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Principals and the Professional Victim Syndrome

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PRINCIPALS AND THE PROFESSIONAL VICTIM SYNDROME

by

JAMES G. PULOS

(Under the Direction of Paul M. Brinson, Jr.)

ABSTRACT

Principals today are constantly in the public eye. Every decision made subjects him/her to the scrutiny of staff and faculty, students, central office personnel, parents, community members, and board members. Contemporary principals are asked by their superintendents to lead reform efforts effectively or face the possibility of dismissal. Principals often face the dilemma of balancing politics in an effort to appease board members and the superintendent while simultaneously implementing critical change efforts in their schools. Hess and Kelly (2005) suggested that as principals attempt to lead reform efforts, they often go blindly into these positions unprepared and enter the principalship with a naivety towards the political aspect and importance of relationship building. In 2008, Polka and Litchka used the term “professional victim syndrome” (PVS) to describe the condition confronted by educational leaders, especially superintendents, who experienced a career crisis where their professional and personal reputations were tarnished and they were challenged with navigating political waves in order to survive.

In this study, the extent to which the PVS exists among principals was examined, how they came to be professional victims; and what mechanisms were used to cope with the crisis experienced. A mixed-methods approach was used for data collection. Members of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals (GAMSP) and the

Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP) were asked to complete the Professional Victim Survey for Middle and Secondary Principals. Out of the 443 total valid responses to the survey, 133 reported serving as a middle school principal, and 310 reported serving as a high school principal. Of the respondents, 11% self-reported being a professional victim. While 9 were extensively interviewed, 75% (36 out of the 48) volunteered to participate in the qualitative study suggesting a willingness to discuss their crisis.

All nine of the victims interviewed were involved in implementing change suggesting this to be a contributing factor for PVS. All nine reported having relationship issues and reported that politics played a major role in their crisis. All nine stated that their family, friends, and spirituality made the difference in how they coped with the crisis.

INDEX WORDS: Professional Victim Syndrome, PVS, Tenure, Reform, Change Agents, Politics, Zone of Acceptance

PRINCIPALS AND THE PROFESSIONAL VICTIM SYNDROME

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my wife and daughter for their constant love, support, and encouragement over the past three years as I worked toward completing this degree. Without question, my “professional victim syndrome” crisis resulted in an unintended crisis for you both and made you victims as well. Through the sacrifices and struggles financially, personally, and emotionally, you have shown me the importance of God and family above all else. Words cannot express my love for you both.

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To my fellow professional victims: without your heart-wrenching stories, this dissertation would not have been possible. We are part of a unique cohort of individuals who share such crises in common. Hopefully, through this publication and the work of others, no one else will join our ranks due to the political and personal aspirations of others. People of character and integrity are hard to find – stay true to yourself. I wish you the best in your future endeavors.

To my mother-in-law, Judy: you have always been there for me and my family through all of our trials and tribulations. You have freely and lovingly given financially and emotionally without hesitation. Your contributions to this accomplishment are immeasurable and are greatly appreciated. You are one of the most generous and kindest people I have ever met. Thank you for everything!

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To my dear wife, Elonda: we have been through a lot over the past twenty-four years together. From months of overseas deployments in the military to endless hours at work as a high school principal; from times of prosperity to our current times of just trying to make it till payday each month; you have always been there for me. You have supported my dreams and we have always persevered. Although we may no longer have many material items to claim as our accumulation of wealth, I feel that I am an immensely rich man for having you as my wife. Saying thank you is not enough for all that you have done for me and our family. I am sorry you had to endure this crisis, but I thank God it was you who was by my side.

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great plans for you because you are such an amazing young lady. I am so proud you are my daughter. Thank you for your devotion, love, and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The principal entered the new superintendent's office not knowing why he had been summoned to meet with him. Immediately, the new superintendent told him that his contract would not be renewed for the next year. The principal was taken aback. During his two years as principal, he had devoted countless hours at great personal expense in order to get the county's only high school off the needs improvement list, and this turn of events was totally unexpected. He reflected upon his role as a change agent and all of the major changes he had made over the past two years to make his school successful. He also reflected upon the people he had upset along the way to get the job accomplished, but he had done what the previous superintendent had asked him to do: "turn this school around now before we are forced to restructure." When he asked the new superintendent for a reason for the non-renewal, he was told simply, "Because of your poor relationship with me."

The above vignette accurately reflects what happened to this researcher in 2010 while serving as a high school principal after two years of making changes that resulted in his school making adequate yearly progress (AYP). This was the first time the school made AYP since the implementation of President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. As recently as 2008, Polka and Litchka studied

superintendents in similar situations and identified the crisis they were experiencing as “the professional victim syndrome (PVS)” and defined it as follows:

The professional victim syndrome (PVS) is the condition confronted by many educational leaders, especially superintendents of schools, who face a career crisis in which his/her professional and personal reputations were being tarnished, and he/she was challenged with navigating the political waves in order to survive, literally and figuratively, as a leader and a person. (p. 180).

Unlike teachers, administrators in Georgia are not protected by tenure; therefore, they serve at the will of the superintendent and/or the board of education (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-942, 2012; GSBA, 2006). As long as the reason for nonrenewal of an administrator is not arbitrary or capricious, or in direct violation of some form of constitutional protection, the superintendent and/or board may non-renew the administrator for just about any reasonable cause (*Board of Regents v. Roth* (1972), *Pickering v. BOE* (1968), & O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940; GSBA, 2006). Administrators of public schools in the state of Georgia lost tenure rights in 1995 due to Governor Roy Barnes’ effort to implement more accountability in public schools. Since that date, school reform has taken major turns with the introduction of the federal and state mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and has placed significant burdens upon those who accept the enormous responsibility to lead their schools in a manner that achieves the desired results expected from the public and their employers. Strains in the superintendent-principal relationship, regardless of job performance, may result in the dismissal of the principal, similar to this researcher’s vignette. Like the evidence supporting the superintendent’s professional victim

syndrome conducted by Polka and Litchka (2008), this researcher believes there are issues facing contemporary principals that constitute their inclusion in the definition.

Principals today are constantly in the public eye. Every decision made by an administrator subjects him/her to the scrutiny of staff and faculty, students, central office personnel, parents, community members, and board members. Contemporary principals are asked by their superintendents to lead reform efforts effectively or face the possibility of dismissal. This dilemma is most evident in the recent cheating scandal in the Atlanta Public Schools. According to the official report from the Office of the Governor of Special Investigations (2011), the superintendent under investigation, Dr. Beverly Hall, placed such demands on principals that they may have feared for their jobs. According to the report Dr. Hall stated, “If principals did not meet targets within three years, they will be replaced and I will find someone who will meet targets” (p. 350). Furthermore, the report concludes that Dr. Hall replaced 90% of all principals during her tenure, but the report does not provide evidence of actual or perceived ineffectiveness on the part of the principals who Dr. Hall replaced, only that they faced the uncertainty of job security if they did not meet the established adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals (Office of the Governor of Special Investigations, 2011).

Over the past several decades, numerous research studies have been published providing various theories and practices that will purportedly aid in the improvement of the educational system in America. Schools in America have been in a constant state of reform that place demands on school administrators to implement changes designed to increase student achievement while balancing the internal and external factors that will determine the outcome of such measures. Relationships exist in the internal and external

environment of the organization, and are directly connected to school reform efforts. Likewise, politics is intertwined in the connection between relationships and reform efforts.

Subsequently, the job of school administrator has evolved in this decade of accountability and requires not only the organizational and leadership skills necessary to be an effective change leader, but requires a disposition that is conducive to the spoken and unspoken rules of politics. The primary intent of this study is to determine to what extent contemporary principals in the state of Georgia experience PVS, the professional victim syndrome. By increasing awareness of the syndrome, educational leaders may enter the principalship with increased levels of preparation and savvy required to be the effective change agents and leaders they are expected to be.

Background of the Study

Polka and Litchka (2008) conducted an extensive study of 30 current and former superintendents in Georgia and New York who faced similar crises as superintendents during their tenure and reported that the superintendents were presented with the options of resigning or being fired for what they reported were political and/or relationship issues with their respective school boards. There is insufficient empirical evidence, however, to support the frequency contemporary principals also experience PVS or professional victim syndrome, yet many are also non-renewed due to poor relationships with superintendents or for other reasons not directly associated with performance.

In 2009, Viadero indicated that there is a limited amount of research available regarding the longevity of principals with only a few states providing some data, and stated that such studies are long overdue. Researchers at the University of Delaware

conducted a recent study of trends in the career paths of principals in the state of Delaware with surveys between 2003 and 2008, followed by interviews of 48 principals in 2009 and 2010. This study indicated that less than 10% of schools maintained stability of school leadership during the years studied. This study focused on reasons why school administrators left the profession with the most frequent reason being conflicts with personnel at the school district level resulting in a non-renewal of their contract or their voluntarily leaving. Some of the principals reported politics as a major factor. Other reasons for leaving included family illness, inability to balance family and time pressures, and various combinations of stress, board conflicts and superintendent micro-management, hours, lack of support, too much paperwork, and increased accountability pressures. Another major finding of this study was that many of the principals reported that they experienced reality shock of personal conflicts with teachers and parents, often having to deal with angry and even screaming parents, and that these shock moments had an impact on their principal career path. According to the study also found that many of the principals did not make the decision to change but were reassigned by their superiors (Farley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz, and Welch, 2011).

Also in 2009, Fuller and Young studied more than 16,500 principals in Texas from 1995 to 2008 and found that just over 50% of high school principals remained in their jobs after just three years, and less than 30% stayed for five years. This study noted that the pressures placed upon principals to quickly raise achievement levels under the accountability requirements had a profound effect on the stress felt by the principals (Fuller & Young, 2009). “Principals often feel like they are asked to do the impossible without the tools and time necessary to do the job well.” (Fuller & Young, 2009, p. 18).

The principals noted the following reasons for leaving the job: excessive interference from central office staff, lack of autonomy, lack of resources, and lack of mentoring and support. (Fuller & Young, 2009).

According to Samuels (2012), the RAND Corporation conducted a study of 519 principals and found that 12% left the principalship position after just one year and another 11% left after just two years. The study found that the decision to change the principal was often made by the district personnel rather than the principal and that the ability to quickly improve performance at the school is likely to have played a major factor in the decision (Samuels, 2012). Additionally, the principals indicated that their limited success in implementing key strategies with staff buy-in influenced the decision (Samuels, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

It is believed by this researcher that an undeterminable number of principals have lost their jobs in this state without being given legitimate reasons by their superintendent and/or board of education. These same principals took the leap from teacher to administrator, and were left without the same job protection they previously received while teaching in the state of Georgia. As well, they often face the dilemma of balancing politics in an effort to appease board members and the superintendent while simultaneously implementing critical change efforts in their schools.

The role of the contemporary principal of public schools today in the state of Georgia has drastically changed over the past three decades since the implementation of the Quality Core Curriculum in Georgia in 1984 to the onset of the new Common Core Georgia Performance Standards in 2010. Principals are held to higher standards and have

greater responsibilities than their predecessors (Hill & Banta, 2008). School boards and superintendents throughout the state are constantly searching for people with the skills and talent needed to implement the necessary changes essential to make substantial differences. The tasks and expectations that are asked of principals are often extremely demanding and unrealistic – resulting in the often cited term, “superprincipal” (Copeland, 2001).

Principals often go blindly into these key leadership positions unprepared by previous assignments and administrative preparatory schooling (Hess & Kelly, 2005). As well, principals enter the new office with naivety towards the political aspect and importance of relationship building as they attempt to lead their schools through reform efforts. Principals face the daunting challenge of maintaining positive relationships simultaneously with their peers, staff and faculty, central office staff, students, parents, community members, the superintendent, and the board of education members while striving to implement reform efforts as a change agent.

The principal of today must either have learned to be politically savvy from previous experiences and use that in their new capacity, or must immediately gain that knowledge upon entering the administrative position, in order to implement any major changes in their new organization. Likewise, the contemporary principal must fully understand the importance of building relationships in order to be successful. Otherwise, they face the strong possibility of either not moving the school forward and/or being asked to resign in lieu of non-renewal or being fired. Successful leaders place emphasis on personal relationships, and realize that change requires courage, commitment, and political savvy (Heifetz and Linsky, 2004).

Similar to the superintendents who stated underlying political reasons for their job loss documented in the research conducted by Polka and Litchka (2008), it is believed by this researcher that the same condition exists for contemporary principals, thus, there is a need for continued research on the “professional victim syndrome”. An attempt to replicate the study of Polka and Litchka (2008) will be conducted with middle and high school principals for the purpose of increasing awareness to the realities of a principalship, increasing preparedness and reducing the naivety that often accompanies a new principal in this important educational leadership position.

Research Questions

Research questions guiding this study were derived from Polka and Litchka (2008). The overarching question is: To what extent does the professional victim syndrome exist among contemporary principals; how did the principals come to be professional victims; and what mechanisms were used to cope with the crisis experienced. The sub-questions derived are as follows:

1. What is the frequency of principals who face the professional victim syndrome in the state of Georgia?
2. What are the relationships between principal demographics and their experiences with the professional victim syndrome?
3. What are the “lived experiences” of particular principals who have been professional victims during their respective careers?
4. What extent did change efforts, relationships, and politics play in each participant’s crisis?

5. What resiliency and reflective strategies were employed by those principals to cope with their respective professional victim syndrome?
6. What advice do principals who were professional victims give to others to help them cope with similar situations?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the educational field for three reasons. First, the study will identify the factors leading up to and the consequences of being a professional victim as a principal, and the means to cope with and respond to the impact this syndrome has on the principal's profession and personal life. Secondly, the information will help current and future principals understand the significance of building positive relationships and the role politics plays while leading their school through change initiatives. Third, this study will help institutions of higher education develop programs of study for certification and preparation of future administrators so they may be exposed to the issues associated with the professional victim syndrome in anticipation of becoming future successful principals.

Delimitations and Limitations

Participants in this study are self-reporting that they meet the definition of being a professional victim. While considered a delimitation, it is not the intent of this study to identify the extent of contemporary principals who are not renewed, fired, moved to another position, or asked to resign in lieu of non-renewal or termination based on competency and/or other legitimate reasons, but rather to study the extent to which these contemporary principals involved in these situations, consider themselves to be experiencing the professional victim syndrome.

There are three limitations identified by the researcher as part of this study. First, the researcher has personally experienced the professional victim syndrome as a contemporary high school principal, and has coped with the personal and professional impact of this syndrome thereafter. It is acknowledged that this may cause the researcher to be somewhat biased when determining the findings of this study because of the experience. However, the standard set of questions previously developed by Polka and Litchka (2008) will provide validity to the findings and offset any potential bias by the researcher. Participants will not be made aware of the researcher's own PVS experience.

The original surveys will only be sent to members of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals (GAMSP) and the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP). This is also considered a limitation since this population may exclude current and/or former principals who were subject to the professional victim syndrome, but who are not current members of the GAMSP or GASSP. From this convenience sample, interviews will be conducted with current or former middle and/or high school principals who volunteer to participate in this study. Participants will be current or former principals who reportedly lost their jobs due in large part to being a professional victim, and not associated with their lack of competence or impropriety.

The third identified limitation in this study is that the individuals who will be interviewed are self-reporting their circumstances as fitting the definition of the professional victim syndrome. Based on the findings of Polka and Litchka (2008) for superintendents, this self-reporting is still sufficient to validate the extent of contemporary principals who are victims of this syndrome.

Definitions of Terms

Change Agent: Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) describe a change agent as an individual who exhibits behaviors and characteristics that: consciously challenge the status quo; willingly lead change initiatives with uncertain outcomes; systematically consider new and better ways of doing things; and consistently attempt to operate at the edge verses the center of the school's competence. Fullan (1993) defines change agency as "being self-conscious about the nature of change and the change process. Those skilled in change are appreciative of its semi-unpredictable and volatile character, and they are explicitly concerned with the pursuit of ideas and competencies for coping with and influencing more and more aspects of the process toward some desired set of ends." (p. 12).

Professional Victim Syndrome: Polka and Litchka (2008) define the professional victim syndrome as, "the condition confronted by many educational leaders, ..., who face a career crisis in which his/her professional and personal reputations were being tarnished, and he/she was challenged with navigating the political waves in order to survive, literally and figuratively, as a leader and a person." (p. 180).

Tenure: O.C.G.A. § 20-2-942 (2012) provides teachers who meet specific requirements with certain due process rights before the teacher can be dismissed or demoted. Specifically, a teacher must be offered and accepts a fourth consecutive school year contract with the same school district to obtain protection often referred to as tenure rights. If a teacher has already earned tenure rights from a previous school system and is subsequently employed by another system, the teacher obtains tenure protection in the new system when the system offers a second consecutive school year contract and the

teacher accepts the contract. The O.C.G.A. § 20-2-942 (2012) also provides specific legal conditions that must be adhered to in order to dismiss a teacher in Georgia who is tenured. This same provision states that administrators are not entitled to tenure rights.

Politics: A couple of definitions from Webster's online dictionary are befitting for the context of politics as it is used in this research. As a noun, politics is defined as "1) the complex or aggregate of relationships of people in society, especially those relationships involving authority or power; 2) any activity concerned with the acquisition of power, gaining one's own ends, etc: company politics are frequently vicious."

Zone of Acceptance: This term, also known as zone of indifference, from Hoy and Miskel's (2005) model called "putting it together", refers to orders that are accepted by each individual in the organization without conscious questioning of authority.

Summary

Principals in the state of Georgia who have been non-renewed or asked to resign in lieu of termination could be tantamount to the professional victim syndrome (PVS) of superintendents identified by Polka and Litchka (2008). Principals experiencing PVS are likely to cite reasons for leaving the principalship similar to the aforementioned studies such as poor superintendent- principal relationships, conflicts with stakeholders, political issues, and/or an inability to manage the change process effectively during intense school reform initiatives.

This study is not concerned with principals who lose their jobs due to legitimate reasons associated with incompetence and/or impropriety, but rather the study is concerned with increasing awareness of the professional victim syndrome and expanding Polka and Litchka's definition to include principals who experience it. Considering the

fact that principals are not entitled to tenure protections, it is imperative that principals understand and are prepared for the potential hurdles they may face to avoid experiencing the professional victim syndrome. As well, it is essential that these individuals gain a better appreciation for how to cope with the events that lead up to and follow the professional victim syndrome should they find themselves in this crisis situation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Open System Administrative Theory and (PVS)

Educational organizations are open systems that are impacted by the environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). That is, schools are goal-oriented and subject to various influences in a natural system. The open system stresses a more humanistic approach where individuals play a vital role superior to the organizational structure. Figure 2.1 outlines the process described by Hoy and Miskel (2008) and provides that inputs such as the environment, resources, policies, and other factors, are undertaken in a transformational process to achieve the public education's technical core of learning and teaching. The outputs of student achievement that evolve from this transformational process are the result of the interactions of structure, culture, politics, and individuals.

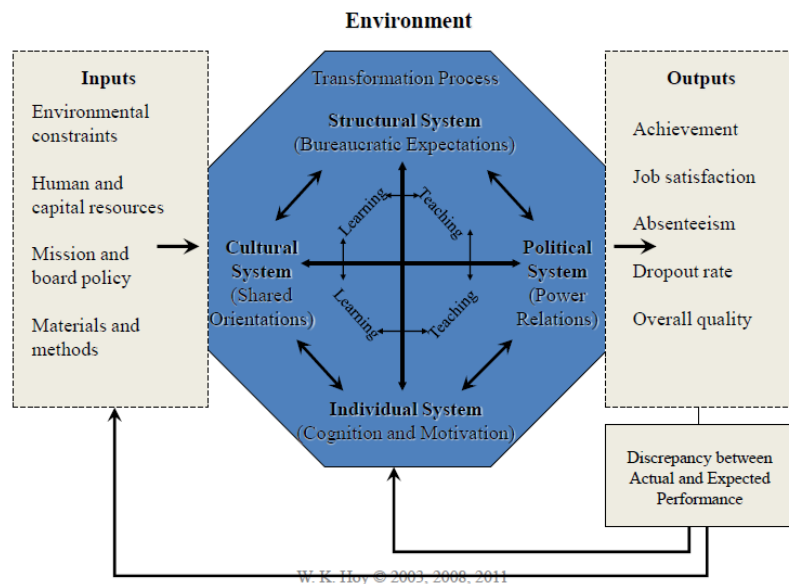


Figure 2.1. Hoy & Miskel Open System Model of the Transformation Process. This figure illustrates the interaction of structure, culture, politics and individuals.

The open system approach further supports the impetus for why school administrators, primarily superintendents and principals, face the professional victim syndrome as the leader of their organizations. Contemporary principals must implement reform efforts that demand changes in the structure of the school that includes major shifts in curriculum and approaches to learning. They must cultivate a positive culture conducive to continued learning while managing internal and external political issues that may interfere with reform efforts, and they must simultaneously develop meaningful positive relationships with individuals including students, parents, community members, teachers, staff, peers, the superintendent, and the board members. All of these open system factors as reported by Hoy and Miskel (2008) appear to contribute to the factors causing principals to be subject to the professional victim syndrome as reported by Polka and Litchka (2008).

Theories X, Y, Z and C and the Transformational Leader

Implementing immediate and sustainable change is often in direct conflict with the humanistic aspects of the organization, especially when dealing with teachers who are highly educated individuals. Failure to include them in the process will not result in long-term change. Fullan (2003) provided that sustainable school reform requires team work. McGregor (2006) provides in his Theory Y the importance of the humanistic aspect of leadership and organizational success, and that people are generally self-motivated and self-directed. He also contends that Theory X leaders, such as those often found in the military, believe that people must be commanded and controlled. Theory X is contrary to Maxwell's 17 indisputable laws of teamwork. Maxwell (2001) confirms that working with others in a team effort is essential to success and writes, "Nothing of

significance was ever achieved by an individual acting alone. Look below the surface and you will find that all seemingly solo acts are really team efforts” (pp. 2-3). Ouchi (1981) examined the different cultures between America and Japan for the business world and developed the concept of Theory Z. Theory Z is more in line with McGregor’s Theory Y in that it places emphasis on the well-being of the employee striving to provide a good working environment that maintains high levels of morale and job satisfaction. Theory C, however, developed by Crane (2009) is more consistent with Maxwell.

Theory C is an alternative to Theory X, Theory Y, and Theory Z. Crane (2009) took the results of a research study conducted by Glenn Tobe and Associates where managers and employees were asked to rank a list of ten performance motivators. Employees ranked appreciation, feeling “in” on things, and understanding attitude at the top of the list (Crane, 2009). Managers on the other hand, ranked these same things for employees on the bottom of their list (Crane, 2009). Crane (2009) indicates that Theory C is about empowering the employees where the leader provides direction through a vision and not through directions. Principals need to provide a vision for their schools that includes input from stakeholders. This requires the fostering of good relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

The theory of transformational leadership discussed by Northouse (2010) is consistent with those conveyed by Hoy and Miskel (2008). Northouse (2010) states, transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an

exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than is usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership” (p. 171).

Hoy and Smith (2007) also reported the importance of involving teachers in problem-solving and decision making. They describe the key to being a successful leader is being one who demonstrates expertise in problem-solving and decision-making, but also recognizes the knowledge of others. With the challenge of implementing change or reform efforts, principals must expand the “zone of acceptance” defined by Hoy and Miskel (2005) as an acceptance of orders without conscious questioning of authority. Wadesango (2012) reported in his study that by encouraging teacher participation in decision-making, the zone of acceptance expands and leads to teacher-empowerment, autonomy and accountability which then leads to increased motivation to carry out the tasks while having greater ownership of the school.

According to the “putting it together” model described by Hoy and Miskel (2005), the zone of acceptance is also called the zone of indifference when referring to the acceptance that some decisions that are outside of a teacher’s expertise are left to the principal. It is when teachers have a personal stake in the outcome and the expertise to contribute, that they want to be involved (Hoy and Miskel, 2005).

Reform Efforts

Accompanied by decades of school reform legislation, school administrators are asked to accomplish more and more each year. The general concern regarding education appears to be that schools in America are lagging behind others internationally and that methods must be changed in order to be competitive in a global society. The space race

sparked by the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957 was a trigger that caused the government to put initiatives in place to improve educational institutions (Serow, 1994). In 1983, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* presented an in-depth report that documented the shortcomings and concerns of the American educational system. In 1994, the Goals 2000 Educate America Act was implemented, which provided eight specific goals for the American educational system. When the year 2000 rolled around, the United States had not met the established goal. As a result, in 2001 President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that is the impetus behind many educational reform measures today. Principals face the heavy burden of becoming change leaders who must implement programs in order to meet the increasing requirements of NCLB (2001) by raising student achievement in their schools.

The state of Georgia has experienced sweeping reform initiatives in their curriculum over the past decade as they began in 2005 to move from the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC), which was in existence since 1984, to the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) ("State Board Decisions", 2012). Principals across the state rolled out new standards and implemented extensive change measures intended to increase student achievement ("State Board Decisions", 2012). This coincided with the increasing demands of NCLB (2001). This initiative was short-lived as the state announced another change initiative on July 8, 2010, with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) ("State Board Decisions", 2012). The CCSS has been incorporated with the GPS to become the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) as the new curriculum for the state ("State Board Decisions", 2012). Principals are currently undergoing the change process for implementing these new reform efforts and must

understand the process in order to effectively implement change within their school (“State Board Decisions”, 2012).

The Change Agent and Reform Efforts

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) described an effective leader as a change agent, and they advocate that being a change agent is one of the twenty-one major responsibilities of a school leader. They further explained that a change agent is an individual who exhibits behaviors and characteristics that: consciously challenge the status quo; willingly lead change initiatives with uncertain outcomes; systematically consider new and better ways of doing things; and consistently attempt to operate at the edge versus the center of the school’s competence (Marzano et al, 2005). These four characteristics make no mention of the relationship development and political aspects that administrators must consider when implementing change. According to Marzano et al (2005), the change agent must consciously challenge the status quo. Rocking the boat by challenging the status quo in a major way could knock one or more stakeholders overboard, and could place the principal in a position of not having a job after his/her contract ends. Challenging the status quo may require school leaders to rock the boat in order to implement change. (Kotter, 2008).

McEwan (2003) described the effective leader as a change master, not just a change agent and explains that a highly effective principal is one who can manage the change in an organization. McEwan (2003) advocates that this involves more than just making changes. It involves a balance of identifying the need for reform with the human aspect that influences change (McEwan, 2003). Specifically, McEwan (2003) supports that the change master must handle uncertainty and ambiguity, respect those who resist

change, be futuristic, be aware of the situation, use the powers that exist within the organization, value the process so people ultimately adopt and believe in the change, motivate others, and develop trust from the team.

Fullan (2006) contended that change basically boils down to one thing: motivation. Fullan stated, "...in most turnaround schools teachers do not feel they are the source of the solution; if anything they are given the message (subtly or not) that they are part of the problem..." (p. 36). Kotter (2002) noted that the central challenge to change is changing behavior and that this is more about influencing feelings towards truths than about analysis of information. Fullan (2006) wrote that building the capacity of the school leader involves the development of the collective to bring about positive change. Houston (2007) reported that a study of school superintendents conducted by the American Association of School Administrators found that the role of school leaders has evolved during the quest for school reform, and that school leaders have become the scapegoats for lack of reformation. This study clearly reflects the necessity for school leaders to build relationships with stakeholders and further indicates that the management of the human enterprise is paramount to success to avoid the blame game and negotiate through the processes of change (Houston, 2007).

Marzano (2003) observed, "Although effective leadership does not involve a specific type of personality, it is true that effective leaders, whether they are administrators or teacher-members of the leadership team, display specific behaviors when interacting with their colleagues. It is these behaviors that help establish personal relationships that are critical to the success of any reform effort" (p. 176).

This is supported by Blankstein (2004), who stated that the most difficult part of change in schools involves the human aspect. Polka (2007, 2010) conducted extensive research, concluding that implementing sustainable change requires leaders to operate in the effective change zone, represented in Figure 2.2 below, where the needs of the organization, professional needs of the individual, and personal needs of the individual overlap. The human side of change is within the effective change zone. The leader must develop positive relationships with stakeholders in order to implement change.



Figure 2.2. Adapted from Polka’s Effective Change Zone (2007). The figure illustrates the high-touch personnel needs when implementing sustainable change.

Reform efforts require leaders to be change agents and masters of change. Principals can introduce change initiatives within their organization and may demand the staff and faculty implement them to the letter, but long-term change requires the commitment of the entire organizational structure. This commitment by the staff and

faculty must be developed by the principal in a team-building approach fostered by positive relationship with all stakeholders.

Change Agents (Leaders) and Relationships

Relationships play a significant role in the continued employment and advancement of leaders in all capacities. The relationships developed by the principal with each stakeholder will greatly determine the outcome of all efforts (West and Derrington, 2009). Reinsch and Gardner (2011) conducted a study of 303 online interviews with senior business executives at companies in the United States with at least 1,000 employees, and reported that relationships and connections significantly influence employee promotions regardless of other factors designed to provide fairness in the process. Similarly, poor relationships with those in authoritative positions may lead to job stagnation or firing (Gabarro and Kotter, 1980).

According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), schools are social systems that require consideration of many internal and external factors that impact on the quality of the technical corps of teaching. Maintaining good relationships with parents, staff and faculty, central office personnel, community leaders, and the superintendent are essential factors the principal must take into consideration (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The school is a social system that requires team building from all of these individuals to support change in our current state of constant educational reform. Maxwell (2005) explained the importance of developing relationships with superiors as an investment. He states, “All good leadership is based on relationships. People won’t go along with you if they can’t get along with you. That’s true whether you are leading up, across, or down. The key to developing chemistry with your leaders is to develop relationships with them” (p. 119).

Glaser (2005) identified that relationships are an essential dimension in team building and problem solving. The superintendent and principal must act as a team and the relationship between the two individuals is paramount to educational reform. West and Derrington (2009) stated, "...the most rewarding and successful school districts had the most effective leadership teams. Specifically, it was the leadership team consisting of the principal and the superintendent, and the relationship between these two administrators that created either a healthy or harmful working environment" (p. ix).

Wheatley (2005) writes about effective organizations in her new scientific approach where people are seen as a blessing instead of the problem. She writes, "Leaders who used more participative, self-organizing approaches tell of how astonished they are by the capacity, energy, creativity, commitment, and even love they receive from people in their organizations." (p. 67.) Principals need to include their staff and faculty in the organization to identify issues and to implement change in order to be effective. As a natural capacity of the position, superintendents will receive reports from internal and external factors regarding the principal's leadership style – to include the use or non-use of teams in a collaborative approach to decision-making. Principals with poor relationships with the staff and faculty will face uncertainty in the strength of the superintendent-principal relationship.

The principal cannot act independent of all other stakeholders and expect to be successful. Although many stakeholders can influence the retention of a principal, only the superintendent has the authority to make hiring and firing recommendations to the school board in the state of Georgia (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211). Without tenure entitlements for principals, the superintendent does not need a reason to non-renew a principal

(O.C.G.A. § 20-2-942, 2012). Collins (2001) found that putting the right people on the bus is vital to the success of an organization. Maxwell (2009) found that not everyone who starts with the leader necessarily needs to remain through the entire journey. He states, “Make no mistake, to some degree, you choose who you lose. If you keep and reward uncommitted or unproductive people, eventually your team will be comprised of uncommitted and unproductive people.” (p. 216). If the superintendent does not believe the principal is the right person for the job due to relationship issues or political issues, immaterial of job performance, it is likely the superintendent will either attempt to develop the principal professionally to hone humanistic skills or cut losses by getting rid of the principal; therefore, the superintendent-principal relationship is vital to the overall success of all change implementation. The principal must foster a positive relationship with the superintendent or face potential crisis of being involved in the professional victim syndrome.

Change and School Culture

The culture of a school will significantly impact how the school operates. It defines the attitudes of the people, how they usually behave, what they value, what they believe in, and normally is very predictable. The culture of an organization is extremely difficult to change because it involves altering the status quo for an organization. Collins (2001) expressed the view that an organization’s cultural discipline corresponds directly with its effectiveness if all employees are self-motivated and self-disciplined to do what is right (consistent with the organization’s culture). Culture cannot be changed if the individual does not believe in the goal or purpose, and the overlapping constructs of the organization make leadership a complex process (Collins, 2001).

Muhammad (2009) conducted a comprehensive study analyzing the impact of culture on implementing change of 34 schools spread throughout the United States. Teachers were categorized into four areas: Believers – those who believe in the core values and readily support change; Tweeners – those who are new to the school culture and are subject to influence by others; Survivors – those who are typically burned out and do not cause waves; and Fundamentalists – those who are opposed to change and often form resistance to change efforts (Muhammad, 2009). The study found that fundamentalists will attempt to politically influence the Tweeners in order to gain ground working against change implementation (Muhammad, 2009). The relationship the principal establishes with each of these entities once again is critical to implementing change within the organization.

Change and Politics

John F. Kennedy (1955) noted that people generally want to be liked and that leaders are no exception to this social aspect. This may require that some decisions a leader makes are based on what Kennedy (1955) was advised to do when he entered the Senate so many years ago, “The way to get along ... is to go along.” (p. 4). People can work toward their objectives but must remain willing to compromise when necessary so they do not rock the boat and find themselves disliked by others and without any support.

Kennedy (1955) stated, “In no other occupation but politics is it expected that a man will sacrifice honors, prestige and his chosen career on a single issue.

Lawyers, businessmen, teachers, doctors, all face difficult personal decisions involving their integrity—but few, if any, face them in the glare of the spotlight as do those in public office.” (p. 7).

Although the principal is not in an elected position, the principal's actions are subject to public scrutiny. Politics boils down to power. The person with the power can influence and/or control situations to his/her advantage or favor. French and Raven (1968) provide the foundation for the impact social influence has on leaders and how they lead. They developed the theory that provides five forms of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert. The leader who can provide rewards can influence people; the coercive leader uses punishment and consequences; the legitimate leader uses the power with the formal position; the referent leader is someone with whom the subordinates relate and like as their leader; and the expert is someone who can influence actions by way of possessing knowledge and skills (French and Raven, 1968).

The principal must be cognizant of all forms of power while leading and implementing change. Internal and external stakeholders will influence the environment the school operates out of and the principal must decide what form of power to use while implementing change effectively (Hoy and Miskel, 2008). Since schools are social systems, they are subject to outside influences and to politics. The principal today must meet numerous demands and manage a multitude of tasks, and he/she must do so in a balanced approach. Because education is a values-laden profession and must focus on human relationships, principals must manage outside influences and politics, while renewing the technical core of the school. Hoy and Miskel (2008) placed politics as one of the major factors that impact on transforming an educational system.

Hoy and Tarter (2004) provided that the Political Model of leadership and decision-making exists in the educational institution no different than other organizations. Hoy & Tarter (2004) contended that decisions made in politically charged organizations

are not always made with the goals and objectives of the organization as the basis. Hoy and Tarter (2004) add that the "...objectives in the political model are personal. Personal goals, not organizational goals, drive the process" (p. 68). People in power often make decisions under the premise of meeting organizational goals, but the root of the decision is purely personal and political (Hoy & Miskel, 2004).

Summary

Hoy and Miskel (2008) support the view of an educational organization as an open system that is impacted by the environment. That is, schools are goal oriented and subject to various influences in a natural system. The open system approach further supports the impetus for why school administrators, primarily superintendents and principals, face the professional victim syndrome as leaders of their organizations. Polka and Litchka (2008) define the professional victim syndrome as, "the condition confronted by many educational leaders, especially superintendents of schools, who face a career crisis in which his/her professional and personal reputations were being tarnished, and he/she was challenged with navigating the political waves in order to survive, literally and figuratively, as a leader and a person." (p. 180).

According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), true change only happens if the principal challenges the status quo. Contemporary principals are required to do more than their predecessors. Reform efforts are a constant reality where change initiatives demand principals to be astute managers of change where they are aware of and can manipulate the internal and external factors that will inevitably become evident from crisis after crisis as the status quo is challenged. Implementing significant change as part

of reform efforts in an organization can be extremely difficult if not executed with the forethought of including the internal and external stakeholders in the process.

Stakeholders have a vested interest in the impact of the changes to be made and may work cooperatively by providing assistance or the stakeholder may hinder the process. The principal's relationship with stakeholders is crucial to their acceptance and implementation of the changes.

The principal cannot act independent of all other stakeholders and expect to be successful. Principals must face the challenge of expanding the "zone of acceptance", reducing the questioning of authority, that often comes with reform efforts, by recognizing teacher expertise, involving teachers in problem-solving and decision-making. Positive relationships with superintendents are also vital to the success or failure of principals. In an open system, the political moves placed upon the superintendent by internal and external factors in regards to the actions of the principal greatly influence the principal's longevity.

The intent of this study is to determine the extent of principals in the state of Georgia who have experienced the professional victim syndrome during their career, to explore the reasons, and to determine how these individuals coped with the crisis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The intent of this study is to determine the extent to which middle and high school principals in the state of Georgia have experienced the professional victim syndrome during their careers, to determine the reasons for experiencing PVS, and to determine how these individuals coped with the crisis. Remaining consistent with the methodology used in the study conducted by Polka and Litchka (2008), this will be a non-experimental, mixed-methods study that allows the researcher to collect demographic data under the quantitative component and extensive personal information in the qualitative portion of the study. A mixed-methods approach allows expansion of the findings from one methodology by use of another offering a more indepth view of each principal's situation (Creswell, 2003; Newman & Benz, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Patton (2002) provides additional support for using a mixed-method approach and states, "...it is common that quantitative methods and qualitative methods are used in a complementary fashion to answer different questions that do not easily come together to provide a single, well-integrated picture of the situation (pp 556-557).

The main focus of this current study is to expand the research of Polka and Litchka (2008) by examining the cases of contemporary middle and high school principals who were moved to another job within the system, or who resigned in lieu of, or were non-renewed by their superintendents due to reasons associated with the professional victim syndrome. In addition, by exploring reasons for experiencing the professional victim syndrome, the study may offer the extent to which change efforts,

relationships and/or politics were contributing factors to PVS. As well, the intent is to determine how these victims coped with their crisis.

Population Sample

Participants will involve approximately 450 members of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals (GAMSP) and approximately 1150 members of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP). The initial quantitative research will involve those members who respond to the 23 question survey (see Appendix A). The subsequent qualitative survey will include members who respond to the quantitative survey and who identify themselves as having experienced the professional victim syndrome as a principal, currently and/or formerly.

Participants will have answered affirmatively to at least one question for items 9 through 14 and would like voluntarily to participate in the qualitative portion of this research study. All participants in the interview portion will be guaranteed complete confidentiality and protection from disclosure.

The researcher plans to interview nine individuals who have met the self-report professional victim syndrome (PVS) definition with the goal of interviewing three from each of the three district sizes (small, medium, and large) as designated by Table 3.1 below. By attempting to interview individuals from different areas of the state of Georgia, the researcher hopes to establish the prevalence of PVS in the general population of contemporary principals.

Table 3.1. GA System Size Designations (RESA, 2012)

System Size	Student Enrollment
Small	Under 6,000
Medium	From 6,000 to 20,000
Large	Over 20,000

Instrumentation

The PVS survey for Middle and Secondary Principals (see Appendix A) will be sent via email to all current members of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP) and all current members of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals (GAMSP). This survey will provide participants the opportunity to respond to 23 questions and to identify if they have ever had a professional victim experience and if they would like to voluntarily participate in the qualitative portion of this research study.

Table 3.2 provides an item analysis of survey questions 1-14 for part I including in Appendix A. References to the sub-question associated with the item and previous research associated with the item is provided.

Table 3.2. Item Analysis for the Professional Victim Syndrome (PVS) Survey Part I

Item #	Item/Question	Cross-referenced to Research Question #	Cross-referenced to Previous Research
1	Gender: a. Male b. Female	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
2	School Assignment: a. Middle School b. High School	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
3	System Size:	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Small (under 6,000 students) b. Medium (from 6,000 to 20,000 students) c. Large (over 20,000 students) 		
4	<p>Highest Degree Status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bachelors b. Masters c. Specialist d. Doctorate 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
5	<p>Total Years of Experience in Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1-10 years b. 11-20 years c. 21-30 years d. 30+ years 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
6	<p>Total Years of Experience as a Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1-2 b. 3-5 years c. 6-10 years d. 11-15 years e. 16+ years 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
7	<p>Number of Principalships Held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1 (first time principal) b. 2 c. 3 or more 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
8	<p>Are you originally from the area in which you are currently working (grew up in, etc)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
9	<p>Have you ever been fired as a principal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 	Sub questions 1 & 3	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
10	<p>Have you ever resigned in lieu of being fired as a principal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 	Sub questions 1 & 3	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
11	Have you ever made a mutual decision	Sub questions 1	Polka & Litchka

	with the superintendent to resign from your position as principal? a. Yes b. No	& 3	Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
12	Have you ever had your contract as a principal not renewed? a. Yes b. No	Sub questions 1 & 3	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
13	Have you ever been reassigned from your position as principal in lieu of being fired, resigning, or having your contract not renewed? a. Yes b. No	Sub questions 1 & 3	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
14	Have you ever sought legal assistance regarding the status of your position as a principal? a. Yes b. No	Sub questions 1 & 3	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young

Table 3.3 provides an item analysis of survey questions 15-23 for part II including in Appendix A. References to the sub-question associated with the item and previous research associated with the item is provided.

Table 3.3. Item Analysis for the Professional Victim Syndrome (PVS) Survey Part II

Item #	Item/Question	Cross-referenced to Research Question #	Cross-referenced to Previous Research
15	School Assignment: a. Middle School b. High School	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
16	System Size: a. Small (under 6,000 students) b. Medium (from 6,000 to 20,000 students) c. Large (over 20,000 students)	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
17	Highest Degree Status: a. Bachelors	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Masters c. Specialist d. Doctorate 		
18	<p>Total Years of Experience in Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1-10 years b. 11-20 years c. 21-30 years d. 30+ years 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young Viadero
19	<p>Total Years of Experience as Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1-2 b. 3-5 years c. 6-10 years d. 11-15 years e. 16+ years 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young Viadero
20	<p>Number of Principalships Held:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1 (first time principal) b. 2 c. 3 or more 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
21	<p>Are you originally from the area (grew up in, etc.) where you experienced an issue as identified in questions 9 through 14?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka
22	<p>Would you like to voluntarily participate in a qualitative study consisting of a one-on-one interview with the researcher?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 	Sub questions 3, 4, 5 & 6	Polka & Litchka
23	<p>If you stated “yes” to question number 22, please provide your contact information below if you are willing to anonymously participate in this study and so the researcher can contact you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Name: b. Email Address: c. Preferred Telephone Number: 	Sub questions 3, 4, 5 & 6	Polka & Litchka

The initial survey will be initiated online using www.surveymonkey.com. This survey was adapted by the researcher from the Polka and Litchka's (2008) study conducted with superintendents to fit the needs of this study for principals. The questionnaire will allow for flexible questioning of participants consistent with the overall intent of the project. The questionnaire will be piloted by consulting with at least three to five current administrators from the researcher's school district to determine readability, ease of understanding, and appropriateness of each question.

The one-on-one interview questionnaire (Appendix B) will then be adjusted based on feedback prior to the researcher meeting one-on-one with each participant at a location chosen by the participant.

Table 3.4 provides an item analysis of survey questions for the interview portion of the study in Appendix B. References to the sub-question associated with the item and previous research associated with the item is provided.

Table 3.4. Item Analysis for the Professional Victim Syndrome (PVS) Interview

Item #	Item/Question	Cross-referenced to Research Question #	Cross-referenced to Previous Research
1	Describe the context in which you became the principal of your school.	Sub question 2	Polka & Litchka Fairley-Ripple, Mead, Raffel, Sherretz & Welch Fuller & Young
2	Did you grow up in this community?	Sub question 2	Self-report
3	Describe the situation and factors that led to the crisis in your principalship.	Sub questions 3 & 4	Polka & Litchka Fullan Gabarro & Kotter Heifetz & Linsky Hill & Banta
4	Explain what your immediate and long-term personal reaction was to	Sub questions 5 & 6	Polka & Litchka

	this crisis.		
5	Explain the effects this crisis had on your family and friends.	Sub questions 5 & 6	Polka & Litchka Viadero Samuels
6	What skills did you use to try to survive the crisis?	Sub questions 5 & 6	Polka & Litchka Viadero Samuels
7	What advice would you give to aspiring and/or current principals regarding the professional victim syndrome?	Sub questions 5 & 6	Polka & Litchka

Data Collection and Analysis

The data from the quantitative survey will be collected to determine general demographic background information of surveyed principals and will be used to identify volunteers who might participate in the qualitative interview portion of this study. The overall demographic information will be analyzed to ascertain general information pertinent to the study of principals and the professional victim syndrome. Participants will be provided with a confidentiality statement assuring the protection of their identity and personal information. All interviews will be recorded and then transcribed. Participants will have their names and the names of their schools protected by utilization of an assigned pseudonym for each individual participant. Other identifying information will be modified to protect the identification of the participant. The interviews conducted in the qualitative portion will be examined and analyzed to determine recurring patterns and themes to answer the research questions.

Summary

Schools in America have been in a constant state of reform placing demands on school administrators, specifically principals, to implement changes designed to increase

student achievement while balancing the internal and external factors of outcomes associated with these reform efforts. This study offers attention to the requirements of being an effective change leader beyond the necessary organizational, leadership and disposition of the principal, to understanding the unspoken rules of relationships and politics that are necessary to avoid victimization associated with losing the leadership or principal position.

This mixed-methods study was designed to answer the overarching questions used to determine to what extent the professional victim syndrome exists among contemporary principals, to explore the reasons for how the principals came to be professional victims, and to investigate the mechanisms used to cope with the crisis experienced.

After field testing the questions for readability, ease of understanding and appropriateness, the survey was sent electronically by the Executive Director of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP) to the association's list serve of members. The quantitative portion consisted of 23 survey questions designed to provide demographic data. For the qualitative portion of the study, questions 9 through 14 were designed to identify individuals who experienced the professional victim syndrome and to solicit volunteers to participate in one-on-one interviews. In order to determine consistency throughout the state, 9 individuals were selected for interviews: three from a large school district, three from a medium school district, and three from a small school district. Pseudonyms replaced actual names, and all school names and locations were not included to protect the identity and confidentiality of the administrators who volunteered to participate.

By determining the extent of the existence of the professional victim syndrome among contemporary principals, exploring the reasons for how the principals came to be professional victims, and by investigating the mechanisms used to cope with the crisis experienced, the researcher hopes to bring awareness to principals to avoid victimization during this overwhelming time of intense scrutiny and accountability.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The study reported here examined principals and the “professional victim syndrome (PVS)” in Georgia. Due to efforts by Governor Roy Barnes in 1995 to increase accountability in public schools, administrators lost tenure and since this time school reform has taken major turns with the introduction of federal and state mandates associated with President George Bush’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001. Principals today are constantly in the public eye and under enormous scrutiny of staff and faculty, students, central office personnel, parents, community members and board members as they take on the responsibility and burdens that accompany the increased demands and accountability measures.

Increased demands require the implementation of changes designed to increase student achievement while balancing the internal and external factors that determine the outcome of such measures. Principals today are required to possess the organizational and leadership skills necessary to be effective change leaders, but possibly even more importantly, they are required to possess the skills necessary to navigate relationships involving the spoken and unspoken rules of politics in education to maintain their positions.

This study offers attention to the existence and/or prevalence of principals and the “professional victim syndrome” in Georgia and offers educational leaders who seek principalships an increased awareness of the needed skills required to be effective change agents and leaders.

This chapter is organized by the research design and the research questions as follows: the quantitative data will be presented, followed by the qualitative data which includes profiles of respondents that resulted in the findings. An analysis of the findings and responses to the research questions will be provided along with a summary.

Research Questions

The overarching question of the study was: To what extent does the professional victim syndrome exist among contemporary principals; how did the principals come to be professional victims; and what mechanisms were used to cope with the crisis experienced.

The sub-questions that guided the study were:

1. What is the frequency of principals who face the professional victim syndrome in the state of Georgia?
2. What are the relationships between principal demographics and their experiences with the professional victim syndrome?
3. What are the “lived experiences” of particular principals who have been professional victims during their respective careers?
4. What extent did change efforts, relationships, and politics play in each participant’s crisis?
5. What resiliency and reflective strategies were employed by those principals to cope with their respective professional victim syndrome?
6. What advice do principals who were professional victims give to others to help them cope with similar situations?

Quantitative Research Design

The quantitative instrument for this study was developed to ascertain the frequencies of the Professional Victim Syndrome (PVS) in contemporary middle and high school principals and to gather pertinent demographic data. The survey consists of 23 questions total; 14 of the 23 are applicable to all respondents and the remaining 9 only apply to respondents who report having experienced a crisis consistent with PVS during the principalship. Questions 9 through 14 of the quantitative survey were specifically designed to elicit information from the respondents regarding whether or not they have experienced one or more issues that are consistent with being a professional victim.

The 23 quantitative survey questions and seven qualitative interview questions were presented to five administrators currently serving in the district of the researcher to determine ease of readability, ease of understanding, and appropriateness of each question. The 23 question survey (Appendix A) developed for this study was successfully sent via email to 1139 current members of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals and to 448 current members of the Georgia Association of Middle School Principals. The survey was made available from July 20, 2012 until August 24, 2012 to 1587 educators who previously served or currently serve as a middle or high school principal in Georgia. A total of 496 responses were submitted for an overall participation rate of 31.2%. Invalid responses totaled 53 and were removed from the 496 total responses submitted, leaving 443 valid responses. The invalid responses were removed due to incomplete answers indicating the respondent did not consent to the terms of the voluntary survey. The overall valid response participation rate was 27.9%.

Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative questions were developed to collect individual stories of middle and high school principals who self-reported experiencing a PVS crisis. Forty-eight out of the 443 valid respondents reported one or more “yes” answers to these questions. Of those same 48 respondents, 36 volunteered to take part in a one-on-one interview. Respondents were informed that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identity. As well, school names and locations would be changed to further protect their identity.

The researcher was able to successfully interview nine total candidates from the original 36 who volunteered. Three candidates were interviewed from each of the three system sizes, with two candidates from high school and one candidate from middle school for each system size. The interviews took place between July 20, 2012, and August 28, 2012, using the questions listed in Appendix B. All interviews were conducted at a location chosen by the interviewee and averaged approximately 45 minutes in duration. Three of the nine would not consent to having their interview recorded. Copious notes were taken by the researcher for those three interviewees. The interviews for the other six were transcribed, and then the nine interviews were analyzed to determine themes and patterns from their responses.

Quantitative Findings and Data Analysis

Out of the 443 total valid responses, 133 reported serving as a middle school principal, and 310 reported serving as a high school principal. The middle school response rate is 29.6% (133/448), and the high school response rate is 27.2% (310/1139). The distribution of responses based on system size reflects 38% served in a small system (under 6,000 students), 35% served in a medium system (from 6,000 to 20,000), and 27%

served in a large system (over 20,000) students. Sixty-seven (67%) percent of the respondents were male.

Forty-two (42%) percent of all respondents reported having earned their doctorate degree; 52% reported having earned their specialist degree; and 6% reported having earned their master's degree. Forty-six (46%) percent of respondents reported having served between 21 and 30 years in education. Forty (40%) reported having served between 11-20 years. Only 2% reported having served between 1 and 10 years, and 12% reported serving 30 years or more.

Forty-six (46%) of all respondents reported only serving one time as a principal; 36% reported serving twice; and 18% reported serving three or more times as a principal. Nearly forty-eight (48%) of respondents reported have from one to five years experience as a principal (30% served 3-5 years and 18% served 1-2 years). Seventy-five (75%) percent of respondents reported that they were not originally from the area they served as a principal.

In total, 48 respondents out of the 443 valid responses reported by answering "yes" to at least one question in the survey for questions 9 to 14 that they have experienced a crisis in their principalship. The 48 respondents equates to 11% of the overall respondents who self-report being a professional victim.

None (0%) of the 48 respondents indicated that they had been fired from their position; four (8%) resigned in lieu of being fired; 13 (27%) made a mutual decision with the superintendent to resign from their position; 5 (10%) had their contract not renewed; 26 (54%) reported having been reassigned in lieu of being fired, resigning, or having their

contract non-renewed; and all 48 (100%) reported seeking legal assistance regarding their status.

Sixty-nine (69%) percent of the self-reported PVS victims were male (33 out of 48); 71% (34 out of 48) served as a high school principal when their crisis occurred and the remaining 29% (14 out of 48) served as a middle school principal when their crisis occurred. The largest number of respondents who self-reported being a professional victim came from those who served in a large school system (21 out of 48) for 44%. Thirty-one (31%) were from a medium system (15 out of 48) and 25% were from a small system (12 out of 48).

The majority (56%) of self-reported PVS victims had earned a specialist degree; 33% earned a doctorate; and 10% hold a master's degree. All of the respondents have served over ten years in education, with the majority (65%) serving between 21 and 30 years). Forty-two (42%) percent of self-reported victims had between 3 and 5 years experience as a principal; six (6%) percent had between 1-2 years; forty (40%) percent had between 6-10 years experience as a principal; and thirteen (13%) percent report have 11-15 years experience.

Twenty-nine (29%) percent of the self-reported victims were in their first principal position when the crisis occurred; fifty-two (52%) were in their second principal position; and nineteen (19%) were in their third or more position as principal. Seventy-one (71%) were not originally from the area they served as principal. Thirty-six (36) of the self-reported PVS victims agreed to voluntarily participate in the qualitative portion of the study.

Response to Research Questions

The data collected was compared with the research questions posed for this study. The overarching question of the study was: to what extent does the professional victim syndrome exist among contemporary principals; how did the principals come to be professional victims; and what mechanisms were used to cope with the crisis experienced. Within these questions were six sub-questions. The findings from these interviews follow as they pertain to each of the questions.

Question 1: What is the frequency of principals who face the professional victim syndrome in the state of Georgia?

Forty-eight respondents recorded an affirmation of at least one of the questions from question 9 to 14 in the survey. Overall, 443 valid responses were recorded for this survey; therefore, 48 out of 443 respondents, or 11%, self-reported having experienced a crisis consistent with the professional victim syndrome.

Question 2: What are the relationships between principal demographics and their experiences with the professional victim syndrome?

In total, 48 respondents out of the 443 valid responses reported by answering “yes” to at least one question in the survey for questions 9 to 14 that they have experienced a crisis in their principalship. The 48 respondents equates to 11% of the overall respondents who self-report being a professional victim.

None (0%) of the 48 respondents indicated that they had been fired from their position; four (8%) resigned in lieu of being fired; 13 (27%) made a mutual decision with the superintendent to resign from their position; 5 (10%) had their contract not renewed; 26 (54%) reported having been reassigned in lieu of being fired, resigning, or having their

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Twenty-nine (29%) percent of the self-reported victims were in their first principal position when the crisis occurred; fifty-two (52%) were in their second principal position; and nineteen (19%) were in their third or more position as principal. Seventy-one (71%) were not originally from the area they served as principal. Thirty-six (36) of the self-reported PVS victims agreed to voluntarily participate in the qualitative portion of the study.

Question 3 & 4: What are the “lived experiences” of particular principals who have been professional victims during their respective careers? What extent did change efforts, relationships, and politics play in each participant’s crisis?

Table 4.1 reflects the nine respondents who were interviewed for this study and some of their relative demographic information. The following qualitative data was reported from the respondents during interviews for the study.

Table 4.1: Demographics for Respondents Interviewed

Pseudonym	Sex	School	System	Ed Level	Yrs. Exp. in Educ.	Yrs. Exp. as Principal	# of Princ. Held
Debbie Prince	F	MS	S	Specialist	21-30	3-5	1
Tom Riddle	M	HS	L	Specialist	21-30	11-15	3
Denise Foster	F	HS	L	Doctorate	30+	6-10	2
Kevin Wallace	M	HS	S	Specialist	30+	6-10	2
Melvin Sullivan	M	MS	M	Doctorate	21-30	3-5	1
Richard Tarter	M	HS	S	Doctorate	21-30	6-10	3
Mitch Stanley	M	MS	L	Specialist	21-30	6-10	2
June Parland	F	HS	M	Specialist	11-20	3-5	1
Valerie Black	F	HS	M	Doctorate	21-30	6-10	2

PVS Victim #1 – Debbie Prince

Debbie Prince is a middle-aged woman with 28 years of experience in education when her crisis took place. She was chosen to serve as the principal of a middle school in a small school district, having grown up in this small town and lived there her entire life. She had previously served as a teacher and assistant principal, and she was proud of her selection to be the new principal at one of only two middle schools in the district. The school had not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the past three years, and she intended to change that during her first-time principalship.

Debbie implemented numerous changes immediately during her first two years as principal, including gender-based classrooms, increase in remediation classes, reduction

of connection classes, and a strong emphasis on implementing Learning-Focused Strategies in all classrooms. Debbie stated that she doesn't see a lot of gray when making changes – things are either black or white in her mind. She admitted that her differing view on issues and actions, and her lack of concern for the involvement of stakeholders greatly contributed to her downfall. Teachers complained about not being included in major decisions, and parents complained about her being too strict. She stated that she intended to make AYP and had to make tough decisions that her predecessor wouldn't make. As for the parent issues, she stated that policies are written for a reason and that she would stand on her interpretation of the intent when dealing with parents.

Despite making AYP her first and second year as principal, the parent and teacher complaints to the superintendent and board were mounting. She stated that she had a great relationship with her superintendent and that this relationship is probably what kept her in her position each of her years as principal. He told her that he had her back as long as she had the student's best interest as priority.

Her major crisis occurred when the son of one of the board members got into two fights in the same year at her school. Board policy written by that same board required that students who get in three fights during their middle school years will be sent to the alternative school. She was asked by the superintendent to carefully review the incidents and to consider lesser charges. Realizing the request was indirectly from the board, she stood her ground and stated that she would treat him like every other student and would not bend to political pressure. She reports that this board member, and one other board member who had received numerous complaints from teacher friends, made public

statements that their intent was to get rid of her as principal and out of their school system.

Her final year as principal ended with the board's disapproval of the superintendent's recommendation to renew her contract. She stated that the superintendent told her that he had to fight to even keep her employed. She was moved to the central office staff for the next school year in a newly created position.

Debbie stated that she lost over \$30,000 in annual income due to this crisis. Her only daughter was in high school at the time and had to respond to snide comments from her fellow students about what happened to her mother. It put a lot of stress on the family. She had her reputation tarnished, and she experienced depression and anger that has only partly faded over the past two years. She stated that she had to take medication to cope with the anger and depression. Her father told her to never hurt the family reputation in the community. She looked at the researcher with a tear in her eye and stated, "I let him down."

PVS Victim #2: Tom Riddle

Tom Riddle is in his mid-fifties and has nearly 30 years in education. He has served as a middle school principal at two different schools and was selected to be principal of a troubled inner-city high school in a large school district. His new high school had not ever made AYP, and their test scores were far below the other high schools in his district.

Tom was well-liked by his staff and faculty. He strongly believed that they were professionals who should be allowed to do their jobs. He implemented procedures to get fights and drug issues under control, and he quickly earned the respect of his staff and

faculty. One of the major changes that he implemented in his school was a movement from a traditional six periods to block scheduling. He stated that he had taught in a high school with block and that he felt block would be a great fit for his new school. This shift was met with resistance from a small group of parents and teachers, but the results proved the move was making a difference at his school. During his five years at this school, tests scores went up in nearly every area and were close in comparison to the other high schools in the area. His school did not make AYP, but it moved considerably closer each year to the point of almost making AYP his last year – something he reports his faculty never thought possible.

Tom had a great relationship with the majority of his staff and faculty. He placed family above everything; he would stress the importance of employees participating in their children's activities and would allow time to do so. He described the work environment at the school as a family. Tom states that each year he didn't make AYP was a concern to him regarding his employment, but his relationship with his superintendent was wonderful and kept him in his position.

A few new board members were installed towards the end of his fourth year, and they expected major changes. As well, a new Parent-Teacher-Student-Association (PTSA) was installed at the school, and Tom found it difficult to work with the new president. The president wanted to do away with block scheduling and had the ear of at least three of the seven board members. She also had the ear of the chairman of the local chamber of commerce, who voiced his concerns to the board regarding the negative imagine Tom's high school had with prospective businesses and people thinking about moving to the area. He stated that Tom was hurting the economy.

Tom did not agree with the PTSA president and would not make the changes. She felt that block scheduling was preventing AP students from being successful. Tom would counter with the overall improving school's scores under block and would not concede. The president's connection with those in power was very influential. During Tom's fifth year as principal, the superintendent made a recommendation to the school board to renew Tom's contract and his request was denied. Tom was six months' short of retirement at the time. The superintendent told Tom that he had to fight to keep him employed, but that the board would only approve of his being given a contract if it was not as a principal. Tom was given the title of Lead Teacher and was assigned to the Alternative School to ride out his last few months.

Tom's son is in high school, about to graduate, and his daughter in college. He had legitimate anxiety over an uncertain future. He reported that he lost nearly \$40,000 in annual income and is seeking employment elsewhere in hopes of recouping some of the loss. He stated that he doesn't sleep well and often wakes up in the middle of the night with pure anger over what happened. During the interview, Tom was visibly upset as he discussed his lived experience with the professional victim syndrome.

PVS Victim #3 – Denise Foster

Denise Foster is in her mid-fifties and had 28 years of experience when her crisis unfolded. Denise had been a principal of two elementary schools before the superintendent approached her about taking over one of the high schools in this large school district. She was reluctant at first because she had no high school experience, but the superintendent persuaded her to take the job because he knew she could take the

failing school forward with her leadership. She trusted the superintendent and agreed to take the position.

On her first day as principal, she entered her new office to find a letter on her desk from anonymous employees stating that they didn't need her making changes and that they intended to get rid of her just like the last principal. Denise gave a copy of the letter to the superintendent and was assured that she had his support and would help her along the way.

Denise stated that she knew she was entering a hostile environment, but she felt she would receive the support needed from her superintendent when she implemented change. Denise then set out to take actions that would result in her school making AYP. She reviewed test data for each teacher and developed professional development plans for those who weren't pulling their share of the load. Classroom observations provided accurate feedback and not fluff, as she called it. This wasn't received well by those teachers, and word spread quickly throughout the school about her actions. Teachers who weren't in jeopardy became concerned, as well. Denise found that even the smallest of changes were met with resistance from the majority of the staff and faculty. Complaints to the superintendent and to board members increased. She was again assured that she was supported by the superintendent.

Her high school made AYP her very first year as principal, she reports, due in large part to her change initiatives. Regardless of the progress, her relationship with her staff and faculty was very poor. She took them out of their comfort zone to implement change, and they didn't like it. Board members started to pressure the superintendent to do something to improve the morale at the high school. She was called to the office by

the superintendent after only her second year, and he notified her that he was going to move her out of the principal job and into a central office position. She reports that he had succumbed to the political pressure of the teachers and the board, even though she brought about the changes he asked her to make. She had lost his support in order for him to save face with his board.

Denise reported that she lost over \$30,000 in annual income unexpectedly due to this crisis. She said that she suffers from depression and anger, and she has to take some medication to cope with these issues. She reflected that she never should have taken the position in the first place, but the superintendent continued to state that he supported her as the principal. She stated that she feels embarrassed around her peers due to what happened, and then closed with, “The superintendent stole my reputation.”

PVS Victim #4 – Kevin Wallace

Kevin Wallace was approaching his thirtieth year in education when his crisis occurred as a high school principal in a small district. He had previously held a job as a middle school principal for five years and was very successful. He reports that his school made AYP every year. The high school was in need of leadership and his superintendent asked him to take the job when the previous principal retired. Kevin didn't hesitate because he had graduated from that very same high school and he was honored to step forward to help bring it back to its previous level of greatness.

Kevin went about implementing change, just as he had done at his previous schools. He analyzed the data and gave directives. He states that this time, though, it was different. A large contingency of teachers resisted his initiatives. Kevin admits that he didn't include them in the process because he felt he knew more of the details and

implications of each change initiative. In hindsight, he stated that not including them in the process hindered his principalship. The teachers complained to the superintendent and one particular teacher was overheard stating that she went to church with one of the board members, and she was going to get the principal fired.

The teachers were only part of Kevin's issues. A prominent parent in the community became upset when his daughter did not make the softball team. He asked Kevin for some assistance with the matter, but Kevin informed him that he wouldn't get involved with coaching matters. The parent had the ear of a few board members and voiced his displeasure. The board members put some pressure on the superintendent, but the superintendent supported Kevin. Kevin was relieved to know that his great relationship with the superintendent was in his favor. Regardless, Kevin stated that he felt like he had a target on his back by the teachers and now several of the board members. Kevin reports that his ultimate demise came when he submitted a complaint to authorities about potential child neglect by another prominent community member. Kevin stated that he was bound by law to submit the allegation so proper authorities could investigate. Kevin stated that the community member immediately went to his friend on the board.

Kevin was called in to the superintendent's office and was notified that his contract would not be renewed. He was not given any particular reasons by the superintendent, but he surmises that the cumulative influence of the teachers and parents brought about the decision. Kevin chose to retire rather than have his contract nonrenewed. He expressed that he has hired a lawyer to fight the issue because he believes he was done wrong. He continued to state that his reputation in the community

was greatly affected by the wrongful actions of the superintendent. He was visibly upset about the situation, but he would not convey how he was coping with the situation other than to state that he had a good legal case and expected to win.

PVS Victim #5 – Melvin Sullivan

Melvin Sullivan was a first-time principal when his PVS crisis occurred during his twenty-first year in education. He previously served as a teacher, counselor, and assistant principal in the same medium school district. Melvin felt elated when the superintendent asked him to become the new principal of the same middle school where he had served as the assistant principal for the past four years. This middle school was one of four in the district and it had made AYP every year. He felt that he had significantly contributed towards that success as the assistant principal and that he could make major contributions now that he was principal.

The new superintendent convinced the board to make each middle school a specifically themed school. One of the four schools was closed down and the students spread amongst the remaining three schools. Parents were allowed to put their students in the school they wanted based on the theme of their choice. As well, his predecessor was allowed to transfer employees to his new school, leaving Melvin with a lot of personnel holes to fill. This was all the start of Melvin's problems. During his first year, the school started to experience a major shift in demographics resulting in a stark population shift, building over his four years as principal from 60% white and 40% minority to the exact opposite of 40% white and 60% minority. Along with this population change, the school experienced an increase in economically disadvantage students from 50% to nearly 80%. Melvin stated that he was not prepared for the impact

these demographical changes had on his staff and faculty, and on the decisions he had to make as principal.

The high scores his school had made under his predecessor were no longer prominent. Slowly, predominately white parents withdrew their students to attend one of the other schools. Teachers were not prepared for the culture change within the school, and morale was extremely low amongst the school employees. Discipline issues arose that weren't previously experienced at the school, and the teachers didn't like what they were asked to do. A new superintendent was hired shortly thereafter and the themed schools plan was halted. Parents would have to take their students to their zoned school or request waivers. By this time, Melvin's school was no longer the same school he had worked in, nor the one he expected to take over as principal.

Melvin felt like he was dealt a bad hand by the previous superintendent and set up for failure. Melvin became the scapegoat for the low test scores, even though the school still continued to make AYP. White parents of feeder schools started to put pressure on school board members to make changes at Melvin's school, to include demanding his removal, not knowing what actions had taken place at the central office level that put his school in jeopardy.

After four years as principal, Melvin was called in by the superintendent and was informed that he could either resign as principal and accept a job as a teacher in the system, or he would be nonrenewed. Melvin reluctantly accepted the teaching position. In a turn of events, a group of other parents voiced support for him as their children's principal. The superintendent had already removed him from the position, but now faced another entity politically. Melvin was subsequently offered a higher position within the

system making the same amount of money he previously earned as a principal. Melvin stated that he really wasn't prepared for the political aspect of the position.

PVS Victim #6 – Richard Tarter

Richard Tarter had already been a principal twice during his 22 years in education, once as an elementary principal and once as a middle school principal, before taking on his new assignment as a high school principal in a small school system. He was not from the area where he became the principal of their only high school, but he stated that he grew to know the people of the community well and loved his job. His school made progress under his leadership and was known for great tests scores and competitive athletics. His superintendent told him that he took a chance on him as an outsider because his credentials were outstanding and his experience was what the system needed to move forward. He would echo those sentiments from time to time over the course of the two years, which made Richard feel wanted and welcomed.

After just two years in the system as the high school principal, the superintendent would call upon Richard to fill in as the interim superintendent whenever he was absent for short periods of time. Richard stated that he felt his relationship with the superintendent was very strong and he felt trusted to be placed in this capacity. He stated that the experience was what he needed to develop his skills for when he decided he would try to become a superintendent somewhere else someday.

The superintendent asked him to fill in as the interim for an extended period of his absence due to some medical issues. Richard reports that it was during this time that he had his integrity challenged and faced the brutal reality of politics at its best. As the interim superintendent, he received an allegation pertaining to the superintendent and a

questionable small financial transaction. After reviewing the information presented, he reported his preliminary findings to the board. He was directed to request an external investigation into the matter, which determined that the allegations had sufficient substance to warrant action by the board against the superintendent.

Having spent decades within this school system, the superintendent had a lot of clout and influence. He was ultimately able to influence board members to allow him to stay on as their superintendent. Richard reports that the superintendent told him that he had lost his confidence in him and that he felt he was out for his job. Regardless of what Richard had to say about the incident, he was considered *persona non grata*. His working conditions changed almost immediately, and every decision he made was subject to scrutiny by the superintendent. He found it strange that he could make a comment about an issue to his secretary and then he would get a call from the central office about the same issue. It was at this time that he realized that someone was listening in on his conversation without his consent. For months, he reports his work environment was hostile, and he felt his job was at jeopardy.

The next spring, his fears were confirmed, as Richard was told that the board would not renew his contract. He could either resign or face the nonrenewal. He did not feel as though he should have to face either, so he fought the nonrenewal in court. Regardless, he was not offered a contract and had to seek employment elsewhere while he fought his legal battles.

Richard was able to obtain a job in another system, actually making slightly more money as a high school administrator, but his wife was an educator and needed a job, as well. His wife was initially hired on in the same school system as Richard, but due to

budget cuts, she was a victim to a reduction in force the same year. Ultimately, Richard states that he has incurred a financial loss in excess of \$100,000 due to having to sell his home for a far lesser amount than it was worth, moving to another town, and losing employment for his wife. He is bitter about what happened and still wrestles with bouts of depression due to the impact on his reputation and family.

PVS Victim #7 – Mitch Stanley

Mitch Stanley had served previously as an elementary school principal and a high school principal before moving to this large school district to become one of their high school principals. He had been successful as a principal at both of his previous jobs and was entering his twenty-first year in education when he moved to the new area. Mitch reports that his expertise was in turning around schools. He stated that he considered himself an expert in this area and that this was why the superintendent hired him to take over as principal of this failing high school.

Mitch reported that his attempts to implement change were met with great resistance by the staff and faculty. They were complacent and did not want to move forward. To them, AYP was just one more reform initiative that would fade away, just like all others in the past. He expressed that everything he attempted to implement required lengthy justification to the staff and faculty, and more often than not, was not fulfilled. He stated that he had learned from his previous principalships that his relationship with the superintendent and board were paramount to his career. The chairman of the board became one of his best friends and still has regular contact with Mitch. It was through these two relationships that Mitch states he maintained his job through some very challenging times.

His school made significant gains during his tenure, but it never made AYP. Mitch states that he takes responsibility for the lack of measured progress, but that he truly was unable to convince the teachers that their culture needed to change in order for the school to move forward. To make matters worse, his head basketball coach was dying of cancer and wanted his assistant coach to become the new head coach. Mitch formed an interview committee, who recommended someone else for the job. Mitch knew from his relationship with the superintendent and the chairman that the board was not happy with his actions. When his contract was up for renewal, he survived by a four-three vote. He stated that he knew his friendship made the difference and he was given another three year contract.

Aside from his issues with the staff and faculty, Mitch experienced the unique issue of having one of his subordinates leapfrog over him to become the new superintendent when the superintendent who hired him retired. Mitch had verbal altercations with this gentleman in the past about issues and he knew to be concerned. The new superintendent was from the same community and knew the board members personally. As he approached his contract renewal again, he had an agreement with the chairman to notify him if it looked like he wasn't going to get his contract renewed. Mitch states that his friend told him that the board was not in his favor and that it would be very difficult considering his relationship with the new superintendent. The complaints from the teachers, the hiring of the basketball coach, and the new superintendent were all looming over him. The chair told Mitch that he didn't feel as though the new superintendent would recommend his renewal. With this information, Mitch decided to take matters into his own hands and took a preemptive strike by

resigning just before the board meeting. He stated that he wanted to leave on his own terms.

Mitch had no backup plan when he resigned. He had one student in the same high school and one in college. His wife was an administrator in the same school system, so his resignation impacted his whole family, both personally and financially. They had to sell off some property and move to another system where they both were hired almost immediately. He told the researcher that he never lost faith in God even though he didn't know what plan God had for him. He still holds some resentment for what happened, but he stated that he had experienced the political aspects that come with being an administrator before and would just move on to better things. His long-term goals of becoming a superintendent someday have taken a backburner, but he and his family are survivors.

PVS Victim #8 – June Parland

June Parland was a first-time principal when she experienced the crisis that led to her nonrenewal as the principal of a high school in a medium-sized school district. June states that education is her second career and she only has 11 years of experience so far, but her previous career provided with a wealth of leadership opportunities that helped her be more marketable for this position. June stated that her predecessor retired unexpectedly, and the school she was asked to take over had not made AYP in six years. She stated that most of the teachers were apathetic towards change and many were vocal about resistance.

During her first year as principal, she wanted to change the school culture, and she wanted to implement instructional changes intended to increase test scores. She

modeled what she expected and placed high demands upon her teachers. She incorporated leadership team meetings and faculty meetings to keep employees informed, but she made it clear that she was in charge and that decision-making was her responsibility. In hindsight, she stated that she should not have been in such a hurry to make the changes she intended. Her lack of inclusion alienated her from her staff. Overall, she stated that she had a good relationship with her students and most parents, a great relationship with her superintendent, but a poor relationship with her teachers. She had the full support of the school board her first year. Her new school made AYP the first year in its history under her leadership.

As the second year came unfolded, she stated that she would recommend initiatives to the superintendent and the school board, but started to see the board withdraw some of their support. The superintendent informed her that the board was receiving a lot of complaints from teachers and some from influential parents concerned with her direction. Many of the complaints from parents and community members were in regards to athletic issues. June reflected that it appeared to her that at least two of the five board members couldn't have cared less about academics; they just wanted a winning football team. They made it known through the superintendent that there needed to be a coaching staff change. She stated that she received confirmation of support from the superintendent throughout the year, and the school made AYP again the second year, but the football team continued to flounder.

The third year, her superintendent retired and a new superintendent took over. After a board meeting, she was stopped by one of the board members in the parking lot next to her car. He asked her if she was going to fire the coach. She stated that the hiring

and firing of the coaches was between her and the superintendent. The board member then told her that if she wasn't willing to make the change then maybe they needed to hire someone to be the principal who would make the decision. The next day, her superintendent asked her about the coaching situation. She stated that she didn't believe the coach needed to be fired. The superintendent then informed her that he was going to fire the football coach. She became wary of her position as principal and questioned her support from the new superintendent.

Once the new football coach was hired, he asked for a lot of changes within the school that influenced both academics and athletics. June was reluctant to make his suggested changes because the school had made great improvements over the past two years. June states that about a week after her conversation with the new coach, she was called into the superintendent's office and was advised to look for another job because she no longer had the support of the majority of the board.

June conveyed that her husband was ill at the time of this incident, and they had accumulated a lot of medical expenses. She was only able to find a job as a teacher in another district, so her income dropped by \$40,000 annually. With the mounting medical bills and the loss of income, she and her husband filed for bankruptcy. Her daughter was a senior at the same school when this happened and experienced isolation from friends and teachers. June is concerned over how to pay for her daughter's college, but she has faith that God has a plan. Two years later, June still experiences some sleepless nights, fatigue, resentment, anger, and depression over what happened.

PVS Victim #9 – Valerie Black

Valerie Black moved from the east coast to Georgia to become one of two new high school principals in this medium-sized school system. With two previous principalships at the elementary level and 25 years of experience in education, she felt prepared for her new job. Her new high school was in need of fresh leadership with new ideas. They had not made AYP in the past, and Valerie had demonstrated during the interview process that her experience making AYP at her last two schools would benefit her as a high school principal.

Valerie was a strong proponent of Learning Focused Strategies (LFS), and she immediately started implementation in her new job. She confessed that she had several different groups of teachers within the high school and that they seemed to operate differently than her elementary school teachers. She had those teachers who jumped right on board and made an effort to implement the new requirements, and she had those teachers who fought her the entire way through resistance and apathy. She stated that she explained in detail at faculty meetings how the LFS model would help the school in their effort towards making AYP. Still, she states that she had about 25% of her teachers who were stubbornly resistant in their implementation. This caused her great concern because she felt as though she had no recourse other than to inform these teachers that they could change or look for another job.

This was not how she wanted to work with her teachers. She admits to being someone who is black and white with issues. To her, this was no different. The teachers needed to make the changes she was directing in order to help the students and the school. Valerie started to get visits from central office staff members unexpectedly thereafter. She found this odd but proceeded with her way of leading the school. Her

superintendent came to her and stated that he was concerned with the number of teacher complaints he had received about how she was forcing LFS in the classrooms and that the teachers don't feel included. She explained to the superintendent the importance of the implementation, and he left telling her that he supported her initiatives. The school did not make AYP, but it did make significant improvements in almost all areas.

At the end of the school year, the teachers submitted a climate survey pertaining to Valerie. Valerie stated that the superintendent called her in during the first week of summer and told her that he was moving her to the central office due to her inability to work with her teachers. She stated that her salary remained the same in her new position, but it remains difficult to face her peers at meetings. Furthermore, she is self-conscious when in discussions with her peers, wondering if they have formed a negative opinion of her personally and professionally.

Question 5: What resiliency and reflective strategies were employed by those principals to cope with their respective professional victim syndrome?

Four of the nine confessed to having to take some form of medication to cope with anger, depression, sleeplessness, or fatigue.

- All nine of them responded that their close friends and family, and faith in God kept them focused on moving forward.
- Five stated that they worked harder at their next job to hopefully help rebuild their reputation in the profession.
- Two have legal actions pending.

- Seven have made major adjustments to their family budget to compensate for the economic impact caused by the crisis, and one claimed that she had to file for bankruptcy.

Question 6: What advice do principals who were professional victims give to others to help them cope with similar situations?

Debbie Prince: “Even knowing what I know now about politics, I still wouldn’t change much about what I did as a principal. I just should have increased my use of collaboration when making major decisions.”

Tom Riddle: “I didn’t suck up to the board members and parents, and play politics. Even with all my years as a principal, I never experienced the politics and relationship issues so significant until I became a high school principal. Realizing the importance too late was my downfall.”

Denise Foster: “Stick to what you know best and know your limits. Never underestimate the influence of any one stakeholder.”

Kevin Wallace: Always be courageous enough to do the right thing for the right reasons. Don’t give in to political issues because the action may be directed by someone who has an agenda different than what is in the best interests of your school.”

Melvin Sullivan: “The glamour of being a principal was enticing, but the politics were overwhelming. Building relationships with all of the stakeholders is key, but I learned it too late.”

Richard Tarter: “Know your legal rights as an administrator. Maintain relationships and pick your battles. Not everything is worth failing on your sword over.”

Mitch Stanley: “Build relationships with all of your stakeholders; especially your superintendent and board.”

June Parland: “As a principal, have a financial backup plan should you lose your job unexpectedly.”

Valerie Black: “Research the culture of your school before you accept the principal position. Develop a plan to implement change gradually without offending people.”

In general, the nine participants advise potential principals to be aware early of the importance of building and maintaining positive relationships, especially with the superintendent and the members of the board of education. While “playing politics” is also crucial for survival and avoiding the professional victim syndrome, maintaining personal integrity is also important for coping with the crisis experienced. Other key points were: implement change gradually, learn the culture of your school, know your rights and have a backup plan should you become a victim in spite of your efforts to avoid it.

Summary

Results from this study on principals and the professional victim syndrome (PVS) are provided. This mixed method study combined quantitative and qualitative data to answer the overarching question of the study: to what extent does the professional victim syndrome exist among contemporary principals; how did the principals come to be

professional victims; and what mechanisms were used to cope with the crisis experienced.

With regard to prevalence of PVS, of the 443 total responses, 11% self-reported having experienced the professional victim syndrome (PVS). Forty-eight individuals responded affirmatively to at least one of the questions 9-14 identifying themselves as professional victims.

Regarding how they came to be professional victims, 75% (36 out of the 48) volunteered to participate in the qualitative study. The researcher was able to interview nine (9) of those volunteers – three from each of the different school system sizes ranging from small, to medium, to large. All nine of the victims were involved in implementing change in their schools; all nine of the victims reported having relationship issues; and all nine of the victims reported that politics played a major role in their crisis.

Of those interviewed, the following mechanisms were identified as means of coping with PVS: 44% (4 out of the 9) reported to having to take some form of medication to cope with the anger, depression, sleeplessness, and/or fatigue associated with the crisis. All nine of them (100%) reported the major role their friends, family, and faith played in getting them through the most difficult times. Five of the nine (56%) stated that they worked harder at their next job to demonstrate their value and to rebuild their reputation. Two (22%) have legal actions pending. Seven of the nine (78%) indicated they made major adjustments to their family budget to compensate for the economic impact caused by the crisis.

The following additional results of interest regarding the consequences of experiencing PVS were derived from interviews. None of the respondents indicated that

they were fired; four (8%) resigned in lieu of being fired; 13 (27%) made a mutual decision with the superintendent to resign from their position; 5 (10%) had their contract not renewed; 26 (54%) reported having been reassigned in lieu of being fired, resigning, or having their contract non-renewed; and all 48 (100%) reported seeking legal assistance regarding their status. All principals reported having their professional and personal reputations tarnished as they attempt to cope with the crisis.

This study answered the overarching question posed pertaining to principals and the professional victim syndrome. The analysis of the information clearly reflects that a significant percentage of contemporary principals face the professional victim syndrome as they implement expected change in their assigned school, while trying to simultaneously navigate the political waves caused by their actions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Professional victim syndrome (PVS) is a condition confronted by many educational leaders who face a career crisis in which his/her professional and personal reputations is being tarnished, and he/she is challenged with navigating the political waves in order to survive, literally and figuratively, as a leader and a person (Polka and Litchka, 2008). With the changes made in tenure laws for administrators in Georgia and the simultaneous increased demands placed upon principals to get more results in order to make AYP, principals face the difficult task of balancing change initiatives with managing all stakeholders, internal and external, in the process in order to maintain employment. The principal must be a change master who knows what actions must be taken to bring about change, but must also be politically savvy enough to influence people and develop relationships that foster a work environment and community inclusion that results in the implementation of long-term change. The principal will inevitably take one or more stakeholders out of their comfort zone during the change initiative, and this dilemma will subject the principal to becoming a potential professional victim.

Principals often go blindly into these key leadership positions unprepared by previous assignments and administrative preparatory schooling (Hess & Kelly, 2005). As well, principals enter the new office with naivety towards the political aspect and importance of relationship building as they attempt to lead their schools through reform efforts. Principals face the daunting challenge of maintaining positive relationships simultaneously with their peers, staff and faculty, central office staff, students, parents,

community members, the superintendent, and the board of education members while striving to implement reform efforts as a change agent.

The principal of today must either have learned to be politically savvy from previous experiences and use that in their new capacity, or must immediately gain that knowledge upon entering the administrative position, in order to implement any major changes in their new organization. Likewise, the contemporary principal must fully understand the importance of building relationships in order to be successful. Otherwise, they face the strong possibility of either not moving the school forward and/or being asked to resign in lieu of non-renewal or being fired. Successful leaders place emphasis on personal relationships, and realize that change requires courage, commitment, and political savvy (Heifetz and Linsky, 2004).

Similar to the superintendents who stated underlying political reasons for their job loss documented in the research conducted by Polka and Litchka (2008), it is believed by this researcher that the same condition exists for contemporary principals; thus, this study offered continued research on the “professional victim syndrome” (PVS).

An attempt to replicate the study of Polka and Litchka (2008) was conducted with middle and high school principals using a mixed-methods approach using quantitative data from the PVS survey for middle and secondary principals (See Appendix A) and qualitative data from the PVS interview questions for middle and secondary principals (See Appendix B) for the purpose of increasing awareness to the realities of a principalship, increasing preparedness and reducing the naivety that often accompanies a new principal in this important educational leadership position. By increasing awareness of the syndrome, educational leaders may enter the principalship with increased levels of

preparation and savvy required to be the effective change agents and leaders they are expected to be.

The remainder of this chapter offers analysis and summary of the findings. The literature review from Chapter 2 is revisited to support the findings and/or implications. Recommendations for educational leaders who enter the principalship are provided about PVS as well as suggestions for further research.

Analysis of the Research Findings

This study combined a mixed method approach to answer the overarching question posed pertaining to principals and the professional victim syndrome: To what extent does the professional victim syndrome exist among contemporary principals; how did the principals come to be professional victims; and what mechanisms were used to cope with the crisis experienced. The analysis of the information clearly reflects that a significant percentage of contemporary principals face the professional victim syndrome as they implement expected and necessary change in their assigned school, while trying simultaneously to navigate the political waves caused by their actions.

Overall, 11% (48 valid responses out of 443) self-reported having experienced the professional victim syndrome (PVS). While 9 were interviewed, 75% (36 out of the 48) volunteered to participate in the qualitative study suggesting a willingness to discuss their crisis. All nine of the victims interviewed were involved in implementing change in their schools suggesting that the intense scrutiny and accountability associated with increased reform efforts is a contributing factor for PVS. All nine of the victims reported having relationship issues; and all nine of the victims reported that politics played a major role in their crisis suggesting that relationships and politics (the spoken

and unspoken rules) associated with maintaining employment as principal are crucial and should not be overlooked when preparing for or engaged in this leadership role.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Polka and Litchka (2008) conducted an extensive study of 30 current and former superintendents in Georgia and New York who experienced what they termed “the professional victim syndrome” as superintendents during their tenure and reported that the superintendents were presented with the options of resigning or being fired for what they reported were political and/or relationship issues with their respective school boards.

The literature review in chapter 2, yielded insufficient empirical evidence to support the frequency of contemporary principals who also experience PVS or professional victim syndrome, yet many are also non-renewed due to poor relationships with superintendents or for other reasons not directly associated with performance.

The literature review in chapter 2 does yield, however, research and theoretical implications for the findings in this study. Table 5.1 provides references linked to the findings of the major factors contributing to PVS.

Table 5.1. Research Findings of Major Factors of PVS and Previous Research

Overarching Question	Cross-referenced to Previous Research
PVS and Change/Reform Efforts	Hoy and Miskel Northouse Marzano, Waters, and McNulty McEwan Muhammad
PVS and Relationships	Heifetz and Linsky Marzano Reinsch and Gardner Gabarro and Kotter West and Derrington John F. Kennedy Hoy and Tarter

	Blankstein
PVS and Politics	Hoy and Miskel Hoy and Tarter

With regard to educational administration, Hoy and Miskel (2008) provided that inputs such as the environment, resources, policies, and other factors, are undertaken in a transformational process to achieve the public education’s technical core of learning and teaching. The outputs of student achievement that evolve from this transformational process are the result of the interactions of structure, culture, politics, and individuals. Northouse (2010) adds that the transformational process is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals.

Many of the major issues associated with PVS are interrelated. In this study, the professional victims interviewed indicate that change initiatives, relationships, and politics, were major factors leading to their crisis. The following is support from the research regarding these major factors:

PVS and Change Efforts

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) described an effective leader as a change agent, and they advocate that being a change agent is one of the twenty-one major responsibilities of a school leader. The principals in this study interviewed each view themselves as strong change agents. They further explained that a change agent is an individual who exhibits behaviors and characteristics that: consciously challenge the status quo; willingly lead change initiatives with uncertain outcomes; systematically consider new and better ways of doing things; and consistently attempt to operate at the edge versus the center of the school’s competence (Marzano et al, 2005). McEwan

(2003) also studied the importance of leaders as stated the change master must handle uncertainty and ambiguity, respect those who resist change, be futuristic, be aware of the situation, use the powers that exist within the organization, value the process so people ultimately adopt and believe in the change, motivate others, and develop trust from the team.

Many studies and theories have addressed leaders as change agents, but Muhammad (2009) analyzed the impact of culture on implementing change and identified teachers as falling in one of four categories: Believers – those who believe in the core values and readily support change; Tweeners – those who are new to the school culture and are subject to influence by others; Survivors – those who are typically burned out and do not cause waves; and Fundamentalists – those who are opposed to change and often form resistance to change efforts (Muhammad, 2009). The study found that fundamentalists will attempt to politically influence the Tweeners in order to gain ground working against change implementation (Muhammad, 2009).

In the current study, although principals did not specifically use Muhammad's (2009) terms, it was clear they described "fundamentalists" as influencing "tweeners" who both negatively impacted the change initiatives. The victims all expressed the belief taking the right actions to address change reform efforts for the right reasons, but acknowledged falling short in involving these groups.

PVS and Relationships

According to Heifetz and Linsky (2004), successful leaders place emphasis on personal relationships, and realize that change requires courage, commitment, and political savvy. From the study mentioned above by Muhammad (2009), the relationship

the principal establishes with all stakeholders once again is critical to implementing change within the organization. The participants of the current study recognized both their strengths and weaknesses in relationships.

Marzano (2003) observed, “Although effective leadership does not involve a specific type of personality, it is true that effective leaders, whether they are administrators or teacher-members of the leadership team, display specific behaviors when interacting with their colleagues. It is these behaviors that help establish personal relationships that are critical to the success of any reform effort” (p. 176).

This is supported by Blankstein (2004), who stated that the most difficult part of change in schools involves the human aspect.

Furthermore, Reinsch and Gardner (2011) conducted a study of 303 online interviews with senior business executives at companies in the United States with at least 1,000 employees, and reported that relationships and connections significantly influence employee promotions regardless of other factors designed to provide fairness in the process. Similarly, poor relationships with those in authoritative positions may lead to job stagnation or firing (Gabarro and Kotter, 1980). West and Derrington (2009) found that relationships, particularly between the principal and superintendent created either a healthy or harmful working environment. The majority of the principals interviewed in this study acknowledged the importance of building and maintaining a strong relationship with their superintendents without compromising their integrity.

All of the professional victims in this study reported that one or more negative relationships with at least one stakeholder contributed to becoming a professional victim.

All of the professional victims also reported blaming the superintendent for their crisis suggesting the lack of support from the superintendent is a major contributing factor to PVS. John F. Kennedy (1955) noted that people generally want to be liked and that leaders are no exception to this social aspect. This may require that some decisions a leader makes are based on what Kennedy (1955) was advised to do when he entered the Senate so many years ago, “The way to get along ... is to go along.” (p. 4) Although the principal is not in an elected position, the principal’s actions are subject to public scrutiny and being mindful of the importance of positive relationships is crucial to success. It is clear in the current study that the majority of the professional victims refused to “go along”.

PVS and Politics

In addition to above references that mention the influences of politics in the principalship, Hoy and Miskel (2008) also placed politics as one of the major factors that impact on transforming an educational system. Hoy and Tarter (2004) add that the “...objectives in the political model are personal. Personal goals, not organizational goals, drive the process.” (p. 68)

In the current study, the professional victims all felt their personal integrity was challenged through the political waves, but they did not compromise for the sake of politics, instead they remained true to doing what they felt was the right thing.

Conclusions

This study was conducted to determine the extent of principals who have experienced the professional victim syndrome, how they came to be professional victims, and how they coped with the crisis.

- More than 1 out of every 10 middle and high school principals consider themselves a professional victim.
- Professional victims interviewed indicate that change initiatives, coupled with relationships and politics, were major factors leading to their crisis.
- A larger number of principals who consider themselves professional victims come from larger school districts than from mid-sized or smaller school districts.
- Most principals who identify themselves as professional victims were not originally from the area they served as principal.
- Some of the principals who consider themselves professional victims would not consent to having their interview recorded, suggesting lingering issues involving trust.
- All of the principals with professional victim syndrome state that their relationships with one stakeholder or another negatively influenced their crisis.
- The professional victims all felt they were taking the right actions to address change reform efforts for the right reasons.
- The professional victims all felt their personal integrity was challenged through the political waves; however, but they did not compromise, instead remained true to doing what they felt was the right thing.
- All professional victims blame the superintendent in one manner or another despite the fact that the superintendent was previously considered an ally.
- All professional victims state that their family, friends, and spirituality made the difference in how they coped with the crisis.

- The majority of the professional victims (69%) were male.
- The majority of the professional victims were not first time principals. Over half (52%) were in their second principalship, and 19% were in their third or more principalship.

Implications

Based on the extent of the principals who have reported experiencing the professional victim syndrome, an increased awareness of the contributing factors is crucial. Findings in this study will help current and future principals understand the significance of building positive relationships and the role politics plays while leading their school through change initiatives. Additionally, this study suggests that institutions of higher education could develop programs of study for certification and preparation of future administrators so they may be exposed to the issues associated with the professional victim syndrome in anticipation of becoming future successful principals.

Recommendations

Further studies could be done to expand the relationship between principals and the professional victim syndrome (PVS). Due to a lack of studies specific to why principals leave their positions in the state of Georgia, further research is needed in this area to analyze PVS and its relationship to turnover rates.

Developing a quantitative instrument without the need for qualitative interviews, may serve to identify the prevalence more accurately since many who experience PVS are reluctant to interview.

Additionally, this study showed that the PVS victims suffered consequences as an administrator that would not have occurred with tenure protection that is provided to

teachers. This suggests further studies are needed to address the issue of tenure for administrators allowing for greater protection and job security which may serve to reduce the number of principals who experience PVS.

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APPENDIX A

PVS SURVEY FOR MIDDLE AND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS

Professional Victim Syndrome (PVS): Polka and Litchka (2008) define the professional victim syndrome as “the condition confronted by many educational leaders...who face a career crisis in which his/her professional and personal reputations were being tarnished, and he/she was challenged with navigating the political waves in order to survive, literally and figuratively, as a leader and a person” (p. 180).

Part I: Please answer questions 1 through 14 as they pertain to your **current** status.

2. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

3. School Assignment:
 - a. Middle School
 - b. High School

4. System Size:
 - a. Small (under 6,000 students)
 - b. Medium (from 6,000 to 20,000 students)
 - c. Large (over 20,000 students)

5. Highest Degree Status:
 - a. Bachelors
 - b. Masters
 - c. Specialist
 - d. Doctorate

6. Total Years of Experience in Education:
 - a. 1-10 years
 - b. 11-20 years
 - c. 21-30 years
 - d. 30+ years

7. Total Years of Experience as a Principal:
 - a. 1-2
 - b. 3-5 years
 - c. 6-10 years
 - d. 11-15 years
 - e. 16+ years

8. Number of Principalships Held:
 - a. 1 (first time principal)
 - b. 2
 - c. 3 or more

9. Are you originally from the area in which you are currently working (grew up in, etc)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

10. Have you ever been fired as a principal?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

11. Have you ever resigned in lieu of being fired as a principal?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

12. Have you ever made a mutual decision with the superintendent to resign from your position as principal?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

13. Have you ever had your contract as a principal not renewed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

14. Have you ever been reassigned from your position as principal in lieu of being fired, resigning, or having your contract not renewed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

15. Have you ever sought legal assistance regarding the status of your position as a principal?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Part II: Please answer questions 15 through 21 below **only** if you answered “**yes**” to **any** of the questions from 9 through 14. Use information applicable **at the time** of the issue or incident.

16. School Assignment:
 - a. Middle School
 - b. High School

17. System Size:
- Small (under 6,000 students)
 - Medium (from 6,000 to 20,000 students)
 - Large (over 20,000 students)
18. Highest Degree Status:
- Bachelors
 - Masters
 - Specialist
 - Doctorate
19. Total Years of Experience in Education:
- 1-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - 21-30 years
 - 30+ years
20. Total Years of Experience as Principal:
- 1-2
 - 3-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-15 years
 - 16+ years
21. Number of Principalships Held:
- 1 (first time principal)
 - 2
 - 3 or more
22. Are you originally from the area (grew up in, etc.) where you experienced an issue as identified in questions 9 through 14?
- Yes
 - No
23. Would you like to voluntarily participate in a qualitative study consisting of a one-on-one interview with the researcher?
- Yes
 - No
24. If you stated “yes” to question number 22, please provide your contact information below if you are willing to participate in the confidential one-on-one interview portion of this study with the researcher and so he can contact you. The data obtained from the interviews will be synthesized and reported in a manner that protects the identity of the participants. Real names of participants, towns,

schools, or other identifying information will not be used in the publication of this study. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity and to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

- d. Name:
- e. Email Address:
- f. Preferred Telephone Number:

APPENDIX B

PROFESSIONAL VICTIM SYNDROME (PVS) INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOR MIDDLE AND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS

Professional Victim Syndrome (PVS): Polka and Litchka (2008) define the professional victim syndrome as “the condition confronted by many educational leaders...who face a career crisis in which his/her professional and personal reputations were being tarnished, and he/she was challenged with navigating the political waves in order to survive, literally and figuratively, as a leader and a person” (p. 180).

The below questions will be asked consistently of all voluntary participants who self-identify themselves during the online survey as being a professional victim.

1. Describe the context in which you became the principal of your school.
2. Did you grow up in this community?
3. Describe the situation and factors that led to the crisis in your principalship.
4. Explain what your immediate and long-term personal reaction was to this crisis.
5. Explain the effects this crisis had on your family and friends.
6. What skills did you use to try to survive the crisis?

What advice would you give to aspiring and/or current principals regarding the professional victim syndrome?

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460

To: James Pulos
Dr. Paul Brinson

cc: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: 07/09/12

Initial Approval Date: 07/09/12

Expiration Date: 06/30/13

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H13002** and titled "**Principals and the Professional Victim Syndrome**," it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full approval by the Institutional Review Board according to federal guidelines.

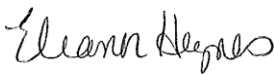
According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

- B2 Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (I) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (II) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research is exempt from IRB approval. You may proceed with the proposed research.

Please notify the IRB when you have completed the project by emailing irb@georgiasouthern.edu. Include the date of completion, the number of subjects (records) utilized and if there were any unexpected events related to the subjects during the project. (If none, state no unexpected or adverse events occurred during the conduct of the research.)

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer