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ABSTRACT

Applying theory from organizational and cultural perspectives to succession of principals, this study observes and records the language and culture of a small suburban elementary school. The study's procedures included analyses of shared organizational understandings as well as identification of the principal's influence on the school. Analyses of organizational characteristics revealed that channels for providing constructive criticism on instructional and professional matters were restricted and that the faculty felt a need for communicating with the principal on such matters. In evaluating leadership characteristics, the researchers found that the faculty shared the belief that the principal was nonsupportive and unduly influenced by external forces. Succession characteristics exhibited by the faculty included the belief that the new principal would provide more instructional leadership and that the faculty had little input in the principal selection process. The findings in this case study substantiate previous research findings. The study identified beliefs about school administration that correspond to existing theories on administrative behavior. A three-page list of references is provided. (MD)

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THE SUCCESSION OF A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL  
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The extent of a leader's influence on organizational performance is a complex issue. Social and behavioral scientists have conducted numerous studies and developed a number of conceptualizations which attempt to explain this link. One area of research has been the change, or succession, of a leader as an event which may be related to several organizational variables.

Succession of the organization leader provides a stimulus for change in both formal and informal organizational structures as reflected through communication among organization members, shared organizational beliefs, and individual and group action. Assessing the changes informal structures during a succession event may afford a greater understanding of the influence and function of organizational leaders. Because adjustments must be made by many both before and after the change of a leader, the nature of relationships among individuals and the degree of influence a leader has on the organization may become more apparent during the succession event. Through studying succession, one can observe the processes by which individuals "negotiate a common theme that

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facilitates and makes sense of organizational events (Gephart, 1978, p. 213)."

### Culture Theory: Analysis of Symbols and Shared Meanings

This study applies theory from both organizational and cultural perspectives. It represents a new dimension in the analysis of organizations by using a cultural paradigm, or metaphor of analysis. In this approach to the analysis of an organization, culture is defined as a system of shared symbols and meanings, and organization is defined as a pattern of symbolic language and actions which facilitate shared meanings and shared realities (Smircich, 1983). Assessing organizational changes from this dual perspective requires thorough observation of action and interaction among organization members as well as extensive interview in which the meanings assigned to certain behaviors may be identified. The goal of such an approach is to identify the shared meanings and shared realities of an organization by analyzing language and action as symbols of those shared understandings.

Succession research, and related sociological and anthropological theory, has repeatedly emphasized the importance of language in assessing the organization's culture. Weick (1979) emphasizes language in cultural

expression through his definition of the organization as "a body of thought thought by thinking thinkers." In his view, an organization exists only as a body of shared thought. An alternative interpretation of meaning creation, the structuralist approach (Goffman, 1962, Gidden, 1976, Pettigrew, 1972), is that meanings are created by individuals, but that some meanings may be shared among individuals in a given social situation. (Pfeffer, 1981).

It is this collection of shared meanings which comprises the norms, beliefs, and operational understandings of an organization. Since these norms, beliefs and operational understandings are expressed through language, this study measures changes in shared meanings by observing and recording the language of the organization members. The significance of language in the assessment of organizational cultures can not be underestimated, and studies of communicated language as the indicator of shared organizational understandings are essential to assessing organization members' reactions to leader succession.

#### Structure of the Study

The current research on succession has been criticized on two counts. First, little study has been conducted on how an

organization prepares for the succession of a major actor in the organizational scenario (Gephart, 1978). The focus has been on adjustments of the organization after the arrival of the newcomer. Much research has been limited to forced successions, as opposed to nonforced, or voluntary, successions. Since organization reactions to forced succession tend to be more negative, the differences between forced and nonforced successions are important. The study of nonforced succession is especially important to the study of principal succession because the majority of changes in school leadership appear to be nonforced. Other researchers suggest dividing the succession event into pre- and post-arrival stages and encourage research which addresses the stages separately (Gordon and Rosen, 1981). As previously discussed, social scientists advocate the observation and recording of language as a measure of attitudes and an explanation of behavior. The present study blends these research suggestions.

This study applies field research techniques of observation and interview in the analysis of organizational changes which occur prior to the nonforced succession of a principal in a public school. The selection of a school as the unit of analysis is based on the need for a self-contained unit of analysis for effective field research. Studying the changes which take place in the organizational culture of a school preceding the succession event may provide the sociological

evidence that principals do affect schools in specific ways.

### Purpose

The purpose of the study is to identify the ways in which public elementary school faculty perceive and react to a nonforced change of a principal in an elementary school.

### Summary of Previous Research

Research on succession has explored numerous characteristics and variables in relation to the succession event. Those characteristics and variables can be organized into three major categories: leader behavior and characteristics, organizational characteristics, and succession process characteristics.

Leader characteristics which seem to have the greatest influence on a group's willingness to accept a leader are the agreeability of leader entrance and perceptions of leader competence. Viewed from the pre-arrival perspective, the analysis of these factors would focus on studying subordinate and superordinate expectations of both the predecessor and the successor. As shown in several studies, expectations of the

successor often emerge from expectations of the predecessor. As the predecessor interacts with the organization, certain patterns of behavior and perceptions of competence form, and the successor may be expected to either conform to those established organizational patterns or to break those which are undesirable patterns. One focus of analysis in the study at hand, then, is to outline patterns of behavior, attitudes, and perceptions of competency associated with the incumbent principal which may in turn shape the behavior, attitudes, and perceptions of competency of the successor principal.

Of course, organizational theorists may argue that the variables discussed above as leadership variables are, in fact, organizational variables. For purposes of clarity in analysis, however, those variables particularly associated with leader behavior are singled out from the broader category of organizational variables.

Organizational variables that studies have shown may be related to succession are organization size, organization performance and organization stability. The relationships between succession and organization size or performance have not been established conclusively. Therefore, conclusions are not be drawn concerning these two variables. The variable organization stability bears directly on the study of leader and group behavior during succession. Using the broadened

framework of situational favorableness (Gordon and Rosen, 1981), the potential for maintaining organizational stability of the school prior to the succession of the principal is analyzed. In that framework, they suggest numerous factors which may influence the ability of the organization to retain its stability and the receptiveness of the group to a new leader. The more favorable the situation for the new leader:

1. the more rapidly s/he will be accepted by the group;
2. the more likely there will be an early performance improvement by the group;
3. the longer the new leader will remain in the group;
4. the easier it will be to introduce other changes to the group;
5. the easier it will be to recruit a subsequent leader (p. 252).

Closely related to situational favorableness are succession process variables which mold individual and group perceptions. Many researchers have cited succession rate as a major determinant of the degree to which the group is disrupted by the succession event. Also cited as major process variables are the selection procedure, the origin of the successor (inside/outside), the legitimacy of reasons for succession, and

the possible symbolic meanings of succession. All of these variables are explored in this study of principal succession.

### Research Questions

The broad questions outlined below are used as a guide in the analysis of individual and group behavior related to shared organizational beliefs in the study of succession in a school. The questions are not intended as hypotheses to be tested, nor are they intended to impose limitations on the study. They were formulated merely as a framework for initiating the research.

#### A. Organizational Characteristics

1. What are the physical characteristics of the school?
2. What are the functional characteristics of the school (i.e., instructional goals, formal rules, etc...)?
3. What are the faculty's beliefs or philosophy about the nature of their work?
4. What are the faculty's beliefs about the role of the principal in general?

**B. Characteristics of the Present Leader**

1. What are the personal and experiential characteristics of the present principal as stated by the principal?
2. What are the personal and experiential characteristics of the present principal as observed by the researcher?
3. What are the leader's stated operational and instructional goals?
4. What is the leader's stated management style?
5. What are the leader's operational and instructional goals as perceived by the faculty?
6. What is the leader's management style as perceived by the faculty?
7. To what degree does the faculty perceive that the present leader has influenced the school or their individual work?

**C. Group Experience With Succession**

1. What has been the frequency of succession in the district?
2. What has been the frequency of succession at the school?
3. Do faculty perceive the reason for succession as legitimate?
4. What connotations does succession in general have

for the faculty and staff?

5. What connotations does this particular succession have for the faculty and staff?

**D. Selection Process**

1. Describe the selection process.
2. Who controls the selection process?
3. Who makes the final choice of the successor?
4. From which groups or individuals is input into selection solicited?
5. From which groups or individuals is input into selection received?
6. How does the faculty perceive the equity and effectiveness of the selection process?

**E. Expectations of the New Leader**

1. What personal and experiential characteristics does the faculty expect from the new leader (including inside/outside status defined as within or without a.) the district and b.) the school)?
2. What personal and experiential characteristics does the district office expect from the new leader?
3. Does the faculty or staff expect changes in leadership style from the new leader?

4. Does the faculty or staff desire changes in leadership style from the new leader?
5. Does the faculty or staff expect a change in the competence level of the new leader?
6. Does the faculty or staff desire a change in competence level from the new leader?
7. To what degree does the faculty perceive that the new leader will influence the school or their individual work?
8. What is the mandate to the new leader from superordinates?

#### Findings

During the analysis of the observation and interview data, several significant themes emerged. The findings are reported under the three major categories of succession research identified earlier: organizational characteristics, leadership characteristics, and succession process characteristics. Themes centering on informal communication and relationships are the most revealing and meaningful in interpreting the perceptions and attitudes of the faculty toward the succession event and ultimately toward the role of the principal in the school.

## Organizational Characteristics

Organizational characteristics, because leader characteristics are to be addressed separately, include both the concrete description of the school and the themes supported by the collective perceptions of the faculty. The school under analysis is a small elementary school with one principal, seventeen faculty, and approximately four hundred students in grades one through six. No vice principal is assigned to the school. The school is located in an suburban community comprised almost entirely of middle-class, non-minority families. The political climate of the neighborhood and surrounding area is conservative and supportive of the current federal administration. The students tend to score above average on standardized tests in comparison to national norms.

The school is typical of many schools in the area and in the nation. The decision to choose a middle-of-the-road rather than an atypical school was deliberate. The researchers determined that studying an "average" school (if there is such a thing) is needed to supplement research which has concentrated on outlying, or atypical, schools. All schools are not alike. Identifying characteristics of different types of schools will lead to their comparative analysis and the ultimate development of differential theories of administration to accommodate various types of schools.

In addition to the physical characteristics of schools, collective perceptions of organization members are an important part of assessing organizational characteristics. One theme related to communication patterns among the faculty was the overriding reluctance to address negative feedback on administrative practices directly to the principal. A contrasting subtheme was the consistent eagerness of the faculty to disclose that negative feedback to the researchers. This finding is not especially remarkable in itself, but the manifestations of it afford greater insight into the relationship of the principal to the faculty and into the nature of his administrative influence on instruction in this school.

Openly offering negative feedback was thwarted by the shared understanding that kindness and courtesy was to be emphasized in all interaction among the principal and faculty. The principal set the example for such behavior, and it effectively eliminated exchange of constructive criticism. Some faculty characterized the principal as "shy" and wished not to be unduly confrontive. Two or three faculty did express their opinions openly to the principal by both their own admission and the observation of others. The majority of faculty viewed these two or three faculty who expressed opinions openly as rebels of a sort. While most faculty complained about certain actions of the principal, they

regarded those who complained overtly in a disapproving light.

In interview data gathered to follow up on this theme, faculty revealed the need for constructive feedback from the principal on evaluation of instruction and the need for a professional vehicle to provide input to the administration for decision making. At the same time, they expressed a fear of too much interference from the administration in instructional matters.

These seemingly contradictory perspectives were reconciled through further analysis of the data. The faculty wanted a constructive, two-way communication with the principal about administrative and instructional matters but wished to maintain autonomy in the classroom as well. They want instructional support not instructional interference. Some faculty felt that such a relationship was highly unlikely, and stated that their concern over interference would outweigh their desire for better communication if they were forced to make a choice.

Another related theme which emerged as an organizational characteristic was related to competition among faculty for recognition in instructional matters from the principal. The principal encouraged the competition in three ways although the researchers could not detect that he was aware of the results of his actions. The principal emphasized national test scores

and made implicit comparisons about the performance of teachers based on the scores. Discretionary funds were used to purchase items for individual faculty, and the other faculty perceived the use of those funds as rewards or even favoritism. Finally, the principal often identified a particular teacher as being outstanding, and other faculty thought the praise for doing a good job was deserved by many others as well.

The emphasis of test scores was by far the strongest catalyst of competition among faculty. Test scores were openly displayed in the faculty lounge area, and results were discussed by the faculty and the principal in the presence of whomever was within earshot including a researcher. One example of test score discussion was the comparison of scores from two second grade classrooms. The teacher who was often praised by the principal was ~~concerned that~~ another second grade teacher's class scores were higher than those of her class. The much-praised teacher questioned both the principal and the other teacher in an effort to determine the reason for the scores being higher. Others in the lounge were privy to the conversation. The researchers refrained from making a value judgment about whether or not the scores should have been disclosed in such a manner, and tried to concentrate on the effects such public disclosure had on the teachers as discussed above.

The teachers' general reaction was that test scores were greatly overemphasized. They felt that the scores did not accurately depict the learning which takes place in the school. Even those faculty who did not make statements directly opposing the emphasis of test scores were uncomfortable with the continual attention the scores were given by the principal. Much of the discomfort expressed by faculty was directed at the inclination of the principal to strictly follow district mandates, such as emphasis of test scores, without regard to faculty concerns or input.

In summary, analysis of organizational characteristics revealed two shared understandings. First, the channels for providing constructive criticism on instructional and professional matters were restricted by the unspoken cultural mandate of exhibiting kindness and courtesy, interpreted to exclude confrontation, to others at all times. Second, the faculty shared the need for exchanging feedback with the principal on instructional and professional matters.

#### Leader Characteristics

Organization and leader characteristics tend to overlap. The organizational characteristic mentioned above, competition fostered by emphasis of test scores, for example, illustrates

the overlap and provide a convenient transition to the discussion of leader characteristics. Discussion of organizational characteristics has established a pattern of shared understandings which is supported by analysis of principal characteristics. To accurately explain the characteristics of the principal, the principal's own assessment of his behavior, the faculty perception of principal characteristics, and the researchers' interpretation of the data are offered.

The principal described himself as an administrator who was concerned about instruction but did not interfere in classroom matters. The principal stated that achievement tests and discipline problems were the major problems with which he is faced. He said that he tried to visit classrooms often and to conference with teachers about their discipline problems. The district requires a visit to each classroom twice a year, and the principal completes that requirement although he admitted that some of the visits are only for four or five minutes each. The principal was pleased that he had some funds in the budget with which to provide extra supplies to teachers "as they see fit." The principal observed that parents present him with problems by requesting transfers of students from one teacher to another. He realized that teachers think he does not support them when he moves the students, but in his judgment it was "a losing game to resist parents." He used the

active P.T.A. as a sounding board for certain programs and ideas.

Teachers interpret the principal's actions in a different way. Teachers have little to say about discipline problems. Their response to the continual emphasis of test scores has already been discussed. Classroom visits were viewed negatively by the majority of teachers. Their common complaint was the lack of meaningful feedback about instruction. Instead, they cited comments from the principal about the cleanliness of the room or similar housekeeping matters during the closing evaluation interview. While the principal viewed discretionary funds as a way to help teachers, the teachers thought the funds were distributed unfairly. One teacher described an episode where several teachers were asked to recommend where the funds should be spent, and their recommendations were ignored. The most significant problem identified by almost every teacher was what they perceive to be the reluctance of the principal to stand up to parental pressure. Many teachers felt the the principal would not support them in a dispute with a parent. One teacher, however, specifically mentioned an incident where the principal did support him in a teacher parent confrontation.

The researchers have concluded that one of the shared understandings of the faculty is the belief that the principal

behaves in ways that are nonsupportive and showing favoritism. They also share the understanding that the principal is unduly influenced by external forces, the parents and the district administration. The understandings may be based in fact, but, regardless of whether they are factual or not, those beliefs comprise at least two of the shared operational understandings which influence the relationships among faculty and between faculty and administration.

Although the faculty and the principal have differing views of the above actions, they seem to share the same perspective on other administrative actions. Throughout the data, evidence of the principal's concern for a clean and orderly environment is apparent. The initial description of the school building reveals scrupulous order of material hung on hall walls and detailed rules governing the appearance of the school as well as the behavior and appearance of students. The punishments identified for student infractions of the rules involve cleaning activities such as picking up trash or washing desks. The principal is clear in his emphasis of orderliness. Though the teachers mentioned the rules and emphasis of order from time to time in their conversations and interviews, they seemed to take the orderly functioning of the school for granted. They were cognizant of the principal's role in maintaining the functional aspects of the school, but their reactions to it were neither positive nor negative. The

actions of the principal to assure order were simply expected.

The analysis of leader characteristics indicated three shared understandings among the faculty. They share the belief that the principal is nonsupportive in certain situations and that he is unduly influenced by external forces. Finally, the faculty views the efficient daily operation of the school as a given--an expected competency of the principal.

#### Succession Process Characteristics

The characteristics of the succession process deal with the expectations that faculty have for the successor principal and for the degree of input they may have into the selection of the principal. The expectations of faculty for the successor principal hinge directly on their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the predecessor. As indicated in the paragraph above, the expectation for orderliness was implicit in the teachers' references to a good instructional environment.

Other expectations for successor characteristics concern the degree of input and support the principal will offer to the instructional program as a whole. The words of one teacher are particularly accurate in describing the general expectations of

the faculty for the new principal:

I'm hoping for a principal who is more dynamic, has more positive involvement, a more intellectual approach to curriculum, more vitality. I would appreciate someone who communicates pride and would like to be more involved in a quality effort--someone who'll set goals and say here is a picture of where we can go, that do you think?

Admittedly this faculty member was more thoughtful and articulate about his expectations for the new principal, but throughout the data evidence of similar expectation can be found.

The only theme which runs counter to the expectation for greater involvement is the desire for little interference from the future principal in matters which were determined by faculty to be a teacher's prerogative. As stated earlier, these two apparently contradictory attitudes can be reconciled by the shared belief among faculty that instructional support is good while instructional interference is unacceptable. For many faculty, evidence of the desire for instructional leadership and expressions of fear of interference can be found in the very same interview.

Along with expectations about the new principal, faculty had expectations concerning the selection process itself. In short, those expectations were that they would have little input

into the decision. Interviews with the district officials who did the screening confirmed this expectation. Preferences of the faculty were not solicited by the district office and teachers did not, in general, volunteer their opinions to the district. Some exchange of information did take place, however, in ways the researchers were not able to identify. One teacher knew, for example, that two men and one woman were finalists for the position. Interviews at the district office did reveal that opinions of parents were often considered in the selection of a new principal. District officials claimed that the parents' input was unsolicited, but one parent stated that someone from the district office had called her.

This last item of information is included to shed light on the perception of faculty that the principal was unduly influenced by parents. Though the unit of analysis in this study is the school, the accidental disclosure in interviews on the selection process that the district office has shared the principal's reaction to parental pressure may explain the principal's unwillingness to ignore parents.

Two other characteristics were identified by teachers as undesirable in the new principal. To place these expectations in perspective, the comments were made by only two teachers in the presence of three others. Support from other observation and interview data was not conclusive. First, the teachers did

not want a principal near retirement. They felt that the school may have been used in the past as a "resting place" for those ready to retire. Second, the teachers did not want a woman because "the few other women principals in the district were not well liked." The researchers were unable to substantiate these subthemes with supporting evidence from other sources.

In summary, faculty share two understandings related to succession process characteristics. They share expectations that the new principal will provide more interactive, dynamic instructional leadership without interference in areas of teacher autonomy. They also share the understanding that faculty have little input into the final selection of a new principal.

### Conclusions

Analysis of the data revealed several shared understandings among the faculty. Some of those shared understandings deal with perceptions of the current organization and its leader. Assessment of the current situation, in turn, leads teachers toward shared understandings of what will be expected of the successor principal.

Teachers clearly expect in the study that the daily

operational aspects of the school will be handled smoothly and competently by the principal. Efficient organization which facilitates an environment conducive to learning is expected from both the predecessor and the successor principal. This conclusion is supported in numerous other studies and theoretical papers (Martin, 1982). One summary of research on effective schools indicates robust findings about relationships between effectiveness and school-level organization "especially as it relates to principals' behavior (Bossert 1983, p. 37)." The definition of organization in this summary, however, includes elements of instructional organization which were not apparent in the school under study. The differences in the kind and extent of organization/coordination activities undertaken by the principal may explain the general dissatisfaction of the faculty with instructional guidance and evaluation.

The organization/coordination activities in the Bossert study include those activities directly related to instruction such as classroom observation, the discussion of problems with teachers, and support of teachers' efforts to improve. In the study at hand, the organization/coordination activities of the principal fell short of the instructional components, and teachers were dissatisfied as a result. They expressed often the limited nature of feedback from the predecessor principal on instructional matters, and, just as often, they stated expectations of increased and more meaningful interaction in

those areas with the new principal.

Along with expectations for more meaningful interaction, teachers expressed a need for clearly stated instructional goals. Many studies show that principals in effective school emphasize achievement. The principal in the school under study did emphasize achievement in the form of scores on national tests. Teachers, however, desired more direction and guidance in instruction. They wanted strong instructional leadership. The data indicates that the teacher perception of instructional leadership behavior includes more than the emphasis of high test scores. According to their perception, it includes a dynamic and supportive role for the principal with adequate professional input from the faculty. This finding can be supported in the literature on effective schools as well, but the identification of the specific behaviors which comprise strong instructional leadership is not complete and may, in fact, be comprised of different sets of behaviors for different types of schools. The faculty at the school under study may desire more guidance than faculty at other schools, for example.

The faculty did articulate concern that the successor principal did not interfere with classroom functions which they perceived as under their area of autonomy. Discussion of this attitude is not directly addressed in literature on effective schools, but it is addressed in analyses of teacher autonomy in

other research. Traditional literature on school administration and contemporary leadership theory both provide evidence of the autonomy of teachers over actual classroom events which is inherent to the nature of schools and teaching. The relationship among the activities of the school are described as loosely coupled (Weick, 1978). The researchers interpreted the teachers' dual desire for instructional guidance and professional autonomy as a manifestation of loose coupling which makes both approaches simultaneously operational. The principal guides the development of instructional objectives which are then left to the teachers for implementation.

The expectation for stronger instructional leadership implies a persuasive and decisive role for the successor principal. Teachers in the school under study attribute the principal's apparent unwillingness to confront parents and his emphasis of test scores because of a district mandate to weakness and a lack of power on his part. They also interpret his reluctance to criticize their teaching constructively as a weakness. Expectations for firmer support with parents and for meaningful exchange during evaluation require strength and conviction of principles on the part of the principal. Research substantiates the conclusion that effective schools have principals who are perceived to be powerful and decisive (Bossert, 1982).

Another condition required for school effectiveness is the existence of quality human relationships among faculty and between faculty and administrators. "Effective principals apparently recognize the unique styles and needs of teachers and help teachers achieve their own achievement goals. They also encourage and acknowledge good work (Bossert, 1982, p. 38)." Data indicate that the principal in the host school recognized a particular faculty member for her work, but encouragement or recognition of other faculty was not indicated. In fact, competition fostered by particular principal behavior, including lack of both positive and negative feedback, encouraged poor relationships with and among teachers. In the judgment of the researchers, a less than desirable quality of human relationships at the school contributed significantly to the collective negative attitude of the teachers toward the administrative behavior of the principal.

#### Summary and Comments

Studying a school through the vehicle of succession and with the benefit of both organizational and cultural theory revealed many important factors about the shared understandings which influence the operation and administration of the school. The researchers found many themes which substantiate findings from previous research on administration of schools. The study

has contributed to the substantiation and development of succession theory as well. Although analysis of the data from the perspective of succession is incomplete at this time, a comment on the relationship of the study to previous succession research is appropriate.

The most startling observation in relation to the processes organizational members undergo during the succession event is that the teachers seemed apathetic or indifferent to the the upcoming change. Almost a nonreaction, rather than a reaction, was observed. In many of the previous studies on succession, reactions to the succession event are pronounced and sometimes emotionally traumatic. Organization members go through a series of sense-making activities which include such behavior as degrading the status of the predecessor (Gephart, 1978). Although the faculty did exhibit tendencies toward status degradation, their sense-making activities were not nearly as intense as those reported in other studies.

One explanation for their nonreaction may be the interchangeability of administrators and teachers among schools and districts. The nature of the administrative profession is that people change positions often during their careers and become, in a sense, interchangeable parts in the educational system (March, 1977). The faculty may be accustomed to changes in principal either because the principal leaves or because they

are assigned to a different school. Their nonreaction may also be attributable to the relative autonomy teachers seem to have in the classroom. Relative autonomy makes them immune to a certain degree to poor administration. In any case, the initial assessment of situational favorableness and organization stability indicates a high degree of probable new leader acceptance and organization stability. The nonreaction of teachers may be due to their shared understanding of the interchangeability of people in education careers and the consequential lack of threat to organization stability. The analysis of the data in relation to succession research promises interesting results.

After reviewing the findings and conclusions sections, the reader has probably decided that the study reports nothing new in relation to principal behavior in effective schools. That is exactly what the researchers hoped to find--nothing new. The procedure of the study was to analyze the expressions of organizational shared understandings made more apparent by the succession event. The objective of the study was to identify characteristics of schools which explain a principal's influence on the school. Both aims were accomplished with the added bonus of having the findings mesh and, in fact, substantiate previous research--research based on quantitative analysis and case studies. One of the most poignant criticisms of quantitative effective schools research has been its use of raw test scores

and the lack of evidence for the intuitive jump from the data to conclusions about qualitative aspects of administration, such as strong instructional leadership. Case studies could support the findings in quantitative research, but they do not provide the detailed and direct data necessary to ground the theories. Field research provides that detailed and direct evidence. Through the cultural metaphor of analysis, the researchers were able to identify shared understandings of school administration which correspond to existing theories on administrative behavior. Theories of administrative behavior in effective schools are grounded, by direct observation and interview, to what actually happens in a school.

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