Socialization of School Improvement Grant Principals during the First Year of Forced Leadership Change: A Retrospective Phenomenological Study

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by

Susan Lynn Kehoe

Dr. George Hill, Dissertation Advisor

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We recommend that the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

SUSAN LYNN KEHOE

entitled

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

George Hill, Ph. D., Advisor

Janet Usinger, Ph. D., Committee Member

Bill Thornton, Ph. D., Committee Member

John Cannon, Ph. D., Committee Member

Loretta Singletary, Ph. D., Graduate School Representative

Marsha H. Read, Ph. D., Dean, Graduate School

August, 2012
ABSTRACT

In 2009, President Barack Obama and the federal government allocated funds for the School Improvement Grant (SIG) initiative to significantly raise the achievement of students in the lowest performing schools in the United States. As a requirement of receiving SIG funding, school district leaders must choose one of four intervention models to implement at SIG designated schools. Each intervention model requires the removal and replacement of the principal. The process of principal replacement is known as succession. In order to plan for effective and sustainable principal succession, it is significant to understand the organizational socialization process at school sites, where existing principals are removed and replaced by new principals appointed by district leaders.

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the lived experiences of seven principals chosen to lead at SIG schools in two adjacent school districts in the western United States. The research questions guiding the study were: (1) What were the socialization experiences of principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation, and (2) What did SIG principals perceive school district leaders’ role to be in the socialization process during the first year of SIG implementation? Utilizing phenomenological research protocols to collect and analyze data, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the spring of 2012 in order to allow the seven SIG principals to individually describe their socialization experiences, from a retrospective perspective, during the first year of forced leadership change.

Data analysis of SIG principals’ perceptions of their socialization during the first year of SIG implementation yielded three major themes: (a) Frenetic Effort to Establish
Stability; (b) Swimming Alone in the English Channel; and (c) Reality Hits Home. Stages of socialization also emerged: (a) Initial Appointment/Mental Preparation; (b) Entering the Setting; (c) Settling In; and (d) I’m Here. A conclusion that surfaced from the study was that the culture present in school settings largely determined SIG principals’ ability to affect change during their first year of school turnaround efforts. The findings in this study illustrate the importance of the organizational socialization process in planning for effective principal succession, especially with the occurrence of forced leadership change.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more
doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of
things.” (Machiavelli, 1950, p. 21)

Background of the Study

Over the last two years, 5,000 of the nation's lowest performing schools became
eligible for assistance under the School Improvement Grants initiative, President
Obama’s “turnaround” grants program. In 2009, President Obama and his
administration allocated $3.5 billion in grant funding to underperforming schools so that
radical steps could be implemented to improve; this was part of an effort to ensure the
highest proportion of U.S. high-school graduates in the world by 2020 (U.S.
Department of Education, 2010). School Improvement Grants (SIG) funding is
awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to state education agencies under Section 1003(g)
of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, (ESEA), reauthorized by the
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002. The SIG initiative provides funding to
school districts with the lowest achieving schools that have the greatest need for the
funds and demonstrate the strongest commitment to use the funds to significantly raise
the achievement of their students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

In 2009, the federal government allocated funds to the SIG initiative for the
purpose of turning around the nation’s lowest performing schools. To qualify, school
district leaders identified the schools to transform and determined which one of four
rigorous models of restructuring was most appropriate for each school: (a) the
turnaround model, requiring removal of the principal and half the staff; (b) the
transformation model, requiring removal of the principal; (c) the restart model, whereby a school is closed and reopened under a charter school operator, charter management organization, or education management organization; or (d) school closure, whereby the school is closed and the students are enrolled in other schools that are higher achieving (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Since its inception, more than 730 chronically low-scoring schools in 44 states have received SIG funding (Williams, 2011.)

In the last several years, the principal’s role has taken on added significance in the accountability and educational reform movements (Crow, 2006). Transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, or the movement from an economy based on heavy industry to the age of information and high technology (Hage & Powers, 1992), has produced distinctions in the nature of work in general and, thus, the educational requirements of workers. As changes continue to occur, it is important to note the increasing complexity in educational work. With this complexity, organizations, work, and life have taken on new dimensions that have not been witnessed in previous generations (Crow, 2006). The shift from an industrial to post-industrial economy has put pressures on educational workers, and the school principal, in particular.

Under the best of circumstances, leading a school presents challenges. In an urban, high poverty, high-minority, often transient environment, new layers of challenges for principals are added as they must adapt quickly and make improvements with a student population and community frequently mired in academic failure (McLester, 2011). When schools enroll a large percentage of students from economically disadvantaged families and their academic performance falls behind their
more privileged peers, the challenges multiply (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010). As part of President Obama’s SIG initiative, those schools may be identified as persistently lowest performing and eligible for SIG funding. A requirement for a school receiving SIG funding is the removal and replacement of the existing principal (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The expectation for a new principal brought into a SIG school is to challenge the status quo and lead change, while making clear the urgency of those changes (Cline & Necochea, 2000; Herman, Dawson, Dee, Greene, Maynard, Redding, & Darwin, 2008).

When a principal enters a district and/or school as a new member of the social group, he or she experiences organizational socialization. Organizational socialization has been defined as “the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role and for participating as an organizational member” (Louis, 1980, pp. 229-230). Simply stated, socialization is the learning of social roles (Merton, Reader, & Kendall, 1957). It encompasses individuals’ adjustments and adaptations to the expectations of the group. These adjustments and adaptations make cooperative effort possible and represent an orientation toward the common needs of the group (Hart, 1993). Through this process, members of the organization come to internalize the values, norms, and beliefs of the groups to which they belong and to accept the meanings these groups attribute to ideas and events. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992) stated, “The ideal socialization process positions one at the point of sharpest focus: not so close as to render the corporate image of fuzzy blur; not so far away as to make the detailed features of the image unrecognizable” (p. 153).
There are several reasons why organizational socialization is an important consideration for both newcomers and organizations. First, neglecting to socialize newcomers can have a substantially negative impact; newcomers’ expectations are not met, leading to poor attitudes, negative behavior, and higher levels of turnover (Wanous, 1992). Second, organizational socialization is crucial in allowing newcomers to “get up to speed” and begin contributing to the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). It is important for newcomers to know what the performance criteria are and that they are making a valued contribution to the organization. Third, newcomers need to know how to function in the organization (Feldman, 1976); they need to learn the values, norms, resources, and politics of the organization (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Louis, 1980). Fourth, organizational socialization is important due to its rapid influence and lasting effects as newcomers adjust quickly in the first few months (Thomas & Anderson, 1998), with adjustment outcomes having lasting influence and quantifiable outcomes (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Lastly, due to increased occurrences of workplace interventions and changes, ranging from the individual to the organizational levels, organizational socialization is necessary as performance related boundaries are crossed (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) emphasized the importance and influence of organizational socialization because of its potentially strong and lasting effect on employee behavior, attitudes, and commitment to their organizations. Kwesiga and Bell (2004) maintained that the organizational socialization process can make or break a career. Organizational socialization affects attachment styles and attachment behavior, but can also influence newcomer role adjustment at work. Furthermore, researchers
(Nelson & Quick, 1991) suggested that organizational socialization can have effects on the health and well-being of newcomers.

Socialization processes are critical to maintaining and/or changing the culture of schools. Through the study of socialization processes and outcomes, the understanding of an organization’s culture, how it is maintained, and its impact upon the activities of administering, teaching, and learning becomes clear (Greenfield, 1985a). Few school systems now give attention to the socialization of their new members (Duke, 1988; Parkay, Currie, & Rhodes, 1992). Administrator performance is, at least in part, a function of the socialization process, especially because much of the socialization takes place within the context of the school (Heck, 1995).

When district leaders replace principals, the effects reverberate throughout a school. The magnitude of this experience and its impact on relationships, expectations, and outcomes may differ, but the effects are felt by all (Hart, 1993). Administration succession is the process of replacing key officials in organizations (Grusky, 1960). Succession brings the matter of leadership close to the surface of organizational consciousness at all levels. Those who appoint new leaders, those who work with them, and those whose lives may be affected by them watch for signs that things will change, and that change will bring about a positive difference in their work lives and outcomes (Hart, 1993). For principals new to a school, critical relationships and interaction patterns among those principals, their superiors, and the social system of the school are ambiguous at the time of their appointment to the school. Many of those relationships and patterns form during the uncertainty right before the succession, throughout the succession, and into the succession when the new principal becomes deeply involved in
a complex social process. Succession is also a time when the occasion for principals to reflect on events and experiences may be difficult to find (Hart, 1993).

Hart (1988) and Blau (1964) concluded that a critical component of a succession experience is the group’s social validation of the legitimate authority of the new principal. When examining succession in the turnaround process, researchers found that accelerating turnover of principals due to pressures of reform, the standardization agenda, principals’ mobility and the aging baby boom generation have created difficulties that threaten the sustainability of school improvement efforts and undermine the capacity of incoming and outgoing principals to lead their schools (Fink & Brayman, 2006). In their study, Fink and Brayman (2004) found that school systems with carefully planned transitions of principals continue with a minimum of unrest and disruption while being capable of handling external pressures.

Socialization adds to the understanding of the social nature of the leadership succession process by introducing the concept of deliberate organizational tactics accessible to and used by superiors that affect the likelihood of desired outcomes. Rather than focusing on static traits, socialization emphasizes the importance of the successor principal’s congruence and growth, as well as to facilitate social and cultural analysis by the successor, as a shared reality develops in the school, thus validating leadership (Hart, 1991).

**Statement of the Problem**

One major approach to school reform calls for the removal of principals of persistently low-performing schools and to replace those principals with ones expected to reverse chronic underperformance rapidly and sustain improvement. New principals are
typically strangers in an experiential sense in that they have not previously occupied those precise positions. The principals are also strangers socially if they come from the outside; in addition, the surroundings are new to them. Simmel (1950) stated that the new principal’s position in the group is determined by how the qualities he or she brought into the position, but that do not stem from the group itself, are viewed. The new principal can easily be an observable symbol of undesired change (Grusky, 1960), and it is common that the school community will seek to protect the current system from the new principal’s influence (Hart, 1993). Just how are these new principals socialized into a new and complex educational environment, both by members of the school itself and by school district leaders, especially when those principals have been appointed to make significant changes? What do these principals understand about the organizational socialization process?

The organizational socialization process is defined as “learning the ropes,” being taught what is important and what is expected in the organization, acquiring appropriate role behaviors, and adjusting to the group’s norms and values (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Few school systems now give attention to the socialization of their new members, and principal’s superiors are often not aware or seem unconcerned with the critical process of socialization (Duke, 1988; Parkay et al., 1992). Furthermore, because SIG reform is in the early stages of implementation, empirical evidence about SIG principal socialization is lacking; not much is known about the socialization process of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change. Therefore, this study sought to explore the organizational socialization experiences of SIG principals and what SIG principals perceived school district leaders’ role to be in the socialization of those
principals during the first year of SIG implementation in the context of principal succession.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the organizational socialization experiences of principals who replaced existing principals at SIG schools (i.e. schools deemed as persistently low-performing) during the first year of SIG implementation. This study also explored principal perceptions of the roles that both school and district personnel played in the SIG principals’ socialization process. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What were the socialization experiences of principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation?
2. What did SIG principals perceive the role of school district leaders to be in the socialization process during the first year of SIG implementation?

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is that it may contribute valuable insight into the socialization experiences of SIG principals as they undergo their first year of forced leadership change. The removal of the existing principal of a persistently underperforming school is a requirement to receive SIG funding in all of the four intervention models. The replacement of the principal is considered to be fundamental in the successful turnaround of a persistently underperforming school. The socialization of those new principals, both at the school and district level, is important to the effectiveness of the principal’s succession. Organizational socialization is a process which can make or break a career (Kwesiga & Bell, 2004) and which can make or break organizational
systems of manpower planning (Schein, 1992). This study may aid reform-minded school district leaders who choose to remove and replace school principals by enhancing their awareness of the socialization process and its significance in principal succession. Current or future principals at SIG schools may also benefit from this study to increase their awareness of the socialization process and its effects on their succession. The awareness of socialization is significant as district leaders and principals work to lead and sustain the change demanded of them.

**Research Design**

This study examined the socialization experiences of seven principals in two urban western school districts during the first year of forced leadership change at schools designated to receive SIG funding; in other words, to capture those principals’ reactions to their new circumstances. In 2010, both school districts received SIG funding with the expectation that SIG-designated schools would rapidly increase student achievement. One of the conditions of receiving SIG funding was that school district leaders were required to remove and replace principals in SIG schools. In order to gain perspective of the socialization process from the principals’ point of view, a phenomenological research design was utilized in this study. The phenomenon under study was the principals’ lived experiences during the first year of forced leadership change. Using this design, it was possible to extract the essence, or a deeper understanding, of the lived experiences of the participants during their first year as a SIG principal (Lichtman, 2010).
Definition of Terms

Throughout this dissertation, a number of words and phrases are used related to school reform and principal socialization. Those words and phrases are defined for the purpose of this study:

- **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**—an aspect of the federally mandated accountability system used to determine if schools are making progress toward narrowing the achievement gap, and in ensuring all students are proficient in the areas of mathematics and English language arts by the 2013-2014 school year (Nevada Department of Education, 2007, p. 9). Schools not making AYP for one year are put on the Watch List. Schools not making AYP for two consecutive years are labeled as being In Need of Improvement. If a school does not make AYP for three consecutive years, they must use some of their Title I funds to support students by providing tutoring or after-school programs. Schools enter Corrective Action if they fail AYP for four consecutive years. Finally, if a school fails AYP for five years or more they must plan to and implement some form of restructuring.

- **Administration Succession**—the process of replacing key officials in organizations (Grusky, 1960)

- **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**—enacted in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson emphasizing equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability. The law authorizes federally funded education programs that are administered by the states. In 2002, Congress amended ESEA
and reauthorized it as No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2010)

- No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—the commonly used name to refer to House Referendum 1, the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Nevada Department of Education, 2007, p. 9)

- Organizational socialization—the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role and for participating as an organizational member (Louis, 1980, pp. 229-230)

- Persistently lowest-achieving schools—(a) any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater or a high school that has had a graduation rate that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and (b) any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or is a high school that has had a graduation rate that is less than 60 percent over a number of years (U.S. Department of Education, 2010)

- Restart model—one of the four SIG intervention models at the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The school is converted or closed and reopened under a
charter school operator, charter management organization, or education management organization (Perlman & Redding, 2011)

• School closure model—one of the four SIG intervention models at the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The school is closed and students are enrolled in other schools in the school district that are higher achieving (Perlman & Redding, 2011)

• School Improvement Grant—Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This grant is to be used to significantly raise student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010)

• Transformational model—one of the four SIG intervention models at the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The principal is replaced (except in specified situations), and the new principal implements a rigorous staff evaluation and development system, institutes comprehensive instructional reform, increases learning time, and is given greater operational flexibility and support (Perlman & Redding, 2011)

• Turnaround model—one of the four SIG intervention models at the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The principal is replaced, and the new principal rehires no more than 50% of the staff, is given greater principal autonomy, and implements other prescribed and recommended strategies (Perlman & Redding, 2011)

Limitations

This study has the following limitations:
1. The principals selected for the study came from SIG schools in two school districts; there were only eight SIG schools in those districts; therefore, findings may not be generalizeable to all schools and districts.

2. Only principals of transformation and turnaround schools participated in the study. In the state where the study took place, only those two interventions were implemented during the first year that the state implemented SIG; therefore, the findings may not be generalizeable to SIG schools following the restart or school closure intervention models.

3. The researcher in the study was a SIG principal; therefore, the findings were collected and interpreted through the lens of a SIG principal going through the socialization process herself. To reduce the impact of this bias on the study, the researcher used phenomenological protocol, followed methods meticulously, kept thorough records, interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and acknowledged her subjectivity (Lichtman, 2010).

**Summary**

The focus of this study was to develop an understanding of the socialization of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change. More specifically, the following questions guided the research: What were the socialization experiences of principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation, and what did SIG principals perceive school district leaders’ role to be in the socialization process during the first year of SIG implementation? As current school reform includes removal and replacement of principals, the examination of the process of how incoming principals are socialized is significant in order to promote effective principal succession. This research
study is presented in five chapters. The first chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, significance of the study, research design, definition of terms, and limitations of the study. The second chapter presents a review of the literature, and the following topics are covered in detail: the SIG initiative, the historical framework and evolving definition of socialization, the conceptual roots and theoretical framework of organizational socialization, principal succession, and phenomenology.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for this research study. It includes the research design, selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis procedures, and the background of the researcher. The phenomenological research design was used to examine principals’ lived experiences during the first year of forced leadership change. The fourth chapter presents the study’s findings, and Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusion.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Chapter 2 provides relevant background into principal socialization, as well as important contextual information that is critical in building the foundation for the study. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section of the literature review focuses on the evolution of school reform with a particular emphasis on the School Improvement Grant, which requires principal removal and replacement in the four intervention models. The second section of the literature review details findings on the theory and research regarding organizational socialization and the importance of the socialization process on effective principal succession. The third section provides relevant information on principal succession, while the last section focuses on the phenomenological research design.

School Improvement Grant

“This is really really hard work; there’s a reason the country took a pass on this for a couple of decades” (Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, as cited in Klein, 2012).

For over 40 years, educational reform has been continually evolving. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson championed the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in response to the condition of education available to children living in poverty in the United States. The Act provided federal funding to schools serving low-income students, representing a major shift in philosophy, as it expanded the federal government’s role in public education. It also demonstrated, for the first time, the explicit link between federal funding and national policy concerns in the form of desired eradication of poverty by means of education (Paige, 2006). One component of the Act, Title I, was created to ensure equality of educational opportunities for all students, as
federal resources were directed to children who had been poorly serviced by state and locally based education system (Paige, 2006). Specifically, Title I, Part A, of the ESEA is a set of programs developed by the United States Department of Education to distribute funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families with the goal of increasing student achievement. Generally, to qualify for Title I funding, a school has approximately 40% or more of its students come from families who qualify under definitions set forth by the United States Census as low-income (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan directed Secretary of Education T.H. Bell to commission a study on the status of public education in the United States; hence, the National Commission on Excellence in Education was formed (Driscoll, 2004). A Nation at Risk was published two years later, and the face and future of public education changed forever, as the nation was warned that America was on the brink of losing its top-ranked position internationally. As stated in the report, “If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). Because of this report, lawmakers in a number of states designed their own definitions and standards of reform. In the late 1980’s, for example, Kentucky became the first state to define its own version of education reform and developed a comprehensive approach concerning student achievement, educator quality, and school and district accountability (Driscoll, 2004).

In 1994, state policymakers were required by mandates in the newly reauthorized ESEA to maintain standards-based systems of accountability and to provide statewide
systems of supports so that school districts and schools could meet the accountability demands required to receive federal funding. As part of the reauthorization, states’ education leaders were encouraged to assess whether schools were making progress in raising the achievement levels of all students and to impose sanctions on those that did not. Although the reauthorization of ESEA called for greater accountability for student achievement, it lacked much force (Herman et al., 2008).

Under the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), leaders in school districts and schools were required to develop uniform statewide-based assessments and an accountability system that determined whether schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP); sanctions were placed on school districts and schools not making adequate progress toward student achievement targets. A progressive set of categories of schools not meeting statewide accountability goals are:

1. Schools in Improvement--Title I schools that have failed to make AYP for two or three consecutive years—one year for planning, one year for implementation of improvement strategies

2. Schools in Corrective Action--Title I schools that have failed to make AYP for four consecutive years; and

3. Schools in Restructuring--Title I schools that have failed to make AYP for five years and have one year to plan and another year to implement a major reform in school governance. (Perlman & Redding, 2011).

An analysis of data and review of restructuring successes by the Center on Innovation & Improvement (Brinson & Rhim, 2009) concluded that:
• Few leaders of schools identified for restructuring were implementing significant changes to school governance and staffing as envisioned in NCLB;
• School districts often chose the least prescriptive restructuring option; and
• All of the four most significant restructuring options were not available to schools.

The experience with restructuring since 2002 has presented a backdrop for the more current focus on the persistently lowest-achieving schools and more substantial methods for positive change. A growing demand for accountability and a commitment to helping children on the wrong side of the achievement divide fueled a varied set of initiatives to significantly impact turnaround schools at the bottom of the performance ladder (Murphy, 2010). The most recent change to school reform and funding toward school improvement came during the administration of President Barack Obama. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education finalized its rules governing $3.5 billion in school improvement grants, representing a dramatic increase in school improvement funding (New Rules Set, 2009). Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG) were funded by $546 million in the fiscal year 2009 appropriation; an additional $3 billion was appropriated from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to support the transformational changes that were needed to turn around the lowest achieving U.S. schools (ARRA, 2010). As stated by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan,

The large investment in school improvement funds made possible by the Recovery Act presents a historic opportunity to attack education’s most intractable challenge—turning around or closing down chronically low-achieving schools. Our goal is to turn around the five thousand lowest-performing schools
over the next five years, as part of our overall strategy for dramatically reducing the drop-out rate, improving high school graduation rates, and increasing the number of students who graduate prepared for success in college and the workplace. (Stratman-Krusemark, 2009, p. 1)

Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the School Improvement Grant (SIG) provided for the U.S. Secretary of Education to allocate funds to the persistently lowest-achieving schools to support rapid improvement through four intervention models:

- Turnaround model: The changes that are required under the Turnaround model, as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education are:
  - Replace principal;
  - Use locally adopted turnaround competencies to review and select staff and rehire no more than 50% of existing staff;
  - Implement strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff;
  - Select and implement an instructional model based on student needs;
  - Provide job-embedded professional development designed to build capacity and support staff;
  - Ensure continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction;
  - Provide increased learning time for staff and students;
  - Provide social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports
  - Implement new governance structure; and
  - Grant operating flexibility to school leader (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).
Under the Turnaround model, states may seek a federal waiver may be sought to allow these schools to restart the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) school improvement clock and no longer be required to provide public school choice or supplemental education services (Maxwell, 2010).

- **Restart model:** School district leaders convert or close and reopen a school under a charter school operator, charter management organization, or education management organization, which has been selected through a rigorous review process. A restart model must enroll any former students who wish to attend the school, within the grades the school serves (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

- **School closure:** School district leaders close the school and enroll students in other schools in the district that are higher achieving. Those other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the schools that are closed and may include, but not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

- **Transformation model:** Changes required to occur under this model, as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education are:
  
  - Replace principal;
  - Implement new evaluation system developed with staff;
  - Use student growth as a significant factor;
  - Identify and reward staff who are increasing student outcomes; support and then remove those who are not;
  - Implement strategies to recruit, place, and retain staff;
  - Select and implement an instructional model based on student needs;
o Provide job-embedded professional development designed to build capacity and support staff;

o Ensure continuous use of data to inform and differentiate instruction;

o Provide increased learning time;

o Provide an ongoing mechanism for community and family engagement;

o Partner to provide social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports;

o Provide sufficient operating flexibility to implement reform; and

o Ensure ongoing technical assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Arne Duncan set a national goal of turning around 5,000 schools in five years, stating

If we are to put an end to stubborn cycles of poverty and social failure, and put our country on track for long-term economic prosperity, we must address the needs of children who have long been ignored and marginalized in chronically low-achieving schools. States and school districts have an opportunity to put unprecedented resources toward reforms that would increase graduation rates, reduce dropout rates, and improve teacher quality for all students, and particularly for children who most need good teaching in order to catch up. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 1)

Since 2009, 44 states have supported turnarounds in 730 low-performing schools (Anderson, 2010; Williams, 2011).

In identifying the lowest-achieving, schools are categorized into three tiers, each tier representing a level of priority for the SIG funding. In the state where this study took
place, the three tiers of schools identified as lowest achieving, in priority order for assistance through SIG were:

- Tier I: Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that: (1) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of those schools in the State (or the lowest-achieving five such schools); or (2) is a high school that has had a graduation rate below 60% over each of the last four years.

- Tier II: Any eligible secondary school that does not receive Title I, Part A funds and: (1) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of such schools; or (2) is a high school that has had a graduation rate below 60% over each of the last four years.

- Tier III: Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is not a Tier I school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The 2009 and 2010 School Improvement Grant programs strongly augmented the restructuring provisions of NCLB and committed a substantial increase in funding to rid the nation of its persistently lowest-achieving schools. It was apparent that the provisions set forth in SIG required that change must be dramatic, improvement rapid, and results significant (Perlman & Redding, 2011). Moving beyond the restructuring provisions of NCLB, the SIG program:

- Considered student growth in determining school progress;
- Sharply focused on the persistently lowest-achieving schools;
- Limited strategies employed under the transformation model to a defined and muscular set of effective practices;
• Stressed the importance of talent, the human capital necessary for rapid school improvement; and
• Required changes in governance and leadership to pave the way for rapid and sustained improvement. (Perlman & Redding, 2011, p. 5)

Because the SIG initiative was a new development in federal efforts to increase student achievement in the persistently lowest-achieving schools, no studies had been conducted at the time of this study to ascertain its success or failure; thus, the SIG initiative is seen as a work in progress with no definitive verdict on its effectiveness. A report by the Government Accountability Office in 2012 found that a number of states renewed grants for schools that did not meet annual goals, arguing that states need more Education Department guidance in making refunding decisions. However, during that same year, a number of schools posted double-digit gains in state math scores. Furthermore, although some school principals may not have achieved significant gains in achievement scores, they began to create new school cultures (Klein, 2012). Robert Balfanz, a leading researcher on school improvement summed it up by stating, “This is not the Oldsmobile of comprehensive school reform…[This is] a souped-up model coming hard and fast and getting big changes quick….The big question is whether those changes are going to lead to improvement” (Klein, 2012, p. 18).

Schools identified to receive SIG funding were required to make big changes against a tight clock due to the program’s genesis. Although the grant funding would be available to schools for three years, from the 2010-11 school year through the 2012-13 school year, some school districts received funds just weeks before the start of the 2010-11 school year. That left many school district leaders with little time to find principals or
teachers and explain the program to the community. The Government Accountability Office criticized the federal Department of Education for taking too long to process the applications, which gave school and district leaders too little time to develop the program’s complex framework. However, federal officials defended the program’s fast pace, as argued by deputy assistant secretary, Jason Snyder: “Our children had waited too long. We realized we should not—we could not—wait any longer” (Klein, 2012, p. 18).

Education policy leaders have questioned several aspects of the SIG initiative. State and district officials have argued that the stringent requirements are too rigid, or perhaps impossible, to achieve. For example, lawmakers question whether the four school improvement models put forth in regulations by the Department of Education are grounded in research sufficiently (Klein, 2010). Policy experts have also contended that states should receive greater flexibility in defining their lowest performing schools, and that the overly prescriptive elements of the four intervention models should be modified (Knudson, Shambaugh, & O’Day, 2011). The capacity of school districts in locating and attracting qualified principals and teachers has been another concern of policy experts, especially when most district leaders had little time in which to plan and execute a turnaround strategy (Maxwell, 2010). The policy decision to replace principals in schools had been difficult, as there have not enough qualified principals-in-waiting to take over in many areas. As stated by Jack Jennings, an education analyst, “Once the administration got into this campaign, they saw it was more complicated that their rhetoric” (Dillon, 2011, p. 3). In some cases, principals were shuffled from one SIG school to another and in other places, the principals’ position sat vacant while searches were conducted for the right candidate. However, more than half of the 46 state Title 1 directors who oversaw
the program during the first two years indicated that replacing the principal was a key piece to improving student achievement in transformation and turnaround schools, according to a survey by the Center on Education Policy (Klein, 2012).

Researchers who have studied how school leaders try to restructure their schools cautioned that there is no magic formula to success. “I think it’s really important to point out that education research doesn’t really point to an easy fix,” stated education analyst, Caitlin Scott, “we shouldn’t expect these options would really create miracles” (McNeil, 2009, p. 1). Additionally, in an open letter to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Gail Connelly, Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) stressed:

NAESP supports the Secretary’s initiative to identify the lowest performing schools, establish rigorous interventions, provide them sufficient resources over multiple years to implement those interventions, and hold them accountable for improving student performance. However, we fundamentally disagree with the approach to enact this wide-ranging and transformational reform initiative with the simplistic and reactionary step of replacing principals as the first step in turning around low-performing schools. NAESP strongly supports reform models that provide the essential resources existing principals of low-performing schools must have to succeed. These resources include the necessary time, talent, and tools. (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2010, p. 1)

The School Improvement Grant initiative has provided the funding to help state and school district leaders address the needs of the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the U.S. to improve student achievement. Rapid, high yield results are the expectation
at schools receiving SIG funding, as demonstrated by improving student proficiency, increasing the numbers of schools that make AYP, using data to inform decisions, and creating a system of continuous feedback and improvement (Perlman & Redding, 2011). The four intervention models require that principals must be removed and replaced, and this has been challenging in school districts throughout the nation (Dillon, 2011). The literature review now moves to explore the socialization process, beginning with a historical framework and evolving definition, an examination of the conceptual roots of socialization, and exploring the theoretical framework and the four dominate themes of socialization, on which this study was based.

The Historical Framework and Evolving Definition of Socialization

The review of literature on socialization has revealed several broad definitions. Like many concepts operating in the social sciences, the verb *socialize* and its cognate *socialization* were current in the language long before they were used as concepts by sociologists, psychologists, or other behavioral scientists (Clausen, 1968). The *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language*, dating back to 1828, contained the word socialize in the sense to render social, make fit for living in society (Merton et al., 1957). Clausen (1968) found an example, taken from a work published in 1899, which indicated that socialization is designed to produce the moral participant in society: “He (the wrongdoer) is imperfectly socialized” (p. 21). Additionally, there were alternate meanings: to nationalize or subject to government control or ownership; to adapt to social needs or uses; and to behave sociably, though the latter usage seems largely colloquial (Clausen, 1968).
The term socialization, along with its various cognates, began to appear with some frequency in sociological writings in the mid-1890’s. Turner (1988) reported that in 1895, Simmel referred to socialization as the process of group formation or development of the forms of association. Turner further indicated that in 1896, Ross characterized socialization as the molding of individual feelings and desires to suit the needs of the group. Clausen (1968) noted that Giddings defined socialization in 1897 as the development of a social nature or character, a social state of mind, in the individuals who associate. Socialization was understood as a condition of society brought about by people forced into a form of willing cooperation among individuals, leading to increased solidarity and reduced the conflict otherwise inherent among individuals (Wentworth, 1980).

The term socialization has continued being used with decidedly varied meanings, although it has been most often used in discussions pertaining to harmonious social relationships and for the persistence and unity of human groups. The implication of we-feeling and of psychic or spiritual participation of the individual in collective activities was as common as the thought that socialization included the gradual incorporation by the individual of the beliefs and customs of his society or group (Clausen, 1968). In his 1913 doctoral dissertation, Ernest Burgess (as cited in Smith, 2007) noted two aspects of socialization:

From the standpoint of the group, we may define it as the psychic articulation of the individual into the collective activities. From the standpoint of the person, socialization is the participation of the individual in the spirit and purpose, knowledge and methods, decision and action of the group. (p. 2)
Through most of the 1920’s, the term socialization was employed rather casually and was more widely used in its present sense in the late 1930’s (Clausen, 1968). With influence from Freud and Mead, Young equated socialization with becoming social, or acquiring the social attributes of members, not some form of social nurturing activity (Clausen, 1968; Turner, 1988). Talcott Parsons (1951) was the first to take advantage of the possibilities that had evolved from the conceptual foundation surrounding the modern understanding of socialization when he wrote, “The acquisition of the requisite orientations for satisfactory functioning in a role is a learning process, but it is not learning in general, but a particular part of learning. This process will be called the process of socialization” (p. 205). In other words, under Parson’s definition, it was no longer necessary to mold, domesticate and render human nature fit for society; all that was needed was to learn proper role expectations to becoming a functioning element in the social system. That learning was what Parsons (1951) termed socialization. Brim and Wheeler (1967), built upon this conceptual understanding by defining socialization as the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them social beings and participants in society.

Similarly, Merton (1968) defined socialization as the process through which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to perform a social role acceptably or to participate as a member of the organization. From Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) business standpoint, socialization entails the learning of a cultural perspective that encompasses and applies to both commonplace and unusual matters occurring in the workplace. It provides the individual with an ordered view of the work
life that guides experience, orders and shapes personal relationships in the work setting, and provides the ground rules under which everyday conduct is managed.

**Professional Socialization**

Socialization is the process of learning a new role. Scholars distinguish among different forms of adult socialization; in terms of professions, socialization can be broken down into two different and distinct forms—professional and organizational (Crow, 2007; Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1991, 1993). Professional socialization refers to the process that instills the skills, knowledge, and disposition needed to become a member of the profession (Bullough, 1990; Crow, 2007). This type of socialization is reflected, in part, in the length and type of training received. Professional socialization occurs primarily during the early stages of a work career and is essential for individuals as they become committed to careers and prepared to fill organizational positions (Miller & Wager, 1971). Leithwood, et al. (1992) conceptualized professional socialization in a framework of initiation, transition, and incorporation into four major areas: relationships, experience with the formal organization, formal training, and outcomes.

Professional socialization occurs at an anticipatory stage, either consciously or unconsciously, and when the individual is intentionally preparing to assume an occupational role (Crow, 2007). The anticipatory stage process considers all the learning that occurs prior to a newcomer’s entrance into an organization (Brim & Wheeler, 1967; Feldman, 1976; Van Maanen, 1976). As stated by Merton (1968), anticipatory stage of professional socialization is the “process by which persons take on the values of the group to which they aspire” (p. 265), while Porter, Lawler, &
Hackman (1975) labeled it as pre-arrival. As individuals progress through the anticipatory stage, two variables emerge: realism, where newcomers have an accurate picture of life in an organization, and congruence, which refers to the extent to which the organization’s resources and newcomer’s needs and skills are aligned (Feldman, 1976).

Professional socialization for school principals typically begins in teaching and moves through university coursework, an internship during which the candidate is placed in a real administrative setting under the supervision of a practicing principal and university faculty member prior to actually becoming a principal, and the first professional assignment (Crow, 2006). From studies on principal professional socialization, scholars have concluded that principals are largely socialized in an informal, random manner (Duke, Isaacson, Sagor, & Schmuck, 1984; Greenfield, 1985a). Differences between principals’ expectations and the reality of the job they experienced extracted strong responses from principals in a study conducted by Duke et al. (1984). Principals experienced unexpected loneliness of the principalship, unexpected time pressure, and the uncomfortable feelings of being unprepared. Duke et al. concluded that the principals had apparently lacked “an appreciation of the complexity of the principalship” (p. 26).

Greenfield (1985b) asserted that professional socialization has two primary objectives: moral socialization, which is concerned with values, norms, and attitudes present to the group, and technical socialization, which focuses on knowledge, skills, and techniques needed to perform satisfactorily as school leader. Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) argued that both preservice and serving
principals placed most value on those professional socialization experiences that related directly to their work and occurred in schools. This mirrors Duke et al. (1984) who found that informal processes dominate principals’ relevant learning experiences. Other studies have contributed to the knowledge of principal professional socialization, where researchers pointed out that site level factors mold the way principals learn their roles and responsibilities (Marrion, 1983).

Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is described as a lifelong process of learning the norms or “ropes” (Schein, 1971) and the values of different and varied groups that an individual may join (Crow, 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Through organizational socialization, a person learns the knowledge, values, and behaviors required of those filling a role within a particular organization (Buchanan, 1974). In other words, organizational socialization focuses on the specific context where the role is being performed, for example, a school facing challenging circumstances. The learning taking place is emphasized by how things are done at that particular site and includes the specific norms, values, and requirements of the school where an individual becomes the leader (Crow, 2007). Organizational socialization facilitates the adjustment of newcomers to organizations (Ashforth & Saks, 1996), and according to Van Maanen and Schein (1979):

Experienced members must find ways to insure that the newcomer does not disrupt the ongoing activity on the scene, embarrass or cast disparaging light on others, or question too many of the established cultural solutions worked out
previously…The manner in which this teaching/learning occurs is…the
organizational socialization process. (p. 211)

More recently, Taromina (1997) defined organizational socialization as “the process by
which a person secures relevant job skills, acquires a functional level of organizational
understanding, attains supportive social interactions with coworkers, and generally
accepts the established ways of a particular organization” (p. 29).

Organizational socialization begins upon appointment, and in the context of
education, the socialization process requires an understanding of a complex array of
people, policies, processes, and priorities (Hart, 1993). Leadership is intertwined with
each particular organizational culture, and each new manager needs to understand and
analyze the particular culture into which he or she is placed (Schein, 1992). An insider
(someone appointed from inside the school) brings past experience and knowledge to
the socialization process in contrast to someone who is brought in from the outside.
Organizational socialization for the new leader in each school is fundamentally unique
(Schein, 1992).

Whereas professional socialization indoctrinates individuals toward a conception
of the profession, organizations socialize their newcomers to be effective members of
the organization (Schein, 1992). At times, the two forms of socialization involve
conflicting values and role conceptions. For example, while professional socialization
may emphasize change, innovation, and reform, organizational socialization may
encourage stability, maintenance of the status quo, and tradition (Crow, 2007). When
the values and conceptions of professional and organizational socialization conflict,
organizational socialization quickly overpowers professional socialization; the salience,
urgency, and power of the work context overshadows education and training (Hart, 1991).

To summarize, the socialization process can be conceptualized as taking place in two phases. The first phase is professional socialization, which refers to the processes through which one becomes a member of a profession and, over time, identifies with the profession (Heck, 1995). For example, the professional socialization of principals would include their preservice, during their anticipatory socialization as teachers, in their formal training, and as new principals in their first years as administrators (Duke et al., 1984). The second phase is organizational socialization, which teaches a person the knowledge, values, and behaviors required in a particular role within a particular organization (Hart, 1993). In other words, organizational socialization occurs when people adapt to new jobs and organizational roles. The focus of this literature is on this latter phase of socialization, organizational socialization, as the growing body of evidence suggests that principal effectiveness largely depends on how well principals become socialized into the cultures and contexts of their new role (Cline & Necochea, 2000; Hart, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1992).

The Conceptual Roots of Organizational Socialization

Socialization has been studied from a variety of viewpoints. Cultural anthropologists research the development of the typical adult in a particular group. Psychologists explore each person’s experiences. Social psychologists examine the influence of a group on each person within it. Sociologists seek to understand the impacts of socialization on people within the institutions and groups that make up
society (Merton, 1968). Each of these perspectives presents information that aids those who work in education to understand their experiences from different viewpoints.

In order to gain an understanding of organizational socialization, culture must be considered. Any organizational culture is made up broadly of long standing rules of thumb, cultural modes of thinking, feeling, and doing (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Organizational cultures arise and are maintained as a way of coping with and making sense of a given problematic environment. However, the transfer of a specific work culture from generation to generation of organizational members does not always occur smoothly, quickly, and without evolutionary complications (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). As new members enter the organization, they always bring with them the potential for change. They may question old assumptions about work performance or fail to appreciate the work ideology shared by existing members. Newcomers bring different backgrounds, expertise, and preconceptions of the job performance; this can lead to values and goals that are different from existing members. Therefore, newcomers must be taught to see the organization in the same way as their more experienced colleagues if the traditions of the organization are to survive. The manner in which this teaching/learning takes place is referred to as the organizational socialization process (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

The Role of Culture in Organizational Socialization

Schein (1992) explained that the framework for the structuring effects of organizational interaction is the culture of the organization and defined culture as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well
enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the
correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)

A school’s culture can greatly influence organizational socialization (Hart, 1993;
Peterson, 2002) and is often synonymous with ethos, sage, and climate (Merton, 1968).
Culture often shapes the way in which a school staff thinks, acts, reacts, and interacts
(Peterson, 2002). A new principal must come to know not only a variety of commonly
shared meanings, but also the interaction patterns that are so established as part of the
school itself that they are passed on to new members as if they are a part of objective
reality and a preferred part of life (Louis, 1980). Schein (1985), through his analysis of
leadership, contended that “culture controls the manager more than the manager controls
culture, through automatic filters that bias the manager’s perceptions, thoughts and
feelings” (p. 314).

Optimal socialization involves learning only those parts of the culture that are
necessary to the organization’s survival and continued functioning. The process will not
work when the new principal does not learn the culture, or assumptions, of the existing
group; the principal feels alienated, uncomfortable, and possibly unproductive. However,
a new principal can become over-socialized by learning every detail of the existing
group, resulting in total conformity and the inability of the school members to be
innovative and responsive to new environmental demands (Schein, 1985). Deal and
Peterson (1990) concurred, pointing out that:

Most principals must work with a cultural tapestry that is already woven. They
must somehow reinforce thin spots or tears, shape it to cover different or changed
surfaces, or even try to reverse the fabric without unraveling the shared meaning.
There is a delicate balance between a principal’s doing nothing and doing harm. The Chinese call this balance wei-wu, the place between inaction and undue force. This balance is at the center of effective symbolic leadership and cultural change. (p. 14)

Barrett (1984) maintained that changing an organization’s culture is more difficult than creating a new one. Members in new organizations are quite open to learning and accepting the culture of their new organizational home, whereas, changing an existing culture is an extremely difficult process. According to Uttal (1983), this view aligns with a basic premise to organizational change and development efforts that changing individual and group behavior is both difficult and time consuming. It is human nature for members of an organization to want to conserve the existing culture; this is referenced as “cultural persistence” or inertia. Members of a culture are aware that components of their culture cannot be changed without affecting other cherished values that are present in the organization.

**Interaction Processes and Theories in the School Setting**

The roots of organizational socialization lie largely in the forces that motivate people to interact, the social processes of interaction, and the social structure environments and outcomes of the interaction (Hart, 1993). The interaction process is fluid, with people defining, assigning meanings, aligning, and re-aligning actions, assessing how they can best satisfy their interests, comparing and contrasting them with others, and adjusting if necessary (Woods, 1992). Turner (1988) examined views that illustrate the usefulness of interaction in exploring leader succession and the organizational socialization process. Turner’s (1988) view of interaction processes
attempt to unify motivation, interaction, and structure. Motivational processes energize and rally people to interact; interactional processes stress how people use gestures, symbols, plans and physical presence to give off signals to others and to interpret signals from others; and structural processes are the patterns that result and become integral in a school.

Interaction process theories focus on the descriptions of the dynamics of interaction, an essential component of any organizational socialization theory. These theories are often applied as research frameworks to leadership studies to explain the behavior of leaders and followers (Hart, 1993). For example, when examining the theory of exchange, researchers suggest that the satisfaction of interests, or satisfaction with social interaction, depends on rewards and that the degree of satisfaction depends on the value of the reward, which is determined through social experience (Blau, 1964; Cafferata, 1979). The relationships between a principal and teacher are personal and dependent on the relative benefit that each can derive from the relationship, while loyalty and leader acceptance develop over time as exchanges take place (Hart, 1993; Hollander, 1979).

Researchers exploring ethnomethodology hold the view that the content of talk and the ways in which existing members of a group can manipulate interaction with a new principal. Ethnomethodology is defined as implicit practices in a group that create a presumption that all in the group share a common world (Garfinkle, 1967). It relies on the detailed analysis of interaction processes among people, particularly in the analysis of talk (Gronn, 1982). Jones (1986) explained that by giving or withholding information or providing information in a strategic way existing members shape the interpretations
and responses of a new principal until she comes to accept the existing, shared reality. Because of this, Smith and Simmons (1983) asserted that a new principal is advised to withhold early judgments about the nature of the actual shared reality operating to shape teachers’ work, parents’ attitudes, and interactions with superiors.

Symbolic interactionism focuses on ways in which people develop self-concepts based on their beliefs about how others see them (Edwards & Klackars, 1981). Bogdan and Taylor (1975) posited that all social organizations are comprised of actors who develop definitions of a situation and who act according to these definitions:

While people may act within the framework of an organization, it is the interpretation and not the organization which determines action. Social roles, norms, values, and goals may set the conditions and consequences for action, but do not determine what a person will do. (p. 15)

Thus, there is only a perceived reality where different people experience multiple interpretations of a situation (Krathwohl, 2009).

In a school setting, symbolic interactionism provides a foundation for exploring how a new principal might come to view herself and how others can influence that view. An interaction is the negotiation of a momentarily shared conversational reality (Collins, 1987). Symbolic interaction involves the exploration of many forms of symbols, such as talk, physical gestures, intonation of voice, and facial expression (Hart, 1993); the meanings of these symbols are constructed in social interaction (Woods, 1992). Achieving inclusion in a group is a critical outcome of symbolic interaction as people develop an implicit account of reality by adding the power of responsiveness; contributing trust to the principal-school interaction; and providing for
the whole group the confidence that reality has a meaning that they hold in common (Giddens, 1984).

Theoretical Framework of Organizational Socialization

The following review of literature represents the research that has built a theoretical framework for organizational socialization, specifically examining the organizational socialization of principals. The theoretical framework upon which this study rests is based on four dominant themes present in organizational socialization: (a) socialization tactics; (b) stages of socialization; (c) personal and social contexts of socialization; and (d) outcomes of socialization. A critical understanding of these dominant themes is crucial and relevant to this study.

Socialization Tactics

People in transition from one role to another in organizations experience organizational socialization (Van Maanen, 1978). The tactics of organizational socialization are defined as “the ways in which the experiences of individuals in transition from one role to another are structured for them by others in the organization” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 230). Whether deliberate or unconscious, organizations employ a number of tactics to integrate newcomers. A tactical decision itself is to leave the socialization of newcomers to chance, dependent on the mix of people, issues, power, and events that happen (Hart, 1993). As suggested by Kwesiga and Bell (2004), socialization tactics are universal and applicable in any job or organization.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) offered a theoretical explanation of how methods of socialization influence an outcome of socialization, role orientation. Based
on their theory, newcomers respond to their roles as determined by the socialization
tactics used by members of organizational members to shape the information
newcomers receive. There are linkages between specific socialization tactics and the
resulting behavioral responses, or role orientation (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a), and “what
people learn about their work roles in organizations is often a result of how they learn
it” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 209). Additionally, the purpose of socialization
tactics is to reduce the degree of uncertainty experienced during early socialization
(Saks & Ashford, 1997b), and organizations use varied socialization tactics in an
attempt to influence newcomer learning (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002).

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), there are six opposing tactics that
members of organizations may use to configure the socialization experiences of
newcomers. These tactics influence the role orientations that newcomers adopt and their
ensuing adjustment to the organization. Newcomers respond to their roles differently
because of the socialization tactics used by members of organizations to shape the
information newcomers receive. By withholding or giving information or by providing
information in various ways, organizational incumbents can encourage newcomers to
interpret and respond to situations in a predictable manner (Jones, 1986). These tactics
may be selected consciously by the management of an organization, such as the
requirement for all newcomers to attend a formal training before assuming the new
position. However, these tactics may be selected unconsciously by management, where
newcomers must learn how to perform the role on their own (Van Maanen & Schein,
1979). Theoretically, these tactics may be used in virtually any setting in which
individual careers are established, whether those careers are business careers, school
careers, political careers, or services careers. The analysis of socialization tactics is based on the most fundamental premise that people respond to particular organizationally defined roles differently not only because people and organizations differ, but also because socialization processes differ (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Mannen & Schein, 1979). The six major dimensions of tactics include:

- Collective versus individual socialization processes;
- Formal versus informal socialization processes;
- Sequential versus random steps in the socialization process;
- Fixed versus variable socialization processes;
- Serial versus disjunctive socialization processes; and
- Investiture versus divestiture socialization processes (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Collective versus individual socialization refers to the extent to which newcomers are provided with a common set of experiences together by the organization or the extent to which individuals are provided with a unique set of experiences. An example of collective socialization is boot camp for military recruits or group training for new salesmen, whereas, individual socialization occurs when a newcomer is expected to learn a given organizationally defined role on his or her own (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Formal socialization refers to those processes in which a newcomer is segregated from incumbent organizational members while being put through a specific set of experiences tailored for the newcomer. In contrast, the newcomer’s role is not distinguished specifically during informal socialization. There is no effort to isolate the newcomer from the organization’s incumbents; they become part of work groups and learning takes place
on the job. The more formal the process, the more concern there is for the newcomer’s absorption of the appropriate attitude and stance associated with the target role (Van Mannen & Schein, 1979).

The third set of socialization tactics is sequential versus random. Sequential socialization is defined as the extent to which an organization specifies a given sequence of discrete and identifiable steps leading to the target goal; each step builds or expands upon previous steps. Random socialization takes place when the sequence of steps leading to the target role is continually changing or ambiguous (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Fixed versus variable socialization tactics refer to the extent to which the steps involved in a process have a timetable associated with them that is both honored by the organization and communicated to the newcomer. Fixed socialization takes place when organizations provide a specific time line required to complete a given passage, whereas, variable socialization processes give newcomers few clues as to when to expect a given boundary passage; there are no clear guidelines for career stage transitions (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Serial socialization refers to the process in which experienced members of an organization groom newcomers that are to assume similar kinds of positions in the organization, serving as role models for the newcomers. When no role models are available for newcomers or when newcomers are not following in the footsteps of immediate or recent predecessors, the socialization process is disjunctive; newcomers must create their own definitions of situations or events because no other role incumbent is available (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The last socialization tactic strategy is the degree to which members of an organization desire to
support and nurture the personal characteristics the newcomer brings to the system. Investiture socialization processes occur when a newcomer’s personal characteristics are valued by the organizational members, whereas divestiture socialization processes are used to deny and strip away certain personal characteristics of the newcomer (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Jones (1986) modified this taxonomy and provided additional categorizations of the tactics, as individualized (individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture) or institutionalized (collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture). Additionally, Jones offered a tripartite division of the tactics as referring to context (collective and formal), content (sequential and fixed), and sociality (serial and investiture), shown in Figure 1.

Researchers have posited that context tactics should contribute to role clarity reflecting whether newcomers have a fixed timetable and whether they know the stages through which they need to progress. Content tactics should positively relate to self-efficacy, and social tactics should encourage organizations to provide mentoring and positive feedback to newcomers, leading to greater social acceptance (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). Jones (1986) asserted that socialization tactics should reduce uncertainty and ambiguity for newcomers, leading to attitudes that are more positive and facilitating adjustment. Scholars (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1994; Jones, 1986; Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a) confirmed that institutionalized tactics are associated with lower role ambiguity, role conflict, role innovation, and less intent to quit. Furthermore, institutionalized tactics are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
(Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a), as well as task mastery (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). However,

**Figure 1.** Jones’ (1986) Tripartite Division of the Socialization Tactics
Mignerey et al. (1995) confirmed a link between the link between individualized socialization tactics and role innovation.

When examining the tripartite division, social tactics have more positive effects on outcomes than either context or content tactics (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Jones, 1986). Researchers have also investigated how newcomers respond to these tactics, focusing on newcomer perceptions of the tactics rather than the tactics themselves. Newcomers’ perceptions of the tactics, rather than the tactics themselves, have greater influence on outcomes. Mignerey et al. (1995) found that the value that newcomers place on feedback and critical involvement attitudes predicted information/feedback-seeking behavior. This behavior was related to innovative role orientation and attributional confidence but was not related to organizational commitment, communication satisfaction, or role ambiguity. Jones (1986) posited that newcomers may select organizations based on their knowledge or perception of how organizations socialize and train new workers. Researchers (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Mignerey et al., 1995; Saks & Ashford, 1997b) suggested that organizational socialization tactics promote positive attitudinal outcomes by providing the context for newcomer learning.

Uncertainty reduction theory (URT; Falcione & Wilson, 1988) has been the tacit basis for research on socialization tactics. Following URT, newcomers to an organization experience high levels of uncertainty during the entry process. Uncertainty is reduced as newcomers seek information via various channels of communication, such as interactions with peers and superiors. As uncertainty is reduced, newcomers become more proficient at task performance and become more satisfied with their job. Socialization tactics may
influence newcomers’ adjustment by reducing anxiety levels and uncertainty. Mignerey et al. (1995) posited that newcomers’ successful organizational entry is dependent upon their ability to seek and obtain ample information to reduce uncertainty, and that socialization tactics are an important antecedent of communication behavior. Furthermore, institutionalized socialization was aligned with increased information/feedback-seeking behavior.

**Socialization tactics and the principal.** When examining contextual tactics, Hart (1991) found that principals were both collectively and individually socialized by school district leaders. An example of collective socialization may include new principals going through a series of activities together, such as training in site-based management or participative decision-making. Jones (1986) suggested that collective and highly structured activities encourage commitment and job satisfaction, but suppress change and creativity. In contrast, individual socialization requires that principals complete socialization processes alone, leading to relatively high levels of role conflict and ambiguity. However, principals demonstrate higher levels of innovation when individually socialized (Hart, 1991). Principal socialization is inclined to be overwhelmingly individual, where principals report strong feelings of isolation and describe activities that reflect little or no planning by district leaders (Hart, 1991). Duke (1987), Greenfield (1985a), and Hart (1988) found that school district leaders provide little orientation, as principals receive little more than the keys to the building and, in some cases, the name of a mentor. Institutionalized, planned processes for socializing principal successors were not present in the studies.
Contextual tactics by which principals experience socialization may also be formal or informal. Formal socialization occurs when district leaders establish specific norms and expectations to accomplish specific goals (Hart, 1991, 1993). In contrast, informal socialization occurs when mentors play a large part in formal and informal socialization tactics. Mentors may be assigned to first time principals, and although this practice receives praise, it can lead to conventional, uncreative behavior (Daresh & Playko, 1989). Van Maanen (1978) further argued that by turning the socialization of newcomers over to established veterans, organizations guarantee the replication of existing roles. Informal mentor relationships may develop, which can leave the quality of the working relationship between mentors and newcomers to chance (Blau, 1988). If mentors receive little guidance about their roles or district goals, outcomes are vulnerable (Little, 1990). Informal socialization may stimulate creativity and innovation but can produce more extreme outcomes than formal socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

When arriving at a new school site, the new principal must learn specific knowledge content (Hart, 1991, 1993). Sequential socialization occurs when exposure to content follows an established and ordered set of steps. For example, sequential socialization may occur when principals are required to complete a program of training in various administrative issues, such as instructional leadership, budgeting, or district planning. When the steps required to learn the content are flexible, ambiguous, and ever changing, random socialization occurs (Hart, 1991). Duke (1987) and Weindling & Earley (1987) found a prevalence of random socialization occurring in education. Hart (1993) concurred, finding that in educational administration, the learning of new
content is infrequently ordered beyond simple orientation meetings at the beginning of the school year. Fixed or variable tactics refer to the timeline in which principals must master content related to district policy. Organizational control is tightened when principals are given a fixed time requirement by which steps must be completed. However, after formal training is complete, and the first job is acquired, principals typically report almost exclusively random and variable socialization, mostly unplanned and occurring at the school (Duke, 1987; Greenfield, 1985a; Parkay et al., 1992).

Sociality refers to social forces used to influence socialization outcomes (Hart, 1991). Principals experience serial socialization when they “follow in someone’s footsteps” and strong role models exist. Dissimilarly, when principals build a new role or significant features of a new role with the absence of a significant role model, they experience disjunctive socialization (Hart, 1991, 1993). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argued that, “the socialization process should minimize the possibility of allowing incumbents to form relationships with their likely successors” (p. 250), as mentors can suppress innovation, limit thinking, and constrain action. Nicholson (1984) maintained that although principals lacking role models need support, they more frequently approach situations more creatively.

When a new work experience reinforces the professional identity of an individual, and the existing sense of self at work is affirmed and supported, investiture occurs. However, when the new work experience challenges a person’s professional identity causing significant adjustment in self-concept, divestiture takes place (Hart, 1993), and the existing sense of self-concept is disaffirmed and subverted (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Hart (1993) claimed that when principals who possess desired skills feel
affirmed, they are more likely to vary the practices of the predecessor, or innovate. When principals feel disaffirmed, they recreate structures that are affirmed by the group, thereby avoiding personal assault and social disassociation by existing staff that innovation invites. Depending on previous experience, principal succession ranges along a continuum from partial divestiture to almost complete investiture. Hart (1991) found that divestiture forces the new principal to acquire new skills or apply skills to the new situation in creative ways, whereas, investiture encourages the new principal to press for innovation while remaining personally unchanged. Leithwood, Steinbach, and Begley (1992) reported evidence of divestiture in their study when changes occurred in principals’ self-images as instructional leaders due to the socialization process. Those experiences were more common for principals already holding administrative positions than for those new to administration. Marshall and Greenfield (1987) found that the organizational socialization process often includes the following tactical characteristics:

- The boundary passage is engaged in an individual mode;
- The informal character of the process makes it difficult for the newcomer to know what is valued by the organization;
- The steps and events associated with boundary passage appear random and thus make it difficult for the newcomer to anticipate the efficacy of his or her role-learning strategies;
- A variable time frame associated with boundary passage keeps the newcomer in the dark regarding his or her progress and increases the likelihood of conformity toward influentials;
Subtle divestiture processes require newcomers to shed values and orientations of the teacher group and to adopt new values and orientations viewed by superiors as central to membership in the administrative group. (p. 38)

To summarize the research on socialization tactics, Duke et al. (1984) posited that socialization experienced by new administrators is usually intense, short, not planned, and informal. They found that new administrators experienced stress and anxiety resulting from time constraints, loneliness, and a perceived lack of skills to manage the demands of the job. In their examination of principal socialization tactics, Parkay, et al. (1992) revealed that socialization occurred primarily informally, with few established procedures designed to enhance the quality of the resultant interactions and integration. Principals’ superiors seemed to be unaware or unconcerned with the critical process of socialization. When exploring research and theory on organizational socialization tactics in general terms, five major features emerged: (a) the nature of events; (b) the timeframe in which events occur; (c) the relative formality of structure; (d) the social context shaped by predecessors and superiors; and (e) the content. Each of these features occurs collectively or individually. School district leaders can design socialization tactics using these features to achieve desired outcomes during principal succession (Hart, 1991).

Stages of Socialization

In addition to socialization tactics, scholars use stage frameworks to draw attention to the steps that newcomers take during organizational socialization. Stages in
linear models are viewed as moving through steps along a continuum until equilibrium and integration in the new setting are reached (Hart, 1993). Stages in iterative and cyclical models are viewed as a perpetual continuation (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Researchers have identified three major categorizations of socialization stages.

**Encounter, adjustment, stabilization.** Nicholson and West (1988) perceived the socialization process as cycles of recurring, interdependent, and continuous phases. As leaders move through multiple successions that each require organizational socialization, they continually move through anticipation and preparation, through encounter and adjustment, then to stabilization (Hart, 1993). Encounter demands much learning, both cognitive and affective. Louis (1980) referred to cognitive learning during entry into a new setting as sense-making. The demands of sense-making on a new principal are dependent upon three factors: (a) the amount of change, meaning the differences in the status, role requirements, and work environment between the old and new positions; (b) contrast, or the carry-over involving people; and (c) surprise, or unmet positive and negative expectations (Hart, 1993).

The adjustment period involves the job of “fitting in.” Nicholson and West (1988) identified the adjustment phase as the heart of organizational socialization at the work site. The new principal must reach accommodation with the role, the people, and the culture at the new school site. Factors to consider during adjustment include mentors and supervisors (Weiss, 1978), group dynamics, job characteristics (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), evaluation, and influence (Feldman, 1976). The personal outcomes of socialization appear during this stage (Hart, 1993). Changes in individual identity, even personality, may result during this stage (Brousseau, 1983). During stabilization, school leaders must
negotiate two sets of relationships concurrently; one with superiors and one with faculty, staff, and students (Duke et al., 1984). The cyclical nature of the stages requires that leaders constantly project into the future, combining their appraisal and assessment of current performance with preparation for any future transitions (Hart, 1993).

**Anticipation, accommodation, role management.** Feldman’s (1976) three-stage entry model is similar to Nicholson and West’s. He explained that anticipatory socialization is the complete process of joining the group, from preparation to selection to entry. Two factors are important to success at this stage: the extent to which the expectations of the newcomer and the organization are realistic and the degree to which the newcomer is well-matched to his or her new role (Feldman, 1976).

In Feldman’s (1976) model, there are four steps in the accommodation stage. First, the newcomer is initiated to the new role. Second, the newcomer is initiated into a group and interpersonal relationships. Third, through interactive processes, the group and newcomer come to see how this person fits into the organization, uses time, and works toward common goals. Fourth, the newcomer and group come to an agreement about this person’s fit into the group and evaluate his or her performance. During the final stage in Feldman’s (1976) model, role management, the newcomer resolves conflicts about how his or her work fits into the organization and resolves conflicts that may arise within the work itself.

**Confrontation, clarity, location.** Wanous (1980) grouped stage frameworks based on the passage of time or on the occurrence of crucial events. The first stage is confrontation, during which the newcomer must confront and accept the reality of the new social setting. Role clarity is the second step, when the tasks of the new job are
assessed, interpersonal relationships with organizational members emerge, and the newcomer learns to cope with resistance to change on the part of established members of the group. The differences between the group’s evaluation of the newcomer’s performance and his or her own evaluation of performance are confronted. The newcomer learns to cope with ambiguity. It is in the third stage when the newcomer locates him or herself in the context by learning which behaviors are harmonious with expected behaviors. Feelings of mutual acceptance emerge during stage four as job involvement and intrinsic motivation increase (Wanous, 1980).

Each stage of socialization offers different challenges for new principals who may be vulnerable to the effects of different tactics. For example, during the anticipation or entry stage, new leaders can gather information about the job and make plans. Principals can discover who is influential, what previous conflicts have occurred, and what members of the school board and the superintendent expect (Hart, 1988). The level of anxiety people feel appears to depend on factors such as previous experience, the amount of forewarning people have, and the relationship with superiors (Hart, 1991). Cosgrove (1986) concluded that teachers expect change from new principals, who should move forward with needed changes because teachers are prepared to adapt and may look forward to change with anticipation. Weindling & Earley (1987) agreed, stating the most successful principals begin immediately with some surface changes that offer highly visible commitment and the ability to get things accomplished. Weindling and Earley recommended that new leaders should immediately begin to study the school and plan for more noteworthy changes related to the content of the work at the school, bring people along, and base their actions on teachers’ dreams and aspirations. The development of
long range strategies lead to changes in structural patterns of the social system over time (Hart, 1993).

During the encounter or adjustment stage, successful principals move past the surface changes into further diagnosis and understanding of the particular school site. Principals begin to accommodate and adjust toward a clearer understanding of faculty perceptions and the nature of the culture (Hart, 1993). Parkay et al., (1992) argued that principals become less intent on promoting change and start to move toward the advancement of a strong vision for the school. Reality shock can occur, where reality is noticeably different from expectations (Louis, 1980). However, this stage can be one of excitement and discovery (Nicholson & West, 1988), especially if principals avoid referring back to the way things were done at their old school (Weindling & Earley, 1987). Areas of discovery can include work context (training or learning opportunities, communication and decision-making, and atmosphere), job content (the people, the nature of the work, and the supervision), and personal responses or effects (performance, reactions and feelings, and impacts on lifestyle). Surprises often occur in transitions to new organizations or transitions within organizations (Louis, 1980), and principals who are transferred within districts are susceptible to these pressures (Ogawa, 1991). As reported by Greenfield (1985a) and Weindling and Earley (1987), negative surprises have a propensity to outweigh positive surprises, particularly those related to people and the environment; this is a reality for which principals say they are poorly prepared.

Outcomes surface during stabilization, when it becomes evident what the personal and organizational implications of a change in principals will be (Hart, 1991). Parkay et al. (1992) discovered evidence of professional self-actualization in successful principal
socialization. They found that some principals complete this transition within two years; however, this transition time was not found for first time principals. First year data foreshadowed the developmental level that principals would achieve by the middle of the third year. Nevertheless, after the first year, the “writing is on the wall” (Parkay et al., 1992, pp. 61-62) in terms of a principal’s eventual level of effectiveness.

**Personal and Social Context**

Each new principal brings a personal perspective, outside influences, and creative skepticism to the new role (Hart, 1991). The new principal, upon entry to a new site, must learn the nature of the new culture while striving to effect changes within it (Schein, 1985). Smith and Peterson (1988) posited that neither the new principal’s previous qualities nor the qualities of the school adequately explain the outcomes of succession. According to Cosgrove (1986), principals pay close attention to this aspect of successor socialization. A large proportion of the new principal’s time and attention is devoted to interpersonal relationships; those relationships play a large role in influencing outcomes (Duke, 1987; Greenfield, 1985a) and with affecting future self-concepts (Duke, 1987; Hart, 1988).

**Personal context.** Talents, preferences, traits, and experiences encompass the personal context in which successions occur. Some scholars view a career as an accumulation of role-related experiences over time (Louis, 1980). Others, like Nicholson and West (1988), see each new work role as a contributing experience. The importance of teachers, mentors, and other influential individuals in shaping principals’ early self-concepts has been emphasized by Greenfield (1985a) and Duke et al. (1984). Additionally, as described by Cosgrove (1986), new and experienced principals and the
teachers they bring when coming to a new school are affected by the personal relationships and expectations that greet them. The way new principals approach leadership transition is strongly affected by their personal traits, beliefs, and expectations (Hart, 1988; Ogawa, 1991). Attributed effects also play a role in principal succession. Ortiz and Marshall (1988), for example, pointed out the impact of a female principal’s dress, sex, experience, private life, and meticulous habits on school members’ early appraisal of her.

Social context. The social structure at the time of new principal takeover is the social context for socialization (Hart, 1991). Some emphasize that culture is so fundamental, thereby, organizations, such as schools, are cultures (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Smircich, 1983). To draw on the power of this context, the new principal must understand and utilize the values, beliefs, and assumptions that are worth guiding and energizing the school (Hart, 1993).

A framework used to understand the social context of succession is human systems theory. Influence in an organizational hierarchy is shaped by level. Level prompts judgments and reactions by members of the organization. As a new principal enters the organization, the response would be very different from that of a teacher entering the organization (Hart, 1993). Three significant features affect interactions within the organization: similarity of the group members; frequency of interaction among group members; and the tendency of people to interact with people like themselves, thus limiting the frequency of contact with people who are different (Hart, 1993). When exploring the impact of contact on positive feelings and the similarity of members on the socialization of a new principal, people generally believe that similarity and frequent
contact affect feelings positively and increase liking. This has led scholars to recommend that principals establish more contact or communication in schools when problems arise (Sherman, Smith, & Mansfield, 1986). However, Monane (1967) maintained that positive effects depend on the legitimacy of the interaction. Neither increased similarity nor increased contact appears “independently or jointly productive of positive effect in systems where hostility is the legitimate expected” outcome of contact (p. 28-29).

The same idea permeates the school setting. Policymakers call for communication between principal and staff, teamwork, teacher peer supervision, and more and longer principal classroom visits; the assertion being that these changes will improve morale and school performance. However, if these actions are not seen as legitimate, resentment and restricted productivity may result (Firestone & Bader, 1991; Hart, 1990; Little, 1990). Experienced staff members find ways to “ensure that the newcomer does not disrupt the ongoing activity on the scene, embarrass or cast disparaging light on others, or question too many of the established cultural solutions worked out previously” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Roberts (1992) contended that principals in his study indicated their most important goals in the first year included making changes in school culture. However, Roberts believed the principals in the study had no effect on school culture, displayed no understanding of school culture, and stressed compliance and formal authority rather than cultural analysis in their first year at the school.

People are more likely to increase their interactions with those who are similar to themselves and limit their interactions with those with whom they feel dissimilar (Hart, 1993); this can be a problem for newcomers, their superiors, or their new colleagues in some ways. New principals may be isolated if the school community views that principal
as not “fitting in;” the community will seek to protect the current system from the newcomer’s influence (Hart, 1993). Additionally, newcomers could increase perceptions of incongruence by drawing attention to differences in their behavior because they do not realize how they are perceived. When new principals emphasize similar beliefs, experiences, and characteristics and minimize dissimilar ones, they are creating a social environment in which they are seen as legitimate (Hart, 1993). New principals must also highlight their valued talents, traits, skills, and knowledge to improve their acceptance by the existing group (Hart, 1991; Weindling & Early, 1987).

**Outcomes of Socialization**

Socialization has personal and organizational consequences; these consequences instantly become part of the context in a dynamic and changing social system (Hart, 1991). When organizational socialization begins to take hold and the new principal is viewed as an established group member, many researchers conceptualize a new social structure; this new structure may or may not be substantially different from that in place prior to the principal’s arrival (Hart, 1993). Predicted socialization outcomes occur at personal, structural, and cultural levels and involve many facets of the principal’s role. Researchers predict a number of outcomes from combinations of these factors and levels of tactics available. The three most universally predicted outcomes are replication, content innovation, and role innovation (Hart, 1991, 1993).

**Replication.** Replication is a custodial response from the new principal and creates the most static outcome in which the new principal accepts the status quo while passively accepting the substantive requirements of tasks or roles (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Greenfield (1985a) posited that the inherited past dominates, at both the
personal and organizational levels, and all facets of the role remain virtually unchanged; the successor principal mimics the actions, values, beliefs, and definition of the role of his or her predecessor, thus maintaining the status quo. The new principal becomes the custodian of an unchanged social system (Hart, 1993). A custodial response occurs when the process is sequential and variable, and includes role models. In essence, new leaders imitate their predecessors, learn the requirements of the job, and use the usual strategies and actions to meet those requirements (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Institutionalized socialization tactics encourage newcomers to passively accept an organizational status quo, or the custodial role orientation (Jones, 1986).

The custodial response indicates that the inherited past dominates, and the new principal “becomes the custodian of an unaltered social niche in the school” (Hart, 1993, p. 465). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) offered that a custodial response occurs when a new principal replicates the learned conventional requirements of the predecessor and applies customary strategies to achieve goals. Traditional socialization has encouraged custodial outcomes that focus on management skills, such as budgeting and scheduling; values, such as stability; and norms, such as routinization (Crow, 2007).

**Content innovation.** Content innovation takes place in the way a new principal performs his or her role. The novice is unwilling for a variety of reasons to limit his or her enactment of the role to the knowledge base transmitted directly through the socialization process (Hart, 1993). Content innovation is more likely to occur when socialization is collective, formal, fixed, and without role models (Hart, 1993). It is marked by the development of considerable improvements or changes in the knowledge base or practices in the principal’s role. New ideas and innovation are stressed when
principals accept traditional norms and goals but change tactical alternatives and tasks (Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1991, 1993).

**Role innovation.** Role innovation is the most inventive outcome, as the mission and goals of the role, as well as its content, change (Hart, 1993). It is predicted when socialization occurs individually, informally, and randomly, is disjunctive, and affirms a strong professional identity (Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1991, 1993). When role innovation occurs during socialization, the new principal rejects most of the norms governing conduct and performance, and makes a genuine attempt to redefine the ends as well as the means (Schein, 1971).

Nicholson (1984) added insight into these three outcomes, focusing on personal and role development. He proposed that personal development is most likely when socialization is sequential (involving cumulative learning), occurs with role models, and requires a redefinition of professional identity. Change is a major premise. However, role development is strengthened when socialization is random, occurs without role models, and affirms professional identity. Nicholson emphasized affective states and coping responses, identity changes, and behavior, stating that affect has a powerful impact and should not be discounted. Successful socialization is made possible by friendship and strong affective bonds (Sherman et al., 1986), and organizations pay a high price for disaffection (Hart, 1993). Socialization operates as one of the top five factors creating feelings of alienation and resignation (Wanous, 1980). Jones (1986) suggested that role orientation is a product of the conscious behavioral attempt to influence procedural role performance and development. Those who experience on-the-job training are subjected to role innovation and should experience more uncertainty, while those who are trained to
accept organizationally-sanctioned role behaviors are subjected to custodial-minded role orientation and should experience less uncertainty.

Nicholson (1984) explored the concept of outcomes even further, identifying four adjustments made by new leaders: replication, absorption, determination, and exploration. Replication results when neither the new principal nor the role change, creating a custodial response. When little change occurs in the role, but considerable personal development takes place in response to role requirements, absorption results. Although this response is custodial, the new principal undergoes personal growth and development. Determination is the outcome when little personal change takes place, but significant content or role innovation occurs. When both the role and the person change, the result is exploration. These outcomes can be functional or dysfunctional, depending on the needs of the organization (Hart, 1991, 1993). Because both principal growth and school improvement are preferred outcomes, Nicholson and West (1988) reported evidence that each promotes the other:

High role innovators are more likely than low innovators to report having experienced personal change as a result of their last job change. This indicates, in the terminology of the theory of work role transitions, that exploration is more common as an adjustment mode than pure determination. (p. 110)

In studies conducted by Hart (1991, 1993) on principal socialization, custodial responses were the most frequently reported outcomes of principal socialization. Cosgrove (1986) found replication to be the most frequently occurring outcome, however, Leithwood et al. (1992), and Parkay et al. (1992) found some evidence of personal development in replication. Weindling and Early (1987) observed content
innovation as a result of principal succession. Changes observed were in decision-making, new instructional skills and knowledge, and student interactions and discipline. Role innovation was rarely found, as successor principals appeared unprepared for, or even unaware of, important values and beliefs that shape outcomes in their new roles (Leithwood et al., 1992; Roberts, 1992). Greenfield (1985b) pointed out that school administrators were once students themselves, typically going from elementary school students to school leaders, learning from those who are products of and familiar with school culture. This serial socialization is potent and functional in maintaining the status quo and presents challenges in any efforts aimed at changing the school culture or introducing new norms and practices within the student, teacher, and administrative subcultures. Greenfield (1985b) stated:

The nature of the socialization process as it appears to occur in educational administration does not foster a response which involves reform or any effort to improve or change the strategies, activities, or practices of the role that would make the role more effective or substantially different, or which would seek to redefine the basic ends served by the role. (p. 110)

More contemporary views of the new principal’s role, especially in the context of school reform, require innovative outcomes to socialization that encourage leadership to support experimentation, collaboration, and learning communities (Crow, 2007). Hopkins (2001) agreed, stating that schools in the 21st century must demand constant assessment, capacity building, persistent experimentation, and a host of other features that depend on innovative leadership. Principals may move into role innovation when there are powerful
external forces at work demanding that the status quo are altered radically to address particular mandates or requirements (Cline & Necochea, 2000).

**Principal Succession**

As school reform leads to school turnaround, the principal is removed and replaced by a new principal, in many cases. Administrator succession is the process of replacing key officials in organizations (Hart, 1993), and it is important to understand principal succession when exploring principal socialization. Succession of the organizational leader provides a vehicle for change in both formal and informal organizational structures as reflected through communication among organization members, shared organizational beliefs, and individual and group action (Fauske & Ogawa, 1983). In schools, changing principals is a disruptive event, as it changes the lines of communication, realigns relationships of power, affects decision-making, and generally disturbs the equilibrium of normal activities (Grusky, 1960; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). It creates a period of apprehension and fear of the unknown with high expectations being held by principals, teachers, and district leaders (Weindling & Earley, 1987).

Most aware of the impact of leadership succession are teachers who experience processions of leaders coming through their school. Most members of an organization view a leadership succession event as emotionally charged, with feelings of expectation, apprehension, abandonment, loss, relief, or even fear (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman & White, 2003). There may be grieving for well-loved leaders, feelings of abandonment for leaders who are moving on, or relief when controlling or incompetent leaders finally leave. Incoming principals may be seen as threats or saviors. According to Hargreaves et
al. (2003), leadership succession is seldom viewed with indifference. For principals themselves, leadership succession forces them to think about whom they have succeeded and their legacy, good or bad; the challenge is to decide what to continue and what to change. Grusky (1960) pointed out:

The successor is caught between his commitments to his superiors and his commitments to his suborganization. The former demand concrete evidence of progress, namely increased efficiency and effectiveness; the latter require some stability of expectations. And, of course, in order to achieve the organization’s goals, the successor must maintain the cooperation of the staff and therefore go slow on changes. (p. 109.)

Brown (1982) conducted a review of succession literature, which revealed studies supporting the full spectrum of possible outcomes where succession improved, disrupted, and had no effect on the performance of the organization. The outcomes of succession may vary dramatically, depending on the conditions that surround them. Succession can bring both functional and dysfunctional consequences to an organization. By bringing in outsiders and new ideas, succession can vitalize the organization, allowing adequate adaptation to change (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1981). However, Grusky (1960) argued that succession can simultaneously promote conflict within the staff and lower morale. Students and instructors are aware of the gap between formal instruction in the practice of administration and the demands of practice.

New principals must find ways to connect and incorporate their professional knowledge and experience. Principals moving to new sites must carefully consider what attitudes and behaviors to take with them. They must acknowledge the dynamics and
inimitable challenges that they may face at a new school (Porter et al., 1975). The social relationships between school leaders and their hierarchical subordinates and superordinates play a significant part in their influence on their school (Hart, 1993). Blau (1964) contended:

We cannot force others to give us their approval, regardless of how much power we have over them, because coercing them to express their admiration or praise would make these expressions worthless…There are fundamental differences between the dynamics of power in a collective situation and the power of one individual over another. The weakness of the isolated subordinate limits the significance of his approval or disapproval of the superior. The agreement that emerges in a collectivity of subordinates concerning their judgment of the superior, on the other hand, has far-reaching implications for developments in social structure. (p. 17)

**Succession Planning**

Central to principal succession is whether the transition in leadership promotes continuity or enhances discontinuity, and to what extent this is planned purposefully. Distinct types of principal succession occurs somewhere on the spectrum of continuity and discontinuity. Hargreaves (2005) identified four categories of succession planning. Planned continuity takes place when a well-thought-out succession plan is in place when a new principal takes over. The plan is sustained and the successor builds on the general directions and goals of his or her predecessor. When carefully planned continuity is in place, school improvement is sustainable over long periods and across multiple leaders. Planned discontinuity occurs when school district leaders assign or appoint a principal to
a school based on a well-thought-out plan, which expects, intends, and successfully ensures that the principal will move the school in directions that are fundamentally different from the preceding principal. A new principal assigned to turn around a failing school or to put a top down reform agenda into place would fit into this category. Hargreaves (2005) found that planned discontinuity promoted significant changes, but those changes were not sustainable. Planned discontinuity often yields rapid results, but effective leadership requires time to build the new culture and heal the wounds that disruption inevitably creates (Hargreaves, 2005).

Unplanned continuity occurs when school district leaders thrust a principal into a school without much foresight or planning and the principal maintains the existing goals and operations. Unplanned continuity surfaces when principals are appointed or assigned without a clear direction or understanding of the school’s needs, when a principal needs a place to “cruise” until retirement or is seen as ineffective, or when long-standing staffs with deeply entrenched cultures possess the knowledge, experience, and tenacity to outlast even the most innovative incoming principals (Hargreaves et al., 2003). Inexperienced principals may not be able to maintain the improvements made by their predecessors, and unexpected and demanding reform pressures prevent incoming principals from maintaining their school’s internal improvement structure. Unplanned discontinuity may suspend prior improvement efforts immediately, while re-establishing long term continuity with less innovative and effective practices that preceded them (Hargreaves, et al., 2003).

Results from Hargreaves’ (2005) succession study revealed a mix of unplanned discontinuity and continuity; discontinuity with the achievements of the new leader’s
immediate predecessor and continuity with, or regression to, the mediocre conditions preceding that predecessor. Any efforts to ensure successful leadership succession were often undermined by poor planning. The important factors to consider during principal succession are leader’s knowledge of improvement and succession processes, frequency of succession, and the changing nature of leadership in times of large-scale reform.

Ogawa (1991) suggested that the interpretation of a principal’s succession by a staff may be affected by organizational norms, conditions surrounding the succession, and characteristics of the succession process. Organizational norms can influence the sense-making of a succession event, both before and after the succession takes place. The relationship between existing organizational norms and the behavior of the successor affect how members interpret the succession. Lieberman (1956) found a tendency for successors to adjust to existing organizational norms, and Guest (1962) explained that when that pattern is held, workers responded favorably to succession.

When examining the conditions surrounding succession, one important consideration is whether the succession is forced. A forced succession is one in which a “predecessor is removed by the organization due to a negative assessment of either the predecessor’s performance or the organization’s performance or both” (Ogawa, 1991, p. 34). Gephart (1978) found that members of the organization degrade the status of the predecessor to legitimize his removal. Jackson (1953) contended that members elicit very negative responses toward successors during a forced succession. Yet, Ogawa (1991) pointed out the importance of the perceived legitimacy of forced successions. The reasons for succession, such as death, retirement, or when members of the organization are involved in the decision to replace the leader, are perceived as legitimate and less
likely to evoke negative reactions (Gephart, 1978; Grusky, 1963). The succession process itself can influence responses to principal succession. Studies have shown that subordinates were more receptive to successors who were viewed as knowledgeable and competent. When the successor was elected rather than appointed, receptiveness was even greater (Goldman & Fraas, 1965; Hollander & Julian, 1978). Additionally, Grusky (1969) found that the acceptance of the successor by organization members was negatively affected when new leaders brought staff members with them into the organization.

At schools where district leaders carefully plan for the transition of new principals, systems continue with a minimum of unrest and disruption (Fink & Brayman, 2004; Weindling & Early, 1987). Important to the transition is attention to effective communications, plenty of lead-time for entry and exit processes, and the compatibility of the new principal’s inbound knowledge with the needs of the school. Furthermore, successors need to learn more about the management of change, support for innovations, involvement throughout the planning process, and evaluation (Weindling & Early, 1987). Careful planning does not guarantee success, but it does ensure that the new principal has the opportunity to identify with the school and negotiate a shared sense of meaning with staff (Fink & Brayman, 2004). School district leaders should provide more support for newly appointed principals and planned programs of induction, such as more official time for visits and interactions at the new school (Hart, 1993).

As principals are replaced at schools, school district leaders must take into account the human factor when planning for a positive succession event. According to
Jaffee (1993), the defining characteristic of the human factor is its status as a conscious and reflective factor of production:

Humans are aware of their environment, the way they are treated, and the conditions under which they live and work. Human behavior is affected by these factors and often is directed toward changing or alleviating unpleasant conditions. Land and machines, on the other hand, are not conscious and reflective; therefore, they cannot respond and react to their experiences, make demands, intentionally avoid work, or develop ideas away from the workplace. (p. 63)

One of the most significant events in the life of all schools is a change in principals, and yet, few things in education succeed less than principal succession (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Those interested in reform and change often fail to grasp the long-term aspects of leadership. Quick-fix reforms to turn around low performing schools often drain teachers or principals, and efforts to improve are not sustained over time. The successful turnaround principal may be promoted for her efforts. This may result in regression among teachers who feel abandoned by the successful leader or feel a sense of relief when the pressure is off (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The pressures on principals by current school reform measures, where one option is principal removal, will exacerbate recent tendencies. Principals are viewed as anonymous managers who have less visibility in and attachment to a school and seem to be more loyal to the system or their own careers (Hargreaves, 2005). The recent standardization agenda has contributed to a surfacing model of leadership that is reactive, compliant, and managerial, thus deterring potential leaders from becoming principals with innovative ideas for promoting higher learning for all students. From their study, Fink and Brayman (2006) discovered that
accelerating turnover of principals due to pressures of reform, the standardization agenda, principals’ mobility and the aging baby boom generation have created difficulties that threaten the sustainability of school improvement efforts and undermine the capacity of incoming and outgoing principals to lead their schools. Principal successors are not afforded the time to engage in an entry process that would allow them to gain the trust of their staffs and develop insight into the cultures and micropolitics of their schools.

Principal Succession and Socialization

Succession and socialization are two sides of the same process involving the same people; the one side, socialization, focuses on the group’s influence on the newcomer, while the other, succession, focuses on the newcomer’s influence on the group (Hart, 1993). Socialization adds to the understanding of the social nature of the principal succession process by introducing the concept of deliberate organizational tactics accessible to and used by superiors that affect the likelihood of desired outcomes. Rather than focusing on static traits, socialization emphasizes the importance of the successor principal’s congruence and growth. Socialization facilitates social and cultural analysis by the successor, as a shared reality is developed in the school, and leadership is validated. Additionally, socialization adds personal growth, school growth, and innovation to the school performance measures typically explored in succession research (Hart, 1991).

The addition of the socialization perspective provides another dimension in educational research. First, it gives researchers a better understanding of the process of succession by studying principal successors, and principals can use a social/cultural analysis as they strive to improve their own successions. Principals need to be aware of
and skilled in organizational analysis, as they become a new member of an organization (Hart, 1991). Second, the power of the school, the school district, and community is emphasized in the socialization framework for succession inquiry to shape the actions of principals. For example, researchers can use succession events to examine how a new principal’s influence or power is validated by the school and how a positive, shared version of the experience emerges (Hart, 1991). Legitimacy and social validation emerge from social interaction processes. Schools have discernable social, professional, and interpersonal norms, beliefs, and assumptions from which these processes are shaped. There is, however, sparse knowledge about how these factors interact (Dornbush & Scott, 1975). Lastly, through the understanding of the factors that predict outcomes, principal and school growth and performance can be anticipated and improved (Hart, 1991).

**Phenomenology**

As Europe lay in ruins at the end of World War 1, Edmund Husserl sought to develop a new philosophical structure that would lend certainty to a disintegrating civilization. Husserl’s writings on phenomenology served as the force behind this philosophical movement throughout Europe (Eagleton, 1983). The origins of phenomenology can be traced back to philosophers Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, however, Husserl has been regarded as the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century (Groenewald, 2004). Other leading proponents of the philosophical concept of phenomenology include Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Satre, and Merleau-Ponty (Lichtman, 2010; Groenewald, 2004). Heidegger introduced
the concept of “being there” and the dialogue between a person and her world (Groenewald, 2004).

Phenomenology includes two variants that are followed in contemporary methodologies, hermeneutic and existential (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutics is generally thought to be the science of interpretation and explanation; there is an interaction between the researcher and what is being interpreted. Two assumptions of hermeneutics are that humans use language to experience the world and humans acquire understanding and knowledge primarily through language (Lichtman, 2010; Richards & Morse, 2007). Alfred Schultz departed from Husserl’s philosophical phenomenology, as he turned it toward the ways in which ordinary members of society attend to their everyday lives (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). This formed the existential variant of phenomenology; being in the world is a perceived reality, and there is a reciprocal relationship between the observer and the phenomenon (Richards & Morse, 2007).

The purpose of phenomenology is to describe and understand the fundamental nature of lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon (Lichtman, 2010). Therefore, phenomenology involves describing things as one experiences them, or of one’s experience of things (Hammond, Howarth, & Keat, 1991). Evidence from phenomenological research originates from first-person reports of life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenologist views human behavior, or what people say and do, as a product of how people interpret their world and attempts to see things from a person’s point of view (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The aim of phenomenology is the return to the concrete, emulating the slogan “back to the things themselves!” (Eagleton, 1983; Moustakas, 1994). Evidence derived from
phenomenological research comes from first person reports of life experiences, and in accordance with the principles of phenomenology, scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is derived through descriptions that make it possible to understand the meanings and essences of experience (Moustakas, 1994).

In phenomenology, the core processes that facilitate the source of knowledge are Epoche, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Meanings and Essences (Moustakas, 1994). The first process is Epoche, a Greek word meaning “to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Epoche demands a new way of looking at things, a way that necessitates learning to see what stands before us, what we can distinguish and describe. The everyday understandings and judgments are set aside and phenomena are re-examined in a fresh, wide open sense (Moustakas, 1994). Personal biases of the researcher are identified and all traces of personal involvement in the phenomenon being studied are removed (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The Epoche challenges those embracing the phenomenon to create new ideas, feelings, awarenesses, and understandings. Husserl stated (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 87), we “seek to attain the beginnings in a free dedication to the problems themselves and to the demands stemming from them.”

The second of the core processes is Phenomenological Reduction, on which each experience, in and for itself, is reflected. The phenomenon is perceived and described in a fresh new way. The task is to describe in textural language just what is seen, not only in terms of the external object, but also the internal act of consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). Things are experienced that exist in the world from the vantage point of self-awareness,
self-reflection, and self-knowledge. The steps in Phenomenological Reduction include: (a) bracketing, where the focus of the research is put in brackets, and everything else is set aside and the research process is solely rooted on the topic and question (Marshall & Rossman, 1995); (b) horizontalizing, where every statement is, at the outset, treated as having equal value; later, statements deemed irrelevant are deleted, leaving only the horizons, or the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon; (c) clustering the horizons into themes; and (d) organizing the themes into a coherent textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The third component of the core processes is Imaginative Variation, which is to seek possible meanings through the use of imagination, varied frames of reference, utilizing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The goal is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, or how the experience of the phenomenon came to be what it is (Moustakas, 1994). The steps taken during Imaginative Variation are:

- Systematic varying of the possible structural meanings that underlie the textural meanings;
- Recognizing the underlying themes or contexts that account for the development of the phenomenon;
- Considering the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts regarding the phenomenon; and
- Searching for exemplifications that clearly illustrate the invariant structural themes and facilitate the development of a structural description of the phenomenon. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99)
The final component of the core processes is Synthesis of Meanings and Essences, the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole. Essence in this sense refers to “that which is common, or the condition without which a thing would not be what it is” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100).

Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and the ways in which humans put them together to construct a worldview (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Phenomenology involves describing things as experienced by individuals, and evidence from phenomenological research originates from first-person reports of life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological research design was used in this study to examine the lived experiences of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change; the phenomenon being studied was their socialization experiences during that first year.

**Summary**

School reform now demands school, district, and state accountability and a commitment to helping children on the wrong side of the achievement divide, fueling a varied set of initiatives to significantly turnaround schools at the bottom of the performance ladder (Murphy, 2010). In 2009, during the Obama administration, the U.S. Department of Education earmarked $3.5 billion for school improvement grants (SIG) to support transformational changes that were needed to turn around the lowest achieving U.S. schools (ARRA, 2010). In addition to reducing the drop-out rate, improving high school graduation rates, and increasing the number of students who graduate career and college ready, the goal for SIG schools was rapid and sustained
improvement through the implementation of one of the following four intervention models, (a) turnaround; (b) restart; (c) school closure; or (d) transformation. All four intervention models called for the removal and replacement of the principal. Schools were identified for assistance through a tiered system, and during the first year, 44 states were supporting the initiative in 730 schools (Anderson, 2010; Williams, 2011).

When a person holding an influential office in a formal organization, (e.g. the principal of a school), is replaced, the effects are felt throughout the organization. Miklos (1988) stated that a change of administrators is a significant event in the history of an organization. When the new principal is also the functional leader of the group, this influence is enhanced (Hart, 1993). As a new principal enters the group, “socialization not only presents a world, it constructs one” (Wentworth, 1980, p. 69). A new principal must adjust and adapt to the expectations of the group, and organizational socialization occurs.

The theoretical framework of organizational socialization used in this study was comprised of four dominate themes, each important to the understanding of this complex process:

- Socialization tactics are the ways in which the experiences of an individual entering an organization are structured for them by others in the organization. Socialization tactics may be consciously or unconsciously used or not used when a new principal arrives at a school (Hart, 1993; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979);
• Stage frameworks draw attention to the steps that principals take during organizational socialization. These stages can be fixed or continuous (Feldman, 1976; Nicholson & West, 1988; Wanous, 1980);

• The personal and social contexts comprise the prior qualities of the new principal and the existing group, which can determine the degree of success of the new principal (Hart, 1991, 1993); and

• The outcomes of organizational socialization that take place in the new principal include replication, content innovation, and role innovation. Outcomes are often determined by what tactics have been used, what stages have occurred, and the particular contexts that a new principal and existing group reveal (Hart, 1991, 1993; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

In schools, changing principals can be a disruptive event, as it changes the lines of communication, realigns relationships of power, affects decision-making, and generally disturbs the equilibrium of normal activities (Grusky, 1960; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Changing principals also creates a period of apprehension and fear of the unknown with high expectations being held by principals, teachers, and district leaders (Weindling & Earley, 1987). Principal succession provides a vehicle for change in both formal and informal organizational structures, and a review of principal succession revealed studies supporting the full spectrum of possible outcomes where it improved, disrupted, or had no effect on the performance of the organization (Brown, 1982).

The importance of organizational socialization and its role in principal succession cannot be overlooked, for both the newcomer and the organization. Furthermore, how newcomers are socialized has symbolic and substantive value over and above what they
actually learn (Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007). There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that principal effectiveness largely depends on how well principals become socialized into the cultures and contexts of their new role (Cline & Necochea, 2000; Hart, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1992). The socialization process in place at both the school district level and individual school level needs to be examined to gain an understanding of what SIG principals experience during the first year of school turnaround.

The phenomenological research design was used to understand the fundamental nature of lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon (Lichtman, 2010). Evidence derived from phenomenological research comes from first person reports of life experiences. In accordance with the principles of phenomenology, scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is derived through descriptions that make it possible to understand the meanings and essences of experience (Moustakas, 1994). There are four core processes that facilitate the source of knowledge: (a) Epoch; (b) Phenomenological Reduction; (c) Imaginative Variation; and (d) Synthesis of Meanings and Essences (Moustakas, 1994). It was possible to extract the essence, or a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change by using the phenomenological research design (Lichtman, 2010). Chapter 3 will fully describe the research methodology used to carry out the study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the organizational socialization experiences of principals who replaced existing principals at SIG schools, (i.e. schools deemed as persistently low performing), during the first year of SIG implementation. This study also explored perception principals’ held regarding the roles that both school and district personnel played in the SIG principals’ socialization process. The following research questions guided this study:

3. What were the socialization experiences of principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation?

4. What did SIG principals perceive the role of school district leaders to be in their socialization during the first year of SIG implementation?

This chapter is divided into six sections: research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and background of the researcher.

**Research Design**

This study employed the phenomenological model described by Moustakas (1994) as the research technique used to gain an understanding from SIG principals about how they perceived the phenomenon of the socialization process in their respective school sites during the first year of forced leadership change. Also examined was SIG principals’ perception of school district leaders’ role in their socialization. At the time of the study, the SIG principals were in their second year at their respective school sites; therefore, their insights and experiences were explored through a retrospective lens. The phenomenological model used in this study consists of four processes: (a) Epoch; (b) Phenomenological Reduction; (c) Imaginative Variation; and (d) Synthesis.
Epoche is an ancient Greek term meaning to stay away from or abstain and describes the theoretical moment where all judgments about the existence of the external world, and consequently all action in the world, are suspended. It is the freedom from suppositions where prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things are set aside (Mousakas, 1994). Epoche is ongoing rather than a single, fixed event. Phenomenological Reduction, the second step in the process, is a way of seeing and listening with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening oneself to phenomena. The goal of Imaginative Variation, the third step, is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying factors that account for what is being experienced (Mousakas, 1994). Synthesis of Meanings and Essences, the final step in the phenomenological process, is the intuitive integration of the basic textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the phenomenological experience as a whole (Mousakas, 1994).

**Research Participants**

This research study took place in a metropolitan area in the western part of the United States and involved principals working at seven SIG schools. All seven principals replaced principals at targeted schools, as required by the mandates of SIG; all seven had previous teaching and administrative experience. The seven principals were individuals who experienced the phenomenon of being socialized into a school that had just lost their principal, due to the demands of SIG. Four of the principals were employed at the middle school level, while three were employed at the elementary school level. Six of the principals were employed at schools in one school district (District A), while one principal was employed at a school in a different school district nearby (District B).
District A was considered a large urban district with approximately 63,000 students. District B was considered a small urban district with approximately 7,500 students. Both school districts were in close proximity to each other within the same state. The exploration of similarities and differences between the two school districts enhanced the findings of this study by going beyond the processes of school leaders in one district. All of the principals were asked to participate in a research study detailing their socialization experiences during their first year as SIG principal. Tables 1 and 2 detail the demographics of each of the seven SIG schools involved in the study; Table 3 provides details about the seven SIG principals.

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews served as the data source in this study. In any research study, proper data collection techniques are crucial to ensure that data are collected in a scientific and standardized manner, resulting in high quality research where the findings are credible (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are often used when a researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to thoroughly understand the answers provided (Dearnley, 2005). By using semi-structured interviews in this study, all participants were asked the same questions within a flexible structure. Participants were encouraged to talk about experiences through open-ended questions; the ordering of further questions was determined by the types of responses received (Dearnley, 2005). There was some freedom about the order in which questions were asked. However, the questions were standardized, and probes were used to ensure that all relevant material was covered (Dearnley, 2005).
Table 1

Demographics of SIG Middle Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010-2011 Demographics</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
<th>School D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
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<td>3.0%</td>
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<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Race</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10.0%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>19.6%</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>In Need of Improvement (Year 1 Hold)</td>
<td>In Need of Improvement (Year 3)</td>
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Table 2

*Demographics of SIG Elementary Schools*

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<th>School E</th>
<th>School F</th>
<th>School G</th>
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<td>641</td>
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<td>Black/African Am.</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-Race</td>
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<td>39.5%</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>In Need of Improvement (Year 5)</td>
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<td>In Need of Improvement (Year 6)</td>
<td>In Need of Improvement (Watch List)</td>
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Table 3

*Years of SIG Principals’ Educational Experience*

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<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Years as Principal</th>
<th>Years as Vice Principal</th>
<th>Years as Teacher/Dean</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>E</td>
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For this study, two semi-structured interviews were planned. The first interview delved into the chronology of the principals’ socialization and the principals’ perceptions of the following areas during their first year, which included:

- their selection as principal at a SIG school and their introduction to the SIG school;
- their preparation for their new role and acceptance at their new school;
- existing school culture;
- school district support and expectations;
- changes in their role.

The second interview was to focus on the principals’ socialization experiences based on the following themes:
• how the school district prepared principal and staff for SIG reform (tactics);
• sources of influence within the organization (tactics);
• dissonance between expectations of principal and those of the organization (personal/social context);
• adjustment period (stages);
• challenges (personal/social context);
• professional development (personal context);
• skills/ability to make necessary changes (outcomes);
• professional growth (outcomes);
• changes in leadership style (outcomes).

The interview instruments are found in Appendix A. However, due to the depth of questions asked and the quantity of information gleaned during the first interview, it was determined that a second interview would not be required, as many of the questions from the second interview were answered within principals’ responses during the first interview.

**Data Collection**

Prior to any data collection, permission to conduct the study was sought from the University of Nevada, Reno, Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board. See Appendix B for Certification of Approval for New Protocol. Once permission was received for this study, the qualitative method of data collection was comprised of semi-structured interviews. In January of 2012, each SIG principal was contacted by e-mail requesting his or her participation in the study. See Appendix C for Participant
Recruitment Protocol. Upon receipt of a positive response, a convenient interview time for each SIG principal was arranged. Interviews were conducted at the school sites of each SIG principal involved in the study and occurred in January and February of 2012. Prior to conducting each interview, written consent from each participant was received. See Appendix D for Consent Form approved by the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board. Additionally, principals were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study before being interviewed. Each principal was involved in one separate semi-structured interview; the interview focused on the chronology of the principals’ socialization experiences during the first year of forced leadership change. The in-depth responses from the first interview revealed much of the focused areas that would have been asked in a second interview, particularly around the themes that surfaced as a result of the principals’ socialization experiences. Each interview took approximately one to one and a half hours. The interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim and completed within a period of four weeks. Storage of the data consisted of separate files for each SIG principal. Each file contained a hard copy of the transcribed interview. All data stored contained a numerical code identifying each principal, not the principals’ names. Principals’ consent forms were secured in a location separate from the data.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of each interview, memos were written down to capture initial thoughts with regard to those interviews. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher once all interviews had been conducted; she found it beneficial, as she was able to begin capturing a broad sense of the SIG principals’ perspectives during
transcriptions. Data analysis included the use of a modification of the Van Kaam method of phenomenological data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The steps for analysis were (a) Horizontalization; (b) Reduction and elimination; (c) Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents; (d) Validation; (e) Construction of individual textural descriptions; (f) Construction of individual structural descriptions; and (g) Construction of textural-structural descriptions.

Once each interview was transcribed, each transcript was read and key ideas and statements were underlined. The transcripts were carefully reexamined and color-coded to identify every expression relevant to each principal’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). At that point, horizontalization occurred, where all statements held equal value and contributed to the understanding of the nature and meaning of each SIG principal’s experience. Following the color-coding, transcripts were reread and key expressions of principals’ perceptions were written in the margins of the transcripts. This process helped to ascertain if the data contained details that were necessary to understand the experience. These key expressions became the invariant constituents, or recurring clusters, of the principals’ perceptions of experiences. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions were eliminated.

The invariant constituents were thoroughly examined and then clustered onto coding sheets. The coding sheets contained data representing emerging core themes, which were identified by color-coded labels that corresponded with the invariant constituents. Following this coding, the researcher met with two members of the doctoral committee to discuss conceivable broad themes. Three initial themes were identified: (a) Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability; (b) Swimming Alone in the English Channel; and
(c) Reality Hits Home. Once the themes were identified, the data was recoded through the perspective of these themes to determine if the themes were truly reflective of the data.

Validation was established by comparing each theme with each transcription. Each transcript was read in context of the three themes to ensure that the overall essence of each transcript’s data was captured. Once validation was complete, each transcription was examined for individual principal’s textural descriptions, accounting for the “what” of the experience. This included the examination of verbatim examples from the transcribed interviews and coding sheets. Data was again examined and individual structural descriptions were constructed and coded, which included the themes and qualities that accounted for the “how” feelings and thoughts of the SIG principals. Finally, once the individual textural and structural descriptions were formulated and coded, a composite description of the meanings and essences of the SIG principals’ perceptions of their socialization experiences was constructed. All of this analyses occurred in the context of the three broad themes. During this phase, subthemes within the broader themes were identified and coded based upon previous analyses. Also occurring during this stage of data analysis was the emergence of another broad theme, Stages of Socialization. Subsequently, the data was examined and coded in context of the new theme.

In phenomenology, one of the core processes includes Epoche, where everyday understandings and judgments are set aside and phenomena are examined in a fresh, wide open sense (Moustakas, 1994). Since the researcher was a SIG principal herself, it was important for her to bracket the data gleaned from principal interviews and capture the essence of their experiences, yet have an awareness of how other principals’ experiences
and perceptions were the same or different from her own. As someone in the same position as those being interviewed, she was challenged to create new ideas, feelings, awareness, and understandings apart from her own. Nonetheless, a clear understanding of the perceptions of the SIG principals in the study was crafted, through continual examination and reexamination of the data.

**Background of the Researcher**

The researcher of this study has been in education for 24 years; 16 of those years were as a classroom teacher, with the remainder of those years as assistant principal or principal. Her years as a teacher were spent predominately at schools considered to be of middle or high socioeconomic status. After six years as an assistant principal or principal at one school located in a middle income community, the researcher chose to apply for and was selected to become a principal at one of the newly designated SIG schools in the school district. Her decision to apply for a principalship at a SIG school was based on her desire to be a part of the school reform movement. Additionally, she was assured that the school district would provide a great deal of support to undertake the challenges of SIG. Receiving district support was of particular importance, since she had no prior experience, either as teacher or principal, in a Title I school. Being a SIG principal herself led to her desire to conduct this study.

**Summary**

A phenomenological design using a retrospective lens was employed to construct an understanding of how principals at SIG schools located in two urban school districts experienced socialization during the first year of forced leadership change and how those principals perceived the role of school district leaders in the socialization process. Seven
school principals participated in one semi-structured interview that lasted between 60 and ninety minutes. Data was analyzed using a modified version of the Van Kaam phenomenological method.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The study examined the perceptions of seven SIG principals in two school districts as they described the socialization experiences that occurred while assuming leadership at schools deemed as persistently lowest achieving and where the previous school leaders had been removed. The study also examined principals’ perceptions of school district leaders’ role in their socialization process. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What were the socialization experiences of principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation?

2. What did SIG principals perceive school district leaders’ role to be in the socialization process during the first year of SIG implementation?

This chapter presents findings obtained from semi-structured interviews with the seven SIG principals in two school districts. The first section identifies three major themes found in the data. The second section identifies four stages of the socialization process as experienced by the seven SIG principals.

Three major themes emerged from the initial analysis of the data: (a) Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability; (b) Swimming Alone in the English Channel; and (c) Reality Hits Home. The first theme, Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability, was quickly identified during the data collection process. The second and third themes, Swimming Alone in the English Channel and Reality Hits Home, were revealed during data analysis. Subthemes were also found in each of these themes during data analysis.
Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability

All of the principals described their initial SIG experiences through terms that implied frenzy. Indeed these principals indicated that they were being held to very high and immediate expectations, with “no honeymoon” period allowed. It was essential for principals to gain an understanding of the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge at their respective school sites in order to make significant decisions that were required of them within a short period of time. Principals’ sense of urgency emerged not only from the demands set forth in the SIG initiative, but also from their perceptions of district expectations, which included: (1) leading change to increase student achievement rapidly; (2) implementing a focused academy (in District A), such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S.T.E.M.), Dual Language Immersion, and Pre-Advanced Placement; and (3) changing the overall culture of the school. One principal explained, “….the expectation is that we’re successful, period.” This sentiment was reiterated by another principal who stated that the expectation was, “…to get the job done.”

Although the need to implement change quickly was in evidence, the principals also believed it was necessary to attain a sense of stability in order to make the required changes. One principal acknowledged the difficulty with attaining stability by stating, “…it was a forced turnover, and there were challenges.” Getting to know their new staffs as soon as possible was crucial for most principals in their efforts to understand the school culture and to take steps toward achieving a sense of stability. Meeting with and getting to know staff was paramount in learning how the school worked. That knowledge gave principals some of the insight needed to make the critical decisions required by the
school districts. Statements such as, “I wanted as much interaction as possible,” “I wanted to hear from them what worked and what didn’t,” and “I needed to see what the issues were at the site to develop the plan” were common among the principals.

Four main subthemes were identified as principals frenetically sought to become socialized and to establish a sense of stability at their new school sites; those were (a) I’m Throwing Myself into This, (b) Tense Beginnings, (c) What Makes This Place Tick, and (d) Buy-In/Relationship Building.

I’m Throwing Myself into This

Principals had little time in which to learn about and understand the SIG process and the schools that they would be entering. In District A, the principals were assigned to their schools in the spring of the year prior to their takeover. In District B, the principal was assigned just after the end of the prior school year. The timing of the SIG initiative required rapid decision-making and planning on the part of the principals; school improvement plans, site-based policies, and staffing all needed to be completed swiftly. Because of the rapidity of the process, principals needed to move quickly, as one principal recalled, “It just became a challenge for me to get up to speed and to get the information I needed to move forward.” Another principal added, “We didn’t have time; usually you investigate, take a year to make your decisions. It was investigate the first two weeks, then change right away. It was a challenge.” Similarly, another principal articulated,

...your district and state folks are telling you to make the changes and make sure student achievement increases and there’s no implementation dip allowed; you’ve
got to go in and do it right away, so you don’t have time to take that first year and talk about how things are going.

In an effort to gain the critical knowledge required to make those decisions, the principals indicated it was necessary to plunge themselves into researching all they could to become familiar with not only the school they would be entering, but also whatever they could find relating to the turnaround process, current national initiatives focused on turnaround, and anything specific to SIG and focused academies. As one principal stated, “I did a lot of research and collaborating with another SIG principal. It was a challenge, and I was scared because I didn’t have the extensive background in dealing with turnaround.” Another principal added, “I looked at [academy] programs to see what would fit with the needs of our kids.” One principal noted, “There were expectations that this school’s student achievement would increase the very first year and there was no time to sit back and observe and watch, so all of the observations and research came into that spring once we were named.”

**Tense Beginnings**

At six school sites, the SIG principals were introduced to their new staffs at a meeting with district officials present in the spring of the school year prior to them taking over. In most cases, those meetings were described as awkward and uncomfortable, especially in the meetings where the existing principal was present. One principal stated, “…it was still very tense with all the district administrators there and the previous principal still there, [I] was just trying to make a positive first impression with them.” Those initial meetings allowed principals to start gaining knowledge of the situation at the school site where they were going. One principal expressed, “It was a tough meeting,
I felt sorry for them [staff] in the sense that they didn’t have a say as what was happening to them... the staff didn’t have enough information around why they were chosen for SIG.” That principal went on to say, “I was panicked too, I don’t know how you avoid those emotions, but it was good...one of those inevitable things, you have to do it.”

Another principal cited,

People were angry, they didn’t want to see any more people from the district, they were done with the whole process. They just wanted to do what they’ve always done and get away with it and go back and shut their doors.

Most SIG principals chose to have at least one formal meeting with just their new staffs prior to the end of the school year. They were excited about those meetings, as it was their first with their staff as a whole; most wanted to make a positive impression, provide the groundwork for building trust and rapport, and push the sense of urgency.

They felt that it was an important meeting, as the staff not only lost one leader, but had no say in who would replace that leader. That meeting was their first opportunity to be specific about the non-negotiables, discuss data, lay out the vision at that point, and begin defining who they were as the new leader of the school. For one principal, the meeting was all about expectations: “I laid it out crystal clear...I wanted them to make sure they really understood what it is they were getting themselves into (pause) there were probably three more people that transferred after that meeting.” Another principal revealed, “…they had the belief that if they didn’t make their targets they were going to be fired, and so [at the meeting] they kept asking me. Finally, I told them no one is going to be fired.”
What Makes this Place Tick?

It was critical for principals to gain knowledge of the existing staff and culture of their new schools. One principal stated, “What I wanted to do more than anything, I really wanted to touch base with staff.” Five of the principals were able to meet with teachers individually, in grade levels, or in departments prior to the end of the school year and found those conversations instrumental in defining the direction they would take and learning who the key players would be. That communication with staff members took place in classrooms during walkthroughs, in the faculty lounge, through e-mail, or through interviews. Through that process, and in looking at school data, principals began to understand the culture of the school and to learn what was valued. One principal reflected, “They [teachers] were vocal about how things used to be and why we should or shouldn’t keep certain traditions.” Another principal voiced, “I was shocked to learn...they were so driven to be punitive with kids.”

It was not always easy gaining access to teachers and staff prior to the end of the school year. In some cases, the existing principals were uncomfortable with the new SIG principal coming into their school sites or were offended with what the SIG principal wanted to do. Those SIG principals did not feel welcome in their efforts to research the school site. They indicated that this inability to access the new school compromised their efforts to learn about the school. One principal described the feeling as “awkward,” adding, “It was tough to come in and recognize the scope of work that had to happen and have the principal sitting right there.” One principal described the process of attempting to talk with teachers as having to “…spend time sneaking around” trying to learn about the school. However, in one school, the existing principal created a smooth transition for
the SIG principal by spending time together, citing some of the challenges and successes. That SIG principal listened to the input, but made no assumptions, wanting to come into the school with fresh eyes.

Not only was it important for the principals to learn about the existing staffs at their new sites, it was also important for the principals that existing staffs learn about their new leader. As one principal noted, “They didn’t have a choice in who their next principal was going to be.” That principal gave the teachers a resume and took a team of teachers to the previous school to “learn a little bit more about my leadership style.” Another way that the new leaders revealed themselves to the existing staffs was when they explained their vision and expectations. One principal articulated, “I took their questions and guided a vision about building staff collaboration, staff empowerment, student support, and involvement with a collective leadership model.” Another principal added, “I talked about high expectations and pointed to schools that are getting the job done with similar demographics.” One principal responded, “It’s huge for an administrator to come in positive…and say this is going to benefit students. Instead of coming in punitive, this is a golden opportunity; this is a chance that nobody else gets.”

Once the previous principal left the building at the end of the school year, it became easier for SIG principals to meet with teachers. The communication continued into the summer at some of the schools, as teachers stopped by the principals’ offices and e-mails were sent. That communication had a dual purpose for the respondents: to function as a way for the principals to get to know teachers and for teachers to get an idea of their new principal’s style and expectations. For all principals, one purpose of the communication was to educate the staff immediately on what it meant to be a SIG school.
One principal described the process stating, “I started talking to staff as a whole even prior to the end of the school year. It goes back to the vision that I brought, making sure every decision and everything we do is based on that original vision for the school.”

For one principal, the first time it was possible to get into the new building was July. As a result, it was challenging to gain the knowledge desired in order to make informed decisions when required. There was no opportunity to meet with staff earlier. Furthermore, the assistant principal was not appointed until August, and all decisions up to that point were made solely by the principal without any staff input. In another school, the process did not begin until after the end of the previous school year. That principal expressed, “I accepted, I started planning right then and there.”

To complicate the situation at two school sites, the principals were not able to meet with their staffs during the summer because their building was being revitalized, or remodeled. This added to the sense of urgency and intensity in gaining the knowledge needed to make sound decisions as quickly as possible. One principal reported:

The only time I had with my teachers before the start of the new school year was that period of time in the last couple of weeks in May and June. I needed to learn everything I could about it then so when we started the new school year, we started with our plans based on what we learned in March through June.

**Buy-in/Relationship Building**

All principals but one believed it was critical to gain staff buy-in. This involved building relationships to bring their staffs together as a way to move the process forward quickly. As one principal explained, “I knew I was going to have to sell them on what we were doing.” Ways by which principals attempted to build relationships and gain staff
buy-in were: discussions around their vision, being present at the school site as frequently as possible during the spring and summer leading up to the new school year, teambuilding activities, involving people in the decision-making process, redefining the PLC process, providing support, and listening to what staff members had to say. As one principal reported, “I wanted to come across as, yes, there are non-negotiables, we have some changes we have to make, but this is going to be a collaborative process; this is a great opportunity.” One principal told the staff of the commitment to the school for at least five years. This was especially important, as that particular school had had four administrators assigned to it in ten years. That principal noted, “I don’t plan on going anywhere...there’s no way of getting around it, so they’re not going to outlast anything. That’s been a big shift.”

One principal reflected that the early part of the process had not been very well planned. The lack of planning resulted in crises prevention all year. The principal lamented, “If I could go back and start over…the teaming perspective [is important] and getting to know each other on a level that’s not business, but personal. I think that’s what connects people and keeps them in their jobs.”

As principals implemented strategies to gain buy-in and build relationships, they also observed how they were being perceived by staff members. Principals reported that teachers’ initial perceptions of them ranged from being thankful for that principal at one school, to the belief that the principal was not equipped to handle the challenges at two schools. As principals became aware of teacher perceptions, particularly negative ones, they engaged in strategies to enhance the positive, such as listening and being open-minded, being transparent, modeling expectations, holding all staff accountable, and
explaining reasons for decisions made. One principal responded, “[The initial perception] was, is this [principal] going to be tough enough to direct us in these ways? I think now they believe, I believe in the direction of the grant, I have value.” “One principal stated, “There were some of these really off the wall, sort of scared perceptions of me, and so when they saw that it wasn’t the case, I think a number of people’s perceptions of me changed.” One principal, however, expressed, “I’m not so sure [perceptions] changed over the course of the year. I was the new principal who didn’t know the challenges.”

Principals attempted a variety of strategies to build relationships and gain buy-in, with the goal of feeling accepted. Principals’ perceptions of how they were accepted by the existing organization were varied; expressions such as mixed, standoffish, glad, resistant, and appreciated were articulated. All principals indicated that there were staff members who were excited about the change, but there were also staff members who were resistant. One principal reflected, “...if you’re going to come into sweeping change, it wouldn’t matter if I was in my old school or not, I still would have had those people that would have resisted and not liked it.” Another principal conveyed, “I think a third of the staff was on board, and probably a third was in the middle, and a third was no, you’ll be gone, we’ll outlive you.” One principal expressed feeling just tolerated by the staff and voiced, “I wasn’t a choice on their part.”

To complicate the situation, most principals indicated that their staffs were not used to the high expectations that these new SIG principals were requiring of them. One principal stated, “…the drive for student achievement was much higher with me, which made teachers uncomfortable; I pushed teachers out of their comfort zone with my expectations. It was difficult and the staff was resistant.” That principal noted that 12
teachers left after the first year. Another principal believed that the staff valued a willingness to listen to what they believed was working and what wasn’t, and stated, “I think they saw someone who’s going to work hard, who values what they do, is going to push them, but at the same time, treat them as professionals, and so I think they were accepting.” At the other end of the continuum, for one principal, the perception of acceptance was revealed in this way: “I’ve never experienced that kind of animosity and viciousness.”

There was one exception to feeling the need for buy-in and the need for feeling accepted. One principal came into the new school with a strong vision and stressed, I didn’t do a bunch of teambuilding, I didn’t do a bunch of cultural stuff, I came in; this is what we’re going to do. I was very clear about expectations, we’re here to do a job, it’s not about you, it’s about a population that rarely graduates and hardly ever goes to college.

In summary, as principals worked frenetically to establish stability at their new school sites, four subthemes emerged: (a) I’m Throwing Myself into This, (b) Tense Beginnings, (c) What Makes This Place Tick, and (d) Buy-In/Relationship Building. These subthemes identified principals’ efforts to meet the demands of district expectations and to fulfill the requirements of the SIG initiative. See Figure 2 for conceptual representation.
Swimming Alone in the English Channel

Swimming alone in the English Channel is a metaphor that aptly describes the perceived socialization process for most SIG principals during their first year at their new school sites and the second theme that emerged from this study. The English Channel has known currents and cold water; inevitable, and potentially dangerous weather, and the possibility of oil spills—yet one must keep swimming, because if not, drowning is a certainty. In the context of this study, the metaphor is value neutral and holds no negative connotation, much as swimmers of the English Channel do so, despite the risks. Two subthemes were identified through principals’ experiences and perceptions: (a) Facing the Challenges Alone, and (b) Inability to Attain Operational Flexibility.

Facing the Challenges Alone

For most of the SIG principals, a perception of facing the challenges of SIG alone own prevailed. The SIG initiative was not only new to the principals; it was new to school districts leaders, and it was a learning process for both groups. One principal articulated, “...there was no road map.” District leaders from District A provided some initial support by having the principals talk with central office personnel about issues,
such as grant funding, human resources and hiring, school data profiles, and curriculum. Beyond that, principals did not believe they were supported. As one principal pointed out, “I was looking to the district for some of those answers and we obviously didn’t have a lot of them in place, we just didn’t.” Another principal had a similar view: “I think there was some thought about specific support for SIG principals, but I’m not sure it ever really happened…I think a lot of people, myself included, felt like they were just being thrown out there.” In reference to support for the schools’ academies one principal responded, “I wish there was more [support] around our academies…what they offered us was pretty dismal.”

Because the SIG initiative was something new, not only at school sites, but also within the school districts, the reality set in for some principals that they were on their own to take on the turnaround process. Statements such as, “I realized this isn’t what I expected it to be,” “We’re on our own,” and “The kind of support I wanted, I don’t think our district was in the position to produce” revealed the belief that some principals had as they moved forward at their sites. Another principal responded, “When they [district personnel] caught wind of the extent that people were pushing back on specific things, they did come through; they were supportive, but the timeliness of that seemed very long at times and made me feel that I wasn’t supported.”

Although this was the general feeling, there were some exceptions. One principal did not share the perception of being along and felt completely supported by the district throughout the entire first year. At that school site, a great deal of guidance was provided in the form of coaching, frequent meetings with and high visibility of district leaders at the school site, joint goal setting and planning meetings, and constant feedback. District
leaders worked very closely with the principal who shared, “I decided I could take this leap because I knew I’d have the support.” That principal was from District B and indicated district leaders were “my right and left hands, we worked very close…I got consistent coaching from the district level.” A principal in District A expressed, “They were fairly supportive.” Interviews revealed that the school district leaders provided support in areas, such as being on top of the priority list for information technology (IT) needs and receiving grant support and budgeting information. One principal observed, “The initial cookie-cutter approach suggested to me that they [school district leaders] really didn’t understand the specific needs at each school, but once the year started, they did start to differentiate their responses [to the] physical plant, infrastructure needs, and technology needs.”

**Inability to Attain Operational Flexibility**

Some principals expressed frustration with their inability to create change in spite of the language in the SIG initiative that principals would have operational flexibility regarding decisions made specific to their schools. As one principal explained, “We had to jump through the same hoops as everybody else has to jump through, and I think it [the SIG initiative] states pretty specifically that the administrator will have operational flexibility.” That principal went on to say, “…the district has provided quite a few barriers to what we are attempting to do here.”

One source of frustration for the principals and their challenges with SIG revolved around human resources and the inability to make staffing changes. Because of the requirements set forth in the SIG initiative, principals felt it would be necessary to make adjustments in personnel in order to affect and sustain change. One principal in the study
was able to remove 50% of the staff as a requirement of the turnaround model, while the other principals were not, due to being transformation schools. Those principals perceived that their hands were tied in terms of making any changes with staffing; they weren’t given any priority in hiring or moving staff that did not want to remain at their site, despite the language found in the SIG initiative. Some of the SIG schools had teachers placed in their schools who had been removed from other SIG schools. One principal noted, “I think the most frustrating thing was when we were told you have preferential hiring, you won’t have to take overages, and then…you’re going to have to take overages.” Another principal stated,

I read in the grant that each year a SIG school could remove staff, and realized that no one knew and it’s not going to happen because some of the issues with the union…we weren’t set up. We certainly weren’t going to be re-interviewing staff and handing out pink slips.

In attempting to swim the English Channel of principal socialization and making it to the other side, the SIG principals scrambled for information, not only about school turnaround or about their respective academies, but also about figuring out what their support base was going to be. As one principal expressed, “I really felt like the SIG principals were told that this is the path we’re going on, but it really wasn’t the path; this was the path over here.” During all of this effort to make it to the other side without drowning, many had the feeling of facing the challenges of being a SIG principal on their own.
Reality Hits Home

When all of the principals were first told that they were going to be undertaking the SIG initiative, they were excited to about the challenge. Responses such as, “It’s an opportunity to help move a staff forward,” “I was ready to take on a new challenge,” “I saw this as a golden opportunity” and “This is a chance to make a difference” were heard resoundingly. One principal stated, “This is the largest action research project of my career.” Most of the principals perceived SIG as a good idea for underachieving schools; it wasn’t that existing principals were considered ineffective, there just needed to be a change, a new direction. Principals worked frenetically to prepare for and take on the challenge in a number of ways: researching, staff meetings and interactions, getting the needed buy-in and developing a plan to take the school to the next level. As the school year progressed, principals began to realize the enormity of their situations, as one principal revealed,

Everything was new…it was just like this wave knocking me to the ground, there’s so much information coming at you, teachers weren’t ready for it either and with the SIG reviews and the components of the SIG paperwork and requirements, and them seeing the SIG goals and the SIG plan and the SIG evaluation feedback, it was a lot to take in, still a lot for teachers and for us.

The third major theme, Reality Hits Home emerged from the data and was evinced in two subthemes: (a) The Challenge to Gain Buy-In and (b) Culture Shock.

The Challenge to Gain Buy-In

Once principals got into their new schools and began to see the ins and outs of their sites on a day-to-day basis, the realities of their situations became clear. Some of the
principals discovered that it was much more challenging to build trust, credibility, and buy-in with their staffs than they originally thought. In the words of one principal, “This staff just didn’t take that leap of faith—I needed to tell them exactly why we need to do this.” Another principal stated, “I’ve never experienced that kind of animosity and viciousness and, unfortunately, as the year played out, it was confirmed.” Another principal responded, “Teachers felt I was not equipped...not realizing the challenges.” Because of that challenge and of the SIG requirements of creating rapid change, some principals became more directive than they had been at previous schools in order to establish themselves and to work toward achieving their SIG goals. “I had to become a little more assertive than I had in the past, this is how it’s going to be; it was rough. I had more one-on-one meetings with individual teachers my first year than I’ve had in my life as an administrator.” At one school, the principal initially felt the need to move quickly towards the accomplishment of school goals. It became clear to that principal that more time should have been spent on communication and buy-in:

When the state tells you we expect things to turnaround, the climate and culture pieces go out the window. I should have combined those better. I had these big ideas that we were going to go this far, this fast, it didn’t work that way. Things I thought were clearly communicated were not and the staff didn’t hear the clear communication; it created distrust. I had to pull back, slow it down, break it into smaller pieces.
Culture Shock

At two schools, the principals discovered the toxic culture that existed in teachers’ relationships with their students. At both sites, the principals came to realize that their cultures were teacher-centered, not student-centered. One principal responded,

Through unfortunate experiences, I was shocked to learn that kids didn’t know up from down…they [teachers] were so driven to be punitive with kids, to set them up and be that “gotcha;” they valued that. That whole relationship with students was a big thing that caught me off guard.

Another principal stated, “This school was very teacher-centered, it was not friendly to parents, it wasn’t friendly to students, it was, this is the way we’ve done it, and that’s the way it’s going to be.” That principal added, “…it was just kind of dark and bad feeling, bad mojo.”

Additionally, some principals discovered the toxic culture that existed in teachers’ relationships with each other by seeing how some teachers felt empowered to act as the voice for the staff. One principal expressed, “There were very few people that ran this school behind the scenes and everybody knew it and nobody wanted to upset that, they weren’t willing to go against that.” Another principal conveyed that some teachers reported feeling shunned, bullied, harassed, and stalked by other staff members if they did not comply with various demands or decisions. One principal described the school culture in the following way: “I wasn’t real sure what the culture of the school was, the culture of the school was everybody was kind of isolated, it was just disorganized.” In referring to the new school site, one principal stated, “It has a reputation of not being the safe place that it used to be.”
Some principals encountered challenges revolving around curriculum and instructional delivery and data collection and analysis. For example, some principals discovered that their teachers did not know how to problem solve on their own; they were used to being “spoon fed” how and what to teach, as one principal responded, “[It was like] the baby bird syndrome, they were waiting to be fed.” Those principals realized they would have to empower their teachers to think for themselves in how to provide meaningful instruction for their students. One principal stated, “Discovering and realizing the difficult transition for staff to actually teach and problem solve, I made it clear, [I said] you are the messenger, you’re the one that makes the magic happen.” One principal stressed how reality changed the plan: “I had to step back a lot from where I thought we would be and start at ground zero [because of what they didn’t have in place].” That principal further explained, “That reality drove the change. I had to learn how to, quite honestly, coddle a bit more because I didn’t want to keep turning over this staff every single year.”

Although most principals were unfamiliar with the culture of their new school sites upon arrival, one principal had that familiarity of the staff and school culture. That principal reported, “I knew from working in the district this long, I knew a little about most of the people and the attitude of this school, and has always been this tough school who does whatever they want.”

In summary, three major themes emerged from the data gleaned from principals’ perceptions of their socialization experiences and of school district leaders’ role in the socialization process during the first year of SIG implementation. Subthemes within each
Figure 3. Representation of major themes and subthemes evinced from SIG principal interviews.

### Stages of the Socialization Process

Although the socialization process of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change converged into the three themes found above, the principals also moved through the socialization process in four stages. Stated by Nicholson and West (1988), the socialization process occurs in cycles of recurring, interdependent, and continuous phases. For this study, those stages were: (a) Initial Appointment/Mental Preparation, (b) Entering the Setting, (c) Settling In, and (d) I’m Here.

#### Stage 1: Initial Appointment/Mental Preparation

The first stage of the SIG principals’ socialization process occurred when the principals were appointed to their new schools. When the principals first heard that district leaders had applied for and received SIG funding, their initial reactions included seeing it as an opportunity, a challenge, and a chance to make a difference. One principal expressed, “It was going to be quite a challenge and quite a difficult transition moving
into a school with a principal that was actually removed.” Another principal responded, “It was a good idea for underachieving schools, maybe that’s what needed to be, the action needed to be taken if they continue being underachieving with the same administration, then maybe changing that would be a good idea.” In District A, the principals were interviewed and selected to become SIG principals; they were then assigned to their new schools. This selection occurred during the spring of the year prior to their takeover. In District B, the principal was asked after the school year was over to take on the SIG challenge at another school. During this stage, two of the three main themes were revealed: Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability and Swimming Alone in the English Channel.

Once the principals were selected and appointed, they all set about the task of learning as much as they could about the SIG initiative and about their specific school sites. That took place at a frenetic pace, as principals were expected to make critical decisions involving big changes at school sites as part of the demands of SIG. Those decisions and changes were expected to occur rapidly. One principal expressed, “If there’s things that need to happen based on what’s best for students, then I’m going to make those decisions right away and I might hurt some feelings, but that’s my job to go in and make necessary changes.” Researching school reform, what works at struggling schools, and learning about SIG was an important and necessary step for all of the principals to guide their decision-making. Understanding the need to learn about their new school site, principals at most of the schools worked with existing staff, to varying degrees, to begin the process of learning the school. Those principals felt that strategy was important, as those staff members acted as a bridge, connecting the old with the new,
to help reach a place of calm and stability. One principal stressed, “I pulled in a few key people that were here that had committed to stay and really leaned on them to help me be sensitive to what was going on in the school.” Another principal further explained, “If it wasn’t for my VP, it would have been a lot tougher, that was the glue; that was my strength that attached me to it.”

During this initial stage, as principals were researching about their sites and the SIG process, they began to realize the enormity of the challenge of becoming a SIG principal. One principal reflected, “…your district and state folks are telling you to make the changes and make sure student achievement increases...you’ve got to go in and do it right away.” The challenges of designing and implementing an academy (in District A), as well as planning how to rapidly increase student achievement loomed large in principal’s minds. One principal described a potential conflict with that requirement:

You’re expected to increase student achievement and build the signature [academy] schools, sometimes they don’t go hand in hand…the [expectation at] a signature school is whatever that signature piece is, and usually in a turnaround, it’s more of a focus on student achievement.

Adding on to the challenges of SIG, most principals perceived they may not have the support they thought they would, as one principal expressed the sentiment:

I was waiting to hear what some of the expectations were with the SIG grant because we had the manual, I read everything, you know, the autonomy, I wanted to know exactly what I could do and what I couldn’t do. I felt like the district, they were still trying to work their way through it, as well.
Figure 4 visualizes principals’ perceptions of their actions, feelings, and realities that occurred during Stage 1.

![Figure 4](image_url)

Figure 4. Conceptual representation showing principals’ perceptions of their actions, feelings and reality during the first stage of the socialization process.

**Stage 2: Entering the Setting**

Stage Two of the socialization process for SIG principals describes the circumstances under which the principals entered their new sites. During this stage, two main themes continued from the previous stage with differing nuances: Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability and Swimming Alone in the English Channel.

Principals were excited to get into their new school sites to begin to see and understand what lay before them and to strategize how they could make a difference. One principal articulated, “I was very aware of what I was getting into…I knew that anytime someone is forced out of a position, that transition, I knew that was going to be tough from the beginning.” That principal added, “I thought this would be …a broader, bigger chance for me to help schools…have the right direction.” Another principal responded, “I’ll have the opportunity to really help move a staff forward and to help kids move forward with student achievement.” Indeed, at this stage, principals were eager to begin
their work; however, as they were entering their new settings, most of the principals encountered one type of obstacle or another along the way.

The research process for the principals was not only learning about the SIG initiative and the turnaround process, it was also to learn about the school to which they were appointed. It was imperative for most principals, even before the school year began, to get to the school site to meet with teachers in order to learn about the school, what (if anything) was working, and what wasn’t. At most school sites, those meetings took place in the spring of the school year prior to their takeover. That process was more difficult at some of the school sites because the existing principal was not comfortable with the presence of the new principal. One SIG principal was contacted by the existing principal, who expressed discomfort with the new principal coming in prematurely. Another principal put it this way: “I didn’t have a place to go; it was not a welcoming environment.” Some of the principals sat in the teachers’ lounge and met with teachers as they came in; others met with teachers on their prep periods. One principal stressed, “I wanted interaction with teachers as much as possible to do a self-analysis of the school. That was hard because you have a staff that liked the old way of doing things.”

Building trust and rapport was identified as important toward building relationships and gaining stability at the school sites, and most principals held staff meetings in the spring of the year prior to their takeover to begin that process. That was the time to make a positive impression, as well as to promote the sense of urgency needed to turn things around quickly. In explaining the need for building trust, one principal stated, “There was not enough communication around why they were chosen for SIG, they didn’t have a say in what was happening.” During those staff meetings, some of the
principals showed their staffs data to help explain their expectations, as well as to discuss their vision, non-negotiables, the SIG process, and initial plans. One principal stated, “They had never seen CRT results, they had never seen the AYP matrix, they had no idea what safe harbor was, so we just took a lot of time going through data.” In discussing a vision for the school, one principal explained,

I wanted to come in with a vision that was crystal-clear and bullet proof, and you can’t argue about anything in what we’re trying to do here, it’s supported by research and common sense. I didn’t do a bunch of teambuilding, I didn’t do a bunch of cultural stuff, I came in, this is what we’re going to do.

Another principal shared, “I approached it with the staff that I was brought in to increase student achievement and that’s exactly what we’re going to do and there’s going to be a lot of changes possibly and that’s just what we have to do in the situation we’re in.”

Principals also stated that it was important for their new staffs to get to know them, and they were sensitive to the fact that their staffs had no say in their appointment. One principal stressed, “I gave them time to ask questions, I also gave them a resume. The thing about this crew, too, is they didn’t have a choice in who their next principal was going to be.”

A few principals brought people with them from their previous schools and believed it was extremely helpful in providing support to move their vision forward. As one principal stated, “I brought a team that knew my expectations, knew what I’m about, that was pretty helpful.” However, at one school, the decision to bring staff from the principals’ prior school was met with some resistance from the staff at the new school site.
At two of the sites, principals were either not named until the summer or not able to get into the building until the summer. They, therefore, had less time with staff before the start of the school year. One of those principals shared,

The people that were key to the process were gone [due to taking other jobs in the school district] and there was just me, so I tried to get to know teachers, but there wasn’t a lot of contact over July, and so I pretty much made some decisions on my own. If I had gotten in there in May, I could have connected with a group of people to help me.

During this stage, six principals also revealed that they did not feel supported by their school district. This was the point where principals were trying to make staffing changes and felt frustrated with not receiving preferential hiring support. One principal reflected, “Why weren’t they giving us more support if they are concerned about what we’re doing…to help us with requirements, more time together, to collaborate with each other.” See Figure 5 for conceptual representation of principals’ perception of their actions and realities that occurred during Stage 2.

![Figure 5. Conceptual representation showing principals’ perceptions of their actions, feelings and reality during the second stage of the socialization process.](image-url)
Stage 3: Settling In

Stage 3, Settling In, occurred as principals entered the first weeks of school, after having time during the spring and/or summer in which to research, plan, and begin implementing change. During this stage, principals had greater knowledge of their sites and of SIG and were ready to begin the new school year. Two main themes were present during this stage: Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability and Reality Hits Home.

Principals had part of the spring of the previous school year and/or the summer to work frenetically to put their plans in motion. The first week of the new school year arrived for the SIG principals at their new school sites. One principal reported that the first week was no different than a first week had been at any other school and stated, “It wasn’t any different, you just kind of sit back and kind of see where people are going and see who the go-getters are right away and see who’s going to try to get away with stuff, so no different than any other year.” In other words, it was a time to see teachers and staff in action. Being visible to teachers, students, and parents was perceived as important. A principal revealed, “It was invigorating, it was just so incredible how everybody took responsibility.”

Some principals felt it was important to continually reaffirm expectations. One principal reported, “Our whole focus the first week was setting the expectations for climate and culture, this is what we expect, this is what we need you to do.” At one school, the principal worked on tweaking newly implemented changes: “The whole first week was constant revision until we finally got it right.” One principal described the perception of the lead-up to the first week as chaotic and explained, “It felt so desperate
[the days before the first week of school], it really did, but the day came and it was fine. That seemed to smooth some of the other stuff over. Some of the little things fell into place that had a big impact.” One principal added, “Our whole focus the first week was setting the expectations for climate and culture, and within two hours of the first day someone was hauled off in handcuffs, so I’m thinking it’s got to get better.”

Once school had started, principals were able to glean what belief systems were present at their school sites and decide how to move forward with that knowledge toward the establishment of stability. Statements such as, “Coming in and cleaning house on a number of levels,” and “getting a good grasp of where their reality was with self-reporting and actually affirming and accounting for it was a big difference,” reveal principals’ perceptions of their reality once they were in the building on a day-to-day basis. One principal responded by stating, “It was a challenge to get rid of the excuses so we could move forward.” Principals also began to see how their roles needed to change. As one principal reported, “When you come in… I hope everybody likes me and I hope everybody believes in what I’m doing, but I found I had to become a little more assertive than I had been in the past.” Another principal stated,

We had to change the comfort here, which is a real process. I really tried to monitor that when we say, this is something else we’re going to do, when to give them the next step, but how to hold them there and support them with it.

One principal was surprised to discover teachers’ inability to think for themselves about their teaching; they were almost robotic because they had been told exactly what and how to teach and when they could teach it. That principal explained,
They really did not believe in a lot of what they were doing. One teacher made a comment that a chimp could do their job. They had no say in any of the decisions. The first year was a very difficult transition because they kept coming to me and saying, so what do you want us to do. See Figure 6 for conceptual representation.

Figure 6. Conceptual visualization of Stage 3 and the principals’ perceptions present within the stage.

**Stage 4: I’m Here**

Stage 4, I’m Here, occurred once principals had time to experience Initial Appointment/Mental Preparation, Entering the Setting, and Settling In. At that point, they were able to determine why their particular school site had been chosen to be a SIG school and realized that substantial changes needed to take place. As one principal articulated, “I pretty much changed everything…everything is different…in the process of turnaround, it’s time for a fresh start, let’s just do it.” The main theme of Reality Hits Home is primarily evinced during this stage.

Many of the changes at school sites centered around climate and culture. As principals reflected back to their first year at the school site, most noted that changes they put in place made a difference to the climate and culture of the school. For example, two principals expressed that the change from being teacher-centered to student-centered had
a huge impact on the climate of their schools during the first year. One principal responded, “They [staff] just weren’t used to that kind of expected relationship with kids and their parents, so I really think that climate and culture piece was huge.” Another principal expressed this sentiment about the change in culture, “Parent involvement and kids feel welcome at school, our attendance rate went up, just that welcoming feel that we’re here for the students and we’re going to be positive with them, and the change from being teacher-centered.” Another principal shared, “We have an active PTO which we didn’t have before and we had a lot of parents come to school events.” Three principals further explained that it was necessary to make changes in staff relationships to ensure fairness and equity. As one of those principals articulated, “...getting toxic people out of power seats.”

Once principals were in place, most of them realized there needed to be changes to expectations. As one principal stated, “The biggest change for people was the expectation that you are going to work as a team, period,” while another principal shared, “it was a consistent expectation to and amongst everybody that this is how we’re doing it and we need to work as a team and be consistent with our expectations for ourselves and our kids.” Put another way, one principal stressed, “It’s been challenging getting rid of the excuses they have here so that we can move forward and not have these low expectations. It’s about building a high expectations frame of mind.” This sentiment was expressed by one principal: “There’s no reason these kids can’t achieve just like the kids at another school, the expectations should be the same.” One principal summed it up: “I was very clear, we’re not here to mess around.” Two principals expressed that they made changes to their PLC structure. One principal stated, “Our PLCs really became our
reform effort. Just the act of professionals sitting down and really having a conversation at least once a week is hugely powerful.”

Changes to the master schedule occurred at most school sites. Examples of how principals made those changes include modifying the number of instructional minutes, lunch periods, the structure of specials, passing time, and the number of assemblies. One principal reported, “They didn’t quite understand the schedule that I put together, it wasn’t something they were used to, so that whole first year, it was a rough transition.”

Instructional changes also occurred at all school sites once principals had been at the sites long enough to observe the reality of instructional practices. Changes that took place included adopting a new reading series, putting science and social studies back into the instructional day, establishing and aligning pacing guides and common assessments, methods of intervention delivery, empowering teachers to make decisions that they believe is best for students, and turning in of lesson plans. One principal reflected,

The biggest change would be our mindset and how we deliver our instruction…I feel as though we were motoring though lessons and programs, yet almost as if we were never reflecting on our practices and what we were doing…we weren’t recognizing some of the needs of our students.

Other changes that principals made at their sites included making mandatory room changes, aesthetic changes, and staff role changes.

As principals had a chance to reflect on their first year and their socialization experiences, each one revealed the overwhelming sense of challenge they felt in the enormity of their situations. One principal stated, “The first year was definitely rough
with this group because there was significant change.” See Figure 7 for conceptual representation.

Figure 7. Conceptual depiction of Stage 4 and the principals’ perceptions present within the stage.

As the principals moved through the stages of the socialization process during the first year at a SIG school, the interview data revealed principal actions and realities at each of the first three stages leading to the fourth stage of changing the culture. Figure 8 visually represents the principals’ perceptions and realities as they moved through the four stages during their first year as leader in a SIG school. The left side of Figure 8 depicts principals’ perceptions toward achieving their goals and fulfilling federal and district expectations, while the right side of Figure 8 portrays the realities SIG principals encountered in each stage while attempting to achieve those goals and fulfill expectations. As illustrated in Figure 8, principals’ perceptions and realities revealed the need for changing the culture at their sites in order to implement the expected changes.
Principals’ Perceptions  

Stage 1  
Excited  
By the  
Challenge  

Stage 2  
Determined  
To Make a  
Difference  

Stage 3  
The Need  
To Set the  
Tone  

Stage 4  
Changing the  
Culture  

Realities  

Stage 1  
Yikes!  

Stage 2  
Obstacles  

Stage 3  
Confronting  
Excuses  

Stage 4  
Principals  
Appointed to SIG  
Schools  

Figure 8. Conceptual depiction of principals’ perceptions of events occurring at the four stages. The left side of the depiction reveals principals’ perceptions of their actions, while the right side reveals the realities they encountered through the stages of their socialization experiences.
Summary

In examining the socialization experiences of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change, three major themes emerged from the principal data: (a) Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability; (b) Swimming Alone in the English Channel; and (c) Reality Hits Home. Additionally, four stages of socialization were revealed through the data; they were: (a) Initial Appointment/Mental Preparation; (b) Entering the Setting; (c) Settling In; and (d) I’m Here. Figure 8 depicts the occurrence of perceptions and events during each of those stages. In Chapter 5, the research questions relative to current research are more thoroughly examined, and the implications for practice and recommendations for further research are proposed.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological retrospective study was to examine the perceptions held by principals of their socialization experiences during their first year at a SIG school. Additionally examined was what principals perceived to be school district leaders’ role in the socialization process during their first year as leader in a SIG school. Using phenomenological research protocols, the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Moustakas, 1994) of the SIG principals were explored. The research questions that guided the inquiry were:

1. What were the socialization experiences of principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation?

2. What did SIG principals perceive school district leaders’ role to be in the socialization process during the first year of SIG implementation?

A phenomenological methodology was utilized by conducting semi-structured interviews with seven principals employed in two school districts who were assigned to lead at schools deemed as persistently lowest achieving. The socialization process of SIG principals was examined after elements from the interviews were extracted, analyzed, and compared. Because the study took place during the second year of SIG implementation in both school districts, principals’ responded to questions from a retrospective point of view. The language used by the principals served to provide an insight into the retrospective perceptions of each principal. Three themes were identified in the data: (a) Frenetic Effort to Establish Stability; (b) Swimming Alone in the English Channel; and (c) Reality Hits Home. The final chapter presents the findings of the study in light of
current research, provides implications for practices, recommendations for further research, and conclusion.

**Discussion**

The principals in the study were all enthusiastic about affecting change at persistently low achieving schools; they felt capable and believed in their abilities. One principal captured this feeling: “I was ready to take on a new challenge, especially an extreme Title [1] school, such as the SIG schools that were chosen.” The principals did their “homework” about the SIG initiative, and they learned as much as they could about their new schools prior to assuming leadership. Although each had apprehensions, they all felt up to the challenge.

The sense of confidence exhibited by the principals may be explained by their years of experience as principals at other school sites, particularly their experience at Title 1 or high-risk schools. Specifically, the principals’ organizational socialization experiences at other school sites may have played a role in their belief in their ability to lead a SIG school successfully. Furthermore, through organizational socialization, a person learns the knowledge, values, and behaviors required of those filling a role within a particular organization (Buchanan, 1974). Scholars agree on the importance and influence of organizational socialization because of its potentially strong and lasting effect on employee behavior, attitudes, and commitment to their organizations (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006).

Principals’ sense of confidence may also be explained by their preparation through leadership programs. This preparation is referred to as professional socialization and is defined as the process which instills the skills, knowledge, and disposition needed
to become a member of the profession (Crow, 2007; Bullough, 1990). Effective leadership programs include: instructional leadership focused program content, integration of theory and practice, a knowledgeable faculty and a strong orientation to the principalship as a career (Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

As the principals entered their new schools, they anticipated there would be challenges with the cultures that existed upon their arrival. After all, the schools had been chosen for SIG because of their persistently low achievement. The actual challenges they encountered were two-fold. The first challenge was staff attitudes encountered. This was complicated by the second challenge of the expected speed of school turnaround by school district leaders. It was as if the SIG grant was a “magic wand” that could turn schools around with a few waves. U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, acknowledged the challenge by stating, “This is really, really hard work; there’s a reason the country took a pass on this for a couple of decades” (Klein, 2012). Nevertheless, the expectations associated with the finding suggested that a change in leadership could work miracles.

Nationally, principals at schools identified to receive SIG funding have been required to make significant changes against a tight clock due to the program’s genesis, with little time to figure out the complex framework of SIG during its initial year (Klein, 2012). Most of the newly appointed SIG principals in this study perceived they were not given time to fully examine and understand the schools’ cultures before having to make crucial decisions that could determine their success or failure during the first year, and ultimately, of their turnaround efforts. They were required to make many of those critical decisions early on in their socialization to their new school site. This finding is consistent
with research by Fink & Brayman (2006), whose study revealed that the turnover of principals due to reform did not afford principals the time to engage effectively in an entry process that allowed them to gain the trust of their staffs or develop insight into the cultures and micropolitics of their schools. One principal in this study reflected, “We didn’t have time; usually you investigate, take a year to make your decisions. It was investigate the first two weeks, then change right away.”

Leadership is intertwined with each particular organizational culture, and each new principal needs to understand and analyze the particular culture into which she is placed (Schein, 1992). The principals in this study encountered a variety of obstacles that are best described as cultural. Principals were faced with the task of changing school cultures where relationships (teacher to student and teacher to teacher) were toxic: “…they were so driven to be punitive with kids;” where instruction was mediocre: “…discovering and realizing the difficult transition for staff to actually teach and problem solve;” where parents didn’t feel welcome: “…it was kind of dark and bad feeling, bad mojo;” or where staffs were skeptical or resistant about change: “…you’re doing this with the original staff, you’re going to have resistance.” One principal summed up this realization: “They [teachers] were vocal about how things used to be and why we should or shouldn’t keep certain traditions.” Interview data from this study aligns with a basic premise of organizational change that changing individual and group behavior is both difficult and time consuming. It is human nature for members of an organization to want to conserve the existing culture. Members of a culture are aware that components of their culture cannot be changed without affecting other cherished values that are present in the organization (Uttal, 1983).
One purpose of this study was to examine principals’ perceptions of their socialization experiences during their first year at a SIG school. When a principal enters a school as a new member of the social group, organizational socialization, or the learning of social roles, is experienced (Merton et al., 1957). The circumstances of entering a SIG school were different from their circumstances as successors at other schools, therefore, their experiences upon entering were unique. Specifically, these principals entered their new schools under forced leadership change. As the principals discovered, the understanding of school culture was integral to their successful organizational socialization. An accepted fact by most researchers is that an organization’s culture socializes people (Schein, 1985) and socialization processes are critical to maintaining and/or changing the culture of schools.

Taormina’s (2004) definition of socialization includes the words, “…and generally accepts the established ways of a particular organization” (p. 29). This aspect of organizational socialization is in sharp contrast with language found in current school reform initiatives, which require districts leaders and principals to dramatically change the established ways of the organization. Results from this study suggest that creating dramatic change in schools was the expectation that SIG principals and district leaders held throughout the first year. The expectation by district leaders and SIG principals was that they (the principals) were to be the leaders of change at their school, rapidly promoting culture change, increasing student achievement, and (in District A) the implementation of focused academies.

Researchers use stage frameworks to draw attention to the steps that newcomers make during organizational socialization (Feldman, 1976; Hart, 1993; Miskel &
Cosgrove, 1985; Nicholson & West, 1988), These socialization stages emerged as a dominant finding in the study. During the initial stage of socialization, every principal was excited about the challenge of making a difference in a persistently low achieving school. Principals described their experiences of working frenetically to learn, not only about SIG, but also about their new school sites. This information seeking behavior also supported principals’ need to reduce uncertainty (Falcione & Wilson, 1988). Louis (1980) refers to this cognitive and affective learning as sense-making. During this pre-entry and entry phase (Feldman, 1976), it became clear to each principal why the school had received SIG designation. They all experienced reality shock (Louis, 1980) as they recognized the impact of culture on the health of their school site. Every principal in the study discussed the necessity of changing the existing culture of their new schools, in one way or another, in order to successfully promote and sustain any turnaround efforts.

As principals began to gain clarity with their roles and adjust toward a clearer understanding of faculty perceptions and the nature of the culture (Hart, 1993; Wanous, 1980), principals determined how to start making the cultural changes that were expected. However, principals discussed a variety of obstacles that made making rapid change difficult. In addition to the challenges associated with school culture, most principals experienced staffing and hiring barriers, as well as the inability to attain operational flexibility they thought they would have as one of the requirements in the SIG initiative. Additionally, many principals discussed the process of SIG itself created obstacles to making change, as many staff members did not understand why their school was designated as a SIG school and a “why us” attitude prevailed.
One of the keys to successful principal socialization and a necessary ingredient in principals’ efforts to establish the stability in order to affect change is the ability to build relationships and gain buy-in with a new staff (Hart, 1993). Most SIG principals clearly conveyed the importance of relationship building, and that it was an ongoing process throughout the first year. Principals articulated a variety of experiences, such as high visibility, discussing vision, involving staff in decision-making, and teambuilding activities as ways to develop relationships and alliances. Support for these findings come from studies by O’Day and Bitter (2003) revealing that elementary schools with higher initial capacity (higher peer collaboration, teacher-teacher trust, and collective responsibility for student learning) responded more favorably to interventions. Not only was it important to build relationships with the new staff, principals also discussed the importance of building relationships with parents. They wanted their parents’ voices to be heard and for their schools to be viewed as safe and welcoming.

Although building relationships was viewed as important, the principals discussed the obstacles with that process. One principal stated, “This staff just didn’t take that leap of faith.” Blau (1964) stated, “We cannot force others to give us their approval, regardless of how much power we have over them, because coercing them to express their admiration or praise would make these expressions worthless” (p. 79). Some of the principals in this study voiced the need to change their leadership styles as a way to build relationships with staff members and discussed their experiences with that change. One principal lamented about the desire to go back and start over, to be more cognizant of the importance of relationship building, stating that, “I had these big ideas that we were
going to go this far this fast, and of course, it didn’t work that way…there was distrust, I had to pull back.”

Outcomes of socialization occur during stabilization (Parkay, 1992), and researchers categorize the outcomes of principal socialization in three ways: (a) replication; (b) content innovation; and (c) role innovation (Schein, 1971). Cosgrove (1986) and Hart (1993) reported that custodial responses were the most frequently reported outcomes of principal socialization, while Weindling and Early (1987) observed content innovation. Results from this study indicated that the SIG principals’ experiences fell somewhere on the spectrum between content innovation and role innovation during the first year. Content innovation was marked by the development of considerable improvements or changes in the knowledge base or practices in the principals, while role innovation occurred when the new principals rejected most of the norms governing conduct and performance in their schools.

The expectation for a new principal brought into a SIG school is to challenge the status quo and lead change, while making clear the urgency of those changes (Herman, et al., 2008). Typically, principals complete a transition toward long-term success with change strategies and a new form of self-actualization within two years (Parkay et al., 1992). Role innovation of some type was present as most of the principals in this study believed they needed to change their administrative practices in some way within the first year, to set the tone in order to steer the school in the desired direction more rapidly. For example, some principals believed they needed to be more authoritarian than they had been at previous schools. Additionally, one principal changed leadership style by
“coddling a bit more because I didn’t want to keep turning this staff over every single year.”

Duke et al. (1984) posited that socialization experienced by administrators new to schools is usually intense, short, not planned, and informal. Findings in this study were consistent with Duke et al., as principals’ initial succession occurred within a short period of time, and most principals believed they did not receive any formal training in the process of school turnaround. Furthermore, most principals believed they were facing the challenges alone by not receiving support for their efforts to turn around their schools.

When examining the opposing socialization tactics of investiture and divestiture in the context of this study, the SIG principals fell somewhere on the spectrum between investiture and divestiture (Hart, 1991). Some principals experienced investiture when they were pressed to be innovative, but their existing sense of self at work was affirmed and supported. In contrast, other principals experienced divestiture, as their professional identity was challenged, causing adjustment in self-concept. These principals were forced to acquire new skills or apply skills to the new situation in creative ways. However, Greenfield (1985a) and Hart (1993) suggested that the desired outcome of role innovation was more likely to occur when socialization occurred individually, informally, randomly, and was disjunctive (absence of a role model). Results from this study revealed that most principals in this study experienced socialization that included those tactics, promoting role innovation.

A second purpose for this study was to examine what SIG principals’ perceived school district leaders’ role to be in their socialization during the first year of forced leadership change. As Hargreaves’ (2005) study revealed, it is important for school
district leaders to provide support to ensure that principals are successful in their succession. In this study, interview data from principals in two districts were collected. District A and B were different in size and complexity. Most principals discussed their experiences of facing the challenges along during the first year at their new school sites. District leaders from District A was not able to provide the kind of support that the principals believed they needed, and principals realized they were on their own to implement school turnaround. It must be noted, however, that the size of District A may not have allowed district leaders the flexibility needed in order to provide support to SIG principals. These findings mirror what other studies have revealed: that principals’ socialization is inclined to be overwhelmingly individual, where principals report strong feelings of isolation (Hart, 1991), and that districts provide little orientation (Duke 1987; Greenfield, 1985a; Hart, 1988). In contrast, however, the principal in District B perceived that district leadership provided a great deal of guidance and support. That principal stated, “I decided that I could take this leap of faith because I knew I’d have the support.”

Principal succession practices occur somewhere on the spectrum of continuity and discontinuity (Hargreaves, 2005). In this study, school district leaders implemented succession practices that most closely aligned with planned discontinuity, where SIG principals were assigned to schools based on a plan, which expects, intends, and successfully ensures that the principal will move the school in directions that are fundamentally different from the preceding principal. Although principals perceived that they were expected to turn their schools around, most SIG principals in this study discussed that they did not receive the support they needed from school district leaders, specifically in District A. One principal reported, “I think there was some thought about
specific support for SIG principals, but I’m not sure it ever really happened…I think a lot of people, myself included, felt like they were just being thrown out there.” Hargreaves’ (2005) observed that although planned discontinuity promoted significant changes, sustaining the changes did not occur in his study. Planned discontinuity often yields rapid results, but effective leadership requires time to build the new culture and heal the wounds that disruption inevitably creates. At the time of this study, it was still too early to determine if any changes made at school sites would be sustained over time.

**Implications for Practice**

A major finding in this study was the significant role that culture plays in a school leader’s ability to implement change. Federal, state, district, and site-based leaders cannot minimize the important role that school culture plays when attempting to replace school leaders successfully, especially when leadership change is forced due to school reform initiatives. The principal can easily be seen as a symbol of undesired change (Grusky, 1960) and it is common that the school community will seek to protect the current system from the new principal’s influence (Hart, 1993). At schools where district leaders have carefully planned for the transition of principals, systems continue with a minimum of unrest and disruption (Fink & Brayman, 2004; Weindling & Early, 1987). Principals at turnaround schools need time to examine the existing school culture and build relationships before being expected to make significant changes at the school sites. Effectively planned socialization practices are required to allow principals the opportunity to get into new school sites to learn what is valued. Only then, will the new principal be able to make meaningful, sustainable change.
As long as school reform includes the removal and replacement of school principals, school district leaders need to implement successful transition/principal succession practices that reflect the use of researched socialization methods. School district leaders need to be aware of the importance of socialization during leadership changes and provide the necessary knowledge to incoming leaders to ensure successful entry into a new school site. As was evident in this study, principals had little time, not only to learn about their new sites, but also in which to make crucial decisions. Important for a principal’s transition into a new site is attention to effective communications, plenty of lead-in time for entry and exit processes, and the compatibility of the new principal’s inbound knowledge with the needs of the school. Principals need to be socialized in the processes and management of change, given support for innovations, and participate in the planning process. Through the understanding of the factors that predict outcomes, principal and school growth/performance can be better foreseen and improved. By allowing this socialization to occur, principals get the opportunity to identify with the school and negotiate a shared sense of meaning with the staff (Weindling & Early, 1987). This implication for practice is certainly not new, as numerous research studies have suggested inclusion into effective principal socialization application (Hargreaves, 2005). Although it has been recommended, few school systems now give attention to their new members. Principal’s superiors are often not aware or seem unconcerned with the critical process of socialization (Duke, 1988; Hargreaves, 2005; Parkay et al., 1992). More recently, however, many school districts are collaborating with universities to produce aspiring leaders who are well qualified to implement district reform strategies and
improve schools for higher student achievement (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

When school district leaders fail to socialize new principals effectively, particularly when their succession is a result of forced leadership change, the sustainability of school improvement efforts is threatened and the capacity of incoming and outgoing principals to lead their schools is undermined. For principals coming into school sites due to school reform measures, such as SIG, effective socialization is even more critical in order for those principals to be successful. Principals need to receive specific professional socialization in the process of turnaround in order to gain an awareness of the forces behind organizational socialization to increase the possibility of effective principal succession. School district leaders may consider utilizing turnaround specialist programs to develop high impact school leaders. These programs provide training in district capacity and conditions necessary to support and enhance transformational change. This recommendation aligns with suggestions made by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, which strongly supports reforms that provide essential resources principals at low-performing schools must have to succeed. These resources include the necessary time, talent, and tools (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2010).

A major theme that emerged from the study was that most principals felt alone in their turnaround efforts. Although not gleaned from interview data whether or not SIG principals had an opportunity to meet with each other on a regular basis, it is recommended that school district leaders promote such a practice. Current literature on adult learning underscores the importance of reflection and dialogue and connecting new
learning to previous experiences. There has been a shift in the thinking around adult learning, going from understanding it from the individual learner’s perspective to the learner in context, such as the workplace (Merriam, 2008). School district leaders need to provide SIG or turnaround principals with an opportunity to meet in regularly scheduled learning communities to reflect on their practice, share their successes, and continue to build their knowledge. Through principal learning communities, this reflection and dialogue can occur, thus, validating principals’ experiences, enhancing their levels of support, and reducing their feelings of isolation.

One of the most significant events in the life of all schools is a change in leadership, and yet, few things in education succeed less than leadership succession (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006), as quick-fix reforms to turn around low performing schools often drain teachers or principals, and efforts to improved are not sustained over time. Researchers who have studied how school leaders try to restructure their schools caution that there is no magic formula to success. School district leaders must be cautious about implementing turnaround efforts that require the removal and replacement of the school principal unless they have well-developed socialization systems in place to support the principal and school site. Current literature cites the importance of considering organizational socialization for both incoming principals and existing staff members because of its potentially strong and lasting effect on staffs’ behavior, attitude, and commitment (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Through the study of socialization processes and outcomes, the understanding of the culture of the organization, how it is maintained, and its impact upon the activities of administering, teaching, and learning becomes clear (Greenfield, 1985a). The socialization process emphasizes a new
principal’s congruence and growth as that principal analyzes the cultural and social elements present at their new school site. That cultural and social analysis is necessary in order to promote the changes that federal, state and district leaders now demand of school principals.

Future Research

Current school reform measures call for the removal of principals of persistently low-performing schools and to replace those principals with ones who are expected to reverse chronic underperformance rapidly and sustain improvement. Results from this study strongly advocate three areas for additional research. This study focused on the socialization of the principal coming into a SIG school, due to forced leadership change. So much of the interview data revolved around the existing staff: their reactions, actions, acceptance, or resistance to their new leaders. It would be compelling to conduct this study from the lens of the existing members of a school site that has been designated as a SIG or turnaround school to examine their perceptions of their role on the socialization of the new leader who has been appointed to the school as a result of forced leadership change. Most aware of the impact of leadership succession are the teachers who experience processions of leaders coming through their school. The results of a study examining teachers’ perceptions and experiences would glean information important to school district leaders as they plan for future SIG or turnaround principals’ successful entry into a new school site.

Second, this study revealed SIG principals’ perceptions of school district leaders’ role in their socialization into new schools. Likewise, it would be significant to conduct this study from the lens of school district leaders as they embark on school reform that
includes the removal and replacement of principals at identified school sites. Gaining a district level perspective would inform policy, both in the school districts in the study, as well as in other school districts where leaders choose to undertake school reform involving the removal and replacement of the principal.

Third, results from this study briefly described SIG principals’ perceptions of the actions of the principals who were removed from schools designated for SIG funding. It would be significant to examine the perceptions of school leaders forced out of their schools due to turnaround efforts. Gaining this perspective, particularly in context of removed principals’ perceptions of existing school culture and their perceptions of why they are being removed, may inform school district leaders in their planning for forced succession.

**Conclusion**

One major finding resulted from this study: the culture and climate at school settings determined SIG principals’ ability to affect change during their first year of school turnaround. During the first year at a SIG school, principals found that deep-rooted cultural issues at their sites made it difficult to implement the changes with the rapidity expected by school district leadership. One principal summed up that statement by saying, “The culture here needed a total rehab…the district told me that without a positive culture, we’re not going to be able to implement the grant.” Barrett’s research (1984) supported this finding, maintaining that changing an organization’s culture is more difficult than creating a new one.

The SIG initiative was funded to support the transformational changes needed to turn around the lowest achieving schools in the United States (ARRA, 2010). In this
study, district leaders identified schools to receive SIG funds because of persistent low achievement attributed, in most cases, to deep-rooted cultural issues. The results of the study illustrate how the challenges for a new principal coming into a SIG school through forced leadership change have been greater than any other principal succession event. As one principal reflected, “It would have been a lot easier to [do this] at a different school.”
Resources


http://0web.ebscohost.com.innopac.library.unr.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?v=v
id=4&hid=25&sid=79912cd0-b831-445e-8cad-7ce0e06a3b48%40sessionmgr4


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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
Principal Socialization Interview 1: Chronology

1. When you first heard that the school district was applying for SIG funding and that principals at schools would be removed, what were your thoughts?

2. What went through your mind when you found out that specific schools in the district would be receiving SIG funds and losing their principals?

3. How did you make the decision to apply to be a principal at a SIG school?

4. As you completed the application process, what were you thinking?

5. Once you were told you would be one of the SIG principals, what went through your mind?

6. Once you were appointed to your particular school site, what were your thoughts?

7. How did you approach all the decisions you had to make prior to the start of the school year?

8. How did the district support/prepare you during the period of time prior to the start of school? After the start of the school year? Did support change throughout the school year?

   a. How do you perceive that the school district supported you as you made or attempted to make changes at your school?

9. Describe what was going through your mind during the first meeting where you were introduced to your new staff.

10. What were your thoughts in planning for your first staff meeting as principal at your new school site?

11. How did you approach your first week on the job? Create a picture of what that first week looked like and felt like for you.

12. How do you feel you were accepted by staff members?
13. Did your thoughts about your role change over time? If so, what prompted that change in thinking?

14. How do you perceive the staff felt about you coming in as principal? Do you believe those perceptions changed over the course of the year?

15. Knowing that you were brought into the school to turn things around, what were your thoughts about how you would bring the staff together to accomplish your goals?
   a. How receptive do you feel was the staff toward your plans/ideas?

16. What did you do to learn the culture of the school?
   a. What types of traditions/practices/procedures did you feel it necessary to change/ to keep the same?
   b. How did you learn what was valued by the school?

17. What do you perceive as the biggest changes that came about during your first year at your school?

18. What do you perceive were the district’s expectations for you in taking this position?
Principal Socialization Interview 2: Themes

1. What have been the sources of influence within your organization?
   a. How have you fostered relationships with key insiders to assist with your socialization?
   b. What individuals or groups helped you acquire the knowledge, skills, and values that made you a productive member of the school site?

2. What skills do you feel you brought to the position of SIG principal?

3. Has there been dissonance between your expectations, values, and beliefs and those of the organization during the first year? If so, how have you worked through that dissonance?

4. You were brought into the school to turn things around quickly. How have you worked to move the staff forward in making big changes?

5. What have you felt has presented the most challenges?

6. What professional development have you received that you feel has supported your successful socialization into the organization?

7. How did you acquire the knowledge, skills, and values that make you a productive member at your school site?

8. What had the greatest effect on your adjustment within the school site, your efforts or those of others?

9. What did you learn that helped you “fit” into your community?

10. How do you perceive the school district prepared the staff for SIG reform at their school, for your arrival?

11. How do you perceive the school district prepared you for SIG reform in the district/in your school?

12. How do you perceive that your leadership changed during the first year as a result of being a SIG principal?
Appendix B

University of Nevada, Reno,

Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board Approval
Certification of Approval for New Protocol: Social Behavioral
Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board

Date:          January 5, 2012
To:            George Hill, PhD Department of Educational Leadership
Copy:          Susan Kehoe

UNR Protocol Number:  S12-060
Protocol Title:      Socialization of SIG principals During the First Year of Forced Leadership
                    Change: A Retrospective Phenomenological Study
Type of Review:     Expedited 6 & 7 Minimal risk
Approval Period:    January 5, 2012 to January 4, 2013

This approval is for:
KehoeProtocolApplication_FINAL_1122.11.doc (Protocol application),
Kehoe_IRB_recruitment_script.doc (Recruitment materials), Kehoe Social_Behavioral_Consent12.21.11,
ver.2.doc (Consent Form), Kehoe Interview Questions for IRB Protocol.docx (Research instruments)

Approved number of subjects: 700

The above-referenced protocol was reviewed and approved by one of UNR's Institutional Review Boards
in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on the Protection of Human
Subjects (45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50 and 56).

PI Responsibilities
- Maintain an accurate and complete protocol file.
- Submit continuing projects for review and approval prior to the expiration date.
- Submit proposed changes for review and approval prior to initiation, except when necessary to
  eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. Such exceptions must be reported to the IRB at
  once.
- Report any unanticipated problems which may increase risks to human subjects or unanticipated
  adverse events to the IRB within 5 days.
- Submit a closure request 10 days after project completion to the IRB.

Reference the protocol number on all related correspondence with the IRB. If you have any questions,
please contact Valerie Smith at 775.327.2308.

For Veteran’s Administration research only
VA Research:   No
Flag VA Medical Record:  N/A
Appendix C

Participant Recruitment Protocol
Recruitment E-Mail

Each participant was initially contacted by email by the researcher. The following phone protocol was used:

Dear           ,

I am conducting a study to explore the socialization process that SIG principals experienced during their first year of SIG implementation. As a principal who came into a SIG school under forced leadership change, your participation will be extremely insightful.

What’s involved? If you agree to participate in this research study, you are agreeing to let me come to your school at your convenience to conduct two semi-structured interviews. The first interview will focus on the chronology of your socialization experiences during the first year of forced leadership change. The second interview will focus on various themes that surface as a result of your socialization experiences. Each interview will take approximately one hour. It is necessary to conduct the interviews over two sessions to gather the data necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of your lived experiences. The interviews will be audio recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. If necessary, follow up interviews will be conducted with you to ensure clarity of data collected. In total, your participation will be between 2 and 2 ½ hours, depending upon follow-up.

There is no pressure to participate and we consider the risks to be minimal. Your identity will be protected to the extent allowed by law. None of the data will be shared with anyone outside of the research team. There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, the results of the study could potentially benefit the research community when examining principal succession and school reform. This study may aid current or future principals at SIG schools in their awareness of the socialization process and how that process affects succession, as those principals work to implement and sustain the radical change that is demanded of them. School district leaders may also benefit from this study as they implement school reform that involves the removal and replacement of school principals. Additionally, because principals often feel isolated in their positions, this study provides an opportunity for the self-examination of your own experiences.

There will be no cost to you, but as a token of my appreciation for your participation in this research study, I would like to give you a $20 Starbucks gift card. If you agree to participate, please fill out the attached consent form, and I will pick it up prior to our first interview. I will be sure to provide you with a copy of the consent form. If you have questions about this study, please contact me, Susan Kehoe at any time.

If the potential participant replies, “Yes,” an appointment will be made for the interview.

If the potential participant replies, “No,” the potential participant will be thanked for his or her time.
Appendix D

University of Nevada, Reno

Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board Consent Protocol
TITLE OF STUDY: Socialization of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change: A retrospective phenomenological study

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. George Hill, Ph.D. (775) 682-9076  Susan Kehoe (775) 544-8152
PROTOCOL #: S12-060

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational socialization experiences of principals who replaced existing principals at SIG schools during the first year of SIG implementation. This study will also explore the roles that both school and district personnel played in the SIG principals’ socialization process.

PARTICIPANTS

You are being asked to participate because you are currently a principal at a SIG school. If you are not a principal at a SIG school, you will not be included as a participant in the study.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will sign this consent form and Susan Kehoe, co-investigator, will pick up the consent form prior to our first interview.

By consenting, you are agreeing to let Susan Kehoe come to your school at your convenience to conduct two semi-structured interviews. The first interview will focus on the chronology of SIG principals’ socialization experiences during the first year of forced leadership change. The second interview will focus on various themes that surface as a result of SIG principals’ socialization experiences. Each interview will take approximately one hour. It is necessary to conduct the interviews over two sessions to gather the data necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of each SIG principal. The interviews will be audio recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. If necessary, follow up interviews will be conducted with principals to ensure clarity of data collected. Those interviews will take place at the school site of the SIG principals and will last no more than one hour. It is anticipated that the interviews will be completed within a period of 90 days in duration after IRB approval. As interviews are transcribed, Susan Kehoe will share transcriptions with you so that you can read and review them and, if desired, can request portions be corrected or removed.
TITLE OF STUDY: Socialization of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change: A retrospective phenomenological study

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. George Hill, Ph.D. (775) 682-9076   Susan Kehoe (775) 544-8152

PROTOCOL #: S12-060

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

There are potential minimal, but unlikely, risks involved with participating in this study. There may be concerns about confidentiality of your identity and data, resulting in school district personnel learning how SIG principals perceive their socialization experiences. In order to minimize these potential risks, each SIG principal will be interviewed on an individual basis in the privacy of the principal’s office. The student investigator will share transcripts as they become available throughout the study for you to review, if desired. Additionally, confidentiality will remain a high priority throughout the research study; no information will be shared with anyone other than the research team. Signed consent forms will be kept separate from other data, and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator’s office. All participants will be assigned a two-digit numerical code and this numerical code will be used in place of names on all data. The coding sheet identifying participants’ names and their corresponding numbers will be kept on the password protected computer of the Student Investigator.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study.

There are potential benefits to the research community in the area of principal succession and school reform. This study may aid current or future principals at SIG schools in their awareness of the socialization process and how that process affects succession, as those principals work to implement and sustain the radical change that is demanded of them. School district leaders may also benefit from this study as they implement school reform that involves the removal and replacement of school principals. Additionally, because principals often feel isolated in their positions, this study provides an opportunity for the self-examination of their own experiences.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity will be protected to the extent allowed by law. You will not be personally identified in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

The Department of Health and Human Service (HHS), other federal agencies as necessary, the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board and may inspect your study records.

The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in a secure location during this project. Only the Principal Investigator, Student Investigator, and Research
TITLE OF STUDY: Socialization of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change: A retrospective phenomenological study

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. George Hill, Ph.D. (775) 682-9076   Susan Kehoe (775) 544-8152

PROTOCOL #: S12-060

Team Member will have access to the study data and information. There will not be any identifying names on the tapes, and participant’s names will not be available to anyone. The tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study. Audio tapes, transcripts, and notes will be stored in a locked cabinet in the home office of Susan Kehoe, student investigator, during data analysis. It will be permanently stored in the office of the Principal Investigator, George C. (Gus) Hill, William Raggio Building, Room 4060. Each participant will receive a numerical code that will be used on all data collected. The document identifying participants' names and the assigned numerical codes will be kept on the personal computer of the Student Investigator (Susan Kehoe). The computer is password protected. All data stored will contain the numerical code identifying the participant, not the participant's name. Transcripts and notes will be retained for 3 years, at which time will be shredded. Audio tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Electronic data on the personal, password protected computer of Susan Kehoe will also be deleted after three years.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you for participating in this research study. All participants will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card as a small token of appreciation from Susan Kehoe, Student-Investigator.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and still receive the care you would normally receive if you were not in the study. If the study design or use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and your consent re-obtained. You will be told of any significant new findings developed during the course of this study, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this study or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact Susan Kehoe at (775) 333-5190 or George Hill at (775) 682-9076 at any time.

You may ask about your rights as a research subject or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concern, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (775) 327-2368, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.
TITLE OF STUDY: Socialization of SIG principals during the first year of forced leadership change: A retrospective phenomenological study

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. George Hill, Ph.D. (775) 682-9076  Susan Kehoe (775) 544-8152
PROTOCOL #: S12-060

CLOSING STATEMENT

I have read (   ) this consent form or have had it read to me (   ). [Check one.]

Susan Kehoe has explained the study to me and all of my questions have been answered. I have been told of the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study.

If I do not take part in this study, my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty [or loss of other benefits to which I am entitled].

I have been told my rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I have been told what the study is about and how and why it is being done. All my questions have been answered.

I will receive a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

___________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Participant  Date

___________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date

___________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Investigator  Date