in terms of their occupation" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 350). Postmes, Baray, Haslam, Morton, and Swaab (2006) found that "people differentiate themselves by constructing a self-image that integrates multiple elements drawn from the patchwork of social groups to which they belong" (p. 226). However, this can only be meaningful if "members of the overarching group sanction (or at least do not challenge) the results of this process … [meaning that]

identity is strongly dependent on the group" (p. 226). Because one's role identity is so closely tied to the expectations of the collective, "collective interests are given priority" (Jetten & Postmes, 2006, p. 116) at "the expense of oneself" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 359). These collective priorities cause individuals to act in ways that negate their personal identities, as they are "shaped by the social groups and societies of which … [they] are members" (Turner et al., 2006, p. 30).

VP Identity Formation

VP identity formation upon new appointment to the role is influenced "by a complex interplay of individual and organizational forces" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 104). These conflicting influences are "due to interpersonal interactions and/or incompatibility between personal, professional, or organizational values" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 2).

Self Versus Collective

Since the development of a role identity is dependent upon individuals' negotiations between "themselves and others regarding the ways in which organization roles and reality should be interpreted" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 105), the formation of their identity may be viewed as a work in progress which is evolving and changing as they situate themselves into their roles. Turner et al. (2006) explained that individuals' identities naturally change, and that:

> An individual's past experience, individual and social, may certainly affect how he or she reacts to and recognizes the contemporary social world, but present social realities, norms, values and ideologies, and reference group memberships are decisive for producing personal identity. (p. 17)

Despite Prentice's (2006) findings that "people can simultaneously feel like

individuals and behave like group members" (p. 47), Jetten and Postmes (2006) suggested that within schools, there remains a struggle for conformity towards larger group needs, in order to enhance cohesion; as a result of this cohesion there is reduced "differentiation between individual group members" (p. 116). The search for identity validation can lead VPs to feel "more connected to and identified with their group" (Prentice, 2006, p. 47). Consequently, balancing the needs of the self and the other is viewed as a surprised complexity for newly appointed VPs, as "this passage and its impact on their personal and professional circumstances" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 4) is quite unexpected, and "for most assistant principals … [becomes] an emotional journey of self-discovery that challenges the mind, body and spirit" (p. 4).

Self Versus Self

Worchel (1998) stated that "the need to be true to one's individual self at the same time as one's social self has been described as 'a life-long dilemma'" (as cited in Jetten & Postmes, 2006, p. 116). This dilemma commonly occurs during identity conflicts when there is "an inconsistency between the contents of two or more identities, such as a clash of values, goals, or norms … held by a single individual" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 354), where "a person behaves, feels, perceives and thinks differently from his or her fellows" (Turner et al., 2006, p. 16). Upon transition, new VPs "are shocked to discover the variety of conflicting roles and expectations inherent in their new position, and the personal and psychological impact is has on their lives" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 2).

Navigating this change ultimately "involves not only what new APs do within the role, but also who they are" (Gibeau, 2011, p. 19). When individuals are put in positions where they must compromise one of their held identities, they suppress or "kill an

identity that is seen to impede other valued identities" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 355). During a vulnerable stage of transition, if conflict exists, this compromise is especially necessary "as a means of facilitating entry into their new role identity" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 355).

VP Role Transition

Within the field of education, the transition that occurs during the promotion from teaching to an administrative role can best be understood as "a significant milestone within the personal and professional landscape of education" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 3). Although to outsiders this transition might seem "to be a straightforward change in roles and responsibilities" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 4), listening to the voices and stories of newly appointed VPs provides an alternate perception of this change. VPs experience several shifts or changes as they exit from teaching and enter into administration (Armstrong, 2015). Specifically, this transition "marks the end of their teaching career and the beginning of a new professional trajectory" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 398). Armstrong (2015) identified these co-occurring changes in this transition process and outlined them in three parts: "their upward shift in the school hierarchy, their relinquishment of their classroom duties and close relationships with students, and a sudden change in their relationship with their former teacher colleagues due to the vice-principals' supervisory status" (p. 113). Consequently, Armstrong (2015) outlined how during this shift VPs undergo an "unexpected loss of a larger community of peers and their exit from the teaching culture [and are met with] the corresponding lack of an administrative community" (p. 114).

The transition from teacher to administrator blends positive and negative feelings and experiences (Armstrong, 2012). Through this adjustment and socialization to the role,

VPs experience “a multistage process that includes at least the three main stages of encounter, adjustment, and stabilization, which evolve as new VPs learn about and adjust to the expectations and responsibilities of their roles” (Armstrong, 2012, p. 400). During the transition to administration, Rintoul and Goulais (2010) found that VPs experienced a

> Metaphorical journey, [where] along the way there were … pitfalls and drowning places, dark holes and battlefields, places where their backs were up against walls. They traveled down roads … [and] described the path of leadership as having a halting progress—a kind of two-steps-forward-one-step-back rhythm. (p. 753)

This transition was similarly described by Petrides et al. (2014), who indicated that their participants spoke of “a period of disillusionment and disappointment as they uncover underlying day-to-day challenges in their work and school sites” (p. 176).

Navigating Relationships

Often finding themselves in a middle position, Rintoul and Goulais (2010) explained how VPs experienced “positional ambiguity—of working in the middle ground between the principal and the teachers, and the challenge of being at once teacher, coach and evaluator” (p. 751). Armstrong (2004) extensively described this experience as boundary crossing, explaining that new VPs are elevated to an administrative perspective where they can view “possibilities that were invisible from their former classroom locations” (p. 3), but at the same time these pathways are out of reach, placing them “at the crossroads of these two interdependent, but competing professions” (p. 3). Navigating this intersection between different visions and groups leads to increased divisions for VPs (Barnett et al., 2012). To mediate this sense of divisions, novice VPs often choose to “be united with the principal and other administrators … [and] must redefine their

relationships with teachers" (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 272). Armstrong (2015) noted that "the change in teachers' attitudes and expectations also made the vice-principals' aware that they were now outsiders to the teaching culture" (p. 113). As a result, this new relationship generates an "us versus them" (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 272) mentality, serving to solidify the newly appointed VP as one with the rest of the administrative team, or otherwise, on their side.

Career Socialization

The transition from teacher to VP shows that "climbing the hierarchical ladder of power and authority requires changes on the social, cognitive, and emotional levels" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 104). Consequently, it "is a powerful developmental process that provokes unexpected responses that are consistent with major personal and professional change" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 2). As VPs come to understand their roles and responsibilities, they adjust to the demands of their new environment and change to meet "the norms and expectations of their reference group" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 104). Therefore, "a teacher moving into an administrative position must relinquish a comfortable mindset, experience a modification of self-esteem as a novice, and learn new behaviours as an expert" (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 495).

Oleszewski et al. (2012) noted that during this transition, "not only must APs be prepared for their role, they must learn the norms and expectations of the organization, often referred to as career socialization" (p. 270). This often occurs through

> learning by example … [where] the assistant principal learned from the principal and other colleagues. From these examples, administrators learned what it meant to be successful…the organizational norms, the boundaries of appropriate

> behaviour, and the ways to conform to the organizational expectations. (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 272)

Armstrong (2012) explained that “though seemingly benign, these [socialization] processes are not neutral. They influence how and what new administrators learn about their work; they determine a variety of individual and organizational outcomes … and they ensure the survival and reproduction of dominant organizational norms” (p. 400).

The changes that occur during this role transition therefore lead to “the construction and evolution of new narratives, perspective, and identities” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 104). Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) found in their stories from newly appointed VPs that even “a year’s experience had forced changes in some of their most passionately held beliefs about education and educators” (p. 2). This explains why when some teachers transition to VP positions, they abandon their status and “devalue old skills” in order to gain “innovation in [their] new role in the school” (Hart, 1993, p. 26).

Roles and Responsibilities of VPs

Armstrong (2009) explained that the promotion to the VP role from a teaching position signaled an elevation within the educational hierarchy, increasing access to power and authority, and greater influence within the school. However, in practice, the duties pertaining to the VP role are varied and “misaligned” (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 4), and can be dependent upon the instructions and authority of the supervising principal. Rintoul and Goulais (2010) confirmed that “ambiguity [is] inherent in their role … changing from school to school, and highly dependent on the leadership style of the principal” (p. 751). Armstrong (2004) reiterated the VP position as dependent on the principal, describing them “as a minority in theory and practice because of their location

at the bottom of the administrative power pyramid" (p. 1). Being secondary to the principal, new VPs express that "although they had assumed that they would acquire greater power and influence as administrators, in reality, they have less power, flexibility, and time … [leading to] this combination of limited organizational power and influence and the inability to control their role" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 114). Consequently, new VPs feel powerless and are "frustrated and disappointed when they find themselves lacking the competencies, power, and moral compasses to resolve the tensions and ambiguities inherent in their administrative roles" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 2). This is because in many cases, "the principal is in charge, the captain of the ship so to speak" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 15), meaning that many VPs need to get approval or direction for their actions, especially when it impacts the school significantly.

Task Ambiguity

Goodson (2000) characterized VPs as "jacks-of-all-trades, ready for anything and everything" (p. 56). Hartzell et al. (1995) agreed that VPs must "respond to any problem that comes up" (p. 13), causing their roles to vary tremendously. These results reveal that "there just isn't any such thing as a typical AP … [they] all do a wide variety of other things; all of…[their] job descriptions are long" (p. 4). Hartzell et al. (1995) also found that VPs' duties were so insurmountable due to the ambiguity of their roles, that in reality, they spent their time "handling whatever comes through the door—then … [still have to complete their] official duties" (p. 4).

Because VPs make numerous decisions every day, Hartzell et al. (1995) indicated that VPs could be put in an "impossible situation" (as cited in Chute, 2008, p. 5), where they feel responsible to different stakeholders, and have to be accountable for decisions

with little support or preparation, while performing “nuts and bolts duties” (Association for Career and Technical Education [ACTE], 2008, p. 10; Beycioglu, Ozer, & Ugurlu, 2012, p. 638). Rintoul and Goulais (2010) explained these “decisional uncertainties … [where VPs] articulated the challenges of satisfying multiple stakeholders—parents, students, teachers, principals—all of whom may have different expectations” (p. 751). Due to their lack of training and preparation for their roles, Armstrong (2004) explained how during decision-making, new VPs often “rely on veteran teachers and administrators, whose interpretations sometimes conflict … [causing them] to please the more powerful stakeholders and to follow pre-established administrative pathways” (p. 4). This tendency to maintain administrative practices is driven by an innate desire to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the VP role. Armstrong (2004) explains that this desire to fulfil roles and responsibilities “makes them more likely to comply with the demands of the superiors in the administrative hierarchy, thus reproducing…roles and pathways that maintain the status quo” (p. 4). Consequently, VPs are “expected to be decision makers … [but] in reality must focus on the agendas of others—parents, principals, teachers” (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 747).

H. D. Armstrong (2005) found that “VPs currently bear the responsibility for a number of jobs that are rejected by employee units above and below them within the school system, largely because their duties are subject to the discretion of principals” (p. 124). D. E. Armstrong (2015) also contributed that because “they no longer belonged to a union, the vice-principals were unable to refuse difficult and/or unpopular managerial tasks” (p. 114). During their immersion and initial transition to these roles, this seems especially true, as D. E. Armstrong (2004) described these types of difficult tasks as

being assigned as a form of "institutional rites of passage" (p. 4). Additionally, due to "funding cuts to education and increased teacher workloads, more operational tasks, that used to be done by committees, are now downloaded to the vice principals" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 8). Their range of responsibilities mostly being delegated by other stakeholders, results in their priorities being "set by others" (Hartzell et al., 1995, p. 13), so that "tasks that were formerly accomplished through staff committees have now, in many schools, ended up on the vice principal's 'to do' list" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 8). This use of their role leads to a state of vulnerability for VPs, where they must fulfil the worst roles and responsibilities with the least amount of support, leading to "a job of high stress, often considered pejoratively as 'the armpit of the system'" (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 746).

Discipline

Within the field of education, VPs are viewed as disciplinarians. Because "VPs often rely on the principal to define their roles" (Chute, 2008, p. 20), "most often, VPs are assigned the duty of student discipline" (p. 1), as they generally oversee student behaviour, implement conduct policies, and control the discipline procedures. These findings were also expressed by VP participants in Nanavati and McCulloch's (2003) study where they voiced their experiences with "the stereotypical role of the vice principal … as a person who is involved primarily with discipline and operations of the school" (p. 7), where aspects of the school's function such as school culture seemed "beyond their control" (p. 6). The VP is also primarily responsible for overseeing student well-being, and issues that affect the child as a whole. This responsibility is overwhelming, because for the new VP, they "are confronted for the first time with the

harsh social and emotional realities of their students' lives, such as violence, abuse, poverty, and racism which were hidden or veiled in the classroom setting" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 4), often causing them to "feel overwhelmed and depressed by the enormity of the problems" (p. 4).

Barnett et al. (2012) identified administration as a "people business" (p. 117), holding the VP responsible for managing staff, parents, and other "people" involved in a school. In their research, they reveal the challenges that this task poses for the VP, particularly in mediating conflicts within these groups, and amongst individuals. Armstrong (2015) reiterated this finding, describing "people interactions" (p. 117) as one of the most difficult aspects of the VP role. Barnett et al. (2012) also found that most of the VPs' attention was "devoted to conflicts with adults ... [which] can force them to shift their perspective from students and classroom concerns to adult and schoolwide concerns" (p. 117). Discipline issues surrounding adults is something that VPs felt ill-prepared to deal with, as they described being confronted with "anger, resentment, emotional outburst, and political turmoil" (Barnett et al., 2012, p. 110). VPs were unaware of their responsibility to intervene in these ways, and ultimately were shocked at the fragility of these relationships, especially in the wake of conflicts and disagreements.

Workload

The weight of the VP role is identified through the all-encompassing notion of workload (Armstrong, 2015; Barnett et al., 2012; MacBeath et al., 2012, Pollock, 2017). Armstrong (2015) reinforced these experiences with workload, role intensity, and lack of control, with her examples that at times her participants were "ignoring basic bodily functions and their personal well-being … [where] during their early tenure, they literally

had to write ‘go to the washroom’ in their daybooks” (p. 115). MacBeath et al. (2012) also identified workload “at the heart of the problem” (p. 422) that VPs face in managing their roles, with Barnett et al. (2012) having reported workload and task management as the most common challenges from their work with novice VPs. Rintoul and Goulais (2010) found that “vice principals work at what has been characterized as a frenetic pace, on average involving a new task every 30 seconds” (p. 748). Rintoul and Goulais (2010) described multiple challenges within this undefined role:

> Task ambiguity—of not having a clear set of expectations, always needing to be ready to pick up whatever needed doing to keep the school running smoothly, the shifting nature of tasks, the inability to ever complete all tasks to their own satisfaction, and the need to prioritize among jobs “which are all important.” (p. 751)

Ikemoto et al. (2014) shared this sentiment, reporting that VPs did not find their roles feasible; rather, “they were spreading their time so thinly across so many roles and tasks that they found themselves not doing any of them well enough” (p. 23).

An example of duties that VPs are responsible for includes “scheduling classes, ordering textbooks and supplies, and coordinating transportation, custodial, cafeteria and other support services. Responsibility for student discipline and attendance problems, as well as health and safety matters … they may also offer personal, educational and career counseling to students” (ACTE, 2008, p. 9). Similarly, they are responsible for “organizational items … that serve to support the climate of the school and the well-being of its students, including guidance, discipline, testing, student supervisions and interactions with the community” (ACTE, 2008, p. 9). Because of this multitude of tasks,

Armstrong (2009) revealed that VPs felt themselves portrayed as "antiheroes, e.g., bad cops, hatchet men, and/or fire fighters, although they fulfil a wide range of instructional leadership and personnel management roles that are integral to daily school operations" (p. 7). Comparatively, it seems that "undervalued and often unacknowledged, the vice principal is the 'often unseen, yet cohesive element that contributes to an efficient and effective school'" (Glanz, 2004, as cited in Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 746). Similarly, from a principal's perspective, "assistant principals are invaluable to the smooth operations in the running of a school" (ACTE, 2008, p. 9).

Time

Newly appointed administrators often find that they "are left with far less time to perform the more rewarding and essential aspects of the job that focus on student success, teacher professional learning and leadership development, all of which contribute to building positive school culture" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 19). Kwan and Walker (2012) echoed this finding, concluding that VPs "did not find their job to be satisfying as they had not been able to spend enough time on the responsibilities on which they would prefer to spend their time" (p. 5). Ikemoto et al. (2014) also commented about how the multitude of misaligned tasks that administrators were responsible for "distract principals from the core work that has a greater connection to student achievement" (p. 5). Navigating this balance was also described by the ACTE (2008) which explained that "there is one challenge to the job … that supersedes everything else—time" (p. 9). While VPs in the ACTE's (2008) study believed "that almost any problem can be solved given sufficient time to tackle it" (p. 10), they acknowledge that in reality "there is just never enough time to do everything an assistant

principal wants to do to meet the needs of students and staff" (p. 10). As a result, VPs find that "more than ever … [they] develop simple rather than complex plans" as they are more attainable in these circumstances (ACTE, 2008, p. 10).

VP Passions

In understanding the longevity of the VP role and the individual desire for job satisfaction amidst these changing conditions, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) showed that a sense of fulfillment "comes from having the time to devote to the more meaningful aspects of the job that have a positive impact on the culture of the school" (p. 16). Ikemoto et al. (2014) also identified how their administrators chose to "focus on the leadership activities that matter, such as … creating a culture and climate of success within their building" (p. 5). These positive initiatives "provide meaning and integrity and are an antidote to the more negative aspects of their role" (Armstrong, 2004, p. 6). VPs believed that "regardless of educational outcomes their greatest source of job satisfaction was contributing to student success" (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 749). Armstrong (2015) reported similar findings indicating that VPs "associated their increased leadership confidence and competence to their ability to transform their negative disciplinary role into more positive interactions with students" (p. 117). Furthermore, through their work towards increasing support for student success and well-being, VPs had "a new sense of purpose … a different perspective of the role … [which] facilitated their ability to navigate its multiple demands and challenges" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 118).

Challenges Surrounding the Roles of School Administrators

Traditionally, administrators are viewed as the head of a school, with their roles varying and encompassing many tasks. Administrators have responsibilities including the

daily functioning of the school, relationship building and networking with various stakeholders, maintaining established academic standards and notions of conduct, and ensuring student and teaching staff wellbeing, ultimately requiring them to balance managerial and leadership demands (Castle & Mitchell, 2001).

Chute (2008) notes that "the tasks that VPs are expected to do, and the skills needed to do them, force them to be a manager rather than a leader in their schools" (p. 4). Consequently, VPs differentiate tasks associated with their roles as "tending to fall into two broad categories—instructional and organizational" (ACTE, 2008, p. 9). Role categories, in turn, ultimately impacted how VPs utilized their time in schools. Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) also indicated that "creating a community of learners is what school leadership is all about" (p. 3), and that entrusted as part of this responsibility as school leaders is "moving the institutions in their care forward" (p. 3). These outlined responsibilities represent the needs and expectations of the various stakeholders involved in education, and therefore can be politically driven to meet planned and calculated notions of a "desired end" (Heck, 2004, p. 4). To compensate for larger issues affecting the administrative role, several changes have been made to the traditional roles, impacting their practice.

Undefined VP Role

Despite the changes facing administrative roles within schools, "Canadian provincial governments and local school boards have done very little to either legally, or formally, establish the role of VPs within public schools" (Chute, 2008, p. 20). This is partly because the VP position was not originally generated from "clear and thoughtful planning" (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 20), but arose to provide support to the principal. Another analysis of the VP role conducted by the ACTE (2008) described "the role of the

assistant principal as aiding the principal in the overall administration of the school—such a simple description for a job filled with complexity" (p. 9). This is because "the VP's duties are delegated by the principal" (ACTE, 2008, p. 1) and their position title implies that "an assistant principal's number one task is to assist the principal" (Goodson, 2000, p. 56). VP roles in Ontario are made increasingly challenging due to the VP's removal from the teacher's union, causing the VP role to be unregulated (Armstrong, 2015). The ambiguity of VP roles has led to a call for "the nature of the role[s] … to be defined, examined, and scrutinized" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 22).

Job Ambiguity

Upon transitioning to their roles, newly appointed VPs find that their experiences as classroom teachers do not inform them of the realities of administration (Barnett et al., 2012). They soon realize that "the work that administrators do is invisible to the teacher in the classroom" (H. D. Armstrong, 2005, p. 119), despite assuming they "knew what went on in the office all day" (Hartzell et al., 1995, p. 4). The ambiguity related to their role creates a discrepancy, ultimately leading administrators to question what their roles really entail, as they continue to face overwhelming demands, and make decisions that do not always reflect their true identities (Alphonso & Bradshaw, 2018). This sense of ambiguity is troublesome for novice administrators because, as Ashforth, Sluss, and Harrison (2007) found, role success requires VPs to "come to know and understand (i.e., learn) the norms, values, tasks, and roles" (p. 16), of their job, so that the school can, "transform the newcomer into a contributing member" (p. 2).

Shortage of VPs

Due to the conflicting and growing demands that school administrators face, administrative positions have become less desirable, resulting in fewer teachers seeking

advancement to these roles (Chapman, 2005; Coe, 2008; Hancock et al., 2006; Kwan & Walker, 2012; People for Education, 2011; Stack, Coulter, Grosjean, Mazawi, & Smith, 2006; Williams, 2003). These findings are coupled with the fact that in Ontario, school principals are "retiring or leaving their administrative positions at an alarming rate" (Castle & Mitchell, 2001, p. 2). Oleszewski et al. (2012) explained that "a large number of principals are expected to leave their profession in the near future" (p. 265). Shoho and Barnett (2010) revealed that "as growing numbers of principals resign and/or retire, fewer qualified people are applying to fill these vacancies" (p. 561).

Consequently, data emerging from the United States predicts that "schools will encounter difficulty finding principal replacements … because of the large number of retirements" (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 265). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) believed that the "increased complexity of working conditions for teachers and administrators, coupled with the large number of retirements in the education sector, has led to shortages among not only teachers but also administrators" (p. 4). MacBeath et al. (2012) also identified this shortage, with their findings showing that "insufficient numbers of these qualified people were applying for vacancies, with supply falling well short of demand" (p. 423).

Shoho and Barnett (2010) contributed that "there are many reasons for the declining interest in the principalship" (p. 561). For example, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) showed that "vice principals feel caught in the squeeze and express concerns regarding burnout and a lack of wellness" (p. 16). Findings from Schermuly et al. (2011) and Ikemoto et al. (2014) also connected issues of job disappointment, frustration, and exhaustion, with decreased well-being, ultimately leading to burnout. These concerns range to express the challenges of administrative roles, such as "the overwhelming

demands of the operational parts of the job, staff turnover, lack of financial and human resources, inadequate preparation for the role, mentoring and on-going job training and external pressures through government mandated initiatives" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 19). In addition to the vast range of roles and responsibilities expected of administrators, "the role context for principals in this province … is not [being] clearly defined" (Castle & Mitchell, 2001, p. 2). This inconsistency between what is perceived and what is lived, generates a discrepancy between what administrators anticipate doing in their roles, and the lived realities of their daily function, making the transition period increasingly vulnerable for these candidates (MacBeath et al., 2012).

Other factors also contribute to the shortage of interest in the VP administrative role. Armstrong (2015) identified this frontline position as having increased visibility, where VPs felt their roles were "exposing them to greater levels of scrutiny and expectation … making them question their reasons for choosing this role and their competence" (p. 115). Additionally, Williams (2001) explained that novice VPs were also influenced by "negative sentiments and comments from their own principals" (p. 20), which discouraged their development and perceptions of these roles. Hancock et al. (2006) also identified that discouragement from family members or friends was a factor disinteresting potential candidates, as it appeared that there was a fear of "increased stress not only for the individual but also for the individual's family support unit" (p. 98).

The Institute for Educational Leadership (2008) found that schools were compromising the traditional role in that "unqualified new administrators are being appointed to schools, retired principals [are] being recruited back to work, and schools [are] beginning their academic year without leaders" (p. 7), as a result of the shortage of

administrators. Oplatka and Tamir (2009) similarly identified this when their participants explained that they "entered their current [VP] role due to teacher turnover, retirement, career transition, death" (p. 227), where essentially there was "a need to recruit a person … [but VPs] had not initiated the application for the vacant position; on the contrary, they had been offered the job" (p. 227). However, because newly appointed VPs often lack career aspirations in the field, are not being mentored in their transition, and in many cases, have acquired their positions without meeting the qualifications of their appointment, their success in these roles is strained, as they do not have the appropriate skills or preparation to face these challenging roles and responsibilities (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; People for Education, 2011). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) revealed that "the increased work combined with reduced support and training often mean that vice principals become slotted into certain roles and are not given the opportunity to gain the breadth of experience needed to be effective" (p. 17).

Administrator Role Transparency

With increased turnover and administrators prematurely leaving their positions, the realities of the VP role have become more transparent, causing discouragement for prospective candidates (MacBeath et al., 2012; Petrides et al., 2014). Hancock et al. (2006) found that teachers believed there was "insufficient gain or personal benefit from making the teacher-to-administrator transition" (p. 98), and not enough was being done to make these roles more appealing, or to motivate teachers to take on administrative roles. For example, Alphonso and Bradshaw (2018) noted that teachers believed that the transition to administrative roles resulted in "increased hours, responsibility and public scrutiny" (para. 10), which were not compensated for by "minimal salary increases"

(para. 10). For those teachers, the “monetary benefits of becoming a principal simply do not outweigh the additional time commitments and stress” (Fuller & Young, 2009, p. 18), that accompany the role. Hancock et al. (2006) had similar findings, sourcing that “meager salary differential, loss of tenure security, and increased job commitments are framed with the negative aspects of increased paperwork, dealing with bureaucracy, and lack of autonomy” (p. 98). They found that “the combination of these items creates a strong disincentive to pursue administrative careers” (Hancock et al., 2006, p. 98).

In his research into role identity Grodzki (2010) informed that “new administrators reported feeling abandoned and left to their own devices by senior staff” (p. 29), and upon their transition found that they were “experiencing a form of culture shock” (p. 29). As a result, these new administrators feel that they need a “reality shock” (H. D. Armstrong, 2005, p. 118), or “reality check” (Hartzell et al., 1995, p. 2), as they navigated their new positions within their schools. D. E. Armstrong (2015) described VP role transition experiences as provoking feelings of loneliness, noting that VPs felt as though they were “doing it all by yourself” (p. 114). H. D. Armstrong’s (2005) research into administrative transitions showed that the current structure of appointing new candidates found “newcomers in difficult and high-risk working situation … [where they] sink or swim” (p. 125). This experience with a “lack of training and loneliness in the role” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 9) was described by participants as “an unfortunate reality for some vice principals” (p. 9). Consequently, participants identify “isolation in the job [as] another concern … [and] emphasize the need for training and mentorship in the role” (p. 16). These processes for appointing candidates, although effective in creating short-term resolutions for these gaps, falter in terms of long-term

effectiveness for this increasing problem. Therefore, the changing role of school administration works to jeopardize the success of the limited number of interested candidates who wish to fill these vacant positions.

VP Role Preparation

To fill vacant administrative positions within schools, candidates are advanced into VP positions with “insufficient preparation and training, limited career prospects and inadequate support and rewards” (People for Education, 2011, p. 3). Rintoul and Goulais (2010) explained the training disconnect where “newly appointed vice principals are typically parachuted into a new school with theoretical training from their principalship courses but with no experience in how to apply this knowledge” (p. 747). This lack of application is also caused by the fact that these preparation courses “focus on leadership tasks most often performed by the principal … [with the vice principalship] not even mentioned in principal preparation courses” (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 746). The urgency to meet these staffing demands ultimately leads to “a large number of vice principals new to the position hav[ing] little time for transition and training once they assume the role in a hectic school setting” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 4). The type of preparation these candidates are receiving is also impractical, causing newly appointed VPs to admit that “putting administrative theory into practice wasn’t going to be all that easy” (Hartzell et al., 1995, p. 2).

VP Career Advancement

VP candidates are reared towards future positions as principals, so their roles are treated as “a mini-principalship” (Hartzell et al., 1995, p. 4). Because it is believed that a “vice-principalship is considered as the career path towards principalship” (Beycioglu et

al., 2012, p. 637), little attention and preparation is given to their roles and responsibilities as VPs, making their initial training incomplete and inappropriate (Chute, 2008). While the formal training VPs initially receive reflects the typical duties and responsibilities of the principal, it appears “the position as assistant [principal] should serve as an effective training ground for the principalship” (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 265). In many cases, the appointment of a VP is initiated as a “source for replacing principals … [and] serves as a steppingstone to the principalship” (Oleszewski et al., 2012, p. 265).

VPs often desire for advancement to the principalship as a long-term career goal and treat the vice-principalship as temporary. Participants in Nanavati and McCulloch’s (2003) study expressed that they feared “‘a good VP is going to burn out’” (p. 14). Due to the volume of work, they recognize this job as an “‘evaporating role’” (p. 14), where there are “‘few career VPs anymore. They want to be principals and then we have a revolving door syndrome’” (p. 14). The desire for promotion in these cases is generated by the autonomy and control that is associated with the principalship, eliminating the vulnerability that VPs experience in being at the hands and discretion of their supervising principal. This turnover and move to principal roles, is linked to the instability in VP roles, expressing that they worry about their position within an administrative team, and seek to be the ones in control (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003).

Conversely, many studies have identified reasons why teachers do not pursue administrative roles (Coe, 2008; Hancock et al., 2006), as well as reasons why VPs intentionally elect to remain in this role versus advancing to the principalship. For example, Barnett et al. (2012) revealed that many VPs did not pursue the principalship

because of “job demands, including role overload and stress, limited contact with students, inadequate funding, fear of failure and public disclosure of mistakes, uncertainty of their own ability to perform the role, and lack of time with family” (p. 97). These characteristics ultimately justify their decisions to remain in VP positions, as these elements are “perceived to be incompatible with the deputy’s personality, lifestyle and preferences” (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009, p. 228). MacBeath et al. (2012) also revealed the VPs reluctance to apply for the principalship as based on personal reasonings, outlining that “the principalship is bigger, broader and more demanding [and] requires a judicious balancing of professional priorities and personal lifestyle choices” (p. 422). Oplatka and Tamir (2009) also outlined that in situations where the initial advancement to the VP role was unplanned, it was common to find “very few aspirations for career advancement [to the principalship as] … the unplanned entry into deputy headship explains the career plateau; when an employee has not planned [their] career progress” (p. 228), and ultimately have no intentions to move forward.

In their research into the changing role of the secondary school VP, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) found support for the longevity of the VP role, with participants from their study expressing that “‘we should make it attractive for a person to be a career VP. There is nothing wrong with doing this. This is good for continuity and cohesion’” (p. 18). Similarly, in their study exploring VP career advancement, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) found that their participants “opposed to popular beliefs stressing the importance of career advancement … [due to] job satisfaction, high levels of well-being … [and] a sense of self-fulfilment” (p. 223). MacBeath et al. (2012) also identified that VPs who were satisfied in their current roles “felt no compulsion to seek promotion” (p. 423).

Oplatka and Tamir (2009) also found many reasons why VPs wished to remain in their current roles; they contrast that the VP role is "less complicated, leaving them sufficient space to establish informal, warm relationships with staff and students," whereas the principalship is portrayed "as stressful, formal and essentially administrative-oriented" (p. 216).

Eliminating the VP Role

Another critical change impacting the role of school administrators is the downsizing and possible elimination of the VP role. Due to the shortage of candidates seeking advancement into administration, the roles and responsibilities of VPs are being re-allocated and transferred to the responsibility of one main administrator, the principal (People for Education, 2011). The singularity of the administrative role within schools ultimately eliminates the networking and community opportunities possible among administrative teams, where natural forms of mentorship are fostered. Therefore, administrators, even those who have been newly appointed, can be expected to fulfil all roles and responsibilities independently (People for Education, 2011). As a result, newly appointed VPs might find that there are "fewer placements for future principals to learn the role" (People for Education, 2011, p. 3), as they do not have a mentor, or a group of peers from whom they can gain knowledge or model after. Working this way, therefore poses a challenge for professional learning and continuity, as it limits "ways to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next" (The Institute for Educational Leadership, 2008, p. 12). Fuller and Young (2009) found that "having stability in the principalship is a key component in enacting effective school reforms" (p. 17), and therefore compromising the role of the school administrator may cause school wide implications,

further devaluing this role and making the likelihood for interested candidates seeking these roles to continue decreasing.

School Climate

School climate is defined extensively to explain “the trend of fundamental concepts and attitudes pervading a community, nation or era” (Fox et al., 1973, p. ix), which can be further described as the goals for the school’s learning programs, elements of a school’s operation that contribute to a positive climate, basic human needs, and goals for effective staff development. These internal characteristics of a school help to “distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviours of each school’s members” (Hoy, 2011, p. 2). Although varying definitions describe school climate as the spirit of an organization, including its attitudes and beliefs, positive school climate can be best understood as “both a means and an end” (Fox et al., 1973, p. 1). In this sense, a positive and thriving school climate makes the environment a desirable place for membership. Traditional goals of school climate initiatives contain notions of the creation of a productive environment through which learning and academic growth can develop, in addition to the need for an environment which is suitable for all members to live and work in (Fox et al., 1973, p. 5). Evaluating and understanding schools in contemporary society leads to an acknowledgement of these goals in development, as they change to meet the lived needs of those within specific communities, and therefore are reflected in their intentions. Investing in the development and maturation of school climate is of utmost importance within the school system as it is believed that, “if schools continue to perpetuate an anti-humane climate in which apathy, failure, punishment, and inadequate

success in achieving the curriculum are characteristic, they may guarantee their own demise" (Fox et al., 1973, p. 3).

School Culture

School culture is described as the unspoken function and beliefs that exist within a community, which create hegemony and can be maintained over time. Halloran and Kashima (2006) stated that "culture can be thought of as a complex and diverse system of shared knowledge, practices and signifiers … providing structure and significance to groups… and ultimately an individual's experience of his or her social work" (p. 138). As a result, "every school has a culture" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 3), however school culture develops through time spent and invested within a community, because "changes to culture are slow and incremental" (Scallion, 2010, p. 14) through which dominant understandings emerge to generate common beliefs. Deal and Peterson (1999) determined that "the concept of schools having distinctive cultures is not new" (p. 2), however, they highlighted that if effective culture is to be developed, "parents, teachers, and administrators need to take a look at their local traditions and ways" (p. 2). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) also suggested evaluating the holistic aspects of a school culture to understand "'the whole staff and how everyone in the building relates'… 'the life of the school'" (p. 6).

School culture is unique to a specific community and can be understood as the feelings that "parents, teachers, principals, and students have always sensed" yet cannot be defined or described because of the way it, "permeate[s] everything" (Deal & Peterson,1999, p. 2). VPs described school culture as "the energy and the feel of the building when you first walk in" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 5). Barth (2002) also

defined school culture as “the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act” (p. 7).

Schein (1985) described school culture as “the way we do things around here” (p. 3), or as, “shared assumptions” (p. 12), that give an organization a sense of “ways to perceive, think, and feel” (p. 9). In his work based on crisis and conflict resolution, Schein (1985) demonstrated that schools can emerge from tensions and remain in solidarity if they have shared assumptions as a foundation to grow from (i.e., if they have strong cultures). In opposition to this concept of a positive and healthy school culture that “promotes learning for both the students and the adults in the building … [a school culture can be] a negative one that is steeped in conflict and resistant to change” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 3).

The positive impacts of a developed school culture are supported by Deal and Peterson (1999) who found that “strong, positive collaborative cultures have powerful effects on many features of schools” (p. 7). They expressed these impacts as ranging from students’ academic effectiveness and productivity, to better communication and problem-solving amongst both teaching staff and students, to more successful attempts at change and improvement efforts, to the identification and vitality of the school staff, and the focus on what is important, and valued by the school community (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Comparing School Climate and Culture

Understandings of school climate and culture often become interchangeable within a school, as they are perceived as values, beliefs, and ways of being. Balci (2011) stated that “climate is the observable form of the culture” (as cited in Gulsen & Gulenay, 2014, p. 94). However, in differentiating between the two, Gruenert (2008) interpreted

culture as a school's "collective personality" (p. 57), and climate as its respective "attitude" (p. 58). Gruenert (2008) explained that "it is much easier to change an organization's attitude, than it is to change its personality" (p. 58). Further, they are both complex and "do not develop overnight ... [but] are shaped" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 4), making them both present, and impactful on all facets of school life.

Although they both have a dynamic quality, school culture is broader than school climate, as influences and changes to it span over more time (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003). School culture "weathers short-term disruptions" (Scallion, 2010, p. 14), whereas school climate is more vulnerable and open to change, meaning that the "complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths … [of school culture become] deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 3). In their understanding of schools undergoing change, Melville et al. (2012) expand upon Sergiovanni's (1998) idea of looking at schools as organizations, markets, or communities, depending on the purposes of the proposed reforms. The belief is that an organization and a market are "effective for bringing about efficient change in school structures over the short term" whereas a "community is effective for bringing about deep change in the operational core of the schools" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 296). As a result, "viewing schools as organisations or markets allows for rapid, short-term change; conversely, a view of schools as communities holds potential for deeper, long term change" (Melville et al., 2012, p. 2).

VP Influence on School Culture

Literature on the administrator role within schools reveals their influence in leading and generating change. In fact, "the school administrator is first and foremost a

climate leader and … [their] key function is improvement of the school's climate" (Fox et al., 1973, pp. 23-24). Similarly, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) noted that "the vice principalship, by its very nature, can be a catalyst for positive school change" (p. 21). In a report analyzing great leaders, Ikemoto et al. (2014) stated that "their most critical work as instructional leaders [is] creating a strong school culture" (p. 31). Weller and Weller (2002) also concluded that, "culture contributes to the school's effectiveness or ineffectiveness and is a product of the school's leadership" (p. 139). Consequently, VPs' work towards impacting the school climate "rests with them" (p. 121), in that school administrators feel the direct successes and failures that emerge from the school climate, and they serve as "a direct reflection upon the administrator as a climate leader" (p. 121).

Petrides et al. (2014) found that "literature addressing effective school leadership points to leadership qualities that must be in place in order to enhance student learning and performance. These qualities include a high-achieving vision and culture within the school" (p. 174). As administrators, their voices are often privy to influencing the entire school community. Therefore, "principals can have a stronger effect on all students in a school than teachers do because teachers affect only their particular students" (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 4). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) also noted the "important influence leadership can have in bringing about changes through clarity of vision and school planning" (p. 18), all which lies in the roles and responsibilities of VPs.

Findings from Scallion (2010) reveal a relationship between administrator roles and climate, which lead to positive student achievement and school improvement. In Rintoul and Goulais's (2010) study, these findings were consistent as VPs connected

"stories of the centrality of students and student success to their professional effectiveness" (p. 749). The positive impacts on student success, both academically and socially were also outlined, showing that "the campus climate pervading the instructional process was a crucial factor in setting the stage for successful teaching and learning" (Gantner, Newsom, & Dunlap, 2000, p. 2), where "campus climate as a major factor impacting desirable educational … [is impacted by administrators] who fashion the campus climate by inspiring the entire learning community of teachers, students, and their parents" (Gantner et al., 2000, p. 4). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) showed that "a deeper understanding of school culture and school change provides a foundation for school improvement" (p. 21). Understanding the unique differences and similarities between school culture and school climate allows for administrators to more precisely improve and serve their schools, so that their actions emerge both to change the mood, or climate, and target belief systems, or culture.

Investing in school culture is essential for the VP role, as research has found that schools with rich cultures and climates lead to "less job-related stress and burnout" (Scallion, 2010, p. 7), conditions currently plaguing the administrative role (People for Education, 2011). However, the topic of school climate is noticeably missing from principal preparation programs, and in practice administrators find they "are detracted from the essential work in cultivating or maintaining a healthy school climate, as they are consumed with testing, curriculum, assessment and accountability" (Scallion, 2010, p. 3). In emphasizing the growth and development of school climate initiatives, academic needs and skills are further increased as efficient learning occurs "in a wholesome and humane school climate" (Fox et al., 1973, p. 121).

VP Interaction With Existing School Culture

VPs also interact with school culture, especially when it directs their actions and defines their roles within schools. Weller and Weller (2002) stated that “culture sets the standards and guides the daily actions of administrators, teachers and student alike” (p. 139). Ikemoto et al. (2014) also found that “aspects of school culture as uncontrollable and dependent on people’s perceptions” (p. 4). Sergiovanni (1998) contributed that there is a tendency for schools to remain stable, as maintained through “a network of assumptions, beliefs, regularities and traditions that comprise norms which define, and then provide, meaning” (p. 297); all which is embedded in existing school culture. As a result, it is critical to this study that a thorough understanding of school culture in relation to its development by key stakeholders such as administrators is evaluated, in order to gain a sense of why and how they “read, shape, and continuously transform the culture of their school” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 10).

Understanding these “collective meanings” allows newcomers to make sense of existing practices, affirms their sense of purpose, and “helps them to rationally accept the social situations they experience in schools” (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 297). In an attempt to shape their school’s existing culture, administrators embody different roles within their position in order to work with the “part, present and future” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 85). In doing so they can understand how to maintain and move their school culture forward. VPs first need to read and understand the current school culture, to acknowledge that “the past exists in the cultural present ... [and] look at the present” to attend to the “deeper dreams and hopes the school community holds for the future” (Deal & Peterson,

1999, p. 86). Sergiovanni (1998) also suggests that "before school culture can change, meanings that are both collectively and individually held must change" (p. 297).

In understanding their role in relation to school culture, VPs need to recognize that "if the culture is ineffective, there are probably climate issues that were missed before they became rooted in the culture" (Gruenert, 2008, p. 58). It is at this point where administrators can determine whether their role concerning the school culture is "to shape it or reinforce it" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 87), as well as how to work towards these needs in ways that are caring, attentive, and reflective, and which becomes part of "their daily work" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 142). Newly appointed VPs bring a new perspective to their roles, and with meaningful attention and opportunity, can advance changes on existing school culture, further supporting the development of these aspects, and contributing new influences of their own. Initially administrators will notice changes to the climate as they influence its attitude, but with time "climate does affect culture…and in this way, school leaders have a hand in shaping culture over the long term" (Scallion, 2010, p. 14). VPs need to understand that their roles "shape[s] climate through the daily transactions or routines of schools but also has privileged access to domains that shape the deeper school culture" (p. 15). Fullan (2003) explained that "it is 'little things' that make a huge difference in changing the working, learning, culture and leadership situations in schools" (as cited in Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 21).

Melville et al. (2012) found that "the implementation of change within schools is complex" (p. 3), especially as a newcomer. School culture can be resistant to change, with communities and ways of being already determined and maintained over time. Other factors such as adapting to the roles and duties of a new job, negotiating existing values

and expectations with others, and prioritizing this work by balancing time and responsibilities are all factors which hinder a new VPs ability to be a changemaker. Spillane (2010) supports these challenges in his study of policy implementation in schools; he found that the main challenges which impose upon VPs implementing change are: "ambiguous, unclear, and inconsistent policies … the agendas of the implementing agency and agents, community attitudes, resources, time" (as cited in Melville et al., 2012, p. 3). VPs are restricted from evoking change, and policies that maintain the ways of being are embraced and maintained. Any ideas which do not fit the existing culture are otherwise "opposed, modified, or circumvented" (Melville et al., 2012, p. 3). Consequently, the ways in which the VP interacts with the culture, and the subsequent ways the VP is impacted by this existing culture are explored as they assume these new roles.

Evoking change on existing school culture is increasingly challenging because it is "difficult to be a VP in a school where styles with the principal vary widely" (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 15), and where above all, "advice given to new VPs is to 'do what the principal requests them to do and make the principal look good'" (Chute, 2008, p. 20). VPs must understand that "the principal is the instructional leader of the school … [and the] job as assistant principal is to support him or her" (Goodson, 2000, p. 56). However, in the lived experiences of the newly appointed VP, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) found that "the principal might be involved in discussions around a policy and to mould and lead culture in a direction that is positive for the school whereas the vice principal would actually implement it" (p. 10).

In cases where VPs find themselves negotiating timelines, they acknowledge that "'you need to actually remind yourself to make time to work on the culture piece'"

(Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 11). This is because “a tension between the importance of that work in relation to school culture and the overwhelming volume of the work” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 13) pervades. Efforts towards influencing existing school culture “takes time to develop” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 17), and with short VP tenures, “rapid turnover hurts the desire to make positive inroads in school culture” (p. 17).

School Culture Impact on VP Identity

The overlapping issues of identity and school culture are pervasive in the literature, suggesting that there is a relationship between the two. An understanding of the individual in relation to the culture is essential, as Halloran and Kashima (2006) have found that “an individual’s representation of cultural knowledge may be…associated with … his or her social identities” (p. 141). This means that in addition to their role identities, their personal identities and innate sense of selves will also impact the school culture.

This concept of identity is essential to the understanding of VP influence on school culture because “how they express their views on school culture is influenced by their experiences working in a school” (Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003, p. 7). Because “APs’ subjectivities have already been deeply formed by their personal histories” (Gibeau, 2011, p. 19), they may feel conflict and resistance when situating themselves into a new context. As a result, they may “either strengthen or abandon an existing self-image” (Hart, 1993, p. 26), based on the needs of their new community, and therefore may not reveal their true selves in this transition.

Role conception is critical during the VP transition period, as administrators can feel a divide between how they visualize their presence in the school and the expectations

being driven by their existing school culture. This finding is meaningful to the understanding of the relationship between the self and the developed culture of a school, in that it shows that in cases where there is "a threat to one's self" (Halloran & Kashima, 2006, p. 145), there will also be reciprocal implications to the maintenance of the larger culture within that group. This disconnect is challenging because VPs may feel pressured to construct a role identity to meet their schools' cultural needs, and in doing so, might compromise the emergence of their authentic individual selves.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed a range of literature relating to administrative identity and school culture. The chapter explored literature about the administrator, focusing on topics such as VP personal and role identities, the role transition process to becoming a VP, and administrator roles and responsibilities. The chapter also reviewed literature pertaining to school culture and climate and their perceived interaction with the VP role.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to investigate VP identify formation upon appointment, reflecting on VP experiences that occurred between 1 and 3 years of transitioning to these roles. This study was intended to describe the intricate aspects of an administrator's identity to show the ways that they perceived these facets interacted with their school's culture. Chapter 3 includes a review of the research methodology and research design, a discussion of the research site and the participant selection, in addition to the data collection processes and analyses. Lastly, it reviews the dependability and the credibility of this study, methodological assumptions, and ethical considerations.

Method

This study acknowledged that a qualitative research approach provides a "broad explanation for [the] behaviour and attitudes" (Creswell, 2014, p. 64), being observed. Consequently, qualitative research provided me with an "overall orienting lens" (Creswell, 2014, p. 64), through which I could generate analysis. Grounding the research in theory is critical to a qualitative study as it helps to "guide the researchers as to what issues are important to examine … [and] also indicate[s] how the researcher positions himself or herself in the qualitative study … [and] how the final written accounts need to be written" (Creswell, 2014, p. 64).

Research Design

This study was conducted using a basic interpretive generic qualitative approach, using interpretive research methods. This methodology "seek[s] to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11), which allows themes to emerge. This method was also

selected due to my intentions to produce a study which contributed findings in a unique way, one which avoided generalizations, only spoke to the lived experiences of the participants, and which did not aim to create broad conclusions.

In selecting the interpretive research design, I adopted a constructivist worldview in that my perspective towards conducting this study was one that sought findings which show that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). The goal of this design was therefore to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8), so to attain authentic results that were also relevant.

Interview Process

Qualitative research accepts that the researcher is the key instrument in collecting and analyzing data, and that he/she does so in a way that utilizes subjective deductive and inductive reasoning (Creswell, 2014, p. 185). Consequently, this type of research is conducted in a setting where the researcher and the participant can interact face-to-face, and “share ideas comfortably” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 258), therefore making the process and related results emergent in nature, as they are flexible to the human and dynamic aspects of this type of research.

The interview method was selected because it provided an outlet through which “participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the research” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 257). As a result, it allowed for an open conversation because “when people tell stories, they select details, reflect on them and create order to make sense of their experiences, all of which are important aspects of meaning-making” (Siedman, 2006, as cited in Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 748). Tierney

and Dilley (2001) described the use of interviewing in educational research as a means "used to gather information that cannot be obtained using other methods" (p. 3), as it generates rich results. My interview style was semi-structured, using open-ended questioning, to allow my participants the freedom to direct the conversation, as they had their "own options for responding" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 257). However, this style of interviewing benefited me as the researcher, in that I had a depth of questions which were structured to elicit specific types of responses and themes, which expanded upon my research questions.

This method was conducted in a way that revealed themes and generated interpretations bringing clarity to this topic, and deeper understandings to this field. This method was selected because it did not focus on an outcome, a cause, or an effect, but instead was a "holistic account" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186) that provided a presentation of real findings as they occurred in practice. This method was designed to generate a conclusion that focused on "understanding an experience or an event" (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003, p. 4), and sharing these experiences to impact the respective field.

Participant interviews were semi-structured using open-ended questions in order to engage with the participants in a personal way as the "questions and probes were designed to elicit stories and reflections" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 38). The interview questions were semi-structured, with the participants receiving a copy of the interview guide in advance (see Appendix). In addition to the specific questions that I had prepared to guide the interview, I also asked questions within the conversation as certain themes emerged. Doing so allowed for a natural and "unconstrained" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 257) conversation to emerge with the participants, where we focused

on natural and meaningful responses. Because of this conversational approach (Merriam, 2002), I was able to ease my participants into the process, and take on the role of listener, while they shared their experiences.

Data was collected during one individual face-to-face interview that was planned for 1 hour. One follow-up email was also sent to each participant, with willing participants participating in this process. One willing participant also participated in a follow-up discussion via email, where he confirmed or negated findings. The interview questions were designed to ease the participant into the conversation. As a result, I began by gathering pertinent background and demographic information from the participants that related to their experiences as teachers and administrators. I continued forward with questions focused on the VPs' experiences surrounding their administrative lives, and their perceptions related to school culture. By asking specific questions, I was able to ensure on-topic responses that ideally would facilitate organized analysis and clear findings. Throughout this process, my role was to listen actively, be curious and questioning, and gently guide the direction of the conversation, while the VPs elaborated and shared their stories. This approach ultimately lead to an open dialogue between me and the participants.

Participants

The pseudonyms Rachel, Chandler, and Monica were used to ensure participant confidentiality. Rachel identified as female between 30-40 years of age and had been teaching for 8 years prior to becoming a VP. At the time of our interview, Rachel had newly assumed the VP role, and had less than 6 months of experience. All of her teaching and administrative roles had been in secondary schools. Chandler identified as male

between 50-60 years of age and had been teaching for 31 years prior to becoming a VP. At the time of our interview, Chandler had entered into his 2nd year in the VP role. All his teaching and administrative roles had been in secondary schools. Monica identified as female between 40-50 years of age and had been teaching for 16 years prior to becoming a VP. At the time of our interview, Monica had recently begun her 2nd year in the VP role. All her teaching and administrative roles had been in secondary schools. Chandler was the only VP to have taught at the same school where he was currently working as a VP. Rachel and Chandler worked in the same school board whereas Monica worked in one nearby. All three school boards were located in Southern Ontario.

Site and Participant Selection

This research was conducted in large, urban school boards in Ontario. This site was selected due to convenience, as it was in proximity to me, and close to the personal connections who assisted in attaining the interested participants. The physical interview sites were outside the participants' schools, in mutually convenient spaces, and in rooms that were quiet and private.

Participants were selected by using purposeful sampling, where I intentionally identified the "best sites and participants to learn about the central phenomenon" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 253). There were three participants in total, each being selected because they were: newly appointed to the VP role at a large, urban secondary schools, in Ontario; possessed a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 3 years of experience in the VP position; and willing to and interested in participating in the study. The first three participants who met the criteria were selected, to avoid any bias in selecting participants. Participants that I knew personally were omitted to ensure that my perspectives of their

responses were not influenced by personal knowledge or insights.

Data Collection

Participant selection occurred through a sequential approach. The primary approach was the distribution of an email invitation to participate in the study through the Master of Education (MEd) student email database at Brock University. Through this approach, my email invitation was distributed to current Brock University MEd students by an office administrator, on my behalf. This email invitation targeted students enrolled in the MEd program, so to recruit any current VPs within the program, or to reach any contacts through a means of email forwarding. The email invitation was also distributed by the Department of Continuing Teacher Education (additional qualifications) at Brock University, to target any participants enrolled in the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP), as they also met the participant criteria for this research. The email invitation included a description of the study, the participant criteria, and an overview of the interview structure. Attached to the email was the letter of invitation and the consent form. It also indicated that any recipient of the email could forward the information to additional individuals who they thought might be interested and qualified in participating in the study.

These two primary means of obtaining participants for this study were unsuccessful. Consequently, my secondary means of participant recruitment was facilitated through an email invitation to participate in the study that was circulated by myself, the researcher. I personally distributed this email invitation to my contacts, such as my professors and peers, who may have had connections within this field. These individuals subsequently forwarded the email invitation to any candidates who fit my

criteria. Email recipients were invited to contact the principal student investigator themselves in order to express their interest in participating in the study. In the email invitation, I indicated my request that recipients did not try to contact potential participants through means other than forwarding the original email invitation, and that they did not include any additional remarks.

The participants were notified by email once they were selected, and at the same time they received the interview guide electronically. At this time, they were also briefed about the study procedures, and a mutually agreeable interview time and place was arranged. The signed consent form was either scanned and returned to me via email or returned in person at the time of the interview. The interviews were audio recorded using an electronic microphone program on both my laptop and iPad. I later transcribed the audio recordings verbatim.

Data Analysis

The interview transcript and a summary of the interview themes were returned to the participants electronically. The participants were given the opportunity to review these documents in order to complete a member check. Through this process they could omit, add to, or clarify any aspects of the transcription, and the interview summary. Once the participants returned the documents, they were asked to explain if they felt they provided an accurate representation of what they were asked, as part of the follow-up process. Anything outstanding from the initial interview, or anything additional, was also discussed with the participants, as part of this process.

The interviews were transcribed, and analyzed, to draw connections. My first step in analyzing the data was organizing the interviews by reading, and re-reading the

transcripts, both as individual documents, and comparatively, and then coding them thematically. Coding is described by Creswell (2014) as “the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks…and writing a word representing a category … segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) … into categories, and labeling those categories with a term” (p. 198). Some themes began to generate naturally, even before the formal analysis process, as I reviewed my interview questions and listened to the recorded interviews, as I first began processing the data. As I began to organize the data I created a codebook. I began this process with categories and themes in mind, and I used these themes as a starting point for my analysis, and the foundation of my codebook. In generating my codebook, I understood that in qualitative research, this tool works as a means of organizing data throughout the analysis process, as it is “a table that contains a list of predetermined codes…[that can] evolve and change during a study based on close analysis of the data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 199). As I worked through the data analysis process, I found this the most effective means to interpret and make sense of my interview transcriptions.

This approach influenced my analysis in that it confirmed that I was “looking for things ... [I had] determined in advance” (Freeman, 1998, p. 103). However, in continuing to work with the transcriptions, additional themes developed through a closer reading, and comparison (Merriam, 2002). When I began coding the interviews, I noticed that my initial themes were sometimes too broad, or not as accurate and representative as I had perceived them to be. Creswell (2014) explains that researchers can use “some combination of emerging and predetermined codes” (p. 199) in constructing their codebook and coding their data. As a result, I began with predetermined themes, and then adjusted, based on emerging themes and in-vivo findings. I did this when I added sub-

headings, and when I broke one larger theme into two smaller and more specific ones, to provide greater depth and clarity to my understandings. By blending predetermined themes with emergent ones, I was able to challenge my own pre-conceptions of my findings and gained a deeper sense of my results. I continued to develop my themes in an organic manner, to not limit emergent ones, and to not have a section of outliers that are dismissed and served no purpose to the research. Instead, I identified the recurrent themes that I had originally missed and gave them a "conceptual code" (Holton, 2007, p. 266) through which they could be represented.

I used different strategies to organize my codebook. First, I utilized the NVivo qualitative data analysis program to analyze and organize the data in an interactive way. However, due to the nature of my interviews, and the anecdotal approach that my participants took to sharing their experiences, I did not find it provided a rich analysis of my results. Instead, I found that by using Microsoft Word documents, I was able to separate my data with headings, and was able to copy and paste data from my interview transcripts into different themed documents. I did this sequentially, one interview at a time, and therefore there were changes to my themes as I began to compare data from the different interviews, drawing out similarities and differences. Organizing the data this way gave me a sense of what the participants had to say about the big ideas and themes and gave me a place to put new ideas and make sense of them outside of my preconceived notions. I coded my interviews line-by-line and found that in many cases the participants were speaking to many different issues at a time. As a result, I found it effective to split themes into subheadings, and to make deeper connections with the data.

The last step to my qualitative data analysis was ultimately making an interpretation of the research, to explain the findings or results. My findings were based and influenced

by my theoretical lens, and by my perceptions as a teacher within this field, as I based and compared these findings against my own lived experiences. Therefore, my findings not only speak to the larger field of education by drawing upon existing themes and posing new questions for the future, but they speak to my lived and practical experiences, and influence how I will move forward having gained these new perspectives.

Dependability and Credibility

In maintaining the dependability of this research, I checked for the accuracy of my findings by asking my participants to confirm or negate the results of my study through their viewpoint (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). By having an open conversation about the realities of VP roles, my analysis was clear and direct. Asking participants to give feedback throughout the research process, and performing a member check of the written transcript, increased the dependability and credibility of the research in that it was not misrepresented or interpreted. By being transparent about my motivations, background, and biases, I increased the credibility of this research, as I was honest about my opinions and gained the trust of my readers. I acknowledge that as the researcher I am limited by the participant, and their approach to participating in the study. Positioning myself as an outsider to the hierarchical power structure of educational administration, and as someone disassociated from the environment in which we were discussing, allowed me to gain trust from the participants as I did not hold any position of power, or threat to them or their stories. Because their identities were kept anonymous and any personal identifiers were withheld from the study, I believed that they gave a true representation of their roles and experiences and had little to withhold from the research.

Ensuring dependability for this study meant that it was "consistent across

different researchers and different projects" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). I was meticulous with the transcription and analysis process and ensure that there were no generalizations in my interpretations (Creswell, 2014). I did so by completing my transcriptions myself, and by reviewing the data multiple times. I also coded and re-coded sections of the transcription to ensure that my representations were always accurate (Merriam, 2002). Data was also triangulated through the member check, and the summary of the interview themes, so to draw upon "multiple sources of information" (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 287).

I also utilized my adviser in peer debriefing exercises, so she could also ensure the validity of my work and helped identify and minimize any potential biases. This process occurred regularly, where I met with my adviser and presented her with various pieces of my work in order to gain her insight. Together, we also met with my two committee members so as to also gain from their knowledge, allowing it to shape the research. This process allowed me to identify any biases or preconceptions I may have brought to the research and gave me the opportunity move away from them in generating a stronger piece of work.

Methodological Assumptions

Many of my methodological assumptions were rooted in my thinking as a constructivist researcher. I assumed that I would be able to gain account of participants' lived experiences. As a result, I made assumptions related to how my findings would be generated, and to what degree I relied upon my participants to lead this study. Some of the methodological assumptions that I had upon beginning this project were that all participants would want their voices to be heard and had meaningful experiences to share.

I assumed participants were rich sources of data and would be reflective and thoughtful. I assumed that all participants would be personally connected to their roles as VPs, and that aspects of their identity would be transparent in their practice. Specifically, I assumed that participants would identify aspects of their personal identity as separate from their role identity and would show how these unique attributes influenced their practices. The same assumptions were made in my understanding of school culture, as I assumed that participants would have a developed awareness of this aspect of their school, and the ways they interacted with it in their practice.

Other methodological assumptions were in the ways I identified my own position within the research and explored the impact of my background and personal experiences. This included my assumption about participant willingness to confide in me due to my status as a relatively novice educator and thus, as someone who was unlikely to be judgemental or evaluative. Conversely, I did not consider that my participants may not have trusted me or would be reluctant and withholding in their responses due to our lack of an established personal relationship. Additionally, they may not have felt comfortable speaking to some themes due to the political and professional repercussions that could have resulted if the confidentiality of the research was breached.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical clearance from the Brock University Ethics board. In addition to consultation with my adviser, I was able to understand the possible repercussions extending from my study. Some of the ethical considerations I processed in this study involved my treatment of the participants and the resulting information gathered from them. My treatment of the participants was one that ensured the

confidentiality of their identities, and the censorship of any personal information that they revealed and the use of pseudonyms. The only personal information and identifiers that were collected were participant names and contact information, as well as some demographical information related to their careers as teachers and as VPs. This documentation was always kept in a secure place, which was only accessible by me, and which will be destroyed 1 year after the completion of the study. Similarly, all information I received through the interview was viewed exclusively by me, ensuring utmost confidentiality of the revealed data. Other ethical considerations included providing my participants with the consent form and giving them the option to remove themselves from the study at any point. Similarly, providing a member check as a part of the transcript analysis process allowed for my participants to be confident about the way their stories were being represented. Having a very transparent motivation for this study was also an ethical consideration, so to be approachable to my participants so if they had any hesitations, or questions regarding the study, they could feel comfortable confronting me, knowing that I would be open to speak about their concerns or to answer any questions. My analysis process also reflected ethical considerations in that I conducted my transcription in a secluded room with headphones connecting to the audio playback, so no one else could hear the interview, and further, had password protection on my laptop computer and iPad.

Other ethical considerations included explaining the positive benefits and outcomes that participating in this study could have on my participants, so to show them a means of applying our process to a practical aspect of their work. I considered the benefits of the participation in this study and aimed to give my participants a meaningful

experience with continued results, after the duration of the study. I considered this an ethical consideration, because it shows that there are benefits outside of the actual results that my study produces. Some of the outlined benefits that I considered included using this experience to continue a process of self-reflection. Reflecting on this experience as a means to grow professionally and to contribute to one's professional development initiatives was another potential incentive I considered for my participants. Sharing this experience by branching this process to other members of the administrative team could also yield benefits for the larger school and professional learning community, as all administrators could work together to understand their roles and grow towards similar goals in their futures. On a larger scale, the benefits of participation in this study could result in potential impacts in VP preparatory programs and policies, where those working in higher positions within the field of education could consider changes towards alternate ways of supporting and preparing administrators, so to ensure a better transition once they obtain new roles.

Some negative ethical impacts that were considered to have minimal risks involved loss of privacy, where outsiders to this study might see the participants as sharing private stories from the field. I considered this as a factor due to the nature of the interviews focusing on the VP as they spoke about their school community, so others who were aware of this participation might not comply. To minimize this risk, I made the decision to conduct the interview at a neutral location away from the participants' schools, so to avoid any onlookers who may misinterpret this experience negatively and see my participant's as confiding in an outsider. This risk was also managed by being transparent about the nature and motivations of my research. Other negative

repercussions that were considered included any negative thoughts or emotions generated by the conversation that would lead to the administrator seeking additional help to overcome these feelings in the future. I managed this risk by informing the participants of their option to decline answering any questions that they were uncomfortable with during the interview, and to only elaborate to the extent of their comfort when responding. Additionally, they were given the opportunity for a member check to verify and modify any of the information given in the interview and were able to withdraw from the study at any time, without any repercussions. Participants might have also felt obligated to participate in this research because I was recruiting through different means of distribution, and therefore they may have received the email invitation from someone in power, or from a friend or colleague, causing them to feel obligated to participate in order to maintain a relationship. This risk was managed by ensuring that when the email invitation was distributed, it circulated through the appropriate channels, so that when participants showed interest, their involvement was completely voluntary. I also managed this by ensuring that in my email invitation, I asked that my contacts solely forwarded the email to those who they think might be interested, instructing that they refrain from additional comments, or use other means to contact the participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a review of the research methodology and research design. It introduced participant pseudonyms and provided demographic information pertinent to the three selected participants and to the location of this research. The chapter discussed the research site and the participant selection, in addition to the data collection processes

and analyses. It also reviewed the dependability and the credibility of this study, methodological assumptions, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This qualitative study explored the process of administrative identity formation from the perspective of three newly appointed secondary school VPs. The study investigated the transition from teaching roles to VP roles, and consequently inquired into the interaction between newly appointed VPs and their school's culture. The four research questions that guided the research were:

1. What is the process of moving from a teaching role like for three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals who work in large, urban, school boards in Ontario?
2. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals describe their process of forming an administrative identity?
3. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals perceive that their identities influence their school cultures?
4. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals perceive that their identities are influenced by their school cultures?

Three newly appointed VPs participated in a one-on-one interview, where these questions were explored in detail. The pseudonyms Rachel, Chandler, and Monica were used to ensure participant confidentiality. The themes that emerged through this process served as the basis through which this chapter was organized. An understanding of the VP role transition, duties assigned to the VP, insider perceptions of VP experiences, VP identity and lived experiences, relationships and school culture, will be revealed.

VP Role Transition

VP role transition was developed throughout this section through an exploration of the motivations for becoming a VP, the formal preparation processes involved in the

transition to the VP role, and the mentorship opportunities available to new VPs. The VP role was explored in the literature to reveal obscure and undefined terms of duties and responsibilities. Consequently, the VP role "has been described as the invisible role, the neglected role" (Glanz et al., 1995, as cited in Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 746). The role lived and experienced by the VPs and shared through their perspective was unique to this study. Their perceptions, as they navigated this new role, had been previously missing in the literature, and was what I had set out to investigate. Their perceptions, although unable to quantify or repeat, speak to real, lived stories that are authentic to their experiences. Consequently, in exploring the lived roles of these three individuals, an authentic understanding of their work was understood. Role transition was discussed with reference to the motivations that led to the VP role, the steps taken in preparation for this role acquisition, and the process in making this change.

Motivations to Become a VP

Participants pursued administrative roles for diverse reasons, and thus, had different goals that they wanted to fulfil. As individuals, participants were motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as they had both personal and collective benefits in mind. As a result, their work seemed to impact their lives at home, and affected their experiences at work. Each participant expressed a unique inner desire to move into this role, all driven by reasons that were specific to their experiences in education. Participants also expressed hesitations and fears associated with this role transition and explained how they overcame these worries or were managing them.

Rachel's decision to pursue administration was based on her dissatisfaction in her teaching role. She perceived that she was not utilizing her skills to the best of her abilities and believed that she could be contributing more in this field in the context of her

advanced level of education. Further, she believed that her future in education was more secure in an administrative role, as she began to have concerns with the way the teaching profession was changing. She explained that:

> I didn't like the classroom … I felt like I was babysitting. And the classroom, from what I'm told, it keeps changing really quickly, so I just didn't feel safe. I really just want to do administrative work, but I want to keep my job in education—my seniority, and my place, because I've earned it. So how can I do that? And to me, this seemed like the best way to do that.

Chandler's motivations for transitioning to this VP role were less defined, and came about hesitantly, as a means to try something different in the last few years of his career before retirement. Chandler explained that in his teaching roles, he was "always looking for something different to do." Although he prepared for this transition over a series of years, he was reluctant to pursue the role because of presumed negative implications on his personal life. He explored many different career paths within the field of education and took on various roles and projects in his schools, and eventually his questions of, "why not try to do something different?" lead him to pursue administration.

Monica had a similar discernment process where she prepared for this role transition over a period of time yet remained in her teaching role because of her love of teaching. Consequently, her motivation to finally transition to administration came from a desire to have more influence and assuming a position where she could have the title and authority to do more. Although always deeply involved in the school, she feared the busyness of the VP role and how that might hinder her influence on students. Regardless

of these hesitations, Monica explained that her pursuit of administration "was always a goal."

Other people were also involved in motivating participants to consider this new role, such as mentors and colleagues. Rachel knew she wanted to move into an administrative role when she found herself observing another VP. She explained, "I would just watch her, and I was just like well if she can do it, I can do it … we have a similar personality, we handle things the same way. … I was like yeah I think I can do that." Similarly, Chandler stated, "I spoke to other people who were doing it, I worked really closely with a VP … I saw what she did, I quite respected her." For Monica, it was one of her students who told her: "you basically run this school as it is, without a title, so you should start moving in that direction." She credited him in that, "this talk from the student [is what] started getting me to think about it." Prior to that experience, her passion for teaching was her main priority, and any previous ideas of becoming an administrator "went way out the window."

Formal Preparation

All participants had formal preparation for administrative roles, in the form of the Principal's Qualification additional qualification courses. Additionally, some participants spoke to personal preparation through discernment and reflection. Chandler found himself preparing for this role over many years. He explained that after he took the Principal's Part One additional qualification course that he "waited another 8 years … to do the next one, part two. So, there was a gap there where I was wondering whether I would go into administration." Prior to her appointment to this role, Monica found that "there was a lot of self-reflection … the process is very slow." She explained how in her

situation, even when she was officially qualified to take a VP role, she had not been given a vacant position until the last minute. As a result, she admitted how she "wasn't prepared to go into the role…as in the mindset of going into the role, because my mindset was teaching." She described this experience as "baptism by fire," explaining that due to the circumstances, she found that, "you just go in, and you do it, and if you screw up, oh well…keep going, you don't have time to think." Consequently, she reflected that "there wasn't much of a transition, because it was just go."

Mentorship

Monica outlined a unique opportunity provided by her school board, where she could experience the role before choosing to pursue this position definitively, which allowed her to try it before fully committing. She described this "mentoring program" in detail, explaining how in the first session "they would have current principals and VPs in the roles talking to potential candidates about what to expect when they got into the role … it was supposed to help for our discernment." In the second session, there were further opportunities to understand "more in depth about day-to-day … and so it was different scenarios where … [we would] play principal." This opportunity countered Rachel and Chandler's experiences, where they felt underprepared for some of their responsibilities. Chandler explained that:

> It takes you 3 or 4 years to really understand everything that you need to do in the role, and there's very little training for it, [and] it's not something that you would normally see on the day-to-day as a teacher, and then you're suddenly exposed to this whole world.

Similarly, Monica felt that in her experience, "I would say it takes you a full year,

because every part of the school year it's something different that is happening." Chandler showed the immense layers of roles of responsibilities that VPs manage daily, when he explained that you "wouldn't be aware of this as a teacher, and so, you move into the role and suddenly you have to learn all this." Consequently, he perceived that the training and preparation that he received in his role transition was "just not efficient." Monica similarly voiced this, saying:

> I don't know if there's anything that I didn't know about being a VP [as a teacher], I think it was more the experience of it … they describe things to you and everything was ideal case … that's what it's supposed to be like every day. And you get there and you're like, this is nothing like I was told. You know what you have to do, you know when you get there what it's supposed to be, but you don't have that opportunity to do a practicum and stay in the role … it would be more beneficial to have a day in the life of a VP.

Acknowledging the different types of preparation practices in other school boards, Monica explained how her experience was "a great discernment process … because, there are a lot of people who went through and were like yeah, this isn't for me … where in other boards they didn't have any of that."

Until recently, this role transition was irreversible within school boards in Ontario, with Monica explaining that "contractually, the collective agreements previously, you weren't able to go back [to a teaching role]." Consequently, if a newly appointed VP was not satisfied in their new role, they often took an early retirement, or suffered in the role. Monica witnessed this in her experience that "It [the collective agreement] just changed … I know people that were in the [VP] role, that tried to move

back, and were told 'nope, you've made your decision'." Overturning this rule provides newly appointed VPs the opportunity to go back to the classroom within a certain period of time. However, this decision to return to teaching has led to unspoken "fallout from the board" (Rachel), of varying repercussions, as revealed by colleagues who have opted to do so.

Duties Assigned to the VP

Understanding the daily work that VPs are responsible for is an integral part of showing how and when they interact with their schools. None of the participants were assigned a teaching role in addition to their administrative responsibilities. Rachel explained however that there were still instances where she provided emergency teaching coverage, "If someone is away and … we don't have someone to cover their class, you can still go in, you're still expected to go in and cover for half an hour or whatever." Chandler explained that in cases where VPs had a teaching role, that he found it "problematic … [as] they're finding the VP role draws most of their time and they can't put the energy and time that they need into teaching."

An understanding of the VPs' duties was detailed through an explanation of the VP portfolio, and their responsibilities pertaining to student discipline and school safety. An exploration of how they managed their daily responsibilities in the midst of various challenges was also revealed. How VPs resolved these challenges, and the tasks and responsibilities which they considered rewarding were also addressed in this section.

VP Portfolio

Each participant spoke to their unique portfolio, which detailed their set of specific responsibilities. In larger administrative teams, made of up of three or more

administrators, these roles were divided evenly, with smaller teams of two being responsible for the same set of tasks. The type of work assigned often determined how manageable these roles became. Monica explained that due to her large administrative team, they were able to divide the tasks so that they each "have busier times … so we know when to not talk to each other, or to take on a little bit more … and they've purposely set it up that way so we're not all busy at the same time." However, in some cases, like in Monica's experience of being a new VP in a pre-established administrative team of four, she found that "[she] didn't get to choose [her tasks]," as her appointment came so close to the start of the school year. Having to prepare for these responsibilities in advance, "the bulkier stuff ended up going to the other three VPs … [with her tasks] not being a huge proponent when it comes to moving education forward in the school." "Because I was a last-minute addition, [the other VPs] didn't know who was coming in [to the new role]." Consequently, they assigned the new VP tasks which were less demanding and were a lower priority at the beginning of the school year, such as "health and safety, lockers … pastoral planning, parent council, awards, graduation, [and assisting colleagues with] EQAO and OSSLT."

Chandler spoke to the issue of "staffing properly," outlining that "bigger schools need more VPs … [and that the school board is] really cutting corners." In Monica's situation, staffing also played a part in how portfolio tasks were divided, with her explaining that her administrative partners "weren't even sure if they were gonna get a fourth [VP], because the number of VPs in the school depends on the number of students in the school." Because "they weren't sure if they were gonna hit the number [of students] at the time," her administrative partners divided tasks as if they were going to

share them amongst three VPs, not four. Consequently, when she was appointed to her position, most of the large tasks had already been accounted for. Monica recognized how challenging dividing tasks could be, where even at "smaller schools, yeah, they have fewer students, but that's the same portfolio amongst two people and so, you kind of see why … you never saw the VP because they were always under the gun."

In addition to the portfolio of tasks, participants spoke to being responsible for all issues relating to an "alpha" of students. Administrators divide the student body by surnames and are responsible for all issues related to the students who fall in these categories. Based upon numbers, an administrative team of two VPs could potentially split the student body from A-M and N-Z. Administrators would then be primarily responsible for that bulk of students. Monica explained how the student body is divided in that, "we all have an alpha … we split the alpha evenly, so we deal with our own alpha kids." Rachel explained that when it comes to this particular duty:

> We split the alpha of the students. So [her co-VP] is [alpha], and I handle all the kids [alpha]. But if I'm out or busy, he's not gonna be like "oh sorry your name is [alpha] I can't deal with you"; he'll take it.

Monica reiterated this flexibility in her administrative team's approach to the management of students, explaining that even though each VP was responsible for a section of students "there are some teams where it's well 'I only deal with f to l,' but to me, it doesn't matter if my colleague is away," because as VPs they have agreed to step in and help as issues arise. To navigate this overlap, Rachel outlined the policy used within her administrative team where:

> If I deal with one of [my co-VPs] kids, I write a note, we document everything,

> and then I give it to him, and then he puts it in their file. I'll let him know the situation, and sometimes you call [the student] down and follow-up, and sometimes you're like "no I dealt with it it's fine." But, yeah there is overlap, even in the portfolios.

Monica confirmed this approach in that "as much as we say you belong to [one VP], if I'm away, my colleagues will take care of it for me, they don't leave me the pile for when I get back."

Discipline and Safety

Within this specific task of managing students, other overlapping responsibilities emerged. Discipline was a primary responsibility as identified by participants. Chandler explained:

> There's a lot of discipline issues that come to our attention. Whether it be conflicts between students or, whether it be classroom behaviour … it is just doing a lot of preventative work, and then dealing with situations and incidents that arise.

Monica found herself in a similar situation, constantly surrounded by issues related to student discipline, and explained that despite the alpha division, she still utilized her administrative team to mediate these conflicts. She explained that there were a "couple of the students who don't agree with my way of how I deal with them, and so, I say to them …'you want to deal with somebody else?'" Having to "deal with contentious issues," Monica explained that she was able to work with her co-administrators at these times, giving her alpha of students the option, so if, "you don't like me, there's Mr., go right ahead." Using this approach, she found that students could see that these individual VPs

handled discipline issues similarly, which lead them to "realize that we're not so different than the other, we're all the same."

Another key role participants were responsible for was safety. This was identified both in the literal sense (e.g., monitoring hallways) and being on the frontlines of any safety issues such as when Rachel ensured that, "everyone's in their class, they're not loitering … [we're] watching the cameras." Safety concerns also existed in the sense of school functionality, specifically as related to policy, and liability. Monica described her increased sense of liability as an administrator when she explained that, "you hear about it, you know about it, but when you start getting into the role … you realize how much more liable you really are." She further explained that, "now that I'm at this end in this lens … now I know better … there's a lot more legalese that takes place now." This responsibility for student safety also extended to their well-being outside of the school building, with Monica explaining her attachment to students after hours, indicating that, "if I have a kid weighing on my mind, I'm watching the news, I'm going please tell me nothing's happened, and so I'm making sure [they're ok]." She reinforced this concern with the example that, "we had heard there had been a car accident with young people, and the automatic reaction is 'are those our students'?" In summary, as an administrator Monica felt that, "you're responsible for them [students], and you can't detach it."

In some cases, the connection between discipline and safety was also made, such as in Rachel's experience where she found she was "disciplining to ensure the safety of the school." Chandler had a similar outlook when he rationalized his strict attitude, explaining:

> I'm there to maintain a safe school environment … and whatever anybody does in

that context or in that environment to compromise the safety of the school, I need to address it with them. So, that's how I learn to be comfortable in the role, rather than seeing it so much as control, I say no it's about school safety, it's about making this a safe place for everyone.

Challenges of Daily Responsibilities

Since the VP's work is often dictated by the principal, participant experiences were different. For example, Chandler explained that "we split the duties and the responsibilities … but the work that we're assigned, tends to absorb huge amounts of our time." Furthermore, Monica revealed that "I think what happens on a day-to-day basis is unpredictable … I don't know if there's anything that can be done to make it more manageable, because you never know what's coming next." She explained, "In the day-to-day, there's nothing to manage it. It's like, you'll know from the very first moment when somebody comes to your door if it's gonna be a good day, or if it's gonna be shot to hell."

Chandler also described the abundance of tasks under his portfolio that would be better suited to a different kind of manager such as "a financial manager, or a school enrollment officer." Instead of finding people who are suitable for these types of tasks, he found that the central office of decision makers continued to "download it on top of a VP who already has enough to do." Because these tasks also required some depth of knowledge in other areas, such as in data management, budgeting and so forth, Chandler felt schools would "be better off having somebody in that role that does it for 15 or 20 years and is really good at it … and does a really good job." Chandler felt that if the VP role remained overburdened, that this would have repercussions. He believed "the

students will suffer, and your staff will feel it … you can't keep downloading onto the VP role."

Participants had many experiences which limited them in their daily work. Conflicting goals and expectations between participants and their colleagues, in addition to differing practices and ways of doing things, all while adjusting to new roles and responsibilities, was an added challenge. Rachel experienced this when she was required to stay at school late into the evening, even after she had completed her duties. This was due to the unspoken rule within her administrative team, that all administrators must enter and leave the building together. Instead of delegating tasks or working together to finish the work, all the administrators worked independently, as it appeared they were trying to prove themselves. Therefore, they "feel like [they] need to do it all," because they were, "responsible, it's in her hands, I need to make sure it's done 100% effectively, this is my name" (Rachel).

Regardless of the purpose, the task of "paperwork" was reoccurring in participants' daily experiences. Rachel explained that in every daily scenario, there was accompanying paperwork. For instance, "the kids that are skipping school, did someone contact them, and do we have all the paperwork … someone has chicken pox, did we do all the paperwork. Someone got a concussion in gym; did we do all the paperwork." Similarly, Chandler expressed, "I think there has been more and more…paperwork, administrative paperwork, forms … dotting the I's and crossing the T's. All this accountability stuff that we've done for the ministry." Lastly, Monica echoed that, "you can get very drowned by and inundated by the amount of paperwork and reports and everything else that you need to do," and that upon reflection on why she wanted to

pursue a role in administration she acknowledged that "me getting into the role is not so I can make up a bunch of papers and reports, it was to help kids."

Mastering the role, prioritizing work, and meeting deadlines were described as additional tasks inherent to the VP role, with Monica explaining, "definitely I want to master this, before I move on to whatever else comes next." Chandler cited "pressures to respond to situations quickly," with Monica, "hoping to God I don't screw this up … [because] it was fast and furious … because I didn't have time to think and overthink things and overanalyze what I was doing." Managing multiple situations proved challenging. Chandler explained how larger issues absorbed his attention, whereas "the smaller stuff which is important too," goes unprioritized. He explained how, "you [could] have a note on your desk and a week goes by and you still haven't addressed it because you're busy dealing with this other major issue." Monica also expressed the abundance of tasks in her daily work, in her example that "there's nothing that you can do, as well organized as you can be, every day I've got a checklist. I won't get through any of my checklist in one week, it's the nature of the beast." In some cases, this led to Chandler making compromises, where he was "not putting as much into [smaller tasks] as I would like," and instead he explained that, "I'm just maybe going through the motions a little bit … it's becoming more of a rubber stamp sort of thing."

Participants used many strategies to navigate these negative and challenging situations. Rachel explained that when faced with conflict, or when unable to adjust to the circumstances of her role within her specific school, she remembered that "as a VP you're not gonna be at the same school. I think the transition is 3 to 5 years ... [so it's important] to remind yourself you're not here forever." Another strategy she mentioned

was picking her battles, and in some cases even "avoiding them … [because] in my mind this is a really negative situation and I'm just gonna stay away from that." This seemed to be the case when navigating issues amongst staff, and between staff and administrators. Rachel explained how with some staff the attitude towards her as an administrator was very "cutthroat" where:

> I'm not even sure how to verbally handle that sort of argument … I'm sure you've heard the term like courageous conversations floating around … so I haven't figured out how to have those conversations yet, so I haven't. I'm still learning so for now I've just been avoiding them.

Alternately, Monica explained how she "navigate[d] [negative experiences] with humour," and sought growth and insight from every situation because, "it helps me grow as a person…all it makes me do is reflect on how things went…[and] what can I do differently the next time." Monica also suggested that "you need to be able to say, I need five minutes, and they can wait ... nothing's a fire, unless the buildings on fire."

Rewarding Tasks and Experiences

A common positive experience that resonated amongst the participants was their ability to foster relationships with students, and their success in establishing a presence in their school community. Each participant spoke to the fear of becoming detached from student life and therefore having positive relationships with students was a "small accomplishment … that will eventually lead to bigger things" (Rachel). Similarly, being an active part in students' successes was echoed by all participants, whether it was walking alongside them while they overcame a difficult experience or being a support system throughout personal troubles.

Another accomplishment participants mentioned was their ability to learn their new tasks and roles, and to perform them efficiently, and with some confidence. Due to the extent of the new responsibilities that they inherited in their role transition, this accomplishment served to reward participants intrinsically, verifying for themselves that they could undertake this new role. Contributing to the cohesion or group mentality of the school culture was also voiced, with them celebrating that "people working together for a common goal…that's a positive."

Insider Perceptions of VP Experiences

Within the field of education, there are many unspoken perceptions of the VP role that are maintained over time by insiders in administrative roles. Unlike roles and responsibilities of the VP which are outlined and mandated by various stakeholders, insider perceptions are the unique findings and unspoken ways of being. These perceptions revealed some of the challenges that participants experienced in the VP role. The following findings are a collection of the qualities and characteristics of VPs as observed and noted by the participants.

The VP Role is Temporary

One perception that was noted by all participants was that the VP role is a stepping-stone to becoming a principal. For example, Rachel observed, "people keep saying to me constantly is like oh this is a very long time to spend in this career. But it's like, there's lots of people who have just been a VP and have retired." Chandler described why this role is perceived as temporary in that, "the principal's role is seen as sort of a step away from all that busyness of being a VP, that's why you wouldn't want to stay as a VP." However, he noted "that's not very effective, if you're training your VPs to get out

of the role as fast as they can because there's too much in it and move into the principal role where they can relax." When asked about the term "career VP," Rachel explained that:

> The expectation that they tell everyone is, like, when I talk to my principal, and my principal talks to me about something or someone else they'll be like: oh you need to learn this so that when one day you're a principal … [and] I have no intention of being a principal.

Rachel described her reasons for not wanting to pursue the principalship in the future when she said, "one, there is too many politics … two, the time, and three, I don't want to be responsible for everything." This sentiment of not wanting to transition into the principal role was also voiced by Chandler, who stated he was not interested in the role. Chandler justified this decision because of the additional transition it would require him to endure, at a point in his career where he could retire instead. He explained how:

> To move into the principal role, it would be something I wouldn't wanna just do for a year or two, but something that I would have to devote another I would say 3, 4, 5 years to. To really get to know the role well and do it justice … I really could retire—I've been in long enough.

Work–Life Balance

Another insider perception of this role was that it was best suited for individuals with "empty nest syndrome" (Rachel), or those with a similar type of lifestyle, where they are closer to the end of their teaching careers. Because of the weight of this role, in the sense of the time commitment and added responsibilities, the transition was better

experienced by older individuals, and those who have less family commitments. Monica confirmed this perception when she said:

> It was easy for me [to take this role] because I only had to worry about myself. I'm not married, I have no kids. Friends of mine who have those added aspects to their life, that was a much harder decision for them to make because … it does mean a lot of late nights where you're not seeing your kids.

Chandler observed, "I'm busier, and I wouldn't have done this earlier in my career because … for my own family life and personal life it would not have worked out well to do this any sooner." Rachel also found that traditionally "most people that are principals, their kids are older, they don't have anything else, no one's at home, there's no pressure to go home and make dinner."

Furthermore, Chandler described administrators he knew who had young families, and how they themselves said they "got into the role too early … [and] they're overwhelmed, and then they're not able to put up the time that they need to for the job." Rachel stated that when asked by novice teachers about how they might adjust to the VP role, she explained, "I'm not gonna lie to anybody … [if] they have young kids and they want to [make this transition to the VP role] … I'm just like no you couldn't do it." Monica further explained the pressure to "always lend myself to do stuff." Monica perceived this when she explained that even before considering candidates for administrative roles, "you need to have done a gambit of things," which show your time commitment, and involvement in the school as a teacher. In requiring this from potential administrative candidates, her experience as a teacher "meant there was a lot less that I

had to [learn], because I was doing that continuously throughout my career … I was doing a lot of leadership type of stuff [as a teacher].”

Power, Gender, and Other Observations

Administrative insiders also believed that individuals who sought these roles in administration were motivated by power and authority. Chandler felt this way when he said, “I think people actually go into it because they like to control things … it ends up being a place that attracts people who are interested in having power … it does attract that type.” Rachel similarly stated that in seeking advancement to the VP role, “you shouldn’t have to be tapped [on the shoulder], if you’re a natural born leader.”

The topic of gender also appeared in insider conversations, with Rachel explaining that in her experience she saw newly appointed male VPs who challenged the boundaries and restrictions of their roles with more success, leaving her to “feel like they have more power to do it than I do.” She explained this through the example of needing to take time of off work to care for a sick child. In her experience, when male VPs do this they are empowered, whereas when female VPs are in similar situations, they are made to feel like they are VPs first and mothers second. She expressed that “when I do it, it’s like looked down upon, when they do it, it’s like they’re male and they get away with it.”

Rachel also expressed that as a woman in the administrative field there was pressure of having “to establish a name for [yourself].” Alternately, this traditional notion of gender within this field seems to be changing, with young, female teachers making the transition to the VP role, meaning that “you’re starting to see administrators pregnant” (Rachel). Consequently, Rachel anticipated changes to the traditional role and its expectations, believing that “as more people in that situation [of pregnancy/young

families] need that stipulation," of a more balanced work-home life, the standards will have to change. This will result in administrators no longer needing to justify their circumstances, in order to prevent their professional lives from overflowing into their personal ones.

Participants also believed that individuals seeking VP positions should have a specific set of skills and experiences, to better prepare themselves for associated responsibilities. Rachel explained that the current expectations were for VPs to be enrolled in a Master's program, but there were no stipulations regarding this degree. She expressed that "I think it needs to be a qualification that you need to have a thesis." Rachel explained how writing a thesis in completion of a Master's degree was essential to the VP role in that without it:

> You don't have a full appreciation of business … and academia when you're holding a position and you only started a Master's degree to get a position ... or if you did coursework … you still don't have that appreciation for policy, and I think right now the drive for principals is to follow the policy, so to see VPs with no background in it, I think it can be done better.

Rachel connected higher education in the form of a Master's degree thesis, with efficiency as a VP. She stated that:

> Yes, being a people person is a very large part of [the VP role]. But if you did the Master's thesis, you have the ability to manage the paper and the people. If you did the course work you have the ability to manage the people, you cannot manage the paperwork.

She explained that "right now with admin, there's a huge drive [with] the Ministry of

Education on paperwork, on legalities, on new policies," and for those VPs who did not complete a Master's thesis, "they can't handle the multitasking cuz they've never had to do it." Some new VPs come from a background whereas teachers they have "taught that [same] class for 20 years … [have begun a] coursework Master's online, and now are running a building, and leaving at 6:30pm having not eaten all day. Does that sound effective to you?" Having not been in school for many years, she explained that these VPs "have no idea how to keep up with email, and board call, and the legislation … but you're used to all that stuff when you do a Master's thesis. And you have to do it in a timely manner."

Regardless of the perceived benefits between a Master's thesis and effectiveness in the VP role, Rachel felt that there would never be changes to these requirements. Instead she expressed that, "I think they don't wanna do that, cuz they're worried that people will never want to become principals then cuz they're gonna be like well screw that I'm not gonna do my Master's thesis." From her perspective, "those are the people who should be running institutions, the people who have an appreciation for, that understand, or will earn an appreciation for policy or academia. [Without that] I don't see how you can run a school."

VP Identity and Lived Experiences

VP identity was explored in context of participants' personal and professional lives, to show an understanding of how participants established their VP identity, how administrative identity impacted their VP experiences, and in which ways their personal identities interacted with their roles. There was a focus on the perceived changes in

personal identity because of this role transition, in order to understand the different personal and professional repercussions related to this change in roles.

Establishing VP Identity

Through these lived experiences, establishing VP identity seemed both intentional and spontaneous, as participants had to assert themselves in some cases, while in others, it was thrust upon them. In an effort to establish their identity as VPs instead of teachers, all participants stated they wished to be a VP in a school other than the ones they had taught in. Monica disclosed that from the school board level, "our board, they make a point of not doing that just because it makes it difficult." This is further described by Rachel when she said:

> I think if you teach where you become a VP then in most cases, unless you were a department head that was respected at the high school level you're not, the staff they won't listen to you because in their mind … you were just a teacher a couple months ago.

However, in taking on a new role in an environment where they were not known, participants found that they were often compared to their predecessors. Rachel acknowledged that, "I'm also filling the shoes of the lady that got promoted to principal, so she knew everything there was, she was an expert VP, hello—first year VP. There's no way in hell I'm going to be an expert." This also occurred when Monica took on her VP role, not having worked at that school, or with any of the other administrators previously, yet she was still aware that "the team at that particular school was strong to begin with … that's why I knew I had big shoes to fill." Monica similarly described challenges when trying to define herself, explaining that as a new administrator who:

> Was placed literally about a week before school had started … [it became] the running joke [that] well five days ago when I was where you are sitting … I was over there [with the teachers and], now I'm on this side and I have to tell you [what to do].

In Chandler's case, "when I was offered the VP position, it was at this school where I first started teaching … I actually taught at this school for about twenty-one years." To define himself as an administrator, and to be recognized in this new way by his former colleagues, Chandler explained how, "maybe I wore a tie a little more often." In addition, he spoke to taking specific actions which included:

> Work[ing] very closely with my partner VP and establish[ing] a strong relationship between the two of us, and between the principal. Because it's important I think to work as a team and to be seen as a team … and not as if a teacher could come to me and ask me for some special favour or something because they had known me before in this other role, and I very much tried to downplay that, and not fall into that.

Administrative Identity

Upon becoming VPs, participants felt that their names were directly attached to their roles and served to label them. Rachel noticed how "it's like everybody knows your name because you are … 'oh, that's the VP at [school name]' … right?" Monica reinforced this idea when she commented that "it's hard to take the hat off," referencing her struggle with separating her personal and professional life and signifying the grandeur of the administrative identity that was placed upon her. She explained this blurring of her personal and professional identity when she provided the example of, "I have a second

cousin that goes to the school that I'm at. So even at a family wedding, it's like that's my VP. No. I'm still your cousin. Let's get this straight."

Connections. Similarly, VP administrative identity was connected to relationships, and their status could change depending on who they knew and had worked with in the past. These relationships carried certain leverages for VPs, especially for those who were newly appointed, as they intertwined with the identities of those that they were linked to. Rachel described this when she talked about establishing a name for herself in the administrative community through networking, and how she had to make sure "that people know who you are and they kind of have an idea of your work ethic."

Role taking. Establishing an administrative identity also seemed to depend on the type of work participants wanted to accomplish in their VP roles. Participants cited the "drill-sergeant" persona, for example, as a professional identity which most effectively ensured their productivity and resulted in them attaining their goals. This was evident in Chandler's experience, where he explained that "my tendency as a teacher … was to be very personable with students … and connect with them … and the role of the VP is very much more about control." Further, he found that "I'm constantly having to say, well these are the rules." As a result, Chandler found that being a VP "means having to appear very stern … administration is an act, you're an actor … there is a certain face that you have to put forward," and in order to put those sentiments into action, you sometimes had to, "crack the whip." Consequently, their daily work also required that they had "thick enough skin" (Chandler), so that regardless of the challenges or difficulties they faced they would "not going to dwell on it too much" (Chandler). Monica reiterated this point in her comparison to her attitude as a teacher, where she was always "a very straight

shooter … [and] very frank … and straightforward.” As a VP she noticed, “you develop more of a thicker skin, you have to, because you’re always under scrutiny. By the parents, by the kids, by your staff.” Her actions were necessary to preserve her well-being in the role, because it was in “making sure you develop[ed] that thick skin … [that] it doesn’t get under you and rattle you right away.”

Due to the discretion of the supervising principal, VPs also found that they engaged in role taking, where they were encouraged to, “preserve and perpetuate the dominant professional and organizational status quo” (p. 22). In these situations, VPs were “expected to be loyal to the principal and as such must modify their perspectives, ethics and morality to conform to the dominant values of the school administration…to build administrative team trust” (Rintoul & Goulais, 2010, p. 747). As a result, they were “constrained by their principal’s leadership style and top-down approaches … [as they] receive clear signals that they must buy into the system, learn the rules, and emulate their administrative superiors in order to get ahead” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 23).

Merging into an administrative team is rarely conflict-free, with VPs expressing that “there were power imbalances between new and more senior team members, who sometimes attempted to silence newcomers’ voices and undermine their decisions” (Armstrong, 2015, p. 117). This is especially true for newly appointed VPs as they are outsiders emerging and challenging the existing structure (Karpinski, 2008), while being faced with the possibility of limited success in these roles if they “transgress the cultural norms of administration” (p. 24).

Reputation. Participants identified impacts to their professional identity which occurred spontaneously as an unspoken result of their actions, ultimately impacting

notions surrounding their reputation. Rachel voiced her fears regarding the repercussions from her actions, when she questioned, “What about my reputation? People will say I’m bitchy or whatever, they’ll talk about me.” In directing this outcome, she spoke to the importance of being consistent, so that it was known that “she sets rules and has deadlines, and she follows them ... [acknowledging that] the three or four [teachers] that always whine, well you’ll never win them over so who cares about that.” By being consistent, she explained “that’s how you’re gonna establish reputation for yourself.”

Impact on Administrative Life

Changes to administrative life were minimally noted. Participant reflections on professional life were seldom as they lacked substantial VP experience that they could draw upon in this area. A majority of their professional life had been spent in the teaching profession, so they have yet to notice any changes to their new status as VPs.

Accountability. In some cases, participants changed professionally in the ways they lived and carried themselves. For Rachel and Monica, this resulted in changes in the ways they acted in and outside of their workplace, as they felt increasingly accountable, and a responsibility to represent themselves appropriately at all times. In this role, they felt as though they “represent the school” (Rachel). This was equally true in the ways Rachel described her interactions with teaching staff, where she recognized that “you’re in an administrator role, so watch what you say,” as she perceived her opinions now carried more weight and value then when she was a teacher. Monica voiced this opinion as well, explaining:

> You know when you start off in teacher’s college and they’re telling you you’re a teacher all the time 24–7 a day—as a VP even more so. You can be goofy as a teacher; people look at you funny when you start becoming goofy as a VP.

Visibility. Professional life also changed for participants as they now recognized the impact of their presence throughout the school and used this visibility to regulate their responsibilities. Chandler voiced that “we need to be visible, we need to be seen in the hallways, the cafeteria,” with Rachel explaining how she ensured to, “walk through the halls, make sure nothing’s going on.” This was contrasted with Rachel’s view of her presence as a teacher where she explained how “you can come in and hide in your classroom.” Monica reiterated the increased presence of her role due to the added responsibility, when she explained her “broader view … the big idea of the school … that’s where I see myself differently,” because now she influenced more than just those students in her classroom and was, “not just looking at my curriculum, my kids … it’s a whole global approach … the blinders are a little bit wider now.”

Commitment. The weight of their professional life in terms of their responsibilities was also considered in relation to effectiveness. Chandler explained his perception about two types of VPs, those who he “knew were doing a good job … [and saw] how much time they were putting in, and what was involved,” and then those who, “were not putting in that much time … [and] they weren’t being as effective as they need to be.” However, in maintaining effectiveness in this role over time, Chandler revealed that, “I think part of that is just survival. You do what you can, and you can’t burn out.” Regardless, their roles and responsibilities were not always desirable, leaving Chandler to admit that “it’s not that I don’t like going in to work, but there are days where you think ‘oh jeeze I dread having to monitor the cafeteria again’.”

Boundaries. Professional life was also impacted in the types of interactions that participants felt comfortable partaking in, with Chandler explaining that:

> In the past … teachers might go out … maybe go out for a drink … I've had several invitations like that, and I don't go, because, it just would be awkward. There might be a certain context where we would, but I would be much more careful about that.

Monica also noted a change in her professional interactions, explaining that her colleagues "don't know if I'm an enemy, if I'm a friend, they don't know if they can joke around, or take me seriously."

Personal Identity

Changes to personal identity were not noticed by participants. Although they felt a change in how others perceived them, and ultimately treated them, they had limited insight into whether they felt different as a result of this role transition.

Hard on soul. Chandler observed how "being in this role, that it can be … hard on the soul," and was concerned he had, "become more cynical." He further explained how the nature of this role impaired his personal enjoyment and well-being in a school setting, where he reflected on how:

> There's not a lot of opportunities to laugh … [where] at my old school we were constantly laughing and joking … and we actually had a lot of fun … in this role, it's not as much fun. So personally, I'm not laughing as much, and I think that can have an effect on you.

Just a job. In contrast, Rachel was firm in explaining that no, she did not change personally as a result of this role. She explained that:

> I'm a very casual person … [while] some teachers, they have a teacher identity, and they're always on. I've never been. My job is my job, but when I come home

> who cares. I mean even at my job I still have a life, people, try to be a person.

Impact on Personal Life

Personal life changed in different ways for the participants. They shared a depth of experiences related to the impacts they endured personally, due to the change in their professional role. Participants agreed that moving into the role of VP had negatively affected their personal lives in a number of ways.

Time commitment. The time commitment and workload negatively affected Rachel and Chandler's experiences in this role. Rachel explained that:

> By the time you come home here you're like dead … you used to finish at two-forty pm, you can go to [the mall], you can go to the grocery store … now, it's like God forbid you're out for a morning, you come back and there's a stack of emails, and you have mail in your box. And then you might not even get to touch it cuz someone comes in and they're like oh this kid hit me, and then there goes your afternoon.

These long hours often occurred as a result of the weight of their roles and tasks where, "it's not at all uncommon to have a day that starts at school at seven in the morning and ends at 7:00 [p.m.]" (Chandler). Consequently, the transition to the VP role "stretched me in a number of different ways … it has definitely been a challenge" (Chandler).

Rachel addressed her specific situation of feeling frustrated when she found that even when she had completed her work, she was still committed to long work days, because she perceived "you don't wanna leave before them [the administrative team], because you're new … you don't want it to seem that you don't want to do hard work … but you feel guilty, [and] it's just not healthy." This dedication to the job was similarly

seen in the unspoken rule about taking sick days and other miscellaneous time off, as Rachel explained that "I can't just take a day off anymore … we have days, but no one takes them. So, you look like an idiot if you were to be like I'm calling in sick." Rachel described this immense commitment as an "unspoken pressure," that if she had been aware of, would have potentially stopped her from seeking this promotion, saying, "maybe I wouldn't have gone this route."

The added responsibilities and time spent at work often did not outweigh the benefits of the job, as was seen in Rachel's statement where she said that in terms of monetary value:

> You're gonna make almost the same money … so why would you voluntarily throw away your hours so you can work 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. You're not paid for that extra time and then the stress of the people. Why when you can come in and hide in your classroom?

Work–life balance. Chandler explained that concerns surrounding a work–life balance lead to his initial reluctance to take on this role. He revealed that:

> There are things that I like to do, ways that I like to manage my life. For instance, I'm a morning person. I like to get up in the morning and you know go for a bike ride or a run or go swimming, and I was worried that in the VP role I wouldn't be able to do that, and in fact, that is true.

The expectation to always be 'on' challenged the dividing lines between home and work. Rachel spoke to her efforts in creating this boundary when she explained how "I don't touch email when I come home, and Saturday/Sunday like I'll look at it, but I'm not responding to anybody until Sunday night 7:30 p.m." Through their experiences, it seemed that the tendency for VPs was that work came above all, with Rachel citing her

colleagues who, "haven't eaten anything all day," as they were consumed with their responsibilities, and could not achieve a work–life balance. Chandler also voiced how this occurred in his role where he would "look at myself and say you're an idiot, why are you working till 7 o'clock at night? Go home … and if it doesn't get done, it doesn't get done." Consequently, all participants voiced an unexpected goal of their role transition, in that they aimed to more effectively maintain their personal lives, by mastering a work–life balance, and establishing a way to navigate both aspects of their self, amidst the long hours and overlapping commitments that they experienced.

Support system. Managing work stress at home was something that all participants experienced. For Rachel, she was "bringing it home unfortunately, and you talk about it with people at home … but then sometimes that backfires cuz they can't help you." All participants admitted to "looking for help, from people who aren't really in the situation. Like bouncing ideas off people you're more comfortable with … [but] they're not in education" (Rachel). However, in Monica's situation, she found that even her family "treat you differently, family and friends, who aren't in the profession—they think of it as this huge title … but they forget it's still me. I'm me, I'm not VP me." Instead, participants found that "it helps talking to someone that's removed, but that's on the same level as you," ultimately gaining a trustworthy insider perspective. However, such as with Monica, she was challenged with getting insider support when "even my very good friends at my former school … I still talk to them as a friend, and so if I'm venting about something, I see their demeanour change … it's not the same," as her change in role, ultimately impacted the way they saw her, and approached their friendship.

Having a support system was necessary to navigate the work–home balance, because in Chandler's situation, he found that "I'm thinking about it a lot," and was

therefore unable to put distance between his work stress and home life. Monica shared a similar experience where her personal life was influenced in this role due to "the type of work that I'm doing, and that I'm bringing home." She outlined that in her new role "it surprised me what issues kids are dealing with … compared to what I knew as a teacher … because we're not privy to that information I was unaware of it." Consequently, she admitted that:

> I'm not gonna lie … those are things that as much as you want to leave the briefcase at work when you go home … those are things that are going to weigh you down. I mean if you have a heart, they're gonna weigh you down.

Loss of autonomy. Monica voiced a unique change in her experience, regarding her autonomy over where she worked. As a VP she lost:

> Control of where you end up … now I have no control over where I go … you can be replaced anytime … anywhere, at any time of the year, and you better be ready to go. And if I end up moving … I can end up [further] from home.

Relationships

Forming new relationships, and navigating old ones, was something that all participants addressed in relation to their role transition from a teacher to a VP. All participants reflected on how their transition into the VP role had broadened and sometimes intensified their relationships with other school members. Through their interactions, a strong sense of their roles in relation to others is understood.

Interactions With Students

Participants noted that as their primary interactions with students changed, consequently, so did their relationships with them. Despite this, each administrator echoed that, "I have a rapport established with some of the students which I think is nice"

(Rachel). Interactions with students also differed depending on the types of initiatives, clubs, teams, and so forth that the VP was involved in. For example, Rachel explained her experience with the students who made up the school's student council, describing how both their attitudes and the work that they did was "amazing" and "outstanding," in that "they're always cheery, and they're just always around."

Alternatively, Chandler noted that due to his role in managing discipline, the students he mostly interacted with were the troubled ones, "who are going through issues, and having problems, and bucking up against authority in many cases," which made his relationships with them centered on discipline. Monica similarly explained that because of this responsibility, she "had negative things take place in the relationship [with students], but the relationship has still stood." Mediating these relationships with students resulted in Monica having to defend her decisions, where in some situations they had to "agreed to disagree … [when students] don't agree with … how I deal with them."

Chandler found his positive interactions with students was limited, explaining how in his daily work, "we're putting out the big fires quite often." He showed how centered his role was on disciplining students in his example:

> I was used to dealing with … sort of the problems in the school … and it's interesting you have an open house or something and all these great kids show up to volunteer, and you realize oh yeah there's this whole other aspect of the school that's actually quite pleasant. So, we always joke about that, we never see those students.

Monica also had this experience in her role, where students with discipline issues were "the majority that you're dealing with now … those are the kids that you're dealing with

most often." This was because these interactions were ongoing, where "you've been working with [a student] for a while and trying to get them back straight on track" (Monica). Rachel contrasted these experiences, because she found that at her school, "all the kids are interested primarily in learning … out of 900 I'd say there are 10 problem students, that maybe do drugs or are involved in drug dealing and are rude to their parents."

Although challenging, these discipline-centered student relationships were also immensely rewarding for participants. Monica discussed the pride that she felt for the students she worked with, who despite their discipline issues:

> They rise to the challenge and they end up graduating, there's where it becomes most rewarding because you kind of got through to them … and you're wondering who you've been fighting with all year around, but then they're crossing that stage and they're giving you a hug, because they know, and you know, that without each other we wouldn't have been able to get to that point.

Chandler also felt rewarded by student success in his role. For students who he had worked with over time, he was also able to witness growth, and change, where:

> With one student, who was quite a problem last year … we struggle[d] all year to try and find the right fit for her, and she ended up not graduated, but … is taking a couple other courses now, and she will eventually get through.

In this example Chandler explained his efforts, where together with that particular student, "we kept working at it … [it was a] very difficult situation … but we stuck with it." Ultimately, attaining academic success for students who had difficulties with their

behaviour was important, with Monica explaining that for every student "that recovers another credit … and they're making up six credits in a semester, that's a positive."

VP-student interactions were also centered on students' personal lives in addition to matters which involved their academics. Monica explained her involvement with overall student well-being, which included navigating different medical and personal issues, and making specific arrangements to address these needs, such as involving external agencies such as CAS. Involvement in these facets of a student's life ultimately lead to participants trying to balance and prioritize these issues, ensuring that the student could "do the best that [they] can, [and] if they are able to get their credits, fantastic … whatever we can do to support [them]" (Monica). Participants also addressed the limits on the amount of influence that they might have on their students, with Monica stating that "as much as you want to help them … it's not about you anymore. You've done your part, and now all you can do is watch what's unfolding."

Time management, and balancing opportunities to interact with students impacted these relationships, with Chandler admitting that "if I were to stay in my office and try to get all of my paperwork done during the day, I would see very few students." Monica also explained that:

> There's some days I don't leave my office … because that's the busiest time, and I can't. But I try to make a point … I'm there every morning in the hallways you know greeting them as they walk in, making sure they're getting into class on time. At the end of the day I'm outside joking around with them … you have to make it a priority too, where you kind of put it in the calendar and make the alarm go off, and it's like now is the time I need to walk around … it's my way of

getting out there and so I see them … you need to make an effort in that cuz if you don't you'll be there the whole time behind a desk.

Interactions With Parents

Participants maintained some relationships with the parents of their students. These relationships varied, with Chandler explaining that in his case what began as "negative relationships … have become more positive." This was due to his role in discipline, where he found that "some of my initial interactions with parents … are very, very negative. But after the course of the year and seeing how I was continuing to work with those students … it ended up turning that around."

The administrator–parent relationship differed in some cases for Monica, where she worked collaboratively to address student issues with discipline. This occurred at times where "the parent asks you to stay for support," in addition to in times, "when the parent can't come and you're there and in loco parentis," helping to give advice and support for a child in extreme situations. Monica found that partnering with parents was common in the VP role because "I've realized that parents are at a loss too, because they've tried what they know [and] … don't know what to do anymore." However, at times, Monica clashed with parents in a "number of cases, where parents don't parent their children, and expect you to," while they remain uninvolved.

Parental involvement was perceived to involve notions of trust and transparency. Consequently, participants voiced a noticeable increase in parental involvement at the secondary level. Monica observed this in terms of student academics, with parents expecting her to mediate issues which occurred within the classroom, often regarding a teacher's evaluation of their child. Monica's involvement in these situations was required

on two levels, doubly because teachers are "on the defense," when being challenged by parents, but secondly because, "parents are much more knowledgeable … [and want] teaching…to be more transparent," ultimately holding her accountable for the education standards. Monica perceived that this trend of increased parental involvement reflected the ideals of contemporary society, as she made the comparison to her experience as a student. She explained that in her case if "you got a 98%, your teacher wasn't the one that got into trouble. Where's the other 2%t? Whereas now the parents are coming up to us saying, where's the 2%?" This emphasis on VP accountability from the parents, also lead Monica to feel as though parents "want to make excuses for their children's bad behaviour, because they perceive it as them being looked at."

Interactions With Staff

Participant experiences included various interactions with school staff. Although in most cases participants were speaking to occurrences with teaching staff, they also referred to other staff members encompassing secretaries, office staff, support workers, and occasional teachers, for example.

Conflict with teachers. Conflict with teaching staff, and mediating conflict amongst staff members, was addressed by each of the participants. The "people" piece of this job, and having it largely focus on adults and colleagues, rather than students, resulted in both surprising and challenging experiences. Rachel expressed this in her explanation that "I am surprised at how much the people piece drains you." Monica added that "issues dealing with … teacher to teacher was something that I didn't think would be as prevalent as it is." Rachel showed how hard it was to understand these complex situations as a VP, because "I would never have done any of those things," as a

teacher. Monica had a similar reaction to teacher behaviour, when she realized the "things to me that were a norm, that of course we do that, isn't a norm for everybody else … that doesn't compute for me, that's not who I was. And it's realizing that they're never going to be like you." Alternately, "it's kind of the opposite of what I'm used to" (Monica).

The complexity of working with others as an administrator was portrayed through Monica's description of her teaching staff's actions and attitude as "child's behaviour." Rachel's comments also emphasized this challenge as she explained that:

> You're working with adults, and they are, yes, very big kids, but at the same time there's politics, union involved, and rules, and the board, legalities, right? Parents, legal issues. So, I need to know how to talk to people.

Monica echoed this sentiment when she revealed that:

> It's very odd, cuz for me I always saw them from the teacher's point of view, you know very collegial … but you start realizing the quirkiness of people in the workplace, [it's] something that you have to deal with that you never thought you had to deal with at the level that you do.

This was increasingly challenging when trying to satisfy both parties of a disagreement, while not creating any disturbances in their own relationships with these teachers. Monica explained how difficult it was to interfere in disputes and to mediate a resolution when she dealt with issues between two colleagues such as an "in-school teacher versus a supply teacher." In these specific situations, she was burdened with her decision despite knowing what was right:

> You have your staff member that you want to defend because she's the one that

> you work with on a day-to-day basis, and yet you have this young occasional teacher who's trying to start out in the role … and so you need to be the mediator and try to be non-partial when they both want you to be partial to them.

Disciplining and moderating teachers was troublesome for participants, because as unionized teachers, they "have a lot of autonomy … they can pretty much do whatever they want. You can try to bring it up, but then there's the whole issue of the union coming in … there's a lot of red tape" (Rachel). Chandler reiterated such limitations when he explained that in his various interactions with teachers it was apparent that there were "some things … you're not going to be able to change." Similarly, Monica commented that "with the staff … there are certain things you talk about, certain things you don't. Especially in a contract negotiating year." As a result, the power that administrators possessed was often limited in regulating issues with teachers, because of their dismissal from the teacher's union, and their subsequent change in status. Monica articulated how this was not always the case for administrators, but "that all came into effect after the principals were moved out of the union." Consequently, Chandler explained being "frustrated [because] you're in this admin role, you've got more power, but you have to be careful about how you use that power."

Relationships with teachers were increasingly strained when students were involved. Chandler illustrated this in "a couple instances where I felt I had to … take a really strong position on behalf of some students … with regards to a teacher's marks at the end of the year." Monica similarly had this experience when she was disciplining students and was "having to justify to teachers what you'd done for that child, and them

not being in agreement of it, because they think you were too soft." In these cases, Monica explained that:

> You wanna make sure you're impartial to both staff and students … and it influences my ability because if the student's right, or the teacher's right, then you want to make sure you're that impartiality, and sometimes it's hard to be that.

These situations further escalated in situations where the administrator found that, "I can't divulge the background to the teacher because of privacy issues, [and] they get really upset" (Monica). Monica explained her rationalization over whether to divulge information concerning students, with her teaching staff, and questioned whether "it has bearing on their courses," and therefore, how essential the information is to their role as teachers. She acknowledged that in her VP role it was important to have complete access to a students' history, but that in the teachers' case she hesitated because, "I'm of the mindset let's not label the kids … don't put a taint on them." This privy in regard to access of knowledge ultimately caused uncomfortable situations for Monica when she disciplined students:

> So anytime you're having to suspend a kid, it always makes me uncomfortable. Not because I'm giving a suspension, [but] because I know their background, so if I'm suspending a kid who has no one at home to go home to, am I giving that kid any service by doing so? But I also have to respect the teachers and what they want.

Rachel also explained how teachers often expected her to interfere with situations in the classroom, without attempting to mediate them themselves, causing her to take on an unexpected role. This occurred when teachers:

> Keep sending kids to the office … [and] have not done progressive discipline. Progressive means you give a warning, you stand close to the student, you ask them to stand outside and wait for instruction, you give a detention, you called the parents, right? And then you come to me. But, [they] just come straight to me.

In other instances where administrators challenged teaching staff, they were often met with conflict. Rachel provided the example of an ongoing issue with a teacher, where when "we confronted her, she burst out crying, I was like you're an adult, you're a teacher—why the hell are you crying?" Chandler similarly explained his approach to confronting teaching staff, to address issues which required action. In his role as the VP spearheading change, he outlined that:

> There are two ways to change … one is to form a committee and to talk to people, and the other thing is to just say "well it's going to be changed and that's how it is." Create conflict and then see where that conflict goes, because that might not be a bad thing. We might have to do the second.

Another prevalent issue between VPs and their teaching staff appeared at the time of their transition. Being new to a school community, and being newly appointed to the VP role, participants contended with staff who had "been working 12, 14, 20 years, 25 years" (Rachel), at the same schools. Participants had to establish themselves amidst the work and history of "whoever the [administrative] teams were in the past" (Rachel). Monica further explained that "especially new coming in, when it's a very well-established school … even the secretary is sizing you up and down, to make sure that you are ready for the role."

Participants noticed that as the "constant" within a school, their teaching staff had

a tendency of "handling things on their own" (Chandler), instead of confiding in, and utilizing the VPs. Chandler experienced this with behavioural issues, when he perceived that teachers "don't trust [administrators] to do it properly ... [and say] we'll take this one into our hands." By assuming VP responsibilities as their own, Chandler perceived "that people [teachers] are working against us … [and] almost like they're keeping information from us." He rationalized this behaviour by thinking that:

> Maybe it's because they don't trust we'll make the right decision, or because they think they know better, or because in the past they didn't get the support they needed from the VP, so this has been how they deal with things.

Regardless of their reasons for acting this way, the VPs perceived that these attempts to work against the administrators only caused more harm, resulting in them "burning out [their] VPs because [they're] not working together as a staff" (Chandler).

Us versus them. Additional conflicts with school staff seemed to exist in groups, where staff took a divisive approach to interactions with the administration. This division was perceived differently by staff and administrators, with Monica explaining her experience when she initially took on the VP role. She explained her realization when she said that "as a teacher, I never really thought of it as being on opposite sides, until I became a VP, and then it was very evident that I'd crossed the line." Monica explained how immediate this transition occurred when "for no reason … as soon as you cross that line, you're just someone else now." Interestingly, Monica added that "they don't realize that they [teachers] do it. And I don't think that they mean it maliciously … and I know they're joking, but there's always a realm of truth, there's an underlying truth to that too."

All participants referenced the "us versus them" mentality that existed within their

schools, separating the staff from the administrative team. This divide often resulted in "courageous conversations," as explained by Rachel, in situations whereas an administrator, you are forced to speak up, and against the collective group of staff. Chandler experienced this when he made a change in his new environment, which immediately situated him as being against the staff. He described this situation, experienced by both him and his co-VP where, "when we arrived at the school, we were not comfortable … that became something that we had to deal with, and those conversations aren't necessarily easy or comfortable but, sometimes you have to do it." In another situation, Chandler explained having to be firm with his staff, acknowledging that, "I know he wasn't happy with me, but it worked, and it was fine." He further explained that, "those are difficult conversations because you know you're gonna have to go and change a teacher's mind, and if you can't change their mind then you're gonna just have to say, well this is what you're doing." Similarly, Rachel felt that in her daily work as a VP she struggled because, "you're on the other side now, you're a superior, and you're an administrator, so you need to kind of get people on board with whatever you're trying to push or initiate, and that's the tricky part."

Grouping the administrators into one whole and treating them like a collective of "others" was something that participants were challenged with in the process of forming and maintaining relationships. Rachel mentioned that:

> The staff, they won't listen to you because it's in their mind it's very much an us-versus-them mentality … and then too, you have friends and it's really hard to be, you can't be the staff's friend too, at the same time.

This was also voiced by Chandler when he explained the impact of his transition on his

past relationships, having returned to a school where he used to teach, now in a VP role. Fearing that his colleagues would take advantage of their prior relationship, he spoke about how he "very much wanted us to be seen as a team, all on the same page together," with his co-administrators. Furthermore, Chandler's transition to the VP role also meant that in some cases, he was making decisions that impacted his past colleagues. He explained how for all administrators "it's hard for us to do," but it was, "particularly hard for me because I knew them as friends, and now I was in a VP role, and I was part of making the decision [about their job] … which also meant taking away money from them." Chandler explained that this divide "was a little weird at first," especially when he found that:

> I still had a lot of friends there who were teachers and now I had a different role with them, rather than being a colleague and complaining about the administration [with them], now I was part of the administration and listening to their complaints and so forth.

Monica also explained that "it's a very weird dynamic, I'll be honest with you." She found that in many of her interactions with past colleagues, "even those, who I'm not their VP, they don't address me the same way. It's still me, I haven't changed, but they totally perceive you as being something different."

There was also a sense of power that served to divide these groups, with administrators being associated with rules, and teachers using this perceived authority as a means to distance themselves from the VPs. Participants showed this when they explained that they were referred to as "the suits" (Rachel). Rachel's conversation with a colleague also expressed this, when she was told, "why would you want to do that

[become a VP], you seem like a fun person." Similarly, Chandler's transition was met with "a very unhealthy attitude … [where] it was almost like [his colleagues were] not able to celebrate somebody moving on in their career… [and teaching was] all you should ever do." During this transition, administrators often encountered an "anti-authority approach … [an] attitude that if you moved into admin, you kind of were abandoning your vocation and your role as a teacher, and you were sort of going to the other side" (Chandler). This transition truly signified a division where teaching staff felt like "off he goes to admin, we've lost him now" (Chandler).

The reasons for this division often lacked an explanation, but rather seemed symbolic. This was such in Rachel's situation, where she found that her school had a large rift between the teaching staff and the administration, where "I don't really know why that is, because it seems like the teachers run the show, everyone gets what they want. So, I still don't know why there's that perception." Her confusion outlined that in this case, there was no perceived reason for this division, other than to continue perpetuating this tradition of the us-versus-them that has existed over time. Us-versus-them conflicts were therefore inherited to administrators who moved into new roles or moved to new schools, as they "were established by previous administrations" (Rachel), and continued to linger over time. As a result, teaching staff assumed that all administrators were the same, and this division was maintained. Rachel explained that upon entering her role she became aware of "a long-standing … feud between guidance and the office, [where] for whatever reason … they make it very difficult," in her interactions with them. She further explained that staff act "like a club," making her an outsider, and causing a strain on her daily work. In mediating this challenge, she

explained how she expresses that, “I just got here a month ago,” as a means of separating herself from the schools’ past, and to reiterate that, “I’m just doing what I’m told … if you have a problem go talk to the principal about it.”

Interactions with the Administrative Team

Participants had vastly different experiences in their relationships with their colleagues on their administrative teams. Challenges with getting support from the administrative team, and maintaining cohesion with the other administrators, was something that Rachel experienced in her time as a VP. In particular, making decisions, and either not being supported, or having those decisions overturned, was something she experienced daily. An example she spoke to was when teaching staff tried to overturn her decisions, which were unfavourable to them, by consulting her co-VP, knowing that they did not make decisions cohesively. Monica contributed how, “you notice that a team isn’t cohesive … and so, it makes for some rocky situations … because well depending on the character of the person as well, they may be pinning things on each other.” As a new VP, Rachel struggled in these situations where she was not supported, because “I’m also the newbie … [and] they obviously have the rapport from last year,” so she felt at a disadvantage.

Being assigned more challenging tasks, being used as a scapegoat, and as the “bearer of bad news” to have something controversial pinned against them, lead to tensions for the entire administrative team. This occurred in Rachel’s role when she was asked to handle a difficult situation with a teacher, not realizing that the other administrators were using her to evade this conflict themselves. As a result, she was met with resistance, and was being held accountable and taking the blame for something she

"really [had] no control over." Monica was used in similar situations surrounding discipline, where regardless of her input on the situation "the principal has disagreed with me, and I've had to swallow that pill," as the principal made the final decision in these matters. She further explained how "even if you wanna take a hard stance … if he/she doesn't agree with it, you're up the creek without a paddle. You have to concede and say ok, this is the way that it is." Nevertheless, the VPs defended their principals' decisions as their own, "because I'm the VP in charge of [that student] … [so] you end up getting blamed … because they see you as the first line of defense, not knowing who's behind you making the decision, and that I'm just the messenger" (Monica).

Meeting collective expectations, when they weren't shared, was a burden for participants. Rachel was put into this situation when she felt pressured to work long hours even when her tasks were completed. This challenged Rachel because she was trying to prove herself as a newly appointed VP, and she feared that it looked like "you're not hard working," if she were to leave earlier than her colleagues. This situation also caused Rachel to feel uncomfortable, as she knew that speaking against these expectations lead to her being "talked about … [and] looked down upon." This ultimately caused her to feel guilty for standing up against her colleagues, because her different ways of thinking and approach's to working, served to further divide them.

Opposite to these experiences, Chandler worked as a unit with his co-administrators. He explained how, "I collaborate, we're always talking to one another [and] I rarely will make a decision just on my own." Monica worked with a similar type of administrative team, one which she could rely on and which she described as a "strong force together." She felt:

> Very fortunate … we feed off of each other … if one of us is busy … my colleagues will take care of it for me, they don't leave me the pile of work … we just do that with each other. Like I said very fortunate, because not all teams are like that.

In her daily work, Monica explained that she had "total and full support of my team," where they were sensitive to her role transition and growth as a new administrator. For example, "they'd say don't say sorry, we know it's your first time … they literally laid it out for me … that way I knew what to do, and so, it wasn't rocky because I had the support" (Monica). In her experience being a part of this administrative team, she expressed how, "we look at it as our little family. We stick up for each other, so even if we disagree with each other … [we're] gonna show the same front for the kids … so we always make sure we have a united front." In their daily interactions with students, Monica explained how she and her co-administrators would "play good-cop, bad-cop [so that students] … realize that we're not so different than the other." Consequently, working this way ensured that both teachers and students alike didn't "come to you and say, 'we like you better than we do the [administrator] next door,' because I find that they will pin us, one against the other … they're trying to break the united front."

Proving themselves in these new roles was increasingly challenging when considering the "revolving door" turnaround of administrators within schools, where their tenure was limited to "5 years, usually not longer" (Chandler). This occurred in Rachel's case, where she was newly appointed to a role where she was "filling the shoes of [an administrator] who got promoted to principal … [and who] knew everything there was,

she was like an expert VP." Rachel acknowledged that as a new VP, "there's no way in hell I'm going to be an expert."

Interactions between the VP and the principal ranged, ultimately showing how impactful this relationship can be on the life of a VP. Rachel expressed that "I don't really want to bother the principal … [instead] let me just check with my co-VP." Monica similarly admitted that "I don't have to work in isolation, and I have that fantastic team, I'm able to converse with them, even before going to the principal … just to talk and say … what would you do? They're always very good with giving advice." Alternately, Chandler explained how contrary to his experience as an administrator, he felt "the role of the principal should be very much part of the team, [and] what we do as VPs and what the principal does shouldn't necessarily be all that different."

The Administrative Community

The administrative community exists outside of the VPs school, and encompasses administrators throughout the school board, creating a network of information and support. This is an informal community, where members are usually connected through past working experiencing, or through personal connections.

For a new VP, seeking out a mentor within the administrative community was essential during their role transition. Having a trustworthy and knowledgeable person was crucial in navigating this role. Rachel explained that "it's really important to establish a network … [to] talk to everyone, call for help, cuz you would be crazy [on your own]." Monica reaffirmed this point when she explained how "you need to make sure that you have the people that you need, on your side … you want to make sure that you make nice." Through Monica's mentorship opportunity during her preparation for the VP role,

she networked with administrators already in the field, to gain insights into "who do you need to know, who do you need to have on your side, who are your stakeholders, and who are this, who are that." She explained how in her school board, even after the appointment to a VP role, "they're still mentoring or giving you sessions … they set you up with a mentor, and you have your own little in-services … because my board really prides itself on the mentoring that gets done."

Socializing themselves within the administrative community was challenging for participants. Upon appointment, they gained membership to the Canadian Association of Principals, which served as a network of support and a source of information. However, participants identified several issues with their membership in this association. Firstly, there was a disconnect between the advice they were given, and the lived experiences in their roles as administrators, especially as they shifted from school to school. Secondly, as Rachel explained, even though this group met frequently, she felt as though she could not bring her authentic concerns to the discussion table, fearing that she "might be thrown under the bus." Therefore, this was not a safe space for participants, because in this small community of administrators, even though they "say oh bring your issues … they'll know where it's coming from … and I think people are, are scared to speak up" (Rachel), because of any possible repercussions.

School Culture

School culture was discussed to identify the different ways VPs interacted with, and were influenced by their environment, and the people that they worked with every day. Their perceptions of their school culture, and the consequent impact on their roles were presented through their unique experiences.

Environment and Atmosphere

School culture was lived and described in different ways by the participants. The physical school environment was credited by all three participants, as being an important aspect of their school culture. Aspects such as cleanliness and modern structure and features all contributed to their schools being positive places to be. This was specific to Rachel's school where "lots of kids hang out in the front foyer … it recently got painted over, and a few things were changed, so it also looks very clean and it's welcoming … it's definitely a nice school when you walk in." Chandler also mentioned the importance of the physical school environment in his excitement surrounding an upcoming construction project, leading to a new school building. He explained how this opportunity could lead to a new beginning for the school, one which would reflect the people who it serves. He expressed being "very interested in starting dialogue with teachers about what they want to see in the new building, physically what do you want it to look like."

Similarly, the atmosphere, first impression, and welcoming presence that was felt even when first entering these schools, was something that each participant identified as being meaningful. Monica described her perception of her school's impression on an outsider walking in as "a very welcoming environment … and a very busy environment. There's always something going on … it's a great place to be." Chandler's description was that "it is a fairly friendly school … it's not a school where you would feel unsafe walking through." The underlying tone, attitude, and sentiment experienced in these schools was also explored, with Monica describing her school as welcoming to all in that it was "very respectful of each other's culture … very culturally diverse." Chandler also noticed the school's tone as an aspect affecting culture, describing how "the atmosphere is somewhat relaxed … it has a good vibe."

VP Influence on School Culture

When describing their perceived influence on school culture, each VP explained that in terms of generating change or being an active participant, "in terms of the administration, I don't think it's us" (Rachel). Specifically, in reference to Rachel's "visions of the school," she believed that in her current capacity as a VP, even though school culture is considered, "one of your roles, that's part of the job," she did not see her voice playing an active role. Alternately, she felt, "oh my God that's never gonna happen." Monica also expressed this in her comment:

> You can't have a school and think that as an administrator you're the one that sets the tone … to say that it's the administrator that comes in, stays for 5 years and takes off, and they're the one who lead the culture, I think that's a pipe dream right?

Monica further explained that due to her distant relationship with students in the VP role, her influence on school culture suffered as well. She perceived that "as a teacher, you can influence your kids … and you may have influence over your colleagues within your department. As a VP … I don't see you being too influential necessarily on an entire school." Due to the rooted nature of school culture, which sees aspects of the school maintained over time, Chandler explained that, "no matter who comes in," it is hard to influence the existing conditions of a school. Chandler perceived that to have meaningful influence, "it's gonna take a really strong administrator at the top, and I don't know that it can be me … I'm not the principal."

The ability to influence their schools' cultures was made increasingly challenging when staff "prides itself on the fact that they [administrators] don't stay long" (Chandler).

The turnaround of administrative staff every few years caused “trust issues” (Chandler), which lead to the idea that teachers, “run the school, administrators just come and go” (Chandler). This form of resistance arose because school staff, “don’t want someone who’s going to put too much pressure” (Chandler), for things to change. As a result, it is perceived that these staff members became determined to ensure that, “they [administrators] won’t last … we’ll last longer than them” (Chandler). Chandler identified that in trying to influence the school culture, these short terms VP tenures are counter-productive, explaining how “that’s kind of damaging … you know we could actually develop a plan, rather than new people constantly coming in, that’s not good for a school.”

Monica similarly voiced her experience with teacher resistance, having found that “many are very reluctant to change,” especially when it was being driven by the new VP. She expressed this limitation in terms of influencing her teachers, when she explained how her “staff were too scared to change or to try because of failure.” In her daily work as an administrator her attempts to influence teaching staff were limited in that, “teachers are the first on the defense,” ultimately impeding her efforts. As a result, she approached her ability to influence them in the sense that “you can bring the horse to water, you can’t force the horse to drink.” Monica also recognized this pushback from teaching staff when she revealed how in her efforts to have an active presence in her school, she was met with “very entrenched teachers, teaching the way that they’ve been taught, or the way they have been teaching for the last 20 years.” Consequently, it became apparent through various situations that “this is the way it works here; it’s been like this for [20-something] years, we’re not gonna affect change.” She perceived that these limitations stemmed

directly from her role as an administrator, in that when the administrative team directed change, there was always resistance from teachers, and the change was ultimately halted.

The VP as the newcomer was also challenged in influencing the school culture, because in some environments they "don't feel welcomed or … they're not encouraged to step forward or they feel there's an old guard there that's always … going [to] have its way" (Chandler). Due to these imposed boundaries, VPs "find it was just too much to handle … and so, they just leave" (Chandler). However, to have an influence on the school culture as an administrator, Monica outlined that regardless of the resistance, "you have to be able to take those things on. If you wanna affect change, you need to be able to make the hard decisions, and to have those hard conversations, those courageous conversations."

Chandler explained one of the ways he successfully influenced the school in his role as VP, and perceived that it was more easily achieved in areas of the school that were less guarded. He explained his impact on an academic initiative, which upon his arrival "was very tired … [and] didn't have a robust committee" of teachers involved, thus allowing him an easier entry to influence and be an active presence. Similarly, Monica explained a way she and her co-VPs influenced the school culture daily, in that they added to the "welcome [and] cohesive," tone of the school when, "first thing in the morning, you're gonna get one of us as a VP, standing by the front door welcoming people in." Monica also perceived her influence on the school culture by means of empowering others, ultimately letting the voices and actions of teachers, students and other stakeholders, guide change with her support. She expressed that "you just have to give them the ability, and give them the power to be themselves, and they are going to

surprise you greatly." She explained that in her experience, attempts to influence school culture were more successful when directed from teaching staff or students because:

> It wasn't coming from us [such as] when kids are learning from kids, they are learning a lot better than when they're learning from teachers … so, where [teachers] won't necessarily show their weakness to us [administrators], they're ok with showing it to each other.

This approach allowed her to have some control over the shape of the school's culture, where in her own attempts, she had been largely unsupported and unsuccessful. She perceived that these limitations were directly linked to her role as an administrator, because when her administrative team directed change, there was always resistance, and the changes were ultimately halted. Monica understood that in her VP role, she was in a position to understand the school as a whole, and so "because you get to see where the deficiencies are, [you can] move it forward … if I see a deficiency in the culture … I need to fill that void." Consequently, she perceived that in her role she was limited in evoking lasting change, but rather her presence as an administrator had potential to cause "a shift in culture."

School Culture Influence on VP

Negative aspects of the school culture, whether related to relationships with teachers, students or otherwise, influenced the VP. In one case, Rachel explained how she was being affected by negative relationships she had formed in her time as a VP, and how "it's hard not to take it personally … [when] you're trying to work and do your best, and then you know people … [have] already casted you." Because of her novice position, being both new to the VP role, and to this specific school community, the culture of us

versus them was "definitely a turn off," as it worked as a roadblock to her success as a VP. Similarly, Chandler explained that:

> Part of the role of administration is to work on creating a cohesive staff … a lot of this … has to do with relationships, and developing good relationships with staff, and the sense that they are supported by us, but also that we're working together on a larger project, with a larger vision. And I think the school culture right now, is mitigating against that in some ways.

School culture was also seen as limiting the daily work and role of the VP. Due to the unspoken power structures which put the VP second in command to the principal, while also giving full autonomy to the teaching staff, the VPs felt that in many situations they were at a loss, and this was where they truly perceived that they were limited (Monica). Rachel explained how especially as a VP, she was "finding it really hard to actually accomplish anything if I work under … a principal," as her role was extremely limited to their authority and discretion. Monica similarly expressed this in her explanation that:

> As a VP, as much as you wanna take that on, if you don't have a principal wanting to take that stuff on, it's not gonna happen. You can only go as far as your principal's gonna allow you to go.

This constant struggle was seen in Rachel's statement where she said, "what can you ever get done if you're just constantly battling?"

Similarly, Chandler expressed feeling confined to this role and strictly limited to his new responsibilities voicing that "the role doesn't allow me to do some of the things that I really enjoy doing … and I just do what my role is [instead]." Monica reiterated

how limited some VPs became in these roles due to the restrictive school culture, where doing anything beyond their defined roles and the acceptable norms, caused tension. To avoid this challenge, Monica explained that "there's some VPs that don't wanna do it [push back]. They sit there, they do their reports, they deal with the kids, they don't want to take anything big on." Chandler also struggled with the weight of these pre-existing influences and the consequent limitations on his VP role, where he constantly struggled with an underlying "laissez-faire" culture. As a new VP he was negatively impacted in his daily role and ability to fulfil his responsibilities, as this way of doing things had been established and maintained over time, whereas his presence was new and did not bare as much influence.

Influencers and Stakeholders

Some of the influences on school culture were unknown as they were rooted in the foundation and heritage of the school, and consequently were long-lasting over time. Chandler perceived that "schools are developed … at a particular time and space, with a particular group of individuals, and very often that initial impetus and vision remains." As a result, such as in Rachel's case, her school seemingly "runs itself" (Rachel). Monica similarly explained the daily function of her school as working "like clockwork." Consequently, when attempting to interact with the school culture, participants faced resistance. Chandler explained how his situation was "getting better incrementally year after year, but it still has this leftover feeling … [where] school culture starts in the beginning and it never leaves." This was particularly evident at his school, because it was originally named after someone who "may have been a big influence on the people who first started this school … [but isn't] somebody you could easily present to young people

now." This caused a disconnect towards their current goals and expectations, and a roadblock in moving the school culture forward, because even though "it's just a name in a lot of ways," it carried significance, and was underlying and impacting the, "strong vision," that they were trying to generate. Monica also spoke to the origins of her school that had been maintained over time and which served to give them "that whole idea of this is who we are … and that principle foundation is what has been constant throughout." She explained that in relation to school culture, the school name, "that's where it stems from, and as years have gone on, it's taking that base, and how we move forward with that."

In these experiences, students had a large role in shaping school culture, and were celebrated for their positive contributions. They held many roles and had various responsibilities, which both contributed to and reinforced the established culture. Monica explained her experience where, "the basic culture starts with students … the students are the ones who dictate the culture." For Rachel, she "would rather work with the student council than the staff … they're amazing." It appeared that these experiences differed depending on the types of opportunities students were offered, as it impacted their level of involvement in the school. Monica credited the strong student influence that she witnessed, on the fact that she worked in a "large school [with] … a lot of student engagement opportunities for kids." She noticed a direct impact between the various outlets for students to participate, and the positive school culture, commenting that, "the other big thing about our school culture is the student voice component is huge, more so than any of the other schools that I've been at."

Students also served to maintain aspects of school culture and seemed to establish

certain expectations and reputations that the school eventually became known for. This was apparent in Monica's school where it was understood that:

> It's not one of these places that you see everybody hanging out … doing nothing, on the school benches you know just twiddling their thumbs. There's a time to learn, and a time to play, and that's very much the culture of this school.

Chandler similarly described a school whose traditions were largely maintained by the student population, and how these aspects of the culture truly influenced the entire school community. He described how through the student voice this school:

> Reinvented themselves … by going back to their traditions … they have a school crest emblasted [sic] in the floor, and you can't walk on it, you can never ever walk on it … they went back to their tradition, and that actually turned the school around. Kids from the neighbourhood weren't going there, and now kids are going there. Cuz it's almost like a private school or special school. You want to be part of this tradition.

During his experience as a new VP, Chandler witnessed this notion of school reputation and legacy have the opposite effect on his school culture and community. He noticed that due to the underlying "rebel attitude" that the students maintained, "the school has the reputation for being that way," so it determined "why [students] choose it. They choose it because they know it's a little more laissez-faire, or they don't choose it because it is that way, and then they're going to other schools … it works against us."

In these three cases, teachers were not dominant influencers of school culture. Rachel explained how she was not disappointed with her staff's limited interactions with issues pertaining to culture, as she perceived "the staff needy … too established, too

comfortable." This was echoed by Chandler when he similarly explained that in his school, "it's too much more of the same, they're comfortable here, but sometimes in education being comfortable is not a good thing." Further, in identifying key influential figures in his school, Chandler reflected upon strong leaders in the past who had since retired, admitting that, "I think that's another issue. I think we've lost some of that, and there hasn't been anyone to come in and fill that gap."

Alternately, Monica felt that despite their current limited contributions, teachers should be utilizing their influence to work collaboratively with students, equally investing in this aspect of the school culture so that:

> The staff is the one that has to advise and direct it, because education is organic … what would have worked 20 years ago … doesn't necessarily work today. So, the students dictate the culture, and [teachers] help to mold it into where it's supposed to be.

Monica perceived this "shared responsibility" as a way to enable students to be active participants in their schools, "because it's not the teacher's living it. It's the teachers that are directing it or conducting it." Using the metaphor of an orchestra, Monica explained that:

> Our principal … he's one of the conductors, but they [the students] are the ones that are playing. And if they're messing up, the conductor may not have lead them the right way, but they're the ones playing the tune. So, if we're not listening to the tune that's been played and correcting it, then that's our fault. But they're the ones that are playing, and I think that's what the culture is. They're the ones that dictate the culture, we just have to direct them in the right direction.

As a VP, Monica took a similar approach, explaining that her role in school culture was to oversee it in its organic form, so if she was unable to shift it and influence it herself, she would still ensure that those voices which were the loudest, were supported. In her case with the student voice being dominant, she saw her role as "mak[ing] sure that all student voices are heard … [and] that everybody is on a level playing field in that respect."

Although not active in leading change that influenced culture, there were cases where teachers hegemonically maintained the current practices. Chandler witnessed older teachers contributing in this way, as they maintained the culture of the school over the length of their careers, which worked in ways to deter change. In his VP role, Chandler realized the immense power and influence that these teachers had, that even "after a while, all these older teachers are retired, surely it [culture] will turn around, but not necessarily." He experienced that even with staff turnover, these underlying tones and ways of being that had been maintained over time, were transmitted to new members of the community, and were continuously carried on, even after the older members had left. This continuity of school culture being maintained over time was further perpetuated beyond the "teachers who have taught their entire careers at [one] school" to instances where there were "teachers who went there as students, who are teaching at that school. And teachers who married another teacher at the school, and they're both still teaching at that school" (Chandler). Monica similarly expressed this continuity when she explained that "the school's been in existence now for about 30 years, there's been people there who started then and haven't left." Alternately, it was perceived that in some cases, teachers maintained the culture unknowingly, with Chandler explaining that:

> I don’t think they even realize how much influence and control they have in that regard … and that if they would get together … [they would have a bigger role] to say what we are about, what do we want to see, and how do we move that forward.

Participants did not mention a strong influence from stakeholders outside of the school building. However, there were some underlying comments referencing school board initiatives, and MOE goals and standards. Rachel gave the example of “a huge drive [by the] the Ministry of Education, on paperwork, on legalities, on new policies.” Similarly, Chandler outlined “practices of accountability [which] have been put into place, for instance [different] processes which is basically the Ministry [of Education] trying to keep very careful track of the data and tying that to school funding and … attendance.” These schools seemed to function with these considerations in mind, and in some cases these standards were manipulated to better fit the schools’ specific needs. For instance, Monica explained that in order to serve a deficiency that the administrative team identified with respect to teacher assessment practices, they transformed a prescribed professional development session that was supposed to be given by the board, into something that met this immediate need. She explained how:

> We ignored what was happening at the board. We linked what we did to what was happening at the board, or to what the board wanted us to do, but we didn’t do the prescribed professional development that was being asked of us … because, we saw that it was something that was needed by a lot of the staff.

However, VPs were not always able to manipulate school board influence, with Monica explaining how these stakeholders hold superior control at the top of the educational

system. She outlined how "you wanna do x, y, and z, and then the school board is like well … let's start here first. And so, you can see the end zone, but you can't get there very quickly."

In cases where stakeholders were not dominantly grouped or identified, it was evident that "the strongest voices in the school … their attitude prevailed" (Chandler). Chandler explained how this occurred in his school, "because you have different standards in different classrooms, you have a collection of individuals rather than a collective of like-minded people who feel like they're working on a project together." In these situations, individual voices would stand out amongst the group, and would influence the culture, either by maintaining the norms and acceptable ways of being, or by being the force of change driving an agenda to serve a purpose.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of this study, as framed around the four central research questions. The following themes were presented in order to organize the findings: VP role transition; duties assigned to the VP; insider perceptions of VP experiences; VP identity and lived experiences; relationships; and school culture.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter concludes the thesis. It provides a summary of the study, a discussion and analysis of the findings, implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for future research. Findings that emerged in connection to the research will be reviewed and related to the literature.

Summary of the Study

This research focused on the stories of three newly appointed secondary school VPs, to reveal their lived experiences transitioning to these roles, and to show their perceptions on how they interacted with and influenced their school culture as administrators. These findings confirmed previous literature surrounding the VP role, which showed that VP responsibilities were vast and varied, ultimately causing a difficult transition and adjustment to the role. This study also revealed the impacts of this role transition on both the personal and administrative lives and identities of these individuals, exploring the challenges they endured in the many facets of their lives. This research also contributed to the discussion of school culture and influence, identifying the different stakeholders involved in both the daily function, and the long-term experiences in these schools. In some cases, this study challenged the reviewed research and presented new and unexpected findings which were not originally considered in relation to this topic. These findings highlighted the VP as an individual, connecting personal factors such as gender, age, and marital status as interacting with the role.

Discussion

The following discussion will highlight the various contributions that this study has made to the current body of knowledge within the field of education. The three

participant experiences from this study will be analyzed and compared to the current literature surrounding the VP role and interaction with school culture. In doing so, this chapter will present new outlooks as a means of offering an alternate understanding that is reflective of these specific participant experiences. This section will frame the findings' two central themes: one surrounding identity, and one surrounding school culture. These themes work to address each of the four central research questions that guided this study:

1. What is the process of moving from a teaching role like for three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals who work in large, urban school boards in Ontario?
2. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals describe their process of forming an administrative identity?
3. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals perceive that their identities influence their school cultures?
4. How do three newly appointed secondary school vice-principals perceive that their identities are influenced by their school cultures?

VP Identity Formation

This study sought findings relevant to the VP role transition to investigate who these individuals are, and how that ultimately defines how they interact with their school culture. The focus of this study became understanding the connections between the self, the VP role, and the school. In exploring the transition and subsequent identity formation, from a teaching role to a VP position, findings surrounding what VPs do in their roles are revealed.

VP professional identity: New role, same person. The importance of role identity was revealed in terms of participants' past teaching identities and their new administrative ones. Similar to findings from Armstrong (2009) and Ashforth et al. (2008), participant experiences showed how these identities sometimes conflicted, collided, and overlapped, often causing issues for participants in their daily work. Navigating this new administrative identity meant that VPs were often making the conscious decision to either carry over and preserve aspects of who they were as teachers or abandon and start anew during this role transition. This finding was similar to Armstrong's (2009) discussion of the VP role transition as a critical pathway choice. Participant perspectives here provided further insights into how this process affected administrator identity during this transition period. The desire to maintain aspects of the previous teaching identity, when responsibilities from the VP role often demanded something different, posed an internal struggle for Monica and Chandler. The conflicting roles and expectations during this role transition as discussed by Armstrong (2004) were also apparent in participant experiences. Administrative tasks did not allow participants the flexibility to maintain aspects of their previous teaching identity, creating a sense of deficit or disconnection in the new work they were responsible for and set goals for the type of work that they wanted to pursue to fill this void. In contrast, Rachel did not have a strong connection to her teaching identity as this was an aspect of her life she distinguished as "work." Consequently, her transition to the administrative role and identity was less stressful, because instead of looking back and comparing her new role to the past, she found herself looking forward and continuing on from this position.

Similar to Prentice's (2006) findings surrounding role identity, releasing their previous teaching identities was challenging for participants in this study. Having been newly appointed and being tasked with the role of managing teaching staff, VPs remained connected to their past identity. Regardless of the ways in which participants connected to their past teaching identities, their experiences as VPs working with teachers was unanimous. As administrators they witnessed a range of teaching behaviours amongst their teaching staff, which often were vastly different than what they considered acceptable. Having the recent experience of being in teaching role challenged these new VPs, because they questioned how some of their teaching staff could be acting in such different ways than they ever would have when they were in the same roles. Their identities from their past teaching roles informed their new perspectives and clashed with those which were unlike theirs. Having recently transitioned from teaching roles gave participants the insight into these teaching experiences, however, working near teachers limited their abilities to let go of those past professional associations. Being in an administrative role without having yet developed an administrative identity caused participants to hold onto their teaching identity, and put forth an undefined identity which mixed the past, present, personal and professional.

Researchers (Gibeau, 2011; Prentice, 2006; Turner et al., 2006) have suggested that administrators are uniquely positioned, with their work and influence in VP roles differing as a result. These variances have often been credited to leadership style, administrative identity, and work experience, with little attention being given to the individual people who occupied these roles. In recognizing this missing aspect in the literature reviewed for this study, it questions whether these personal factors of gender,

age, and marital status have ever been considered in the past but have not been given value in the research as they are subjective and difficult to quantify. Another possibility could be that in an area of research (Armstrong, 2012) that has reported administrative experiences as unanimous, grouping the VP and principal as one collective, perhaps this was an oversight which had not been considered relevant to researchers in the past.

VP personal identity: Who they are and why that matters. Through this research, it was apparent that participants' personal lives and identities were deeply rooted to their sense of self, and thus connected to their administrative identities in the workplace. Although not prevalent in the VP literature that was reviewed, Giroux and Gauthier (2006) had similar findings to this study in that they found that a VP's personal qualities could affect their experiences in the workplace. Through participant stories, it was obvious that who the participants were as people was underlying in who they were as administrators, and that these two identities could not be separated.

Within these personal aspects are specific factors which impacted participants in their roles. When these factors interacted in the workplace, it was also important to understand how it mattered both to the VP themselves and to the others involved. For example, this study identified age, gender, and family composition as aspects of a VP's personal identity which overlapped and had repercussions in their administrative lives. Through participant stories it was evident that these specific factors further impacted their VP role transition, making their experiences unique. Age was a factor in how VPs felt equipped for the role, but also in how they were perceived by others to be able to handle this transition. This meant that experiences for older VPs changed dramatically from those who were younger, where despite all being newly appointed to these roles, age

became synonymous with ability and expertise. In their Canadian study of school administrators, Giroux and Gauthier (2006) found that “the average age of school administrators has been dropping steadily, a clear indicator that they are getting younger” (p. 12). If this trend continued over the last decade, administrator age, specifically for those who entered the role at a younger age, would persist to be a factor impacting their work. Age coincided with other factors in this study such as the role of working parents and the implications of family roles and responsibilities. Age also determined the number of years in the role before retirement, therefore impacting how participants approached their responsibilities. As a result, some VPs were careful not to burn themselves out in order to sustain a long administrative career, while others did not want to take on an abundance of tasks approaching retirement, because they felt they were unable to commit the time necessary to accomplish these goals in the long-term.

Participants in this study also believed that they were being treated differently because of their genders, and in how they presented themselves to meet unspoken job expectations typical of gender stereotypes. Participants perceived that administrative responsibilities catered to more traditional masculine personalities (strict/authority) over feminine ones (lenient/nurturing). Contrary to these beliefs, Giroux and Gauthier (2006) found that “an increasing number of school administrators are women” (p. 12). Despite this occurrence, females in these roles struggled with assuming the VP role and faced more challenges than their male counterparts. These experiences revealed how hegemonic systems and ways of thinking surrounding the administrative role were maintained over time and remained resistant to the complex changes that have occurred to the VP role. This was increasingly troublesome when aspects of participant personal

life and gender interacted, such as in the case of pregnancy and motherhood, where this aspect of their personal identity became impossible to compartmentalize. As a result, female VPs questioned whether their experiences in these roles were predetermined by their gender, and thus whether their gender shaped and outlined the types of opportunities they were being offered in these roles. It was not possible to determine whether their perceived connections between gender and the VP experiences was intentional, or if was a hegemonic aspect of this role. However, these experiences appeared to be the norm for female VPs. Gender was a major feature impacting female VPs and should be identified as a mitigating factor in future research which understands and compares VP experiences.

Family structure was also indicative of VP identity, with their experiences differing if they had dependents (e.g., children, partners), or if they were single. Administrative life for a single VP seemed to be committed to the workplace, while those with family obligations struggled to satisfy their respective roles in the workplace and in their homes. These experiences revealed how VPs managed their time and responsibilities, balancing VP roles with their personal lives. Within their roles, their experiences ranged based on the specific qualities of their dependents, such as their ages, their personal needs, and their own roles. Therefore, these experiences differed for participants with young children, as opposed to those with teenagers; for those with one child, and those with multiple, and so on. These factors impacted participants in many ways, especially in the extent to which they were responsible for these dependents. Caring for the well-being of these dependents extended to both children and partners, providing an interesting critique of what it means to balance the roles of mother/wife and father/husband with that of the VP role. Through these experiences, connections to

gender were discussed again, in understanding the roles women and men hold in their personal relationships, and their subsequent responsibility to that part of their life which exists at home.

Power dynamics between couples were revealed through this investigation into personal identity, with participants explaining how their roles in the workplace potentially impacted their partners' professional lives as well. Rachel explained how this occurred using an example of one of her colleagues, whose partner was a powerful stakeholder within the field of education. She revealed how that largely impacted her work and role as a VP in that same school board, as it held her to different professional expectations and pressured her to be a model VP. His partner's success caused his stress because her failures would be associated with his and would cause professional implications for his work as a result. Participants also voiced how impactful their partners work was to their own work–life balance, impacting how they shared responsibilities at home. For example, Chandler's wife did not work in education and had a different schedule from his and that of their children, making him the primary caregiver for his dependents. Having these responsibilities at home set parameters for his life at school, meaning it could not interfere with his roles at home.

Consequently, these unique family dynamics should be considered in detail when researching the VP, as these overlapping personal and professional factors could greatly influence their lived experiences. This was especially true considering the negative repercussions of job dissatisfaction, work stress, and general unhappiness in the VP role, following role transition. Although consequent repercussions of their professional life,

these factors would increasingly occur when VPs are not achieving a work–life balance, and when their personal needs are being compromised.

Another aspect of the self that was relevant to this research was the participants' self-identified perception of their personality, including their outlook, attitude, and approach to all aspects of personal and professional roles. For the participants in this study, a difference existed between participants who identified as having serious demeanors, versus those who were laid back, as this impacted their ability to compartmentalize their roles and responsibilities. VPs who approached their roles in a serious manner, and who tended to maintain a professional identity, seemed to be able to separate their personal lives more effectively. This was evident in Rachel's transition to the VP role, where similar to her experience as a teacher, she assumed these responsibilities as part of the job, and was able to detach from this role outside of the workplace. Participants who assumed a more personal approach and who were closely bonded to their professional identities, struggled with separating these two aspects of their lives. This was evident for Monica when she expressed her emotional ties to the workplace, specifically for the well-being of her students, and how she carried these sentiments with her into her home life. The same emotions were expressed by Chandler as he experienced lingering guilt when he had challenges in the workplace, and always felt a passionate connection to his work as a VP.

VP role transition: Preparing and supporting VPs. The lack of support in preparing for the VP role, during the role transition, and throughout the tenure of this position, was revealed in this study and aligned with literature in this field (Armstrong, 2012; Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003; Oleszewski et al., 2012, Rintoul & Goulais, 2010).

Literature pertaining to the transition from teaching roles to the VP suggested that in navigating this new role there was a need for appropriate preparation and support to ensure success in this role taking. However, through an analysis of the discrepancies and generalizations in the current literature, and through an understanding of the current policies and standards regarding this transition, it was evident that the VP was largely unsupported. Participant experiences in this study showed the flaws in the current preparation system and gave insights into areas for improvement both during preparation for this transition, and in working in this role over time.

Unlike the literature that was reviewed this study found that while in their teaching roles, some participants were encouraged or otherwise “tapped on the shoulder” by another stakeholder, in an attempt to have them consider transitioning to this position in administration. This finding differed from that of Oplatka and Tamir (2009), who identified instances of unqualified teachers being offered administrative roles in order to fill gaps in open administrative positions. Although in this study this interaction appeared to be the beginning of a mentorship relationship, often participants were left to navigate this transition on their own, as was echoed by Armstrong (2012), and Nanavati and McCulloch (2003). During this discernment process participants discussed the process of comparing themselves to administrators they had previously worked with, perceiving that if their colleagues successfully assumed VP roles, then they too could manage this role. Some of these model VPs served to mentor these inquisitive teachers during this process, supporting them to pursue the VP role because they seemed well-suited for the position. Mentorship which would have supported participants in making a successful transition, and which would have truly prepared them for the realities of these roles were not

common. The exception to this was seen in Monica's case where she participated in a mentorship preparation course prior to making the role transition.

During this transition it appeared that the VPs were largely left to navigate this position on their own, with participants explaining strategies they had personally derived to make this position more manageable. Having a confidant or a mentor in the field was something that participants valued but had to establish on their own. In the cases where a mentorship relationship was provided for the new VP, it linked them to a senior administrator or an "expert in the field." Often, this relationship was not flexible to serve the VP's immediate needs but was set up as a series of periodical meetings which addressed certain topics and skills as a means of passing on knowledge. Similar to Armstrong (2004), this form of mentorship also served the purpose of passing on and maintaining various unspoken ways of being within the administrative role. Consequently, this relationship was short-term, and would often terminate after 1 year.

These insider relationships were not always established in confidence or trust, leaving the newly appointed VP in a vulnerable position to manage the difficult challenges they faced. This finding was not explored in the literature, in that a fear of professional repercussions, tensions, and other consequences loomed for participants, causing them to feel as though there was no safe place where they could address the specific issues they were dealing with. Considering that the network of VPs within a school board is generally small, and many of them have previously worked together, navigating issues amongst staff in a professional, discrete manner is a serious concern. Consequently, any negative inter-relationships and issues amongst administrators conflicted VPs. Due to the connectivity of their administrative network, they were unable

to seek advice from other administrators without jeopardizing privacy, causing tensions, and perhaps being viewed as troublemakers. Cautious about voicing their concerns and issues with insiders within their network of administrators, participants tended to confide in family and friends, who often could not relate to these issues or assist them in a purposeful way.

VP Interaction With School Culture

Participant interaction with school culture was twofold in that they were active in influencing their school community and were also influenced by it. The many factors surrounding VP interaction with school culture were discussed, to reveal some of the short-term and long-term motivations, goals, and challenges participants faced in this area.

The VP: Influence on school culture and long-term goals. Similar to findings from Gantner et al. (2000), participants in this study unanimously voiced that in their work as VPs, they were motivated to make an impact on their school communities. Due to her desire for school-wide influence, Rachel transitioned to the VP role. Her school culture goals were more systemic and long term, driven by an interest in educational policy and a desire for reform. Being in the VP role, she identified how limited her influence was even at this level of administration and began to consider this role as temporary. Thus, Rachel's motivations in her current role connected to literature which positions the VP role as a stepping-stone towards advancement in administration (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Consequently, Rachel identified long-term growth as an administrator as one of the ways she would be able to achieve her long-term goals to influence school culture.

Monica and Chandler did not express motivations for career advancement beyond the VP role, but instead were determined to master the current responsibilities of this new job. Both participants expressed how mastering their daily VP tasks would lead to them fulfilling their desires to connect with students and influence the school community. This was a major aspect of their previous roles as teachers, and something that they found lacking in their current roles as administrators.

Monica's goal as a VP was to help students in a more meaningful way. Her insight as a VP informed her about what the student population needed as a whole and gave her the power to put plans into action to help them achieve as a collective. As a teacher Monica was able to influence the students in her classes, but as a VP she was able to oversee other teachers as they worked with their students, ultimately having a larger impact on the school as a whole. As a result, her influence on student experience was enacted through her mentorship over teaching staff, and consequently she succeeded in achieving a school-wide impact.

Despite their desires to enact change, influences on school culture required long-term time and effort, as identified by Scallion (2010). This was repeatedly challenged by short administrative tenures in schools, staffing dynamics, undefined roles, and hegemonic ways of being which were hard to disrupt. Consequently, participant interaction with school culture was seen through long-term maintenance of the existing culture, and small attainable efforts towards long-term changes which were supported by other staff members and students who were able to cultivate and carry these goals forward, beyond the limits of the VPs.

The VP: Attempts at challenging existing school culture. Findings from Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) and Weller and Weller (2002) focused on existing

school culture were reinforced in the participant experiences discussed in this study. Due to the busyness of the VP role, Monica was hesitant to make the transition to administration. Having a large impact on school culture as a teacher, by being student-focused and active in the community, Monica feared how impactful she might be once she assumed the VP position. She desired the ability to have more influence within a school, and becoming a VP gave her the position required to enact the types of changes she envisioned. However, with the VP role being undefined, unstructured, and overwhelming she lacked influence on school culture, as she was overburdened with daily tasks and didn't have the time required to make these changes. Attempts at challenging this administrative culture of busyness meant sacrificing other commitments or responsibilities. To have an impact on the school community, participants needed to leave their offices and put their daily work on hold, in order to make time for their school culture priorities, ultimately causing them to have long workdays and heavy workloads, and creating a strain on their work–life balance.

Being unable to direct change from a VP role informed Rachel's viewpoint about advancements in administration. Being limited in her VP role, and observing her school principal in a similar position, her perceptions of the administrator role on school culture were altered. This realization caused her to shift her long-term goals towards assuming an administrative role in policy change at a school board or through the MOE, where she presumed she would have a larger influence to enact changes. Having this insight enlightened her that administrative positions such as the VP and principal which operate at the school level, would not allow her to satisfy her ambitions for change. Being faced

with limitations in her current VP role, Rachel ultimately sought more power and control in a role where she could truly be influential.

Due to the type of school environment he worked in, Chandler's motivations as a VP were to restore authoritative control over a community of staff and students who were used to bending the rules. Chandler inherited this situation upon his appointment, as it was embedded in the school culture, having been established at the origin of the school and maintained by the school community over time. Despite facing push-back, he saw the power from his VP role as the only solution to these culture problems. These issues absorbed most of his time and overwhelmed his role, despite having other goals of improving academic initiatives, working towards increased student success, and mastering his new role. His efforts towards directing culture changes were necessary to create the opportunities for other changes to occur during his tenure. If he could successfully change this aspect of the school culture which he had very limited influence over, then he believed his school community would be more open to him imposing other changes with more effectiveness and less resistance in the future.

Despite challenges, participants remained focused on influencing school culture. This motivation was driven by the sudden reality of their VP roles and responsibilities being vast and varied, where amidst the numerous challenges inhibiting their successful transition to administration, they maintained a desire to do, and to achieve the ultimate fulfillment of these goals. Through this push-back, participants revealed a lot about school culture influencers and stakeholders, and through their responses to these challenges they served to contribute to the understanding of the VP role and duties as complex.

School culture: Whose voice is the loudest? Contrary to the literature (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Gantner et al., 2000; Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003; Petrides et al., 2014; Scallion, 2010; Weller & Weller, 2002), participants expressed limited influence on school culture in their roles as VPs. They identified other various stakeholders who influenced their schools in different ways, but when asked to describe their roles, it was clear there was a lack thereof. Their voices, connected to notions of power, control, and authority, were silenced from those above them, being principal's, managers, school board personnel and MOE directives, in addition to those below them, mainly being teaching staff and students. These groups overpowered VPs, both in their numbers and in their influence, leaving the VP as a "middle-man" and virtually powerless. In this study, VP participants were navigating this role, and were lacking expertise, confidence and support in doing so. Similar to findings from Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) and Scallion (2010), the task of influencing school culture was not a feasible focus in the daily work of managing this role, despite their innate desires to enact these changes.

The findings from this study contributed an alternate perception of what is currently being reported about VP influence on school culture. A few reasons for this difference could be equated to the scope and focus of this study. This study focused on newly appointed VPs in the first 3 years of their role transition. Many other studies of administrators in this field did not have such a narrow lens, rather they tended to group VPs with principal experiences, creating discrepancies in the findings. The principal role by its nature is at the top of the administrative hierarchy and holds more influence. Compared to a VP, whose position is defined as at the discretion of the supervising principal, and who is thereby limited by their say, they would not have similar

experiences. Identifying specific voices is crucial to obtaining accurate knowledge about the lived experiences of VPs in these roles.

Recommendations

The implications of this study are important to the area of administration within the field of education. The outcomes of this research show that there are many areas for growth and change, in this area of administration. Through these three unique voices we gain knowledge of real, lived VP experiences, which give insights on the current perceptions of VP roles within schools. This research was derived and centered on documenting authentic stories from these newly appointed VPs, and through these conversations, this group of administrators were given a voice. Consequently, the recommendations related to this study are focused on presenting the genuine truths from these participant experiences, to ensure that they are represented both in their practice and roles as VPs, and in the literature. The findings presented in this study therefore have implications for educational practice, theory, and research.

Recommendations for Practice

The experience of becoming a secondary school VP, and the impacts on school culture as a result, leave lasting impressions regarding what can be done to improve this transition process. Moving forward, these findings can have a direct impact on all practices relating to the VP role, so that in taking these three experiences into consideration, positive changes can occur to better all experiences in these roles. This study portrays the daily work and life of a VP; therefore, any suggested recommendations will be purposeful in providing insights for decision-makers, who often make changes for VPs, without knowledge of the consequent implications. The findings from this study

also serve as a resource for VPs in their present roles, in addition to those who will move into administrative roles in the future, as there is the potential for these practices and policies to evolve over time, with these recommendations in mind.

Defining the VP role. This study contributed different ways to effectively define the VP role. Participants addressed the complications they experienced, caused by their roles and responsibilities being undefined. By being at the discretion of their supervising principals, participant experiences varied, as did the type and quantity of work that they were responsible for.

The VP position needs to be defined, and its roles need to be standardized by the MOE. Role requirements and responsibilities need to be standardized and outlined to ensure VP experiences are unanimous, and to show how important these roles are to the function of a school. Defining the VP role "through co-ordinated supports at the school, district, Ministry of Education, and the College of teacher's levels" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 120) will ensure a standardization of expectations and responsibilities for administrators in these positions. Having these roles and responsibilities outlined by the MOE allows for the VP to stand alone from the influence and discretion of their supervising principal, and ultimately is necessary for consistency in these roles across various schools and regions. Similarly, outlining standards regarding the length of the workday, and the quantity of work and responsibilities within the VPs portfolio, would ensure these aspects are regulated across school boards, so that the lived daily experiences in these roles are not overwhelmingly different for each VP. At the school board level, Ikemoto et al. (2014) explain how necessary it is to "set expectations for principals' day-to-day work that are aligned to and reinforce effective leadership practices defined by the [Ministry]

standards" (p. 22). Doing so would ultimately streamline these positions and eliminate any grey area with what the role entails, allowing "principals to focus on the things that matter … [and] to use their time efficiently and make the job feasible" (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 22).

It is also recommended that there is a review of a VPs tenure, leading to a mandate over the duration of years that each VP remains at a specific school. The current practice seems quite flexible, with VPs working at a specific school for a range of time, with no consistency as to when or why these tenures are shortened or extended. However, in this study, participants revealed that there was an unspoken standard of 3 to 5 years before VPs were moved. Participants agreed that this short tenure could often impede upon the amount of work that they were required to do, in order to meet their intended goals, and achieve the vision they had committed to. Gaining feedback from VPs surrounding the duration of time that they feel necessary to remain in a school is advised, so that they can more purposefully utilize their roles.

Another recommendation is to actively shift the perception of the VP role away from it being a stepping-stone to advancement within administration. This is a necessary change to ensure the continuity and significance of the VP role within schools. Whether it be becoming a principal, or a position at a school board, seeing the VP role as temporary, and ultimately unimportant, has detrimental impacts on this role. This outlook devalues the role, making the VP role seem undesirable, and as something you must do, or a pre-requisite that is needed, in order to qualify for a better position. Alternately, encouraging the role of "career VP" will generate changes in this field, where teachers will be interested in pursuing these roles, and will be passionate for the type of work that it

entails. It will also mean that VPs who take these roles will approach this work seriously, knowing that it matters and will influence the school as a whole.

Some recommendations for practice will require a change in the way the role of the VP is perceived and treated within schools. An idea to generate change would be to make efforts in repairing the relationship between administration and school staff. The "us versus them" issue was apparent in the experiences of all three VPs, and negatively impacted their daily work, and adjustment to the new role. Remedying these relationships through mediated restorative conversations, will allow the VP to make a difference in their roles, where they have the trust of their staff, and can work cohesively towards shared goals.

Purposeful and appropriate preparation for the VP role. Based on the findings from this study, there are several recommendations for the current preparation programs and procedures which train new administrators for their roles. First, modifying the prerequisites for VP roles, such as only promoting candidates who have fully completed a Master's thesis, and those who have fully completed the PQP, as opposed to those candidates who are only enrolled in or have partially fulfilled these programs, would make this transition easier for VPs. In preparing for the role transition, participants suggested an amendment to the prerequisite job requirements currently expected of VP candidates. Giroux and Gauthier (2006) identified that from a Canadian context the, "regulation regarding the conditions of employment of school administrators requires that administrators complete a graduate university program in educational leadership … [but] to apply for an administrator's position, a candidate must have earned at least six of the program's 30 credits" (p. 12). Participants highlighted the need for newly appointed VPs

to have completed a Master's thesis, and to have fulfilled their additional qualification courses in full, before assuming their administrative roles. In a study conducted by Beycioglu et al. (2012) there was a difference between postgraduate preparation where "vice-principals who were educational administration graduates ... felt themselves more effective and more synchronic in their schools" (p. 642), revealing that "having a graduate degree of educational administration better prepared the participants for their job … and their ability to balance their work and personal lives" (p. 645).

Related to the structure of the current PQP, it is recommended that modifications and revisions are made pertaining to the curriculum so it better suits content relevant for VP candidates. VP-focused curriculum in these preparation courses is necessary, thus making them more purposeful and specific to the VP experience. Traditionally the PQP "presume that the initial training of principals and assistant principals should be identical" (Hunt, 2011, p. 163). Rather, the generation of programs that are specific to the VP and principal role respectively, should be considered.

Prior to taking on the role, the need for practicum experience is necessary. Having this authentic day-in-the-life experience before becoming a VP would improve the transition process, as it would ease these candidates into their future roles, causing them to be more confident and comfortable with these new tasks and responsibilities (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Participants outlined that this opportunity would benefit them as it would allow them the opportunity to test out the role before making the permanent commitment. Preparing for the transition to administration would benefit from a practicum component, because candidates could shadow a VP in this role to gain an authentic and transparent outlook of this lived experience. Schmidt (2010) supports the

idea of a VP internship, whereby shadowing a mentor these candidates are "given an opportunity to explore situations through experiential training … in safe environments where they can apply these values and principles" (p. 632). Mandating these programs through legislation and implementing them across all school boards would also ensure that over time these standards would be "used to inform principal professional learning and to facilitate on-going conversations about practice and growth … [where they would] use the framework as the foundation for giving principals meaningful feedback and opportunities for development" (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 22).

Professional development (PD) sessions would provide another opportunity to prepare these candidates in less formal ways, thus introducing them to policies in educational administration earlier in their teaching careers. These sessions might appeal to candidates who already had some interest in pursuing administration and would be a low-risk way for them to learn more and gain firsthand experiences in this area. Having these experiences prior to the role transition is necessary for more transparency in these roles, and consequently, more success once these roles are acquired. These PD sessions would also provide a means of introducing administrative roles to teachers who may not have previously shown interest in this area.

It is also recommended that VPs should seek this role advancement independently, rather than being encouraged through recruitment tactics. Traditionally, VP recruitment is informal, yet it can be a successful means of acquiring candidates. However, VPs who prepared for, and chose these roles independently, rather than those who were "tapped on the shoulder" or otherwise recruited, might feel more confident in this transition having prepared through their own discernment process. Having the

internal motivation and desire for the role is a driving force that allows these candidates to be more successful. Being encouraged by another person, and then having to continue in the process independently, often sets VPs up for failure. These findings extend to participants who intended on staying in their VP roles, compared to those who pursued the principalship, and the differences in their experiences if these advancements were self-selected, or if they were encouraged by another stakeholder. In their study, Beycioglu et al. (2012) found that "vice-principals who did not plan to be a principal felt that they had more difficulties" (p. 643) and that the same group "experienced more difficulties when coping with work stress … than their career counterparts" (p. 645).

Mentorship and support throughout the vice-principalship. Mentorship and support during this role transition is necessary for new VPs.

> To participate in the various mentorship programs, internships, or coaching … [because as] new leaders [to] have a mentor relationship with more experienced principals or vice-principals in the early stages of their careers … [provided] collaborative models of learning in cohorts, so that real-life dilemmas could be discussed. (Schmidt, 2010, p. 633)

Mentorship is essential at the time of transition but should also be available throughout a VP's tenure in the role, and again as they move to new schools. Beycioglu et al. (2012) found that despite having some VP experience, the "vice-principals who had less than five years felt that they were less effective in their schools" (p. 643). A continued partnership while in this role would mean that regardless of experience, there would always be another person to lean on, who could provide knowledge, perspective, and insight, that would be specific to the VP role.

It is also recommended that an external outlet for support should be offered to VPs, so that in cases where there are internal conflicts or struggles within their schools and administrative teams, there is a safe place and person to offer support, without any fears of repercussions or consequences. Having this support in place for VPs would also ensure that they received appropriate and adequate support from within the field, so not to blend these professional issues with their personal lives, as they tend to do now. Doing so not only would ensure that professional and personal boundaries and relationships are not being blurred but also would see that VPs are getting productive results and feedback that can help them resolve these issues and move forward. In addition to having a private forum to resolve these issues, Schmidt (2010) reveals the importance of support from "respected colleagues and trained facilitators" (p. 633) in navigating these situations in a professional manner.

Recommendations for Theory

The two underlying theories that served as the basis for this study were both confirmed and challenged through these findings. The theories emerging from literature surrounding the administrative role and identity aligned with these three participant experiences. This transition to the VP role was confirmed as a critical change in these participants' lives, both impacting their identity and sense of self as they transitioned from teacher to VP, and their ability to be influential in their new role as administrators.

Social constructivism as a framework and approach to this research, provided a genuine representation of participant lived experiences. Further, as a perspective towards conducting interviews, I was able to gain authentic understandings surrounding these specific VPs, and their unique circumstances. Consequently, my findings, although rich

in detail, only speak to these three participant voices. As a result, I would further recommend the use of a theory that balances the organic and subjective approach offered with social constructivism, with one which can be refuted and grounded, leading to more concrete results with definitive findings and outcomes.

Recommendations for Further Research

To foster a deeper understanding about the experience of being a newly appointed secondary school VP, and their influence on school culture, more research into the field of education and administration is required. Currently, research surrounding the VP experience is limited, and overshadowed by the principal role. Narrowing specifically on the VP role will give more authenticity and insight to their lived experiences.

Understanding VPs for their unique qualities is essential to this field of research. By giving VPs a voice, and allowing them to speak to their specific experiences, we gain an understanding of who they are, and how that changes their experience in their roles. This was a surprising outcome of this research, where not enough value was originally given to the differences amongst VPs, and where it was assumed that their common experience of all being newly appointed administrators would align. Consequently, their testimonies ranged due to their personal demographics, outlining a need to narrow in on participant identifiers when conducting research. In a study of VPs conducted by Petrides et al. (2014), these researchers also noticed the impact of personal demographics and outlined many factors in their section entitled “Demographics: Factors that make a difference” (p. 186). As a result, I would recommend further research focus on gender, such as in the study conducted by Oplatka and Tamir (2009), where they investigated the experiences of newly appointed men and newly appointed women, respectively. In

addition, age was an unexpected factor, with younger VPs speaking to unique challenges that did not exist for older VPs who were near retirement. Similarly, differences regarding marital status and family structure, for those VPs with and without families or other dependents, led to many variances in their lived experiences as VPs. Although not prevalent in this study, an understanding of VPs based on their racial and ethnic backgrounds, would also be an integral point of focus for future research.

Further research should also be conducted to compare VPs from different geographic areas, as the focus of this study was on those working in large, urban school boards in Ontario, and these experiences might differ for VPs in rural areas, or for those in different provinces across Canada. Likewise, attention to the school size, and the amount of responsibilities related to the size of the staff and student populations, should be researched and compared. Similarly, the number of other administrators which make up the administrative team, creating a larger or smaller network of VPs, was also a noteworthy difference amongst participants, and should be further investigated as a factor which impacts VP experience.

Research comparing VPs who initiated their own role transition, with those who were encouraged or recruited by another stakeholder, would also provide interesting results. This would likely draw conclusions related to motivation, job satisfaction, and work outcomes that were mentioned throughout this research. Similarly, further research into the types of mentorship, internship, professional development, and preparation programs that VPs participated in would also be worthwhile to investigate in relation to this field. Looking at what forms of training and preparation are available to these candidates, and how their experiences change depending on their participation, could

show a variance in results across participants. In addition, comparing VPs who had fully completed these prerequisites, with those who were just enrolled, would be an interesting perspective to add to the literature.

Having this occur in one instance in this study, I would also recommend exploring the experiences of VPs who work in schools where they once assumed teaching roles. This participant's experience was fascinating and unique and would lead to a great future study. Further, evaluating the experiences of VPs whose role takes up 100% of their time, compared to those who maintain responsibilities as teachers, would also be interesting to investigate. This would likely lead to an understanding of the experiences between elementary school VPs, and secondary school VPs, like those focused upon in this study.

Having three candidates participate in this study, provided a limited outlook into this topic, especially given any of the demographics that further divided participant experiences. Consequently, having a larger group of participants to compare experiences with would be an enriching way to extend this research, so to generate larger sources of support for the experiences that are being shared. Specifically, this study focused on understanding the experiences of newly appointed VPs. However, understanding this role beyond these novice years would be an interesting point of comparison. It is anticipated that many of the challenges related to the role transition would not appear in conversations with experienced VPs. Alternately, there would be more depth to their stories about the types of relationships they have developed, the sense of influence that they have, and the ways they are able to generate change.

Utilizing other methodological approaches would also be an alternate way to explore research in this field, giving way to findings that generate from observation or

narrative, for example. Within the same focus of the VP experience, collecting data from other members of the school such as other administrators, teachers, and students, would be a very interesting way to compare perceptions of the role. Collecting data from other stakeholders, as they reflect on the VP role, would give depth to what is lived and what is perceived. This reflection would also be useful in generating data regarding the way the VP impacts the school culture, as it will outline their influence in a tangible and measurable way. Utilizing other stakeholders to generate these findings, who are all relevant to the VP role, would be worthwhile to explore in the future.

Conclusion

Research has shown that the VP role needs to be restructured to better serve the changing needs of secondary schools within Ontario. Defining these roles formally through legislation, and integrating them with appropriate preparation programs, mentorship opportunities, and standards of practice, would lead to many positive repercussions for those currently in these roles, and for those considering these roles in the future. Positive enhancements to the VP role will also impact the entire administrative team, leading to more cohesion amongst school leaders, and unity and efficiency in the work that they do throughout their schools.

Specific to the VP role, a defined set of tasks and responsibilities will positively contribute to job satisfaction, manageable workloads, and standardized expectations that will be consistent for all VPs in schools across Ontario. Eliminating the various obstacles and hardships that VPs currently face will ensure that they are more effective and purposeful in their roles as school leaders. On a larger scale, improvements to the VP role will aide in the longevity of these roles over time, attracting more teachers to consider

this transition to administration, while satisfying those currently in the roles to continue their tenure. Refining these roles would also contribute to VPs having more influence on their schools, and having their voices heard. There are many ways to improve upon the VP role both in theory and in practice, all which can be done through purposeful interactions with current VPs who are navigating these roles by listening to their lived experiences, and letting their voices and stories guide the changes.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Demographics

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. How long have you been a VP?
3. What percentage of your time is devoted to being a VP (how much release time do you get for being a VP?
4. Were you a teacher at this school before you became a VP?
    a. If so, do you think this affected your ability to be a VP?
        i. How do you define yourself in a different way?
5. Is it your plan to stay in this role? If not, what is your plan?

Administrative Identity

1. What made you decide to become a VP?
2. How did you prepare to become a VP?
3. How do you think being a teacher prepared you for your administrative role?
4. What are your main responsibilities in this role?
5. What has the experience of transitioning into the role of VP been like for you?
    a. How easy or difficult was it for you to make this transition?
        i. Did this surprise you?
6. How do you feel this transition into administration changed your professional identity?
7. Now that you're a VP, has it changed how you perceive the role of teachers? How?

   a. Did it change how teachers perceive you?

8. Now that you're a VP, has it changed how you perceive the role of the VP? How?
9. Now that you're a VP, has it changed how you perceive the role of the principal? How?
10. How do you feel this transition into administration changed your personal life?
11. How do you feel this transition into administration has changed your personal identity?
12. What has surprised you the most with respect to being a VP?
    a. What pressures do you feel in this role?
13. What have you found to be most challenging for you in this new role?
14. Have you had to make any decisions that have been uncomfortable for you?
    a. Why were they uncomfortable, and how did you manage them?
    b. Did anyone help you?
15. What have you found to be most rewarding? What are you most proud of?
16. Do you see yourself differently now that you're a VP?

School Culture:

1. How would you define school culture, and how would you describe the culture of your school?
2. What does your school look like and feel like when you walk in the doors?
3. *Who* do you think sets the culture of your school and how?
   a. Who are the leaders?
   b. Who is involved in the day-to-day?
4. Who are the heroes in your school, and how do they reflect your school's culture?

5. Are there any stories told that reflect/define/signify what your school culture is?
6. Describe any positive or negative relationships that you have developed.
    a. How did you navigate these relationships in your role as VP?
    b. How do these relationships affect you?
7. What are the norms and the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in your school? For students? Teachers? Parents? Administration?
8. How do you feel your school culture influences your ability to be an effective VP?
9. How do feel you are able to influence the school culture, as a VP?
    a. Is this different from your influence as a teacher?
10. Describe any instances where you felt your ability to do your job was limited by the culture of the school. Of the school board.
11. Describe any instances where you felt surprised by the school culture.

Final Questions:

1. Describe your best and/or worst day in this role.
2. What would you have liked to know about being a VP that you didn't when you first entered this role?
3. How do you think the role has changed over the last 10 years?
4. How manageable is the role of VP, and what do you recommend could be done to better assist you in being successful in this role? To better assist all VP's?
5. Do you feel you've given a fair picture of your role?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?