

SCHOOL MICROPOLITICS: UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARING
FOR COMMON MICROPOLITICAL CHALLENGES THAT
NOVICE PRINCIPALS ENCOUNTER IN K-12 SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to identify common micropolitical challenges encountered by establishment stage principals during their novice stage years and associated strategies for principals to effectively respond to these challenges. Twelve establishment stage, or veteran, principals were participants in the study. This qualitative study employed case study design and used the constant comparative method to analyze data. Data included interviews, memos, and field notes, which allowed for data triangulation for trustworthiness. Findings suggested that the alignment of school vision and school culture both work toward the development of a principal's reputation and help to manage micropolitical challenges that principals encounter. Findings also suggested that micropolitical challenges can be minimized when principals lead staff in the development of a school change protocol that can be referenced when change has been initiated from within the school or mandated from outside of the school organization. This dissertation contributes a process for resolving micropolitical challenges in educational leadership. Moreover, the findings may help to enhance a principal preparation curriculum by contributing a set of new guiding principles related to leadership and school micropolitics.

I. INTRODUCTION

A newly appointed high school principal often looks forward to the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills learned in a master's level principal preparation program. For instance, crafting a shared vision among staff and modeling exceptional leadership skills often remain at the forefront of a principal's leadership arsenal. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of curriculum and instruction, teacher coaching, school budgets, and teacher appraisal round off many of the primary learnings from a principal's principal preparation program that drive school improvement.

In this scenario, shortly before a new school year got underway, a staff member approached a newly appointed principal and asked for a moment to talk. Elated at the opportunity to begin to network with staff, the principal welcomed the staff member to join him. The staff member introduced himself as Josh (pseudonym) and informed the newly appointed principal that, although employed as a teacher, he held an administrative credential. Josh explained that he applied to be high school principal and that the entire staff wanted him to be principal of the school, but the superintendent denied his appointment and ultimately hired the newly appointed principal instead. Josh shared that he and the rest of the staff were very upset he was not named principal. Josh abruptly exited the library, leaving the principal to wonder how his knowledge and skills related to a shared vision, servant leadership, curriculum and instruction, teacher coaching, teacher appraisal, and school budgets might help with these kinds of political dynamics he just encountered as a new school principal. The principal then realized that despite attendance at a premier principal preparation program, strategies for addressing school politics, also known as school micropolitics in educational research, were not included in

his principal preparation training. Indeed, the scenario above describes an experience from my tenure as a principal and served as part of the rationale for conducting this dissertation on school micropolitics.

This dissertation employed a qualitative case study research design aimed at identifying some common micropolitical challenges that novice or induction stage principals encounter during their first few years serving as school principals. To do so, I explored a range of early principal experiences by establishment stage or veteran principals. Oplatka (2012) defined establishment stage principals as having reached a career stage that is characterized by competence and confidence within the managerial role. Establishment stage principals were selected to be interviewed for this study because the number of years of experience in their positions coupled with a characterization of confidence embodies adequate micropolitical negotiation skills. The remainder of this chapter provides a background to the research problem before acknowledging the researcher's positionality. Then, the research problem is outlined, the purpose explained, research questions are detailed, and a list of key terms used throughout the dissertation is provided.

Background of the Problem

Micropolitics in Education

Iannaccone (1991) defined politics as a process by which "society's persistent social values are translated into policy [through a] set of arrangements by which a particular society governs itself—its constitution" (p. 467). Johnson (2003) argued that politics in education refers to the implicit tensions in the educational system. School micropolitics represents one kind of politics in education. But, what are micropolitics?

Johnson (2003) argued that “Iannaccone was the first to coin the phrase micropolitics in education” (p.52). Iannaccone distinguished politics at the federal, state or district level from micropolitics—the politics that take place within each school (Johnson, 2003). However, micropolitics continue to be defined in different ways. Malen (2006) defined school micropolitics as “formal and informal use of legitimate and illegitimate power by the principal and teachers to further individual or group goals, with such goals based on values, beliefs, needs and ideologies” (p. 3). Moreover, Flessa (2009) and Lindle (1999) described the study of politics within schools as the unvarnished truth of the behind the scenes political push and pull between teachers, the principal, students, and parents. This political push and pull begins early in the career of a school principal. For instance, Lee (2012) suggested that immediately, the school community begins to compare the new principal with the previous principal’s vision and methods of leadership. At the heart of this comparison remains the process by which school leaders and teachers pursue their interests (Hoyle, 2010). Hence, as Blase (1991) argued, micropolitics illustrates the varied ways that people attempt to use power to influence others, protect themselves, and compete for what they desire. Hoyle (2003) stated that the study of micropolitics expands the understanding of micropolitical contexts within the principal’s work and can provide principals with needed concepts or frameworks as tools for reflection on their performance and experiences. Even though managing school micropolitics requires skilled negotiation, previous research has suggested that principal preparation programs have not prepared school principals to address micropolitics within schools (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Micropolitics and micropolitical theory has traditionally been grounded in rational choice theory. Rational choice theory is based on three central assumptions, including (a) actors have preferences in mind, (b) there are potential positive and negative outcomes, and (c) actors select the action they perceive to be most likely to deliver the desired outcome (Scribner et al., 2003; Weiske, Petzold, & Schad, 2015). As such, “actors in schools manage the inherent conflict and make distributional decisions through processes that pivot on power exercised in various ways and in various arenas” (Malen, 1994, p. 148). For example, Agi, Levidoe, and Anthony (2016) identified school goal attainment, student performance, and achievement as common areas of tension. In these scenarios, each staff member and the principal are actors, each with preferences in mind. They think through potential positive and negative outcomes of any series of decisions and make decisions acting in alignment with the best potential outcome from their perspectives. Micropolitical theory offers an additional lens for understanding collaborative reforms in schools by uncovering power, influence, conflict, and negotiating processes between individuals and groups within school organizations (Achinstein, 2002). Principals seek to be prepared for all of the leadership challenges or issues they will face in schools.

Micropolitical Issues in Education

Research has suggested the existence of different micropolitical issues faced in education, more generally, and schools, in particular. Some issues have revolved around the general theme of social justice and have included race/white supremacy, equity, ethical decision-making, and special education. These issues, among others, have served as the impetus for micropolitical challenges faced by school principles.

Therefore, aspiring principals should hope to garner a “more sophisticated understanding of the entanglement of the cultural, social, (micro)political, moral and emotional aspects of their jobs” (Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballett, 2011, p. 104). Mette, Biddle, Mackenzie, and Harris-Smedberg (2016) encouraged leadership programs to “examine poverty, economic, and racial privilege” (p. 75) associated with school improvement efforts to understand how economic and racial disparities based on societal norms affect instruction and attitudes in school. Rex (2006) suggested that without this type of staff analysis and reflection, knowledge from some students may be valued and knowledge from other student groups not valued (e.g., the languages and practices that are brought to the classroom by students of color). Principals must also negotiate current societal issues on their campuses like white supremacy and controversial symbols from the civil war. These societal issues can affect school climate. For instance, Levy, Hudson, Waters, and Mansfield (2017) suggested that “different cultural and racial groups often understand the causes of the Civil War differently and likewise perceive Confederate symbols contrarily “[F]or many African Americans, these symbols are painfully associated with enslavement and White supremacy” (p. 107). Research has suggested that micropolitical challenges can be found within special education. For instance, in accordance with the federal least restrictive environment mandate, “schools are including more students with disabilities in general education” (Theoharis & Causton, 2016, p. 46). Because teachers may have varying views on the appropriateness of this law in practice, social justice issues can transcend into micropolitical issues related to “building leadership, special education, equity, diversity, intersectionality, and/or leadership for learning” (p. 46). In essence, social justice issues are only one subset of

issues that can become micropolitical whirlwinds requiring skillful political astuteness on the part of school principals.

Research has suggested that within the context of school micropolitics, principals often rely on interpersonal relationships with staff and students for conducting school operations and maintaining the overall school climate. That is, principals operate on the “front lines setting the tone for school environment, which includes establishing and maintaining emotionally safe and ethical workplaces” (Tenuto, Gardiner, & Yamamoto, 2016, p. 11). Cranston (2012) contended that the importance of the human experience is illuminated by the relationships in the teaching profession. Developing strong relationships with students and teachers remains critical for negotiating micropolitical issues, even as principals may often find themselves looking for a more “definitive statement or search for tools in their toolkits that might enable them to be more effective as ethical leaders” (Cranston, 2012, p. 51).

Micropolitical challenges for principals have often emanated from local events outside of the school that can transform themselves into micropolitical challenges inside the school. However, regardless of the source of micropolitics, principals have been expected “to provide the necessary conditions for a smooth functioning of the school as an organization” (Kelchtermans et al., 2011, p. 97). Therefore, a micropolitical resolution requires skillful reaction to any external pressures, demands, and norms while focusing on the general agenda for the school and its improvement overall. For instance, Blase, Blase, and Phillips (2010) suggested that high performing principals must collaborate with assistant principals, teachers, other staff members, and parents to develop and sustain sub-systems like teams, programs, and protocols all while addressing

other major leadership responsibilities. According to Winton and Pollock (2012), principal preparation programs must acknowledge the political complexities found in schools and support candidates to be successful in their political roles as future school principals. Moreover, Farley-Ripple, Raffel, and Welch (2012) argued that principal preparation programs should prepare principals to carry out conflict resolution and address both politics within schools and politics stemming from the larger community.

Principal Preparation

Principal preparation programs vary in terms of their curriculum and their specific components that have been aligned with principal standards from each state. However, previous research on principal preparation programs has suggested that regardless of location or specific state-based requirements, exemplary principal preparation programs include the following program features as part of their framework (Hewitt et al., 2014; Jamison & Clayton, 2016; Orr & Pounder, 2011; Thessin & Clayton, 2011):

- Standards-based curriculum that focuses on instructional leadership,
- Program coherence that integrates classroom-based, field, and internship opportunities,
- Active learning opportunities,
- Internships that are both extensive and strongly linked to program standards,
- Cohort-based or other structures that enhance networking opportunities and socialization into the field,
- Systematic and well-defined performance assessments that are aligned to leadership proficiencies spelled out in standards,
- Support for faculty development and systematic program evaluation, and

- Partnerships with school systems and sites, with opportunities for practitioners to have input into program design and operations

This framework provides the groundwork for designing principal preparation programs.

Micropolitical training remains a lacking feature in principal preparation programs. Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013) conducted a cross-national analysis of school leaders and found that programs considered as exemplary lacked training in school micropolitics. In a review of five acclaimed principal preparation programs, Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) found that only one program, the Delta State University Educational Leadership Cohort provided training in this area. It featured an “understanding the processes and politics of school change” (p. 31). Of seven competencies in the program, four were steeped in micropolitics. These included (a) influencing teacher feelings of efficacy, motivation, and satisfaction, (b) establishing the organizational and cultural conditions that foster a positive environment for teaching and learning, (c) promoting professional collaboration, and (d) enlisting the involvement and support of parents and the community.

McGrevin and Schmieder (1993) identified 10 critical skills for novice principals. Six of these skills were based in the social and political dynamics of educational leadership, including (a) maintaining a framework for achieving school goals with staff, (b) understanding that the change process is continual and will continually affect staff, (c) remain aware of personal biases, (d) understanding how to effectively facilitate group meetings, (e) encouraging involvement from all corners of the school community, and (f) facilitating a positive balance between district and building values. McGrevin and Schmieder also found that survey responses suggested that veteran principals and first-

year principals had a desire for additional micropolitical instruction. This instruction included training for conflict management and in the area of human relations.

Moreover, one challenge for principal preparation programs has been the negotiation between a theory-for-understanding and a theory-for-practice. Hoyle (1999) discussed a tension between a theory-for-understanding entertained by academics in their effort to understand more about micropolitics while school leaders or practioners have been more concerned with micropolitical theory-for-practice to improve political outcomes at the campus level. Despite these tensions, partnerships between school districts and preparation programs continue to remain important for preparing principals. Sanzo et al., (2011) suggested that the lack of models for successful partnerships has been due, in part, to the number of individuals involved in the planning and the differences in vision, ideologies, and respective reasons for participating in a partnership. Although practical application of skills and knowledge learned in principal preparation programs remains essential for aspiring principals, applying these skills and knowledge in practice, especially as they relate to the micropolitics remains limited and challenging.

Flessa (2009) suggested that the ability to engage in micropolitical analysis holds the keys that could bring resolutions to conflicts that emerge in schools. In concentrating and unifying the efforts of universities and school districts, Blase and Blase (2002) interjected that “research on the political aspect of supervision, in concert with an understanding of the politics of teaching would provide a solid foundation from which to develop incisive understandings of supervisory process and structures in schools, with both theoretical and practical significance for school improvement” (p. 6). However, it remains unknown whether specific training strategies for dealing with micropolitics could

enhance existing principal preparation program curriculum and, thereby, result in fewer negative repercussions for schools and fewer principal terminations/reassignments.

However, what those micropolitical strategies might be remains unknown (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Flessa, 2009; Fuller, Orr & Young, 2008; Gill, 2012;).

Positionality

Wubbena (2017) stated that because “qualitative researchers are the instrument of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, [they should] acknowledge [their] positionality” (p. 469). Therefore, as Wubbena recommended, “I engaged in reflexivity to make my positionality explicit by recursively examining, questioning, and explaining the potential influence of my past experiences on the research process” (p. 467). My interest in school micropolitics emerged from my experience as a high school principal and from the experiences shared by colleagues who have also served as school principals. Moreover, news stories about school principals whose terminations were rooted in the mishandling of school micropolitics led me to reflect on the voids in my principal preparation program experience. Training or instruction on school micropolitics was not represented or discussed during my two-year Master’ Program in Educational Administration. I was proud to have received my principal training from a prestigious university in Texas, in association with my school district, as a part of a cohort in 2002. While this program existed, 15 teacher leaders were selected each year by the school district and the university from over 150 principal nominees. Techniques for creating a shared vision with staff and the importance of servant leadership were cornerstones of the program. Additionally, training related to school budgets, curriculum and instruction, coaching teachers, and teacher appraisal were included in my training. But, these

trainings did not prepare me for the micropolitical challenges that I encountered as a school principal, leaving me to my own political instincts in trial and error scenarios. Over the last 15 years as an administrator, I have witnessed a pattern among principals—the termination or the resignation of novice principals largely resulting from an inability to understand and navigate the complexities and dynamics of school micropolitics. The findings from this dissertation provide empirical support, although incomplete, for the supposition that principal preparation programs should teach strategies for helping principals negotiate school micropolitics.

Problem Statement

Micropolitics in education remains a burgeoning field of research. Ryan (2010) suggested that research on school micropolitics remains in the early stages of development beginning with the seminal scholarship of Iannaccone (1975). Johnson (2003) argued that the politics of schools is a legitimate field for scholarly inquiry. This dissertation examined the intersection politics in education, school micropolitics and some implications for principal preparation programs.

School systems continue to suffer the effects of principal preparation programs, in general, failing to provide aspiring principals with the specific knowledge and skills they require to effectively manage and negotiate micropolitics that occur within the school campus. Previous research has examined the micropolitics in education (Achinstein, 2002; Agi; Levidoe, & Anthony, 2016; Blasé, 1991; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Flessa, 2009; Hoyle, 2003, 2010; Iannaccone, 1991; Johnson, 2003; Lee, 2012; Lindle, 1999; Malen, 2006; Scribner et al., 2003; Weiske, Petzold, & Schad, 2015), different micropolitical issues in education (Blase, Blase, & Phillips, 2010; Cranston, 2012;

Farley-Ripple, Raffel, & Welch, 2012; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2011; Levy, Hudson, Waters, & Mansfield, 2017; Mette, Biddle, Mackenzie, & Harris-Smedberg, 2016; Rex, 2006; Tenuto et al., 2003; Theoharis & Causton, 2016; Winton & Pollock, 2012), and the role of micropolitics in principal preparation programs (Blase & Blasé, 2002; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Flessa, 2009; McGrevin & Schmieder, 1993; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). Although together this previous research has suggested that effective school principals should be able to negotiate myriad micropolitical issues that may be encountered in schools. That is, school principals should have micropolitical literacy as they enter and sustain their leadership positions. No research has examined either the common micropolitical challenges that novice principals frequently experience or an adjoining set of effective strategies for mediating these common challenges that principals are likely to encounter. Therefore, future research on micropolitics should focus on the sources of power between supervisors and teachers, as well as the associated respective interests, ideologies, and values they may hold in the quest for the needed theoretical explanations (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Willower, 1991). Lindle (1994) suggested that the challenge for principal preparation programs remains to prepare principals with the necessary tools to address conflicts related to differing values, changes in conditions, and the emergence of unique dilemmas that require a resolve. Moreover, previous research has not provided strategies for new principals (and veteran principals alike) to effectively negotiate and resolve micropolitical issues in schools at different levels. This dissertation was designed and carried out to address this gap in previous literature.

The findings from this dissertation will contribute new knowledge to the scholarly field of school micropolitics. This knowledge can help principal preparation programs integrate micropolitics into their principal training programs by helping aspiring principals gain the necessary micropolitical literacy to make a sustained and lasting impact on school improvement. Currently, principal preparation programs have not prepared school principals to address the dynamics of micropolitics within the school environment (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The need for micropolitical literacy becomes more apparent when considering principal retention. For instance, Farley-Ripple et al., (2012) found that one of the most common reasons that principals left their assignments, the profession, or were removed, stemmed from politics and poor working relations. Preparing future principals for their political roles may help mitigate principal attrition.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe common micropolitical challenges that establishment stage or veteran principals encountered as novice or induction stage principals and associated strategies for negotiating those challenges. Twelve establishment stage principals were interviewed from 12 different schools located in Central Texas. Principals from these 12 different schools included four elementary schools (i.e., grades K-5), four middle schools (i.e., grades 6-8), and four high schools (i.e., grades 9-12). Establishment stage principals (i.e., veteran principals) were defined as principals who have reached a career stage characterized by competence and confidence within the managerial role and who could provide a retrospective perception regarding micropolitical challenges they encountered (Oplatka, 2012). Micropolitics in

education was defined as “formal and informal use of legitimate and illegitimate power by the principal and teachers to further individual or group goals, with such goals based on values, beliefs, needs and ideologies” (Malen, 2006, p. 3). Data were collected using interviews, memos, and field notes, and data were analyzed using a modified constant comparative method (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). This analytical method allowed for categorical induction that led to the emergence of thematic categories based on common principal experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Accordingly, this dissertation was guided by three research questions (RQ1-3):

- RQ1: What are the school micropolitical challenges faced by novice principals?
- RQ2: What have been specific resolutions, effective or ineffective, to the micropolitical challenge leading to the *establishment stage* of a principal’s tenure?
- RQ3: How did your handling of these political issues (successfully and/or unsuccessfully) advance or impede your establishment as a ‘veteran’ principal?

By addressing these three guiding research questions, this dissertation makes a unique contribution to micropolitics in education. Beach and Lindahl (2000) suggested that principal preparation programs should teach future principals to facilitate consensus building and conflict resolution, negotiation, and collaboration skills. This dissertation served to not only identify micropolitical challenges and strategies for ameliorating these challenges, but it also aimed to provide some guiding principles needed by principal preparation programs to develop curriculum related to teaching micropolitics. Hence,

this dissertation addresses Linder's (1994) longstanding recommendation that principal preparation programs provide principals with the micropolitical knowledge and skills needed to address conflicts related to values, changes in conditions, and the emergence of unique dilemmas. Otherwise, in the absence of understanding common micropolitical scenarios faced by novice principals, principal preparation programs may struggle to prepare principals for common micropolitical challenges. Principals prepared for the negotiation of micropolitics are more likely to persist in their career and bring stability that helps school improvement efforts (Fuller et al., 2008; Waddle & Buchanan, 2002).

Definition of Terms

The definitions of key terms provide readers unfamiliar with the terminology some clarity of understanding while helping to avoid misinterpretation (Nenty, 2009).

- *Accountability* – refers to student performance indicators and academic outcomes (Ford & Ihrke, 2015).
- *Disenchantment stage* – refers to the career stage reached by school principals, sometimes as they reach the end of their careers, during which they often become stagnant and or autocratic (Oplatka, 2012).
- *Establishment stage* – refers to the principal career stage that is characterized by competence and confidence within the managerial role (Oplatka, 2012).
- *Facilitative leadership* – refers to the strategies intended to improve teacher satisfaction, motivation, and esteem often achieved by demonstrating trust in teachers, developing shared governance structures, encouraging teacher input, encouraging teacher autonomy, giving rewards, and providing support (Blasé & Blasé, 2014).

- *Induction stage* – refers to the socialization career stage during which the novice principal must respond to difficulties such as working towards being accepted, and understanding the organizational culture (Oplatka, 2012).
- *Macropolitics in education* – refers to the political pressures that may come from the federal government, state governments, accountability systems, unions, and businesses (Webb, 2008). Macropolitics can be thought of as external interest groups outside of school but that can affect the micropolitics within the school (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993).
- *Maintenance vs. Renewal stage-mid* – refers to career point for principals that is characterized by a loss of enthusiasm (Oplatka, 2012).
- *Micropolitics of education* – refers to the politics that take place within the confines of schools (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). Micropolitics is the formal and informal use of legitimate and illegitimate power by the principal and teachers to further individual or group goals, with such goals based on values, beliefs, needs and ideologies (Malen, 2006).
- *Novice principal* – refers to school principals with limited or no specific principal experience; often discovering that their role will rely heavily on their skills of persuasion and negotiation, rather than order and compliance (Lindle, 1999). This study defines novice principals to be within their first three years of service as principal, based on Oplatka's (2012) synthesis of scholarship investigating the early career stage of the principalship.

- *Professional socialization* – refers to the processes through which individuals become members of profession, and as time passes, develop their own identities within that profession (Parkay, Currie, & Rhodes, 1992).
- *School culture* – refers to “a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization. It is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act” (Barth, 1990, p. 7).
- *School leader* – refers to school principals (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013).
- *School reform* – refers to a school improvement initiative that may include supportive networks including sufficient health care, supportive social services, and parenting education (Tough, 2009).
- *School vision* – refers to the manifestation of the school’s values, goals and aims (Whitaker & Monte, 1994).
- *Self-efficacy* – refers to psychological empowerment as a process of developing feelings of self-confidence or empowerment among staff through both formal and informal techniques (Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000).
- *Servant leadership* – refers to a leadership perspective that places a high value on people, supports team development and encourages the sharing of power (Laub, 1999).
- *Shared vision* – refers to consensus around a common vision leading to enhanced collaboration leading to greater achievement (Kise, 2012).

- *Social justice* – refers to three main elements of teaching for social justice includes analyzing social or institutional inequities, consideration on how privilege and oppression influence pedagogical decisions, and linking deliberative inquiry to social justice goals (Kelly & Brandes, 2010).
- *Traditional leadership* – refers to strategies intended to control teachers, often to achieve principal-driven initiatives or goals (Blase & Blase, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the beginning elements of this dissertation. The chapter began with an example of a micropolitical challenge that a new school principal fresh out of a principal preparation program might face. The chapter then provided the background to the research problem by briefly reviewing the literature on micropolitics in education, issues in micropolitics, and principal preparation programs. The next section discussed my positionality. Both the background to the research problem and my positionality shaped the approach taken to identify the research problem. The next section outlined the purpose statement and research questions that guided the dissertation. The last section presented a list of common definitions. The next chapter delves into the literature more deeply. Chapter three details the method employed to translate the research questions into answers. Chapter four presents the findings. The last chapter synthesizes the findings with previous research and provides some theoretical and practical insights for future research and principal preparation programs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews previous research on micropolitics in education to lay the groundwork underpinning the purpose of this dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation was to describe the common micropolitical challenges that novice principals might face in schools, and the potential strategies for negotiating these challenges as described by establishment stage principals. This chapter examines three areas of previous research. First, the literature was reviewed to determine what has been written and, therefore, it provides an approximation of the current state of knowledge on school micropolitics. Second, the literature was reviewed to understand how principals have experienced school micropolitics. Lastly, the literature was reviewed to understand the structure and curriculum of principal preparation programs. This literature review on micropolitics in education, principals, and principal preparation programs provided the foundation for this dissertation.

Politics in Education

By the end of the 1960s, politics in education had become an important field of study with a growing scholarly interest (Scribner et al., 2003). Scribner, Alemán, and Maxcy (2003) credited Lawrence Iannaccone as the first to identify the politics of education as a “subspecialty of educational administration in which scholars selectively apply political science methods and knowledge to teach and write about their core constituencies—superintendents, principals, teachers, and their communities” (p. 16). Indeed, politics in education has become an expansive, varied and ever evolving field. Some contemporary themes in the politics in education include school accountability, parent participation in school reform, social justice, and school leadership. Research on

the politics in education has provided a broader context through which a greater understanding of the political dynamics nested within school leadership can be examined.

Variations in intergovernmental relations often provide the impetus driving politics in education. For instance, Grissom and Herrington (2012) examined the effect of school accountability on how intergovernmental relations and Race to the Top (RTTT) grant money was transferred to “states, local districts, and other governmental and nongovernmental education organizations under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of more than US\$53 billion” (p. 3). RTTT represented the largest federal education grant in the history of the United States, stressing the government’s commitment to “standards and assessments, recruitment and retention of effective teachers, improvement of low-performing schools, and the establishment of viable data systems for tracking student achievement and teacher effectiveness” (Nicholson-Crotty & Staley, 2012, p. 160).

Malen (2006) suggested that intergovernmental relations affect schools because individual or group goals and their associated values or beliefs about educational change are likely to vary, providing the groundwork for micropolitical challenges. Grissom and Herrington posited that American federalism references the relationship between national and state governments, as well as the inner workings between local governments.

Grissom and Herrington found that the level of governor and union support in each state affected the number of RTTT applications that were submitted. This finding suggests that “applications were symbolic actions taken by politicians with constituents who favor educational reform” (Nicholson-Crotty & Staley, 2012, p. 179).

A second area of research in the politics of education (beyond intergovernmental relations) include how parent participation affects school leadership decisions-making.

For instance, Marsh, Strunk, Bush-Mecenas, and Huguet (2014) posited that “participatory democratic theory suggested involving the maximum number of individuals who will be affected by the decision at hand, and that participants have equal power to determine the outcome of decisions” (p. 53). In the school context, Tschannen-Moran and Garis (2014) described a correlation between a school’s efforts to establish community member engagement and the extent that community members would go to support the school when it was needed. As “policy makers and reformers continue to push for greater parent engagement in reform, it is particularly important to gain a better understanding of what parent engagement looks like, what shapes it, and what might improve it” (Marsh et al., 2014, p. 53). Marsh et al., wrote that school districts should consider rethinking existing institutional beliefs about the role of community members to help ensure comprehensive implementation of school reform decisions. Hence, parental involvement remains an important factor in the politics of education in the United States.

Another important area of research in the politics of education includes consideration for social justice issues. Bass (2015) argued that the current system wide approach to educational reform is failing students of color and students from high poverty backgrounds. These underserved students continue to fail their academic potential. For instance, Cooper and Mulvey (2015) suggested, “Economic inequality, increased segregation, and poor educational attainment are all on the increase in the United States” (p. 659). Dumas, Dixon, and Mayorga (2016) suggested that a dominant area of research has examined how educational policy intersects with the topics of race, inequitable access to resources, and disproportionate success or achievement in schools. Jackson (2008) stated that in the past, a “color-blind society has been a part of the

American dream, with all citizens equal before the law” (p. 151), although the premise of this belief negates the contribution of other cultures. Bass (2015) suggested that:

Both schools and communities should value the promotion of social justice and democracy as their central focus as they set forth to accomplish their common goal of successful human development. It is this valuing that will allow for the development of policies and practices that will promote the equity and optimum outcomes for students and citizens. (p. 720)

Fusarelli and Bass (2015) cautioned that overly simplistic plans for a solution often fall short of achieving a resolution or improvement—that is, failing to address larger and deeper social issues like poverty remains at the root of many problems in education. For instance, based on the equity paradigm, resources get distributed to the neediest students (Bass, 2015). Bass reiterated that one main assumption of this paradigm was that students would not perpetually require more resources. Beyond challenges related to equity for school principals, superintendents have been challenged with bridging equity across schools. School boundaries demonstrate one way that politics at the district level plays a significant role in the negotiation of equity in education and beyond the school.

Research has suggested that for social justice to have an influence over policy and economic inequality, it must be acknowledged and understood by those in positions of power. For instance, Cooper and Mulvey (2015) asserted that “isolation from wealthier, more affluent neighborhoods tends to result in an invisibility and, therefore, an ignorance among those in wealthier neighborhoods about the hardships that exist for children and their families living in poverty” (p. 665). Bass (2015) posited that in the absence of equitable policies, student achievement will continue to lose ground nationally, as a

significant segment of the students become underserved, ultimately becoming undereducated members of society.

Previous research has suggested that within schools, social justice issues can trigger micropolitics in various ways. For example, veteran teachers who have remained at a school campus over an extended period are likely to have enough micropolitical power to select students to be placed in their classes. If a veteran teacher's desire is to educate the best and the brightest students, this is likely to leave struggling students (e.g., minority and low-income students) to be taught by less experienced teachers. Grissom and Herrington (2012) suggested that educators "with more experience have the opportunity to accumulate organizational, social, and political capital that provides them with sources of influence in school decision making [to the extent that] more experienced teachers are assigned fewer Black or low-income students" (p. 611). This type of scenario suggests that principals may benefit from leadership training that helps them navigate micropolitics emerging from social justice issues. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) argued that principals "must possess high-quality instructional skills, be able to support the learning of both students and adults in school, raise critical issues concerning equity and privilege and be able to provide leadership for collective responsibility for school improvement" (p. 215). Crow and Weindling (2010) contend that these types of micropolitical challenges necessitate that school leaders possess the skills, knowledge, and disposition to address school and community challenges, in addition to having knowledge related to curriculum and instruction. Within "a social justice perspective, the greatest challenge for the educational administration field may be to shift its mental model of what it means to be a school leader rather than a school

administrator” (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005, p. 209). The different themes discussed in the literature on politics in education, in the broader sense, illustrates an intertwined relationship with school micropolitics.

School Micropolitics

Micropolitics—the study of politics within schools——has been understood as the study of how things really work in schools, not necessarily how an organizational chart or a principal’s action plan would like them to work (Flessa, 2009, p. 331). Blase (1991) suggested that micropolitics depicts how people attempt to use power to influence others, protect themselves, or compete for what they want. Eilersten et al. (2008) depicted that micropolitics itself was a “means for becoming aware of the complex and often contradictory power relations and webs of influence affecting and guiding unconsciously professional practices [in schools]” (p. 306).

When change is initiated on a school campus, a series of micropolitical challenges may emerge. In micropolitical studies, the “black box” of system theory was cracked open to reveal in intimate detail the combatants inside the “arena of struggle” (Scribner et al., 2003, p. 23). Hoyle (2010) suggested that micropolitics operates in the direction where school leaders and teachers pursue their interests in the context of the school environment and its external pressures. Rational choice theory underpins how micropolitics operates. Weiske et al. (2015) suggested rational choice theory helps to explain how individuals with different preferences work to achieve the best possible actions to maximize their utility or happiness. Becker (1976) suggested that within the rationalist tradition, the intentional pursuit of outcomes and preferences by individuals often underlies their behaviors or political actions. To support this point, Blase and Blase

(2002) purported that research on micropolitics has revealed that supervisory decisions and practices have political implications. Blase and Anderson (1995) posited that with increased involvement of teachers, parents, and students, micropolitical literacy is required, so that these stakeholders may “work together authentically” (p. 12).

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) described micropolitical literacy as the ability to understand scenarios through a micropolitical lens comprised of knowledge, wisdom, and experience. Hoyle (2003) stated that the role of micropolitics includes expanding the understanding of the micropolitical context within the principal’s work to provide principals with the necessary concepts or frameworks serving as tools for reflection on their performance.

Historically, research on micropolitics has primarily focused on conflict and negative or dysfunctional relations among individuals or groups in organizational settings (Blase & Blase, 2002). However, micropolitics refers to both conflictive processes and co-operative processes (Blase & Blase, 2014; Eilertsen, Gustafson, & Salo, 2008; Townsend, 1990). Therefore, school principals may take a dichotomic approach to micropolitics, in which principals work toward constructive or productive micropolitical outcomes, while principals are also prepared to successfully negotiate conflict emerging from micropolitics. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) clarified that disputes between principals and teachers can emerge from a number of topics, including policy change (e.g., merit pay and curricular disagreements), goals (e.g., proposed changes to the school’s mission statement or a change in the student discipline guidelines). Agi et al. (2016) suggested that tension from staff emerges for principals because of contradictions in the values or in the school vision. For example, tension can occur during the planning

of academic content, the nature of curriculum, the student assessment methods, school duties, or promotion and transfer issues that affect school staff. Blase (1989) posited that, although the principal's decision is recognized as final, teachers and staff expect that decisions will be made fairly. Ryan (2010) suggested that when negotiating social justice issues, principals "have little choice but to play the political game, that is, to acknowledge the political realities of their organization, hone their political skill and put these skills into play" (p. 374). In order to understand more about educational politics, Flessa (2009) suggested examining the dynamics through which conflicts emerge.

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) contended that when staff members do not believe they have the resources to sway a decision, the group may work to form a coalition with other groups. Within this social process, Malen (2006) described how teachers have been shown to use strategies such as sabotage, passive resistance, gossip or confronting the principal in a coalition of teacher force. Alternatively, strategies used by principals may include a series of control strategies like confining meeting agendas to safe topics or granting favors for certain teachers to garner loyalty. To this point, school leaders "are often shocked to discover that their role is more one of persuasion and negotiation than of order or compliance" (Lindle, 1999, p. 174). Moreover, principals often get "caught in cross-currents of legislative mandates, district regulations, union contract, constituency demands, teacher expectations, student pressures and their own convictions" (Malen, 2006, p. 150). Willower (1991) described that within the school, "the norms of the teacher and student groups tend to reflect their adversarial posture" (p. 444). However, Marshall and Scribner (1991) clarified that students are often powerless in the political field of the school and, therefore, may turn to violence or other destructive behaviors.

Flessa (2009) argued that negotiations between teachers and principals represents a social process requiring flexibility on both sides to reach an outcome. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014) recommended that school leaders recognize their influence as political.

In school micropolitics, teachers often seek to balance autonomy in some areas with conformity in others. In particular, teachers often covet leeway or autonomy within their own classrooms, including their teaching methods (Willower, 1991). Teacher autonomy related to instruction can be beneficial for schools when collective values and methods are effective and steeped in best practices, although problematic methods coupled with the belief that problems are created by students can become precarious. Such views become apparent when teachers hold deficit beliefs about the academic abilities of students from diverse backgrounds (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). However, granting autonomy or privileges to teachers is an aspect of political skill that new principals need to develop before becoming an establishment stage principal.

When new principals do not recognize the full implications of condoning privileges to a person or group, it can create conflict among staff members and become difficult to manage (Meyer et al., 2011). Yet, political power is not always visible. Webb (2008) described power as a concept that can operate covertly and panoptically. Blase (1991) suggested that the micropolitical perspective addresses overt and covert processes by which individuals or groups within an organization acquire and exercise power to promote and protect their interests. Principals who have developed political skill can weigh the potential implications of their decisions with precision. Taliadorou and Pashiardis (2015) and Ferris, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, and Fink (2001) suggested that political skills combine to form the four following dimensions:

- Self and social astuteness: individuals possessing political skill are astute observers of others and keenly attuned to diverse social situations
- Interpersonal influence/control: politically skilled individuals have a strong and convincing personal style that tends to exert a powerful influence on those around them
- Network building/social capital: individuals with strong political skills are adept at using diverse networks of people by easily developing friendships and building strong and beneficial alliances and coalitions
- Genuineness/sincerity: tactics of politically skilled individuals are seen as subtle and their motives do not appear as self-serving. They appear to others to be congruent, sincere, and genuine

Moreover, from a broader scope or perspective, political skill has been “defined as the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004, p. 311).

There exists two contrasting leadership approaches, including traditional leadership and facilitative leadership. Blase and Blase (1997) suggested that traditional leaders use strategies intended to control teachers, whereas facilitative leaders use strategies to develop teacher satisfaction, shared governance structures, encouraging teacher input, and increased teacher autonomy. Similarly, Wong (2008) described traditional or top-down leaders as transactional leaders that focused on management through a series of rewards and punishments, whereas facilitative leaders were described as transformational leaders that “tend to broaden and elevate the interests of followers,

generating awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group [which generally] stirs followers to look beyond their own self-interest to the good of others” (p. 21). The transition from traditional or transactional leadership to facilitative or transformational leadership exemplifies moving from the traditional top-down models to more inclusive governance models (Xu, Wubbena, & Stewart, 2016). Empowering teachers to perform and execute organizational goals can be classified as a co-operative process. Conger et al. (2000) defined empowerment as a process of building feelings of self-efficacy among staff through both formal techniques and informal techniques. Mishra, Spreitzer and Mishra (1998) posited that empowerment manifests through four areas, including:

- *Meaning* – employee perceives that their contributions are valuable,
- *Competence* – employee’s belief that they have the skills required to perform vital tasks,
- *Self-determination* – teacher participation in making critical decisions that affect their work, and
- *Impact* – teachers’ perception that they have influence on what happens in the school.

Transformational leadership can provide the impetus for empowering teachers in school.

Ryan (2010) suggested that some administrators subscribe to both traditional leadership strategies and facilitative leadership strategies in their practices depending on the context or situation. Ryan noted that school administrators are likely to utilize “persistence, planning, experimentation, honesty, patience, aggression, play acting and quiet advocacy” (p. 368). Meyer et al. (2011) suggested that “principals who were

particularly aware of context used micropolitics to gain influence and to build trust in their decisions among teachers” (p. 7). Whether initiated by macropolitical forces outside of the school or forces within the school, examination of school micropolitical dynamics remains critical for novice principal’s political skill development. Ryan (2010) contended that leaders should lead with wisdom and justice as opposed to force.

Micropolitics and Macropolitics

The politics of education includes both micropolitics and macropolitics. Distinguished from “politics witnessed at the federal, state, and district level, micropolitics refers to the politics exercised in and around the school building” (Johnson, 2003, p. 52). Bacharach and Mundell (1993) characterized macropolitics as external interest groups outside of the school that can affect outcomes within the school. There has been a general agreement in the literature that school micropolitics occurs on the school campus and macropolitics occurs at central office, the state level, and above.

Webb (2008) suggested that macropolitics affects micropolitics often in the context of school reform. Amidst school reform, tensions can escalate as staff members work to secure their interests or protect their places in the organization. Indeed, individuals with competing values or competing priorities seek to have their priorities and values prevail (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). Achinstein (2002) defined conflict as an “event whereby individuals or groups clash, in which divergent beliefs and actions are exposed” (p. 425). Iannaccone (1991) suggested that policy gets formulated through the interaction of conflicting social values. In any “discussion of politics, whether macro or micro, familiar concepts such as power, conflict, coalitions, and policy or their myriad derivatives come into play” (Marshall & Scribner, 1991, p. 348).

Trust and Leadership

The development of trust in a relationship requires sustained maintenance and effort. Sometimes characterized as genuineness, the principal's ability to build trust has an important role in school micropolitics (Ferris et al., 2001). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, (2014) argued that "first and foremost, for principals to earn the trust of their teachers, they must demonstrate genuine caring for teachers, students, and parents alike" (p. 69). Bono, Hooper, and Yoon (2012) described the personality traits of trustworthy leaders as competence, consistency, reliability, openness, respect, and integrity.

Distrust in the school setting can work against the goals of being an effective school leader. Walker, Kutsyruba, and Noonan (2011) suggested the destruction of trust may begin with a simple disappointment, leading to suspicion and distrust. Distrust can manifest itself as "an unpleasant and uncomfortable work environment [leading to a scenario where] energy that could be devoted to teaching and learning is diverted to self-protection" by teachers or students (Walker et al., 2011, p. 478). An environment of distrust can escalate micropolitical challenges between staff and the principal. In order for principals to earn the trust of their teachers, they must "demonstrate genuine caring for teachers, students, and parents alike [that can be] characterized by a generalized spirit of good will [and may often include] faculty involvement in decision making" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014, p. 69). Walker et al. (2011) posited that school leaders must realize the fragility of trust to enhance their leadership practice.

There exists a divide in the literature regarding the extent by which external groups outside the school, like community members, are involved in school planning. Research has suggested that involving the local school community is advisable, and that

this involvement requires additional effort and political finesse. For instance, successful principals are able to negotiate the elements of school micropolitics in the local community. Khalifa (2012) posited that community members may include the people in local residence, markets, churches, lodges, schools, and other neighborhood settings. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014) pointed to a correlation between a school's efforts to provide opportunities for the community to participate in school decision-making and the extent to which a community can support their school when most needed.

In contrast, superintendents and principals may exclude groups situated outside of the campus or school district. Willower (1991) suggested that school leaders often seek to avoid potential conflict with community members by carefully selecting what topics they bring forward to the community for discussion. Lindle (1999) argued, "If the structure of school decision making includes parents or other community representatives, voices from outside the profession are added to the melee" (p. 176).

Nonetheless, community members can play an important, if not central role in school micropolitics. Blase and Blase (2002) suggested that "prospective administrators should become cognizant of their everyday political orientations; understanding the elements of trust, respect, as well as the nature of professional collaboration and reflection" (p. 29). Beyond developing political awareness among school staff, "trust, rapport, and social capital can all be built when principals expand their role to include community leadership as defined by the community" (Khalifa, 2012, p. 428).

The Aspiring Principal's Introduction to Politics in Education

Before obtaining a principal position, an administrative candidate may encounter politics beginning with the principal interview process. Tooms, Lugg, and Bogotch

(2010) suggested that candidates are often considered a “fit, not a fit and misfit” (p. 99) within the politics of selection process. Farley-Ripple et al., (2012) found that interview recruitments sometimes came in the form of a “recommendation by someone, usually a superior, to consider a specific position” (p. 796). Alvy (1984) stated that once selected to be a principal, insiders appeared to have fewer organizational problems than outsiders during their respective administrative experiences. However, regardless of being an outsider or insider, politics becomes an important challenge for new school principals.

Farley-Ripple et al., (2012) identified the six common methods for principal career transitioning, including self-initiation (e.g., the administrator applies for and pursues the position by making contacts with stakeholders), recruiting and tapping (e.g., recruitment from a fellow educator), requesting (e.g., superintendent request of administrator to switch roles within the district), reassigning (e.g., administrator receives a directive from the superintendent or from the central office that they will be switching campuses at a particular date without an option for deliberation), removing (e.g., often as a result of conflict or politics, as well as a host of other reasons like performance), and passing over (e.g., administrator remains in current role despite efforts to acquire a different administrative role in the district). In a qualitative study focusing on principal succession, superintendents and central office leaders perceived that “succession of principals is an important issue; however, there was not a consistent concern for the implementation of succession planning and management practices” (Zepeda, Bengston, & Parylo, 2011, p. 153). Miller (2015) emphasized that attention to the politics of transitioning for new administrators requires sufficient intervention from district officials.

The Novice Principal

O'Malley, Long, and King (2015) suggested that effective principals often experience a “wide range of simultaneously occurring and competing issues” that the novice principal can manifest themselves in “unique leadership and affective challenges” (p. 119). Oplatka (2012) defined the novice principal as being within the first three years of a principalship. Oplatka further characterized the novice principal’s experience as a socialization process, during which the new leader must “confront many issues and difficulties, such as attaining acceptance, learning the organizational culture, and establishing ways to overcome the insecurities of inexperience and to develop a sense of confidence” (p. 131). Lindle (1999) described a novice principal as having limited or no specific principal experience and often discovering that the principal’s “role is more one of persuasion and negotiation, than order and compliance” (p. 174). Novice principals begin to experience some level of micropolitics as soon as the job assignment begins. If a novice principal is able to successfully sustain their position, over time the individual will move through the various principal career stages (see Figure 1). Oplatka (2012) contended that these stages progress from the novice or induction stage to the establishment stage, which has been characterized by confidence and competence, and from the establishment stage to the maintenance vs renewal stage, which has been characterized as a career point for a principal accompanied by a loss of enthusiasm. The last principal career stage has been characterized as the disenchantment stage, which manifests as stagnation toward the end of a principal’s career.



Figure 1. *Stages of a school principal's career in education.*

One key challenge that confronts the rookie principal pertains to issues related to his or her predecessor (Parkay et al., 1992). New principals may experience conflict in attempts to bridge personal relationship styles with their predecessors while teachers adjust to potential changes in values and to a new principal's perception of leadership (Meyer et al., 2011). Lee (2012) explained that the "school community not only compares the new principal to the previous one but also resists changes to the routines and the culture to which they have become accustomed" (p. 264).

Ashton and Duncan (2012) explained that a lack of experience in decision-making, a sense of professional isolation, and school accountability requirements remain

some of the most common pressures that new principals experience. As the primary supervisor and change agent on a campus, the novice principal often begins to experience structural loneliness, given that no one else in the school shares the same position, although principal federations or associations can help to remedy this aspect of being a school principal (Farley-Ripple et al., 2011; Piot & Kelchtermans, 2016). Beyond the practical application of what novice principals have learned during their principal preparation training, they must also successfully transition to the relational dynamics of being the leadership for a school. In instances when a novice principal has been selected to bring dramatic change to a school, Lee (2015) suggested that significant resistance can be expected, especially from school staff. The burden of compounding stresses and responsibilities can lead to an increase in emotional and health related issues for school principals (Bridges, 2012). School administrators, especially school principals, find themselves at risk of developing health and sleep problems, as well as being unable to bounce back from life's inevitable setbacks and disappointments (Bridges, 2012, p. 409).

Novice Principals, Political Skill and Risk of Termination

Despite the training received in principal preparation programs, novice principals have reported a sense of shock when coming to understand the multitude of responsibilities and the pace at which these responsibilities must be negotiated. Spilline and Lee (2014) posited that if principal preparation programs could “make novices aware of the ultimate responsibility, ‘reality shock’ of their new job and the stress that accompanies this shock would be a small but potentially important first step” (p. 456).

Leadership challenges for the novice and veteran principal alike are unpredictable, multi-dimensional, and often political in nature, even as student

performance and accountability ratings remain a central focus for district leaders and community members. Fisher (2014) remarked that in the age of accountability, principals have been expected to be curricular leaders, educational visionaries, budget analysts, experts on public relations, and legal contracts while negotiating conflicting interests among students, staff, community members, and district office officials. For instance, Meyer et al. (2011) found that within the emerging micropolitics of new school leadership, specific groups among staff were perceived as winners because they obtained influence with the new principal while other groups experienced a loss of influence, which most often manifested itself on an emotional level. Oplatka (2012) wrote that novice principals both work toward being accepted and work toward understanding the organizational culture of schools.

Winton and Pollock (2012) posited that prior to developing political skills and effective communication with critical stakeholders, novice principals may resort to control strategies like ignorance, persuasion, persisting, keeping others off-balance, and working the system. Blase and Anderson (1995) asserted that novice principals may resort to transactional control strategies like rewards, sanctions, and mandates. Other political tactics used by principals often center around control by way of force and coercive actions as a means for diminishing criticism from a faction of the community (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Bolman and Deal (2003) suggested that these types of control strategies do not work for an extended period of time and, in the interim, may hinder staff members' communication while eroding staff morale. Miller (2015) wrote "power hoarding kills the spirit rather than liberates it; power must be shared to advance the cause of good in the world, for leading is essentially an act of giving" (p. 65).

Bolman and Deal (2010) proposed four frames for analyzing how political skills and power dynamics interact with the larger organizational structural context. The four frames include the structural frame, human resources frame, political frame, and symbolic frame. First, the structural frame centers on goals and roles within an organization. The primary focus of this approach includes the organizational environment and associated policies with an emphasis on specific tasks. By way of contrast, the human resources frame centers on how organizational and human needs align. The focus areas for the human resource frame include relationships, needs, and skills. The focus of the political frame includes political dynamics like examining competition, conflict, and organizational politics. Finally, the symbolic frame highlights how meaning gets constructed within an organization. Culture, stories, and rituals are the primary focus of the symbolic frame. All four frames combined provide a framework for analyzing how organizations function. Consideration for the four frames and how each intersects with the political frame provides a further approach for analyzing school micropolitics. Schools “are political because they are inevitably a loose collection of different individuals and groups with enduring differences in background, beliefs and agendas” (Bolman & Deal, 2010, p. 53).

McGinn (2005) interviewed 35 dynamic principals with a focus on their political skills. McGinn’s findings suggested that some of the principals expressed the belief that they had insufficient political skills for the job while other principals believed that their lack of political skills forbade them from effectively finding their places within the system, understanding the micropolitics, developing networks of support, and understanding where leverage within micropolitics may exist and be utilized. Blase and

Blase (2002) indicated that prospective principals must learn about the political orientations of the school and be able to apply elements of trust and positive professional collaboration to successfully enhance their political success. Ashton and Duncan (2012) recommended principals schedule time with stakeholders to hear and validate their concerns.

When novice principals fail to develop their political skills, dysfunctional school micropolitics may become evident to central office supervisors and the larger community. In the worst-case scenario, novice principals may be involuntarily terminated. Waddle and Buchanan (2002) explored involuntary termination of principals in Missouri. Their study surveyed 525 superintendents in the state using a questionnaire that reflected leadership standards from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards. Findings indicated that of the 2,664 principals in the state, 199 of them were terminated during the time of the study. Waddle and Buchanan suggested the reasons contributing to involuntary termination, as reported by the superintendents surveyed, included:

- Inability to develop, communicate, implement, monitor, and evaluate the school improvement plan (vision of learning)
- Inability to develop and sustain a culture that values students and staff and is inclusive of all individuals
- Inability to create a climate that values effective teach and learning, including the allocation of resources, a safe and healthy environment, effective decision-making, and procedures that support teaching and learning
- Inability to effectively communicate and collaborate with members of the school and community

- Inability to demonstrate ethical behavior in relationships within the school and/or community
- Inability to work within the policies, laws, regulations, as well as the social, and culture context of the community (pp. 25-26).

Effective communication, navigating school culture, collaboration, and uniting community members behind a common vision for teaching, studying, and learning all have an interconnectivity toward micropolitics and the involuntary termination of principals. Hence, effective communication/collaboration with community members remains a critical skill for principals (Caruso, 2013; Thessin & Clayton, 2011).

Agi et al. (2016) suggested that principal termination was often linked to micropolitical tensions like “distribution of school resources, participating in various school activities, school goal attainment/students’ performance and achievement, school development planning and improvement, school culture and discipline, community involvement in school/expectations, methods/approaches of evaluating school success, curriculum execution and instructional materials, curriculum impact on the community, and accountability” (p. 75). Similarly, Davis (2000) suggested that most superintendents identified the reason for principal termination as being related to particular personal characteristics or poor relationships with others, yet principals that were terminated identified the level of politics as their primary reason for termination.

Progressing from Novice Principal to Establishment Principal

The career path from novice principal to establishment principal often progresses through unique challenges, uncertainty, and school micropolitics. Similar to Oplatka’s (2012) four principal career stages, Parkay et al. (1992) conducted a three-year case study

that followed 12 high school principals from the time of their appointment through what became conceived of as five stages of professional socialization. Parkay et al. defined professional socialization as the “process through which someone becomes a member of profession, and in time, develops their own identity within that profession” (p. 45). The five stages of professional socialization included:

- Survival – personal concerns and professional insecurities are frequently high at this stage, and the principal may feel overwhelmed.
- Control – principal is in constant fear of losing control and becoming ineffective. In response to this fear, the principal relies more on the power that is vested in the role of the principal than on the demonstrated power of expertise.
- Stability – individual has achieved “veteran” status.
- Educational leadership – primary focus is on curriculum and instruction.
- Professional actualization – focus is on attaining personal vision (i.e., creating a culture characterized by empowerment, growth, and authenticity).

Parkay et al. (1992) found that by the end of the three-year study, only five of 12 principals had reached the fourth stage and no principal reached the fifth stage. These findings illustrated the time it can take for novice principals to develop proficient leadership skills. McGinn (2005) suggested that school closure, reduction of staff, low exam results, a divided staff, and difficult evaluation conversations represented some of the critical micropolitical challenges that novice principals can struggle with on the job. Ashton and Duncan (2012) discussed four strategies that have been recommended for new principals: (a) making it a point to learn all students’ names, (b) effective use of

advisory to achieve school goals, (c) drawing attention to teacher and student contributions and accomplishments, and (d) building rapport with teachers and students during the school day. Meyer et al. (2011) posited that school leaders who were aware of the context for using micropolitics can gain influence and build trust among teachers. Crow and Weindling (2010) argued that “developing the skills and dispositions to gather trustworthy, culturally sensitive, and politically perceptive information is an important part of the learning process for new leaders; however, these skills and dispositions are not always valued in principal preparation programs” (p. 154). The development of curriculum on school micropolitics for principal preparation programs should become a central focus to help induction stage principals reach the establishment stage.

Principal Preparation Programs

Previous research on the success that principal preparation programs have in preparing principals for micropolitical challenges points to a progressing, hopeful, evolving, and often failing effort. There have been both discouraging and encouraging findings related to principal preparation programs. Encouraging findings were reported by Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2007). Darling-Hammond et al. found that novice principals reported extensive mentoring, coaching, and engagement in effective leadership strategies in principal preparation programs. For example, O’Malley and Capper (2015) found that 82.5% of respondents in a project surveying faculty in principal preparation programs at 100 University Council for Educational Administration universities reported programs that are oriented toward preparing leaders for social justice. Moreover, only 10% of the respondents reported that the majority of faculty in their principal preparation programs do not identify social justice as a core component in

their teaching and research. Orr and Barber (2009) posited that faculty interested in enhancing their knowledge of leadership strategies remains a primary motivation guiding program research and development. Hess and Kelly (2005) illustrated that “defenders of conventional preparation programs have shown a remarkable willingness to compromise and acknowledge the need for reforming traditional preparation” (p. 157).

Some less encouraging findings have included the 2005 U.S. Department of Education report. This report suggested that conventional principal preparation programs lacked vision and coherence overall. Other critics have “focused on the pace and caliber of change in higher education, arguing that graduate schools of education lack the capacity and rewards structure necessary to foster anything other than superficial changes to existing practices” (Young & Brewer, 2008, p. 107). Principal preparation programs have also come under greater scrutiny related to dismal state accountability achievement toward reaching state standards. Even before the advent of No Child Left Behind, concerns about principal preparation programs “have paralleled the standards movement, particularly over the past decade” (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 27). University principal preparation programs have been almost void of knowledge related to the challenges that principals may likely face and, therefore, have not been able to completely prepare novice principals for the leadership demands that they are likely to encounter on the job (Bauer & Brazer, 2012; Bridges, 2012; Waddle & Buchanan, 2002). For instance, LaMagdeleine, Maxcy, Pounder, and Reed (2009) stated:

Because of the applied nature of the field of educational leadership, not only are faculty members with traditional research and teaching skills needed, but it is also highly desirable that these same faculty members have strong backgrounds as

educational practitioners (e.g., school teachers, administrators, or other educational professionals) so that they have professional understanding of schools and other educational organizations and can work collaboratively with school communities. (p. 138)

Aspiring principals must be trained for school leadership based on real world experiences. Waddle and Buchanan (2002) found that due to the “increasing complexity of the job and the expectations that principals should know and be able to do, it is not surprising principals are on occasion, involuntarily terminated” (p. 23).

Returning to a prominent theme that was illustrated in the previous review of research on the politics in education, preparing aspiring principals with the skills for reshaping school communities to be socially just and democratic requires specific principal preparation in school micropolitics. Hewitt, Davis, and Lashley (2014) posited that “leadership preparation programs must cultivate leaders who can navigate schools as they are to improve their effectiveness while also fundamentally rethinking and reworking education to what it might be—socially just, equitable, and democratic” (p. 225). Johnson (2003) argued that principal preparation programs should encourage student reflection on concepts and issues such as “democracy, justice, the democratic society, marginalization, structured silence, inclusion-exclusion, and the role of education in realizing or obstructing the realization of our normative visions” (p. 59). Micropolitical skills among school leaders remain critical for addressing conflicts and issues that arise in schools, especially related to issues concerning social justice.

The Future of Principal Preparation Programs

An important goal for principal preparation programs should be to prepare principals for school micropolitics. Research has suggested that preparation programs can no longer “ignore the complex political reality of life in school” (Winton & Pollock, 2012, p. 51). Instead, they must “help principal candidates become comfortable and effective in their political role because their success as school leaders—and the success of students, families, teachers, and communities with whom they work—depends on it” (p. 51). Lindle (1999) suggested that “micropolitics is absolutely a question of survival for school leaders [and, therefore,] the study of micropolitics is inevitable, advisable and unavoidable” as it is now recognized as an “inherent occupational requirement” (p. 176).

Literature Gap

The literature reviewed in this chapter has suggested that school micropolitics, in particular, and micropolitics in education, in general, remains a converging point of challenges for aspiring and novice principals alike (Agi et al., 2016; Blase, 1991; Blase & Blase, 2002; Eilersten et al., 2008; Hoyle, 2003; Iannaccone, 1991; Johnson, 2001; Lindle, 1999; Marshall & Scribner, 1991). This previous literature has also demonstrated that principal preparation programs often fall short in providing aspiring principals with the tools to face micropolitical challenges in schools (Bauer & Brazier, 2012; Bridges, 2012; Davis et al., 2012; Gill, 2012). Beach and Lindahl (2000) stressed that principal preparation programs should teach the necessary skills and knowledge to help aspiring principals facilitate consensus building, conflict resolution, negotiation, and collaboration. Research has suggested that school districts should work in tandem with universities to develop curriculum and training directed at school micropolitics, so that

novice principals can be prepared to recognize, and effectively negotiate school micropolitics (Davis et al., 2012; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Hewitt, et al., 2014).

Johnson (2003) argued that “the politics of education is a messy and scattered field; conceptual, theoretical, and methodological challenges do exist [but even so, the satisfaction of progress] rests on the commitment to the principles of disciplined, empirical grounded inquiry” (p. 61). In this vein, future research on micropolitics in education should focus on the sources of power between supervisors and teachers, as well as the associated respective interests, ideologies, and values they may hold in the quest for the needed theoretical explanations (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Willower, 1991). Malen (2006) suggested that school micropolitics remains a “force, for good or ill” (p. 160), and it should be studied in the school context, because the school remains “an institution for political socialization, an object of political contest and an arena of political negotiation” (p. 160). Scribner et al. (2003) noted that an understanding of school micropolitics depends on scholars to have continued, rich, and critical discussions on the topic while engaging in a wider range of research methods in the interest of understanding more.

Future research on micropolitics in education can likely inform curriculum and training for aspiring principals in principal preparation programs. Although political theory may provide a fair description of school micropolitics, it continues to lack in providing practitioners with models that would help them to facilitate the politics embedded in school leadership (Blase & Anderson, 1995). Hence, future research in micropolitics “lie at the heart of the work of leadership” (Flessa, 2009, p. 336).

III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that was employed in this dissertation to address the purpose and research questions presented in the first chapter. The purpose of this dissertation was to understand how establishment stage principals navigated school micropolitics during their first three years as school principals to identify common micropolitical challenges that novice principals have faced and common strategies used by those principals to respond to those challenges. This chapter first reviews the research design and case study method before reviewing the purposeful sampling technique, means of data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness of the design.

Research Design

Qualitative methodologies comprise a family of research approaches such as “grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, action research, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis” each of which “share a similar goal in that they seek to arrive at an understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it” (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013, p. 398). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that qualitative research can enable an interpretive or naturalistic approach to finding clarity or the meaning of phenomena, as well as associated meanings created by people. Kitto, Chesters, and Grbich (2008) summarized that qualitative research concerns itself with a systematic collection of data—organizing, describing, and interpreting textual data generated from discussion, documentation or observation. Merriam (2009) clarified that an “important characteristic of qualitative research is that the process is inductive; that is, researchers gather data to build concepts, hypothesis, or theories rather than deductively testing hypothesis as in positivist research” (p. 15). Qualitative researchers “are

interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). In qualitative research, procedural rigor for the purposes of establishing trustworthiness and validity can be addressed in a variety of ways. Johnson (2003) wrote that neither the acceptance of traditional frameworks or newly emerging frameworks on micropolitical research should “come at the cost of sound theoretical, conceptual, and methodological rigor” (p. 60). Kitto et al., (2008) posited that procedural rigor may include explicit descriptions of how data were collected, coded, and analyzed, as well as disclosing the sampling of participants, and an opportunity for participants to review collected data to ensure accuracy—a process otherwise known as inter-rater reliability.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all research methods. Advantages and disadvantages are often at the center of debate regarding whether quantitative or qualitative research is superior. For instance, Horsburgh (2003) suggested that reflexivity in qualitative studies—acknowledgement that the researcher’s actions and decisions may impact, or bias findings has been characterized as a disadvantage to qualitative research. However, Flyvbjerg (2006) suggested that research bias “applies to all methods, not just to the case study and other qualitative methods” (p. 235). Charmaz (2012) pointed out that in the past, “quantitative researchers saw qualitative research as idiosyncratic, impressionistic, unsystematic, biased, and impossible to replicate” (p. 3). Flyvbjerg (2006) argued that qualitative “case study has its own rigor, different to be sure, but no less strict than the rigor of quantitative method” (p. 235). Weingand (1993) argued that quantitative methodology has been rigidly structured and use meticulously quantified methods that have the ability to explore external behavior, but “becomes silent when

internal behavior is to be the object of analysis” (p. 19). Increasingly, quantitative researchers have seemed dissatisfied with purely quantified results and are turning toward supplementary qualitative analyses (Struass & Corbin, 1994, p. 277). Lincoln (1995) concluded that qualitative research is not intended to confirm or disprove findings but is centered on contributing to a process of greater understanding of the specific experience or phenomenon being studied. As such, qualitative research has been selected as the ideal method for capturing experiences toward discovery a about micropolitical challenges and associated resolutions or outcomes.

Method: Case Study

Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) suggested that case study research should be classified as a research approach, as opposed to a research method because case studies employ a variety of methods. Yin (1981) wrote that that case study research is particularly useful when an empirical area of focus must examine a phenomenon it its natural context, especially when the boundary between a phenomenon and context are not clear. A research strategy “is best suited to a different set of conditions and each strategy is therefore likely to be favored whenever such conditions prevail” (Yin, 1981, p. 98). Flyvbjerg (2006) reiterated that case study method and design is not appropriate in every situation such that the method selected should align well with the circumstances and problem that is being studied. Similarly, Merriam (2009) posited that “a researcher selects a case study design because of the nature of the problem” that is under analysis, given that “case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding phenomenon” (p. 50).

Yin (1981) posited that case study researchers must be trained to assess a variety of sources of information that may include (a) face to face interview informants, (b) telephone interview data, (c) agency documents, (d) field notes and on-site observations, and (e) related organization publications. Merriam (2009) suggested that “Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigation strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive” (p. 39). Patton (2002) suggested that a single case study is often composed of smaller cases that will encompass stories from a variety of individuals, or families, and other groups.

A single case study may be layered—inclusive of numerous case stories within a summative research report. When more than one object of study or unit of analysis is included in fieldwork, case studies may be layered and nested within the overall, primary case approach (Patton, 2002, p. 298). Common misconceptions related to case studies have been rooted in the belief that a single case study cannot be generalized and cannot contribute to the scientific development. For purposes of clarification, Flyvbjerg (2006) offers the following:

One can often generalize on the basis of a single case study, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization and supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas ‘the force of example’ is underestimated. (p. 228)

Flyvbjerg (2006) posited that although the researcher’s subjective judgement about case study process is considered by some to make this method less rigorous than quantitative

methods, “researchers who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts, and hypothesis were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points (p. 235). Yin (1981) summarized that case study method (a) is vital beyond the exploratory stages of research, (b) conclusions do lead to confirmable results, and (c) may be used for descriptive purposes or to check the validity of a proposed explanation.

Of within-case design, Yin (1981) posited that protocol should be well-defined, clearly communicated, and the design should be followed explicitly throughout the research process—achieving a predictable process for the reader, and less susceptibility to researcher bias. Flyvbjerg (2006) posited that in consideration of human learning, case study method is directly linked to context-dependent learning which shown to be critical in the development from basic to expert level of skills, as opposed to context-independent learning that is characteristic of limited growth beyond beginner skills, as when learning from a textbook or a computer that limits growth beyond beginner skills. Flyvbjerg added that both context-dependent learning and context-independent learning are both necessary; the latter for learning the basic working principles, and the prior for development beyond rudimentary understanding. Yin (1981) suggested that “case studies are relevant for studying knowledge utilization, because the topic covers a phenomenon that seems inseparable from its context” (p. 99). Flyvbjerg (2006) posited that case study method “is a necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology” (p. 241).

Constant Comparison Analysis

Constant comparative analysis is often associated with grounded theory research that works toward the development of a new theory of explanation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) have been credited with developing a grounded theory method while conducting a study of the terminally ill. Charmaz (2012) described this grounded theory approach as a systematic method of analysis that includes collecting and analyzing data. Constant comparative analysis, however, may be used outside of grounded theory research. Merriam (2009) wrote that the “constant comparative method of data analysis is widely used in all kinds of qualitative studies, whether or not the researcher is building a grounded theory” (p. 31). Constant comparative analysis generally involves comparing line by line coding of interview transcripts, seeking patterns that may become categories and ultimately themes. For the purpose of applying constant comparative analysis to transcribed interview data, it is recommended that open coding and comparison of every line of each transcribed interview be completed, before applying the same technique of comparison across all interviews, seeking emerging patterns, and other notable discoveries within the data (Boeije, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989). Charmaz (2012) described constant comparative analysis process as line by line coding, particularly as a result of applying analytical questions, coding with the use of gerunds—the noun form of verbs as possible, and analysis through comparison of the data. Boeije (2002) recommended the use of an inventory for comparing fragments, emerging themes, and memos in an effort to describe or define initial emerging concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1990) outlined the constant comparative analysis steps beginning with open coding for the development of categories, then progressing to axial coding or comparing categories or themes,

concluding selective coding—analysis of core concepts that have emerged from the open coding and axial coding data analysis process. Merriam (2009) clarified that the inductive comparative processes of constant comparative analysis offers a sequential strategy for data analysis. Tan (2010) posited that transparency of each step in the constant comparative analysis method should demonstrate how the data and method were used to generate primary conceptual categories. Therefore, constant comparative analysis can be suitable for purposes such as building theory, analyzing data and identifying relationships among varying data points.

Proposal for Study

Within the family of qualitative approaches, a layered case study approach using constant comparative analysis was used to systematically examine data to develop guiding principles on school micropolitics. A social constructionist epistemological perspective considered in tandem with the goal for this study helped to generate a set of guiding principles toward effective negotiation of school micropolitics. While this study started with an informed sense of school micropolitics as outlined in research literature, and a conviction that skills for navigating micropolitics are significant for novice principals and principal preparation programs, it sought to contribute a more specific set of guiding principles related to micropolitical preparation for principals from a robust inquiry into those dynamics.

A qualitatively layered and nested case study approach requires analysis of many forms of descriptive data. Yin (1981) posited that case study researchers must be trained to carefully assess a variety of sources of data to include, face to face interview informants, telephone interview data, any agency documents, field notes from on-site

observations, and any related organization publications. Agency records or publications, field notes and memos were analyzed.

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled with veteran or establishment stage principals using open-ended questions. An interview protocol was used to ensure consistency among the questions asked to participants. Using an interview protocol, I followed up with probing questions based on responses to further my investigation of all aspects of these principal's encounters with school micropolitics. The foremost question for this study was what are the school micropolitical challenges faced by novice principals? In addition to documenting these challenges, I sought to understand how these challenges were negotiated or resolved. Therefore, my secondary question will center on specific resolutions, effective or ineffective, to the micropolitical challenge during the novice or induction stage as a principal. Also of interest was the examination of guiding principles that may have been developed by participants over time for negotiating micropolitical challenges. Therefore, my third question focused on understanding what guiding principles have developed over time for successfully negotiating school micropolitical challenges. The data collected and the fidelity to which constant comparison analysis was applied for this case study sought to discover specific strategies for recognizing and resolving micropolitical challenges.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Once transcribed, I coded the first interview transcription line-by-line using gerunds to more clearly convey specific action. Charmaz (2012) stated that line by line coding, particularly as a result of applying analytical questions, and coding using gerunds—the noun form of verbs and analysis through comparison of the data frames the beginning stages for constant comparative

analysis. For the analysis of transcribed interview data, a framework of open coding of every line of the first interview was conducted and comparisons were made among this data. This process was repeated for each interview to identify emerging patterns (Boeije, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989). I applied constant comparative analysis when coding each interview transcription, followed by comparing all transcriptions by noting patterns, themes, and category saturation. Boeije (2002) posited that once the cycle of comparison does not bring new insights to categories, saturation of the category has been achieved.

Memo writing was a critical aspect of data analysis. Charmaz (2006) identified memos as analytic notes about coding and comparisons and the researcher's related ideas. Through this technique, I recorded reflections, comparisons, and recorded my analytical process. Although memos are considered unofficial records of the research process, they also serve as a critical reference during the process of data analysis.

Field Site

This study was conducted in Central Texas. District demographics were represented as approximate averages to mask the district's identity. The district total staff is comprised of more than 9,000 persons. Staff demographics related to race is reflected as an average of 10% African-American, 30% Hispanic, and 60% White. Student populations averaged 20% African-American, 60% Hispanic, and 10% White. Limited English Proficiency student population averaged at 30%. Economically disadvantaged students totaled more than 60%, and the special education population averaged 10%.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling technique is a hallmark in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling entails that the researcher seek out participants that are knowledgeable and or

have experience of the specific phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The profile of the twelve establishment stage principals participating in this study are as follows: (a) five or more years' experience, (b) currently lead a campus with 300 students or more, (c) contributing to a non-homogeneous sample of principals, (d) represent four elementary, four middle school and four high schools (e) representing low SES and high SES schools, and (f) demonstrate a willingness to discuss their experiences. Their combined contributions created an illustration of perspectives, dynamics, and practices within school micropolitics. The study of these 12 participants provided independent sources and perspective of micropolitics in their respective schools.

Recruitment

To identify principals for this study, the profile of principals as illustrated above was shared with the school district. Based on the profile, the school district provided a list of principals that could be contacted regarding an invitation to participate. Accordingly, purposeful sampling was used to capture the varying perspectives of the twelve selected participants (Creswell, 2007). This form of sampling enabled the selection of twelve established principals that met the research criteria. Participants were assigned pseudonyms so that their identities were concealed. School demographics were rounded to an average to help mask each school's identity.

Procedures for Data Collection

Data collection sessions with participants served as foundational structures of information, each of which built upon the next, forming an expanding structure for data analysis. Merriam (2009) clarified that an "important characteristic of qualitative research is that the process is inductive; that is, researchers gather data to build concepts,

hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypothesis as in positivist research” (p. 15). Inductive research processes were applied to data analysis and led to new guiding principles on school micropolitics negotiation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. These dialogues were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in conjunction with field notes and memos. Interview conversations were conducted in the principals’ offices or school conference rooms and were scheduled in 60 to 90-minute blocks. Secondary transcribers were utilized for all audio recordings.

Ethical treatment of all participants in the study was established. Each principal signed consent for participation in the study. Participants were informed that their identity would remain confidential. I prepared research questions and an interview protocol to ensure an organized and fluid data collection process. Data triangulation was implemented by combining my interview data, field notes, and memos. Patton (2002) posited that “triangulation within a qualitative inquiry strategy can be attained by combining both interviewing and observations” (p. 248). Subsequently, I was interested in learning more about potential commonalities in micropolitical challenges faced by novice principals and the strategies to respond to these challenges and ultimately contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

Case Study Research and Constant Comparative Analysis

Yin (1981) summarized that case study method (a) is vital beyond the exploratory stages of research, (b) conclusions do lead to confirmable results, and (c) may be used for descriptive purposes or to check the validity of a proposed explanation. Using within-case analysis, I created a protocol for applying the constant comparative method beginning with the comparison of line by line coding to seek patterns within the data to

determine possible categories, and the use of axial coding to construct linkages within the data, concluding with the emergence of themes. Boeije (2002) recommended the use of an inventory for comparing fragments, emerging themes, and memos in an effort to describe or define initial emerging concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that constant comparative analysis begins with open coding for the development of categories, then progressing to axial coding or comparing categories, concluding selective coding—analysis of core concepts that have emerged from the open coding and axial coding data analysis process.

The protocol of the constant comparison method was followed by writing memos to list possible emerging concepts and to classify these under subheadings. Place markers were then listed under each emerging concept to link all participants' interview transcripts referencing the same emerging concept. A partial example of this process is listed in Appendix C. This process enabled an additional perspective toward emerging themes and a system for organizing all references to each emerging concept, and later, themes. Member checking was conducted by typing a summary of interview transcriptions using the assigned codes as an outline. Each summary was hand-delivered to each participant with an invitation to contact me at any point to clarify or further discuss any point. Enfolded field notes, coded interview transcripts and these memos provided a means for triangulating data. Regarding within-case design, Yin (1981) posited that research protocols should be clearly delineated and followed explicitly throughout the research process, providing a predictable process for the reader while minimizing susceptibility to researcher bias.

I began this inductive case study research process with a conceptual framework of school micropolitics to help provide direction and structure. The conceptual framework was based on a review of literature, which suggested that if principal preparation programs develop and teach a curriculum directed at micropolitical strategies, novice principals will likely be able to more effectively recognize and respond to micropolitical challenges. Cross analysis of data collected using axial coding helped refine the categories. Selective coding led to the development of categories. Merriam (2009) clarified that axial coding centers itself around the process of first relating, and refining categories while selective coding was utilized in the final development of categories. Four themes emerged from the overarching method for analysis coupled with triangulation of all available data and literature. These data combined helped to develop guiding principles of school micropolitical negotiation. These new guiding principles contributed to the research in school micropolitics.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring data verification, trustworthiness, and credibility is critical to the qualitative research process (Creswell, 1998). Research methods should require consideration of “provisions that can be made to address matters such as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Shenton, 2004, p. 73). Merriam (2009) explained, the “extent to which research findings are credible...is addressed by using triangulation, checking interpretations with individuals interviewed or observed, staying on-site over a period of time, asking peers to comment on emerging findings, and clarifying researcher biases and assumptions” (p. 234). Striving for trustworthiness, three different goals were attempted within this study: (a) to articulate my positionality, (b) to

carry out the study in an ethical and competent manner; and (c) to present findings with comprehensive or sufficient evidence to add credibility and dependability of the findings. Secondary transcribers were utilized for all audio recordings. After interview data was coded, analyzed, and summarized, the participants had an opportunity to review a synopsis of their contributions to confirm that the interpretations of their meanings were conveyed accurately—member checking. Kitto et al., (2008) posited that member checking, otherwise known as respondent validation, offers subjects that were interviewed the opportunity to view and amend transcripts as a measure for enhancing validity. During all follow-up discussion, I made notes of the discussion to include in the analysis and triangulation of data.

This chapter described the methodological approaches used for this study, which were qualitative case study research and constant comparative analysis. Yin (1981) wrote that case study research is particularly useful when an empirical area of focus must examine a phenomenon in its natural context, especially when the boundary between a phenomenon and context are not clear, as is the case with micropolitical dynamics in school contexts. Constant comparative analysis was applied in the interest of examining emerging themes, and the meanings encompassed within each theme on micropolitics. The following chapter presents four themes that emerged from this case study and an interpretation related to each theme in a quest to extend the current understanding of school micropolitics.

IV. FINDINGS

This chapter presents four emerging themes that correlate managing and negotiating school micropolitics. The first three themes outline leadership strategies and perspectives that can serve to diminish the emergence of micropolitical challenges for principals. The fourth theme reveals specific models and leadership perspective related to successful practice of school micropolitical negotiation. The first section of this chapter introduces the twelve establishment stage principals, using memos taken during principal interviews and masking school specific indicators. Each of the four themes that emerged from categories provide perspective, strategies and techniques directed at monitoring, negotiating, and resolving school micropolitical issues on the school campus.

Twelve Establishment Stage School Principals

The participating school district provided a list of principals at elementary, middle, and high schools that matched the establishment stage principal profile of (a) five or more years' experience, (b) currently leading a campus with 300 students or more, (c) each contributing to a non-homogeneous sample of principals, (d) four elementary, four middle school and four high schools (e) representing low SES and high SES schools, and (f) demonstrating a willingness to discuss their experiences. The principals are introduced by their pseudonym identities according to school level (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Profiles of Principal Participants*

Name	School Level	Race and Ethnicity	Certification Program	Micropolitics Included in Principal Training	Number of Students	Percent Range of Students of Color
Melva	Elem.	White/Hispanic	2-year Masters	Some	500-600	80%-90%
Brenda	Elem.	White/Caucasian	2-year Masters	None	900-1000	10%-20%
Ricky	Elem.	White/Hispanic	2-year Masters	None	300-400	60%-70%
Mercedes	Elem.	Black/African-American	Private University	None	600-700	80%-90%
Able	Middle	White/Hispanic	2-year Masters	None	600-700	80%-90%
Nancy	Middle	White/Caucasian	2-year Masters	None	1200-1300	20%-30%
Greg	Middle	White/Caucasian	2-year Masters	None	1100-1200	30%-40%
Diego	Middle	White/Hispanic	2-year Masters	None	1000-1100	50%-60%
Tina	High	White/Caucasian	2-year Masters	None	2200-2300	40%-50%
Sierra	High	Black/African-American	2-year Masters	None	700-800	60%-70%
Jack	High	White/Hispanic	2-year Masters	None	1200-1300	80%-90%
Steve	High	White/Caucasian	2-year Masters	None	1700-1800	30%-40%

Elementary Principals

Elementary principal one. Melva leads an elementary school with a high number of low SES students and an overall enrollment of between 500 and 600 students. Melva is Hispanic, and she spent eight years of her career as a teacher, after which she served as an assistant principal for three years. Melva earned her principal certificate by attending a two-year master's program that did reference a level of politics in a law class. As principal, Melva has served her current campus for six years. Melva shared that her first three years as principal was marked by significant staff resistance to change and

consistent district support. Upon arriving at Melva's school for the interview, office staff were hard at work greeting and processing visitors through security clearance systems. Melva greeted me and led me to a space for her interview. Hispanic students make up more than 75% of the school population. The school is known for having a strong culture of cooperation and respect. The school offers a range of programs to include athletics and arts programs and hosts a school-based positive youth development program as one of its signature school programs.

Elementary principal two. Across the city, Brenda is the principal of a high SES school of between 900 and 1000 students. Brenda is White, and she became a principal after successfully completing a two-year master's program that did not examine school micropolitics within its curriculum. Brenda has been principal of her school for more than 5 years. Brenda shared micropolitical strategies used both during her first school principal experience and during her current principal tenure that will be examined for comparison. When I arrived at the school to interview Brenda, I noticed numerous parents eating lunch with their children, and many more parents volunteering in the school office. After a short time, I was directed to Brenda's office for her interview. Brenda's school population is White. Brenda's school offers numerous programs to include a student council and a school-based positive youth development program as one of its signature programs.

Elementary principal three. The researcher appreciated the transparency shared by Ricky, the principal of an elementary school populated by a moderate number of low SES students and a total enrollment of between 300 and 400 students. Ricky gave explicit details about effective and ineffective techniques associated with implementing a

new required district program at the school. Ricky was busy talking with district administrators when I arrived—a clear illustration of macropolitical negotiation. Ricky is Hispanic and has been the principal of his school for more than six years. Ricky was a teacher for six years and earned his principal certificate from a two-year master's program that did not discuss school micropolitics as a focus area. Ricky shared his experiences in enacting two change model approaches at his school—one ineffective that resulted in struggling school climate, and one effective resulting positive and effective change. Ricky's school population is Hispanic, followed by a White population. Ricky's school draws families from across the city for its dual language program. The school is also known for its strong parent and community involvement.

Elementary principal four. Mercedes is African-American. She earned her administrative credential from a private university that did not highlight school micropolitics, as area of focus. Mercedes taught for five years during her career and has served as principal for the last seven years. Mercedes's school enrollment is situated between 600 and 700 students—a majority of those students are Hispanic. During the interview, Mercedes spoke of the lessons learned in introducing a new program and new systems to the school. Mercedes also outlined considerations leading to the timing of any change and when to consider halting the change process. Mercedes's school hosts numerous programs to include Dual Language and a choir program. The school has a total enrollment of more than 500 students; most students coming from low SES families. Mercedes was talking with several teachers in the hallway just outside of her office as she signaled me to join her for the interview.

Middle School Principals

Middle school principal one. Abel is a Hispanic principal of a school with an enrollment of between 600 and 700 students. The school has a high number of low SES students in attendance. When I arrived at the school for the interview, it was easy to see the warm and positive relationship that Abel has with students at the school. Previously, Abel was a teacher for five years and an assistant principal for two years. Abel commented that his two-year master's program did not cover school micropolitics. When I sat with Abel for the interview, his descriptions of how he worked with staff appeared to be in the same vein as his approach to working with students. He shared an intricate and detailed approach for negotiating micropolitical challenges emanating from staff conflict or concerns. Hispanic students are the majority among students at the school. The school features an early college prep and a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) program.

Middle school principal two. Greg has been the principal of a middle school for more than five years. Greg is White, and he spoke of his experiences being charged by the school district to make numerous changes at the school that was met by staff resistance. When I stopped in to see Greg to see if he would consider being a part of this study, he invited me to sit with him at that moment for the interview, and thus the interview began. White and Hispanic students compose the largest student populations among a total enrollment of between 1100 and 1200 students. A moderate population of students from low SES families complete the student population. School-based positive youth development programs are available at the school.

Middle school principal three. Nancy is a principal of a middle school with an enrollment of between 1,200 and 1,300 students. Nancy was a teacher for eight years

before attending a two-year master's program, after which she ascended to the position of assistant principal for eight years, before becoming a school principal. Nancy reported that her master's program did not focus on school micropolitics and spoke about how she had to learn how to negotiate micropolitics over time—detailing strategies for managing school micropolitics through techniques and practices that affected student, staff, parents and community members. Nancy also emphasized the importance of knowing when to stop a change process, before the toll on the school staff exceeds the benefit for expedited change. White and Hispanic students compose the majority of student enrolled with moderate number of students from low SES families included in the school's enrollment. Nancy's school has developed a school-based positive youth development program.

Middle school principal four. Diego has been principal of his school for the last six years, and during that time, has shown himself to be a master of school micropolitics. Although his strategies and techniques were not a focus in his master's program in educational administration, through trial and error, Diego has devised detailed strategies that are frequently effective in resolving micropolitical challenges. Diego is Hispanic, and the middle school that he leads has an enrollment of between 1,000 and 1,100 students. The school features a school-based positive youth development program, among others. White and Hispanic students compose the majority population at this prominent urban middle school. A moderate number student from low SES families attend the school. When I arrived at the school for the interview, the front office bustled with activity as Diego invited me into his office.

High School Principals

High school principal one. Tina has been a high school principal for more than 5 years. Tina discusses the importance and benefits of developing and maintaining strong relationships with school board members, key community members, alumni, parents, all staff and students. Tina also shared a method of testing her ideas for changes or improvements with these groups so that she may reflect on feedback before deciding to enact the change—ordinarily in its newly developed form, as per feedback considerations not initially conceived. Tina is White, and she has experience as teacher. She attended a two-year master’s program before serving as an assistant principal for more than five years, and then as a principal for more than seven years. Tina’s high school enrollment is composed of White and Hispanic students, and the school enrollment is situated between 2,200 and 2,300 students. A moderate number of these students are from low SES families. The school hosts a STEM program, to include extra-curricular programs such as band, choir and football.

High school principal two. Sierra has been a school principal for more than 12 years. Sierra’s two-year master’s program in educational administration did not include a focus on school micropolitics. Sierra did, however, outline that her previous school district developed a template in which an existing principal detailed explicit information about the all facets of the school to include profiles of staff members. Sierra spoke at length about the critical nature of addressing micropolitical challenges. Sierra also detailed strategies related to community and alumni contributions to the school’s agenda. Hispanic and African-American student enrollments constitute the majority populations of between 700 and 800 students at Sierra’s high school. A majority of students are from

low SES families. STEM and a school-based positive youth development programs are featured at the high school that Sierra leads.

High school principal three. Jack is White, and he is the principal of a school with an enrollment of between 1,200 and 1,300 students, the majority of whom are Hispanic. Most of the students are from low SES families. Jack has been principal of the school for more than five years. He spoke at length on his experiences working with community members in a manner that led to the community affecting school goals and practices. Jack also outlined how his mentors helped him to understand more about how to negotiate politics at the district office. Jack's school features STEM and a school-based positive youth development programs to include extra-curricular programs such as band, choir and football.

High school principal four. Steve's high school has an enrollment of between 1,700 and 1,800 students with White and Hispanic students composing the largest demographic. A moderate number of students are from low SES families. Steve outlined the careful negotiation between macropolitics at the legislative or district level, and its connection to micropolitics on the school campus. Steve is White, and served as a teacher for 17 years, an assistant principal for seven years and a principal for more than 14 years. He received his principal certification by attending a two-year master's program. When I arrived at the school for the interview, I had the good luck to overhear Steve negotiating a micropolitical issue with a staff member. Steve concluded his meeting with the staff member taking some time to reflect on the discussion—a technique that will be explored further, later in the finding sections. Steve's school features STEM and a school-based

positive youth development programs on the campus. The school also features fine arts programs, and a football and band program.

Affirmation of School Micropolitics on Day One

Melva, Diego and Brenda each reported that school micropolitics begins for new principals as soon as the job begins. All school principals in this study identified micropolitical challenges that required time, attention and resolution. Participants shared stories that illuminated various common sources of micropolitical challenge and collectively provided a model for negotiating and resolving micropolitical challenges, as will be illustrated later in this chapter. New principals are often compared to the last principal by staff, students, parents, central office staff and the wider community. Staff are the first to observe the new principal's every word and gesture to deduct what the new principal will do differently from the last, what the new staff expectations may be, and how they might benefit from participating in political dynamics. Diego described, "New principals are always dealing with the shadow of the one that left. And staff will always compare the new person to the previous person in terms of their vision and how things are going to be." On the topic of the immediacy of micropolitics for new principals, Greg recalled, "Since the school was so loyal to the last principal, you oust the principal overnight, bring in me, who no one knows, and I have a completely new plan, you don't get a warm and fuzzy reception. It was a pretty volatile year. Lots of issues." Although a primary focus in this study, school micropolitics can begin for a new principal as soon as the person is named principal.

Principals will often be met by some level of resistance or pushback by a segment of the staff. The first few weeks of becoming a principal can be marked by resistance.

Melva stated: There was pushback in the form of a repeating statement that well, we have been doing it like this for so long. So, there was that like a wall was built you know, as I wanted to move forward in changing some areas that needed to be changed, again based on data.

Staff resistance can be seen as a test for the new principal. Staff may resist a principal's idea or request for change and then observe the principal's reaction to begin to determine the extent that staff will be able to control the principal.

Sources of School Micropolitical Challenges

All participants in this study identified that micropolitical challenges are likely to emerge when the school is amid making changes to curriculum, systems, or protocols. Primary sources for micropolitical discord in schools includes mandated changes and changes sought by the community members. Mandated changes will emanate from macropolitical sources such as the school district, the Texas Education Agency, or from the legislature. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) stated that macropolitics are external interest groups outside of the school that can affect outcomes within the school. Webb (2008) explains that macropolitics can trigger micropolitics, often as a result of school reform or changes in accountability standards. However, micropolitics refers to both conflictive processes and co-operative processes (Blase & Blase, 2014; Eilertsen, Gustafson, & Salo, 2008; Townsend, 1990). Therefore, micropolitics in schools can embody both constructive or productive political outcomes and conflict emerging from micropolitics. Yet, amidst school reform, tensions can escalate as staff members work to secure their interests or protect their place in the organization. Although knowing the sources of micropolitical challenges may be valuable information for aspiring principals,

three participants in this study explain that micropolitical challenges can emerge from anywhere, even from an action or decision that may have seemed completely innocent or logical in its inception.

Ricky: You have to realize that you have to consider what other people are thinking, and it could be anything from the lunch schedules, talking with downtown or even your pet policy; what pets can be on the school grounds, or it could be parking. It could be anything or your teachers, or how you handle supplies, why it is that you limit copies, things that seem very simple but to the teachers are big, big, big. And if you listen to what they're saying, you're more apt to help establish routines, procedures that benefit everybody.

Principals must expect that micropolitical challenges can emerge at any time, and in accordance with any decision, statement or change. Diego's story about preparing for an end of the year staff social demonstrated that micropolitical challenges come from unpredictable sources. Diego described that a faction of the staff believed that the social should include alcoholic beverages. Another group of staff members believed their children should attend, and therefore that the social should be void of alcohol. Diego explained that "these two camps were exchanging emails and people's feelings were getting hurt." Principals are responsible to halt activities that may harm school culture and working relations between staff. Accordingly, Diego asked that the emails stop and then he met with a few members from each group to find a compromise. The final agreement specified that the first-half of the social would include children and no alcohol consumption, followed by the half that would exclude children and include alcohol. Diego added, "Those are the weird challenges that principals get once in a while where

you're just like seriously, we're arguing about this? Come on guys.” Since sources of micropolitical challenges appear as unpredictable and may emanate from ambiguous circumstances, monitoring for micropolitical challenges in all aspects of school operations, and developing the knowledge and skills for negotiating these challenges becomes essential for principals.

Although not specific to a research question in this study, five participants stated that the first three to five years of being a principal was marked by an apex of micropolitical challenges. Fuller, Orr and Young (2008) suggested that principal retention is important for a host of reasons such as a correlation between principal turnover and teacher turnover and because school reform efforts depend on strong and trusting relationships that requires a five-year period to develop. Although micropolitical challenges may subside in time, micropolitical challenges appear as a constant. Success in micropolitical negotiation will help to ensure attainment of the establishment stage as a principal. Oplatka (2012) described this stage as being characterized by competence and confidence within the managerial role. The following presentation of perspectives, strategies or techniques enfolded within the following four themes, may serve to increase success in negotiating micropolitical challenges, and thereby may expedite attainment of the establishment stage for novice principals.

Theme 1: Growing a Reputation as a Leader

The following themes describe how an alignment in the school's vision and culture, and a consistent focus on benefit for students, may serve to help to define the principal's reputation. The reputation a leader or principal aspires to build for themselves is not so different from developing goals or an action plan for a school. The development

of a leader's reputation, the school action plan and goals, campus culture and the school vision warrant a strong level of alignment to help avoid misperceptions about the core vision of the school. Clarity and alignment in these areas provides principals with a forum for managing the constructive and productive aspects of school micropolitics, as staff and the community members understand in advance the core beliefs, aligned standards and plans of the school. Six out of the twelve participant drew a strong correlation between the frequency and magnitude of micropolitical challenges on a school campus, and the leader's reputation—in part, as evidence in the campus culture and vision. Eight participants in this study described a student-centered reputation of integrity, as the target in reputation building.

Growing a Reputation as a Leader

Based on the data from this study, the following elements will be examined by focusing on (a) building a body of evidence toward a reputation through every conversation, action or decision (b) demonstrating transparency about core beliefs or non-negotiables, (c) training assistant principals and leadership team members so that their words and actions mirror the principals reputation and ambition, as these leadership members will be seen as an extension of the school principal. As Steve looked back on his career of more than a decade as a high school principal and discussed the primary goals of principals, Steve stated:

I think that the goal of any principal is to have to establish a reputation or trust in you, void of any personal agenda. I'm not trying to do things that give me accolades. I'm just trying to run a good school, make it a loving environment for the kids and support the teachers, hire good teachers and let them do their job.

The reputation of a principal is developed over time, and it is shaped in part, by every action, conversation, and decision. Diego summarized that “from a series of successful leadership encounters, you’re actually growing your reputation as a leader.” Decisions made at any point along the tenure of the principal’s career will give new definition—positive or negative to the principal’s reputation.

Giving all staff members an equal voice and a sense of being heard was described as essential toward building a reputation of integrity. In describing his experience in opening a new school, Abel recounted, “It was organic. I mean it wasn’t anything like a tug of war. It was giving everybody an equal voice. We sat at round tables and divided into grade levels.” Principals must monitor team work and work styles to help ensure that all staff feel safe to contribute ideas, so that all unique contributions can extend toward overarching school goals.

In those instances when the principal must make a defining decision on an issue, explaining the rationale for the change or decision in a transparent manner is essential for reputation building, as it eliminates a host of assumptions for the leader’s decision. Abel stated, “When you discover that there are political challenges with a group of teachers or a teacher that isn’t happy with something, sometimes it’s because their perception is inaccurate. They’re drawing conclusions without knowing the truth or knowing the full story.” Providing opportunities for open discussion with staff members can provide a venue for clarifying viewpoints, information and ambition.

Nancy: Communication is the number one thing. I didn’t know that was part of it; just telling them why you made the change. I meet with student council once a month. There are a couple of procedures I’ve stopped at the school, but I didn’t

ever tell the kids why. When I told the why, they responded, oh well that makes sense why you did that. When I make a change, I tell the staff but also tell the kids the reason behind it. They understand the whole view of it all.

Providing a rationale for a decision to teachers, students and community members serves to clarify the reason for the decision. This practice is frequently referred to as transparency.

Six participants identified training and monitoring assistant principals as a critical practice because actions taken by assistant principals will reflect on the principal.

Mercedes explained, “Coaching of assistant principals and curriculum coaches is really the area where I have to check and be aware of how their relationships with teachers are going because sometimes, those relationships can become an issue.” Several principals expressed regret in not providing sufficient training or monitoring of assistant principals and reported resulting diminishment in school climate, and potential damage to the principal’s reputation. Diego shared that in the previous year, two new assistant principals joined his team. Some staff reported that a staff member in charge of school-wide testing was rude and used unprofessional language. Diego added that one of the new assistant principals was assigned to address the issue and this resulted in the staff member responsible for testing coming to him in tears, explaining that she was very hurt to have been removed from testing responsibility.

Diego recalled: She was ready to put in her transfer paperwork to go to another school because she felt like this was her family but that she felt that we really hurt her. That is the kind of stuff you wish you could turn the clock back on, but you realize, okay I’ve got to fix it now.

Since assistant principals and members of the leadership team represent the principal, principals must train and monitor these individuals to ensure that they understand the principal's core beliefs, expected standards, and the vision for the school. An unintended message or action communicated to community members, parents and students by leadership team members is likely to cause unnecessary confusion and potentially harm the principal's efforts to develop a student-centered reputation of integrity as well as the school's reputation.

The Lens: Kids First

Principals make decisions each week pertaining to school operations, budget, and resource allocation (including time). Eight participants stated that thinking through how students will be impacted by any decision is critical for school leaders. Getting to know each student by name was characterized as an advisable endeavor for principals to undertake, as it demonstrates genuine caring and accountability to the students. This was outlined as an admission for the principal and the leadership team on the campus. When principals know the students in a school, and are cognizant of student perception and ambitions, principal can make judgements or decisions that are student-centered.

Diego explained: I talk to my assistant principals all the time to remind them that any decision we're making has to be in the best interest of kids, period. Whether it was good for this group of adults or that group of adults, it didn't matter. It had to be good for kids. If it wasn't good for kids, then we weren't going to do it that way. As staff becomes cognizant of how you make decisions, they will begin to emulate your thinking. You start to lead them in a way that is less about your leadership and more about what's right for kids.

From a macropolitical or micropolitical perspective, basing decisions on student benefit provides what many would consider to be a full proof bases for any decision. Even when the principal's decision is based on how students are impacted, it remains possible that people may not ever agree with the decision. Micropolitics aside, making decisions as a school principal that center on benefitting students exemplifies a moral standard and serves to preserve the principal's student-centered reputation of integrity.

School Culture Intersects a Principal's Reputation

School culture is reflective of values and core beliefs held by the principal. Barth (1990) defined school culture as:

a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization. It is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act. (p. 7)

Alignment between school culture and a principal's reputation is crucial as it avoids a potential for perceived hypocrisy. School culture was a focus area for ten participants, as they discussed their experiences with school micropolitics. Sierra characterized her first few years as principal as a time for, "[U]nderstanding what the rituals are and then build on their customs, and what people value here." Building upon school traditions or customs provides a venue for demonstrating respect for customs, while transforming customs toward new goals.

Describing the school culture to potential hires during interviews establishes expected standards—allowing the interviewee to decide if the school's culture resonates with their own educational philosophy. Mercedes stated, "I think from the beginning we

have agreements and expectations. When my team interviews prospective teachers, we describe the committee of teachers, staff expectations and the culture of the school that we have worked so hard to build.” Emphasis on school culture and expectations as an interview committee also serves to remind school staff of school standards and ambitions. Mercedes added that if a new teacher finds that meeting the expectations and vision of the school culture and expectations is too difficult, either the resistance fades quickly, or they leave after the first year.

Diego explained: When everybody’s on the same compass, then there’s not a whole lot of dissension in the ranks because you can always reference the compass direction and say, wait a minute, let’s remember to see it through our compass lens and that makes the conversations easier.

A common understanding of school culture among teachers and staff helps to define purpose, ambitions, and provides a lens for considering any new campus endeavors.

Principals want to be perceived as accessible to their staff and community members. The term open-door policy is a common leadership strategy. All principals in this study spoke of their ambition to remain accessible to staff. Tina described appropriating specific hours each week for one-on-one conversations with staff members coupled with posted hours for communication sessions during her first year as a high school principal. Tina explained that her ambition was to hear all staff perspectives. Tina stated, “I offered this to every staff member, including custodians, cafeteria employees and teachers. Everybody could have a one-on-one and we had great conversations. People shared everything from their passions to personal medical things with me.” By way of contrast, Jack felt that he had a mix of people who would either

come to see him to discuss an issue, and those who would not. Jack explained, “I have the people that are close to me who tell me stuff that’s going on, and I do have people who still are afraid to walk through that door. So, I’ve got to change something. It is a growth opportunity.” Growth opportunities for reputation building remain a constant target throughout the principal’s tenure, in part because new students will continue to flow into the school year, as one class leaves, bringing new parents into the community circle. Benefits of being accessible to staff include the ability to monitor school culture, given proximity to general school operations, and staff and student climate. Accessibility however, without the development and maintenance of a trusting relationship will not garner comprehensive information for the principal, as information may be abbreviated or withheld in light of a lack of trust or a climate of fear.

Diego: I think if you’re not establishing those relationships or you’re not leading with integrity, you can’t be trusted, or if you tend to be spiteful, you won’t get important information. It will blindside you because people will be afraid to come to talk to you because they can’t trust you.

Trust is developed and manicured over time by principals. “First and foremost, for principals to earn the trust of their teachers, they must demonstrate genuine caring for teachers, students, and parents alike” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014, p. 69). Walker et al., (2011) described that school leaders must realize the fragility of trust in order to enhance their leadership practice. Every conversation, decision, and action combined will determine the extent to which trust between the principal and staff can grow, thereby further defining the principal’s reputation.

School Vision Intersects a Principal's Reputation

Like school culture, the school's vision aligns with the principal's reputation. Whitaker and Monte (1994) described school vision as a manifestation of the school's values and goals. School vision is also thought to be reflected in the school's campus improvement plan and school budget. Eight participants correlated school vision with school micropolitics. Steve stated, "It is difficult to be prepared for all the things that are going to come to you and the decisions you're going to have to make. So, you want have a core set of beliefs." A principal must be able to continually express their core beliefs or non-negotiable expectations for staff, community members or board members.

Although not referenced by all participants, discussion on the development of school vision resulted in a dichotomy of perspectives—school vision developed by the principal as compared with school vision developed by the collective staff, and or community members. Tina and Able for instance, described that the vision was by their design, but staff shared in conceiving how the vision would be achieved.

Tina: I think that's the key to working through politics is to tend to throw out an idea, get a little feedback, then throw out another idea and get a little more feedback. And it just works itself out over time, and I think then more people are contributing. It's a more authentic process. The vision might have been mine, but the process of getting there becomes more authentic and engaging.

Principals will often conceive much of the school vision, however participants in this study recommended including the staff in its development as well as the associated action plan. Staff involvement in the design is essential to realizing the vision's full potential.

Diego: You can talk about having a vision but if you can't deliver the vision, then your vision is a dream, and you are just floundering. I like to think of a vision as something we're all working towards but that we never really reach as it is constantly evolving, but we always know what it looks like.

Alignment of school culture, school vision, and a principal's core beliefs must complement each other so that all staff and school utility can be synchronized and unified toward achievement. As the school vision and school culture continue to evolve, the principal's reputation can remain centered as a student-centered reputation of integrity through clear and consistent discussion and messaging related to the school vision, as embodied by school culture.

Theme 2: Negotiating Macropolitics

This theme will demonstrate how macropolitics occurring outside of the school such as at the legislative, district, or community levels can have a direct effect on the emergence of school micropolitical challenges for the principal. The principal's participation at the macropolitical level, although limited in some cases, can at times succeed in reducing required changes that would create school micropolitical challenges. According to eight principals in this study, community members have been shown to successfully influence the district office in some cases, resulting in a district required school change. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014) pointed to a correlation between a school's efforts to provide opportunities for the community to participate in school decision-making and the extent which a community can support the school when needed. The principals in this study referenced macropolitics that led to school micropolitical

challenges during the process of implementing a plan to meet the mandated requirements with school staff.

The researcher has deemed the transaction from macropolitical mandates to micropolitical challenges as a macro-micro bridge. Principals in this study reported that mandated changes have required schools to host new school programs, reorganize the campus theme, organizational plan, and extend the school day. Nine principals in this study reported that micropolitical challenges such as staff insubordination, confronting the principal in a coalition in a staff meeting, expressing frustration with other staff and the principal, and transferring to another school or out of the school district have resulted from macropolitical mandated requirement. The following provides perspective and a strategy related to negotiating macropolitics, when strategy or negotiation are possible.

The Macro-Micro Bridge Leads to Two Roads

Mandated change from macropolitical sources has some notable distinctions. Some of the primary distinctions are that mandates from the legislature are legal requirements, whereas district initiatives and community member expectations may remain open to variance in the expectation or the timeline for the change—a road to complete legal compliance, as opposed to a road where variance may be possible. Five participants in this study revealed that common sources of micropolitical challenges are triggered by required changes for the school that are imposed by the school district or the legislature.

Macro-Micro Bridge to the Road Formulated by Law

Changes for schools that are mandated by the legislature carry little or no variance for requests such as an extension for implementation of the mandated change. Variance

is sometimes achieved by the school district but since changes mandated by the legislature are in the form of law, the changes are required until such a time that the law is amended or discontinued. Malen (2006) contended that principals are often caught in a vortex of opposing forces such as legislative mandates, new district initiatives, teacher and student expectations, community member demands and the principal's own core beliefs. When the mandated changes transform themselves into directives for the principal from the school district, the assembly of the macro-micro bridge is consolidated. As the principal stands before the teaching staff to announce the changes and how these will affect school staff, school micropolitics blooms.

Steve explained, "A lot of the challenges honestly emerge from the legislature which mandates the district to make a change." Two participants in this study asserted that in many cases, the mandated changes are shortsighted, relative to benefits for students, or the implications for the school staff. In the scenario shared by Steve, the mandated change came during his first year as principal and resulted in teacher equity work issues that would result in little or no conceivable benefit for students. Staff members most affected by the new requirements challenged Steve on these issues during a full staff meeting in the school library. The teachers pledged refusal to comply with the new requirements. Steve reported that he was able to compose a statement characterizing that all staff were working very hard, and that this requirement fell into the other duties as assigned contract clause. Days later, according to Steve, the teacher who was most vocal in the staff meeting came to Steve to apologize and the staff climate soon returned to its traditional operating status. Malen (2006) described how teachers have been shown to use strategies such as sabotage, passive resistance or confronting the principal in a coalition

of teacher force. This scenario illustrates the dynamics that can emerge, resultant from legislative mandates, and provides some sense of the principal's role in negotiating the implementation of such mandates.

Macro-Micro Bridge to the School District Road

Changes that emanate from the school district may be forged in policy or often as an expectation communicated at a principals meeting. Since district initiatives and expectations are not forged in law, it is sometimes possible to find a means for variance or exception, especially in instances where the expected change appears to work against current school progress or school culture. Ricky noted that when implementing a new district required language program, staff was so resistant to the change that any chance of meeting the district timeline vanished during the change process. When Ricky met with his supervisor during his mid-year appraisal conference, Ricky reported that the topic of implementing the new language program was raised.

Ricky: [T]he supervisor asked, so where are you with our plan? How far have your teachers come? And I said well not as far as you would like me to be and the supervisor asked why. And so I took the plan the staff and I had laid out and the supervisor said, oh that's really interesting. Well, you do the relational thing and all that. It's okay, you do whatever you need to do with your teachers because that's the way you guys run things. So as long as your scores are good.

While variance relative to district initiatives are a possibility, the principal's relationship with the district office and the supervisor may also play a role in variance attainment.

Three participants in this study revealed their belief that protecting teachers from

unnecessary changes that come from macropolitical sources was a part of their responsibility, and correlates to their reputation on the campus as a leader.

Steve: [I] make it a point and I feel it's a part reputation with the teachers, that I'm not going to support any unnecessary mandates or requirements. I will say that my job is to protect you as much as I can from things coming down, from central office to the campus so that you can do your jobs and not have to do certain additional things. However, there are sometimes when we have to comply. When that happens, our goal is to get together and figure out how we can do it in the least invasive way and still meet the requirements.

Seeking variance to mandated changes that do not align with the vision of the school or the ambitions of the community members may be sought through positive relationships. As a point of clarification, no participant in this study recommended principal insubordination in response to mandated or required changes. Jack explained, "The longer you stay on a campus and the longer you've been with a district, it is true the more people tend to trust that you're doing the right thing, the less they mess with you." Strong trusting relationships with district office personnel can be built over time. All participants stressed the importance of strong relationships with the district office and with supervisors.

Community members can sometimes play a role in seeking variance to district requirements. Jack recounted a scenario during his first year as principal, when his school was being required by the district to make several changes, one of which included extending each school day. Jack reports that the required change did not sit well with the

staff or the community members, which was composed of parents and school stakeholders.

Jack stated: So, in the end, we ended up having a community stakeholders meeting. The community came out and made their presence and their lack of support for the required changes known. It was the last time we ever heard about extended learning time.

Jack's story not only demonstrates how variance can sometimes be found in mandated district requirements but also illustrates that a strong relationship with the community members, even in its early stages can bare extraordinary benefits. Half of the participants in this study suggested that from their inception, change requirements that come from macropolitical sources are often disconnected from an articulated understanding of how students will benefit or what the potential negative implications may be for the school staff.

Community Members

Khalifa (2012) posited that the community may include the people in local residence, markets, churches, lodges, schools and other neighborhood settings.

Community members constitute a potential source for micropolitical challenge on the campus as they may threaten to go to the district office if the principal will not concede to their demands. Duncan (2012) recommended scheduling time with individuals and stakeholder groups to demonstrate validation of their concerns and ideas, the practice of listening to understand and to respect culture and community, as a means for growing elements of trust. According to participants in this study, community members have approached district offices to pursue achieving their agendas. Ten out of twelve

participants cited community members as an entity that required regular communication and attention. A principal will want to determine how they will orient themselves with critical community members. Tina stated: “So, in the early stages, I think it is important for a principal to understand who in the community has established relationships with school board members, central office, key players and current staff on your campus.” As macropolitics has a direct effect on school micropolitics, building strong relationships with those individuals that have political influence with the school board, community members or the district office is critical, even as having a strong connection with all parents and community stakeholders is essential. Sierra added that based on her observations, “there are some people in the community that feel like they have an entitlement on the campus ... not necessarily the right thing, but they feel like they have the entitlement to press for certain things to happen.” When principals orient themselves to open communication with influential community members, this may alleviate community members going directly to the school board.

Principals should strive to have a variety of methods for staying abreast of issues in the community, and concerns community members may have with the school. One model for staying connected to community members was discussed by Tina, who formed a principal support group. The support group was composed of parents from each of the neighborhoods in the school attendance zone. Tina described that, “The primary goals of the principal support group was for them to get to know me and for them to share any discussions with me that were taking place in the neighborhoods.” A principal support group can also provide the principal a platform for testing ideas, before making any

sweeping school changes. Devising methods for principals to develop and maintain close ties with vital community members is advisable.

The PTA

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is an important entity that often maintains active association with the district office, vocal community members and other school-oriented organizations. Some schools have groups that provide the same function as a PTA but have a different title or acronym. Principals should seek to develop strong and meaningful relationships with PTA members. These relationships will require frequent conversations to ensure communication. The PTA can serve to protect and inform the principal of potential threats or emerging issues. Ricky shared a story about a teacher that went to a PTA meeting with a few of her colleagues to raise concerns about an assistant principal. Ricky reported that the PTA halted the teacher's monologues abruptly and that he was immediately contacted by the PTA president about the incident. Ricky said, "The teacher's attempt to take the issue to the PTA backfired when the PTA asked the teachers to leave, recommending that they see me instead." The principal's standing with community members and PTA will need to be able to stand the test of objection.

Change in schools is inevitable. Developing strong relationships and forums for frequent communication with critical stakeholders within the community and at the district office may serve to provide the principal with support and/or variance to expectations outside the school vision of benefits for students. When change is certain, whether mandated by law, or required by the school district, or due to staff-initiated change, a method or protocol for negotiating change can provide a predicable formula or procedure that the principal and the school staff can rely to minimize uncertainty and

unnecessary anxiety. The following theme will reveal a change protocol comprised by study participants. The theme will also illuminate leadership strategy and perspectives for negotiating collaborative and mandated change.

Theme 3: Enacting Change in Schools Micropolitics

When needed change is conceived by the school staff or required from outside the school, the establishment of a change protocol can offer the principal's staff a level of predictability, resultant reduced anxiety, and therefore reduced micropolitical challenges. This theme will provide leadership perspectives and strategies for negotiating micropolitics associated with change in schools. The following theme will also reveal two change protocols comprised by study participants, coupled with leadership perspective and strategies for negotiating micropolitics amid school change.

School-Initiated Change

All principals in the study determined a correlation between the perpetual change in schools and micropolitical challenges. During the planning or implementation stage for change, staff conflict may emerge. Ten principals in this study identified open discussion and exercise of good listening skills as essential, during the change process. Four participants in the study emphasized the importance of taking notes during these discussions as a tool for reflection, and to project validation and objectivity.

Abel: I've always felt it's necessary for a leader to be receptive to what staff want because sometimes that's where the disconnect starts between the administrator and teachers. To us, it's practical to say you're just going to do this and spend 90 minutes in the classroom and for the teachers well yeah, it's easier said than done.

Let's talk about those 90 minutes. It's having those very honest, organic conversations of what is really doable and being able to reflect on it and listen. Encouraging open and honest conversation regarding change with all stakeholders about the change process and the associated demands helps to define issues and viable solutions. School-initiated change can be beneficial for students and strengthen the school culture. Strategic planning, staging staff discussions using school data or associated articles can instill a greater propensity for collaborative change. Open discussion with staff in larger and smaller strategic groups regarding change opens communication and heightens understanding for all stakeholders, leading to a stronger and more positive student-centered process for change.

Principal-Initiated Change

In instances where the change is introduced by the principal, consideration of the timing and manner for communicating the change becomes vital to how the message will be received by the teaching staff. For instance, if staff are in the midst of completing numerous project deadlines, the principal may want to consider reviewing the school calendar to plot a strategic time for introducing the change.

Mercedes: And timing is everything. I think that's something that principals miss. When you're trying to analyze the situation. Sometimes it's just other initiatives that cause teachers to already be stressed. In these cases, it's not really the political challenge it appears to be. Sometimes it's that emotionally and mentally they're not ready for it. I have learned with experience that timing is key. Thinking through to the best time to have a discussion with the teaching staff about change will improve implementation outcomes and preserve school climate. Perspective

from seven out of 12 participants in this study indicated that principals must also be aware of when to stop principal-initiated change. Mercedes explained, “I’ll tell my assistant principals, sometimes you have just to get to the point where you cut your losses and you realize that this is as far as I’m going to get with this situation.”

Principals must monitor staff and school climate to assess the balance of desired benefit from scheduled change plans and growing discontent among school staff.

Nancy: I think back to a close friend of mine, she got backwards with her staff during her second or third year as principal and she got removed. What I wanted to tell her was to back down. Just back down. Unless a child is being hurt or damaged, whatever it is the staff is wanting, back down a little bit and compromise on this stuff.

Removal of principals due to mishandling of school micropolitics continues in schools. The ability to continually assess staff morale and school culture informs the principal of when to slow, halt or suspend a change initiative.

Principals may encounter philosophical differences related to practice among staff members, such as grading. Diego described a change protocol intended for the facilitation of a lengthy staff discussion on a grading practice that he believed had become problematic. Diego depicted a grading practice at this school that caused students to fail courses at unprecedented rates.

Although by district policy, the principal cannot award grades, Diego prepared his assistant principals for a difficult staff discussion intended to evoke change in the grading practice. Diego’s procedural steps for evoking change included:

1. journal article study sessions focused on grading practices

2. reading and discussing the articles in groups with the full staff
3. reviewing related school data
4. concluding by a strong principal recommendation to the staff to use an alternate grading practice.

Preparation for a full staff discussion intended to elicit change requires forethought and preparation, especially when some staff members are entrenched in their beliefs.

Diego: [W]e went through a day of real intense debate with our faculty. There were teachers that were adamant about the use of the current grading system, and there was another group that saw things through my perspective. In the final analysis, 80 percent of the staff made a compromise. And there are still a handful of staff that use the previous grading system. And so that was a really good outcome to some really difficult conversations we had with the whole faculty about our philosophy of grading.

The change protocol described in this scenario may serve as model for consideration when principals are planning a change protocol intended to mediate strongly held beliefs. Novice principals should consider not only the timing of introducing change to their staff but also the timing related to their skill development as discussion facilitators, before endeavoring this type of change protocol.

Phoenix from the Ashes: A Change Protocol

Design of a staff-developed change protocol should be led by the principal, and it should parallel school culture. Ricky described a change scenario experience that did not go well in its early stages. This scenario was instigated by new district curricular requirements intended to respond to anticipated changes in state testing. Ricky lamented

that he started the change by talking to his staff but then stopped all discussion—later informing staff that the change was imminent and to ensure that they meet all related deadlines. Ricky reported that the result of this approach was low staff morale. Ricky explained, “[I] realized morale had plummeted. Staff were telling me they no longer felt good about coming to work, while others notified me that they had started to look for a new job elsewhere.” Stress and anxiety can be heightened not only for the teaching staff but also for the principal, when school culture begins a decline. Ricky reported that as a result, he invited teacher leaders to his office and apologized to them for allowing school climate to suffer resultant of his change approach. After sharing the written district mandate with his leadership team, the group developed a change protocol for moving forward. The change protocol comprised the following steps:

1. the leadership team would share the district mandate in a full staff meeting
2. seek volunteers to attend a training related to the new curricular strategies
3. schedule school-wide training sessions led by staff that attended the training
4. maintain full transparency during the change process
5. include the full staff in planning and implementing the process

Ricky reported that as he and the leadership entered the library for the staff meeting, he could sense discord. Ricky stated, “So we arrived for our faculty meeting and there was a lot of tension. Some teachers wouldn’t even look at me. And, then I said, first I need to apologize to all of you. I should have done a better job at introducing this change.” Four participants in this study suggested that an apology, in some scenarios, can serve to begin restoration of relationships and trust. The reported results of that staff meeting are that numerous teachers volunteered to go to the training. Ricky added, “It brought relief

when they realized it wasn't just me trying to impose all those things on them. I thought this is awesome and then staff morale was a lot better.” Creating a change protocol in advance of enacting change provides an expedient guide for enacting change. The protocol assembled in this scenario may serve as a model for consideration, during the creative process at respective schools.

Change protocols may be as unique as the school itself. Additionally, half of study participants cited transparency related to change and communicating the rationale for decisions during the change process as imperative. Eleven participants in this study recommended inclusion of all staff in the development of change protocol processes. The overarching recommendation for principals is to lead in the development of a change protocol as a means for reducing micropolitical challenges and undue anxiety, so that when school change becomes imminent, the school team can turn to a change protocol.

Making the Ultimate Decision as Principal

Principals will be subject to situations where despite a change protocol and skilled facilitated staff discussion, a consensus cannot be reached. Since the principal works as a designee of the superintendent and as the manager of the school, authority to make final decisions are vested the position of principal. Transparency and a clear explanation of the rationale for the decision, as discussed previously in this study, has been advised by study participants.

When a principal makes a decision that is in alignment with the school vision and school culture and is student-centered and aligns with the principal's core values, the alignment of these constructs may serve as a formidable safeguard for the decision. This point was highlighted by Steve, who when confronted with someone who does not agree

with his decision, claims to respond, “I’m sorry you don’t agree with that, but in my judgement, it is the fair thing to do, and it is in the best interest of the students in this situation.” Keeping students at the forefront of decision-making can create difficulty for an opposing argument. The authority to make a final decision in a school is entrusted to the principal. The exercise of making a final decision on processes or protocols is reserved for veteran and novice principals alike. Prudence and consistency appear as hallmarks in decision making for school principals.

Authority vs. Leadership

Ten participants in this study promoted a collaborative approach to leadership—development of a shared vision developed by all staff. Two participants summarized the distinction between authority and leadership in identical ways.

Diego: [A]uthority and leadership; people intermingle those and they’re very separate things. Authority is, somebody gave me the keys to run the building and said you have the last call on some of these decisions. That’s authority.

Leadership is all about how you build this climate where people are working together for a goal to move the school in a certain direction. And you don’t do that through authority, you do that through leadership. Those are two very different concepts, and I think young principals often confuse those and that’s a big mistake.

Authority was seen by all but two participants as a construct to be used sparingly or only when required when leading school change. As discussed in this theme, the principal’s authority provides decision-making rights above all others on the school campus. The

use of leadership skills however, motivates people to band together to achieve collective goals.

Able: The mistake is to think, well, I become the leader and all of a sudden, it's like god, all knowing, omnipotent and you're trying to tell people what to do versus really working with people. And I think for new principals, the key is recognizing that if they walk into an organization thinking they are the know all end all, they're doomed for failure. They have to walk in there really knowing they're going to continue working with people especially if they're going to expect people to follow.

Although principals are entrusted with authority, use of effective leadership strategies is the preferred method for enacting change and leading school staff.

Scenarios in which principals are charged by the district to make sweeping changes on a school campus that will be void of staff input can be expected to occur less often for novice principals. In these instances, or in instances where the novice principal has compelling support from the district office to enact change, authority most often becomes the primary leverage for control.

Use of Authority

Although most participants in this study advised the use of leadership skills over the use of authority to lead staff, one participant in the study described that he was selected to become a principal of a school where immediate changes were sought by the school district. Greg had previously served as an assistant principal in the district. Greg explained that under pressure from community members, the school district wanted to establish a new themed-academy at the school while increasing academic performance.

The previous principal had been popular with the staff. Staff concern and discontent emerged when they received a letter from Greg two weeks before the school year was to begin outlining new schedules, course offerings and processes, accompanied with the news that he was the new principal.

Greg said: That first year, there were massive staff movements against me. And because I was firm about everything, I let them know that if they didn't like it, they could hit the road. It was my way now and I completely changed the design.

When substantial and expedient change is sought by a school district, authority as a leadership model of leadership skills has been implemented. Greg reported a strong level of support from the district office despite opposition from staff. At the end of a difficult school year, Greg decided to apologize to the staff for his approach. Greg reported that staff morale improved immediately and that over the course of three years, the school's new theme became popular in the neighborhood and the school's new theme was recognized as a quality program. In this scenario, with sustained district support, an authoritative approach to leadership can result in some positive outcomes for a school, even if school climate suffers during transition.

The other principal who reported use of district supported authority during her first three years as principal was Melva. In Melva's circumstance, she reports being met with resistance from numerous staff members as she began to observe systems and protocols that she believed required improvement. Melva reported breaking through the resistance over time by: (a) conducting class observations daily, (b) providing regular verbal and written feedback on all performance criteria, and (c) moving toward the termination of a teacher during her first year as principal. Melva reported maintaining

this regiment throughout her first three years as principal—the time it took to begin to build a trusting and collaborative school climate. During those three years, Melva recalls challenging events for her and some staff members.

Melva: [I] had people here in my office, certain teachers yelling, mad and upset that I was addressing performance issues. It became very personal for them. So now in my sixth year, definitely things have changed. I know because I can address difficult issues with my teachers, and they take it well. We have built a relationship of trust together that helps me to address issues we might face.

In this progression of leadership, authority was implemented for a sustained period of time by successfully garnering district support during this period. Over time, this participant was able to decrease the use of authority and increase leadership skills as a means for building a school culture of trust and collaboration.

Congruences and Differences: Authority and Leadership

All principals in this study reported implementing practices such as providing verbal and written feedback to document performance concerns. Collectively, participants in this study have attained sufficient leadership proficiency in negotiating micropolitics—attaining establishment stage as a principal. Although two principals reported emphasis on the use of authority in leading their schools during their first three years, both principals were successful in developing a school climate with staff that is based on trust and collaboration over time. Both principals understood that they had guidance and support from the district to make specific changes at the schools. Greg understood the level of district support that he was awarded as a result of conversations with supervisors before being appointed principal. By contrast, Melva encountered

significant micropolitical challenges at her school and then sought and successfully garnered sustained district support through to completion of needed changes to school staff and school climate.

Neither Melva nor Greg reported using authority as a primary means to school change, without district support and guidance. The scenario previously disclosed by Nancy about her friend who was terminated by the district as a result of primary use of principal authority coupled with failing to compromise with her staff illuminates what can happen with authority is used, without securing district support in advance.

This collection of scenarios comprises a composite perspective that the use of leadership skills to motivate a school staff to perform in tandem can be successfully balanced with candid staff performance feedback from principals. Novice principals are faced with another macro-micro bridge that also leads to two roads—attainment of the established stage as a principal or removal from the post of principal, all contingent on the novice principal's political skill. As a means for prospective attainment of establishment stage for a novice principal, the ability to resolve micropolitical challenges is vital. Skillful macropolitical negotiation and skills related to resolution of micropolitical challenges are trademarks of the establishment stage principal. The final theme in this chapter will present a participant formulated model for identifying and negotiating micropolitical challenges in schools.

Theme 4: A Logic Model for Micropolitical Resolution

A hallmark of the establishment stage principal is the ability to successfully negotiate micropolitical challenges, and they emerge from ambiguous and sometimes predictable events. The following theme will reveal a model for negotiating

micropolitical challenges derived from participant interviews. Successful negotiation of micropolitical challenges encompasses early detection of any dispute, the competence to successfully intercept the problem, and to defuse it—finding a compromise that is acceptable to all stakeholders. This means that staff may continue to carry out their respective responsibilities in tandem. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) clarified that disputes between a principal and teachers can manifest from any number of topics to include a policy change such as merit pay, curricular disagreements, goals like a proposed change to the school’s mission statement, or a change in student discipline guidelines. Micropolitical challenges can materialize between two staff members, or between two or more groups of staff members, and sometimes between staff members and the principal. Each participant in this study disclosed their own set of procedures for successfully navigating micropolitical challenge. The first step in resolving micropolitical challenges is to detect and recognize the challenge. Detection of a conflict or issue may come from staff, students, parents or even community members.

The Need for Informants

Detecting micropolitical challenges in emergent stages enables the potential of resolving discord before substantial damage can be inflicted upon working relationships and the school climate. All participants disclosed a variety of methods for staying informed of staff contention. Examples included frequent classroom walk-throughs, talking with staff during student passing periods, talking with a variety of staff before and after school, and consistent communication with the leadership team. Mercedes explained, “And so at every teacher planning meeting, I send in instructional coaches. They’re not administrators, and they’re not set up to look like administrators, but they

will come and tell me of any issues.” To encourage that staff will report an issue to the principal, assistant principals and members of a leadership team, a strong level of trust must be developed. Once principals become aware of the potential for the igniting of a micropolitical challenge, they must calculate their next steps. Ten participants in this study recommended that taking the time to gather more information about the potential micropolitical challenge before acting is advisable. This practice provides the principal with as much accurate information about the matter, so that the response can be as effective as possible. Sierra stated, “[T]eachers will come and let me know. Students will come and let me know what’s going on, if I don’t already know it. I always check it out. First, I observe.” All participants stated that once they have what they believe to be sufficient reliable information related to an emerging micropolitical challenge, they apply their own unique set of procedures for successfully navigating micropolitical challenge.

A Logic Model for Negotiating Micropolitical Challenges

The establishment stage principals in this study collectively contributed to the following model for resolving micropolitical challenges. All participants contributed to a model for negotiating micropolitical challenges comprised of 13 procedural steps. The steps are organized under three overarching actions: (1) discuss, (2) reflect, and (3) follow-up. The resultant logic model illustrated in Figure 2 may be considered by principals at all career stages for negotiating micropolitical challenges:

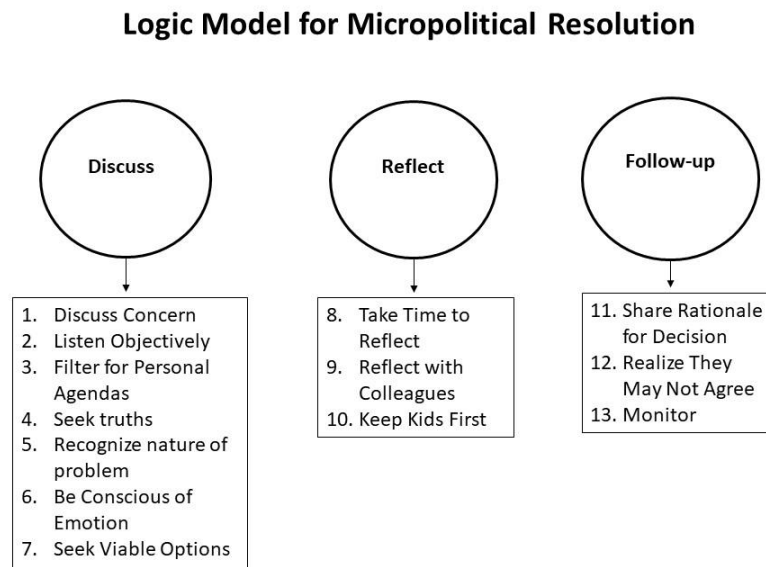


Figure 2. *Logic model for micropolitical resolution.*

Discuss

1. Discuss concerns—Schedule a meeting with or assemble the individuals involved in the matter to discuss the issue;
2. Listen Objectively—Listen without interrupting;
 - If the issues being described may seem trivial, recognize that the issue is critical to the staff;
 - Take notes during the discussion;
3. Filter for Personal Agendas—while listening, attempt to conceive any personal agenda;
4. Seek Grains of Truth—Endeavor to establish and organize known truths embedded in the narratives;

5. Recognize the True Nature of the Problem—Assemble all information as you reflect to distinguish the central issues;
6. Be Conscious of Emotion—During the discussion, regardless of the emotions that may be displayed by others, be conscious of how personal emotion may be displayed and perceived;
7. Seek Viable Options—During follow-up meeting, seek viable options with those involved;

Reflect

8. Take Time to Reflect—Consider suspending any decision as the meeting ends, asking for time to reflect before scheduling a follow-up meeting;
9. Reflect with Trusted Colleagues—During the intercession, consider discussing the matter and possible solutions with trusted colleagues as a means for garnering greater perspective;
10. Kids First—Test resolution against the benefit for students and alignment with school vision and culture before establishing a compromise or final decision;

Follow-up

11. Share the Rationale—If a compromise cannot be achieved between staff members, share the final decision on the matter;
12. They May Not Agree—Be cognizant that people may not agree with the decision. Reiterate that the decision is fair and good for kids, etc.;
13. Monitor—Check in or monitor staff to ensure that a resolution has been attained or that agreements are being honored.

Extending Insights Regarding Selected Model Steps

Discuss Concerns—All participants supported the assembling of those staff involved in the conflict or issue to a neutral location to discuss the issue. Some participants subscribed to scheduling a meeting, while others believed that scheduling a meeting would build anxiety in staff members, triggering an escalation in rumors and dialogue that could damage school culture.

Nancy explained: [W]hen I needed to have a conversation with an individual, I try not to pre-schedule it because they sit there and have anxiety over it and reflect on it. So normally, if I have to have a conversation, I'll send somebody to cover their class and do it immediately so it's not like this huge thing.

In circumstances where the issue has become contentious or when the political strength of one group outweighs the other, meeting with each person or group separately can be a consideration.

Diego: There are some things that you have to take care of separately. Getting the parties in the same room may not be the best way to do it because sometimes that gets very contentious right away. Sometimes you have to go to one camp and listen, then share what the other camp is saying, going back and forth until you come to an agreement somehow. If one group has more political strength on the campus and you bring all those people in the same room, it's going to be lopsided meeting. And so rather than have these lopsided kinds of meetings, sometimes it's easier to say I'm going to go talk to her or I'm going to go talk to them, figure out what they need. Tell me again what you need and why. Then I'll come to some decision that's somewhere in the middle.

As principals observe and get to know their staff through a political lens, principal will be able to make judgements related to the best method or forum for obtaining resolution.

Filter for Personal Agendas—Eight participants suggested that recognizing personal agendas within a narrative is critical to negotiating micropolitical challenges as it serves to distinguish truth. This can sometimes be achieved by asking probing questions. The challenge when deciphering personal agendas during discussions is sustaining objectivity.

Able suggested: It's very important as a principal you filter some of the information they're giving you because again, it could be skewed or one-sided but what's important is you don't take offense to it. Just jot it down and look at it and filter as you investigate. Once you begin to understand the nature of their issue, the closer the remedy.

Reflection time will allow the principal time to consider options and discuss with trusted colleagues while demonstrating respect for staff in taking the time to consider a resolution to the micropolitical challenge.

Kids First—As principals facilitate toward resolution or compromise related to a micropolitical challenge, consideration of how students will be affected by any decision should remain at the forefront of principal's contemplation. Ten participants in this study advised keeping students at the forefront of discussion when problem-solving with staff.

Jack clarified: Now that we've assessed the conflict between two or three people, the one thing we always ask before any decision is, what about the kids? So, you all are arguing or fighting or whatever. What kind of resolution can we come to where every kid that you work with will benefit from resolving this issue?

Resolution between staff members that encompasses consideration for how students will be affected will more likely result in a decision that is in alignment with the school vision, school culture and the principal's student-centered reputation of integrity.

Old Guard Versus New Guard

A common micropolitical consideration for principals new to a campus is in determining the agenda of the veteran staff that have been at the school for years and the agenda of the newer staff some of which the new principal may have recently hired. Veteran staff have sometimes been referred to as the old guard, and newer staff—the new guard. Four principals in this study referenced the typical contrasting agendas of the veteran versus newer staff members. The stereotype characterizes veteran staff as older, more closely tied to the union, and less likely to support any change or innovation, while newer staff tend to be younger, hopeful, and ready for the challenges tied to any innovation. Veteran staff, however, often have greater political influence across the campus that has developed over time and may operate as a well-defined coalition. This situates the new principal between both groups, as decisions and plans are being deliberated by the full school staff.

Diego: I've experienced twice in my career now, the challenge of the old guard versus the new guard, when taking over a school. And all of the micropolitics that goes on with that because there are veterans that have been there for a while, saying this is how we've always done it. This has always been good for us. This is the way it works. And then there's the new group that has a lesser voice because they're simply not as tenured as the first group.

Veteran staff will often have a stronger political voice on the campus, given their tenure or membership within the larger veteran faction of staff. Educators “with more experience have the opportunity to accumulate organizational, social, political capital that provides them with sources of influence in school decision making” to the extent that “more experienced teachers are assigned fewer Black or low-income students” (Grissom & Herrington, 2012, p. 611). Challenges posed by veteran staff is not restricted to staff meetings and can manifest for the principal in daily conversations with staff. Melva explained, “That was a major challenge that I encountered. It was resistant teachers that had been here at this campus for some years. Newly hired staff saw this challenge that already existed for me, as we were moving forward with the systems that were in place.” Micropolitical strategy is critical in these scenarios, as the entire staff is observing, listening, making judgements regarding the principal that will help to define the principal’s reputation, as the principal facilitates the discussion, sometimes between opposing sides.

The ambition for principals is in negotiating micropolitical challenges towards outcomes that align with the school vision, while obtaining the best contributions that each group and each person on the staff has to offer. During member checking with Diego, he clarified that he did not consider old guard staff as not having meaningful contributions to offer. He added that veteran staff can also offer historical information that can minimize action plan hindrances.

Diego: It’s making certain you’re bringing those coalitions together so that they understand nobody has more power than anybody else. The old guard feels heard, the new guard feels hopeful and heard and therefore, new guard voices become

equal to the voice of the old guard, and that's how you start to bring the best ideas forward. We're talking about what's best for kids. The old guard sometimes has trouble with that because they've gotten to a place where what's best for us is the way to operate, and then I say no, sorry. That's going to be my call. I'm not going to blame it on the new guys either. I'm going to blame it on me and say no, no. It's got to be about the kids.

The pursuit of evoking feelings of validation and hope in two opposing sides simultaneously requires skill and practice. Recognizing old guard and new guard staff members and understanding the objective of integrating two opposing sides may expedite successful micropolitical negotiation. Diego added that in his experience, compromise rarely comes to a 50/50. Compromise however should be situated somewhere in the middle—closely aligned with the school vision, school goals, and school climate that is characteristic of the reputation the principal has sought to develop. Since all staff will not always agree with every decision that a principal makes, there is a potential for criticism and dispute to be brought by a staff member or a group of staff. The principal must be prepared to respond to any scenario, even if the response is a decision not to engage. Strategy and calm resolution will help to determine the remedy.

Conflict Between Staff and the Principal

Principals may encounter conflict with a staff member or a group of staff related to teaching assignments, appraisal feedback, a room change or unpredictable and ambiguous events. In these instances, employing selected steps from the Model for Negotiating Micropolitical Challenges should be a consideration. The series of steps

provides of framework for professional discussion and exploration of viable solutions or compromise.

Michelle: You can't just come in top down and say this is the way it's going to be because you're not going to get buy in from that. That's why I say, back down. As soon as you dig your feet in, you've lost. Be willing to meet with them. I worked downtown and found it's all going to come back to me anyway, so I got to figure out how to handle this.

Compromise is objective when facilitating a conflict between staff members, and when facilitating a conflict between staff and the principal. The model for negotiating micropolitical challenges may not be appropriate in circumstances when difficulties advance to gross insubordination or unprofessional behavior. Six participants expressed the importance of having a support system or mentors that can be relied upon when the business of school leadership becomes perplexing. Through a support system, dialogue regarding strategy that may include introducing district support can be deliberated.

Melva explained: When you don't know what is right, even with years of experience, you have to be willing to recognize that and reach out to others for guidance. If I'm not sure, then I have to pick up the phone to gain perspective. Every leadership complexity related to micropolitics will require a response that correlates to the specific complexity. A principal support system and time for reflection can help to inform strategy.

In summary, the four themes presented in this chapter were formulated through the constant comparative analysis method. The themes collectively provide a foundation of strategy and perspective toward successful negotiation of school micropolitics. The

first three themes comprise structures that can reduce school micropolitical challenges for the principal, and the fourth theme provides guiding principles related to successful micropolitical negotiation practices. The development of a principal's reputation rests upon the success or failure of macropolitical and micropolitical negotiation. While there may not be a substitute for principal experience as it pertains to negotiation of school micropolitics, the perspectives and strategies resulting from this study, may serve to expedite competence in micropolitical negotiation, and therefore attainment of the establishment stage for principals.

V. DISSCUSSION

This discussion chapter interrelates the literature on micropolitics with the themes that have emerged from this study and provides a synthesizing discussion for each of the three research questions posed. Scholarship on micropolitics illuminates the understanding of the themes, and reciprocally, this study's themes serve to reexamine the literature. Within the analysis, an expanded understanding of common micropolitical challenges and strategies for responding to common micropolitical challenges as outlined in this study's problem statement are presented. Resultant implications for principal preparation programs and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

The purpose of this study was to capture a set of the most common micropolitical challenges that novice principals frequently experience and an adjoining set of effective strategies for mediating these common challenges by interviewing establishment stage principals regarding their novice principal experiences. Accordingly, three guiding research questions were posed. A synthesis of study findings and the literature will examine what is known about micropolitics as well as the integration of proven strategies for managing and successfully negotiating micropolitical challenges that have been developed independently by study participants over time. Findings then serve to extend the literature on micropolitics and define considerations for future research on micropolitics while providing knowledge that may be considered for the development of principal preparation program curriculum.

Research Question #1

The first research question set out to discover common school micropolitical challenges faced by novice principals. Based on this question, theme 2 was identified.

Theme 2 was grounded in words such as macropolitics, legislature, school board and community members. Theme 2 described the interchange between mandated change from macropolitical sources, such as the legislature or school board, and the subsequent emergence of micropolitical challenges in schools. This interchange is characterized in this study as a macro-micro bridge.

Theme 2 presents the finding that school micropolitical challenges emerge from macropolitical sources of mandated change, such as from the legislature, school board or as a result of the school board being influenced by community members. This finding is affirmed by scholarly literature (Webb, 2008). For instance, Grissom and Herrington (2012) noted that Race to the Top (RTTT) grant money resulted in mandated changes for schools as states and local districts applied for Fiscal Stabilization Funds. RTTT represented the largest federal education grant in the history of the United States, stressing the government's commitment to "standards and assessments, recruitment and retention of effective teachers, improvement of low-performing schools, and the establishment of viable data systems for tracking student achievement and teacher effectiveness" (Nicholson-Crotty & Staley, 2012, p. 160). Findings from this study suggested that common sources of micropolitical challenges are triggered by required changes for the school that are imposed by the legislature, school district and sometimes by the school community. Study findings suggested that micropolitical challenges encountered by participants in their first three years as a principal included insubordination, resistance, confronting the principal as a coalition of staff members, and working to conceal information from the principal. Malen (2006) described how teachers have been shown to use strategies such as sabotage, passive resistance, gossip or

confronting the principal in a coalition of teacher force. The agreement between the literature and this study's findings that micropolitical challenges emerge from mandated changes, indicates that micropolitical literacy—the principal's ability to understand the dynamics of micropolitics—is essential to resolving those dynamics. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) described micropolitical literacy as the ability to understand scenarios through a micropolitical lens that is comprised of knowledge, wisdom and experience.

Yet theme 2 also revealed a distinction among kinds of mandates. Variance can sometimes be achieved relative to district initiatives or expectations, whereas legislative mandates offered fewer or no opportunity for variance because the mandate is established by law. Findings suggest that variance has been most frequently achieved when the principal could clearly define the school vision and demonstrate that the mandate in question did not complement, or was counter to, the elements of the school vision. The idea of seeking variance in the implementation of district initiatives in order to diminish micropolitical challenges adds to the current literature on micropolitics.

In theme 2, there is a suggestion that community members could place pressure on both the principal and school district for changes that community members sought, and community members could also come to the defense of a principal — uniting with the principal to achieve variance from district expectations. The dichotomy of community member pursuits against and for the school and the principal is also found in the literature review. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014) pointed to a correlation between a school's efforts to provide opportunities for the community to participate in school decision-making and the extent to which a community can support the school as needed. Theme 2 and the literature agree that frequent communication and strong

relationships with community members who are affiliated with the school serve principals well.

Theme 2 answers the first research question and supports the literature that common micropolitical challenges for novice principals include acts of insubordination, acts of resistance, confrontation of the principal as a coalition of staff members, and concealing information from the principal. Theme 2 further agrees with the literature that micropolitical challenges correlate to macropolitical mandated change requirements or mandated reform efforts. Theme 2 also extends the literature in noting that variance can be sought in relation to district initiative requirements by consistently demonstrating and communicating a clear school vision and by keeping strong and close relations with community members affiliated with the school and with district officials. The literature and study findings both emphasized that micropolitical literacy is critical in negotiating micropolitical challenges and strategies for effective change.

Research Question #2

The aim of the second research question was to determine specific resolutions to micropolitical challenges that have led to the establishment stage of a principal's tenure. This research question set out to capture strategies and perspectives with either effective or ineffective outcomes, to discern favorable and unfavorable practices. Theme 1 was identified for responding to research question 2. Theme 1 centers around key words such as a principal's reputation, school vision, school culture, trust and student-centered.

Literature on micropolitics includes discussion of school vision and school culture suggesting that for principals, tensions from staff emerge because of contradictions in values or in the school vision and can manifest themselves in planning for (a) choice of

content, and nature of curriculum, (b) student assessment methods, (c) school duties, or (d) promotion and transfer issues affecting staff (Agi et al., 2016). Theme 1 reveals that alignment of school vision, school culture, and the values therein serve as a framework toward micropolitical resolution. This alignment of vision, culture, and values serves as lens and reference for questions that may arise as the school year progresses. Although the literature specifies that tensions are often related to contradicting values or vision, this study's findings extend the literature by suggesting that the congruence of the school vision, school culture, and values with the principal's daily decisions serves as a structure or framework for effectively mitigating micropolitical tensions (Linder, 1994).

Theme 1 highlights the idea that a principal must cultivate trusting relationships with the school community such as teachers and students, community members, and district officials, which is also reflected in the literature (Blase & Blase, 2002). Meyer et al., (2011) posited that school leaders who are aware of the micropolitical context can gain influence and build trust among teachers. Theme 1 also suggests that cultivating trust among the school staff, district officials and community members becomes more attainable amid an alignment of school endeavors, and consistency in keeping students at the center of decision making. Study findings extend the literature in its suggestion that making decisions that are consistent with the school's vision are most often considered as fair and critical toward building and maintaining trusting relationships and the principal's reputation. Blase (1989) posited that although the principal's decision is recognized as final, teachers and staff expect that decisions will be made fairly. Yet, theme 1 also revealed that using reflection time allows the principal to collaborate with other administrators in thinking through a final decision. Theme 1 also suggests that describing

the rationale for a final decision and emphasizing that the decision is both fair and student-centered are effective strategies toward building relationships and maintaining the principal's reputation.

Theme 1 aligns with the literature in suggesting that all decisions made by the principal and the teaching staff must be student-centered. Bass (2015) posited that in the absence of equitable policies and redistribution of resources, student achievement will continue to lose ground nationally as a significant segment of the students are underserved later becoming undereducated members of our society. Theme 1 and the literature agree on the concept that principals must be prepared to bring the discussion of how students will be affected when school decisions or planning is underway and be prepared to uphold equitable policies and standards to challenge social justice issues despite the micropolitical challenges these discussions may cause.

Theme 1 answers research question two by suggesting that in the absence of skills conveyed in principal preparation programs for negotiating school micropolitics, establishment stage principals reported that as novice principals, alignment and clarity of school vision and school culture formed a framework from which to measure solutions to issues or challenges that arose during the school year while building trusting relationships with all stakeholders. O'Malley, Long, and King (2015) posited that effective principals often experience a "wide range of simultaneously occurring and competing issues" that the novice principal can manifest themselves in "unique leadership and affective challenges" (p. 119). Despite these challenges, Oplatka (2012) clarified that during the novice or induction stage, new leaders work towards being accepted and understanding the organizational culture of the school. As such, study findings reveal that an aligned

framework composed of school vision, school culture, and values serves to diminish micropolitical challenges — serving as a structure to guide decision-making and continuous planning.

Research Question #3

The objective of the third research question was to distinguish any strategies developed over time by establishment stage principals for successfully negotiating school micropolitical challenges. Theme 3 and theme 4 respond to research question 3. Theme 3 centered around change dynamics in school and school systems, focusing on words such as mandated change, reform, change protocol, leadership and micropolitical challenge. Theme 4 focused on key words such as negotiation, resolution, and micropolitical literacy. Theme 4 revealed specific strategies related to micropolitical negotiation, a 13-step logic model for addressing micropolitical challenges, and it explored dynamics among veteran teachers and new teachers during the change process.

Theme 3 proposed the idea that since micropolitical challenges emerge as a result of change, the establishment of a change protocol serves to reduce such challenges, given that the protocol has been established by school staff and the principal, providing predicable fundamental steps for the change process. Literature and study findings agree that micropolitics emerge during reform or change processes. Teachers and administrators do not always share a vision of schooling or work collaboratively; educators and parents are often mutually suspicious and sometimes antagonistic. School site reform plans shift and change over time because of the specific people involved (Flessa, 2009, p. 332). Malen (2006) explained that values or beliefs about change may vary among individuals or groups bringing about new micropolitical challenges. Lee

(2015) posited that significant resistance can be expected from school staff in instances of dramatic change to a school. Study findings demonstrated that leadership approaches to change based in limited or directive communication created resistance and micropolitical challenges as described in the literature. Yet, theme 3 reveals that the development of a change protocol created at the school that champions clear communication and encourages collaboration reduces staff anxiety and, therefore, a level of micropolitical challenge. Study findings suggest that change is inevitable and essential for developing the skills of the principal and the school staff, and so effective communication is essential.

Theme 3 indicates that the use of facilitative leadership is more effective than traditional leadership strategies. Traditional leadership is characterized as principals using strategies intended to control teachers, whereas the use of facilitative leadership strategies entails developing shared governance structures and encouraging teacher input in order to achieve teacher efficacy (Blase, 1997). Wong (2008) noted that facilitative leaders generally elevate the interests of school staff “generating awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group” which generally “stirs followers to look beyond their own self-interest to the good of others” (p. 21). Ryan (2010) purported that some administrators subscribe to a combination of both traditional and facilitative leadership strategies in their practice depending on the situation. However, study findings indicate that traditional leadership strategies are more often adopted by novice or induction stage principals and when a school district is requiring comprehensive changes at a school. Theme 3 also suggests that that facilitative leadership should be the goal for principals engaged in comprehensive school change.

Theme 4 captured specific strategies related to micropolitical negotiation, such as a 13-step logic model for addressing micropolitical challenges and providing a perspective on dynamics among veteran teachers and new teachers during change processes. Theme 4 reveals patterns of contrasting agendas between veteran versus newer staff members. Veteran staff have sometimes been referred to as the old guard, and newer staff as the new guard, with stereotypes commonly characterizing veteran staff as older and less likely to support innovation while newer staff are characterized as often being younger, hopeful, and ready for the challenges tied to any innovation. Yet, theme 4 also reveals that principals can practice their skills in facilitating conversations that allow members of the old guard to feel heard and validated, while ensuring that all members of the staff feel hopeful—all the while, keeping a focus on benefit for students and the overarching school vision.

Scholarly literature in educational leadership has suggested that skills for the negotiation of micropolitical challenges are a need for all principals, and that “micropolitical literacy” is required so that various stakeholders may “work together authentically” (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 12). Theme 4 extended the literature on school micropolitical negotiation by revealing a 13-step logic model for addressing micropolitical challenges. The 13-step model provides a novel and specific approach for resolving micropolitical challenges through micropolitical literacy.

In summary, themes 3 and 4 respond to research question 3, which seeks to discover strategies developed over time by establishment stage principals for successfully negotiating school micropolitical challenges. Theme 3 reveals that the strategy of establishing a school-based change protocol may serve to reduce a level of micropolitical

challenge, as the protocol provides predictable process steps for guiding school change or reform among school staff and the principal. Theme 3 additionally acknowledges that greater political power is most often held among veteran staff as opposed to new staff members. It provides a compass for new leaders for situating conversations toward validating all staff members, while keeping a focus in planning meetings on the school vision and benefits for students. Theme 3, enfolded with the literature, further answers the third research question in this study by encouraging the use of facilitative leadership strategies which develop shared governance structures over traditional leadership strategies characterized as strategies intended to control teachers.

Theme 4 extended current knowledge on micropolitical negotiation, as sought by research question three, in articulating a 13-step logic model for resolving micropolitical challenges. The 13-step model moves beyond a definition of micropolitical literacy to a model for consideration in the resolution of micropolitical challenges expediting the application of micropolitical literacy. This model may assist novice principals in avoiding many trial and error encounters with micropolitical challenges. In this way, it may assist them in reaching the establishment stage. Theme 4 also answers research question 3 in seeking strategies developed over time by establishment stage principals for successfully negotiating school micropolitical challenges in revealing that principals can work toward situating themselves in conversations with older and newer staff members in a manner that results in all staff members feeling heard and validated while keeping a focus on benefit for students and the overarching school vision. A summary of the correlation between research questions and the themes that responded to the questions can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. *Correlation between Research Questions and Corresponding Themes*

Research Questions	Correlation to Themes
Research Question #1: What are the school micropolitical challenges faced by novice principals?	Based on this question, theme 2 was identified. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 2 was grounded in words such as macropolitics, legislature, school board and community members. • Theme 2 described the interchange between mandated change from macropolitical sources, such as the legislature or school board, and the subsequent emergence of micropolitical challenges in schools. • Theme 2 finding agree with common micropolitical challenges described in the literature.
Research Question #2: What have been specific resolutions, effective or ineffective, to the micropolitical challenge leading to the <i>establishment stage</i> of a principal's tenure?	Theme 1 was identified for responding to research question 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 centers around key words such as a principal's reputation, school vision, school culture, trust and student-centered. • Theme 1 reveals that alignment of school vision, school culture, and the values therein serve as a framework toward managing micropolitics.
Research Question #3: What strategies have been developed over time for successfully negotiating school micropolitical challenges by <i>establishment stage</i> principals?	Theme 3 and theme 4 respond to research question 3. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 3 centered on change dynamics in school and school systems, focusing on words such as mandated change, reform, change protocol, leadership and micropolitical challenge. • Theme 4 focused on key words such as negotiation, resolution, and micropolitical literacy. • Theme 4 revealed specific strategies related to micropolitical negotiation, a 13-step logic model for addressing micropolitical challenges. • Theme 4 explored micropolitical dynamics among veteran teachers and new teachers during the change process.

Concept Model

The literature recommends that principals develop micropolitical literacy for negotiating micropolitical challenges. This dissertation suggests a multi-tiered concept model that works to extend previous knowledge on micropolitics. The concept model

provides a series of perspectives and strategies for managing school micropolitics, coupled with a 13-step logic model for directly resolving micropolitical challenges in schools. This model begins with the alignment of the school vision, school culture, and the principal's reputation. This alignment serves to manage the negative impact of macropolitical mandated change, expressed as associated micropolitical challenges, as it defines the school vision clearly for all school stakeholders. A second opportunity for diminishing micropolitical challenges for principals involves leading school staff in the formulation of a school change protocol that may be utilized to guide change processes, whenever change is mandated, needed, or desired. When micropolitical challenges emerge despite these means for reducing micropolitical challenges, the 13-step logic model for negotiating micropolitical challenges emerging from this study may be referenced in seeking resolution. This concept model for managing has been depicted in Figure 3.

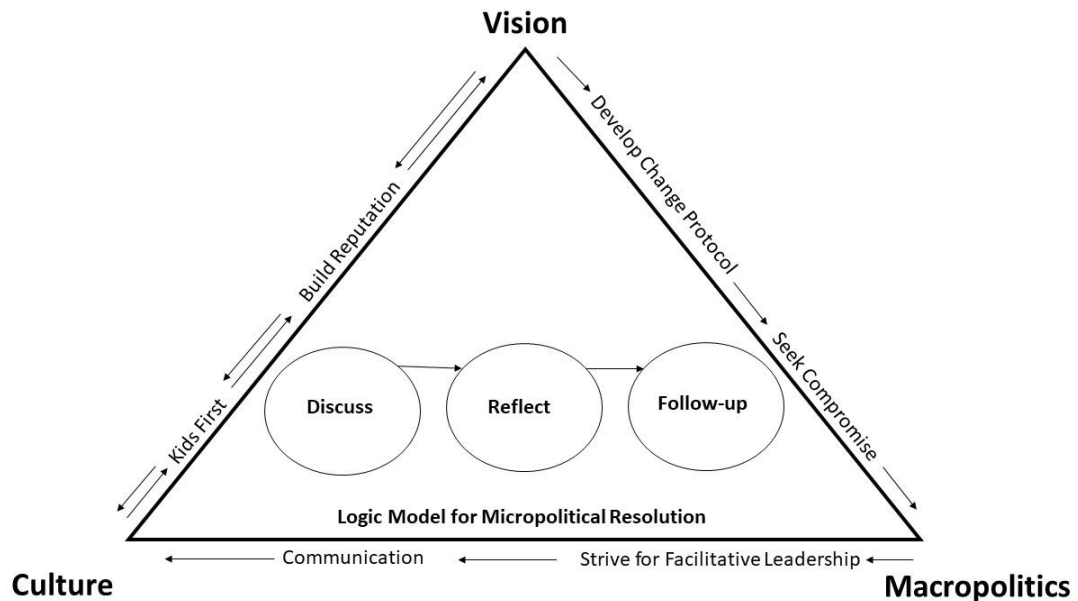


Figure 3. *Conceptual model for managing school micropolitics.*

Implications for Principal Preparation Programs

The results from this study support the idea that principal preparation programs do not provide adequate lesson design related to micropolitical challenges that emerge during the practice of school leadership.

Mercedes stated: I think this is a really good dissertation. We're just thrown in here without written supports in this area of campus politics. Those are things you have to know to figure out how to navigate because they don't really address this in prep programs.

This sentiment mirrors the recollection made by the researcher of encountering micropolitical challenges at the outset of becoming a principal and reaching back to learnings from the principal preparation program and finding no specific strategy for resolving the issues. Curriculum on school micropolitics is sought by aspiring and induction stage principals.

Nancy stated: I'm really excited that you're researching micropolitics. Lots of principals get kind of beat up with the whole political arena of the job. Some principals weren't able to get out of it and ended up getting removed from their campuses. My mentor always said there's got to be a curriculum related to micropolitics for these principals.

Strategies and perspectives related to a school micropolitical curriculum for principal preparation programs remains an area of school leadership training in need of further definition and refinement.

This finding from the study reflected the literature in concluding that school micropolitics is an element of leadership training that requires expansion within principal preparation programs. Farley-Ripple et al., (2011) suggested that a goal for preparation programs should be to prepare leaders for managing conflict, politics, and school community relationships. Winton and Pollock (2012) purported that all principal preparation programs must “help principal candidates become comfortable and effective in their political role because their success as the school leaders—and the success of the students, families, teachers, and community with whom they work—depends on it” (p. 51). Findings from this study provide a set of guiding principles that principal preparation programs can consider in developing micropolitical curriculum for principal preparation programs.

This study found that the twelve establishment stage principals who participated in this study did not receive school micropolitical training while attending their principal preparation programs, yet they still reached the establishment stage. The data suggests that they had to figure out how to negotiate school micropolitics on their own. Their narratives also speak of those principals who failed at micropolitical negotiation resulting in removal or their termination. Hewitt, Davis, and Lashley (2014) posited that “leadership preparation programs must cultivate leaders who can navigate schools as they are to improve their effectiveness while also fundamentally rethinking and reworking education to what it might be—socially just, equitable, and democratic” (p. 225).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The conclusions of this dissertation should be considered in light of several delimitations. First, the purposeful sample and qualitative methods orient findings

toward a contextual understanding that, while transferrable, is not generalizable to a larger population of school leaders. Secondly, all participants in this study are from an urban setting, and so no rural participants contributed to the findings. Additionally, micropolitics from the perspective of teachers was not a focus in this study, and the study cannot address how teachers see or experience micropolitical challenges or their resolution.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was intended as case study research in the area of school micropolitics. Future studies on school micropolitics may seek to include principals at a variety of career stages. Bringing focus to the micropolitical challenges in rural settings may also be a consideration for future studies. Future studies may also consider investigating micropolitics from the teachers' perspectives.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the literature on micropolitics in relation to themes that emerge through a succession of the three research questions posed. It concluded these examinations with a synthesis of literature and study findings that affirms and extends scholarly knowledge on school micropolitics by suggesting strategies and perspectives as a means for attaining micropolitical literacy. Study findings revealed guiding principles toward co-operative processes within micropolitics and included perspective and strategy for addressing micropolitical challenges (Blase & Blase, 2014; Eilertsen, Gustafson, & Salo, 2008; Townsend, 1990).

These guiding principles suggested the alignment of school vision, culture, and values as a means for developing the principal's reputation. Findings also suggested the

development of a school change protocol that can be referenced when change has been initiated and revealed a 13-step logic model for resolving micropolitical challenges. Together, these strategies are represented as a conceptual model for managing school micropolitics. McCabe and McCarthy (2005) reminded us that principals must be willing to raise critical issues involving equity and privilege with their teaching staff while providing leadership toward collective responsibility during school improvement and the change processes. Therefore, school principals may take a dichotomic approach to micropolitics in which principals work toward constructive or productive micropolitical outcomes while also being prepared to successfully negotiate conflict or micropolitical challenges.

The co-operative processes within micropolitics then may serve to supersede a level of micropolitical challenges, while the perspective and strategy located in the 13-step logic model constitutes the conceptual model for managing school micropolitics described within this study. The conceptual model provides some means for novice principals to expedite their development toward micropolitical literacy while maintaining a student-centered agenda that can result in sustained and focused leadership and the associated benefits for students, staff, the principal and all school stakeholders. Furthermore, the findings may help to enhance principal preparation curriculum by contributing a set of new guiding principles related to leadership and school micropolitics.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Research Question #1: What are the school micropolitical challenges faced by novice principals?

- **R1.1 Interview Question:** Can you describe what micropolitical challenges stand out in your mind that emerged during your first 3 years as a school principal?
- **R1.2 Interview Question:** Can you share some examples of the most common political challenges you have faced?

Research Question #2: What have been specific resolutions, effective or ineffective, to the micropolitical challenge leading to the *establishment stage* of a principal's tenure?

- **R2.1 Interview Question:** What was it like for you when you first felt that you had successfully resolved a major political issue on your campus?
- **R2.2 Interview Question:** Tell me about an instance, where if you could go back in time, you would have handled a campus political challenge in a different way?
- **R2.3 Interview Question:** How did your handling of these political issues (successfully and/or unsuccessfully) advance or impede your establishment as a 'veteran' principal?

Research Question #3: What strategies have been developed over time for successfully negotiating school micropolitical challenges by *establishment stage* principals?

- **R3.1 Interview Question:** When you find yourself confronted with a political challenge on your campus, what steps and considerations do you employ through to resolution?
- **R3.2 Interview Question:** Can you give me some examples of how you identify or recognize school political issues in their early stages?
- **R3.3 Interview Question:** How is your approach to navigating political issues in the school similar to or different than the approach/es you used as a novice principal?

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

STUDY TITLE: School Micropolitics: Understanding and Preparing for Common Micropolitical Challenges

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Leo Colegio

EMAIL: l_c36@txstate.edu

PHONE: 1-541-337-7689

FACULTY ADVISOR: Dr. Michael P. O'Malley

EMAIL: mo20@txstate.edu

PHONE: 1-512-245-3083

SPONSOR: No funding sponsor

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about school micropolitics. School micropolitics is often described as strategies used by school leaders and by teachers to pursue their respective interests within the school setting. The information gathered will work towards identifying common micropolitical challenges that novice principals face, and some strategies for responding to these challenges. You are being asked to participate because you have been identified by the school district as an establishment stage principal. Establishment stage principals are characterized by their competence and confidence. Additionally, we have sought to interview principals that have more than five years' principal experience and who are current leaders of a campus with 300 students or more. Based on this profile, participants will be able to contribute vital information related to their experiences during their first three years as principal.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in one interview conversation with the primary researcher that is expected to last up to 60 minutes in duration. The interview will be scheduled to take place during the month of February or March of 2018, at a private location of your choosing, to include in your office after or before school. During the interviews, you will be asked questions related to micropolitical challenges that emerged with staff, during your first three years as

principal. These for instance may include reflecting on as time when a grade level of teachers requested a double preparation period during the school day, which you had reservations of granting for specific school-based reasons, and how this scenario played itself out. The interview will be audio-recorded with the primary researcher's personal recording device, and the primary researcher may also take notes during the interview conversation. You will also have an opportunity to review my interpretation of your responses before this data is applied to the study. Your review may be achieved via email and a phone conversation.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Participants will be assigned pseudonyms so that their identity is concealed. All demographics will be rounded to an average to mask district and school identities. Every effort will be made to protect participant's confidentiality.

In the event that any of the interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time. Should you feel discomfort after participating, you may contact the sponsoring professor:

Dr. Michael P. O'Malley at Texas State University at (1-512-245-3083) or at mo20@txstate.edu

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide will contribute to the current research on school micropolitics and may serve to provide a set of guiding principles related to school micropolitics for use by principal preparation programs.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The primary researcher, sponsoring professor, and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Your name will not be used in any written reports or publications which result from this research. Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Leo Colegio: (1-541-337-7689) or soho42us@yahoo.com

This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on [date]. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-245-8351 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time.

Printed Name of Study Participant: _____

Signature of Study Participant: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Thank you!

APPENDIX C

Partial Example of the Constant Comparative Protocol

	<input type="checkbox"/> INTERNAL MICRO	<input type="checkbox"/> MICRO-MACRO BRIDGE
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXTERNAL MICRO	<input type="checkbox"/> MACRO
	FIG 10	
A-1	<input type="checkbox"/>	SHARE VISION & GOALS <input type="checkbox"/>
A-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	BUILD A CULTURE
A-3	<input type="checkbox"/>	TEACHERS WANT TO BE HEARD
A-4	<input type="checkbox"/>	BE RECEPTIVE TO STAFF ^{FEELINGS} REPORT / VALUES
A-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	OPENLY DISCUSS THE WORK
A-6	<input type="checkbox"/>	BE REFLECTIVE <input type="checkbox"/>
A-7	<input type="checkbox"/>	CHANGE IS PERPETUAL <input type="checkbox"/>
A-8	<input type="checkbox"/>	SEEK VIABLE OPTIONS WITH THEM
A-9	<input type="checkbox"/>	CREATE COLLABORATIVE TRUSTING CULTURE
A-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	ALIGN BUDGET TO GOALS <input type="checkbox"/>

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