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Micropolitics and the Principalship: A Qualitative Examination of How Principals Develop This Critical Attribute of School Leadership

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Micropolitics and the Principalship: A Qualitative Examination of How Principals Develop This
Critical Attribute of School Leadership

by

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of the Requirements for the Degree
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ABSTRACT

Micropolitics and the Principalship: A Qualitative Examination of How Principals Develop This Critical Attribute of School Leadership

Schools, like most contemporary organizations, are complex places, and there is an extensive body of evidence that outlines the skills that school leaders must possess to effectively operate schools. Effective school leadership is essential, and not only for the safe and orderly operations of school. Recent evidence indicates that a positive relationship exists between principal effectiveness and student achievement.

The complexity of schools is due in part to the fact that schools are immersed in politics. This case sought to explore how principals acquire and develop the micropolitical skills required for their position from the onset of the principalship.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Micropolitics, or as it is sometimes called organizational politics, has been described as “the formal and informal use of power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals within organizations” (Blase & Blase 2002, p.9). Bolman and Deal (2003) in their seminal work, *Reframing Organizations*, spoke of politics as “...simply the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests.” (p.181). It is this phenomenon that puts politics at the heart of decision making. There is a growing body of evidence indicating that micropolitical skills are an essential attribute for principals, and that principals themselves describe their jobs as increasingly political in nature (Portin et al., Schnieder, DeArmond & Gundlach, 2003; Marshall & Scriber et al, 1991). Principals must be prepared to engage in a wide variety of leadership behaviors including micropolitical leadership (Portin et al. 2003), yet they often enter the profession having graduated from preparation programs that differ in content and quality (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen 2007). Some principals may start their principalship well grounded in micropolitical skills, while others may have received little quality training in this area. Portin et al. (2003) determined that principals must demonstrate micropolitical leadership if they are to be effective. This study examined the perceptions of three active principals to better understand how they developed their micropolitical leadership capabilities from the onset of their principalship. Qualitative data was gathered through the use of interviews. Qualitative research techniques are well suited to explore complex issues such as micropolitics and school leadership (Patton, 2003). It is important that principals possess

these skills. Principals adept at the knowledge and application of micropolitical skills are more effective (Portin et al , 2003; Waters et al, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002), and schools with effective principals are more likely to produce higher levels of student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Perhaps never before in the history of American education has there been more need and greater pressure for quality school leadership as a key to improved student performance. This study sought to contribute to the effort to produce principals who are better able to meet these demands. Additionally, Blase and Blase (2002) and Portin et al. (2003), after the careful examination of this topic, it called for ongoing research concerning the study of micropolitics and school leadership. This study was one response to that call.

While many principals describe their job as political, there seems to be a considerable amount of confusion and even some controversy, surrounding the subject (Malen & Cochran, 2008; Johnson, 2003; Iannaccone, 1991). Even principals who claim to be apolitical may encounter situations where politics are a factor. Research has indicated that it behooves school principals to possess an understanding of the political environment of their school communities and how to manage it (Portin et al. 2003). The study of politics in education is over four decades old; yet, there is no definitive agreement on how this term should be defined. (Scriber et al, Alemna & Maxy 2003). Much of the confusion surrounding this discipline can be traced to its conceptual underpinnings. The study of politics in education can be traced two distinct fields of study. As the name implies, one major contributor to this discipline is the field of political science. This field looks at the formulation and implementation of policy through the lens of institutional power and influence (Johnson, 2003). Organizational

theory is the other field that contributes to the understanding of politics in education. Theories derived from this field view political activity within organizations as the process whereby individuals and groups use power and influence to vie over scarce resources (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

As research into the field of politics in education advanced, scholars such as Iannaccone and Cistone (1974) and Hoyle (1999) introduced the concept of micropolitics in schools. Blase and Blase (2002) furthered this research and provided the field with one of the most used definitions for micropolitics. In 1991, Blase developed the following definition for micropolitics in schools:

Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part political action results from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously motivated, may have “political significance” in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact (pp. 9-10).

Scholars use the term *micropolitics* to describe the political dynamic that applies to the process of making decisions and allocating resources within schools. In contrast, the term *macropolitics* is used to describe processes that involve policy making and implementation that occur primarily outside of the school. Macropolitics is frequently employed to describe how power is used and decision making is conducted at district, state, and federal levels. While macropolitics is generally considered to be evident outside of the school, researchers have noted that micro- and macropolitics may exist at any level of school systems, depending on circumstances (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993).

The study of micropolitics in education has been criticized as being redundant and even pernicious. Critics argue that this subject is already explained by the fields of

political science and organizational theory (Iannaccone, 1991). Scholars Portin et al. (2003) and Blase and Blase (2002) have refuted these arguments asserting that the study of micropolitics makes an essential contribution to the advancement of effective administrative practice in schools. Malen and Cochran (2008) concluded that, while several definitions for micropolitics have been put forth in the research community, the focus on how individuals and groups use power and influence to affect decisions and allocations of resources in schools serves as a unifying construct for the field of educational politics.

This study sought to expand upon the examination of micropolitics by researching how public elementary school principals acquire and develop these skills from the onset of their principalship. Semistructured interviews to generate qualitative data that were to be used to formulate a clearer understanding of how principals develop the micropolitical skills needed to meet the demands of their position. The perceptions of the participants were carefully examined to uncover what types of formal and informal activities elementary principals engage in to acquire and develop their micropolitical skills from the onset of the principalship. I sought to uncover examples of induction practices for new administrators, professional development, advice, training provided by postcommencement, educational institutions and training provided by professional organizations, as well as other activities cited by the participants.

Three participants were purposefully selected elementary principals who lead similar public schools in Suffolk County, New York. Schools were identified based on 2008 data provided by the New York State Education Department. Participants had tenure or the equivalent of tenure, as of September 1, 2009. Names of candidates were

obtained in consultation with officials of three organizations that represent elementary principals in Suffolk County. Working with these officials, I sought to identify candidates that could offer information-rich accounts concerning how principals develop their micropolitical leadership capabilities.

Purpose of the Study

Schools, like most contemporary organizations, have become complex places to work and learn. Organizations in general and schools in particular require skilled leaders to operate effectively; yet it is not enough that these leaders possess intelligence. History is replete with stories of organizations that failed despite having bright leaders. Studies detail how otherwise intelligent and talented managers committed gross acts of mismanagement in companies the likes of CISCO and Enron. Many of these acts were due to the managers' inability to accurately understand and apply appropriate mental models to the functions of their organizations.

Schools are also susceptible to mismanagement. The fiscal or ethical misdeeds of school administrators tend to draw local, and even national headlines, as illustrated by events that occurred on Long Island, N.Y. during the past several years. Frank Tassone, former superintendent of Roslyn Schools, was convicted of stealing some \$2,000,000 from the district (Bradley, 2005). Other forms of mismanagement are more insidious, but do not draw as much attention. Principals who are ineffective and cannot meet the demands of instructional and building leadership may not grab headlines but do harm to schools none-the-less. Surveys sponsored by the Wallace Foundation indicate that while there are sufficient numbers of principal applicants, superintendents complain that obtaining qualified individuals is a major problem (Archer, 2003). Effective school

leadership is essential, but not only for the safe and orderly operations of schools. Evidence highlighted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), and Waters et al (2003) indicates that a significant relationship exists between principal effectiveness and student achievement.

Studies and reports describe the skills and attributes that principals must possess in order to be successful (ISLLC, 2008; Portin et al. 2003; Waters et al 2003). Bradley Portin and his colleagues (2003), working with a grant from the Wallace Foundation, completed an extensive study of 21 schools to examine the role of the principal. Portin et al. concluded that there are seven critical areas of school leadership. These areas are: 1) instructional, 2) cultural, 3) managerial, 4) human resource, 5) strategic, 6) external development, and 7) micropolitical. Waters et al (2003) also studied school leadership, and determined that, specific categories of leadership qualities were necessary in order for principals to be judged effective. Their study was based on an extensive search of more than 5,000 educational leadership studies dating back to the 1970's. Waters et al, conducted a meta-analysis on what they considered to be 70 superior works. The results of their study yielded the understanding that political acumen is necessary for effective school leadership. Forty-six states participate in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The consortium is responsible for the creation and publication of educational leadership policy standards that were first issued in 1996. This document points to the need for principals to demonstrate proficiencies related to the political domain.

As the body of work describing essential attributes and skills for principal grows, attention turns to how principals acquire these qualities. Some researchers, like

Northouse (2001) (as cited in Katz, 2004) have argued that effective principals possess innate qualities and characteristics that cannot be taught. Others feel that quality principal preparation programs can produce quality principals. Linda Darling-Hammond (2007) and a team of researchers set out to study the impact of exemplary leadership development programs on the performance of principals. Their study determined that exemplary programs produce school leaders that are far more likely to engage in effective leadership practices than principals who participated in comparison programs. Participants in the exemplary programs rated themselves “significantly better prepared to lead instruction and school improvement” (p. 143). Testimony of the teachers who work for these principals substantiates these findings. While Darling-Hammond et al. determined that the quality of principal development program matters, they stopped short of declaring that a causal relationship existed between principal effectiveness and exemplary preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Darling-Hammond et al.’s report concluded that, yes, exemplary programs do exist; however, the quality of principal preparation programs varied. Superintendents and school boards cannot assume that every new principal has received the same degree and quality of preparation.

Statement of the Problem

Micropolitics or, as it is sometimes called, organizational politics, is considered an essential skill for principals (Malen & Cochran, 2008; Portin et al., 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002), and lies at the “...heart of decision making” for managers of any type of organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.181). Principals enter the principalship with varying degrees of preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), so it cannot be assumed that principals receive sufficient training in the area of micropolitical leadership during

their preservice preparation. This study sought to explore the perceptions of sitting principals regarding the development of their micropolitical acumen from the onset of their principalship.

Research Questions

1. What formal structures do school districts, superintendents, and principal professional organizations provide to insure that elementary principals possess micropolitical knowledge and skill in Group 17 schools in Suffolk County, N.Y.?
2. What informal activities do elementary principals engage in to develop micropolitical skill and knowledge in Group 17 schools in Suffolk County, N.Y.?
3. How do principals describe their level of understanding of micropolitics upon entering the principalship in Group 17 schools in Suffolk County, N.Y.?
4. How do principals describe their current level of understanding of micropolitics in Group 17 schools in Suffolk County, N.Y.?

Significance of the Study

Micropolitical skills and attributes are considered essential for principals. The importance of the principal goes beyond efficient school operations. There is now evidence that indicates that the role of the principal has a significant impact on student achievement. This study has provided information for principals, professional organizations, policy makers, and superintendents concerning the design and effectiveness of inservice programs intended to develop micropolitical skills and attributes. Although the concept of politics in schools has been studied for over four decades, researchers Portin et al. (2003) and Blase and Blase (2002) have called for

further research in this critical area. This study sought to expand the knowledge base available for principals and researchers when applying the political frame to schools.

Conceptual Framework

Bolman and Deal (2003) argued that applying mental models is an effective strategy in helping make sense out of complex organizations. The authors, writing in their landmark work, *Reframing Organizations*, divided these mental models into four categories or frames. These frames were described as political, structural, human resource, and symbolic. This study concentrates on the political frame. Successful leaders understand the politics of their organization and use this understanding to help make the organization more efficient and productive.

Writing about politics in organizations can be traced back to Machiavelli's *Prince*. More contemporary examinations of organizational politics can be traced to the 1960's. Cyert and March (1963), as cited in Bolman and Deal (2003), began to examine how managers could apply an understanding of jobsite politics, in an effort to judiciously distribute limited resources, manage conflicts, and obtain results. Deal and Nutt (1980) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003) described how school administrators used the political power of their positions to effectively implement new programs in schools.

More recent works by Malen and Cochran (2008), Portin et al. (2003), and Blase and Blase (2002) recognized the critical impact that organizational politics has on the principalship. In order to delineate the role politics plays in educational organizations, Portin et al. and Blase and Blase utilized the term *micropolitics* to describe how the political frame applies to internal operations within school organizations.

Bolman and Deal (2007) provided one of the most concise descriptions of the skills and attributes necessary for leaders in any organization to exercise effective micropolitical or organizational leadership. After an exhaustive review of the literature, they conclude that organizational politics is comprised of four distinct skillsets. Each category is substantiated by substantial research. The four categories are: 1) mapping the political terrain, 2) setting the agenda, 3) networking and coalition building, and 4) bargaining and negotiating.

I sought to obtain a more robust and nuanced view of the ways that elementary principals perceive the use of these attributes impacts their roles as leaders of their schools. Careful attention was given to the participants' descriptions of how they develop these skills from the beginning of their principalships. Structured interviews were used to gather this data.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study examined the experiences of three public elementary school principals using a case study approach. The participants for this study came from Group 17 schools in Suffolk County, New York. Only elementary public school principals were considered for this study.

Delimitations

Scholars such as Malen and Cochran (2008), Blase and Blase (2002), and Portin et al. (2003) have supported the examination of micropolitics in education as a distinct field of study. Researchers such as Bacharach and Mundell (1993) have questioned the benefits that may be gained as a result of the study of micropolitics arguing that there is no purpose in differentiating between macro and micropolitics (Scriber et al, 2003). This

current study rejected Bacharach's argument, and will specifically concentrated on those attributes of politics in education referred to as *organizational politics* or *micropolitics*. Those phenomena that pertain to macropolitics were not considered for purposes of this study. *Macropolitic*, as used here, pertains to the political processes that occur primarily on the federal and state level.

Definition of Terms

Four Frame Model: Concept presented by Bolman and Deal (2003) in their work *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. The work of leaders and managers is organized into four components: structural, human resource, political and symbolic. These frames are then used as a tool for providing insights that will help to make sense of complex organizations.

Political Frame: The mental model for organizations that views the process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of power, scarcity, and divergent interests.

Micropolitics: Refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations.

Political astuteness: The ability to manage politically charged situations to successful outcomes.

Principal: The educator who possesses executive authority in the school.

Similar schools: As defined by the New York State Department of Education are schools that serve similar students and have similar resources. The following factors are considered in grouping schools: a) the grade levels served by the school, b) rates of student poverty and limited English proficiency, and c) the income and property wealth

of district residents. Student poverty levels are indicated by determining the percentage of children in the school who participate in the free-lunch program.

Skill: A learned behavior or ability that can be applied to leadership.

Summary

Principals play a critical role in schools. Not only are principals responsible for managing safe and efficient buildings, recent studies have indicated that student achievement is affected by principal performance. Effective principals understand and manage the political aspect of their schools. Malen and Cochran (2008), Portin et al. (2003), and Blase and Blase (2002) have referred to the formal and informal political processes within a school organization as *micropolitics*. Schools are steeped in politics and these authors conclude that effective principals must possess a sophisticated level of micropolitical skill to insure successful school operations.

Linda Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) working with a team of researchers determined that principal preparation programs vary in both quality and content. Exemplary programs are more likely to produce principals that engage in effective behaviors; however, superintendents have reported difficulty in obtaining sufficient numbers of qualified principal candidates.

This qualitative study used case study analysis to examine the experiences of three public elementary school principals. I sought to determine what formal and informal activities school districts, policy makers, professional organizations and individual principals engage in to acquire and develop micropolitical skill and knowledge.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

Chapter II provides a framework to better understand the different ways that politics affect the function of schools and how the theory of micropolitics in schools has unfolded over the decades. The study of politics in education is examined and its value as a distinct field of inquiry is considered. Emphasis is given to the skills that principals require to provide micropolitical leadership in their schools and the methods used to acquire these skills. The difference between micropolitics and macropolitics is delineated. Studies are included from the United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium and Australia as well as the United States.

The Four Frames

In order to better understand the role that politics plays in organizations in general, and schools in particular consideration will be given to a comprehensive framework that explains current theories regarding organizations. This framework was provided by Bolman and Deal (2003) in their seminal work, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. Bolman and Deal provided a framework to categorize and explain a broad range of theories concerning the operation of organizations.

Throughout the past century, theories have been espoused, and research has been conducted to better understand how organizations function. The application of mental models is an effective strategy to help make sense out of complex organizations. Bolman and Deal (2003) divided these mental models into four categories or frames. These frames were described as 1) structural, 2) human resource, 3) political, and 4) symbolic.

Contemporary organizations have become complex places to manage and work. Serieux (1993), as cited in Bolman and Deal (2003), described the exponential growth of the intricacy in organizations as a “big bang” that resulted from the confluence of the information revolution, globalization, and numerous political and social factors (p.5). As members of society, we rely on organizations to provide us with needed goods and services. All organizations require skilled leaders to operate effectively. It is not enough that these leaders possess intelligence. History is replete with stories of organizations that failed, despite having bright leaders. Bolman and Deal (2003) cited studies conducted by Vaughan (1995), who examined the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster, and by Charan and Useem (2002), who delved into the collapse of Cisco Systems, to describe that otherwise intelligent and talented managers committed gross acts of mismanagement. These acts were the result of the managers’ inability to accurately understand and apply appropriate mental models to the functions of their organizations. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), Charan and Useem (2002) noted the failure of 176 public companies in 2000 and 257 companies in 2001. The combined assets of these companies totaled more than 343 billion dollars. These failures, Charan and Useem had concluded, were attributable entirely to managerial error and came at a time when America’s economy was the strongest in the world (Bolman and Deal, 2003). Bolman and Deal referred to the inability of managers to make sense out of the operations of their organizations as the “curse of cluelessness” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.6).

To combat this phenomenon, Bolman and Deal offered tools designed to help managers and leaders make sense of the operations and functions of their organizations. These tools are organized within four frames and are mental models that, when applied

appropriately, help to make sense out of the complexity and seeming chaos of modern organizations. Bolman and Deal detailed these frames after conducting a thorough and exhaustive review of literature related to organizational theory. The authors incorporated the theories of dozens of renowned theorists to provide a robust portrait of how each frame impacts the function and characteristics of organizations.

Theories, design, and behavior of organizations can be better understood when seen through these frames. Principals must exhibit proficiency in all four frames, as all effective managers of organizations must do. Both Blase and Blase (2002) and Portin et al. (2003) have called on researchers to more closely examine the role that the political frame holds in schools, and how it can be used to better understand how schools function. This study is one response to that call.

The Political Frame: Organizational Politics

Politics is a pervasive part of organizational life (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Machiavelli detailed its existence in *Prince* over 500 years ago. During the early part of the last century researchers including Frederick Taylor and Max Weber started to examine organizations using scientific terms and processes. Organizations came to be viewed as “unitary entities,” monoliths that acted with singular purpose. Bolman and Deal (2003) noted that Cyert and March challenged this view in their 1963 book, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*. In this work Cyert and March embraced the concept that organizations were, in reality, a conglomeration of coalitions and subgroups. Their work provides an early, and important, contribution to the understanding of the political frame. Bolman and Deal (2003) cited Cyert and March in describing the dynamic that exists between different coalitions within an organization. This dynamic is highlighted by a

bargaining process where in limited resources are exchanged in an effort to manage conflict and obtain results. Cyert and March argued that this is a more realistic portrayal of how decisions are made in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2003) focused attention on Gamson (1968), who expanded on this portrait of decision making by articulating the relationship that exists between authorities and partisans and the distinct effect this relationship has on organizations. Authorities provide initiatives that come from the top down, while partisans mobilize groups to assert their bottom-up agendas. Stability in an organization exists when there is a balance between the authorities and the partisans. Gamson reasoned that the absence of authority results in chaos (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Politics ultimately comes down to how members of organizations acquire, maintain, and use power to resolve conflicts and obtain desired results. Bolman and Deal (2003) summarized the works of Baldrige, 1971; French and Raven, 1959; Kanter, 1977; Pfeffer, 1981; and Russ, 1994, to create a list of eight sources of power. These sources include 1) position (authority), 2) information and expertise, 3) control of rewards, 4) coercive power, 5) alliances and networks, 6) control of agendas, 7) framing (control of meaning and symbols), and 8) personal. These sources of power are all available to school principals. Bolman and Deal (2003) referred to a caveat offered by Kotter (1985) that is particularly applicable to many principals. While principals possess position authority, this type of authority is not sufficient to get the job done, and a “power gap” is said to exist (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 196). Principals must look beyond the authority that ensues from their positions to utilize power in all of its forms to accomplish

their mission. How principals develop their understanding of power, and the skills to use it, lies at the heart of this study.

Bolman and Deal (2003) presented studies conducted by Deal and Nutt (1980) to provide insight into how school administrators use power. Deal and Nutt studied how programs sponsored with federal funds were implemented in schools. Administrators, acting quickly to take advantage of federal funding for their schools, developed programs with little input from their staffs. The administrators were pleased when the proposals were approved for government funding. Their happiness turned to disappointment when the teachers and staff responsible for implementing the new programs met the news with “resistance, criticism, and anger” (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p. 228). What the administrators failed to account for was the political dynamic that was extant in their schools. The administrators assumed that the legitimate authority they possessed as administrators was sufficient to initiate these new programs. These administrators did not recognize that the partisans of the organization, the teachers and other staff members, also possessed power. Deal and Nutt’s study revealed that the partisans ultimately had enough power to not only halt the initiatives, but also to contribute to the demise of some superintendents (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

It is important that power, and the use of power, should not be viewed exclusively in negative terms. Foucault (1975) (as cited by Bolman & Deal, 2003) asserted that power is not necessarily bad, as it is power that produces what ultimately becomes the reality of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.192). Every day, principals have the ability, as well as the responsibility to use their power to push the school’s agenda forward. One can say that principals who deny the existence of the political dynamic in

schools are naïve, while principals who assume that all school constituents use politics to obtain only selfish gains are cynical. Kotter (1985) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003) argued that neither view is accurate explaining that public and private organizations need managers who possess sophisticated social skills and strong leadership capabilities. Kotter described these types of managers as “benevolent politicians” who must possess the skills necessary to mobilize all members of the organization to achieve “meaningful purposes despite the thousands of forces that push [organizations] apart; ...skills that can keep our corporations and public institutions from descending into a mediocrity characterized by bureaucratic infighting, parochial politics, and vicious power struggles” (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p.204).

Bolman and Deal, after a thorough review of the literature, listed four categories of political skills that effective leaders must possess. These skills are categorized as 1) agenda setting, 2) mapping the political terrain, 3) networking and building coalitions, and 4) bargaining and negotiation. The need for these skills is based on the following assumptions: 1) organizations are made of coalitions, 2) enduring differences exist between members, 3) important decisions determine how to assign scarce resources, 4) conflict invariably results from tension caused by differences and the struggle over resources and power ultimately becomes the most important resource and 5) action results from the bargaining and negotiating that takes place among the members of the organization (Bolman and Deal, 2007).

Bolman and Deals’ five political assumptions can be applied to better understand how schools function. Principals must deal with coalitions of teachers, parents, students, staff, central office administrators, colleagues, and community members. Each group has

vested interests that play into how the school operates. Many times these interests are in conflict with each other. Funds, time, and knowledge are limited resources. Conflict erupts over how to distribute these resources. Conflict in organizations is exacerbated by the differences that exist among the different groups, and power becomes a critical feature of school life. The principal possesses the power associated with the authority of his or her position, but this power is not enough to rule by estoppel. It is here that principal-leader-manager must utilize all the forms of power that he or she possesses combined with sophisticated political skills and acumen to negotiate with the various stakeholders to produce meaningful outcomes for the school.

Politics in Education

While the study of politics in education is over four decades old, there is little consensus on what defines politics in education and, at times, there appear to be more questions than answers in the literature (Malen and Cochran, 2008; Lindle & Mawhinney, 2003; Scriber et al, 2003; Johnson, 2001). However, there is considerable evidence to substantiate the claim that school leaders consistently frame their practice as political (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Marshall & Scriber et al, 1991). Schools have been described as arenas where leaders must continually engage in political activities to manage conflict, find balance, and use power to survive. The study of politics in education seeks to answer the critical question, "...who gets what and how as well as who did not get what and why" (Lindle & Mawhinney, 2003, p.4).

Scriber et al (2003) described the emergence of the politics of the education field as having a "messy center" (p.10). They attributed this condition to the theoretical foundation of the field. The application of different theories resulted in two distinct

strands of study concerning how politics relates to educational organizations. The primary referent for the examination concerning the politics *of* education is the field of political science. Organizational theory and the study of educational administration provide the underpinnings for the study of politics *in* education. These different roots have resulted in a theory that lacks a “single disciplinary paradigm” (Scriber et al, 2003).

Theories explaining the relationship between politics and the operations of educational organizations have vacillated over the years between the use of organizational theory or political science as the primary referent. There was a strong alignment with political science during the 1970's. Iannacone and Cistone (1974) are noted for having applied the principles and methods of political science to the theories of educational administration. Hoyle (1999), in contrast, developed the notion that micropolitics within schools is distinct from other forms of politics. This form of politics relates more closely to politics described by organizational theorists. Despite this lack of coherence, Scriber et al (2003) endorsed the continued study of politics in education. Such study, they argued, provides a valuable tool that, when used as a heuristic device, can provide insights into educational phenomena that were previously invisible to both researchers and practitioners.

Micropolitics Defined

Moore (1993), as cited in Bolman and Deal (2003) noted that organizations are arenas for internal politics as well as “political agents in larger arenas or ecosystems” (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p.228). Schools certainly function within larger systems created by district, state, and federal policy makers. Local, state and federal politicians can support or detract from the school's effort to accomplish its mission. This contrast of

internal, parochial politics with the political ecosystem that exists outside of the school has drawn the attention of educational researchers. Blase and Blase (2002) summarized two decades of study pertaining to politics pertaining in schools, and divided it into two discrete subcategories that they referred to as *macropolitics* and *micropolitics* in education. Both terms are grounded in similar principles. These terms incorporate ideas of power, coalitions, conflict, negotiation, and values. Macropolitics pertains to the political dynamic external to the school. This includes public and private relationships on the local, state, and national levels. Examples include the relationships that schools have with state and federal departments of education, knowledge of corporations, and political representatives. Iannaccone and Cistone (1974) noted that the political milieu outside of schools affects politics at the building level. Boyd (1991), as cited in Blasé and Blasé (2002), later presented a case study concerning the politics associated with policy implementation. The 1980's were marked by a groundswell of political sentiment for school reform. Political actors outside of the schools established a reform agenda for schools. One of the most visible and lasting acts of this movement was the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Schools were directed to implement policies based on this document. What Boyd noticed next was startling. It was not the authors of the policies but those responsible for implementing the policies, who had the final say as to how these policies were actually implemented. School administrators, because of their proximity to their buildings, ultimately took theory-laden policy and turned it into practice. Boyd's insight spawned a host of studies that examined how policies were implemented on the school level, and

thus began the systematic study of micropolitics on the school level (Blase & Blase, 2002).

Blase and Blase (2002) acknowledged that there is no clear consensus on the exact definition of micropolitics in schools, although a great deal has been written about the subject (pp. 7-8). While some researchers would limit the concept of micropolitics to the organizational politics that take place only at the most basic levels of school functions, organizational scholars generally recognize this idea as an oversimplification and that micropolitics can take place at any level of an organization (Blase & Blase 2002).

Much of the research into micropolitics in schools has used the following definition introduced by Blase in 1991 and provided in Chapter I (Blase and Blase, 2002).

This definition of micropolitics is in keeping with Bolman and Deal's (2003) description of the political frame and both Blase (1993) and Marshall (1991) referred to micropolitics as a synonym for intraorganizational, or organizational politics.

Micropolitics Contrasted With Macropolitics

Iannaccone (as cited in Marshall, 1991) is generally credited with introducing the term *micropolitics of education* in the late 1960's yet, most of the research concerning the politics of education focused on broader, macropolitical topics. The field of economics has established two interrelated but distinct subgroups known as *macroeconomics and microeconomics*. This distinction has enabled scholars to develop effective paradigms to explain how complex economic systems function on the broad national and global scale (macroeconomics) and on the smaller, more localized individual arena of the local marketplace (microeconomics).

Scholars who study educational administration have found this approach to be useful in the study of politics in education. Ball (1987) recognized that the internal dynamics of schools could not be completely explained as the implementation of policies developed on local, state and federal levels. These outside agencies may limit the range of possibilities open to teachers, but they cannot exercise absolute control over what happens within schools. The study of micropolitics seeks to explain two basic facets of the organizational life of schools, conflict and domination, while macropolitics examines how policies are established, relationships are maintained, and resources are allocated on levels external to the school (Blase & Blase, 2002; Ball, 1987; Hoyle, 1999).

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) are scholars who notably rejected the notion that the study of politics in schools should be divided into the subfields of micropolitics and macropolitics. They based their argument on the premise that it is not theoretically possible to divorce politics and policy within organizations. Ball's initial argument that the micropolitics of schools should be studied as a distinct field has been substantiated by Blase (1991) and Blase (2002) and Portin et al. (2003). They concluded that the study of micropolitics contributes to a better understanding of how schools function, and provides tools that enhance principal efficacy.

The Research on Micropolitics in Schools

Research examining micropolitical leadership in schools has relied on qualitative methods to gather data. According to Malen and Cochran (2008), recent articles describing micropolitics in schools trace their research roots to Ball's (1987), Blase's (1991), Blase and Anderson's (1995), and Marshall's and Mitchell's (1991) use of case study analysis. Blase and Blase (2002) referred to case studies, when they concluded that

principals, along with other members of school communities, “are deeply immersed in a dynamic, micropolitical world; [where they] among other things routinely employ a range of strategies and tactics to achieve their goals and protect their interests” (p. 17). Portin et al.’s (2003) study examining the essential elements of school leadership utilized data gathered from detailed case studies of 21 schools in four cities across four states. Portin et al. (2003), based on this research, identified micropolitical leadership as one of seven essential elements of school leadership.

Studies examining the impact of micropolitics in schools have been conducted in various nations. Geert Kelchtermans (2007), working in Belgium, employed the case study approach to better understand how macropolitics influences micropolitics in Flemish schools. Eight years previously, Bennett (1999) provided anecdotal evidence, based on her participation in the Australian Self Review process (ASSR), that micropolitics is extant in Tasmanian schools and requires further study. Mawhinney’s review of the literature noted that “...researchers in the UK (Hoyle, 1986; Ball, 1987), Canada (Townsend, 1990), and the US (Blasé, 1991; Iannacone 1991; Marshall & Scriber, 1991; Willower, 1991; Anderson & Herr, 1993; Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Lindle, 1994; Blase & Anderson, 1995; Malen 1995) have explored the conceptual dimensions of a micropolitical lens for analyzing school administration” (p.161).

Case study research is an approach to qualitative research that may be described as particularistic, descriptive, or heuristic (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). The purpose of case study research is to provide an all-encompassing methodology that is used to illuminate phenomena that occur within a unit of study or a bounded system. Portin et al. (2003) conducted case studies to examine how leadership was exercised within the

context of school systems, and how explanations for leadership were developed based on the information acquired in these studies. These explanations would not have been possible if other forms of research were utilized. Case study research is particularly useful to describe and explain little known or poorly understood situations. (Leedy). Blase's (1991) use of case study shed light on developing theories related to micropolitics in schools. Despite the results drawn from these studies, Portin et al. (2003) and Blase and Blase (2002) have stressed the need for further research.

Micropolitics and the Role of the Principal

Portin et al. (2003), working under a grant from the Wallace Foundation, conducted a series of in-depth interviews with representatives from 21 schools in four cities and across four states. Portin et al. developed several critical insights concerning effective school leadership and concluded that principals must be able to apply these insights to accurately diagnose the needs of their buildings. Portin et al. stated that all schools, regardless of size or type, require leadership in each of these seven critical areas: 1) instructional, 2) cultural, 3) managerial, 4) human resources, 5) strategic, 6) external development, and 7) micropolitical. They offered the insight that the principal is not necessarily the only individual responsible for providing leadership in schools and that some of the responsibility for leadership can be delegated. For example, the principal is ultimately responsible for understanding the demands of instructional leadership and making sure that this demand is met, but may appropriately delegate the responsibility of updating a curriculum guide to a qualified lead teacher.

As mentioned previously, Portin et al. noted that the area of micropolitical leadership requires further study. They explained that micropolitical leadership requires

principals to manage the interactions between the other six critical areas of leadership. Portin et al.'s (2003) study noted that micropolitical leadership was one of the seven critical areas of school leadership that principals did not delegate to others.

Blasé (1998) described how strongly power and politics influence what happens in schools (Blase & Blase, 2002), and Bolman and Deal (2003) encouraged managers and leaders to consider the political frame when analyzing their organizations. Schools are complex organizations that are steeped in politics, and principals must possess political skills and acumen to effectively manage their schools.

Sergiovanni (1996) considered the political nature of schools and asked if schools are special, unique types of organizations that are different from other forms of corporations. Do principals require the same political skills as those required for a manager from IBM or Merrill Lynch? He argued that schools are indeed special types of organizations that are part of a continuum of organizational types that range from commercial corporations like IBM to wholly altruistic organizations such as churches. Sergiovanni recognized that, on this continuum, schools lie closer to churches than to corporations.

Sergiovanni recognized that politics permeate the school environment and urged school leaders to adopt a style of political management based on virtue. While the politics of corporations can sometimes be described as the nip and tuck of various coalitions maneuvering and fighting over limited resources; Sergiovanni instead called on school stakeholders to “subordinate their own private interests for the general good of the school” (p. xviii). While the conventional wisdom as expressed by Gamson (1968) suggests that principals use their positional authority to push forward their own agenda

for schools, Sergiovanni (1996) instead called on principals to create a compelling vision that all stakeholders can agree to work towards. Block and Deal (2003) noted that Block (1987) and Burns (1978) expressed similar sentiments by urging managers to create a noble image of what they would like their departments to accomplish and to use positive politics to appeal to the higher motives of their members.

Principals and Their Effect on Student Achievement

Educators may have known intuitively that the quality of leadership provided by the principal affects school performance, but not until recently was evidence established to substantiate this claim. There are a host of articles that provide school leaders with advice on how to conduct their jobs. The authors of these articles relied on theory, while eschewing the analysis gained from the growing body of quantitative data that was becoming available regarding the impact of school leadership. (Waters et al, p.3), working with the McREL balanced leadership framework, undertook an exhaustive meta-analysis of studies dating back to the 1970's. The data from their analysis demonstrate that a relationship exists between leadership and student achievement (Waters et al., p.3). Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) studied achievement data involving 1818 teachers and 6490 students. The authors were able to conclude that principal leadership had a weak, but nonetheless significant, effect on student achievement. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom in their 2004 work on how leadership influences student learning, pointed to the promise of Waters et al's work, but cautioned educators to view Water et al's conclusions with reservations. Leithwood et al. recognized that the extensive skills outlined in the Waters et al. study are indicators, of what behaviors school leaders should engage in to positively influence student achievement, but cautioned that more study is

necessary before a causal relationship can be drawn between principal effectiveness and student achievement. Still Leithwood et al. (2004) concluded with the sentiment that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning, especially in high-need schools” (p.3).

Political Skills and Principal Preparation

Linda Darling-Hammond et al.(2007), recognizing how important effective principals are to school success, undertook an in-depth study of eight exemplary pre- and inservice principal development programs. This carefully constructed qualitative study enabled the authors to determine that “exemplary programs can produce leaders who engage in effective practices” (p. 143). Their work revealed that while there appears to be sufficient numbers of applicants, superintendents report a lack of sufficiently qualified principal candidates.

Superintendents cannot assume that every principal hired will be fully prepared with the skills needed to be effective school leaders. Superintendents, policy makers, and professional organizations in an overall attempt to improve school quality will want to take formal and informal action to insure that principals possess essential skills (Leithwood). Individual principals seeking to enhance their personal effectiveness will embrace activities provided through their school organizations, as well as pursue formal and informal individual learning activities outside of the organization (McGough, 2003).

David McGough (2003) noted that three primary methods are used to improve principal practice: 1) the redesign of administrator preservice programs, 2) the use of inservice professional development, and 3) the redesign of the induction and assessment process at the district level. Olivero and Armistead (1981), writing for the National

Association of Secondary Supervisors and Principals, described two critical goals for principal inservice programs. The first should be to benefit students; the second is to enhance principal's personal effectiveness within school organizations.

Olivero and Armistead noted that principals' learning can be accomplished through activities ranging from informal networking to carefully planned, systemic training. Ineffective training is characterized as sporadic, patchwork, and fragmented. Leithwood studied exemplary formal inservice programs by examining five components. Effective inservice programs addressed 1) the image of an effective principal, 2) classification of principal behavior, 3) provision for stages of growth (with special attention to entry level principals), 4) forms of instruction, and 5) assessing the impact of training on principal performance. The best programs had a positive impact on principals' ability to influence change in their schools.

Summary

The study of politics in education is four decades old, and the concept of micropolitics has been examined for nearly as long; yet, both Portin et al. (2003) and Blase and Blase (2002) have called for further research into this critical, yet messy, aspect of school organizations. David Boote (2005) (as cited in Berliner, 2002) wrote that problems in education typically are messy which makes research in education more difficult than other fields. He argued that it is essential for educational researchers to conduct sophisticated in-depth reviews of the literature as they conduct their research.

This review of the literature has relied heavily on the works of several influential scholars. Bolman and Deal's comprehensive analysis and accompanying framework of organizations is widely recognized for its usefulness as a tool for understanding a very

complex field. Lee Bolman has a Ph.D. in organizational behavior and Terrance Deal has a Ph.D. in Educational Administration. Both authors are recognized as experts in the fields of educational administration and organizational leadership and their best-selling book is about to enter its fourth edition. The Politics of Education Association (PEA) fosters an exchange of viewpoints between educational scholars, practitioners, and policy makers over the subject of educational governance and politics, and its publications have provided tremendous insight into the area of politics and schools. The PEA is also closely affiliated with the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Jay D. Scriber et al is a founding member of PEA, and has written extensively on the general topic of politics in education and on the use of micropolitics by school leaders. Laurence Iannaccone has written numerous books and articles, and is the recipient of PEA's lifetime achievement award. Catherine Marshall is a past president of PEA. Stephen Ball, Joseph Blase and Eric Hoyle are among the most frequently cited scholars in the literature regarding micropolitics in schools. Each author has written dozens of books and peer reviewed articles devoted to the subject.

Decades of research are reflected in this review of the literature; yet, there is no absolute definition for what constitutes the political dynamic that exists in school organizations. Despite this lack of cohesiveness, several patterns concerning micropolitics in schools are evident. Educators make up a diverse community of scholars and there is no reason to assume that they always share a common vocabulary, but a working definition for micropolitics in schools has emerged. Hoyle (1999) and Blase (1991) have provided definitions that are still being used by Portin et al. (2003) and Scriber et al (2003). These definitions are complementary, rather than contradictory and

have been employed by researchers in North America, Europe and Australia. Further these definitions are consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2003) definitions for organizational politics. These definitions form the core of this study.

The research and theories concerning politics and education that yielded these definitions have evolved over the years. This evolution has been marked by the fluctuation between political science and organizational theory as the primary referents for the study of politics and education. Scriber elaborated how the structuralist, rationalist, and culturalist research traditions further helped to shape the theories of politics and education. The rationalist tradition offers the keenest insights as to how principals apply micropolitics to school operations, and is the approach that was applied to this study. Where the culturalist and structuralist view the role of the individual as actor controlled by the organization's culture and structure respectively, it is the rationalist approach, with its focus on choice, that offers the greatest promise for a better understanding of how principals can apply micropolitics to effectively manage their schools.

Lastly, some scholars have raised the argument concerning the utility of the concept of micropolitics as a distinct field of inquiry. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) argued that there is no empirical reason to separate micro and macropolitics. They asserted that the political process that produces policy is, for all intents and purposes the same process that individuals and coalitions engage in to determine how resources are allocated within schools. This argument, however, is rejected by numerous researchers, who conclude that applied micropolitical analysis is essential to discovering more effective explanations for school dynamics and to developing deeper understandings for

how schools function (Iannacone & Cistone, 1974; Hoyle, 1999; Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991; Portin et al., 2003; and Scriber et al, 2003). As Ball (1987) effectively argued, the study of micropolitics makes visible previously unseen factors critical to school operations. Researchers who seek to better understand how micropolitics impact the role of the principal will do well to heed Ball's argument.

Conclusion

Schools are remarkably complex organizations that strain the leadership capabilities of the principal (Portin et al., 2003). Principals enter their positions having graduated from principal preparation programs that vary greatly in both quality and content (Darling-Hammond et al. 2007). School leaders consistently describe their schools as politically charged places in which to work; yet, researchers continue to acknowledge that there is still need for more study into how politics affects the operations of schools (Scriber et al, 2003; Portin et al., 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002).

Several researchers have advanced the notion that the politics of education can be divided into two distinct subfields referred to as macropolitics and micropolitics (Iannacone & Cistone, 1974; Hoyle, 1999; Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991). The study of macropolitics seeks to explain how educational policy is developed and how resources are distributed to schools on the level of federal, state, and district educational agencies. The first use of the term *micropolitics* in schools is generally credited to Iannacone et al., appearing in an article written in 1975 (Scriber et al, 2003). Over the years, educational scholars have sought to refine this term using concepts borrowed from organizational theory. Scriber et al (2003) noted that politics in education is a field of study comprised of "a messy center" (p.10). Ideas in this field are advanced as largely

heuristic devices. As such these theories do not yet provide absolute understandings for how politics impact schools, but they do provide critical insights for how individuals and diverse coalitions come together to get things done in the school setting. Ball (1987) argued that the “micropolitical analyses offers better explanations for school dynamics...” (Scriber et al, 2003, p.23). Other scholars who have argued that the study of micropolitics offers unique and worthwhile tools to better understand school organizations include Hoyle (1999), Blase (1991), and Scriber et al (2003).

The ever-increasing scrutiny that schools are under in this politically charged, reform-minded era demands that principals possess substantial amounts of political savvy, as well as educational acumen in order to succeed. Educational scholars Blase & Blase (2002) and Portin et al. (2003) have called for further research into the study of micropolitical leadership in schools. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the critical body of knowledge of how principals acquire and utilize the elements of micropolitical leadership from the onset of their principalship. This knowledge will provide individual principals, professional organizations, local school districts, and state educational agencies with the background to help plan formal and informal activities necessary for the acquisition and development of this essential attribute of school leadership.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to provide a detailed portrait of how three principals experience the phenomenon of micropolitics in similar public elementary schools located in Suffolk County, N.Y. This study explored the manner in which these individuals developed their understanding of micropolitics from the onset of their principalships. The three participants were purposefully selected for their political astuteness. The use of structured interviews obtained information-rich accounts of the participants' perceptions of the impact that micropolitics has on their roles as building principals.

Research Design

Hoyle (1999) observed that there is a “considerable gap” (p. 96) in understanding between the environment explained by organizational theory and the pragmatic world experienced by school administrators. He noted that “empirical studies of micropolitics were extremely rare” (Hoyle, 1999, p. 96). More recent work indicates that there is still need to empirically examine how micropolitics impacts school leadership (Malen & Cochran, 2008; Scriber et al, 2003; Portin et al., 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002). Scholars Malen and Cochran (2008), Portin et al. (2003), and Blase & Blase (2002) concluded that micropolitics is an essential element of school leadership that requires further research. This study applied qualitative research methodologies to delve deeper into the phenomenon of how principals acquire, develop, and apply micropolitical leadership skills from the onset of their principalships. This question is particularly important in

light of Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) and Portin et al.'s (2003) findings that principals receive inconsistent levels of preparation. It cannot be assumed that principals enter their positions with an adequate background in micropolitics.

Scriber et al (2003) concluded after more than two decades of study, that micropolitics in schools remains a complex area of inquiry. In-depth case study analysis is particularly suited for delving into these complex leadership behaviors (Yin, 2003; Patton, 2002). Whereas quantitative research relies on the gathering and ordering “of numerical data to describe, explain, predict, or control phenomena of interest” (Gay, et al. 2009, p.7), qualitative research enables researchers to study “issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 2002, p.14). Qualitative methods like the structured, open-ended interviews used for this study are particularly suited to certain purposes, questions, problems, and situations, and are useful in finding out “what people do, know, think, and feel” (Patton, 2002, p.145).

The qualitative case study design used for this study deliberately examined multiple cases to produce stronger findings than if simply one case was used. Herriott & Firestone (1983) , as cited by Yin (2003) noted that an advantage of the multiple case design is that the results are regarded as more compelling than if a researcher uses only a single case. A type of purposeful sampling known as *intensity sampling* was used for this study to support the selection of information-rich cases that would be worthy of in-depth examination. Intensity sampling requires researchers to conduct exploratory work, in order to insure that participants possess the phenomenon of interest to a significant degree (Patton, 2002). The selection process is explained later in this chapter. The open-ended questions used during the interviews provided a nuanced view of how these

principals experienced the phenomenon of micropolitics from the onset of their principalships.

Principals who employ micropolitical skills effectively, according to Portin et al.'s (2003) study have reported a higher level of school success. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how micropolitics impacts school leadership by presenting the perceptions of practitioners in the field. Skills associated with micropolitical leadership include: 1) agenda setting 2) mapping the political terrain 3) networking and building coalitions and 4) bargaining and negotiating (Bolman & Deal, 2007).

Sample

The sample size was part of a purposeful strategy to pursue in-depth, informative interviews with participants who were recognized for their political astuteness.

Qualitative researchers face the decision of focusing on “a narrow range of experiences for a larger number of people or a broader range of experiences for a smaller number of people” (Patton, 2002, p.227). The sample size of three permitted me to conduct thorough interviews that concentrated in greater depth, thus covering a wider breadth of experience than if a larger sample were used (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argued that even one case can lead to new insights when such a case can be demonstrated to have what the authors referred to as “social reality” (p. 493). The purpose of this study was to provide needed illumination of an essential element of school leadership. This illumination grows out of the interviews conducted with elementary public school principals within one school group and one

geographic location. Silverman (1993), as cited in Crouch and McKenzie (2006) asserted that in-depth interviews “generate data which give an authentic insight into people’s experiences”.

The participants are three principals of Group 17 schools located in Suffolk County, NY. The Department of Education of New York State groups similar schools for reporting purposes. The impact of district size and socioeconomic status was not examined for the purposes of this study; therefore, participants were selected from schools identified as similar by New York State’s Department of Education. These listings are published on the Education Department’s webpage (http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/reportcard/2008/similarschools/SG17_2008.pdf). Elementary schools identified as belonging to Group 17 schools are identified as not urban and not rural and having students with low needs relative to district resources. This delimitation represents my attempt to eliminate the possible affect of district size on induction and professional development experiences of participants. Large urban districts such as New York City’s Department of Education are able to offer elaborate professional development for principals in the form of the aspiring principal’s academy (Edweek). The participants in this study possess tenure or the equivalent of tenure. Tenured principals have several years of experience and have demonstrated a level of success commensurate with having been granted tenure.

Selection Process

The population for this study was generated using the technique of purposeful sampling. Creswell (2005) explained, that individuals chosen through purposeful sampling are intentionally selected because they possess information that can further

illuminate the phenomenon under examination. Unlike extreme sampling, a sampling process that utilizes outliers for its sample pool, intensity sampling seeks “rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not highly unusual cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 234).

Candidates were considered for this study if they were 1) seated as a public elementary school principal of a Group 17 school in Suffolk County, N.Y.; 2) possessed tenure or its equivalent; and 3) were deemed politically astute by a panel of experts. As explained in Chapter I, political astuteness is defined as “the ability to manage politically charged situations to successful outcomes”. This definition was employed in two recent studies which examined micropolitical leadership and the resolution of political conflict (Hartman, 2008; Judson).

Suffolk County, N.Y. is located on the eastern end of Long Island and covers an area of 912 square miles. There are 69 school districts contained within Suffolk County (U.S. Census Bureau). Exploratory work with organizations representing public elementary school principals in Suffolk County facilitated the selection of participants. The president and vice-president of the Suffolk County Elementary Principals’ Association, a deputy director of Suffolk County SCOPE and former school superintendent, and the executive director of the Long Island Leadership Academy were consulted. Each official was contacted in person or via telephone.

After introductions, a brief overview of the study was provided, and the definitions of political astuteness and micropolitics were provided to each official. I asked for assistance in identifying potential candidates for the study using the criteria specified earlier in this chapter. Three potential participants were identified. . It was discovered that no one official or organization claimed to have personal knowledge of

every elementary school principal working within the county. The principals were selected because it was understood that each possessed a rich amount of information regarding micropolitical leadership. Two individuals were identified by officials from all three organizations. One individual was identified by the officials from SCOPE and the Suffolk County Elementary Principals Association. The officials who participated in this exploratory work recommended the participants based on each individual's experience, background and success in dealing with numerous situations that required the use of micropolitics.

These individuals were sent a letter of solicitation. Each of the three principals indicated a willingness to participate via a telephone call to me. Each participant was provided with informed-consent at the time of the face-to-face interview. Identifying information obtained from the participants is confidential, and has been stored in a locked file cabinet in my home.

Interviews

A total of three interviews were conducted with each participant over the course of three months. The first interview was conducted via telephone, provided a brief introduction to the study. The second interview was conducted face-to-face at a convenient time and location for each participant. These interviews lasted from 50 to 75 minutes. Follow-up interviews were conducted with each candidate telephonically, and lasted from 20 to 30 minutes. The face-to-face interviews were recorded and detailed transcripts were prepared after each interview (audio recordings, original notes and transcripts along with any identifying material will remain in a locked cabinet in my home for three years. These materials will be destroyed thereafter.)

Interview Guide

An interview guide was constructed to facilitate the structured interviews.

Structured interviews that utilize open-ended questions allow the researcher to pursue specific areas of questioning while permitting a degree of flexibility (Gay et al., 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). These interviews permitted me to explore the experiences and perceptions of the study participants. Every effort was made to present questions in an unbiased and conversational manner while following the line of inquiry and protocol consistent with the purposes of this study (Yin, 2003). Principals were asked to describe their understanding of micropolitical leadership, the attributes required to execute this element of school leadership, and how they came to acquire and develop this knowledge from the onset of their principalships. The interview questions were based on the research questions outlined in Chapter I. The interview questions are presented here. A rationale is provided after each item.

1. Background information:
 - a. How many years have you been a principal?
 - b. How many years have you worked in your current assignment?
 - c. What grades does your school serve?
2. Based on your experience as a principal, how would you describe job-related politics, also known as *micropolitics or organizational politics*?
 - a. Describe your current understanding of micropolitics.
 - b. How does your current understanding differ from when you began your principalship?

Rationale: Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) have documented that principals enter the principalship with varying degrees of preparation. This question sought to elicit a sense of how preservice training and courses impacted the individuals understanding of micropolitical leadership.

3. Identify three to five key individuals or constituencies whom you perceive to yield power that affects the operations of your school.
 - a. Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as *mapping the political terrain*.
 - b. Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as *mapping the political terrain*.

Rationale: Bolman and Deal (2007), after an exhaustive review of the literature and citing Pfeffer, 1992; Pinchault, 1993) identified “mapping the political terrain” as one of four key political skills for administrators.

4. For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3:
 - a. What are critical items on this individual or constituency’s agenda?
 - b. Describe how this individual or constituency affects how agendas are established in your school.
 - c. Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as agenda setting.
 - d. Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as agenda setting.

Rationale: Bolman and Deal (2007), after an exhaustive review of the literature (and citing Kanter, 1993; Kotter, 1998; Pfeffer, 1992; Smith, 1988) as one of four key political skills for administrators.

5. For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3:
 - a. How do you network and build coalitions with this individual or constituency to make decisions regarding school-related tasks?
 - b. Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as *network and coalition building*.
 - c. Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as *network and coalition building*.

Rationale: Bolman and Deal (2007), after an exhaustive review of the literature (and citing Kanter, 1983; Kotter, 1982, 1985, 1988; Pfeffer, 1992; Smith, 1988) identified the ability to "network and form coalitions" as one of four key political skills for administrators.

6. For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3:
 - a. How do you bargain and negotiate with this individual or constituency to make decisions and distribute resources related to school operations?
 - b. Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as bargaining and negotiating.
 - c. Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to bargaining and negotiating.

Rationale: Bolman and Deal (2007), after an exhaustive review of the literature (and citing Bellow & Moulton, 1978; Fisher & Ury, 1981; and Lax & Sebenius, 1986)

identified the ability to “bargain and negotiate” as one of four key political skills for administrators.

7. Recommendations from principals for principals:

- a. What formal and informal activities, if any, would you suggest as most helpful to the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership skills for principals?
- b. What induction activities, if any, would you suggest to help new principals develop micropolitical skill and knowledge?
- c. What reading materials, if any, would benefit new principals seeking to further their understanding of job-related micropolitics?
- d. What existing training activities or courses, if any, would you suggest for new principals?
- e. What training or courses, if any, would you recommend districts and professional organizations develop to further principals development of micropolitical skill and knowledge?

Rationale: Portin et al. (2003) indicated that micropolitical leadership is one of seven areas essential for effective school operations. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) and

Portin et al. (2003) reported that principals receive inconsistent levels of preparation.

This question permits the participants to make recommendations as to how principals can develop micropolitical leadership attributes based on their knowledge and experience.

The data was gathered, transcribed, and coded to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of how principals acquire and develop micropolitical leadership skills.

Instrument Validation

It is important that qualitative researchers make every effort to reduce bias, maximize accuracy, and emphasize empirical findings. “The credibility of qualitative methods hinges on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork” (Patton, 2002, p.14). Filslead, as cited in Patton (2002) stated, “It is crucial for validity and consequently for reliability to try to picture the empirical social world as it actually exists to those under investigation rather than as the researcher imagines it to be.” (p53).

This study exercised several strategies to reduce the error that is inherent in examination of social phenomena so as to insure that the recorded data accurately reflects what actually occurred. Interviews were the primary source of data for this study. Interview questions were prepared in consultation with an expert panel of five elementary school principals. I conducted trials through mock interviews with two other principals before conducting interviews with the participants. Interrater reliability was established in cooperation with an expert who reviewed the transcript of one of the interviews. I compared his results with the expert’s to assess the consistency of each examiner’s account. Validation was accomplished by providing each participant with a written summary of his or her interview. The participants were asked to confirm that I accurately interpreted and summarized the interview.

Data Analysis

Detailed transcripts were created after each interview. These transcripts were analyzed to determine the existence of any patterns. I examined the transcripts and identified patterns using a categorization scheme that emerged from an analysis of interview transcripts. Patterns were judged in two ways, those that fit with the theoretical

propositions detailed in Chapter II and those that vastly contrasted with each other (Patton, 2002). Questions examined during the data analysis considered: 1) What if any common themes emerge? 2) What patterns or lack of patterns emerge in relation to the theoretical propositions outlined in Chapter II? 3) What are the patterns or lack of patterns noted in relationship to the research questions outlined in Chapter I? 4) What insights emerge from the data analysis? 5) What, if any, additional data is required to address the research questions?

The initial phase of data analysis involved the inductive discovery of patterns, themes, and categories. As the interpretive phase of this qualitative study progressed, analysis switched from inductive to deductive processes. The participants were engaged in follow-up interviews, wherein each participant was asked to review the data according to the scheme constructed by the analyst. Participants were then, asked to construct a matrix based on the micropolitical behaviors identified during the face-to-face interviews using the categories that emerged from the inductive stage of the data analysis. This table appears in Appendix C.

The case study method permits the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of contemporary, real-life events including organizational and managerial processes (Yin, 2003). Micropolitics is a complex phenomenon that must be considered in context, and the behaviors associated with micropolitics are difficult to control for. Specifically this study examined how micropolitics impacts school operations as perceived by three elementary school principals from similar schools within the same geographic location.

Yin (2003) noted that analyzing case study evidence is particularly challenging, because the research community has not clearly defined the strategies and techniques needed to conduct this process. Problems with case study analysis can be attributed to a lack of rigor, difficulty in generalizing the results due to small sample sizes, and a tendency for case study reports, due to their narrative nature, to be long. Yin (2003) countered that, in order for a case study to be perceived to have merit, it must 1) present cases that are of interest to the specified audience. 2) address the underlying issues that are uncovered during data collection. 3) maintain a clear chain of evidence, 4) display sufficient evidence so that the reader can determine the logic of the researcher conclusions. 5) demonstrate that alternative perspectives were considered and 6) present the report in an engaging format.

I considered Yin's guidelines throughout the progression of this study. As noted in Chapter II, the purpose of this study was to contribute to the critical body of knowledge of how principals acquire and utilize the elements of micropolitical leadership from the onset of their principalship. The audience includes individual principals, professional organizations, local school districts, and state educational agencies. Underlying issues uncovered during the interviews and alternative perspectives are presented in Chapter IV. A clear chain of evidence has been established and made accessible to the external reader of this study. This chain of evidence includes detailed descriptions of the research questions, a schedule of interviews (including the time and place of the interviews), interview procedures, interview transcripts, my notes, and a summary of conclusions. The external reader examined these documents 1) for accuracy; 2) to determine if there is a link between the study's protocol and the research questions;

and 3) to cross-reference the methodological procedures and the resulting evidence.

Every effort has been made to report information in a manner that has meaning and utility to the specified audience for this study (Yin, 2003).

Summary

Schools are organizations whose working patterns are not readily accessible to researchers. Fullan (2000) and Fuller (1994, as cited in Angelides (2001) questioned the wisdom of engaging in large-scale reform efforts without first examining more closely how policy is implemented and qualitative case study research has the potential of allowing researchers to practically and effectively explain the culture and practices of schools (Gay et al., 2009; Patton, 2002). Micropolitics is an essential element of school leadership; yet, there is still much research needed to explain how principals acquire, develop, and use this critical attribute of school leadership (Portin et al., 2003).

Qualitative research in general, and case study analysis in particular, offers the promise of developing a deeper understanding of how individuals develop and learn the complex skills associated with micropolitics (Yin, 2003; Patton, 2002; Gillham, 2000). This study employed case study analysis to gather information that may prove useful for school agencies, policy makers, professional organizations, and individual principals concerning the methods that principals use to acquire and develop micropolitical skills and knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

Presentation of Analysis and Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of principals regarding micropolitics. A qualitative research methodology was employed to examine information rich accounts concerning how principals acquire and develop micropolitical leadership capabilities from the onset of their principalships. Research questions examined specific attributes associated with micropolitical leadership while uncovering how principals developed these attributes from the onset of their careers as principals.

Nature of the Study

The research population for this study consisted of elementary principals from group 17 schools in Suffolk County New York. Group 17 schools are identified by the New York State Department of Education as schools from districts that are not urban, not rural, and where student needs are considered low in relation to district resource capacity. Participants were questioned during structured interviews. Twenty-five questions were asked to explore the participants' perceptions of micropolitical leadership. The questions were divided into seven categories. The first two categories of questions provide background information concerning the respondents' perceptions of micropolitics. The next four categories asked participants to describe how they address micropolitics when engaged in the operations of their schools.

Micropolitics is a concept that is fraught with ambiguity. Blase (1991), as cited in Scribner et al. (2003) and Blasé and Blasé (2002) provided one of the most frequently used definitions of *micropolitics*.

Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part, political action results from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously motivated, may have “political significance” in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact (Blase & Blase, 2002, pp. 9-10).

This study expands on Blase’s (1991) definition of micropolitics, by including the scholarly work of Bolman and Deal (2007) as it pertains to the political frame of organizational theory. It has been noted that micropolitics is a synonym for organizational politics (Marshall & Scribner, 1991), and Bolman and Deal’s comprehensive examination of the political frame have provided detailed descriptions of the skills required for managers to effectively deal with organizational politics or micropolitics. Bolman and Deal divided these skills into four categories. These descriptions were incorporated into the interview protocol for this study and formed the questions that asked the participants to share their perceptions concerning mapping the political terrain; agenda setting; networking and coalition building; and bargaining and negotiating (Bolman and Deal, 2007).

Bolman and Deal (2007) used the phrase “mapping the political terrain” (p. 120) to describe the process of determining who in the organization possesses political power and influence. They cited Pichault (1993), who noted the importance for managers to identify those individuals and groups who exert political force within the organization. Bolman and Deal (2007) elaborated by describing a process referred to as *mapping the political terrain* whereby managers plot how individuals and groups exert influence as they pursue their interests within the organizations.

Bolman and Deal (2007) referred to agendas as “statements of interests and scenarios” made by individuals and groups within organizations (p.118). These statements may be written or stated; and they may or may not be part of the organization’s formal objectives. Bolman and Deal (2007) referred to the work of Kanter (1983), Kotter (1988), and Smith (1988), who, after thorough investigations conducted with leaders of both private and public organizations, recognized that agenda setting is an essential element of effective political leadership. Setting the agenda requires leaders to present a vision of what is to be accomplished coupled with a strategy to achieve the vision. Managers who demonstrate effective political leadership must also be sensitive to items that are important to the agendas of other members of the organization.

As described by Bolman and Deal (2007), Kotter (1985) provided a four-step outline of the process involved in networking and building coalitions. 1) First, the manager must determine whose relationship is relevant to completing the tasks of the organization; 2) Next, the manager must consider who may exert influence to impede the completion of the task; 3) Managers must then develop relationships with those individuals necessary to complete the task; and 4) Lastly, managers must identify strategies to be used with individuals to insure that the task is completed.

Bargaining and negotiating is “central to all decision making” (Bolman and Deal, 2007, p.124). Kanter (1983) (as cited by Bolman and Deal, 2007) noted that identifying common interests is one of the first tasks of bargaining and negotiating. While the parties involved in bargaining and negotiating typically share common interest, they generally face situations that present some form of conflict. Many times, conflict within schools is the result of disputes over the distribution of limited resources (Portin et

al., 2003). Principals, as all managers must seek resolution and make decisions when two or more parties within the organization vie over these limited resources. Lax and Sebenius (1986) and Fisher and Ury (1981) (as cited by Bolman and Deal, 2007) observed that there are different styles of bargaining and that not all forms need to result in winners and losers.

Principals are considered leaders of their schools and leadership of schools is a highly complex task (Portin et al., 2003). Micropolitical leadership is one of what Portin et al. described as seven essential elements of school leadership. Micropolitical leadership in schools refers to the behaviors exerted to guide the course of events inside of the school through the use of micropolitical processes. Portin et al. (2003) remarked that the phenomenon of micropolitical leadership still requires further investigation. This exploratory case study employed Blase's definition with Bolman and Deal's description of the four categories of political skill in order to provide the conceptual background needed to analyze the data pertaining to the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon of micropolitics in their schools.

Given the importance of the skills associated with micropolitical leadership, the study explored how the participants developed these skills from the onset of their principalships. For each category, questions examining the formal and informal activities used by the participants to develop these skills were asked. The participants were also asked to judge the relative merit of formal activities provided by school districts, professional organizations, and informal activities pursued by individual principals in the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership capabilities. The participants were also asked to recommend those practices best suited to prepare new principals, to

provide micropolitical leadership and to help practicing school administrators further develop their micropolitical leadership capabilities.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

There is no formally adopted method to analyze qualitative data. There are guidelines but no rules (Gay et al., 2009); however, data analysis progressed following an outline established by Yin (2003). The general analytic strategy utilized for this case study is what Yin referred to as “developing a case description”. This framework permits the researcher to organize data in a way that will reveal the participants’ perceptions of the manner in which they acquired, developed and applied their micropolitical leadership capabilities. Data were transcribed after each interview. As the interviews progressed, open coding data added an interpretive layer to the transcripts. The interpretations developed while open-coding the transcripts were collected to identify emerging themes. Axial coding was performed after the face-to-face interviews were complete. The transcripts were scrutinized for evidence of patterns and exceptions for each of the postulated themes.

Miles and Huberman (1988, 1994), as cited in Patton (2002), detailed the process of refining initial qualitative data. Data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions occur concurrently. Inductive analysis enabled the identification of emergent themes and patterns. A categorization scheme was created to 1) provide a useful summary of the data 2) maintain the specificity and 3) support the validity of the study. This categorization scheme was based on the line of questioning related to mapping the political terrain, setting the agenda, networking and coalition building, and bargaining and negotiating and was incorporated into an analyst-constructed taxonomy of micropolitical behaviors that

were obtained from the interview data. This taxonomy formed the basis for the unordered meta-matrix tables used to illustrate common and dissimilar responses from each participant. These tables also illustrate the types of activities used by principals to acquire and develop micropolitical skills. Activities used to develop micropolitical leadership skills were sorted under the two broad headings of Formal and Informal. These tables illustrate, in a compact form, the information obtained from the interviews. (Gay et al. , 2009; Yin, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Data analysis for this study progressed through an inductive stage and a confirmatory stage. Inductive analysis was conducted during the initial phase of data analysis. Patterns, themes and categories that emerged from the data were organized into tables based on an analyst-created categorization scheme. The confirmatory stage of this qualitative study was deductive in nature. The categories and descriptions developed during the initial phase of the study were tested during subsequent interviews with the participants and the initial categorization scheme and descriptions were carefully examined for accuracy, clarity, and authenticity. This process is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) description of "grounded theorizing" (as cited in Patton, 2002, p.454). Deductive analysis, using the insights of the participants, supported the construct validity of the study. Patton (2002) observed that "Researchers and evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in the analysis react to what is described and concluded" (p.560).

Background information

The first set of questions was asked to determine the experience and educational background of the participants. The three participants together possessed a combined total of 43 years of experience as building principals. Principal #1 had a total of nine years in one building; Principal #2 had a total of 15 years as a building principal with four years in his current assignment; and Principal #3 had a total of 19 years of experience as principal in the same building. Each respondent possessed a different level of education. Principal #1 attained a professional diploma in Educational Administration in addition to a Masters of Science in Education. Principal #2 possessed a doctorate in Educational Administration; and Principal #3 is currently a doctoral student pursuing a degree in Educational Administration. All of the participants are principals of elementary schools. Principal #1 leads a kindergarten through 4th grade school; Principal #2 leads a school that serves children in grades kindergarten through 4th grade; and Principal #3 leads a school with students that range from kindergarten through 3rd grade.

The organizational structure of each participant's district varies. Principal #1 works in a district that is comprised of nine elementary schools. Principal #1 does not work with any other administrators inside of the school. Principal #1 works with several administrators on the district level including two directors, four assistant superintendents, and one superintendent. These district administrators are responsible for supervising issues concerning curriculum, budget and facilities. A seven-member board of education oversees the operations of the district in which Principal #1 works. Principal #2 is principal of the sole elementary school located in the district. There are no other administrators who work inside of Principal #2's building. There is one superintendent, a business official, and a special education chairperson in Principal #2's district. A five-

member board of education oversees the operation of schools in Principal #2's district. Principal #3 works in a district that contains three elementary schools. Principal #3 works with one assistant principal within the building. There are four directors, three assistant superintendents, and one superintendent who comprise the district administrators in the district where Principal #3 works. These administrators supervise curriculum, facilities, athletics, budget and personnel. There is a five-member school board that oversees the operations of Principal #3's district (SCOPE, 2009).

The second category of questions asked the respondents to explain their current understanding of micropolitics, their perception of the role it plays in school leadership, and how that understanding has changed from when they first became principals. Linda Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), after extensively examining principal preparation programs in America, determined that principals receive inconsistent levels of preparation. It cannot be assumed that principals learned the knowledge and skill for engaging in micropolitical leadership from their preparation programs. Understanding how principals develop their micropolitical leadership abilities is one of the main themes of this study.

Questions 2.1 and 2.2 asked the participants to describe their current understanding of organizational politics or micropolitics and contrast it to their understanding when they first became principals. Principal # 1 reported that,

I see it [micropolitics] as relationships and all the interrelationships that are associated with any organization. Relationships that have a lot of formality but also lots of informality. A lot of times you can get what you want through the back door or help someone to see, perhaps a better way is through the back door.

Principal #2 when asked, "Based on your experience as a principal, how would you describe your current understanding of organizational politics or micropolitics?"

responded “I would say it is inherently involved in almost everything we [educational leaders] do.”

Principal #3 responded to the question concerning her current understanding of micropolitics by stating,

Micropolitics in the school setting is something I believe that one is not well prepared for, as most things, until you get on the job. You don’t have a true understanding. You learn definitions of what it is, and the dimensions, but sometimes I feel it goes out the window when you are actually on the job because it can surprise you; in terms of what you have to use and the people you have to endeavor to reach your goal. That’s a discovery process.

In response to Question 2.2, “Is your current understanding of micropolitics different than when you first became a principal?” Principal #1 responded, “I would have to say ‘yes’ because my experiences have changed that. I can’t say that I formally thought about it [micropolitics] before becoming a principal.” Principal #2 responded to Question 2.2 by stating, “Yes, I am more aware of it [micropolitics]; it always existed, but at the time that you’re first starting off you don’t realize the influence that it [micropolitics] is having and the use of it being implemented around you or with you.” Principal #3 responded to Question 2.2 by stating,

When I began the principalship I thought it [micropolitics] was a structure; something you could see on paper. I really did believe that whole organizational chart (both formal and informal), in a sense, existed. Then, when you really start to work in a system and you really start to understand people’s strengths, their interpersonal relationships, and [gather} some practical experience; you learn from that and you realize that in order for a leader to get things done you have to move off that formal structure on paper and use other resources. Learning how to cultivate those resources, that I think, is key. That’s a learning process.

Category of Questions

Mapping the political terrain

The three participants were asked a series of questions concerning micropolitics and mapping the political terrain. As discussed earlier in this chapter, mapping the political terrain in schools refers to the skills utilized by principals to identify individuals and groups who have the ability to influence school operations. Questions 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 explore the participants' perceptions concerning mapping the political terrain in their schools and the manner in which they developed this skill. The participants' responses are listed in Table 1. These responses were organized using a categorization theme that emerged after a thorough content analysis of the interview transcripts. These categories reflect the participant's efforts to identify individuals and groups that exert influence over their schools. All of the participants' responses are listed in the left column of Table 1. A dot in one of the columns to the right indicates which participant provided the responses listed in the column labeled "Respondents' perceptions of micropolitical leadership related to mapping the political terrain." The bottom two sections of Table 1 illustrate the participants' perceptions of how they acquired the micropolitical skills associated with mapping the political terrain.

Table 1

Principals' perceptions of mapping the political terrain					
	Respondents' perceptions of micropolitical leadership related to mapping the political terrain	Interview Question	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
1	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Union leadership Union leadership	3.1	•	•	•
2	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: PTA/PTO representatives	3.1	•	•	•
3	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Board of education (formal roles)	3.1	•	•	
4	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Board of education (informal roles)	3.1		•	
5	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Sports organizations	3.1		•	
6	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Rotary International	3.1	•		•
7	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Property owners associations	3.1		•	
8	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Central administration	3.1	•		•
9	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in your school: Teacher leaders (informal)	3.1	•		
	Respondents perceptions of how formal activities contributed to the development of the skill of mapping the political terrain				
1	course work describing formal/informal power & roles in graduate school	3.2	•	•	•
2	some doctoral course work on politics	3.2		•	
3	Some graduate course work examining the formal structure of school systems	3.2	•		
	Respondents perceptions of how informal activities contributed to the development of the skill of mapping the political terrain				
1	On the job experience	3.3	•	•	•
2	Prior experience	3.3		•	
3	Observation	3.3			•
4	Input from others	3.3			•

Each respondent was asked to map the political terrain of his or her school by identifying three-to-five of the key individuals or constituencies that yield power to affect the operations of the school. Each of the respondents was quick to identify both individuals and groups who yielded power that affected his or her school.

Mapping the political terrain asks principals to identify those individuals or constituencies who have the ability to affect the operations of schools. These individuals or groups may possess formal or informal power, and may encourage a change in school operations or resist change. Pichault's (1993) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2007) carefully documented case study illustrated how this exercise can have a profound impact on the success or failure of a leader's initiative within an organization.

The three respondents readily employed the skills associated with mapping the political terrain, and were quick to identify individuals and groups who affected operations within their schools. There were two examples that were consistent among the respondents. These were union leadership and parent organizations. In response to the question, "Identify some of the key individuals or constituencies whom you perceive to yield power that affects the operations of your school", Principal #1 replied, "Of course, central administration, the board of education, the teachers' union and formal organizations like the PTA (parent-teacher association)." In addition, Principal #1 demonstrated that he recognizes that, while the building representative for the union is a key individual who possesses power due to her role, there are other teachers who are perceived to possess informal power when he stated, "[The teachers union are the recognized representatives voted on by the teachers, but there are perceived teacher leaders within the building who are respected for their knowledge and wisdom.]" When

asked to identify the key individuals and groups within his school, Principal #2 responded, “Union leadership; there are many unions that you may have. That would be the presidents of the teachers, custodial, secretarial, or paraprofessional.” “You” have your Parent Teacher Organization, and school board.” Principal #2 then identified individuals and constituencies who possessed informal power that affects Principal #2’s school. “Your outside organizations, whether they be sports groups such as property owners, Rotary leadership.” Principal #2 also observed that certain individuals exert influence through both the formal and informal use of power. Specifically, Principal #2 spoke of board of education trustees who “Really, they have to act as a board, but as individuals they also exercise their informal power.” Principal #3 stated that three constituencies whom Principal #3 perceives to yield power in her school are, “the formal leadership in the building. The building representative who represents the union...from the community point of view would be the PTA president...and the other layer...the key individuals at central office.”

Questions 3.2 and 3.3 explored the manner in which each participant developed the skills and knowledge required to identify the key individuals and constituencies that influenced their school’s operations. Each respondent recognized that some formal course work provided background knowledge concerning formal structures and roles of key individuals in educational systems. The following paragraphs report the participants’ response to the question, “Describe how formal experiences such as graduated course work, professional training, or district-sponsored professional development contributed to your understanding of the micropolitical skill referred to as mapping the political terrain”.

Principal #1 stated, “It was when I took administration classes, but I do remember looking at the structure of the K-12 educational system direct responsibilities. “Some of my work during the administration program helped me to understand the structure of the district a little bit.” Principal #2 stated,

I had some course work dealing with power; formal and informal power and influence. To the extent of what we do day in and day out, the course work didn’t go that far. It [the course work] didn’t describe it or recognize it [how to identify key individuals and groups who influence school operations]. I also had some course work on politics and education in general. I thought that was helpful, but, really it is on the job experience. Those courses took place on the doctoral level.

Principal #3 stated, “In course work you are introduced to the structure and you are introduced to the formal roles [of key individuals].

The next paragraphs report the participants’ response to the question, “Describe how informal experiences such on the job experience contributed to your understanding of the micropolitical skill referred to as “*mapping the political terrain.*”

Principal #1 described, “I would say probably more than 50%...more like 70-80% is really on-the-job training, a sink-or-swim type of figuring it out.” Principal #2 stated, “On-the-job experiences, day in and day out; mostly dealing with different constituency groups.” Principal #3 explained.

In practical experience, you learn how everyone operates, which can be very different from district to district. That’s why school leaders have to be adaptable and learn the terrain in terms of where they go. That you find out through trial and error (I believe); observation; taking input from people who know those [key] individuals. That’s how I think you get to learn how you are going to work among those groups that you perceive are going to help you move in the direction you want to go.

Setting the Agenda

The participants were next asked three questions concerning the skills associated with setting the agenda. These skills are characterized by the ability to recognize the

interests of the key individuals and constituencies within organizations. The participants were asked to consider the individuals and groups identified in response to the question, “Who has the power and influence capable of affecting the operations of their schools?” Questions 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 explored the participants’ perceptions concerning their understanding of the skills associated with setting the agenda, and the manner in which they developed these skills from the onset of their principalships.

The participants’ responses to questions related to setting the agenda are listed in Table 2. These responses were organized using a categorization theme that emerged while analyzing the interview transcripts. The participants identified those items of interest to the individuals and groups who the participants identified as exerting the power to influence school operations. All of the participants’ responses are listed in the left column of Table 2. A dot in one of the columns to the right indicates which participant provided the response listed in the column labeled “Respondents’ perceptions of micropolitical leadership related to setting the agenda.” The last two sections of Table 2 illustrate the participants’ perceptions of how they acquired the micropolitical skills associated with setting the agenda.

Table 2

Principals' perceptions of setting the agenda					
	Respondents' perceptions of setting the agenda items	Question	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
1	Identifying budget priorities (<i>what</i> items are important)	4.1	●		
2	Identifying contract interests: ie. benefits, pay for extra work	4.1		●	
3	Identifying scheduling interests: Extra time for instruction	4.1		●	
4	Identifying instructional interests: Field trips	4.1	●		
5	Identifying instructional interests: Instructional improvement	4.1	●		
6	Identifying budget priorities: Items for students	4.1		●	
7	Identifying contract interests: working conditions	4.1	●	●	
8	Identifying contract interests: Pay for extra work	4.1		●	
9	Identifying budget priorities: Personal items for classroom	4.1			●
10	Identifying instructional interests: Program continuity between schools	4.1	●		
11	Identifying instructional interests: Program enhancements	4.1	●	●	
12	Identifying vision for school	4.1			●
	Respondents perceptions of how formal activities contributed to the development of the skill of agenda setting				
1	None	4.2	●	●	
2	Minimal-some doctoral courses (connected to experience)	4.2			●
	Respondents perceptions of how informal activities contributed to the development of the skill of agenda setting				
1	Consulting colleagues	4.3	●		
2	Critical observation of experienced administrators	4.3		●	
3	On-the-job experience	4.3	●	●	●
4	Listening to constituencies	4.3	●		

Agendas, when viewed through Bolman and Deal's political frame, are "statements of interests and scenarios" (p. 118) expressed by the individuals and groups that make up the organization. These individuals or groups may have formal or informal roles within the organization but each has the power to influence the organization's operations. According to Bolman and Deal (2007), fieldwork conducted by Kanter (1988), Kotter (1988), and Smith (1988) determined that agenda setting is an essential task for political leadership. Agenda setting requires leaders to develop a vision, followed by a strategy to achieve the vision. This phenomenon applies to principals in schools. Principals must take directives from state and local policy makers and mold them into a vision for the school. Pfeffer (1992) (as cited in Bolman & Deal) pointed out that managers must display sensitivity to the views of key individuals and constituencies in organizations. This sensitivity requires leaders to take into account the interests and feelings of these individuals and groups when formulating agendas.

When asked to identify the interests of individuals and groups who affect operations within their schools, the three respondents readily employed the skills associated with setting the agenda. In response to the question, "What are the critical items on the agenda of key individuals and groups identified in question 3.1?", Principal #1 replied, "For my school, and for the district as a whole, it is dollars and the budget factor....Our superintendent, I know, has a strong desire to lift the level of several buildings instructionally. We're a district of a number of elementary buildings and the superintendent would like to see, as would I, more of a cohesiveness around the district." Principal #1 spoke of an agenda item expressed by her teacher union representatives when she explained,

I have a wonderful relationship with our two building reps.... One thing that several teachers and the union have been concerned about is we have had two teachers with breast cancer who are next door to each other in the same grade level. One is only 30 years old and one is in the mid-50s. This began last spring; the teachers were very concerned that maybe it was something environmental within the building or the grounds that may be a contributing factor.

Principal #1 provided an account of how the superintendent's agenda came into conflict with the agenda of an influential group of parents.

Last year, there was a strong group of parents who didn't want some of the changes that were coming, particularly regarding our fifth grade. Our superintendent put his foot down regarding the outlay of money. We had always taken our fifth grades to a play in the city ...that was an expensive day; [The superintendent directed that when planning trips for] one child and one parent we now had a fifty dollar cap. [We] were not able to find a play for that amount of money, [so] we went to the Bronx Zoo [instead]; there was a big backlash [the parents were very disappointed that the school could not arrange a fieldtrip to a play].

When asked to describe some of the items on the agendas of the key individuals and groups in his building, Principal #2 replied,

Union leadership is continually looking for increased benefits and better working conditions for their membership. Whether it's time off, pay, release time. ...Other organizations such as your PTO, or your parent constituent groups would advocate, use their informal power to contact individual board members and advocate a certain position whether it be an [instructional] program [for students] or [address] a decision that they feel [will result in]an injustice being served to students or to their organization.

Principal #3 responded to the Question 4.1 by stating,

I'll start with the building rep. I see them as a dual role. Their agenda is twofold. One, I think how they appear to their peers is very important. Sometimes they have a political agenda because they are put in a position to uphold a certain persona. You have that going on. The other part is to, I think, combine their personal agenda with those of the group that they represent.

Principal #3 then turned her attention to what underlies the agenda of Parent-Teacher Association officials.

The PTA president, or executive board members sort of make or break a school leader if they are in a powerful position and their perceptions of you are generally shared among the community. I think they serve in a very similar role as the

union president. Because, as much as we would like to think that these individuals step into those positions from a more altruistic point of view, sometimes that is not the case. So, often you're dealing with addressing individual concerns that are put into a broader context and to ferret that out is not always easy. That's something to contend with all the time.

Principal #3 alluded to the superintendent's agenda when she stated, "The superintendent who is sort of looking down upon [what is occurring in the building and is] sort of working in tandem with you." Principal #3 spoke of the importance of her own vision when Principal #3 evaluated the agendas of the key individuals and constituencies in her school, she summarizes,

In terms of the politics, you have to get through the maze of all of that and try to distill, not only addressing that, but your personal vision because a school leader could get lost in that and not have a vision. I think you have to try to be in concert [with key individuals and constituencies], but it can lead you sometimes in directions that you didn't... that conflict with your personal vision. Because you really can't dismiss – you may not agree – but you can't dismiss where they want to go.

Questions 4.2 and 4.3 explore the manner in which each participant developed the skills and knowledge required to identify interests of key individuals and constituencies within their school. The following paragraphs report the participants' responses to the question, "Describe how formal experiences such as graduated course work, professional training, or district-sponsored professional development contributed to your understanding of the micropolitical skill referred to as *setting the agenda*."

Principal # 1 stated, "I would say, absolutely no formal agenda training."

Principal #2 replied, "No, I would say there was no [formal training or course work] that helped prepare me for [agenda setting]. Principal # 3 offered the following observation,

I have only found now in my doctoral work that, every time I read a book in my doctoral courses my first thought is, "Gee why didn't I read that book earlier in my career? I would have been a lot better at this." In other words, I also feel that sometimes you're not ready for that [scholarly material related to setting the

agenda] too. I think that sometimes you have to have the practical experience in the classroom, and then get the theoretical because you just don't get it. I think the same is true with a school leader, particularly in terms of dealing with all of these groups. That if you had the theory without the practical experience you wouldn't necessarily get it.

In response to the question that asked the participants to describe how informal experiences contributed to their development of the skills associated with setting the agenda, Principal #1 replied,

Often, speaking with one person, individual or group of people with a particular interest, it's easy to say, "Yeah, that's a good idea." Then, hear the opposite side and others who fall somewhere in the middle. I guess I've learned through the school of hard knocks that you have just got to do the right thing by children. I think that what is best for the children and the families that I serve; listen to everything and make a decision. I listen to all the opinions and allow for discussion wherever that makes sense, and then at some point say, "Well we heard this; we know all the particulars and all the concerns and have to say this is what we are going to do for our children". I don't know that I've ever seen anything formally [develop my knowledge of agenda setting].

Principal #2, when asked how informal experiences contributed to his development of the skills associated with setting the agenda, stated,

I would say, as being a spectator in politically active districts, that you have to learn that game quickly or you will never survive long enough to reach tenure status or continuation of employment. In particular, I can think of one district that I worked [as principal] where there was a high school principal who was extremely politically involved. So therefore if they didn't hold a position of formal authority that would give them formal power they would routinely, as a matter of practice, use informal power to accomplish what they were seeking.

Principal #2 borrowed the motto from the popular reality show *Survivor* to describe the process associated with his development of the skills related to agenda setting as learning how to "outwit, outplay, outlast"

Principal #3, responding to the question “Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the agenda setting.” noted,

Well, early in my career, because I think you evolve in any role that you are in, but early in my career I didn't have as high a regard for all of those political factions as I know now to be very important. So, I learned a lot the hard way. I had very strong ideas [concerning what should be the school's agenda] and I would say more so tried to exert them within the building and with the parents, and maybe just because of survival not with your supervisor. ...It took a long time to try to understand how to work with all the players. And the challenge is that's constantly changing. You know, the superintendent doesn't stay the same, the building reps don't stay the same, and you just get comfortable with, sometimes the people in those positions, the building rep, the PTA president, and then they change. So, it's a constantly evolving process that actually forces (in my opinion) the school leader to get better at it, because one could become very comfortable with the people that they're working with; but it keeps you on your toes because you always have a new set of something you have to deal with. That's the learning process I feel in the job.

Networking and coalition building

The three participants were asked a series of questions concerning micropolitics as it relates to networking and coalition building. Their responses to Questions 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 are displayed in Table 3. Kotter (1985) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2007) described networking and coalition building as “the process whereby managers develop relationships with key individuals in an effort to accomplish objectives with an organization.” (Bolman and Deal) Questions 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 explored the participants' perceptions concerning networking and coalition building in their schools and the manner in which they developed this skill. The participants' responses are listed in Table 3. These responses were organized using a categorization scheme that emerged after a thorough content analysis of the interview transcripts. These categories reflect the participants' descriptions of the manner in which they establish relationships with the individuals and groups who have influence over their school's operations. The

participants' responses are listed in the left column of Table 3. A dot in the columns to the right indicates which participant provided the response. The bottom two sections of Table 3 display the participants' perceptions of how they acquired the micropolitical skills associated with networking and coalition building.

Table 3

Principals' perceptions of networking and coalition building					
	Respondents' perceptions of networking and coalition building items	Interview Question	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
1	Break down barriers between administrator and individuals and groups to promote effective working relationships	5.1	•	•	•
2	Build trust with individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships	5.1	•		
3	Clarify your point of view/convictions to promote effective working relationships	5.1			•
4	Establish effective communication with individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships	5.1	•	•	•
5	Examine resistance from individuals/groups: is it help or obstruction	5.1			•
6	Find commonality between administrator, individuals, groups	5.1	•	•	•
7	Know formal channels of communication and decision making	5.1	•		
8	Know how individuals and groups influence each other	5.1			•
9	Know informal channels of communication and decision making	5.1			•
10	Provide resources to individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships	5.1	•		
11	Selectively sharing information with individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships	5.1		•	
12	Willingness to share resources or information with individuals or groups to promote effective working relationships	5.1	•	•	
13	Awareness of the impact of role specific appearance on relationships	5.1			•
	Respondents perceptions of how formal activities contributed to the development of the skill of networking and coalition building				
1	None	5.2	•	•	•

	Networking and coalition building-informal				
1	Personal experience outside of school	5.3		•	
4	Empathy	5.3	•		
2	Experience with constituents	5.3	•	•	•
3	Observing key individuals	5.3		•	•

Bolman and Deal (2007) put it frankly when they assert that managers need “friends and allies to get things done” (p.123). Effective principals, as all effective managers, must cultivate relationships as a means of garnering support for their own agendas and to understand the motivations that lie behind the agendas of others. Networking permits principals to determine who holds power in their school systems. This process allows the principal to look beyond the basic organizational chart to view not only those who hold formal power but those who hold informal power as well. It is networking that provides principals with the information needed to accurately map the political terrain (Bolman and Deal, 2007).

Bolman and Deal (2003), cited Kanter (1983) who described a sequence of actions that illuminate the networking and coalition building process. The first task is to determine who, the individuals and constituencies are whose help the principal will need to accomplish a given task. If the principal does not have a relationship with any of these groups, he or she will need to develop one. Kanter found that obtaining the support of superiors is also necessary. Principal #1 alluded to this when she described the influence that the superintendent exerts on her school. Next, Kanter (1983) recommended that the manager-coalition builder solicit the support of what Kanter (1983) describes as cheerleaders. These individuals and groups may be called upon to create a positive climate and support for the principal’s initiative. The process of coalition building and networking serves a dual purpose. While the principal is garnering support for his or her

initiative, these individuals and groups are afforded the opportunity to influence the details and outcomes of the project. The final stage of the process, what Kanter (1983) refers to as “horse-trading,” leads into the discussion of bargaining and negotiating. During this stage principals as managers “promise rewards in exchange for resources and support” (Bolman and Deal, 2007, p.123).

Each respondent offered examples of how the participant utilized networking and coalition building in his or her role as principal. Both Principal #1 and Principal #2 acknowledged that communication and a willingness to share information helped to foster a network within their schools and districts. Principal #1 stated, “I think that communication is critical and key...that ongoing communication...whether it is just checking in with the group or formal like at site based meetings.” Principal #2 elaborated on that;

Communication is the opportunity to find commonality. It's things you should learn or can learn as a kid (i.e, networking and getting yourself into certain cliques). In its' rudest form, it's clique building. You have to learn how to create commonality and get accepted into certain groups that maybe normally you would not get accepted into. You have to break down the barriers and walls to get into them. You do that through finding things that make you similar. Looking for things that make you similar, pointing them out to the individual, so that they feel a level of comfort with you; and will allow you into that relationship. And It's communication. Picking up the phone and talking to them.

Principal #2 explained “One of the key pieces of networking to keep in mind as people who hold formal power is that we have access to information that many people do not have access to, and information is power.” In light of this, there have been times when Principal #2 has been deliberately selective about what information he shares with his constituents. “You can use information to your benefit” Principal #2 stated, “by creating

those networks. You can give them [constituents] pieces of information to build a relationship.”

Principal #1 emphasized the need to find commonality with the key teachers in the school. Principal #1 stressed that finding commonality on certain interests nurtures the growth of “grass roots” support for key initiatives. Principal # 1 stated, “From the time I was a teacher, I have found that a grass roots effort is the best way to get anything to grow. That’s how people believe, become enthusiastic about what they do.” Principal #1 likened the launch of major initiatives to “moving a mountain.” Principal #1 explained; “A lot of it [networking] is knowing your audience, your group of people, and being able to relate it [school initiatives] to them (i.e., I had one teacher who is our expert in literacy who would come to me [frustrated] saying, “They’re [other teachers] not doing it [reading initiatives].” For three years, I would tell her [patience], one grain of sand at a time, we’re moving a mountain. They have to believe it. We could tell them or we could show them. Show them and let the snowball grow from its own momentum.” Principal #1 then provided an example to illustrate this point. The district in which Principal #1 works encouraged teachers to adopt a guided reading approach in their classrooms. Guided reading emphasizes the use of appropriately leveled texts for use with students based on each child’s ability to read. By its nature, this approach to reading avoids the singular use of whole group instruction. Principal #1 encountered teachers who were resistant to change in their style of instruction. Principal #1 explained, “They liked the whole-class approach to teaching. I tried to think of something that they could relate to.” Through conversation, Principal #1 realized that several of these recalcitrant teachers shared a mutual interest in physical fitness. Principal #1 capitalized on this knowledge to

create a metaphor for this new approach to reading instruction. Principal #1 asked the teachers to describe the principles behind weight training. The teachers explained, among other things, that an athlete who wishes to build muscle mass must utilize weights that are “just right” for the athlete. If the athlete uses weights that are too light or too heavy, there is little benefit and even potential harm. When an athlete uses the appropriate weights, he or she will make progress in the gym. Principal #1 then pointed out to the teachers that the same theory could be applied to the teaching of reading, stating that materials that are too easy or too hard do little good, but the “just right” reader produces the optimum gain. Principal #1 reported that this was an effective use of networking and coalition building that helped to build support for a district initiative within the school stating, “That’s how I explained guided reading and just-right leveling to them. And they would say, “Oh, we get it now.”

Principal #1 and Principal #3 pointed to the importance that networking holds in the process of building trust and establishing an atmosphere of respect. Principal #1 used networking to communicate a vision that all members of the school organization explaining, “By pulling different groups together to share the vision. When I first came here...wonderful people...secretaries, custodians, teachers... very good people. But instruction was mediocre; the scores were fine, everything looked terrific, but the depth of what was going on in the classroom wasn’t where I thought it should be.” Principal #1 communicated to the staff that, “I would make sure that everyone had the idea that we are the ultimate lifelong learners, and we really have to practice what we preach. Do you really want to go to a cardiologist that hasn’t opened a book in 15 years? So, we have to stay current too.” Principal #1 spoke of the need to establish “a sense of trust, that we are

all growing together.” Networking with the different members of the teaching staff provided Principal #1 with an understanding of how learning new material was unsettling to certain members of the staff, and Principal #1 used this information to adjust his methods. “There’s a real sense of not wanting to feel that they have been doing something wrong for 15 years.” What Principal #1 learned from networking helped him to realize that he needed to be patient with staff members who were afraid to let go of their traditional teaching methods. Principal #1 stated, “It doesn’t mean throwing out great ideas and replacing them with whatever way the wind is blowing that day. It means taking best practice and say, ‘I am going to try this.’” This patience helped to foster an atmosphere of trust that emphasized that the entire faculty was “growing together” within the building.

Principal #3 demonstrated her recognition of the importance that informal channels of communication have on networking and coalition building by explaining,

I think observation is very important, because a lot of it [networking and coalition building] is informal. For example, the formal channel might be that I know there are certain things that I would first discuss with my building rep, but sometimes that is not going to get me where I need to go. So I have to go to the informal movers and shakers in the building (and I have to know who they are) I have to observe who respects those people. What influence do they have on other people who will follow them, and then try to mesh the two.

Principal #3 noted that a principal must be cautious when using informal channels for networking and coalition building, stating, “[Initially] you can’t discount one group. I can’t discount the formal building rep, if you will, and go to that whole informal network.” Principal #3 went on to explain however that there are times when the informal network must be established and used to accomplish school-related tasks.

Principal #3 elaborated,

Sometimes you have to do that [go around those individuals who hold formal roles and access informal channels of communication] ... you have to do what you have to do. That's just the way that it is. You have to learn that. You have to learn how to identify who they [key individuals or groups that present resistance to school initiatives] are and stand by your convictions. In order to do that you need to know when someone is trying to obstruct you from achieving your goals or your goals for the organization and when they are trying to help.

The respondents could offer no example of how formal training or course work helped them to develop the skills of networking and coalition building from the beginning of their careers as principals. "No course work has ever taught me how to do those things," stated Principal #1. To the contrary, each respondent identified numerous examples of how informal experience contributed to obtaining what each considered the essential skills of networking and coalition building. Principal #2 summed up how the knowledge concerning networking and coalition building was acquired stating, "I learned this [not through any course] but through experience."

Principal #3 noted that experience, including learning from mistakes, has prepared Principal #3 to address school-related conflicts and challenges. Principal #3 stated,

You learn over the years that force only builds resentment. You're not going to get where you need to go. So you have to step back and little by little try to get individuals who may buy in and try to build upon that. Your timeline could be off, but you keep straight on your vision. You just keep building, and building, and building until you get the confidence of enough people to begin to move forward with something even though the formal structure was opposed. That puts that person politically in a position of, "Am I going to be against everybody?" Rather than hitting the person head on (I've tried that in the past, and have learned from my mistakes), see that that is not always the way to go. So those are the kinds of experiences that you keep building on. The next time a similar situation comes up like that you learn from that.

Bargaining and negotiating

The participants were asked three questions concerning the skills associated with bargaining and negotiating. The skill of bargaining and negotiating demands that

principals seek resolution and make decisions when two or more parties within the school experience conflict or vie over limited resources. The participants were asked to describe their perceptions of how they use bargaining and negotiating to make decisions and distribute resources amongst the key groups and individuals in their schools. The participants' responses to the questions related to bargaining and negotiating are listed in Table 4. These responses were organized using a categorization theme that emerged through data analysis. The categories reflect the participant's efforts to identify how they use bargaining and negotiating with individuals and groups that exert influence over their schools. All of the participants' responses are listed in the left column of Table 4. A dot in one of the columns to the right indicates which participant provided the response. The last two sections of Table 4 illustrate the participants' perceptions of how they acquired the micropolitical skills associated with bargaining and negotiating.

Table 4

Principals' perceptions of bargaining and negotiating					
	Respondents' perceptions of how bargaining and negotiating contribute to their ability to exhibit micropolitical leadership	Interview Question	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
1	Building a reputation for fairness when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1		•	
2	Building a vision of "what is in the best interests of children" when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1		•	
3	Develop resource wish lists	6.1	•		•
4	Explain rationale when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1		•	
5	Give "Green pass" for resources to key individuals/groups when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1		•	
6	Maintain open dialogue when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1		•	

7	Swap budget codes when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1	●		
8	Use resources as "rewards" when making decisions and allocating resources	6.1			●
	Respondents perceptions of how formal activities contributed to the development of the skill of bargaining and negotiating	Interview Question	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
1	None	6.2	●	●	●
	Respondents perceptions of how informal activities contributed to the development of the skill of bargaining and negotiating	Interview Question	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3
1	Common sense	6.3			●
2	Observing experienced administrators	6.3		●	
3	Trial and error	6.3	●		●

Blase and Blase (1991) described micropolitics in schools as “the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations.” Kanter (1983) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2007) explained that politics is infused throughout the process of bargaining and negotiating. Bolman and Deal (2007) asserted that “bargaining is central to all decision making” (p.124). They referred to the work of Lax and Sebenius (1986) who noted that individuals approach the bargaining process seeking to either create value or claim value. Value-claimers seek to convince or coerce the opposing negotiators to accept the terms and conditions laid out by the value-claimer. The value creator seeks to join with the other party to synergistically solve a joint problem (Bolman and Deal, 2007).

Fisher and Ury (1981) (as cited by Bolman & Deal, 2007), argued that the positional form of bargaining typified by the value-claimers is an inefficient method of negotiating that denies each party the “opportunity to create an agreement beneficial to both parties.”(p.125) Fisher and Ury (as cited by Bolman & Deal, 2007), outlined

multiple strategies to effect what they referred to as “principled bargaining” (Bolman and Deal, 2007, p. 125). These strategies create an environment wherein the parties generate value and better outcomes for each participant than if the participants used positional bargaining. Strategies to use for the principled bargaining process include: separate the people from the problem; focus on interests, not positions; invent options for mutual gain; and insist on objective criteria.

Value-claiming is a competitive form of bargaining that views each participant as being motivated primarily by self-interest. Bargaining and negotiating are necessary because the decisions made will affect each party. Information is power, so it is necessary for the participants in value-claiming negotiations to strategically withhold information from each other. Threats are viewed as acceptable, even necessary, to value-claiming negotiations. They also must be used strategically, and they must be credible. Typically, one party must capitulate to the other in this form of bargaining, thus generating a winner and loser (Bolman and Deal, 2007).

Bolman and Deal represented bargaining and negotiating as a continuum that ranges from positional to principled. Principals, as all managers, must be able to recognize the style of negotiations used by others and, further, know when to decide between a value-creating or value-claiming approach to negotiations. Anecdotal evidence exists that indicates that the value-claiming approach does work. The business world witnessed the effectiveness of a value-claiming approach to negotiations when the young Bill Gates negotiated a deal with IBM using value-claiming strategies that ultimately led to his becoming one of the richest men in the world (Bolman and Deal, 2007).

In spite of this demonstration of the utility of the value-claiming approach, Bolman and Deal (2007) cautioned that “Managers who get a reputation for being manipulative and self-interested have a hard time building networks and coalitions they need for future success” (p. 127). The authors concluded that an approach referred to as “conditional openness” (p.128) works best when the participants anticipate long-term working relationships. The following paragraphs will establish that each of the respondents professed a desire to engage in the type of negotiations that Bolman and Deal categorize as value-creating.

Each principal in this study recognized the distribution of resources as an integral part of the process of bargaining and negotiating. Principal #2 explained how resources are distributed and decisions are made in the school stating,

First off, I should say there are certain groups that I have always given a green pass to and have not entered into a blocking role. I will always give them a green light and if [what they are asking for is problematic] I will explain it to them; and that will usually be enough. [Usually it is] something that is so easily seen that it is not going to bother them. Their response is, “Oh yeah, we see your point.” Usually, it is not an elimination of their idea, but a slight change or modification to fit it to what we have. It’s kind of an open dialogue. The same thing with teacher staffing and supplies, or something that people want my approach has been cards on the table, very open and up front. I think that I have a reputation from the people who have worked for me or with me that they know that I am very direct. And laying out the position, that is what we really believe is in the best interest of the children and the district. People tend to usually accept it so that it is not my basic premise is to come in and say yes, and only if it is problematic to put some limitation on it. But thenm, explaining it usually resolves it and they are very accepting of it.

Principal #1 expressed the belief that when bargaining and negotiating,

Money always gives a sense of what is most important. When teachers put in their wish lists in June, I tell them to prioritize; over the years whatever the[amount of] money that the teacher would have gotten for workbooks the teacher could get for classroom libraries. Those who were comfortable enough in working without workbooks took the money to build up their classroom libraries. Within three years, the whole building had moved away from ordering

workbooks. They realized that they didn't really need the workbooks. This is another example of grass roots and trying something out. It was something that I did and shared with the other principals. It is where you use your money.

The example of trading budget codes as a means to obtain classroom libraries is congruent with what Bolman and Deal (2007) referred to as "principled, value-creating bargaining."

Principal #3 provided a cautionary note concerning the use of resources as a reward when bargaining with members of the school community, a process that Fischer and Ury (1981) (as cited in Bolman and Deal) referred to as "positional bargaining."

Principal #3 noted,

"Resources" is a key word because it is something that people want. Look at a definition of *resource*. A resource could mean anything from equipment; it could mean access to something; it could mean, from a parent's point of view, access to putting a child in a particular class. There are all kinds of things. The building leader is a keeper of the resources in a sense of doling them out. How do you use that power in a sense to work with these groups who have agendas. You have to be very careful with that because you could, if one is not ethical, it could be very damaging to the building leader. Resources could be a reward (i.e., who gets what). I think that we're watched very carefully. Who gets the better schedule, who gets the Smartboard [a desirable piece of classroom technology] in their room, who gets the student of the PTA president, or not; who gets whatever. So I think there's always that balance between when you are giving a resource [and] what's the motivation behind that. It could also trap someone. So, that's where I think a leader has to be very careful to keep that as a bargaining chip all the time. They have to work very hard because you may be working with somebody because you want something, but you may also have something that they want you have to be very careful with that kind of exchange.

This scenario, as outlined by Principal #3, resonates with Bolman and Deal's (2007) explanation for using principled bargaining over a positional approach. Principal #3 is wary of the effect that positional bargaining may have on long term relationships because of the resentment that may result from this type of bargaining.

All three respondents could not recall any formal training that contributed to the development of their skills at bargaining and negotiating. Principal #1 responded, “None” when questioned whether she had received any formal training concerning the skill known as bargaining and negotiating. Principal #2 also answered “no” to this question. Principal #3 responded, “I don’t remember anything in my training that really speaks to this situation....Although I do think it [bargaining and negotiating] is something important, that should be included when working with aspiring administrators.”

The respondents highlighted the importance of experience as providing them with the skill and knowledge necessary for bargaining and negotiating. Principal #3 credited her knowledge of bargaining and negotiating to common sense and trial and error. Principal #3 stated, “You sort of rely on your common sense, and either fail and learn from your mistakes or do good [sic].” Principal #1, when asked how she acquired the skills of bargaining and negotiating, responded, “It was informal.” She then explained that on-the-job experiences, such as the trading of funds to obtain classroom libraries, is an example of the kind of opportunities that have helped her to improve her bargaining skills.

Principal #2 credited the observation of experienced administrators with contributing to his development of the skills and knowledge necessary for effective bargaining and negotiating. He provided an example by recounting an anecdote of a middle school principal who needed new curtains for the school auditorium;

I’ve got to give you an example of the use of informal power that I just thought was classic. The curtains in the auditorium were this drab ugly burnt orange and

every year before the big event, the middle school play, he would have the curtains taken down, cleaned and sewn up because they were in disarray. They were old. It got to the point where you couldn't sew them up anymore. They were just torn to shreds. He had repeatedly asked [for replacements]. It was a lot of money to replace the curtains and the district office said, "Absolutely not." So what he did one year, before the play, he didn't have them taken down, sewn up or cleaned. The auditorium was dark [before the start of the play] all the board members were there, the superintendent was there, every formal person in the place [school district] was there; and the lights came up; and there was a gasp from the audience. I tell you by the next morning he had a phone call from the district office, "Order those curtains!" That's using informal power [to bargain and negotiate].

This anecdote illustrates how Principal #2's bargaining acumen is augmented, not only by his experience, but also by learning from the experience of others as well.

Recommendations of participants

The audience for this study includes researchers, scholars, policy makers and practitioners (Patton, 2002). Therefore, one purpose for this study is to provide a platform that will bring the knowledge, experience, and advice of the respondents recognized for their understanding of the micropolitics in their schools to the attention of the educational community. Each of the respondents was recommended by officials from professional organizations in their county. These participants offered information-rich accounts of real-world phenomena, and this study sought to capitalize on the experience and knowledge these respondents brought to the study by asking what, if any, recommendations they would make to help administrators to deal effectively with the phenomenon of micropolitics in schools.

There was one recommendation that Principal #1 and Principal #3; felt were paramount; namely, the establishment of a mentorship or shadowing program whereby new principals could receive ongoing assistance from qualified and experienced principals. In response to the question, "What formal and informal activities, if any,

would you suggest as most helpful to the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership skills for principals?” Principal #1 explained, “I would think that shadowing a principal who is successful with micropolitical leadership or relationships for an extended period of time. Principal #1 elaborated by recounting a recent experience with a staff member who is pursuing a degree in school administration;

We have a teacher who is going for her administration classes now, and I know that they don't have the opportunity [to shadow experienced principals for an extended period of time]. I didn't have the opportunity either. One of her recent assignments was to observe and write up a tenured and nontenured teacher. We wound up [by coincidence] observing the same teacher at the same time. In chatting with this teacher [the teacher in pursuit of the degree in educational administration] the other day, I realized how valuable this was for her as a future administrator to observe different teachers in different points of their career. Of course she asked for her friends to do that for her. But also to dialogue together what we observed during the lesson, similarities and differences in terms of style and so forth of the teachers. In taking that a step further having the intern walk down the hall with you and have six people stop you going from [observing how the experienced principal handles] the formal to informal relationships. I think that that would be critical for future administrators.

Principal #3, when asked for recommendations, replied,

I think one of the best models that a leader can have is to work with a mentor. That's an opportunity to discuss the kinds of things that you never learned in school (i.e., the practical side, the things that nobody teaches you). I think that, as a whole we really want to invest in school leaders. Some people can hit the floor running, but I think that there should be some formal structure within a school system where particularly new people are mentored. That I think is really important. In terms of how do you manage, who are all the kinds of people that you have to deal with, the lay of the land if you will, things to consider, not to really tell them what to do, but things that you may come up against. Because I think that all of those things beg the question, “How am I going to handle that?” “Do I have the intestinal fortitude to deal with this?” and “What's my stand on it?” Before maybe these things happen. Because if you can anticipate, you learn from that and you can prepare yourself better I believe.

Principal #3 cautioned that care must be exercised when selecting a mentor for new principals. Mentors must be selected “as someone inside the organization whom others

would want to emulate.” Principal # 3 expressed that belief that procedures would need to be established for how mentors are selected,

There needs to be some process, I don't know what that process would be, but you need someone within the organization who has noted the mentor as “someone that others might aspire to emulate.” But then, on the other hand, the person being mentored should have some input who they might want to emulate, because if you have respect for someone [you may be more likely to benefit from their advice]. As you sit back and you think of your own experience, and you think of all the people you work with, you say now that I know what I know and now that I've observed these people in action and now that I've had a while to talk to them philosophically who is it that I feel I could learn from. Because I think that that connection is so important. [Selecting a mentor is important in part because] You don't want to perpetuate bad habits, if you will. That's key.

Principal #2 offered a series of recommendations for new principals, stressing that it is important for new principals to establish effective relationships in their schools.

The first thing to do, I think, is you have to (I do this to this day) is shut your mouth and you have to get yourself out, introduce yourself and just listen. A lot of listening. You have to hopefully find one or two people that have some collective history of the organization to go back to and compare your notes with to find out who are your formal and informal power people that exist in the community and the organization. You have to not respond to anything that is being said to you when you are out there meeting and greeting people. Just listen to what their concerns are and start to piece the web together. The network web of individuals find out who is squawking, complaining, who just complains and complains, who has the ability to take action if they need to, who holds a lot of informal power or formal power etc. Start to piece together the entire web network that's out there and see where you plug into it. And not take a lot of action until you figure it out, because you may be stepping all over potential land mines if you do it too quickly and start opening up your mouth too fast. I've seen people lose their job by doing that in certain environments. Depending upon the tolerance of the organization will dictate how long you can stay employed if you start to make bad errors in judgment. Meaning errors in judgment not that will endanger kids but political errors in judgment.

Each respondent was asked to recommend reading and training activities provided by professional organizations. There were some nonspecific references to training provided through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Supervisors and Administrators of New York State (SAANYS), and the National Association of

Elementary Principals (NAEP). Principal #3 recommended that new principals read the works of Peter Senge “because it gives an understanding of systems thinking; how everything in a system is interrelated and affects one another.” Principal #3 also recommended that William Glasser’s control theory can help new principals to “control their behaviors and [understand] how those behaviors affect the choices [they] make and how others respond to [them].” This work helps new principals to “know themselves.” Without this knowledge, Principal #3 asserted that new principals are “on a very shaky foundation.”

Subsequent Interviews

The structured, open-ended questions used during the initial phase of the investigation permitted a degree of flexibility in terms of the responses. The participants were able to draw upon the breadth and depth of their experience. The data analysis performed in the first phase of this study was inductive in nature. I identified meaningful and discrete segments of information, and then arranged them in a rational categorization scheme. These results are illustrated in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4. A summary illustrating the participants’ perceptions of micropolitical leadership behavior was prepared based on these tables for use during follow-up interviews. A copy of the Summary Table can be found in Appendix C.

Subsequent interviews were conducted telephonically with each participant. While the initial phase of the investigation utilized an inductive process, this phase of the study relied more on deductive reasoning. The participants were presented with 46 micropolitical leadership behaviors. Each participant was asked to categorize these

behaviors according to the categorization scheme based on Bolman and Deal's (2003) description of organizational politics that was used for this study.

There was a high level of initial agreement between the participants. Each participant was quick to recognize the descriptors associated with mapping the political terrain; however, there were several discrepancies concerning the descriptions of agenda setting; networking and coalition building, and bargaining and negotiating. Further investigation with the respondents revealed that the discrepancies were language based. Dialogue with the respondents provided information needed to revise the descriptions in order to provide further clarification regarding the intent and purpose of each skill. These revisions provided clarification, resolved the discrepancies, and were incorporated into tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

The dialogue during the subsequent interview with Principal #1 was particularly helpful in providing clarification for several descriptors presented in this study. This clarification contributed to the authenticity and usefulness of the categorization scheme. Principal #1 commented that helped her to understand the categorization scheme for the behaviors was to keep in mind that, "Mapping the political terrain addresses the question, 'Who [emphasized by the respondent] can exert influence in my school?'" "Agenda setting addresses the questions, 'What [emphasized by the respondent] do they want?'" "Networking and coalition building addresses the important *relationships* I need to get things done." and "Bargaining and negotiating addresses the *how* as in how I get things done."

The clarifications obtained from dialogue with each of the three participants were noted and incorporated into the presentation of the findings. The follow-up interviews

also helped clarify statements made by the participants during the previous interviews. These clarifications appear in the form of brackets inserted into the quotations. Each participant received a summary of the participant's interview and was given an opportunity to make corrections and provide clarification. This, and the subsequent interviews provided an opportunity to verify that the data presented in this study accurately depict the perceptions of the participants.

Conclusions

A qualitative case study methodology was used to illuminate the perceptions of three politically astute elementary school principals from similar schools in Suffolk County N.Y., concerning the phenomenon of micropolitics as they experienced it in their schools. The interview guide was designed to gather data necessary to explore the four research questions presented in Chapter I. Stake (1995) (as cited in Patton 2002) explained that instrumental case studies examine a small group of subjects to explore certain patterns of behavior. Specifically the patterns of behavior examined for this study focused on what skills the participants employed to engage in micropolitics in their schools, and how they developed these skills from the onset of their principalships. Intensity sampling was used to purposefully select the participants for this study. I conducted exploratory work with officials from professional organizations to determine that the experiences of these participants would offer intense, but not extreme, examples of how the individual principals experienced the phenomenon of micropolitics in their schools and how these principals developed their understanding and skill of micropolitics.

The participants possessed a combined 43 years of experience as building principals. Their experience ranged from 9 years for Principal #1 to 19 years for Principal #3. Each of the participants is a principal of a similar public elementary school located in Suffolk County, N.Y. Principal #2 possesses a doctorate, Principal #1 possesses a professional diploma for administration in addition to a Masters degree in education, and Principal #3 is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in educational administration.

The primary questions examined the participant's perceptions of the skills associated with micropolitics. The skills required to address micropolitical situations in organizations can be divided into four categories: mapping the political terrain; setting the agenda; networking and coalition building; and bargaining and negotiating (Bolman and Deal, 2007). Bolman and Deal's descriptions for each category were incorporated into the interview questions used for this study. The participants were asked to respond to questions that solicited their perceptions of the skills associated with "mapping the political terrain." These questions asked the participants to identify several groups or individuals within their schools that possess power and influence to affect school operations. The participants provided nine examples. Within these responses, the participants noted that certain individuals possessed two forms of power: the formal authority associated with their title, and informal power that could be exercised on an individual basis. Principal #2 noted this phenomenon when describing certain board of education trustees. Principal #2 explained that all trustees should behave according to the formal job descriptions provided by regulation and policy, but there are times when some trustees act in a less formal role to obtain desired outcomes more related to self interests.

Principal #1 provided the view concerning the informal roles that some teacher leaders play in schools. All three of the respondents identified the representatives of the teacher's union as key individuals who possessed the power and influence to impact school operations. Principal #1 noted that, in addition to the individual teachers who possess formal recognition for the leadership they provide, there are teachers who are considered informal leaders within the school, due to the respect that others hold for these informal leaders. I had expected to find that the perceptions shared by these experienced participants would provide nuanced insights into the complex nature of the phenomenon of micropolitics in schools. The observations provided by Principal #1 and Principal #2 describing how principals must be aware of, not just the formal, but also the informal roles played by key individuals within the school organization, provide a key insight into the phenomenon of micropolitics in schools. These observations are consistent with Pichault's (1993) study describing the impact of organizational politics on a large governmental agency in Belgium (as cited in Bolman and Deal, 2007).

The participants were asked to describe the activities that they feel helped them to develop the skills associated with mapping the political terrain. There was substantial agreement among the participants concerning the manner in which they developed the skills associated with mapping the political terrain. Each of the participants gave some credit to graduate classes for providing an overview of the formal roles and structures that comprise school districts, an "organizational chart type of thing" as Principal #1 referred to this knowledge. Principal #1 explained that "more like 70 to 80% [of her knowledge concerning mapping the political terrain] is really on-the-job training, a sink-or-swim type of figuring it out." The participants could not think of any formal activities

sponsored by their school districts or professional organizations that provided them with a greater understanding of mapping the political terrain. Given the importance ascribed to the essential nature of micropolitical leadership for principals as described by Portin et al. (2003) and Blase & Blase (2002), I would have expected to discover that the participants had engaged in forms of formal professional training in micropolitics provided by their school districts or professional organizations.

The participants provided 11 examples of agenda items that they considered critical to the key individuals and groups identified when mapping the political terrain for their schools. Principal #1 stressed that agenda items are the expression of *what* interests are of importance to the individuals and groups in her school, and this distinction found agreement with the other participants' views of setting the agenda. The participants were careful to differentiate that the processes that were associated with determining, prioritizing and choosing agenda items should be associated with the skills of networking and coalition building; and bargaining and negotiating. This provides evidence that the participants recognize that the concept of organizational politics as described by Bolman and Deal (2007) has utility for them.

Principal #3 was the only participant to acknowledge any relationship between formal training and her understanding of the skills associated with agenda setting. When asked to describe what formal experiences contributed to her understanding of agenda setting, she explained, "I have only found now in my doctoral work that every time I read a book in one of my doctoral courses my first thought is , 'Gee, why didn't I read that book earlier in my career? I would have been a lot better at this.'" Principal #1 and Principal #2 were not able to identify any formal training or course work that helped

them to develop their knowledge or skills related to agenda setting. Instead, these participants credited their on-the-job experience as the primary source of their understanding of agenda setting. This finding supports the conclusion that experience is the primary contributor towards the participants' understanding of micropolitics in their schools. Principal #2 alluded to the critical nature of agenda setting, when he explained that, in politically active districts "...you have to learn the game quickly or you will never survive long enough to reach tenure status..." This statement supports the conclusion that the use of micropolitical skills such as agenda setting have significant impact on the role of the principal, and is congruent with the research that asserts that micropolitics has a significant impact on school operations (Malen & Cochran, 2008; Portin et al., 2003, Blase & Blase, 2002).

The participants provided 13 examples of how they used networking and coalition building to work with the key constituencies and individuals in their schools identified by mapping the political terrain. The importance of networking and coalition building found resonance with the participants. Each participant spoke of the significance of finding commonality among the administrator, individuals, and groups that comprise the school. Likewise, the participants were quick to establish that effective communication is an essential component of networking and coalition building. The participants use these behaviors to assess and manage the political dynamic that surrounds them inside of their schools. The behaviors associated with networking and coalition building are the appropriate response to what Bolman and Deal (2007) described as "...the conditions that most managers face every day: ambiguity, diversity, and scarcity" (p.123).

Principal #2 spoke of insinuating oneself into key groups within the school community, in order to build working relationships with the members of those groups. This demonstrates the application of what Kotter (1985) described as “exerting political influence” (as cited in Bolman and Deal, 2007, p.122). These experienced and politically astute principals reported using the micropolitical skills associated with networking and coalition building on a daily basis; yet, none of the participants could describe any formal activities that contributed to their understanding of this category of micropolitical skill. Instead, each of the participants credited experience with providing them with the skills associated with networking and coalition building. This finding supports the conclusion that these principals rely on experience to develop micropolitical skills.

The participants identified eight behaviors concerning the skills associated with bargaining and negotiating. The participants emphasized that bargaining and negotiating were processes concerned with making decisions and allocating resources. Each of the participants spoke of bargaining and negotiating in terms consistent with what Fischer and Ury (1981) (as cited in Bolman & Deal) described as “principled bargaining”. Principal #1 provided an example of what Fischer and Ury would describe as “invent options for mutual gain”, when she related that she allows her teachers to use funds to obtain classroom libraries. Principal #2 spoke of maintaining an “open dialogue” when bargaining and negotiating with the different individuals and constituencies who comprise his school community. Principal #2 stated that he is willing to explain choices, and “to be very open and up front” when making decisions about staffing, supplies, and other interests. He explained that this openness and directness helps the individuals and groups within the school to be more accepting of the outcomes that result from

bargaining and negotiating (Bolman and Deal, 2007, p.125). These observations support the conclusion that the descriptions of the skills of organizational politics provided by Bolman and Deal and used for this study helped to provide clarity for the participants when describing the phenomenon of micropolitics in their schools.

None of the participants could identify any formal activities that contributed to their understanding of the skills associated with bargaining and negotiating. Principal #1 and Principal #2 spoke of obtaining experience through trial and error as the primary means of developing the skills associated with bargaining and negotiating. Principal #2 credited the observation of experienced administrators with providing the means to better understand the process of bargaining and negotiating. These findings substantiate the conclusion that the principals in this study rely on experience as the primary source of their understanding of micropolitics in their schools.

Summary

Chapter IV began with a restatement of the purpose and nature of the study. What followed was a presentation and analysis of the data. The qualitative methodology used for this study facilitated the exploration of information-rich accounts of how principals from similar schools in one geographic location experience the phenomenon of micropolitics in their schools and how they developed the ability to deal with micropolitics from the onset of their principalships. Data were gathered using structured interviews with three purposefully identified elementary school principals from Group 17 elementary schools in Suffolk County, New York.

The structured interview used for this qualitative study was comprised of 25 open-ended questions that were organized into seven categories. The interview protocol

followed guidelines presented by Patton (2002). The questioning began with gathering background information about the participants, the participants' perceptions concerning micropolitics, and how the participants' perceptions concerning micropolitics have changed since the beginning of their principalship. Primary questions explored the principals' perceptions of how they use micropolitics to face the day-to-day demands of the principalship. Secondary questions sought to uncover how these principals developed their micropolitical skills, and what activities they would recommend to other principals interested in developing a micropolitical leadership capacity. Face-to-face confidential interviews using structured, open-ended questions permitted the participants to provide honest and thoughtful answers. The findings from Chapter IV will be examined in further detail in Chapter V. The relationship of these findings to the literature will also be considered.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Micropolitics is considered an essential attribute of effective principals (Malen and Cochran & Cochran, 2008; Portin et al., 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002), but it cannot be assumed that principals receive sufficient training in this critical area of school leadership during their preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Portin et al., 2003). The purpose of this current case study was to examine the perceptions of experienced, politically astute principals concerning how these individuals developed micropolitical skill and knowledge from the onset of their principalships.

Summary of Research

The study of micropolitics is a field fraught with ambiguity. Scholars have not been able to create a single design that describes the manifestations of this complex, pervasive, and influential phenomenon of school operations. During the past four decades, researchers have used case study analysis to examine this topic. Malen and Cochran and Cochran (2008), preparing a review of the literature for the publication of the Handbook of Education Politics and Policy, edited by Cooper, Cibulka, & Fusarelli, noted that the empirical foundation for the concept of micropolitics of schools “is broad in scope but uneven in quality” (p.148). Malen and Cochran and Cochran (2008), Portin et al. (2003), and Blase & Blase (2002) concluded that additional work is required to bring clarity to the field of micropolitics in schools. This study is one response to these recommendations.

Malen and Cochran and Cochran (2008) considered “research-based articles that directly address the micropolitics of schools” for their study (p.149), and research-based articles concerning the micropolitics of schools formed the basis of the present study. The scholarly work of Bolman and Deal provides additional insights into the phenomenon of micropolitics in schools. The strategic use of the Bolman and Deals’ (2007) analysis, regarding the leading theories of organizational science, provides insights into the practical application of micropolitics in education. Malen and, Cochran (2008) found that, while the research community recognizes the presence of micropolitics in school systems, micropolitics “distinctive features remain elusive and contested” (p.148). Bolman and Deal (2007) considered studies conducted on a broad range of organizations to provide a more cohesive description of the characteristics and behaviors associated with organizational politics, a term that many educational scholars consider a synonym for micropolitics (Blase, 1991; Marshall & Schriber, 1991).

Bolman and Deal (2007) described four basic skills that a “manager as politician” (p. 117) must possess. They offered their findings after carefully examining the works of leading organizational theorists over the past four decades. Descriptions of these four skills provided a focal point for this study. These descriptors enabled the researcher to better examine the perceptions of micropolitical leadership experienced by the participants in this study. These four skills are deemed essential for principals in order to display effective micropolitical leadership. They are: mapping the political terrain; agenda setting; networking and coalition building; and bargaining and negotiating.

Summary

This qualitative research study sought to examine the perceptions of three principals from Group 17 public elementary schools in Suffolk County, N.Y. concerning micropolitics in their schools and the manner in which the participants developed their micropolitical leadership capabilities. This study produced data that contributes to a clearer understanding of how principals hone their micropolitical leadership skills. This data was obtained through structured interviews with three elementary principals who were purposefully selected based on their being judged as politically astute by an expert panel. Face-to-face confidential interviews using structured, open-ended questions permitted the participants to provide authentic and thoughtful answers. The questions, based on Bolman and Deal's (2007) description of organizational politics, were designed to examine political situations faced by these principals on a daily basis and the manner in which they developed the micropolitical skills necessary to effectively address these situations.

The purpose of this study was to better understand how principals develop micropolitical skills from the onset of their principalships. Four research questions were explored as they pertain to the principals in this study: (a) What formal structures do school districts, superintendents, and principal professional organizations provide to insure that elementary school principals possess micropolitical knowledge and skill? (b) What informal activities do elementary school principals engage in to develop micropolitical skill and knowledge? (c) How do principals describe their level of understanding of micropolitics upon entering the principalship? (d) How do principals describe their current level of understanding of micropolitics?

The participants' responses to the interview questions provided useful data that contributed valuable insights concerning the political nature of the principalship, and the manner in which these principals developed their micropolitical skill and acumen. The results are congruent with educational research indicating that micropolitical leadership is an essential attribute for effective school leaders. (Malen & Cochran, 2008; Portin et al., 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002). The principals involved in this study attested to the politically charged nature of their schools and the need for effective building leaders to possess a high degree of micropolitical skill and knowledge.

The four political skills outlined by Bolman and Deal (2007) resonated with each of the three respondents. Each individual could readily map the political terrain, determine extant agendas, describe how each used networking, coalition building, and bargaining and negotiating to achieve school related objectives. While each principal could point to some course work in graduate and doctoral programs as having some influence on their perception of mapping the political terrain, each of the three respondents credited experience as the primary source of his or her micropolitical knowledge and skill.

Research Question #1

“What formal structures do school districts, superintendents, and principal professional organizations provide to insure that elementary principals possess micropolitical knowledge and skill?”

Mapping the Political Terrain

The three respondents quickly identified examples of those individuals and groups who yielded power that affected their schools. Each principal described in detail how members of the school community had different interests and degrees of power that

ultimately impacted school operations. While the participants' answers indicated a degree of familiarity and facility with the micropolitical skill known as *mapping the political terrain*, the principals could point to little formal course work or training that provided them with this skill.

Each of the principals explained that some graduate-level course work had provided a sense of how formal power relationships could impact school operations. Principal #1 referred to this understanding as an "organizational chart type of thing." Principal #3 attributed some of her understanding to graduate course work in a doctoral program. None of the participants identified training sponsored by the school district or professional organizations as having contributed to their understanding of mapping the political terrain.

The perceptions of micropolitics for this study are provided by the participants, and I am careful to note that no statistical generalizations are meant to be asserted or implied. Yin (2003), however, did recognize that researchers who conduct qualitative case study research may make analytical generalizations. The fact that the participants indicated that they relied almost entirely on experience for their knowledge of micropolitics is significant and indicates that further inquiry is required.

Three possible origins of this finding are discussed here. It is possible that formal activities do exist but are not known to these principals. This observation points to the need for further research concerning professional development for principals. This research should examine the depth and variety of principal training programs available to principals, and should consider how programs address issues and concepts relating to micropolitics.

Another conclusion that may be drawn from the finding that the participants relied almost entirely upon experience to develop their understanding of micropolitics concerns the view that some members of the educational community consider politics of all forms to have a negative connotation. This negative connotation results in the opinion that politics of any form should be avoided in schools. Scholars who view decision making through a micropolitical lens observe that individuals and groups will always have divergent interests (Bolman and Deal, 2003). Groups and individuals who experience divergent interests within organizations must find ways to express their points of view and exercise whatever power they have to see that their interests are addressed. There is a tendency for some members of school communities to view the use of power in decision making as coercive, which results in a negative perception (Ball, 1987). The need for individuals and groups to exercise power to address their interests creates an atmosphere in schools that Ball (1987) referred to as “arenas of struggle.” Foucault (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003), however, asserted that political processes within organizations should be approached pragmatically and without judgment. “We have to stop describing power always in negative terms; it excludes, it represses. In fact, power produces; it produces reality” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.192). Disagreement is one outgrowth of conflict and struggle within schools, and members of school communities typically wish to avoid conflict (Malen and Cochran & Cochran, 2008). Fischer and Ury (1981) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003) acknowledged that the form of bargaining known as “positional bargaining” produces outcomes that result in winners and losers. Fischer and Ury countered that not all bargaining that takes place between and among individuals and groups within organizations must produce winners and losers, and

“principled bargaining” is one method of making decisions using a micropolitical process to produce results that are mutually satisfactory to all of the involved parties within an organization (Bolman and Deal, 2003, pp. 212-213).

The third conclusion drawn from the finding that the participants relied primarily on experience to develop their understanding of micropolitics is that creation of useful training in micropolitics has been inhibited, due to the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of micropolitics in schools. This view is congruent with the research of Malen and Cochran and Cochran (2008), who stated, “The micropolitics of schools is an evolving but arguably underdeveloped field of study (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Scriber et al et al., 2003). “It’s conceptual boundaries and distinctive features remain elusive and contested.” (p.148). As discussed in Chapter II the conceptual underpinnings for the concept of micropolitics in schools are derived from two distinct fields of inquiry: political science and organizational science (Scriber et al., 2003). The different research traditions that comprised these fields have resulted in what Scriber et al described as a “messy center.” The tensions that result from the lack of clarity concerning the concept of micropolitics have inhibited a unifying concept from being put forward. Also, most of the fieldwork on micropolitics involves case study methodologies, from which researchers are able to generate insights but not make definitive claims about the topic (Malen and Cochran, 2008, p.150).

Setting the Agenda

All three of the respondents readily identified agenda items associated with key individuals and groups within their schools, and how these agendas impacted school functions. Two of the respondents did attribute their understanding of agenda setting to

formal training or course work. Principal #3 explained that, while essentially all of her skill at agenda setting was developed through informal experience, she recently had encountered material related to this skill in a doctoral course. She wondered aloud why she didn't learn more about micropolitical leadership sooner, but concluded this thought with the observation that when it came to agenda setting, experience was necessary before certain concepts could make sense. Principal #1 noted that agenda setting determines the objectives of micropolitics. She explained that a review of agenda setting in her school answers the question, "What do these individuals or groups want?" Principal #1 and Principal #2 could not recall any formal training in agenda setting.

Networking and Coalition Building

Each of the three respondents were quick to provide numerous detailed examples of strategies used to establish networks and build coalitions within schools yet, all three indicated that no formal training or course work contributed to their knowledge of networking and coalition building. Principal # 1 explained during a follow-up interview that she views networking and coalition building as "relationship building." All of the participants noted that building relationships with key constituents and groups was a critical part of their roles as building principals; yet, no formal training occurred in this area.

Bargaining and Negotiating

The three participants were able to describe several examples of behaviors that contributed to effective bargaining and negotiating within their schools. Each participant could identify strategies that he or she developed to make effective use of bargaining and negotiating in school. The participants reported such things as allowing teachers to

exchange budget codes, maintaining an open dialogue, and building a reputation for fairness, as actions used to bargain and negotiate effectively. None of the respondents could identify an example of how formal training or course work contributed to the development of this skill set.

Research Question #2

Research Question #2 was “What informal activities do elementary school principals engage in to develop micropolitical skill and knowledge?”

Mapping the Political Terrain

While the three respondents acknowledged that formal graduate coursework had provided some understanding of how to map the political terrain, each respondent credited informal activities with producing most of their understanding. Principal #1 explained that she felt that “80%” of what she knows about mapping the political terrain is the result of the knowledge she gained from “on-the- job” experience. Observing experienced administrators and other members of the school community in critical situations was considered another informal, but valuable, means of augmenting this skill.

Principal # 3 provided a description that was consistent with each participant’s experience concerning mapping the political terrain.

In course work you are introduced to the structure [of school organizations] and you are introduced to the formal role [of key individuals], but in practical experience you learn how everyone operates (which can be very different district to district). That’s why school leaders have to be adaptable in terms of where they go. That you find out through trial and error.

Ultimately, each principal concluded that it was practical experience that was the greatest contributor to his or her knowledge concerning mapping the political terrain.

Setting the Agenda

Trial and error was also cited as an example of how principals develop the skill of agenda setting. Two respondents used the cliché “hard knocks” to describe this learning process. Principal #3 spoke of how experience contributes to her understanding of agenda setting when she stated:

It took a long time to try to understand how to work with all the players. It’s a constantly evolving process because the players are continually changing; that actually forces school leaders to get better at it. You always have a new set of agendas to deal with. That’s the learning process.

Principal #1 felt that good judgment and sound values were more important than reading related professional literature when setting the agenda. She doubted that, “reading an article would help.” Principal #1 summarized her perception of agenda setting when she stated, “I guess I’ve learned through the school of hard knocks that you have just got to do the right thing by children.”

Networking and Coalition Building

Each participant in this study emphasized the importance of experience as it applies to the acquisition of the skill set of networking and coalition building. Taking time to build relationships with the members of the school community provides principals with the knowledge needed to maintain and grow effective networks within the school system, while building a support base for principal-sponsored initiatives.

Observation of key individuals and groups was considered a vital part the experience necessary to develop the skills needed to network and build coalitions.

Principal #1 likened her observations to “watching an organism grow.” Principal #3 stated her belief that,

Observation is very important... For example, the formal channel might be that I know there are certain things I would first discuss with my building representative. But sometimes that is not going to get me where I need to go, so I

have to go to the informal movers and shakers in the building. I have to know who they are; I have to observe who respects those people [and] what influences they have on other people.

While the above illustration indicates the importance of observing key individuals in developing the participant's understanding of networking and coalition building, Principal #1 added that the experience of "dealing with people over time" is making a valuable contribution towards developing the skill of networking and coalition building.

Bargaining and Negotiating

As with each of the previous micropolitical skill sets, experience was the primary source of knowledge about bargaining and negotiating for the principals who participated in this study. Observing experienced administrators also provided the participants with opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of this skill set. Principal #1 described the development of her bargaining and negotiating skills as "trying something out," discovering what would work with a few individuals, and then repeating the practice with others. Principal #1 referred to this process as building "grass roots" support for programs.

Principal #3, with 19 years of experience, has dealt with numerous situations that required her skills of bargaining and negotiating. To her, bargaining and negotiating is about resources. "

"Resources" is a key word because it is something that people want....A resource could mean anything from equipment, access to something,...putting a child in a particular class; there are all kinds of things. The building leader is a keeper of the resources in a sense of doling them out.

Principal #3 was very cognizant of the attention that bargaining and negotiating receives within her building.

How do you use your power to work groups who have agendas? You have to be very careful...if one is not ethical, it could be very damaging to the building leader....who gets what, I think we're watched very carefully....So I think there's

always that balance between when you are giving a resource and what is the motivation behind it.

When questioned about the manner in which she developed this understanding of bargaining and negotiating, Principal #3 responded in this way “You sort of rely on your common sense, and then you either fail and you learn from your mistakes or you do good [sic].”

Research Question #3

Research Question #3 was “How do principals describe their level of understanding of micropolitics upon entering the principalship?”

While micropolitics was evident to the respondents upon entering the principalship, they were not as aware of its scope and impact within their schools as they are now. Principal #2 explained that “It [micropolitics] always existed, but at the time that you’re first starting off you don’t realize the influence that it is having and the use of it [micropolitics] being implemented around you or with you.” The respondents described their sense of micropolitics at the start of their principalship as something that was given little formal thought. What was known about micropolitics at the inception of the principalship related to formal roles and relationships typically outlined on a published organizational chart. Principal #3 explained, “When I began the principalship, I thought it was a structure; something you could see on paper. I really did believe that the whole organizational chart (both formal and informal), in a sense, existed.” It was evident from the interviews that these principals entered their principalships with little or no formal training in the dynamics and use of micropolitical leadership. Principal #3 expressed a sentiment that recurred in each interview, when she explained that she did not feel that she was fully prepared to deal with micropolitical issues. “When you are

beginning [your principalship]" she stated, "You don't have a true understanding [of micropolitics]. You learn definitions of what it [micropolitics] is, and the dimensions, but sometimes I feel like it goes out the window when you are actually on the job because it can surprise you." The respondents could not identify any induction or training activities that had prepared them to face the challenges of micropolitical leadership.

Research Question #4

Research Question #4 was "How do principals describe their current level of understanding of micropolitics?"

The three respondents explained that their current understanding of micropolitics changed significantly from the beginning of their principalships. They currently view micropolitics as pervasive. Principal #2 affirmed his view that micropolitics "is inherently involved in almost everything we do." Principal #1 explained her view of micropolitics when she stated, "I see it as relationships and all the interrelationships that are associated with any organization (relationships that have formality, but also lots of informality). She went on to explain how her current understanding of micropolitics has changed from when she first started her principalship "A lot of times you can get what you want through the back door, or help someone see perhaps the better way of doing things through the back door." The term "back door" here refers to informal means of accomplishing objectives. Principal #1 stated clearly that her understanding of micropolitics differs from when she first began her principalship "...because my experiences have changed that...I can't say that I formally thought about it [micropolitics] before becoming a principal.

Principal #3 echoed Principal #1 when she credited experience as responsible for helping her to see that micropolitics goes far beyond the roles people fill on an

organization chart to how “a school leader uses other [techniques] and resources to get things done.” When she began her principalship, she felt that micropolitics was a structure that “...you could see on paper.” Principal #3 explained that she possesses a more nuanced view of micropolitics than when she began her principalship;

When you really start to work in a system, and you really start to understand people’s strengths, their interpersonal relationships, and some practical experiences, you learn from that and you realize that in order for a leader to get things done you have to move off that formal structure on paper and use other resources. [A school leader needs to] learn how to cultivate those resources. I think it’s key.

Principal # 2 spoke of the importance of observation and communication when developing the skills of setting the agenda, networking and coalition building, and bargaining and negotiating. This was a recurring theme throughout Principal #2’s interview. He described learning these skills through, “On the job experiences,” “day in and day out,” and “mostly dealing with different constituency groups.” He applies what he observes and what he learns through communicating with key individuals, to augment his experience and skill in micropolitical leadership.

Scholars have established that micropolitical leadership is a distinct skill set for principals, but what does it look like? The research community has built consensus around definitions for micropolitics that refer to how power is used within school organizations to make decisions, implement policies, and distribute resources. Yet, the research community continues to seek detailed descriptors of micropolitical leadership behaviors. This study chose to use concepts developed by Bolman and Deal (2007) to describe specific leadership behaviors that pertain to the micropolitical concepts of mapping the political terrain, agenda setting, networking and coalition building, and bargaining and negotiating.

Portin et al. (2003) reported that micropolitics is infused throughout the leadership functions of principals. This conclusion has been substantiated by the findings of this study. Hoyle (1999), Blase and Blase (2002), Portin et al. (2003) and Malen and Cochran (2008) went on to assert that there is a need for further study in the field of micropolitics. The findings of this study, in many ways, reflect the status of the field. While the respondents substantiated the political nature of their jobs, they identified little or no formal training that contributed to their understanding of micropolitical leadership.

This study examined the perceptions of individuals from school districts that are categorized by NYS as not urban, not rural, serving students with low needs in relation to district means. Large urban school systems have different resources that may permit access to different forms of administrator training. Small rural districts may face different issues than Group 17 schools. A thorough examination of principals outside of Group 17 schools was considered outside of the scope of this qualitative case study. Indeed, future researchers may wish to examine the experiences of principals who serve schools from different types of categories. This study closely examined the experiences of experienced principals recognized by others for their political savvy. Future research may wish to examine the experiences of principals at other stages in their careers.

Conclusions

1. The results of this study substantiate that Portin et al.'s (2003) finding is correct; micropolitical leadership is an essential element of school leadership. Portin et al. examined school leadership at different levels and in different school settings. The Portin et al. study found that micropolitical leadership is one of seven essential areas of school leadership at all levels and settings. Portin et al. found that micropolitical leadership was

an area in need of further study. The current study examined the perceptions of principals in public elementary schools that are considered not urban and not rural by the New York State Department of Education. Data obtained from each participant substantiates Portin et al.'s conclusion that micropolitical leadership is an essential element of school leadership. When asked to describe his current understanding of micropolitics, Principal #2 stated emphatically, "I would say that it is inherently involved in almost everything we do." Portin et al.'s (2003) study examined multiple facets of school leadership, concluding that there were seven essential elements. The current study focused on the element of micropolitical leadership. This study extended beyond Portin et al.'s study, in that it delved more deeply into the characteristics that may comprise micropolitical leadership.

2. While micropolitical leadership skills are essential for principals, the participants of this study could identify little formal training covering this important area of school leadership. Notably, the participants repeatedly spoke of developing their micropolitical acumen through "experience", "trial and error", and "hard-knocks." Reference to university training pertained primarily to one-dimensional organization charts and formal job descriptions for those in authority. The participants also had difficulty identifying formal training in micropolitics provided by school districts and professional organizations. The purpose of this qualitative study was not to draw generalizations concerning the depth and quality of training provided to principals regarding micropolitical leadership, but to demonstrate that further research is needed to examine what opportunities are available for principals to expand their expertise in the area of micropolitical leadership. This is especially pressing given the affirmation that

micropolitics is an essential element of school leadership, that an individual's ability to engage in micropolitical leadership can determine a principal's success as a school leader and that the effective use of micropolitical leadership enhances the principal's ability to lead. Studies conducted by Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) indicate that schools with efficacious principals tend to produce students with higher achievement results than schools with less effective principals.

There is a need for scholars, school districts, and professional organizations to examine more closely the training and course offerings available for school administrators. While courses and training opportunities that promote the development of micropolitical leadership exist, they need to be publicized. In areas where these courses do not exist, course offerings should be created.

3. The qualitative case study methodology utilized for this study provided many valuable insights concerning the phenomenon of micropolitical leadership in schools. I found that the keen interest concerning micropolitical issues expressed by the participants, and the nuanced views the participants provided through their insightful reflections provided data that could not have been obtained with other research methodologies.

Patton (2002) explained that qualitative research methodologies are a good fit for a study when researchers in the field conclude there is not enough known about the topic. As referred to in previous chapters, there is agreement within the research community that the concept of micropolitics in schools requires further study (Blase & Blase, 2002; Portin et al., 2003; Malen & Cochran, 2008).

Qualitative research is well suited to examine a complex phenomenon such as micropolitics in schools and the impact that this phenomenon has on the participants of the study, and is better suited for understanding the depth and details of what actually goes on when respondents engaged in the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002; Gay et al, 2009). The qualitative interviews conducted for this study obtained data that provided longer, more detailed, and more nuanced points of view from the participants.

Patton (2002) used the term “a people-oriented inquiry” (p. 33) to describe the process of eliciting from experienced, politically astute principals authentic accounts of their perceptions of micropolitics in their own terms. Structured interviews with open-ended questions permitted the participants to provide insights that described real world perceptions of events that took place within the contexts of their schools. Principal #1’s account of how the metaphor of weightlifting became an effective use of networking to encourage the district initiative of guided reading is one example of an observation that could not have been easily obtained using quantitative research strategies. Likewise, Principal #2’s recollection of how an experienced principal obtained new curtains for his school’s auditorium provides an example of how qualitative research methodologies can tease out keener insights concerning complex behavior than quantitative research methodologies. When asked to describe how informal experiences contributed to Principal #2’s understanding of bargaining and negotiating, the participant recalled an anecdote about of an experienced principal who used informal power to obtain new auditorium curtains (a fuller version of this anecdote was presented in Chapter IV). Principal #2 shared this story to provide an insightful illustration of how informal experiences helped to develop Principal #2’s understanding of the skills associated with

bargaining and negotiating. Such insight would prove difficult to obtain from the use of quantitative measurement.

The open-ended nature of the interview questions permitted Principal #3 to expand upon Principal #3's views as the interview progressed. Principal #3 described the understanding of micropolitics as a "discovery process." Principal #3 elaborated later in the interview:

It took a long time to try to understand how to work with all the players; and the challenge is that's constantly changing. You know, the superintendent doesn't stay the same, the building reps [teacher's union representatives] don't stay the same, and you just get comfortable with sometimes the people in those positions; the building rep, the PTA president and then they change. So it's a constantly evolving process that actually forces (in my opinion) the school leader to get better at it [agenda setting], because one could become very comfortable with the people that they're working with. But it keeps you on your toes because you always have a new set of something you have to deal with. That's the learning process I feel in the job.

A review of the research on micropolitics in schools provides no evidence of quantitative research instruments that can obtain this type of data, and Patton (2002) endorsed the use of qualitative methodologies for studies where there are limited quantitative tools available to measure the phenomenon in question.

4. This study supports the notion that schools are complex entities comprised of a conglomeration of coalitions and subgroups (Bolman and Deal, 2003). This was borne out through the accounts provided by the participants. The principals provided a portrait of the necessity to engage each coalition with sensitivity towards that subgroup's unique set of interests. When asked to map the political terrain of their schools, the participants responded by identifying numerous individuals and groups. These entities included members of the board of education, the superintendent, other central office officials, union officials, teachers, parents and students, as well as representatives of outside

organizations. Principal #2 described how he deals with the complex nature of relations with many of these individuals and groups when he stated, “You deal with it [power and influence] all the time.” When you do not have enough authority to accomplish a specific task, “...you have to use informal power to get what you want to accomplish.”

Recognizing that there are times when he is the one possessing the authority, Principal #2 noted that, “...being on the reverse side and having [formal] power, I can see the game being played very well.” The game that Principal #2 referred to is how individuals engage in micropolitics to make decisions and allocate resources.

5. The skills related to micropolitical leadership are effective tools that can be used to overcome staff resistance to instructional initiatives. Deal and Nutt (1980) (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2003) observed that principals must use micropolitical leadership to overcome staff “resistance, criticism, and anger” towards program initiatives (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p. 228). Their account was borne out by Principal #1’s description of how she introduced new reading strategies to her school. Principal #1 reflected that staff resistance manifested itself with the teachers questioning the need to change and wondering, “Is she [the principal] saying that I’ve been teaching the wrong way all of these years?” As the literature about school leadership is replete with tales of staff resistance to change (Fullan), it is essential that principals develop tools to facilitate the implementation of change in their buildings. The participants of this study attested to the utility of micropolitical leadership to facilitate change in their buildings.

6. The study of micropolitics as a distinct field separate from other fields of politics contributes to a deeper understanding of school leadership. It is notable that, where Bacharach and Mundell (1993) rejected the utility of dividing school politics into

macro-and-micro strata, scholars such as Iannacone and Cistone (1974), Hoyle (1999), Ball (1987), and Blase and Blase (2002), demonstrated that separating out the political activities that occur on a daily basis in schools from other political processes contributes to a deeper understanding of the distinct nature of how micropolitical leadership impacts schools. Similarly, the participants of this study were quick to recognize the applicability of the concept of micropolitics to the dynamics of school leadership.

7. The participants of this study were not aware of professional literature that provided information for obtaining a deeper understanding of how micropolitics impacts school operations. The participants could not identify any printed material that contributed to a deeper understanding of the micropolitical issues facing their schools. In fact, Principal # 1 explained that she did not feel that journal articles would be particularly helpful in her endeavors to determine the different agendas of her constituent groups stating,

I guess that, with agenda setting it is more informal I might call a colleague and say, “This is what’s going on and I want to run this by you; what do you think? As opposed to reading an article. I’m not sure that [reading an article] would directly help the situation.

This reaction is based on Principal #1’s belief that no articles exist relevant to the topic of micropolitics and agenda setting in schools. A reference list identifying relevant literature could facilitate access to information concerning micropolitical leadership for principals.

8. There is a growing demand for principals to possess micropolitical leadership capabilities. As the political demands on school systems increase, schools will require principals that are more adept at demonstrating political leadership. Katz (2004), referring to his study concerning effective school leadership found that “top-down”,

“coercive”, or “domineering” styles of management are no longer viable forms of school leadership for principals. Principal #1 alluded to this phenomenon when she referred to the value of building “grass roots” amongst staff to support school initiatives.

As the research of Hoyle (1999), Ball (1987), Blase (2002), and Kelchtermans (2007) alluded to, the phenomenon of micropolitics can be observed in school systems around the world. Kelchtermans (2007) further observed that in Belgium macropolitical actions can have direct influence on the micropolitical leadership of the school. The participants of this study echoed this phenomenon, noting that initiatives handed down by school boards and central office administrators demand the principal’s use of micropolitical leadership.

Articles appear regularly in publications such as Education Week to provide further evidence that macropolitical issues increasingly influence the micropolitical dynamics of the schoolhouse. This trend described by Kelchtermans (2007), and supported by accounts given by the participants of this study, highlights the need for principals to possess the micropolitical leadership skills necessary to address the effects that macropolitics has on the schoolhouse.

9. Mentorship programs would be an effective means of helping new principals to develop micropolitical leadership capabilities. When discussing what needed to happen to insure that new principals acquire necessary micropolitical leadership skills, each participant responded that some form of mentorship program would be valuable. Despite the significant impact that micropolitics has on school operations, all of the participants reported having received little formal training in this area upon the start of their principalship. The participants noted that micropolitics can “make or break” a new

principal. Given the resources that are invested in the hiring of principals and the turmoil caused in schools associated with an unsuccessful principalship, it would behoove school districts to reduce the risk of principal failure by providing training in the area of micropolitical leadership. Considering the effort and time that individuals devote to preparing for the principalship, professional activities that contribute to the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership capabilities would be a valuable step towards insuring the success of new principals.

10. The description of organizational politics provided by Bolman and Deal (2007) provided clarity for this study and contributed to a deeper understanding of how micropolitics impacts school leadership. While definitions of micropolitics have been available for several decades, a definitive description for this phenomenon has been mired in ambiguity (Malen & Cochran, 2008). This ambiguity is attributable to the field's philosophical underpinnings of political science and organizational science.

Using the language of organizational science provided by Bolman and Deal (2007) to describe the dynamics of micropolitics was useful as a heuristic device to better understand how the participants perceived the phenomenon of micropolitical leadership. The results of the current study point to the authenticity and utility of the nomenclature provided by Bolman and Deal (2007) for future researchers. Careful consideration of Bolman and Deal's (2007) synthesis of the literature concerning the political frame of organizational science provided terms and descriptions that had resonance for the participants of this study. While the scholarly literature concerning micropolitical leadership reports a degree of ambiguity, the participants of this study found clarity in Bolman and Deal's (2007) description of organizational politics. The participants used

these descriptors to express how the use of power and authority impacted the process of making decisions and allocating resources within their schools. While the participants recognized the complexity of micropolitics, they also found the phenomenon of micropolitics in their schools to be pervasive.

It was clear that the participants relied on observation and experience to deduce the existence of micropolitics in their schools. They also expressed that experience and trial and error were the principal means used to hone their micropolitical skills. Future studies may wish to examine the relative merits of different forms of professional development activities as a means for developing micropolitical leadership capabilities.

11. Malen and Cochran and Cochran (2008) pointed to a current phenomenon that impacts school leaders, that of the increased prevalence of centralized policies, requiring stricter adherence of mandates are being imposed on schools. Sergiovanni (1996), in *Leadership for the Schoolhouse*, offered a strategy for school leaders to respond to the confusion and strife that result from this phenomenon. Principals, Sergiovanni argued, must be able to create an overarching vision of what schools can and should be. Indeed, Principals #1 and #2 offered responses that could be used to substantiate this vision.

Principal #1 described that, when dealing with other individuals and constituencies within the school who may possess different points of view, you have to communicate that "...you have to do the right thing by children." Further, Principal #1 elaborated, stating that different groups must be "pulled together to share the vision." Principal #2 spoke of vision when describing the importance of building an effective reputation stating, "I think that I have a reputation from the people who have worked for me, or with me, that they know that I am very direct and laying out the position that is what we really believe

is in the best interest of the children and the district.” Principal #2 expressed the opinion that such a reputation is important because, “People tend to usually accept it so that it is again my basic premise is to come in and say yes, and only then if it is problematic to put some limitation on it. But then explaining it usually resolves it and they are very accepting of it.” In this manner, Principal #3 reported that key individuals and constituencies are more likely to accept decisions when these individuals and groups can see that the overarching reason behind the decision is for the benefit of the students within the school.

Policy Recommendations

Implications of this study result in the following policy recommendations concerning the ability of principals to engage effectively in micropolitics:

1. Include in the design of principal evaluation systems criteria that concentrate on micropolitical leadership capabilities.
2. Consider micropolitical leadership capabilities when hiring new principals
3. Include micropolitical leadership capabilities in administrative certification guidelines.

Rationale:

As discussed in Chapter II superintendents of school systems frequently complain that they are unable to obtain qualified applicants for school principals positions (Archer, 2003). The ISLLC Educational Leadership Policy Standards 2008, published by the Council of Chief State School Officers, provide a broad set of standards, expectations, and guidelines for school leaders that are recognized in 46 states. Skills associated with micropolitics are present in the standards. These skills include: developing the instructional and leadership capacity of staff, developing the capacity for distributed

leadership, collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to the diverse community interests and needs, mobilizing community resources, acting with integrity and fairness and responding effectively to the political context of schools. As noted previously in this paper, Portin et al. (2003) observed that micropolitical leadership is one of seven essential areas of school leadership, and Waters et al. (2003) concluded that understanding the impact of political forces at work inside of the school is necessary for effective school leadership. Evidence provided by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) indicates that a significant relationship exists between principal effectiveness and student achievement. Therefore, states and school districts should consider the ability of principals to engage in micropolitics effectively when developing certification requirements, evaluation procedures, and hiring practices.

4. Institute the requirement of districts to provide a mentoring program for new principals.

Rationale:

Principal #1 and Principal #3 recommended that school districts provide mentoring experiences for principals. Principal #1 stated, “I would think that shadowing a principal who is successful with micropolitical leadership or relationships for an extended period of time, like a student teaching period of time, as opposed to one day.” Principal #3, when asked for recommendations to help principals develop their understanding of micropolitics, stated, “I think one of the best models that a leader can have is to work with a mentor.” These recommendations are borne out in the research community. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth recommended that departments of education and school districts, working in partnership with universities, engage in “intensive leadership

development through mentor-supported, field-based experiences that serve those ready to become principals” (p.485). Skilled mentors can help new principals to navigate the complicated process of moving from theory to practice, as the new principals make the transition from their former role as teachers to their new roles as school leaders.

Successful field-based mentoring experiences must have clear goals and purposes, skilled and respected mentors and a balance between oversight and independence for the new principal mentee. Such programs will require significant investments of district and state resources (Ferrigno & Muth.

Practice Recommendations

Implications that are produced by this study result in the following recommendations concerning professional practice for principals:

1. Districts provide formalized induction activities that include helping new principals to better understand how micropolitical leadership affects school operations.

Rationale:

The Council of Chief State School Officers (2008) endorses the establishment of robust professional development activities such as the Ohio Department of Education’s two-year induction program for elementary and secondary principals. This induction program incorporates the ISLLC standards which address, in part, the micropolitical processes referred to in this study. Walker and Carr-Stewart (2006) recommended that induction activities for new principals provide opportunities for recently appointed administrators to reflect on the attributes of successful school leadership. These reflections should include an examination of Bolman and Deal’s (2007) descriptions of the four categories of political skill. This examination can provide new principals with a

useful tool to develop an understanding of the micropolitics they will encounter upon starting their principalships.

2. Districts and professional organizations provide professional development courses to help practicing principals better understand how micropolitical issues affect their schools.
3. Provide access to professional libraries that will enable principals to examine issues of micropolitics published in professional books and primary source journals where current educational research is first published.
4. Develop collegial circles wherein new and experienced principals can meet to discuss issues related to micropolitical leadership.

Rationale for Recommendations 2, 3, and 4:

This rationale applies to recommendations for practice Numbers 2, 3, and 4, and pertains to professional development activities that are available for principals. Peterson (2002) argued that professional development for principals should complement preservice preparation, and should be tailored to match the stage of the principal's career. Access to well-designed courses, resources such as current professional literature, and activities such as collegial circles, can support principals in deepening their skills in the area of micropolitics. The National Staff Development Council (2000) and the Council for Chief State School Officers (2008) endorse professional development for principals that is long term, well-planned, job embedded, driven by professional standards for administrators, and focused on student achievement (Peterson, 2002; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

Recommendations for Future Research

Implications produced by this study result in the following recommendations concerning future research into micropolitics as it is experienced by school principals:

1. A study examining the perceptions of micropolitics experienced by principals in different settings, including large urban districts and private and charter schools.
2. A study examining the perceptions of micropolitics experienced by middle school and high school principals.
3. A study examining the perceptions of micropolitics of principals serving schools in different geographic locations.
4. A study examining the perceptions of micropolitics experienced by principals of different ages, years of service, gender, and race.

Rationale for Recommendations 1 through 4:

It is important to stress that this study was limited to the perceptions expressed by the participants. The participants worked in similar elementary schools from one geographic location. Further inquiry is required to examine the perceptions of micropolitics experienced by principals of different subgroups. These subgroups include principals of different genders, ages, race, and levels of experience. The experiences of principals serving in different types of schools warrant further inquiry. School subgroups to be examined include schools from different geographic locations, district sizes, and populations.

5. A study investigating professional development programs for school administrators to determine how these programs support the development of micropolitical leadership capacity.

6. Rationale:

This study examined the perceptions of three principals of similar schools from one geographic location. These principals reported relying primarily on experience to develop their understanding of micropolitics. Further inquiry is required to examine what professional development programs exist to assist principals in the development of knowledge and skills regarding micropolitics. Peterson (2002), Walker and Carr-Stewart (2006), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), provided critical insights as to what constitutes quality professional development programs for principals.

6. A study examining the relationship between the micropolitical leadership capabilities of principals and student achievement.

Rationale

Research conducted by Leithwood, et al. (2004) indicates that the impact of school leadership produces an effect on student outcomes that is second only to the influence produced by classroom instruction. By extension, researchers may wish to determine the nature of the relationship, if any, between principals who effectively engage micropolitics in their schools and the student outcomes from those schools.

7. A study examining how power influences micropolitics.

Rationale: Foucault (1975), as cited in Bolman and Deal, (2008) argued that the use of power ultimately shapes the reality of organizations. Researchers have identified multiple sources of power within organizations, including positional, coercive, information and expertise; control of rewards; alliances; and networks; control of agendas; framing; and personal power (Bolman & Deal, 2003). How these forms of

power are used lies at the heart of the phenomenon of micropolitics (Ball, 1987; Hoyle, 1999; Blase & Blase, 2002; Malen & Cochran, 2008). Webb (2007) elaborated on this by noting that power manifests itself within organizations in two forms: covert and panoptic. Webb called for further research examining the relationship between macropolitics and micropolitics and influence that observed power and unseen power influence the way change is effected in schools.

Concluding Remarks

Principal #2 noted that politics is inherently involved in almost everything that takes place in schools. Bolman and Deal (2007) explained that politics is neither good nor bad, but lies at the core of the decision-making processes in organizations. The values ascribed to politics are not a function of politics itself, but the motivations that serve as a catalyst for micropolitical behavior. Principals need to understand and apply micropolitical leadership in order to be effective as educational leaders. The demands of contemporary education, however, require more of school leaders. Malen and Cochran and Cochran (2008) pointed to a trend that is most relevant to today's principals. At one time the mantra of the school reform movement was "greater responsibility with greater freedom", but the code now appears to be "greater responsibility, less discretion, and increased mandates". As centralized policies are increasingly imposed on the schoolhouse, principals will need to develop ever more sophisticated means of exerting micropolitical leadership. In the face of scarcity, conflict, and confusion, principals must be able to create an overarching vision of what schools can, and should, be (Sergiovanni, 1996). Burns' (1978) words remain relevant for today's educational leaders; He called on principals to adopt a positive style of politics that inspires all members of the

community to continuously strive for the higher moral purposes of the school (Bolman and Deal, 2003).

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form



Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

JAN 05 2010

Researcher's Affiliation:

Approval Date

John Stimmel is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive Ed. D. program for K-12 School Administration offered by the College of Education and Human Services.

Purpose of Study and Duration:

The purpose of this study is to explore how elementary school principals develop their micropolitical leadership skills from the onset of their principalship. An interview will be conducted which will take approximately forty-five minutes to complete.

Expiration Date
JAN 05 2011

Description of Procedures:

Forty-five minute interviews will be conducted with three elementary school principals. Predetermined questions will be asked about the topic during this interview. The initial questions examine the political dynamics encountered in the participant's school. Additional questions seek to determine how the participant develops political skill and knowledge to address these dynamics.

Participants will be invited to participate via the mail. From the available pool of elementary principals who volunteer, three principals will be randomly selected to participate. The interviews will be audio recorded so that no part of the responses is lost and that they can later be transcribed.

Instrument:

The instrument, or the interview questions, are derived and grounded from a practical and theoretical research base. Questions will be asked which will allow the researcher to gain further information about "micropolitical leadership" and the formal and informal means that principals use to develop knowledge and skill concerning mapping the political terrain, agenda setting, coalition building, bargaining and negotiating.

Voluntary Nature:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Should a participant decide to withdraw from the study at any time, he or she may do so without penalty.

College of Education and Human Services
Executive Ed.D. Program
Tel. 973.275.2728
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

JAN 05 2010

Approval Date

Expiration Date
JAN 05 2011

Anonymity:

The interviews will not provide for anonymity as they will be conducted face to face with direct researcher-participant interaction.

Confidentiality:

Information will be gathered through individual interviews and will be kept strictly confidential. At no time will the name of the interviewee or the name of the interviewee's school be revealed. All data will be stored on a USB flash drive and will remain in a locked cabinet in the researcher's residence for three years. The researcher is aware of the rules of confidentiality and holds a certificate regarding the rights of participants.

Access to Records:

The interview responses and data will be held in strict confidence. The research records will not be available to anyone but the researcher and his dissertation committee.

Foreseeable Risks:

There are no risks in this research.

Expected Benefits:

There are no direct benefits expected by participating in this research.

Compensation:

There is no compensation offered with this research.

Questions:

Any questions about this research can be directed as follows:

Researcher: John Stimmel (631) 872-4620 john.stimmel@shu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Daniel Gutmore, Ph.D. (973) 275-2853 daniel.gutmore@shu.edu
Department of Educational Leadership,
Management and Policy
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079-2685

Questions (continued):

For rights as a human subject:

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D. (973) 313-6314 irb@shu.edu
 Office of the Institutional Review Board
 President's Hall – 3rd Floor
 Seton Hall University
 400 South Orange Avenue
 South Orange, NJ 07079-2685

Audio-tapes:

Participants who sign the Informed Consent Form are giving permission for their interview session to be audio-taped. Participants will not be identified. Only the researcher will have access to the tapes and only the researcher will transcribe them. Upon completion of the research, the data will be stored on a USB flash drive which will remain in a locked cabinet in the researcher's residence. Only the researcher will have access to this cabinet. The data will be destroyed three years after the study is completed.

Acknowledgement of Informed Consent Form:

I have read the material above, and I agree to participate. I am aware that I will be provided with a copy of this Informed Consent Form.

 Subject's signature

 Date

Seton Hall University
 Institutional Review Board

JAN 05 2010

Approval Date

Expiration Date
 JAN 05 2011

Appendix B
Transcripts of Interviews

Text of Principal Interviews

Principal #1

1.1 How many years have you been a principal?

Nine years.

1.2 How many years have you worked in your current assignment?

Eight years.

1.3 What grades does your school serve?

Kindergarten through fifth grade

1.4 What is your tenure status?

Tenured

1.5 Describe your level of education.

Bachelor's degree in elementary education; Master's degree in reading, and a Professional Diploma in administration.

2.1 Based on your experience as a principal, how would you describe your current understanding of job-related politics, also known as micropolitics or organizational politics?

I see it [micropolitics] as relationships and all the interrelationships that are associated with any organization. Relationships that have some formality but also lots of informality. A lot of times, you can get what you want through the back door, or help someone see perhaps the better way of doing things through the back door.

2.2 Is your current understanding different from when you first became a principal?

I would have to say yes because my experiences have changed that...I can say that I formally thought about [micropolitics] before becoming a principal. I guess a little bit more... I was an observer as an assistant principal for three years, and that helped formulate what and how I would deal with situations as a principal; what I would do similar and what I would do differently.

3.1 Identify three to five key individuals or constituencies who you perceive to yield power that affects the operations of your school.

Of course, central administration, the Board of Ed., more through central administration and the teachers' union. Then, I would say the perceived leaders within the building, teachers, parents, then formal organizations like the PTA.

3.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as "mapping the political terrain".

Formal, I would say, not very much. Formal education on understanding the leaders of a school system...It was before I had kids when I took administration classes, but I do remember looking at the structure of the educational K-12 system's direct responsibilities, like an organizational chart type thing; line positions as opposed to specific types of relationships in my district. For instance, I am directly responsible to my assistant superintendent; our director of curriculum doesn't really oversee the principals. We're a large district; we don't answer to the director of curriculum formally. Some of my work during the admin program helped me to understand [the structure] of the district a little bit.

3.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as "mapping the political terrain".

I would say that probably more than 50%...more like 70-80% is really on the job training...sink or swim type of figuring it out. And the role of the principal...if you don't love people you're in the wrong job...especially in this day and age. Of course, many years ago the principal was more of a manager, and now as a curriculum leader and so forth, we're really in the classrooms everyday overseeing the operations from a more instructional perspective, as opposed to that strict managerial building operation of the building perspective.

4.1 What are critical items on this individual's or constituency's agenda?

For my school and for the district as a whole it's always the dollars and cents...the budget factor, and of course we're in the type of economic times where it's even more important than ever before during my tenure as an educator. Our superintendent, I know, has a strong desire to lift the level of several of the buildings instructionally. We're a district of nine elementary buildings, we tease and joke, but, seriously, two buildings operate according to one set of rules, and the seven other buildings are doing, perhaps, things a little bit differently. All doing a good job, but the level of instruction is much higher at two of the buildings and the Sup [superintendent] would like to see, as would I, more of a cohesiveness about the district and about the education of our students. I think there are many people in the seven buildings working on that, but there is always that little force of resistance even on the central level. One of the key people at the central level was a principal in one of the seven buildings. He's of the position that everything is fine. So that is probably the largest thing that the superintendent would like to see change.

I have a wonderful relationship with our two building reps (now and always). That has more to do with the two individuals and who they are. One thing that several teachers and the union have been concerned about is, we have had two teachers with breast cancer who are next door to each other in the same grade level...one is only 30 years old and one is in the mid-50s. This began last spring; the teachers were very concerned that maybe it was something environmental within the building or the grounds that may be a contributing factor. The building has been tested several times by reps through Nyset (NYSTATE). through the district and so forth, and they're not finding anything. They tend to think that it has more to do with the fact that we live on Long Island and that we have a large population of females working in the building; so our percentage is probably going to be higher than another operation; but there is that fear.

Last year, there was a strong group of parents who didn't want some of the changes that were coming particularly regarding our fifth grade. Our superintendent put his foot down regarding the outlay of money. We had always taken our fifth grades to a play in the city ...that was an expensive day. [The superintendent directed that when planning trips for] one child and one parent we now had a \$50 cap. [We] were not able to find a play for that amount of money, [so] we went to the Bronx Zoo [instead]; there was a big backlash [the parents were very disappointed that the school could not arrange a fieldtrip to a play]...the buses were late; it was a little bit of a rainy day; I was like, "come on ...". ...like anything else it was fine.

4.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding of the skill referred to as "agenda setting".

I would say absolutely no formal agenda training.

4.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding of the skill referred to as “agenda setting”.

Often, speaking with one person, individual or group of people with a particular interest, it’s easy to say, “yeah, that’s a good idea.” Then hear the opposite side and others who fall somewhere in the middle. I guess I’ve learned through the school of hard knocks that you have just got to do the right thing by children. I think that what is best for the children and the families that I serve is to listen to everything and make a decision. I listen to all the opinions and allow for discussion wherever that makes sense, and then at some point say, “Well, we heard this; we know all the particulars and all the concerns, and have to say this is what we are going to do for our children”. I don’t know that I’ve ever seen anything formally...[to help with agenda setting].

I guess that, with agenda setting, it is more informal. I might call a colleague and say, “This is what’s going on and I want to run this by you; what do you think?” As opposed to reading an article. I’m not sure that that [reading an article] would directly help the situation.

5. Networking and Coalition Building

5.1 For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3, how do you network and build coalitions with this individual or constituency to make decisions regarding school-related tasks?

Well...I think that communication is critical and key...that ongoing communication...whether it is just checking in with the group or formal like a site-based meetings and organizations. I mentioned the superintendent’s desire to have us be a more

cohesive district instructionally...two buildings are a little more ahead of the curve to be very careful not to be [boastful]; i.e., look at what we did... but to [invite] people in; for example [say], “If you’re interested, come on board; this is what we did if you would like to share,” and so forth, so that it is more of a two-way street. As opposed to two buildings viewed as the favorite children and the other buildings are viewed as the stepchildren.

That’s easy to happen in education; I think that’s the way teachers often feel, unless there is that sense of trust and that sense that we are all growing together. [Describing the reaction a teacher might have to new information], is she telling me that I have been doing it wrong all these years? There’s a real sense of not wanting to feel that they have been doing something wrong for 15 years. I don’t think that that’s what anyone needs to suggest,. especially when I first came here. I would make sure that everyone had the idea that we are the ultimate lifelong learners and we really have to practice what we preach. Do you really want to go to a cardiologist that hasn’t opened a book in 15 years? So we have to stay current too. It doesn’t mean throwing out great ideas and replacing them with whatever way the wind is blowing that day. It means taking best practice and say, “This will work in my classroom, and I am going to try this.” Always being willing to modify, adapt, and try new things.

By pulling different groups together to share the vision. When I first came here...wonderful people...secretaries, custodians, teachers... very good people. But instruction was mediocre; the scores were fine, everything looked terrific, but the depth of what was going on in the classroom wasn’t where I thought it should be. As I was walking around in September I remember walking into a 1st grade classroom and the kids were cutting out hundreds of words from the back of a workbook; they were all over the

place. They didn't even know half of the words yet. I said, "Oh my goodness, this isn't the best use of instructional time...but how do we move forward from there? So we began with Writer's Workshop; I am always willing to model something even if it is something that I am not comfortable with, so that we can investigate and move forward. Writer's Workshop happened to be something I was very comfortable with. I would release teachers to come observe me in whatever grade level they were working in...we met at lunch. Setting up the structure, modeling for teachers; being willing to serve as that support, being willing to say, "You need that, we're going to buy that;" guiding them; giving them what they do need; giving them freedom from what the district required of them. My second or third year I said, "Don't worry about the anthology." I told them to throw it out the window. They thought I was crazy, but now no one uses the anthology. We still have an anthology; each grade level covers two to three stories a year if it makes sense with what they are doing. We actually have a few male teachers in our building, for the most part upper-grade teachers who were a little bit slower to get on board with Readers Workshop. They liked the whole-class approach to teaching. I tried to think of how I could get these guys to move forward? I thought guys, muscles [something that they could relate to]; if you are working out [in the gym], if the weight is too much, how much of a workout do you get? If the weight is too easy, how much of a workout do you get? But when you're at that just right level that's where [you see the greatest growth]. And that's how I explained guided reading and just-right leveling to them. And they would say, "Oh, we get it now." ...A lot of it is knowing your audience, your group of people, and being it able to relate it to them. I had one teacher who is our expert in literacy who would come to me saying, "They're not doing it". For three years

I would tell her [patience], one grain of sand at a time, we're moving a mountain, they have to believe it. We could tell them or we could show them. Show them and let the snowball grow from its own momentum. From the time I was a teacher, I have found that a grass roots effort is the best way to get anything to grow. That's how people believe, become enthusiastic about what they do.

5.3 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “network and coalition building”.

No course work has ever taught me any of that. I think of my experiences as a teacher, think of that experience, and when I became an administrator. Watching organisms grow just has to be the best way to [build coalitions]...need to provide the support that people need.

5.4 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “network and coalition building”.

All informally. Through my experience and gut and knowing how to deal with people. Learning more so how to deal with people over time, but it is really through experience. Also putting yourself in that teacher's situation. Upon reflection, earlier in my administrative years I would wonder “Is this teacher hearing that something that she has been doing for years is wrong?” It's like the joke about the time machine. A scientist uses the time machine to advance 100 years to the present. With him he brings a doctor, teacher, lawyer, and architect. He gives each individual three days to learn all they can about their profession. After three days, he asks if they want to stay or go back. The doctor, lawyer, and architect feel overwhelmed by all the advances in their professions and decide to return. The teacher declares that very little has changed in 100 years and

decides to stay. It's like the Smartboard or the blackboard. It is important to change the teachers' mindsets. I think that over the eight years that I have been here most, if not all, of the teachers have understood that. Anything that we do together, whether I'm saying something or another teacher is saying something, it is to better ourselves for the children and not saying you have been doing wrong for the last 20 years.

6. Bargaining and Negotiating

- 6.1 For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3: How do you bargain and negotiate with this individual or constituency to make decisions and distribute resources related to school operations?

Money always gives a sense of what is most important. When teachers put in their wish lists in June, I tell them to prioritize; over the years whatever the [amount of] money that the teacher would have gotten for workbooks the teacher could get for classroom libraries. Those who were comfortable enough in working without workbooks took the money to build up their classroom libraries. Within three years the whole building had moved away from ordering workbooks. They realized that they didn't really need the workbooks. This is another example of grass roots and trying something out. It was something that I did and shared with the other principals. It is where you use your money.

- 6.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as "bargaining and negotiating".

None, it was informal.

- 6.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the attribute referred to as "bargaining and negotiating".

It was informal, building up a classroom library served several purposes. We were trying to take something away, to use the anthology less and use real literature more with leveled texts. We only had x amount of dollars, so taking the workbooks away freed the teachers to have the time and the knowledge that their independent thought was better than anything that a workbook would provide. Of course, having the money to do it was helpful.

7. Recommendations from principals for principals:

7.1 What formal and informal activities, if any, would you suggest as most helpful to the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership skills for principals?

I would think that shadowing a principal who is successful with micropolitical leadership or relationships for an extended period of time, almost like a student teaching a period of time as opposed to one day. We have a teacher who is going for her administration classes, now and I know that they don't have the opportunity [to shadow experienced principals for an extended period of time]. I didn't have the opportunity either. One of her recent assignments was to observe and write up a tenured and nontenured teacher. We wound up [by coincidence] observing the same teacher at the same time. In chatting with this teacher [the teacher in pursuit of the degree in educational administration] the other day, I realized how valuable this was for her as a future administrator to observe different teachers in different points of their careers. Of course she asked for her friends to do that for her. But also to dialogue together what we observed during the lesson, similarities and differences in terms of style and so forth of the teachers. In taking that a step further, having the intern walk down the hall with you and have six people stop you going from

[observing how the experienced principal handles] the formal to informal relationships. I think that that would be critical for future administrators.

7.2 What induction activities, if any, would you suggest to help new principals develop micropolitical skill and knowledge?

I really think that you have to walk the walk, you need a time period from theory to practice as an undergraduate...the expert's theory sounded great, but when faced with a real world challenge, I have often thought that there are many books about the principalship that have yet to be written for new principals. But I think that the most practical is that on-the-job training when you are in that sink-or-swim situation. Really doing what your heart tells you...going with your gut.

7.3 What reading materials, if any, would benefit new principals seeking to further their understanding of job-related micropolitics?

Honestly I don't really know. I do see sometimes a one-day academy through BOCES. I don't really know much about any of them but I do sometimes think that that book hasn't been written yet, so there's the next job for you.

7.4 What existing training activities or courses, if any, would you suggest for new principals?

I know that there are some training courses but I can't recommend them because I do not know enough about them.

7.5 What training or courses, if any, would you recommend districts and professional organizations develop to further principals' development of micropolitical skill and knowledge?

Design a course that helps answer the question, "How do you learn it all?" I do think that it would have... after help and safety, it is to make sure that life makes sense that school makes sense. Helping students to make sense of their world...younger years, older years...It would be like helping children to develop a sense of authenticity in their writing.

Whether the principal knows the term *micropolitics*, it is about trust. It is like observing teachers... the teacher has to trust me enough to accept criticism. Trust is a key issue. I'm not the judge and jury; it is about trust and give and take.

Text of Principal Interviews

Principal #2

1.1 How many years have you been a principal?

15

1.2 How many years have you worked in your current assignment?

4

1.3 What grades does your school serve?

K-4.

1.4 What is your tenure status?

I have a renewable contract in lieu of tenure.

1.5 Describe your level of education.

Doctorate

2. Current Understanding

2.1 Based on your experience as a principal, how would you describe your current understanding of job-related politics also known as “micropolitics” or “organizational politics”?

I would say that it is inherently involved in almost everything we do.

2.2 Is your current understanding different from when you first became a principal?

Yes, I am more aware of it; it always existed but at the time that you’re first starting off you don’t realize the influence that it is having and the use of it being implemented around you or with you.

3.1 Identify three to five key individuals or constituencies who you perceive to yield power that affects the operations of your school.

Union leadership, there are many unions that you may have. That would be the presidents of the various units, whether it be teachers, custodial, secretarial, paraprofessional; right there you have your three to five, but I'll go on. You have your PTO [Parent Teacher Org.], the school board, school board member individuals; really they have to act as a board but as individuals they also exercise their informal power. Your outside organizations, whether they be sport groups; perhaps other groups such as property owners, rotary leadership.

3.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “mapping the political terrain”.

I had some course work dealing with power; formal and informal power and influence. To the extent of what we do day in and day out, the course work didn't go that far. It [the course work] didn't describe it or recognize it [how to identify key individuals and groups who influence school operations]. I also had some course work on politics and education in general. I thought that was helpful, but really it is on-the-job experience. Those courses took place on the doctoral level.

3.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “mapping the political terrain”.

On-the-job experiences day in and day out, mostly dealing with different constituency groups. As an assistant principal, lower levels of administration and even prior to that coaching. You deal with it all the time. In the roles that you have you don't have a lot of formal power, so you have to use informal power to get what you want to accomplish, now being on the reverse side having [formal] power I can see the game being played very well.

4.1 What are critical items on this individual's or constituency's agenda?

We'll go back to union leadership. Union leadership is continually looking for increased benefits and better working conditions for their membership. Whether it's time off, pay, release time; so they're always looking to use sometimes informal power to accomplish that; it can be meetings or minor job actions, which you know are job actions but no one can admit to. That's all an informal power play. Of course, they would use formal power through the grievance process. Other organizations, such as your PTO or your parent constituent groups, would advocate, use their informal power to contact individual board members and advocate a certain position, whether it be an [instructional] program [for students] or [address] a decision that they feel [will result in] an injustice being served to students or to their organization, and they would contact other influential people in the community to accomplish that. Of course, the flip side is those individuals that they're contacting are using their informal power to put influence on me to create the change that they're all seeking.

4.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as "agenda setting".

No, I would say that there was no [formal course work] that helped prepare me to deal with this.

4.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding of the skill referred to as "agenda setting".

I would say as being a spectator in politically active districts that you have to learn that game quickly or you will never survive long enough to reach tenure status or continuation of employment. In particular, I can think of one district that I worked in

where there was a high school principal who was extremely politically involved. So, therefore, if they didn't hold a position of formal authority that would give them formal power they would routinely, as a matter of practice, use informal power to accomplish what they were seeking. As I used to say in that district, you had to outwit, outplay, outlast. It was survivor, it was much more political than this district.

5. Networking and Coalition Building

5.1 For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3, how do you network and build coalitions with these individuals or constituencies to make decisions regarding school-related tasks?

Communication [is] the opportunity to find commonality. It's things you should learn or can learn as a kid (i.e., networking and getting yourself into certain cliques). In its rudest form, it's clique building. You have to learn how to create commonality and get accepted into certain groups that maybe normally you would not get accepted into. You have to break down the barriers and walls to get into them. You do that through finding things that make you similar. Looking for things that make you similar, pointing them out to the individual so that they feel a level of comfort with you and will allow you into that relationship. And it's communication. Picking up the phone and talking to them. One of the key pieces of networking that we have to keep in mind as people who hold the formal power is that we have access to information that many people do not have access to. Information is power. When you share information with people you empower them. You empower people; they develop a sense of wanting more information. So you can use information to your benefit by creating those networks. You can give them pieces of information to build a relationship.

5.3 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “network and coalition building”.

No [formal experience]

5.4 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “network and coalition building”.

I think it's things as a kid growing up, then being thrust into that situation. One of the things, a clear clean example of that your PTO, PTA, whatever you have here, people who are there are typically there for a reason. Yes, they will primarily say that they are there for the benefit of the children, benefit of the kids, the district etc. But I think that there is a personality type that goes along with those people that want those types of positions, a personality type that they want to be on the inside; they want to be as close as possible to the individuals who are in the know who have information that others don't have. So you, as the building principal, have an opportunity to capitalize off of that. And you can share...let them be the first to hear certain pieces of information that you know, or only a select few individuals know, and that is an automatic empowerment. Like I said, they feel an automatic level of elevation by getting that. Now, of course they turn around and spread that word to others; they never keep it in confidence. Even if you say, “Keep it in confidence” very rarely do you find that they will keep it in confidence. Knowing that they will not keep it in absolute confidence, you should always use it to your benefit. There may be certain things that you want to get out so that you can go through that avenue. I learned this through experience.

6. Bargaining and Negotiating

- 6.1 For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3: How do you bargain and negotiate with this individual or constituency to make decisions and distribute resources related to school operations?

I can think of a couple of examples on that. First off, I should say there are certain groups that I have always given a green pass to, and have not entered into a blocking role. I will always give them a green light and if [what they are asking for is problematic] I will explain it to them and that will usually be enough. [Usually it is] something that is so easily seen that it is not going to bother them. Their response is, “Oh yeah, we see your point.” Usually it is not an elimination of their idea, but a slight change or modification to fit it to what we have. It’s kind of an open dialogue. The same thing with teacher, staffing and supplies, or something that people want, my approach has been up front. I think that I have a reputation from the people who have worked for me or with me, that they know that I am very direct and polite. And laying out the position, that is what we really believe is in the best interest of the children and the district. People tend to usually accept it, so that it is not really- again my basic premise is to come in and say yes, and only then if it is problematic to put some limitation on it. But then explaining it usually resolves it and they are very accepting of it.

- 6.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “bargaining and negotiating”.

No, but it does fit into formal negotiations. Long before the parties sit across the table to sit with the leadership and talk about the problems that will be discussed at the table. I think that that is called just being up front but not aggressive. Here are the

issues... You need to discuss those, so that when you get down to formal negotiations there are no surprises. It kind of fits into the topic.

6.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the attribute referred to as “bargaining and negotiating”.

I’ve got to give you an example of the use of informal power that I just thought was classic. The curtains in the auditorium were this drab ugly burnt orange and every year before the big event, the middle school play, he would have the curtains taken down, cleaned and sewn up because they were in disarray. They were old. It got to the point where you couldn’t sew them up anymore. They were just torn to shreds. He had repeatedly asked [for replacements]. It was a lot of money to replace the curtains and the district office said, “Absolutely not.” So what he did one year, before the play, he didn’t have them taken down, sewn up or cleaned. The auditorium was dark [before the start of the play] all the board members were there, the superintendent was there, every formal person in the place [school district] was there; and the lights came up and there was a gasp from the audience. I tell you, by the next morning he had a phone call from the district office, “Order those curtains!” That’s using informal power [to bargain and negotiate].

7. Recommendations from principals for principals:

7.1 What formal and informal activities, if any, would you suggest as most helpful to the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership skills for principals?

The first thing to do, I think, is you have to do (I do this to this day) shut your mouth and you have to get yourself out, introduce yourself and just listen. A lot of listening.

You have to hopefully find one or two people that have some collective history of the organization to go back to and compare your notes with to find out who are your formal and informal power people that exist in the community and the organization. Clearly you have to not respond to anything that is being said to you. And you are out there meeting and greeting people. Just listen to what their concerns; who is squawking, complaining, who just complains and complains, who has the ability to take action if they need to, who holds a lot of informal power or formal power, etc. Start to piece together the entire web network that's out there and see where you plug into it. And not take a lot of action until you figure it out, because you may be stepping all over potential land mines if you do it too quickly and start opening up your mouth too fast. I've seen people lose their job by doing that in certain environments. Depending upon the tolerance of the organization will dictate how long you can stay employed if you start to make bad errors in judgment.

7.2 What induction activities, if any, would you suggest to help new principals develop micropolitical skill and knowledge?

Get out in your building and start to talk to people. Also, a little bit further, branch out and find out about the outside people that are coming into the building. Where they fit into that whole social network. You can almost diagram it out.

7.3 What reading materials, if any, would benefit new principals seeking to further their understanding of job-related micropolitics?

Nothing I can think of ... I'm sure there's something.

7.4 What existing training activities or courses, if any, would you suggest for new principals?

I think that that's very helpful through the Long Island Leadership Academy.

7.5 What training or courses, if any, would you recommend districts and professional organizations develop to further principals' development of micropolitical skill and knowledge?

I would say that it has to come from a professional organization such as SAANYS or NAEP, and not from a district. The district itself is already biased, and will undermine exactly what you are trying to accomplish. An organization has multiple layers. That formal power base in the district office is part of the network, and could be part of the problem, but a professional organization is looking for the benefit of its membership.

7.6 Importance of Micropolitics

I think it really is a spectrum, especially at the beginning. It's always there, but I think the importance of it is huge at the beginning for the newer administrator. For the new administrator or someone new to the organization. I think that, as time passes on and that person earns credibility and earns a reputation that's a good reputation, it starts to take a little bit of a back seat. It's not as important, though; it is still something that the individual always has to deal with. To a certain degree, if they have a good reputation and good experiences accumulated, people are going to be less active in trying to circumnavigate them by using informal power to get their way. There'll be relationships there where people will know they can go in and have a conversation and get results or get a better understanding of why they're not going to get what they are looking for and they'll accept it from that person because they'll accept their judgment from past experiences. Certainly, at the beginning it's huge.

One thing that came up that I didn't get to share in any of the other questions...

You asked about formal course work. I've got to say that there was one particular course

that I took that I can specifically say that I learned from the course, and the course spent a lot of time talking about how to politically remove someone who is in a formal power authoritative position. The insight was that you would never take a person head on; you take away their support bases. And sometimes you have to start from the outer rings and work yourself inward. So, what I mean by that is that if you are the teacher who is looking to take out the department head you never ...by taking the department head on is not going to solve the problem but what you have to do is start to take away the people around that person who are their support. And sometimes those people around that person could be the superintendent or the building principal. They are the people that if you politically want to use your informal power; you use those relationships with those individuals who have the ability to make formal decisions and you start to erode that person's credibility, that person's reputation, that person's ability to do work, and to show that maybe discredit them if you want to get them out of a position. That's the way you remove somebody.

Text of Principal Interviews

Principal #3

1.1 How many years have you been a principal?

19

1.2 How many years have you worked in your current assignment?

19

1.3 What grades does your school serve?

Kindergarten through 3rd Grade

1.4 What is your tenure status?

Tenured

1.5 Describe your level of education.

Doctoral candidate

2. Current Understanding

2.1 Based on your experience as a principal, how would you describe your current understanding of job-related politics also known as “micropolitics” or “organizational politics”?

Micropolitics in a school setting is something I believe that one is not as well prepared for as most things until you get on the job. You don't have a true understanding. You learn definitions of what it is, and the dimensions, but sometimes I feel like it goes out the window when you are actually on the job, because it can surprise

you in terms of what you have to use and the people you have to endear to get to your goal. That's a discovery process.

2.2 Is your current understanding different from when you first became a principal?

When I began the principalship, I thought it was something you could see on paper. I really did believe that that whole organizational chart, both formal and informal, in a sense existed. Then, when you really start to work in a system and you really start to understand people's strengths, their interpersonal relationships, and some practical experiences, you learn from that and you realize that in order for a leader to get things done you have to move off that formal structure on paper and use other resources. [A school leader needs to] learn how to cultivate those resources. I think it's key. That's a learning process.

3.1 Identify three to five key individuals or constituencies whom you perceive to yield power that affects the operations of your school.

One would be the formal leadership in the building. The building rep, if you will, who represents the union. The other would be from the community point of view, would be the PTA president, and then the other layer is really what happens at central office, the key individuals at central office.

3.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as "mapping the political terrain".

In course work you are introduced to the structure [of school organizations] and you are introduced to their formal roles [of key individuals].

3.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as "mapping the political terrain".

But in practical experience you learn how everyone operates (which can be very different from district to district). That's why school leaders have to be adaptable and learn the terrain in terms of where they go. That you find out through trial and error (I believe) observation, taking input from people who know those [key] individuals. That's how I think you get to learn how you are going to work among those groups that you perceive are going to help you move in the direction you want to go.

4.1 What are critical items on this individual's or constituency's agenda?

I'll start with the building rep. I see them as a dual role. Their agenda is two-fold. One, I think how they appear to their peers is very important. Sometimes they have a political agenda because they are put in a position to uphold a certain persona. You have that going on. The other part is to, I think, combine their personal agenda with those of the group that they represent. So it's an interesting role. Some are better at it than others. That's something to contend with all the time. The PTA president, or executive board members, sort of make or break a school leader if they are in a powerful position, and their perceptions of you are generally shared among the community. I think they serve in a very similar role as the union president. Because, as much as we would like to think that these individuals step into those positions from a more altruistic point of view, sometimes that is not the case. So, often you're dealing with addressing individual concerns that are put into a broader context and to ferret that out is not always easy. The superintendent who is sort of looking down upon all of this and sort of working in tandem with you. I think they're much like a building principal in many regards, or school leader in many regards, they want the job to be done; they want to be there to lend support, and they have pressures upon them that political pressures from board and community that

you are also affected by. In terms of the politics, you have to get through the maze of all of that and try to distill not only addressing that but also your personal vision, because a school leader could get lost in that and not have a vision. So, that's the other part of that; How do you try to address the politics of all of those groups that have a big impact on what you do, and still at the same time maintain a sense of where you are trying to lead and get others to follow? I think you have to try to be in concert [with key individuals and constituencies] but it can lead you sometimes in directions that you didn't... that conflict with your personal vision. Because you really can't dismiss where they want to go. Sometimes you just can't hold that back.

4.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “agenda setting”.

I have only found now in my doctoral work that I every time I read a book in my doctoral courses my first thought is, “Gee why didn't I read that book earlier in my career? I would have been a lot better at this.” In other words, I also feel that sometimes you're not ready for that [scholarly material] too. I think that sometimes you have to have the practical experience in the classroom and then get the theoretical, because you just don't get it. I think the same is true with a school leader particularly, in terms of dealing with all of these groups. That if you had the theory without the practical experience you wouldn't necessarily get it. I'll speak for myself; I wouldn't get it. Reflecting on that and learning you say, “Now I get it.” You know what Senge says. I think the key is you cannot learn to work with all of these groups unless you have a good understanding of yourself. That takes a long time, I think, because you come from a much different place. In the beginning you're trying to please because you are in survival

mode, but you don't always know yourself as a leader when you are starting out. Over the years, you learn through all these experiences with people; you get a stronger set of core values from which to lead. That will help you, and you can't have that without the experience.

4.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding of the skill referred to as "agenda setting".

Well, early in my career, because I think you evolve in any role that you are in, but early in my career I didn't have as high a regard for all of those political factions as I know now to be very important. So I learned a lot the hard way. I had very strong ideas [concerning what should be the school's agenda], and I would say more so tried to exert them within the building and with the parents and maybe just because of survival not with your supervisor. ...It took a long time to try to understand how to work with all the players. And the challenge is that's constantly changing. You know, the superintendent doesn't stay the same, the building reps don't stay the same, and you just get comfortable with sometimes the people in those positions, the building rep and the PTA president, and then they change, so it's a constantly evolving process that actually forces (in my opinion) the school leader to get better at it, because one could become very comfortable with the people that they're working with; but it keeps you on your toes because you always have a new set of something you have to deal with. That's the learning process I feel in the job.

5. Networking and Coalition

5.1 For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3, how do you network and build coalitions with this individual or constituency to make decisions regarding school-related tasks?

I think observation is very important because a lot of it [networking and coalition building] is informal. For example, the formal channel might be that I know there are certain things that I would first discuss with my building rep, but sometimes that is not going to get me where I need to go. So I have to go to the informal movers and shakers in the building (and I have to know who they are) I have to observe who respects those people. Observe what influence do they have on other people who will follow them and then try to mesh the two. You can't discount one group. I can't discount the formal building rep, if you will, and go to that whole informal network. Sometimes you have to do that [go around those individuals who hold formal roles and access informal channels of communication]... you have to do what you have to do. That's just the way that it is. You have to learn that. You have to learn how to identify who they [key individuals or groups that present resistance to school initiatives] are and stand by your convictions. In order to do that you need to know when someone is trying to obstruct you from achieving your goals or your goals for the organization and when they are trying to help. So with both of those groups, I think is key that is how you sort of get through that [networking and coalition building].

5.3 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “network and coalition building”.

5.4 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding of network and coalition building.

An implementation of something is a really good example. A couple of years ago I had attended a conference and learned about something that I thought would be a really good fit for our school. It was a vision that I had, and I had to have people buy into that. So you start I think out of respect for the institution by discussing and inviting in the very formal groups within the building. I faced opposition with the direction I wanted to go and then again that's where I think it goes back to knowing yourself and learning from your experience. You learn over the years. So, you have to step back and little by little try to get individuals who may buy in and try to build upon that. Your timeline could be off, but you keep straight on your vision. You just keep building, and building, and building until you get the confidence of enough people to begin to move forward with something, even though the formal structure was opposed. That puts that person politically in a position of, "Am I going to be against everybody?" Rather than hitting the person head on (I've tried that in the past, and have learned from my mistakes), see that that is not always the way to go. So those are the kinds of experiences that you keep building on. The next time a similar situation comes up like that, you learn from that.

6. Bargaining and Negotiating

- 6.1 For each individual or constituency identified in Item #3: How do you bargain and negotiate with this individual or constituency to make decisions and distribute resources related to school operations?

Resources is a key word because it is something that people want. Look at a definition of *resource*. A resource could mean anything from equipment; it could mean access to something; it could mean, from a parent's point of view, access to putting a child in a particular class. There are all kinds of things. The building leader is a keeper

of the resources in a sense of doling them out. How do you use that power in a sense to work with these groups who have agendas. You have to be very careful with that because you could, if one is not ethical, it could be very damaging to the building leader. Resources could be a reward (i.e., who gets what). I think that we're watched very carefully. Who gets the better schedule, who gets the Smartboard [a desirable piece of classroom technology] in their room, who gets the student of the PTA president, or not; who gets whatever. So I think there's always that balance between when you are giving a resource [and] what's the motivation behind that. It could also trap someone. So that's where I think a leader has to be very careful to keep that as a bargaining chip all the time. They have to work very hard because you may be working with somebody because you want something, but you may also have something that they want. You have to be very careful with that kind of exchange.

6.2 Describe how formal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the skill referred to as “bargaining and negotiating”.

I don't remember anything in my training that really speaks to that; this is the situation you could be in. I don't remember in my formal training that included working with aspiring school leaders that they are mentored or really understand the importance of that. And how it's critical to how they're viewed.

6.3 Describe how informal experiences contributed to your understanding and skill related to the attribute referred to as “bargaining and negotiating”.

You sort of rely on your common sense, and then you either fail and you learn from your mistakes are good at that.

7. Recommendations from principals for principals:

7.1 What formal and informal activities, if any, would you suggest as most helpful to the acquisition and development of micropolitical leadership skills for principals?

I think one of the best models that a leader can have is to work with a mentor. That's an opportunity to discuss the kinds of things that you never learned in school (i.e., the practical side, the things that nobody teaches you). I think that, as a whole, we really want to invest in school leaders. Some people can hit the floor running but I think that there should be some formal structure within a school system where particularly new people are mentored. That I think is really important. In terms of how do you manage, who are all the kinds of people that you have to deal with, the lay of the land if you will, things to consider, not to really tell them what to do but things that you may come up against. Because I think that all of those things beg the question, "How am I going to handle that?" "Do I have the intestinal fortitude to deal with this?" and "What's my stand on it?" Before maybe these things happen. Because if you can anticipate, you learn from that and you can prepare yourself better, I believe.

7.2 What induction activities, if any, would you suggest to help new principals develop micropolitical skill and knowledge?

A formal mentoring, informal mentoring. It's interesting you are always in that position; that's what happens. School leaders do the same thing; you could come in and work with five principals and you're always making those judgments as to the perception of that person. The one thing that I would suggest is that we could be too quick to mentor. There needs to be some process. I don't know what that process would be, but you need someone within the organization who has noted the mentor as "someone that others

might aspire to emulate.” But then, on the other hand, the person being mentored should have some input into who they might want to emulate, because if you have respect for someone [you may be more likely to benefit from their advice]. As you sit back and you think of your own experience and you think of all the people you work with, you say, “Now that I know what I know, and now that I’ve observed these people in action, and now that I’ve had a while to talk to them philosophically, who is it that I feel I could learn from”? Because I think that that connection is so important. [Selecting a mentor is important in part because] You don’t want to perpetuate bad habits, if you will. That’s key.

7.3 What reading materials, if any, would benefit new principals seeking to further their understanding of job-related micropolitics?

The first thing, I think, is Senge. I wish I would have read Senge a long time ago in and terms of systems thinking. Because it gives an understanding of what you are talking about. How everything in a system is interrelated becomes a system and affects one another. I think that sometimes we don’t think in terms of systems problems and systems solutions. We have a very narrow view. That would be one. The other would be that I’ve read William Glasser’s work in control theory. I don’t ever remember any formal training that talks about that. Because it goes back to control yourself, your behaviors and how that affects the choices you make where you are coming from and others responses to you. I think that a good leader knows themselves first and then you’re in a position to start working with all of these people. Without that, I think you are on a very shaky foundation.

7.4 What existing training activities or courses, if any, would you suggest for new principals?

No. I couldn't say that I am aware of any.

7.5 What training or courses, if any, would you recommend districts and professional organizations develop to further principal's development of micropolitical skill and knowledge?

It's important to have training that is very specific to the environment that you are in. And sometimes I feel that even with workshops that speak to this it is sometimes too hard to make the connection; they're too generic. I think people learn best when they really are learning in the setting that they are in. While I think that [these organizations] provide some generic courses, and just to talk about this is what you'll face... I don't really see how taking a workshop offered by any of those organizations would still really prepare people to the level that they need to be prepared. I think it is more than a one-shot deal. You need some personal feedback. That's what I think the key is.

7.6 How would you describe your perception of the importance that the role of micropolitics plays in school leadership to principals just entering the profession?

It will make or break a person in terms of their ability to lead. Because when you think about it, you are getting people to follow where they may not have gone on their own. So, to understand the micropolitics and you have to have the skills. You usually don't come out of the box having the skills but you have to develop the skills to be able to manage all of that. To school administrators just coming out, I would say to find a good mentor. Somebody they respect, number one, and then trust, are key to a

mentor-mentee relationship. And be willing to learn, because they are most likely to make some mistakes, and they could be very hard ones, and hard to recover from.

Appendix C

#	Micropolitical Leadership Behavior	Category: Mapping the political terrain	Category: Setting the agenda	Category: Network and coalition building	Category: Bargaining and negotiating
1	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Union leadership	X			
2	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: PTA/PTO representatives	X			
3	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Board of education (formal roles)	X			
4	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Board of education (informal roles)	X			
6	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Sports organizations	X			
7	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Rotary International	X			
8	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Property owners associations	X			
9	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Central administration	X			
10	Identifying individuals or groups who yield power or influence in you school: Teacher leaders (informal)	X			
11	Identifying budget priorities (<i>what</i> items are important)		X		
12	Identifying contract issues: i.e., benefits, pay for extra work		X		

13	Identifying scheduling issues: Extra time for instruction		X		
14	Identifying instructional issues: Field trips		X		
15	Identifying instructional issues: Instructional improvement		X		
16	Identifying budget priorities: Items for students		X		
17	Identifying contract issues: working conditions		X		
18	Identifying contract issues: Pay for extra work		X		
19	Identifying budget priorities: Personal items for classroom		X		
20	Identifying instructional issues: Program continuity between schools		X		
21	Identifying instructional issues: Program enhancements		X		
22	Identifying vision for school		X		
23	Awareness of the impact of role specific appearance on relationships			X	
24	Break down barriers between administrator and individuals and groups to promote effective working relationships			X	
25	Build trust with individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships			X	
26	Clarify your point of view/convictions to promote effective working relationships			X	
27	Establish effective communication with individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships			X	
28	Examine resistance from individuals/groups: is it help or obstruction			X	
29	Find commonality between administrator, individuals, groups			X	
30	Getting into cliques to promote effective working relationships			X	

31	Supporting grass roots initiatives by groups or individuals			X	
32	Know formal channels of communication and decision making			X	
33	Know how individuals and groups influence each other			X	
34	Know informal channels of communication and decision making			X	
35	Provide resources to individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships			X	
36	Respect points of view of individuals/groups			X	
37	Selectively sharing information with individuals/groups to promote effective working relationships			X	
38	Willingness to share resources or information with individuals or groups to promote effective working relationships			X	
39	Building a reputation for fairness when making decisions and allocating resources				X
40	Building a vision of "what is in the best interests of children" when making decisions and allocating resources				X
41	Explain rationale when making decisions and allocating resources				X
42	Give "Green pass" for resources to key individuals/groups when making decisions and allocating resources				X
43	Maintain open dialogue when making decisions and allocating resources				X
44	Create and prioritize wish lists when making decisions and allocating resources				X

45	Swap budget codes when making decisions and allocating resources				X
46	Use resources as "rewards" when making decisions and allocating resources				X