THE CONVERGENCE OF AUTONOMY AND HETERONOMY IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES

By

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To the faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of MILDRED WATKINS find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Chair

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I am strong when I am on your shoulders; you raise me up to more than I can be.

Brendan Graham

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THE CONVERGENCE OF AUTONOMY AND HETERONOMY IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES

Abstract

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Tensions between the autonomy of individual teachers and the expectations for their practice articulated by district, state and federal mandates are common in an era of accountability. In response some educational leaders call for idealized professional communities that consistently focus on specified values. Obstacles to such reforms arise when teachers view these efforts as imposed by administration and as precluding their creative and imaginative energy. This field study of two high performing elementary schools serving historically underserved populations draws from scholarship that seeks a less utopian framework for school community by employing two constructs: heteronomy and interdependence. Data were collected to describe the ways teachers share decisions, and to describe teachers' experience of autonomy and professional community as contributing to their practice. By researching the perspectives of teachers and examining their experiences in light of situated and recurring activities the study describes the collaborative work of teachers to support shared objectives and to respond to common expectations. The study identifies three teacher practices with reference to autonomy and heteronomy - emergent, congruent, and aligned. Each practice expresses a manifestation of community focus, moving from dichotomous interests toward a convergence of autonomy and heteronomy within the school community.

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Dedication

For

Audra

Let us put our minds together to see what

we can build for our children.

Chief Sitting Bull

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

School teachers and administrators in the United States work in a challenging environment. Chief among the issues they face is disparity in academic achievement between ethnic minority and White students. Differences in performance are also observed between students living with poverty and those that are more economically advantaged. Exacerbating these problems is the fact that enrollments of minority and economically disadvantaged students are increasing in numbers and percentages (Marshall, 2002). The achievement gap underscores the absence of equity in America's schools (Petrovich & Wells, 2005). And yet, Petrovich and Wells argue that issues of equity have given way to a sorting process that emphasizes attainment of predetermined uniform standards for educational advancement.

The prevailing ethos for schools today demands individual student achievement that emphasizes rigor, uniformity, and competition (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). As such the consequences for failure fall largely on students. Many of the factors that contribute to failure, however, rest outside the scope of student responsibility. Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that schools offer more advantages to students whose home culture match that of educators than to those whose background differed. Research also suggests that members of affluent communities resist funding formulas and school boundary adjustments that potentially increase equity of opportunity for other less affluent communities when they reduce or negatively impact current services (Kozol, 1991). Kozol also notes existing disparity in funding structures from state to state and

community to community that endow some schools abundantly while others struggle to provide basic services.

The apparent paradox between achievement and equity as set forth within current accountability policies has also generated increased scrutiny of educators and strained school systems as educators endeavor to respond to these opposing demands (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Hoyle et al. (2005) state that the federal policy expectation that all students attain uniform academic standards without regard to differences in ethnicity or socio-economic status is remarkable given the disparities between schools in terms of resources, quality of personnel, and academic supports. Educational personnel and students are expected to work out school improvements despite inequity in resources, funding, and supports.

Scribner, Hager, and Warne (2002) argue given the complexity of the challenges that no educator should expect to succeed by "going it alone" (p. 71). Scribner et al. are not unaccompanied, for embedded in school reform policies and pressures are calls for restructuring school leadership. Elmore (2000) argues the abundance and depth of relevant information related to teaching and learning, the increase in external scrutiny of schools, and the disparity in educational attainment of diverse student populations demand a more interdependent school structure equipped to resolve concerns over low achievement and unmonitored results. Others also call for such change and the empowerment of teacher leaders with decision making authority, resources, training, and time (Blasé & Blasé, 1997; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hahn, 2002; Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Griffin, 1995; Gronn, 2002; Reitzug, 1994; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Distributed leadership is the label applied to this model of

leadership advanced by reforms (Harris, 2003; Sawyer, Scribner, Watson, & Myers, 2005). Two key principles are paramount in initiatives for restructuring school leadership: (a) expanding teacher participation in instructional problem solving and (b) developing a stronger professional community with articulated instructional standards (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Liebermann & Miller, 2005). Indeed, teachers are being asked to assume greater involvement in and commitment to collaborative work with colleagues than what has been expected or advocated in the past (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Sergiovanni & Starratt 2002).

Traditionally, school improvement and decision making has been the domain of principals and other administrators while teachers maintained a great deal of autonomy over classroom practices and curriculum (Elmore, 2000; Ingersoll, 1994). Administrators held responsibilities for buses, state reports, building maintenance, personnel and the like. Teachers, on the other hand, selected curricula with little more than topical guidance from administrators, board members, or other teachers. The design of day to day lessons, decisions about student assessments, and academic reporting were largely the purview of individual teachers or small teacher groups (Lortie, 1975). As such, restructuring school leadership entails an important shift given its intent to disrupt traditional expectations, values, and norms associated with teacher autonomy over classroom practices and curriculum (Scribner et al., 2002).

Research Problem and Purpose of the Study

The call for greater participation by teachers in the process of renewing and strengthening instruction may result in schools better able to serve students through the development of knowledge and redistribution of responsibilities within professional

communities (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2005). Yet as teachers and administrators work together to design and implement instruction that supports equity and increases student achievement they will almost certainly come up against practices and beliefs associated with teacher autonomy (Scribner et al., 2002). On the other hand, they also will inevitably run into policies and other responses to educational accountability that contradict movement toward collaboration and distributed school leadership such as performance assessment of individual teachers based on student achievement (Valli, Croninger, & Walters, 2007), "curricular and pedagogical impositions of scripted lessons, mandated curriculum, and narrowed options for pedagogy" (Crocco & Costigan, 2007, p. 513), and "hierarchical and bureaucratic district and school cultures" (Wood, 2007, p. 699) that conflict or constrain decision making by a school community. Indeed, Maxcy and Nguyen (2006) in their review of distributed leadership literature present the argument that in many instances this framework appeared as less about transference of "power to those down the chain of command (albeit under strict limits and specifications) than as a means to maintain the status quo, if not further consolidate power under the guise of redistribution" (p. 181). Westheimer (1999) too presents resistance and disappointment in securing the promise of school reform initiatives and asks, "Why then does the task of achieving the type of collegial setting suggested by so many school reforms seem so elusive?" (p. 72). He responds by identifying theoretical weaknesses and offering a case study that demonstrates the inadequate elucidation and conceptualization of the strategies, outcomes, and ideologies inherent in literature on school community.

Westheimer's (1999) critique of scholarship that applies the concept of community to schools joins others who note similar concerns related to the indiscriminate and careless operationalization of community (e.g., Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001) or problems with the treatment of difference in school community literature (e.g., Bushnell, 2001; Shields & Seltzer, 1997). Despite such troubles Sergiovanni (1994) argues unequivocally for educators and scholars to replace the model and metaphor of school as organization with that of community.

The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to the development of scholarship that endeavors to clarify school community theory. The study describes and analyzes the work of teachers in two elementary schools in Washington State with large enrollments from traditionally underserved populations that have evidenced significant increases in student academic achievement. Data were collected to address the following research questions: (a) What are the ways teachers collaborate and share decisions related to teaching and learning? (b) How do teachers understand and experience autonomy as contributing to their practice? and (c) How do teachers understand and experience professional community as contributing to their practice? By researching the perspectives of teachers and examining their experiences, the study contributes to emerging understanding about the nature of teacher autonomy within school community in an era of accountability. The study's findings speak to issues of school governance and teacher leadership. As Ingersoll (1994) explains, there is need for more research to address the integration of autocratic and democratic models of administrating schools, concluding that, "there has been little effort to explain the simultaneous presence of contradictory images of organizational control in schools" (p. 152).

The current chapter continues by presenting a brief review of literature on school leadership, focused particularly on teacher leadership, and that which discusses the concept of practice. The conceptual framework for school community, however, is offered in chapter two. Following the literature review on leadership and practice, chapter one offers a synopsis of the study's research methods, which will be fully described in chapter three with results of the study found in chapter four. The final section of chapter one provides a statement about the researcher as instrument and limitations that are reflected in the study's conclusions, which are presented in chapter five.

Teacher Leadership and Practice

Although teacher leadership is used in development of the research problem and practice is evident in the research questions, this study is not about teacher leadership or professional practice per se. Neither leadership nor practice is the focus of the analytical work presented in this dissertation. School community occupies the spotlight. There are implications for leadership as is noted above and as will be fully discussed later in the dissertation. And practice is employed as a conceptual tool for organizing and interpreting teacher beliefs, values, norms, relationships and behaviors. But this work is not to further understanding of practices, routines, knowing in action, or other related constructs. Therefore, a brief discussion of the conceptual frameworks pertaining to leadership and practice that informed the study is necessary. I present the discussion of the concepts in this chapter, rather than chapter two, as the placement here allowed chapter two to be written with a single focus on the conceptual issues relevant to school community including community, autonomy, heteronomy, and interdependence.

Teacher leadership. Providing the theory from which educational leadership scholars' draw, organizational theorists argue that leadership neither entails coercion by an absolute ruler, nor the anarchy of absolute individual free choice. Leadership takes place in a relationship between leaders and followers who seek together to accomplish a moral purpose (Burns, 1978). Leadership is discussed as involving interaction that includes identifying outcomes, enacting behaviors, and instilling norms that meet the long term needs of individuals and organizations (Selznick, 1957). Selznick further proposes that leadership occurs when efforts are expended to focus attention on decisions and processes that address the dynamics and challenges between and within an organization and its environment.

Heifetz (1994) builds on this model of leadership by defining technical and adaptive work, which are based on a typology of the kinds of problems people experience in social and organizational settings. Technical work is appropriate when problems are clearly defined and solutions can be easily prescribed. Adaptive work differs from technical in one or more ways. Either the problem is clearly defined but the solution cannot be simply prescribed by the leader, or both the identification of the problem and the solution require the active involvement of both leaders and followers to learn more about the problem and to seek options for resolution.

School improvement appears to involve more than technical problems to be addressed through formulated responses that leaders dictate and followers implement. Improved student achievement, increased professionalism, and securing equity and excellence for all students appear as adaptive challenges. The work of school improvement is described as requiring the participation of both formal and informal

leaders at all levels of the school (Gronn, 2002; Lieberman & Miller, 2005; Smylie et al. 2002; Spillane, 2005). Teacher leaders are presented as working in collaboration with colleagues to refine teaching and strengthen student achievement (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Sergiovanni & Starratt 2002). Critical to this work is reflection upon classroom through to school-wide practices (Lortie 1975, McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Schön, 1991). Teacher leaders can be seen inviting and persuading others to pursue instructional activities collaboratively and share decision making in ways that expose educational values and goals (Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Reitzug, 1994; Riehl, 1998; Ruff & Shoho, 2005). School leadership can be seen to encourage or facilitate development of a professional community around shared values. Teacher leadership, however, may also contribute to a weakened sense of community in a school as well, given potential conflict and dissent about embraced or advocated values.

Practice. The concept of practice is one that is familiar with the community literature. Indeed, communities of practice offer an understanding about organizing and organizational learning which has received much attention in business (Wenger, 2000) and education (Little, 2002). Orlikowski (2002) defines practices as

> situated recurrent activities of human agents, they cannot simply be spread around as if they were fixed and static objects. Rather, competence generation may be seen to be a process of developing people's capacity to enact what we may term "useful practices" — with usefulness seen to be a necessarily contextual and provisional aspect of situated organizational activity. (p. 253)

Orlikowski's definition arises out of work that has sought to explain the skillful execution of activity and knowledge in organizations. Her definition appreciates Schon's (1983)

observation of knowing in action exhibited by experts he studied rather than the two staged process of knowledge in action that consists of accessible a priori knowledge which then is used to guide action. In this view, knowing is an ongoing accomplishment that possesses a quality of instability, but since it is more or less reenacted given similar intentions, relationships, and behaviors given time and place this knowing in action becomes taken for granted. Cohen (2007) argues that these "recurring action patterns" share much with what Dewey wrote on routines. Cohen describes how Dewey's philosophy identifies four errors in common discourse about routines. Routines are assumed to be "rigid in their execution, that they are mundane in content, that they are isolated from thought and feeling, and/or that their underlying action patterns are explicitly stored somewhere" (p. 774). The point of the discussion here is to suggest that the notion of practice being forwarded here is sensitive to such distinction. Practice as used in the context of the study represents a kind of situated reoccurring activity that reveals flexibility, evidences preference or commitment, and possesses some measure of importance to the participants.

Research Methods

This field study explores the experiences and perspectives of teachers in two high performing elementary schools in Washington State that serve students from diverse backgrounds in an effort to understand the nature of autonomy and community in the collaborative work of teachers. After securing access to each school, principals at each site were interviewed. As part of their interview, principals were asked to identify teachers who were perceived to be highly involved in collaboration with others. Several of these teachers were interviewed and observed. Other teacher participants were

identified for interview through researcher observations. A total of 30 formal interviews with multiple follow-up informal discussions were made over the course of the year in which the study was conducted. As such, care was taken to ensure sufficient time at each of the schools such that adequate focus with relevant details could be obtained (Glesne, 2006).

As noted above, observations were made of the activities and happenings at both schools. Observations included classroom interactions, grade level meetings, school improvement meetings, collegial conversations, and formal training events. Finally, data collection involved gathering pertinent documents related to the participating teachers' work. These included agendas of meetings, student achievement data, curriculum planning documents, curriculum guides, and the like.

Data analysis began with reading field notes of observations and transcripts of interviews. Codes and themes were identified through an iterative process of reviewing and gathering data. The open coding of field notes and transcriptions slowly gave way to focused analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) and development of a typology that was supported through the use of an integrative memoing process (Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006).

Self as Instrument and Limitations

Taking into account the practical and ethical dilemmas associated with backyard research, that is studying ones own work environment (Creswell, 2003), I chose not to study my own professional setting, but to conduct research in two schools with demographic characteristics similar to those of the elementary school for which I am superintendent. It should be noted, however, that I had served as the regional director of

Migrant Education for an Educational Service District previous to becoming superintendent. In this former capacity, I presented training events and provided technical assistance to both of the schools in the study. I am also acquainted with the superintendents and principals of both schools and had varying degrees of acquaintance with some of the teachers at both sites. With reference to the teachers, however, it had been several years since I had contact with any of them. In the course of the study, I made many new contacts with teachers I had not known previously. Although I emphasized my role as researcher and graduate student, participants were knowledgeable of my position as superintendent of a neighboring district. The convergence of my previous experience and current role may have influenced how participants perceived my questions such that they were not completely frank or modified their behaviors in my presence.

To minimize the possibility of these concerns, I worked hard to develop rapport with participants and went to lengths to assure them that their involvement would remain confidential. Further, I endeavored to triangulate important references in the interviews and witness key behavior or interactions on several occasions before assuming that what I had recorded was accurate. My analysis of the data is also aided by the fact that I have more than ten year's experience as a classroom teacher and regularly visit classrooms as part of my current assignment. Likewise, I reviewed literature relative to the roles and responsibilities of teachers to ensure that what I observed related to common perspectives and concerns of teachers from the classroom rather than my administrator perspective.

My perspective of teacher leadership and professional communities is also an important consideration. My views are shaped by teachers and administrators who have experienced significant increases in student achievement. These educators credit

improvement in achievement to their collaborative practices and alignment of curriculum and instruction to explicitly articulated standards. As a result, I endeavored to be mindful of this oversimplification. A professional community is greatly influenced by the culture, personalities, values, and beliefs of the persons that compose it. In approaching the study, I therefore sought to understand the context and social patterns of the educators who worked there. Further, it was important to lay aside my early assumptions regarding the kinds of activities and beliefs that support professional communities. In conducting the study, I attempted to engage in open conversation with teachers and administrators in seeking their descriptions of the realities they perceive in their schools and in themselves (Mills, 1959). How successful I was on these counts will be evident to readers as they continue reading what follows.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The language of educational reform is abundant with discussion about the need to develop schools into communities (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). In the following chapter, I identify the characteristics presented in literature to describe and define school community. As part of this discussion I consider the implications and problems of this theory, namely its tendency toward sentimentalism, idealism, and elitism. The chapter will then explore how philosophers and researchers have attempted to conceptually and operationally develop theory that resists or amends the noted problems. The concepts of heteronomy and interdependence will be defined and described as part of this presentation. The chapter then offers its conceptual model and definition for school community. A summary of the key ideas concludes the chapter.

School Community Defined

The definition of school community is as broad as its use is prolific. Perhaps most commonly, a school community is defined as a group of educators who possess shared experiences, offer mutual assistance, exhibit a common identity, and agree upon a common vision and values (DuFour, & Eaker, 1998; Grossman et al., 2001; Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Merz & Furman, 1997; Oxley, 1997; Wager & Kegan, 2006). Coalescing around a belief that collectively the members of the community can make a difference in student success, community members are presented as possessing a similar opinion or outlook on the work to be done and the priority for asset distribution (Marzano et al., 2005). In descriptions of a professional development community, school

improvement is described as arising out of this alignment of values and deprivatization of practice (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1995). When schools are defined as communities, they are viewed throughout much of the literature as achieving something more than is present in a typical school.

Much of the reform literature advances an idealistic notion of school community. Bushnell (2001) writes of her concerns about this idealism and its potential to mislead. Grossman et al., (2001) too note problems with the ideal forwarded in literature and contrast community with what they call pseudo community. School community with its attendant and desirable end of high student performance has become an end itself and as such spawns mimicry. In pseudo community the effort to exhibit shared values and purpose inhibits open discussion of hidden or problematic concerns. In their view, a pseudo community allows a facilitator or a few vocal members the opportunity to dominate the agenda and control decisions.

Maxcy and Nguyen (2006) discuss systemic and cultural features of public schools as also contributing to pseudo community. Teachers are not among the most highly paid professionals nor are they the recipients of abundant public esteem and recognition (Parkay & Stanford, 2007). The rewards of teaching are most often cited by teachers themselves as the physic rewards that are embedded in relationships with students (Lortie, 1975). Teachers report that finding success with an individual child or the gratitude expressed by students are among the things they value most. Lortie found that teachers seek to maintain control over the aspects of their work that they believe will optimize opportunities to receive these student-centered physic rewards. This includes the autonomy to select learning activities that will appeal to students, to set classroom

schedules to emphasize some subjects over others, and to determine which students will receive the bulk of the teachers' time and attention. The alignment of classroom curriculum to state established standards, stringent measures of accountability, and traditional divisions between grade levels, subjects, etc., in many respects challenge teachers' classroom decision making and collaborative efforts to implement practices that facilitate the intrinsic, physic rewards which they seek (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Lortie, 1975; Scribner et al., 2002). School reforms that seek to build community, particularly when viewed as imposed by administration, are distrusted, disregarded, and disrupted by teachers (Wood, 2007).

Furthermore, the literature's attention to an idealistic notion of community has resulted in researchers missing important differences between the kinds of community found in schools. In his study of two schools recognized as exemplary school communities, Westheimer (1999) notes that one of the schools appeared to simply balance individual interests with voluntary participation in limited public activities. In a manner somewhat similar to Grossman's et al. (2001) pseudo community, dissent was commonly suppressed in favor of a homogenized and generalized purpose. In the other school, the work of the community encompassed the more rigorous work of dialog to seek out difference in perspectives, develop guiding principles and philosophies, nurture diversified leadership, and establish interdependence. The open conflict expressed on a regular basis in this school, however, might lead some to question the degree to which community was present. The findings offered through Westheimer's study highlight concerns that neither school would fit the definition of community commonly used in educational literature.

If the definition of school community must contain the qualities of being a cohesive group of educators who share agreement on common goals—then it becomes a concept that can be achieved in only a small portion of schools. Noddings (1996) is willing to make this concession, positing that community is surrendered to all but a privileged group of private elite and public suburban schools, where diversity tends to be less pronounced.

Greene (1988), however, is unwilling to forfeit or abandon what she sees as the promise of community for education. She rejects a notion of community that is of limited use and calls for a more substantive imagination and rendition in both scholarship and practice. Westheimer (1999), Shields and Seltzer (1997), and Gates (2005) have also argued for a redefinition of school community. Indeed, they almost ask whether it is possible for educators, or for that matter any people, to avoid life in some kind of community with others. Drawing on theory that contains a more robust conceptualization of social interaction, these works direct school community toward a less idealistic or utopian notion.

Toward Redefining School Community

A "more dynamic and less idealistic" (Gates, 2005, p. 150) definition of community than that found in educational reform literature is needed. Educators have found it difficult to establish professional communities that focus on shared values that narrowly channel the creative and imaginative energy of teachers, administrators, and patrons (Greene, 1988; Scribner et al., 2002; Theobald, 1997; Westheimer, 1999). Many schools are encumbered by tensions between the autonomy of individual teachers and the expectations for their practice articulated by principals, district leaders, and state officers

(Elmore, 2000; Grossman et al., 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Scribner et al., 2007; Wood, 2007). Scholarship that seeks to move school community theory toward a less utopian framework has employed two constructs: heteronomy and interdependence. The following section presents a discussion of both concepts and provides illustrations for clarification.

Heteronomy. Who will decide what is taught, how funds are prioritized or which staff will be hired? In many schools decisions for instruction have fallen under teacher authority while hiring, budget, and other school level decisions have been the domain of administrators. This separated authority is shifting as a result of recent school reform efforts (Ingersoll, 1994). Administrators are taking a more active role in the development of curriculum and oversight of instruction. On the other hand, the popularity of site based teams has sometimes expanded teacher leadership to include building and district level decisions that were typically administrative in traditional schools (Smiley et al., 2002; Gronn, 2002). The restructuring of school leadership appears to increase tensions between the autonomy of the individual (i.e., teacher or principal) and heteronomy of the community.

Levinas (1987) defines autonomy as "self rule" and heteronomy the "rule of the other" (as cited by Child, Williams, Birch & Booty, 1995). The distinction between heteronomy and community is important for not only are the two concepts frequently conflated in the literature, but as Martin (1998) notes "The Enlightenment philosophers agreed that society *was* dependence, but they did not agree as to whether this dependence implied rule-from another" (italics in original p. 101). Past and present scholarship leaves

unanswered the question about the degree to which community restricts the autonomy of individuals.

Nevertheless, calls for equilibrium or balance between individual autonomy and communal heteronomy are abundant (Etzioni, 1987; Scribner et al., 2007). But what exactly does a balance look like? Too often, equilibrium is nothing more than a negotiated settlement between what the individual wants and what the community wants. Gates (2005) concludes that "the test for scholars has been the delineation of policy that will be successful, but not too successful in strengthening outcomes of collective responsibility" (p. 152). In other words, when the premise for seeking equilibrium assumes the superior value of individual freedom, building community is a good thing as long as the community does not become so strong that it becomes restrictive.

An example as applied to schooling may be helpful for purposes of illustration. The effort to bring equilibrium between the opinions of the individual members of the school, with the collective opinion of the whole faculty may be attempted in several ways. For example, in a textbook adoption process, a democratic vote would give weight to the majority opinion, while ensuring that each individual had the opportunity to cast an autonomous vote. A negotiated compromise might result in adoption of the text preferred by most while allowing individuals to supplement the text with various preferred materials. Another option would be to set aside conflicting texts preferred by different subgroups while a third text, not the first choice of anyone, but acceptable to most, might be adopted.

Each of these potential solutions focuses on the issue of who holds the authority for a decision. In the case of the democratic vote, the majority carries the authority. If

supplemental materials may be added to the adopted text, the majority of the school has decided to share limited power with each individual. If each subgroup sets aside its first preference in favor of an alternative compromise, the individual faculty members have determined to sublimate their autonomy and reinforce the authority of the whole. In seeking equilibrium, “my way”, “our way” or combinations of the two become the focus of the decision making process. Scribner et al., (2002) recommend that principals seek ways to incorporate teacher autonomy into the decision making process of schools, so long as the community’s goals and values are maintained. It is counsel that can be recognized as advancing a model of equilibrium or balance (Etzioni, 1996).

In order to improve student performance outcomes, school reform appears to encourage a kind of balancing of authority to redress concerns that teachers have had too much control over teaching and learning. Look no further than collaboration and shared decision making involving administrators and teachers as evidence (Elmore, 2000; Smiley, 1992; Spillane, 2005). And the point only deepens with inclusion of parents, community members, state officers, and federal legislators which strengthen heteronomy and reduce autonomy (Petrovich & Wells, 2005; Starratt 1996). In today’s accountability environment teacher autonomy over classroom practices is restricted through surveillance and incentives (Codd, 2005; Webb, 2005).

Against this argument for equilibrium Helgesen (1995) describes the relationship between heteronomy, community, and autonomy through a metaphor of jazz music. Each instrumentalist improvises his or her notes (i.e., autonomy) within the framework of common chords and themes (i.e., community). It is because the musicians operate within this framework of agreed upon chords that each is free to choose their notes. Without

agreement upon chords, the players would either be forced to follow a prescribed score (i.e., heteronomy) or lose their musical expression in chaos (i.e., anarchy).

Helgesen's (1995) work in organizations is part of a large body of scholarship that endeavors to frame and reconcile issues that arise in social theory given the existence of wholes and parts. The whole cannot be reduced to its parts but neither can the parts be summed to equal the whole. Philosophers have developed a theory of interdependence for understanding and explaining the nature of these kinds of relationships.

Interdependence. The dominant paradigm in Western philosophy posits the primacy of the individual (Bellah, Madsen,Sullivan, Swidler, &Tipton, 1985). It presents the self as a separate entity that seeks its own preferences and desires. Others, however, suggest that understanding human behavior requires recognition that the individual is embedded within a context of relationships and commitments to larger purposes than that of the self (Buechner, 1996; Bonhoeffer, 1954). Writing from the Christian perspective Lewis (1949/1980) offers an argument along this line when he wrote

> No man who values originality will ever be original. But try to tell the truth as you see it, try to do any bit of work as well as it can be done for the work's sake, and what men call originality will come unsought. Even on that level, the submission of the individual to the function is already beginning to bring true personality to birth. (p.175)

Buddhist philosophy also shares this position as identified in the concept of interdependence. Suzuki (1999) provides a clear discussion of interdependence. He begins by recognizing independence as a condition where the collective whole is sufficient because it is composed of many parts. Thus, in this view independence is not

acquired through the supremacy of the individual over others. The independent collective is autonomous since diverse parts of the whole are present to complete the unit. Independence then is increased, not diminished by the presence of others.

Suzuki (1999) then proceeds to discuss dependence. Dependence is the relationship that each part has to the other parts that create the whole. Each individual relies on others for completion of the whole. Each part is dependent on the other parts given its specialization and uniqueness, which contributes and draws from the whole.

The example about textbook selection can be used to illustrate both the concept of independence and dependence. Teachers and administrators in a school possess varying degrees of knowledge about subject matter, curriculum, and instruction. A school's professional team includes some educators with academic qualification and preparation in the field of study. The educators also have acquired a variety of clinical perspectives on student instructional needs. There is also on the faculty different skill levels that pertain to nurturing collaborative dialog. To the degree that the school's leadership draws upon or draws out the talents of the faculty in decision making, the faculty can be thought of as independent, able to move forward with confidence in regards to the selected textbook. That is, the multiple and diverse membership of the school community reveals the manner in which each individual is dependent on the others and this dependence is strengthened in the community's independence.

The contrast between the equilibrium model and interdependence can be pushed deeper. The model of equilibrium as previously discussed handles tensions between autonomy and heteronomy through references to questions of authority such as "Who has the right or responsibility to decide?" or "Who will decide which is the best direction for

our school?" To begin, interdependence does not result in elimination of the difficulties raised by differences of opinion and conflicts between individuals. Within a community, disagreements will surface. Decisions that seem best for the community may not seem best to all members. The concept of interdependence, however, shifts the understanding and action given such problems in a different direction than that presented in the model of equilibrium. To appreciate this difference it is helpful to consider the example of the textbook selection.

The guiding principle of interdependence is not based on an effort to find who the authority or expert is. Rather it opens with or enables the question "What great thing do we wish to know and understand?" The subject itself is placed at the center of the decision making model. Teachers, administrators, students, and stakeholders become members of a learning community gathered around the subject of their mutual concern or interest. To be sure, members will view the subject differently and prioritize conflicting aspects of the subject. They can, however, begin to dialog with the desire to increase their knowledge of the subject rather than to compete for a finite decision making authority. Palmer (1998) describes this as the "community of truth." He writes,

> As we try to understand the subject in the community of truth we enter into complex patterns of communication – sharing observations and interpretations, correcting and complementing each other, torn by conflict in this moment and joined by consensus in the next. The community of truth, far from being linear and static and hierarchical, is circular, interactive, and dynamic. (p. 103)

To summarize the distinction between balancing individual/community interests and building interdependence, the primary difference is that in the former, the community

seeks equilibrium in authority and in the latter the community shares a mutual commitment to truth seeking. In attempting to balance individual and community interests, the textbook committee enters into a transaction among its members and the interests they represent. They have joined together for a specific purpose, and concluding that purpose, set aside their task and resume their previous interests. In the community of truth, in contrast, work is focused on expansion of knowledge and understanding. The outcome of this work broadens the members' perspective, nurtures new relationships, and provides opportunities to develop or refine practice. The by product of this work may be a textbook adoption, but the process takes the members to a new place with regard to the subject of their inquiry. This new place will ensure that the next decision process begins from a new and more comprehensive point of departure. The transformative work of an interdependent community greatly enhances not only the specific work of a particular time, but strengthens the community toward improvement of practice.

School Community Redefined in the Context of Reform

In a school community, the members of the school engage in dialog, openly disagree, seek additional information, enlist the perspectives of others, test and experiment, and maintain an ongoing and dynamic forum that guides action and decision making. While these characteristics may be present in the transactional work that most often accompanies the model of equilibrium, it is the focus of the discussion and not its methods that distinguish the process. In the former, the participants mediate between autonomy and heteronomy to influence decision making. In the latter, teachers, administrators, and students recognize each other as seekers of truth and attend to issues of truth rather than that of authority per se.

Each member of the school community brings partial information. As members commit themselves to increase their knowledge and understanding regarding the subject, they are essentially recognizing their interdependence. Since the subject is not fully known to any of them, they are dependent upon each other to increase their understanding. The community is made of others who bring breadth of knowledge and insight from various vantage points, therefore, the community is independent and able to continue its truth seeking. Dialog and experience provide the workshop from which the members craft an emerging truth. It is this truth, and not specifically the individuals or the community, informing decision making. With truth at its center and interdependence as its governing principle, the school as a community can attend to the interests and needs of both the community and its individual members.

Conclusion

We have shown how the assumption that autonomy and community exist in tension or competition with one another can be reframed employing the notions of heteronomy and interdependence. With a great thing at the center of its interactions, the community of truth gives credence to both individual and collective needs.

As leaders encourage deepening transitions toward greater interdependence, there are no guarantees that conflicts will not occur. Indeed, the dialog of a community of truth is likely to increase differences of perspective. When such conflicts arise, the members of the community will do well to remember that a focus on the great thing they are learning will better serve them than an emphasis on *who* knows best or has the greater authority. Thus reframing educational process in the community of truth is not a means to avoid disagreement. Rather it is a context in which to redefine conflict and open opportunities

for a transformational reality to emerge. Such a reality will incorporate aspects of the views of multiple members without exactly matching any of them.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

The call for greater participation by teachers in the process of renewing and strengthening instruction through professional communities may result in better schools (Lieberman & Miller, 2005). Yet scholars note resistance to school reform (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006; Scribner et al., 2002; Theobald, 1997; Valli & Buese, 2007; Wood, 2007). Theoretical weaknesses including inadequate elucidation and conceptualization of the strategies, outcomes, and ideologies inherent in literature on school community are identified as sources of the problem (Westheimer, 1999). Despite such troubles Sergiovanni (1994) among many others argues unequivocally for educators and scholars to replace the model and metaphor of school as organization with that of community.

The purpose of this field study is to pursue the task of clarifying understanding of schools as communities through describing and analyzing the work of teachers in two elementary schools in Washington State with large student enrollments from traditionally underserved populations that have evidenced significant increases in academic achievement. Specifically, data were collected to address the following research questions: (a) What are the ways teachers share decisions related to teaching and learning? (b) How do teachers understand and experience autonomy as contributing to their practice? and (c) How do teachers understand and experience professional community as contributing to their practice?

The chapter that follows describes the research methods that were used for gathering, managing, and analyzing the data that addressed these questions and purpose.

Issues pertinent to self as instrument have been threaded throughout this discussion as appropriate, for I endeavored to attend to my biases and the influence of subjectivity in site selection, data gathering activities, and data analysis. Nevertheless, there is a section that addresses several of these issues in particular, which follows sections on each of the mentioned topics. Following the presentation of site selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, and self as instrument sections a discussion of research ethics is offered. A brief summary is provided as conclusion.

Site Selection

As a superintendent and principal of a small rural school district, much of my work is on the front lines of daily classroom practice. I selected the research problem and questions as I wanted to further my knowledge of how to accommodate individual teacher preferences while building a professional community. The study presented a chance to observe teachers closely who were working collaboratively and see what that looked like as well as how strong teacher leadership was expressed in such a school. I hoped that the study would help me to learn more about building a school culture conducive to teacher leadership. In addition, I wanted to select schools that serve a student population similar to that of my present district. I believe that context is important in education. I felt if I was to take full advantage of this opportunity that the issues and concerns faced by teachers in the observed schools needed to reflect those kinds of things that happen in my district. Finally, I wanted the collaborating, decision making, and teaching that I observed to be connected in some way to student success. I wanted to select schools where the students and teachers were experiencing high levels of academic

achievement, at least as measured by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), which is the state's mandated assessment.

I began site selection process by discussing the procedures and criteria for determining schools with Dr. Gordon Gates, the chairperson of my dissertation committee. He shared recommendations based on his knowledge of schools in the state and the work of other doctoral students. To his recommendations I added similar deliberations with two other faculty members in the College of Education. I reviewed comparative assessment data from schools in Washington that served the targeted student demographic. Drawing on my work as a former regional coordinator for Migrant Education, I took into consideration my knowledge of districts serving high numbers of Latino students and the recommendations of colleagues in the Migrant Education Program. The final site selection was determined by the following criteria: the schools served a high percentage of Latino students and had a high poverty rate; the schools had improved student performance on the WASL and exhibited high levels of performance; and the sites were geographically accessible to support multiple visits. In addition, since the focus of the study was to better understand teacher collaboration and decision making, it seemed fruitful to conduct the study in both a small and a larger school system (Harmon, Gordanier, Henry, & George, 2007). Harmon et al., identify numerous differences in operations and control of educational organizations given their size and such contrast was thought would facilitate the analytical work of the study.

Description of Selected Sites

Ultimately two schools that fit the above criteria were identified. These schools, given the pseudonyms of Discovery and West Bend serve student populations with at

least fifty percent free and reduced lunch eligibility and at least forty percent Latino students. The two schools were selected from among those that exhibit greater than expected achievement as measured by the WASL when compared to schools with similar student populations. A description of school is offered to provide the particulars for each.

Discovery Elementary. Discovery is a K-5 school located in a small city in a predominantly agricultural area of the state of Washington. Discovery is one of several elementary schools in the Lakeshore School District. More than 60% of the students at Discovery are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. The student population is approximately 55% Latino, 40% White, and 5% other ethnic groups. The school enrolls more than 450 students and is served by a staff of 30 teachers. Upon entering the comfortable building, visitors are greeted by brightly decorated welcome signs and linguistic and graphic messages that reflect the cultures of the students who attend this public school.

Over the last ten years, the Lakeshore School District has been actively engaged in development of district wide goals, curriculum, and assessments. The district administrative team conducts visits to each school site twice during the year, reviewing the progress the site is making toward its goals and monitoring student achievement data. Discovery, like the other elementary schools in the district, tracks student performance on the WASL. Students are also monitored with district developed semi-annual assessments and classroom based assessments developed by grade level teams.

As faculty at Discovery worked toward implementation of the Lakeshore District goals, the principal and many of the teachers committed themselves to the development of a school wide model for student intervention and enrichment. Changes in staff and

curriculum during this period of time have focused on the development of greater congruence from classroom to classroom and grade level to grade level.

This attention to focused curriculum and instruction has been accompanied by improvements in student scores on state tests and to several state and national awards for the school, and/or various staff members. In an eight year period reading scores on the state assessment at the fourth grade level have increased from 45% of students meeting standard in 2000 to more than 70% meeting standard in 2007 for a gain of about 55%. Mathematics scores showed even greater gains with 20% of students meeting standard in 2000, increasing to a 2007 level of nearly 53% meeting standard.

West Bend Elementary. West Bend is a K-5 school located in a rural area of Washington. It is the only elementary school in a small K-12 school district. More than 80% of its students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The student enrollment is approximately 75% Hispanic, 20% White, and less than 5% other ethnicities. The school serves more than 300 students with a staff of about 20 teachers. As visitors enter the building a brightly colored display opposite the office boasts a national award the school recently received. This and several other state and national awards recognize the school and various staff members for their contribution to increased student achievement. In an eight year period reading scores on the state assessment at the fourth grade level increased from 30% of students meeting standard in 2000 to 65% in 2007 for more than a 100% improvement. Mathematics scores in 2000 were below 10% of students meeting standard. By 2007 nearly 40% of students were meeting standard in mathematics.

These gains and the school's recognition have come at a time when the school staff has been engaged in significant work in the area of school improvement. Failing to

make adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years, the school had fallen into mandated school improvement five years ago. As a result, state funds became available to support a school improvement facilitator who worked with the staff to examine learning and teaching in the building. The teachers met regularly over several months to articulate a school improvement plan and set goals for increased student achievement.

West Bend relied on the guidance of a state facilitator and ongoing relationships with regional consultants, state, and national representatives of several learning support programs, and trainers from publishing companies during this period. A structure for collaborative teacher teams was born out of this process.

Data Collection

After the schools were identified using the site selection process and criteria discussed previously, the principals at both schools were approached and given an explanation of the purposes of the study. These school leaders were acquainted with me as a fellow administrator and former regional specialist, and raised no concerns regarding the study. The administration at both schools granted access. The following procedures were used for data collection pertaining to participant selection, interviews, and field observations.

Participant selection. After access to the sites was secured, principals at both buildings were asked to identify teacher participants based on a theoretical sampling model that anticipated differences in perspective among various teachers (Lofland et al., 2006; Lortie, 1975; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Requests were made for at least two teachers from the primary level, grades kindergarten through second grade, and two from the intermediate level, grades third through fifth. The criteria also included a request for

at least two teachers with less than ten year's experience and at least two with more than fifteen year's experience. Finally, the request was made to name teachers who were active in the school improvement process in the building and names of others who were not active. In addition to the request for names, I also identified teacher participants for inclusion in the study through the process of field observation.

Interviews. Seven teachers were selected at Discovery and another seven at West Bend Schools for formal interview given their nomination by their principals. Teachers identified by their administrators were sent emails introducing me as a researcher and graduate student, identifying my interest in their teaching practice, and inviting them to participate. In addition, through the course of making observations, attending collaborative meetings, and visiting with staff, I spoke with and invited an additional nine teachers at West Bend and five teachers at Discovery to participate in the study. While I was observing, I looked for teachers who might express or display a different perspective of the school improvement process than that shared by the respondents who had been identified by their principal.

The teachers participating in the study were drawn from a variety of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. Of those formally interviewed, five of the teachers at Discovery had been teaching for less than ten years while four had more than 15 year's experience. Four of West Bend's teachers had less than 10 year's experience, two had between 10 and fifteen years and three had more than 15 year's experience. The teachers also represented a diversity of grade levels. Five West Bend teachers served students in intermediate grades, third through sixth. Four West Bend teachers served primary grades, kindergarten through second grade. One of the West Bend teachers served as a part time

instructional coach as well. Of those formally interviewed, three Discovery teachers served intermediate grades, four served primary grades and two had job assignments that crossed grade levels.

All these teachers were involved in collaborative teams in their buildings, since every teacher in the two buildings met for grade level collaboration at least weekly. All West Bend teachers were members of at least one curriculum team as well. The selected Discovery teachers all indicated that they were active in at least one collaborative team with building or district level curriculum focus. While initially, I had requested to speak with teachers who were not participating in formal curriculum committees, I found that this was not possible because both buildings typically include all teachers in collaborative teams.

Formal interviews were also conducted with the principals of the two buildings. Both principals had less than two year's experience as principal of their respective buildings. However, each had been previously associated with the school district for more than five years and was familiar with the school prior to assuming responsibilities as principal. Therefore, a total of thirty primary participants, both teachers and administrators, were included in the study.

The interview protocol for the project was developed during a pilot study at West Bend Elementary. The protocol was developed based on themes that emerged during a literature review of teacher leadership. A copy of the guide is included in the appendix of this report. The interview guide began with an open ended question to allow the researcher and the respondent to become better acquainted and to establish the interview partnership (Weiss, 1994). The first section of the interview protocol contained questions

about these teachers' context. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) discuss the place of the classroom and the leadership of students as the essential components of teacher leadership. The interview guide was organized to allow the respondent to share perspectives regarding this setting. The remainder of the interview guide asked teachers to reflect upon their teaching practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995; Howey, 1988; Lortie, 1975; Parkay, Shindler, & Oaks, 1997), relationships with colleagues (Blasé & Blasé, 1997; Boyd & Crowson, 2002; Griffin, 1995; Westheimer, 1999), and professional development opportunities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Reitzug, 1994; Riehl, 1998, Starratt, 2003). These were chosen to explore common themes related to school improvement.

The interview questions were designed to introduce a theme and allow the respondent to determine the direction of the response. The guidance of the protocol was a necessary reminder to the researcher as I found it difficult to discipline my interview procedure to avoid directional questioning. The guide was a valuable tool reminding me to ask open ended questions and to allow the respondent to set the direction of the response.

During the pilot study, respondents most often referenced their own classroom experiences, often discussing these from a technical perspective. To better understand their preferences and priorities, a prompt was added to encourage teachers to discuss the aspects of their work that they found rewarding (Lortie, 1975). This theme provided a greater understanding of the teacher's style and provided a fuller context in which to frame the teacher's practice.

Questions were also added to further prompt respondents in the areas of collaboration and professional development. The pilot study revealed that the prompts for professional development and professional practices were sometimes answered with lists of activities or scheduled meetings. For this reason, these sections were expanded to include more specific questions regarding shared planning and responsibilities.

Field observations. The study was designed to include data collected from observations at both West Bend and Discovery Schools. School life is replete with social interaction: teachers to students, teachers to teachers, administrators to teachers, patrons to teachers and so on. For this reason, I chose to add observed behaviors to the record of accumulated data that were contained in interview transcripts about these teachers' professional role within the school community. This process was accomplished by means of recorded fieldnotes.

I conducted observations in classrooms, staff rooms and public areas on each of my four site visits to West Bend. I attended five collaborative meetings and made extended observations in four classrooms. These visits were spread out in the academic year and included a fall visit, one winter visit and two spring visits.

I conducted seven site visits to the Discovery School, made observations in classrooms, the staff room, the office, the library and hallways. These visits included five collaborative meetings, and multiple informal conversations and classroom observations. In addition I attended a regional meeting where the Discovery staff made a formal presentation of their school improvement work. The site visits were made in the fall, in late winter and in early spring.

When observing in the school setting, I gave particular attention to interactions between individuals, seeking to identify the purpose of the interaction, who initiated it, and the apparent relationship of the participants. These observations were recorded in handwritten jottings in a simple notebook that served as reminders of the event. One site visit would yield many such events. These jottings were then converted into more extensive descriptions of the interactions as soon as I left the school site (Emerson et al., 1995). During the evening following a school visit, several hours were devoted to completing these field notes.

In taking jottings and in the later development of field notes, I made a conscious effort to describe the events as they were evident in observation, leaving judgments and reflections out of the notes themselves. These latter perspectives were summarized in separate memos or sidebars to the notes, either as the notes were developed or much later during the process of analysis. This method allowed me to perceive the interaction in closer context to the way it presented itself without consciously attaching meaning at the site.

Although attempts were made to avoid overt evaluation of events, no observer can eliminate her own biases and perspectives from the observation process. In the choice of what to note and what to overlook, for example, observer judgment is evident (Emerson et al., 1995). With this in mind, I made every effort to mindfully consider what I prioritized for documentation. As discussed above, I gave conscious attention to interactions, particularly to interactions between teachers. This focus supported the research purpose to describe the work of teachers with regard to school improvement giving attention to leadership, collaboration, and autonomy in the context of this work.

Data Analysis

The data, once transcribed or expanded into detailed field notes were coded using an open coding process (Emerson et al., 1995). Topics were selected based on themes in the text. Once the transcripts were coded, I reviewed these codes by reading the marginal notes and looking for common topics that might provide structure for the analysis process.

In reading and reflecting on the materials generated, I asked myself several questions. Do the selected quotations support the focused code? What is the quote saying? Do the articulated focused codes reflect the breadth of the information gathered? Is there a unifying theme that ties the data together? Throughout this process the analysis was guided by the overriding question: what patterns am I seeing in these themes? In reading the excerpt files, it became evident that respondents, although they were addressing similar issues, were speaking of these issues from diverse vantage points. Some of these teachers' practices appeared to be primarily guided by district or state requirements while others seemed to be the outgrowth of a kind of collaborative inquiry.

Initially four topics emerged as possible areas of interest: collaboration, expressions of autonomy, professional development, and rewards. These became the initial focused codes that began to shape the analytic process (Emerson et al., 1995). These themes were related to the research topic and consistent with theoretical assumptions (Lortie, 1975; Scribner et al., 2002; Weiss, 1994). Once these focused codes were identified I proceeded to organize selected quotations into excerpt files (Weiss). As I reviewed the excerpt files and reread transcripts, three additional focused codes were added: administrative role, student achievement, and time constraints.

To explore these themes further, I reread the professional literature that had guided the articulation of the research questions, and dialoged with my dissertation chairperson. These reflections resulted in the draft of a model which posited a polarity between autonomy and community and which described seven levels of relationship between the two. This early model served as a mini-theory that suggested closer alignment of the individual and community as the focus of inquiry into educational practices increased (Weiss, 1994).

Using this early model as a guide, data were sorted into codes describing various teacher practices. To test the fit of the data to the emerging model, I noted various teacher practices on color coded cards. These cards were arranged according to school and teacher assignment then sorted by teaching practice. The resulting visual display supported the conclusion that although all teachers were engaged in a variety of practices, certain teacher groups were more heavily represented than others in certain practices.

This analysis was tested in conversations with my chairperson and with a peer. With their assistance, several areas of weakness were identified. Chief among these was the difficulty of representing autonomy and community as a polarity. A review of literature on the subject of community supported the view that community was the context for interaction between the self and others and not the antithesis to autonomy. With assistance from my chairperson, the model was changed to describe the heteronomy of others and the autonomy of each individual within the collective community.

A qualitative researcher and friend suggested that the model did not so much describe a parallel polarity as it seemed to him to be a funnel moving from opposing positions toward a common focus. His recommendation led to the description of the

model as an alignment or convergence between autonomous and heteronomous interests.

The test of this refined model came as I reviewed transcripts and resorted excerpt files to test the fit between the new model and the data. The model appeared to support Weiss' (1994) description of the finishing phase of analytic work. "By the end of the analysis phase the investigator should more and more see the data fitting into already established codes" (p. 156). As I submitted the model to the same analytic questions mentioned above, the data readily corresponded to the refined codes.

Self as Instrument

As I engaged in data gathering, I reflected on what I was seeing and hearing in light of my current experiences, as well as drawing on my professional background. That background includes ten years' experience as a classroom teacher, and the opportunity to work with hundreds of teachers as a regional specialist for an ESD. Furthermore, in my current administrative assignment I have daily interaction with teachers. These connections to the classroom have focused my interest in the topic of the present study. In multiple conversations with teachers, it has seemed to me that a tension is described between district, state and nationally mandated educational practices, and the expression of individual styles and professional preferences. Many of these conversations have taken place around family gatherings. My mother is a retired school teacher, and various cousins, in-laws, and other relatives are teachers as well. As the only administrator in the family, I have tried to remain in touch with the teacher perspective.

The temptation for any administrator is to approach teaching from a systems perspective. Technical questions like class size, hours, contracts and compensation can overshadow the reality of day to day interactions with students and parents. During the

present study, I worked to focus my data gathering on the aspects of the teaching craft that dominate so much of teachers' work. To understand the role of autonomy in teachers' choices I included questions in the interview protocol regarding teachers' desires for their students, what the teachers found fulfilling and the nature of the challenges they faced. I also sought to understand who they relied on for expertise and how they encountered and used that expertise (Lortie, 1975).

In reflecting on my perspective of the place of teacher autonomy in the educational community, I recalled my own experiences as a teacher. I often felt frustrated by a lack of clear direction and targets. It seemed that I was left alone to select materials, plan activities, decide how to assess student learning and create a system for reporting grades and accountability. I frequently felt uncertain about my students' skills and my instructional decisions. This feeling was perhaps more pronounced because approximately half of my years in the classroom were spent as a resource teacher for English language learners. Since my students were assigned to English as a Second Language Class as either an alternative to, or supplement for, traditional core courses in language arts and English, I did not have teaching colleagues who were working with the same curriculum, nor did I have a district mandated curriculum. As a regional specialist at an ESD, I often interacted with teachers in similar circumstances who received little curriculum guidance from their districts.

I have witnessed the less than remarkable success of my own students and that of the students of other teachers that I have assisted in a regional capacity. These experiences have influenced my belief that teachers need clearly articulated targets,

measurable goals, and a supportive team of colleagues with whom to explore instructional options.

Early in the process of data analysis for this study, a conversation between myself and Gordon Gates provided an opportunity for me to explore my bias toward clearly articulated goals and collaborative teaching. At a pivotal point in that conversation he asked me what impact greater teacher autonomy over the instructional process would have on professionalism in teaching. I answered that the greater the autonomy the less the professionalism. He indicated that he would answer with the opposite perspective.

I reflected for some time on why he and I perceived this issue differently. At length, I determined that my experience with teacher autonomy had been grounded in conservative, repetitive practices. Guiding principles for this kind of autonomy had been "what we've always done," or "what's available," or even "what's easy to do." Gordon's perspective of autonomy appeared to derive from a regard for academic inquiry. It seemed that he focused on an autonomy grounded in a scholar's desire to explore greater understanding and alternative interpretation. In the latter context, a closely prescribed curriculum eliminates broader understanding. In the former, such a curriculum has the potential to turn the practitioner toward greater alignment with researched practices and an expanded perspective of instructional alternatives.

This reflective process made me aware of my bias in favor of a heteronomous expression of curriculum, assessment and instruction. The relative isolation that I had experienced as a teacher encouraged me to seek a community of colleagues and instructional practices that reflected the collective wisdom of that community.

Having identified this bias, I considered the autonomy/heteronomy question from the opposite perspective. What were the implications of externally mandated requirements on a teacher who consistently sought instructional improvement and who had long been in touch with others who shared a passion for her craft? For such teachers, external mandates might indeed limit the capacity to engage in professional practice. These early reflections became the focus of the data analysis. Having identified my own perspectives, I returned to the collected data to consider the implications from both the individual and the collective perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

The research study was originally approved on October 7, 2005 by the Washington State University Institutional Review Board which verified that the research protocol offered protection to participating subjects. This approval was continually renewed throughout the study and extends to September 22, 2008.

The principals of both schools selected as research sites gave both oral and written permission for research to be conducted. These principals as well as the teachers who were interviewed signed consent forms which included a general description of the study, the promise of confidentiality, and information regarding the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. As the research was underway, these protections were reemphasized orally as I observed in the school environment and made casual contact with staff members that were unfamiliar with the project or its purpose.

To protect confidentiality, all names of people and places included in the research have been changed. Care was taken to remove specific information that might identify the

schools or individuals who participated. For this reason, some details regarding professional position or role has been obscured or altered to protect confidentiality.

During the course of the research, questions from one participant regarding the perspectives or thoughts of another participant were redirected to focus on the general scope of the study. This served the purpose of protecting the confidentiality of information shared in the data collection process. It also provided the opportunity for me to share early reflections of the general themes that were emerging in the data gathering process and to check with the inquisitive participant for perceptions of those themes (Glesne, 2006).

An important consideration in the research process is to ensure that participants are not harmed as a result of their participation in the research. Since the project was conducted in a public place risks associated with the study were minimal. It is possible that some participants experienced some inconvenience with regard to scheduling. Every effort was made to alleviate this concern by offering interview times during the school day or at alternative times as preferred by the participant. Some social pressures may have occurred with regard to peer relationships. For example, it is possible that a teacher could have felt that participation had singled him out either as an exemplary teacher or as one needing improvement. Though these concerns were not expressed by any participants, effort was taken to lessen this type of concern. Interviews and observations included multiple participants with a variety of job assignments and experiences. Expressions of gratitude and positive comments regarding interesting and helpful experiences were included in every interaction. Statements that would evaluate performance or make judgments were avoided both on site and in the final report.

Since I work as a school administrator, it was important to approach the research task from the perspective of a teacher. The hierarchy of school governance could have either overtly or inadvertently created an imbalance of power in the researcher participant relationship. While it may not have been possible to completely overcome this difficulty, every effort was made to communicate dignity and respect to each participant. This process included listening carefully and reflecting an empathetic understanding of the information being shared. In the analysis of the collected data, I consciously worked to perceive the data from the vantage point of the teacher and the classroom. Recognizing particularly the multiple expectations that have been placed on teachers, I sought to understand the various observed practices from the perspective of professionals who are facing rapid changes and accelerating accountability. This perspective helped me to relate to the shared challenges faced by all educators in these times of school improvement.

Because some of the research participants were acquaintances of mine prior to the study, I took care to clarify my role as a researcher and to emphasize the confidentiality of the information shared. There was no apparent evidence that participants shared information with me which might not have been shared in the absence of our acquaintance. Nevertheless, as with any informant, when information that might prove embarrassing or harmful to the participant was shared, I took care to either avoid its use in the final report or to ensure that it was presented without context that would link it to the participant, even by others at the site who might read the report.

A final ethical consideration is that of the potential benefits of the research study. Though the inconvenience or potential risks to participants in this kind of study may be minimal, it would be unethical to request participants' time and to extract their stories if

the purpose of such a study failed to promote positive outcomes and gain to the educational community. It is hoped that the most immediate gains were experienced by participants as they shared with a researcher. Glesne (2006) reports that "by listening to participants carefully and seriously" the researcher honors the participant with a place of respect, and that "by providing opportunity to reflect on and voice answers to your questions you assist them to understand some aspect of themselves better" (p. 143).

Beyond consideration of the benefits to the individual, it is hoped that the larger educational community will gain by the study as well. The research topic addressed the tensions between individual freedom and community relationships. If this report furthers the educational dialog toward greater interdependence it will make a contribution toward improvement of that community.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods used to select participating sites, to gain access to these sites and to select participants. Consideration was given to the role of the researcher. The process of data collection and analysis of these data was described. Finally, a discussion of the ethical safeguards and implications of the study were considered. In the next chapter we will examine the collected data and consider the implications of these data for educational practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOL COMMUNITY

School reformers call for greater teacher participation in school decision making via leveling organizational hierarchy and implementing collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2005). The argument for change hinges on schools becoming places were professionals work as members of a community to improve the academic achievement of students. Yet as teachers and administrators design and implement instruction that supports equity and increases student performance they have encountered conflict and constraint associated with teacher autonomy (Scribner et al., 2002) particularly as it interacts with policies set forth on teacher evaluation (Valli et al., 2007), district, state, and federal mandates (Crocco & Costigan, 2007), and bureaucracy (Wood, 2007) to name but a few. Westheimer (1999), Bushnell (2001), and Gates (2005) identify and examine weaknesses with school community's sentimentalism, idealism, and elitism. The purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to this ongoing development of school community scholarship.

Chapter four offers the findings from the study and begins with a description of teachers' practices that emerged through analysis of interview and observational data collected at West Bend and Discovery. The practices were organized into a typology to address the first research question about the ways teachers collaborate and share decision making related to teaching and learning. Specifically, three practices labeled emergent, congruent, and aligned are described and examples from the data provided. The chapter then proceeds to discuss a model depicting the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy that became evident through the process of coding, examining negative

cases, and triangulating evidence for the three practices. The model speaks to the second and third research questions that ask how teachers understand and experience autonomy and professional community as contributing to their work of teaching students.

A Typology of Teacher Practices

The process of coding teacher interview and observational data generated a lengthy list of teacher beliefs, values, norms, relationships, and behaviors as relevant to collaborative inquiry and shared decision making. Codes were sorted, grouped, and examined for underlying characteristics or attributes that differentiated or placed codes with like cases. Ultimately, three kinds of practices titled emergent, congruent, and aligned were identified. These three teacher practices were defined by four attributes labeled focus, expertise, structure, and process. The resulting typology presented in Table 1 *Teacher Practices in School Community* was both exclusive and exhaustive of the beliefs, values, norms, relationships, and behaviors present in the data.

Table 1.

Teacher Practices in School Community

	Focus	Expertise	Structure	Process
Emergent	Following	Directed by protocols	Elemental	Palpitated
Congruent	Inquiring	Discussion with experts	Interrelated	Arrhythmic
Aligned	Researching	Dialog within community	Circular	Continuous

Emergent Practices

The teachers at West Bend and Discovery generally expressed and acted in ways that demonstrated support for the reforms taking place in their schools. A main feature of the ongoing improvement in both buildings was implementation of district mandated

curriculum and integration of state learning standards into lessons. Faculty used a common curriculum in several subjects and they met either weekly or semi-weekly to coordinate their teaching. Teachers in both buildings were modifying their instruction and advancing their professional development as defined or necessitated by the adopted district protocols.

Focus. Improvement in both schools was explicitly organized around district and state mandates. Teachers were observed struggling with the question of "What does the district want us to do?" Determining how or in what ways classroom practices were to reflect the requirements guided much of their efforts.

> It's not - you can get a book and look at the curriculum and have fun with it without a purpose. Everything, you know why. Everything you do you have to get something out of it. Before teachers would have fun with a lesson. Thinking you were writing but you didn't know exactly what you were doing....So now the teaching is more directed. (Discovery teacher)

> I did think with our reading grant sometimes we get too heavily focused on what the grant wants us to do and we sometimes lose sight putting some of that fun into the kids. Fortunately for our math curriculum we have so many great things we do that kind of balances out some times you know. I remember thinking in Harcourt this ninety minute block when I was teaching Harcourt there were so many little things that I wanted to do but I couldn't because it wasn't in requirements of that ninety minutes. (West Bend teacher)

The work of pacing and modifying lessons to follow mandates and programs was most evident during the weekly or semi-weekly teacher grade level meetings, as well as

in daily lesson planning. At West Bend and Discovery teachers were provided times during the school day to confer and engage in lesson planning. The following field notes recorded my observations at one of the weekly meetings at Discovery.

> Teachers are discussing money and practice for kids. Diana uses this everyday in Math Minutes. Helen seems to be using it less often in Math Minutes. Charlie points out that the assessment only calls for students to name the coins and the value of the coin, not to add up change…. As math conversation goes on, Diana often says "yea" or "nay" to various parts of upcoming lessons. Both teachers seem very familiar with the curriculum materials. Helen generally agrees with Diana's choices….At one point Diana hesitates to bring it up, Helen encourages her to do so, Diana says she wants to use her own idea for a center in math class not the Math Destinations one. Helen supports her. Helen remarks to me, "Sometimes you really want to practice the concept in a way that is different than the book." Both Helen and Diana express concern about being behind in math.

The district adopted math curriculum in both districts exhibited clearly defined scope and sequence of materials which necessitated teachers' attention, but other subjects too evidenced restrictions in teacher choice. For example, a scripted reading program had been in place in West Bend for several years. Teachers, however, were observed crafting during their weekly collaboration and daily planning times alternative activities to adjust materials to student need. Through these practices, teachers appeared to be balancing or adjusting their interests and understanding of students in their classrooms with those defined by the district or state.

> We have a very - our reading curriculum is very scripted, very laid out for what we need to cover so usually when I finish a unit I sit down and write out my lesson plans. I do have some adjustments I can make to it. How much, how long I'm going to take to do a unit, so based on student needs, how that group has been working, I can set it up as a three day, four day, six day, however many days I have in supplemental activities. So I base it on what they have learned already, how quickly they're learning. (West Bend primary teacher)

The focus of emergent practices was largely about following district articulated curriculum in the core academic subjects. While some minor variations were evident—manifesting a subtle tug of war over authority, expectations, and norms—curriculum guides and programs maintained teacher attention to district goals and procedures.

Expertise. While outside consultants were referenced as providing expertise to teachers, the dominant influence or source of authority for practices labeled emergent appeared to rest with the district. An instructional coach at Discovery indicated that teachers worked with her to interpret district expectations and adoptions. She described an interaction with a teacher who wished to modify the district's writing curriculum. She explained that he was,

> phenomenal in writing because of his voice….His ability to write in a humorous fashion, beautiful. His main question to me was, "Donna, do I have to stick to [the district curriculum]?" My word to him was that within that classroom….he could give them a gift that year. He could give them the gift of humor in their writing. They can very well go to [the next] grade and be taught [the district curriculum]

without humor but at least for one year they had been given permission to put humor in their writing.

Expertise evident in emergent practice depended on a flow of information and training coming from the school district and was focused on the district curriculum.

> We do have professional development through the school district...I belong to the math articulation team so we go to meetings at the district and we talk about the math program.…we come back to the school and spread the news, and if teachers have concerns about anything in math they send them to us and we talk to the district." (Discovery primary teacher)

Teachers at West Bend also talked about practices where deference to the district was exhibited. Jessie Gibson, explained that she and her colleagues exercised latitude in some areas while following clear guidelines in others.

> We have some philosophies that are different…Kim, for instance, does a read aloud which I always used to do, but I'm not finding time for it. And I do spelling and she doesn't do spelling....And Don didn't for the first half of the year and then he started doing it again. I don't know what he is using.…We had adopted a spelling and that kind of got dropped when we did spelling with the reading program.

When asked why teachers have autonomy over spelling but not, for example, mathematics, Gibson elaborated. "Because the adoption ran out. Because it was included in the reading. Now it can't be included in the reading and nothing new has been adopted. So that's an option.…Math is pretty well regimented. Science is adopted. Reading is adopted. Writing we have an adoption."

Teacher comments also revealed a high degree of acquiescence even when they were concerned about the direction of the program—whether pertaining to the instructional strategies used, sequencing of materials, or expectations of students. For example, a West Bend teacher discussed her problems but said, "Well, I've mentioned it to our reading coaches and they say, 'Well, this is what the reading grant tells us we need to be doing. This is what the state tells us we need to do.' I'm hoping it will get revised sometime because I don't want kids to hate reading and think it is a chore."

Emergent practices were characterized by the expertise or authority granted to the district. Teachers could agree, disagree, or have no opinion on the curriculum but everyone was clear or asking for clarity on the expectations. Teachers were not necessarily following district mandates to the letter. When challenging the district, their labor could be defined as that of feasible compromise. District personnel provided coaching, data support, and peer training to support and maintain the focus of classroom curriculum and instruction on district targets.

Structure. Emergent practices were structured by clear, specific targets and procedures. At both West Bend and Discovery these targeted subjects included reading, mathematics, and science. Those elements of the curriculum that were prioritized by the district were carefully articulated and monitored. "We have our GLEs, our state ones, those are our big goals and then our district that has the curriculum they develop so we kind of have clear steps on lessons and things like that" (Discovery primary teacher). And when transparency was lacking, teachers reported, "There are new things that the district is asking us to do and sometimes we don't understand exactly what they want but when

we work together…we clarify and we try the things they are asking us to do in the classroom" (Discovery primary teacher).

In Discovery, the district had developed its own accountability system with continuous analysis of data on student progress. Teacher, Carmen Mendoza, explained her role in supporting data management for the district. "We go in the computer and we check that your data are there and if we cannot find your data, then we talk to you and we tell you what to do and then we compile all the data in one graph and give it back to you....I just go and say, 'Do you need any help?'"

During teacher collaboration time, much attention was given to calibrating and aligning lessons to the guides and programs adopted by the district.

> Usually we start with the math. There are two portions to the math. There is what we call Math Minutes and that's just about a half hour a day where we are practicing skills….The other portion is called Math Destinations and at the moment we are studying different kinds of [animals]. We're measuring strings to see how tall those [animals] are using hands, to see how heavy they are, and all kinds of facts about those [animals]….We'll look at where we all got to….So we kind of recalibrate and say, okay we only got this far. We need to back up a little bit. The Math Minutes goes right along pretty well every day. It's the big [animal] unit that we often get behind. We kind of look at each other, how did this go, how did that go? (West Bend primary teacher)

The nature of teacher activity in these practices appeared piecemealed. Trying to keep students on pace with the lessons contributed to this elemental approach of constantly examining short term concerns and patterns in student responses and making adjustments

rather than engaging in holistic assessment of student learning. “We’ve worked out a system that works very well for us. We test the kids, what the kids need, give it to the kids. Did they get it? Didn’t they get it? What are we going to do about it?” (Discovery intermediate teacher).

The partiality of emergent practices was observed not just in what it was that was being worked on but how teachers worked together. This was particularly pronounced in teacher talk about their early improvement efforts. For example, West Bend teacher, Mary Lange, stated “I think even when we didn’t have that collaboration time I was seeking out *some* people to talk things out with. Now it’s easier to get that collaboration time and then it does bring other teachers in who might not have collaborated with us that much.”

Emergent practices tended to demonstrate compartmentalized action. The district required data and targets were handled in ways that conveyed that issues or concerns were self-evident and tended not to be treated systemically, but rather in an isolated or elemental manner. The district employment of a structure that involved teaching this curriculum, using that test, reporting these data was seen as facilitating this outlook.

Process. Teachers were regularly involved in training to use and teach with district adopted programs, spending time in collaboration with colleagues to ensure that mandates were being followed, and examining student data from benchmark assessments. Yet, form rather than substance appeared to be paramount in emergent practices. Emergent practices can be described as palpitated given that they tended to be frequent and tenuous in terms of how teachers viewed their function.

> You know, the truth is, it really started with math. When I first started teaching [this] grade….I just kind of followed the math curriculum and what would come out of it and by that, probably, March or April I was very frustrated with that because I didn't feel like my students were doing as well as I wanted. (Discovery teacher)

The multitude of demands on teachers' time entailed difficulties for giving full attention to following what were essentially district mandated programs. Discovery instructional coach Donna Willis described her desire to engage in a comprehensive process for curriculum development.

> Donna Willis: I had taught with two other teachers and we had done spelling the same way all three years because that was what it was. Teacher A left, myself and teacher C were together to do it just that way again. New teacher A comes in and "I don't like the spelling program. I'm doing something different." Tension, jealousy, frustration....
>
> Interviewer: Any clues on overcoming those obstacles?
>
> Donna Willis: Well, in the end, just swallowing self. You know…you've got so much coming at you as a teacher in reality…. I think there was something like that, some training with our collaboration *we would agree to try this for a little bit* and then come together and see how it works.

In West Bend, teachers were involved in the selection of the reading program. The district had received a grant which resulted in constraints that had to be attended. Bob Conway offered these remarks about the process, "Initially there were a lot of issues we had to talk about and we had to narrow down and we were just going to talk about this

one issue this time and make sure we knew what we're talking about and not taking any bunny trails." His comments of "making sure we knew" and "bunny trails" point to a process bogged down by irrelevant concerns. Here an effort was being made to prevent the form of participation from getting in the way of substance.

In summary, emergent practices were those in which teacher behavior or comments evidenced a high degree of conformity to district directed improvement. Teacher work was organized around following or modifying as appropriate curriculum guides and targets. The degree of monitoring and sanctioning, either positively or negatively, clear and measurable targets encouraged teachers to seek assistance and training. Lesson plans were modified to fit approved programs in ways that evidenced a piecemeal even transactional approach to change. School improvement activities that were labeled emergent, therefore tended to occur with high frequency but low intensity. This is not to suggest that teachers did not possess strong feelings about some of these practices—both positively and negatively. The lack of intensity noted in these practices references the interrupted and fragmented qualities in their focus, expertise, structure and process.

Congruent Practices

The process of analyzing data gathered at West Bend and Discovery also identified a set of practices that were labeled congruent, which were seen as possessing an expanded, more internally focused purpose than that of adherence to district policies and procedures. In these practices, like those of emergent practices, teachers referenced district requirements. However, a professional interest or curiosity was evident in these practices, which was not present in those of emergent. Teachers were looking at their

school districts' curriculum guides or adopted programs to learn about teaching and learning. While supporting district efforts for school improvement, they engaged in a quest for increased student achievement that drew from resources both inside and outside their local schools. Their work can be described as congruent to that of their districts since both were searching for ways to improve student outcomes.

Focus. "We've all jumped on board and said, 'OK, if this is best for kids.…This is how we operate. This is our business'" (West Bend primary teacher). Congruent practices were those that were guided by the question "What is best for kids?" for the focus of this question led them into active inquiry. Teachers in both schools described their desire to learn more about their students and to adopt teaching practices that supported student success.

Teachers were working together to implement "best practices." Through this inquiry they were developing common understandings and building interpersonal relationships. Bob Conway, an intermediate level teacher, described the unfolding work of inquiry in West Bend.

> Ever since I got here twelve years ago it seems like we had a long ways to go….Initially we had curriculum that was all over the spectrum. Everyone was kind of doing their own thing. As we went along we started narrowing it down, narrowing it down until we got all on board and everyone had one curriculum. When the committees started meeting there were a few issues we had to resolve but what was good was we really laid the ground work about when we're in the committee it's OK to disagree. Disagreement does not equal disloyalty. That was a big key right there. Just because you disagree doesn't mean you hate the school

> or you hate the person or you are disloyal to the school. That was a big key for all of the committees was that we talked about that it was OK to disagree. What we have to focus on is what is best for the kids.....We felt as a staff that we all wanted to be on the same page.

Being on the same page about what was best for students required time and energy. External requirements and appearances were not named as primary motivators. The impetus for teachers was internal. Kate Bailey stated, "I have very high expectations for myself. I love to learn and it's just my goal to be the very best teacher I can be" (Discovery fifth grade teacher). In addition, teachers expressed their commitment to finding ways to help their students perform academically.

> We want what's best for the kids… We go in and sit down and usually take up the lunch room and work on math and that's our big focus…. Looking at what we do so we can improve what they [the students] understand and can manage on a unit test. (West Bend intermediate teacher)

Expertise. The process of inquiry led teachers to engage in discussions with others that had expertise in the area of teaching and learning. This inquiry put teachers in touch with consultants, trainers, and curriculum publishers from outside the school. West Bend teachers described their reliance on trainers for assistance in the search for practices to better serve their students. "And that's a big part of school improvement, is having outside people coming in that really know their stuff. And observing and modeling and stuff like that" (Roger Collier, intermediate level teacher).

Teachers particularly expressed appreciation for the classroom level work these outside experts brought to the school. "We all had the benefit of having [the program

author and a trainer from the publisher]…with us the first couple years to help with our math. If they were here they would pop in and help us with our questions and things we needed to do" (Zoe O'Brian, primary level teacher). "Then we got our Math Destinations program for kindergarten and first grade and we brought in [a trainer and the program author from the publishing company]…they would come and work in the classrooms with us. It was really wonderful. (Mary Lange, primary level teacher).

The expertise of congruent practices was characterized by a discussion with experts from the state education office, the regional service center, and private publishers. A discussion involves an exchange of ideas and information. Outside experts brought new ideas and energized the teachers. "It was good because everyone came to the training and the money allowed us to bring in some bigger names who really knew what they were doing. They had our respect because they were nationally known. We weren't going to stand up and say, 'Ah, you're full of hooey'" (West Bend intermediate teacher). As the expertise of specialists enhanced the West Bend teacher's knowledge and skills, so the teachers provided classroom based insights to these consultants. Jessie Gibson, an intermediate level teacher at West Bend worked with the publishers of the district's mathematics curriculum to pilot new materials.

> I have also worked with [a consultant from the publisher] and I'll give him feedback and say, "Oh, this had only one problem in the whole unit. Why are you testing on that?" He'll say, "Then throw that out and we'll take that out of the test" They really do listen to us…..Like we did this one thing from last year and we got to this lesson this year, and I thought they wrote it so much better. I told [the consultant]. "Hey, that activity, that lesson challenge was really cool." They

> e-mailed me back and said, "Yes, you're the one that made that one up."….[It's] fun to be on the planning part of it. (West Bend intermediate teacher)

Teachers synthesized the information and skills they had learned from these specialists with their own reflections and incorporated new strategies into their classroom practices. Jessie Gibson described the collaborative work she and her grade level team did to enhance and extend a training in language arts.

> We were taking that final training together…and then when we bring it back to the classroom there is a lot of collaborating - sharing supplies, "How did you teach this?" "What were the questions you thought were important?" Like the one we are just starting….They give you a KWL chart to do. Kids tend to…just throw generalizations up on it. They won't get specific enough. We're incorporating that but taking it up a notch and making it question and answer appropriate to more in depth kind of things.

Teachers gathered recommendations from specialists and considered these recommendations in light of their own needs and experience. The expertise of trainers was highly regarded and used to assist teachers who were struggling with a difference of opinion. "There were certain people…[including the] school improvement coordinator that really felt we should have done more with dual language, that we really explore that. There were a lot of teachers that [said]… 'Teach them English.'" Through reading the materials provided by the consultant, the decision was made not to pursue dual language as it was based on work with students in Canada.

Generally, teachers expressed confidence in the advice they had received from external specialists. And they sometimes adopted these experts' recommendations

wholeheartedly. At other times they reflected on the recommendations in light of their own experiences and implemented strategies that represented a synthesis of more than one perspective. In either case, the teacher's congruent practices were heavily influenced by discussion with experts.

Structure. Congruent practices were characterized by a mode of inquiry that demonstrated interrelatedness on several counts. As discussed previously, teachers depended on consultants and specialists to support and guide their work. Teachers also collaborated with their peers at each grade level, on committees, and in small groups. While collaboration was evident in emergent practices, the interaction that supported this work was generally linear—determined by district mandates and most often directed from the district to teachers. In congruent practices, teacher ownership translated into a more interrelated or osculating configuration of the work.

Teachers engaged in congruent practices took opportunities to learn from their peers and to maintain a discussion focused on professional development. Jessie Gibson praised the way the teachers worked together on the curriculum by dividing and delegating the work among the faculty. "If we had to align all the curriculum it would be really tough. But with collaborating we've managed a lot and we've adopted some really well aligned curriculum to the standard too and that helps….It also makes your job more fun….You don't feel so alone" (West Bend intermediate teacher).

The structure of congruent practices also emphasized this kind of mutual responsibility in the area of student learning. Zoe O'Brian a primary level teacher and member of the West Bend mathematics committee expressed her commitment to school wide achievement, "These kids are not just my kids. All the kids in the school are my

kids. I think a lot of us feel that way…when a kid comes up and shows what he knows, we have an understanding of what's going on and we can rejoice with them.…We take responsibility for all of our kids."

Congruent practices included connections with the West Bend community, with support staff and with teachers from every grade level. "We had lots of meetings with all the teachers, the para pros were invited, the community people invited, a big meeting here on Friday night and Saturday and we…did brainstorming and small groups where we discussed areas where we needed to improve" (West Bend primary teacher). "There was no vertical kind of awareness….that changed to where we all became aware more of what should be happening at the year before. What we're doing impacts [students] afterwards" (West Bend intermediate teacher).

Grade level meetings, curriculum teams, community forums, and classroom and school visitations are the framework of an interrelated structure to support congruent practices. The teachers engaged in these practices give substance to that framework through discussion with experts and commitment to student achievement.

Process. The process by which these teachers conducted their inquiry into "What's best for kids" was ongoing. Once committed to seek best practices, they referenced this focal point often. At times teachers indicted that their work together was progressing with common purpose and successful outcomes. "We're always knocking around – 'What do we do next?'... 'How do we set this up a notch?' 'How do we get the kids to do this better?' So we collaborate and get things going staff wise" (West Bend intermediate teacher). "Almost across the board all the math and reading and writing has increased. The entry knowledge with kids has increased....they know that the whole

school is working toward common improvement in everything" (West Bend intermediate teacher).

At other times teachers indicated that differences of opinion and differing rates of professional development made progress uneven. Their ongoing work toward improvement was not always smoothly choreographed. Having selected, figuratively speaking, the same sheet of music, these teachers occasionally stumbled with the rhythm of the melody.

> We used to pretty much work in our own classroom, do our own thing. You were given a set of books and that's what you taught from. Then when we went through the school improvement that helped our staff so much. It forced us to collaborate even though there were still people on staff who didn't want to and there were some curriculum adoptions that some people were not anxious to participate in. And in the past they might not have and wouldn't have been forced to. But in the school improvement we met enough times and did enough team working that it becomes the norm that you work together. (West Bend intermediate teacher)

Furthermore, teachers sometimes found the process of incorporating new strategies uncomfortable. Their commitment to finding the keys to student success assisted them in overcoming their reluctance. Margaret Young at Discovery described her response to a decision to include a new reading strategy this way.

> Then this year really the Corrective Reading program is kind of an uncomfortable change for me because it is very direct instruction…We know about, don't teach phonics in isolation. It's a bit of a leap of faith to try it and I just will see how it

goes. I keep going back to, it's not their only reading experience….It needs to be intensive and it's engaging but it is different for me. I feel a bit robotic.

Relying on discussions with experts for bringing about change also added to bumps and inconsistencies in the process. Experts were not always present when needed and when they were present they were not always needed.

"When we first started the school improvement process we decided that we would bring some of the big guns from around the nation for math and they have come in and assisted us and we focused on getting a curriculum that we could all use. Well, these people came in and....They were giving…input, coming in once a month, sitting down with the teachers, observing the teachers, saying that looks great, then demonstrating lessons for the teachers to observe themselves" (Bob Conway, intermediate level teacher).

Finally, even when there was strong support for adopted curriculum, differences of opinion occurred as to how it should best be implemented in specific situations. A primary teacher expressed her disagreement with the reading curriculum team's decision to prioritize the reading schedule over an enrichment activity. "We were talking about some assemblies that were going on in the morning and it interfered with reading switch by ten minutes and it was like, 'Oops, nope, those kids have to wait those ten minutes and then they can go to that assembly.'….as hard as these kids work, the ten minutes, they need to be doing that fun stuff."

Congruent practices demonstrated an arrhythmic pattern of change. Teachers engaged in these practices had made a commitment to a common inquiry. Nevertheless, they continued to perceive best practices from a variety of lenses. At times they worked

in harmony with colleagues, at other times their views and perspectives clashed. Ultimately, however, they expressed a commitment to work toward a shared interest in the success of their students. When difficulties arose, they refocused on their mutual purpose and redoubled their efforts.

> Almost all of the staff really gets along….And there were some struggles probably with me as much as anything with [another teacher], but we still, we're professional….Kind of just get your job done. But I think that part is just working with other people. And not everybody just gets along with everybody else and when you're paid, obviously you collaborate and stuff, you do it….The intent is to make things easier for the kids. (West Bend intermediate teacher)

In summary, congruent practices focused on inquiry into best practices. Guided by the question "What is best for kids?" these teachers sought expertise through dialog with experts. This work evidenced an interrelated structure to support collegial learning. Although the process of their work was sometimes arrhythmic, they refocused their attention to an ongoing commitment to increased achievement.

Aligned Practices

Among those teachers who I observed and interviewed, Discovery's fifth grade team stood out. While this team exhibited emergent and congruent practices described above, they distinguished themselves by doing what looked like congruent practices plus. The differences between congruent and what came to be called aligned practices may be degree and continuity. But there was also evidence of other things. And this discussion of Discovery's fifth grade team will endeavor to illustrate these differences.

Discovery's fifth grade team is made up of three classroom teachers, Bonnie Hayes, Kate Bailey, and Chris Gardner. This is a team that works closely with two specialists: Margaret Young and Donna Willis. Young and Willis provide support services and instructional coaching at Discovery. Hayes and Gardner began a close collaboration several years ago when they decided to pool their resources and planning time to coordinate mathematics interventions for struggling students. This early effort at coordination grew to include Bailey, a third teacher at the same grade level. While the beginning of their efforts focused on sharing support materials, the team soon moved to address every aspect of their professional work including setting learning targets, building schedules, developing assessments, intervening on behalf of troubled students, and establishing high expectations. Specialist Margaret Young emphasized the team's shift from technical planning as described in emergent practice.

> In the past….it was a planning time. It was a time to sit down [and figure out] "Where are you in the math text book and where am I?"...The collaboration that we started four or five years ago is not centered around specifically planning but bigger ideas with what we wanted to see happen with students. If I'm struggling working with a group of kids, or specific student, getting out the student work and looking at it and brainstorming ideas of what we have available to help this kid out. So some of it can work into planning but it's more the big picture.

Focus. The fifth grade team has taken the guiding question of congruent practice, "What is best for kids?' and tightened and refined it to specifically target strategies that overcome obstacles to student learning. With aligned practices the guiding question moved beyond inquiry and reliance on outside experts to research and development that

asks “What is the key to unlock the learning for every student?” Bonnie Hayes described the teams’ commitment to this focus.

> We want to see everyone of [our students] grow and when you’re determined and work really hard in trying to find that key to their learning and then it happens, it’s like the most motivating thing you can imagine…. I think that motivates us more than anything because when you have success it kind of breeds success. It pushes you harder because you know it’s possible.
>
> The main thing we are successful at doing is really being clear on what we are trying to teach and having clear goals and targets and also the fact that we research, we do our own professional development. We read like crazy to find what are the best practices, and then we try them and if they don’t work exactly like we want them to do sometimes we need to tweak things. We work on it and we don’t give up I guess is what it comes down to. We persevere. (Kate Bailey, fifth grade teacher)

Best practices are sought for and teachers do attend to student achievement. However, these comments convey something deeper. They suggest an internalization and ownership of their practice.

The team monitored student progress, communicated often with regard to student concerns, tested various ideas, and zeroed in on building their professional skill and knowledge. Margaret Young stated, “You know this is a part of…my job, is to be a little bit flexible and try things…. I think when I know better I do better.” Gardner described the change in team’s perspective this work had created. “We just used to go from unit to

unit and you didn't know if the kids got it or not and to check the reality that this thing works. Now we know who needs what."

The team carved out a half hour each day to differentiate interventions and share instruction between classrooms. During this time each teacher took a group of students that needed support in a specific area. For example, Gardner might work on math skills while Bailey supported struggling readers. Young would address yet a third learning need while Hayes offered an extension lesson for students who were doing well. These interventions are provided to flexible groups. The focus of the teaching changes with the needs of the various students.

> They'll get a double shot of anything really because they're getting things in the classroom. For example, if we feel a group needs more with summary, you know, it will be a lot of the lower kids. So they are getting summary in my class, but then they'll get a double shot of summary. But then next week they may be getting a double shot of multiplication strategy. It's whatever we find from assessment that they need. (Discovery fifth grade teacher)

Thus, the focus of aligned practices was on researching and developing ownership of instructional interventions and curriculum. These teachers were guided by the desire to refine their skills and knowledge of practices that would overcome barriers to student achievement. The faculty were supporting each other by integrating their work to find solutions to instructional challenges.

Expertise. The expertise of the team's aligned practices rested on dialog that looked much like that described by Schon's (1983) reflective practice and Palmer's (1998) community of truth. The fifth grade team was committed to finding,

implementing, and refining practices that unlock learning for each of their students. The teachers and the students were engaged in a daily exploration.

> We all know what we're good at…you do this and I'll do that and it works out really well….The five of us all work together to see what we can do to improve our teaching, to serve the kids the best way possible. That's our goal. It's to serve our kids and we just enjoy each other. We laugh with each other. We cry with each other. We support each other. (Discovery fifth grade teacher)

Congruent practices, with their reliance on discussions with outside experts, foreshadow the more holistic discourse evident in aligned practices. In contrast and extension, aligned practices incorporated the recommendations of outside experts and district mandates into the context of these teachers' professional conversation. Drawing on each teacher's unique talents, these educators also relied on literature, attended conferences, employed classroom action research, or held informal conversation among colleagues to strengthen the ongoing dialog involved in aligned practices.

> Two years ago, we really took a look at fluency and we went to a conference that talked about fluency being a very important predictor of academic achievement later on, not only in reading but also in math….So we decided to really study that so all of us in fifth grade did a book study with focus on fluency and breaking fluency apart into its individual components so that we were really clear about the different aspects of fluency, not just racing. So we did that and I did, as part of my master's [degree], I did an action research with fluency and afterwards we've seen some really good success with kids. (Discovery teacher)

The dialog and reflection within community shaped professional exchanges like those described in field notes from a fifth grade collaboration meeting.

> Chris brings in the notebook and begins writing notes, referencing conversation from the last meeting. Margaret asks about the "chunk and chew" strategy she used with her literacy class today. Did she introduce it too soon? The others say no, it is a strategy for the full year, use it any time. The group discusses mountain planning maps. Chris, Bonnie and Kate are all using these as a pre write tool for students. Chris talks about her students - especially some of the boys – who appear to be mapping too fast without the details they need for good writing. Bonnie suggests that Chris use mentor texts to model the mapping process. Kate recommends *Peter's Chair*, a model text she used with her class.
>
> Bonnie remarks that the mentor texts help students see the importance of details. She discusses the problem she had with students revealing too much information early in their writing when it would be more effective to save some detail for their story climax. The teachers talk about the book *Grandpa's Teeth* as a good model about keeping the secret until the end of the story. Chris shares strategies she has used with her students to set up characterization and setting before they begin their mountain maps. This seems to have helped many of her students. The discussion turns to reflection on what the teachers have learned about pacing and planning that needs to go on before students write.

Structure. The structure of interaction in the fifth grade team flowed in a circular fashion between teachers and reached out to include others. At times the district or state influenced the decisions these teachers were making. At other times, the teachers

themselves were the catalyst for change. The flow of information moved up and down the school hierarchy, and it moved in and out of the grade level team and the school. This circular structure required and maintained flexibility across classrooms and schedules. Gardner even discussed the inclusion of students themselves in the aligned practices. "Kids know what they know and what they don't know…. I'll tell the kids, 'We're going to have a group of kids that are going to be working on telling time. Is there anyone who would like to be in the group?' And there will be five or six hands will go up. They know that they need to work on telling time. It's pretty amazing really."

In a collaborative discussion, the three classroom teachers described the structure of their relationships with the school district and their influence on district practices. The following excerpt from field notes of that conversation highlights their work at the district level.

> I ask if the team has had an influence on district decisions and programs. They tell me that they have presented their writing to all fifth grades in the district. Specifically their literature based writing. Kate [Bailey] participated in state writing scoring and range finding. The fifth grade assisted in developing district anchor papers for writing. The team presented their work on spelling research to the district reading and writing articulation team. They tell me that they have also done substantial research on fluency and have worked with the district to increase emphasis on this. They have set their specific team goal for reading fluency for the past three years in a row. They have refined how to teach fluency and presented this as part of their [annual data summary report] to the district. The district is now building a plan to assess fluency across the district based on the

fifth grade team's work. This year they are among those taking a lead in looking into mathematics computation.

Bailey reported that the Lakeshore District looked to the fifth grade team for leadership.

> We get a lot of district administrators asking our opinion or looking at what we're doing….An example would be…we were at ASCD [conference]…and we wanted some material from them that had to do with spelling. We didn't know this, but the administrator from the district that was there had gone over to the person in charge of getting out materials, "Give these guys the materials they want because they're the ones we're looking at to lead the way." (Discovery fifth grade teacher)

By overcoming the isolation that fosters continued under-examination of practices these teachers crafted a discourse that advanced improvements in student learning and made opportunities to research and develop practices that broke through obstacles to student success. The structure of this conversation was circular, characterized by an open exchange of ideas between and among teachers, administrators, coaches, consultants, and students.

Process. The process of aligned practices is continuous. In contrast to the arrhythmic patterns of congruent practices, aligned practices worked in almost seamless coordination as teachers communicated frequently, both formally and informally. This coordination maintained a constant focus on improvement of instruction. The teachers' commitment to find the key to every students' learning inspired these teachers to be persistent in reviewing curriculum, refining instruction, and augmenting interventions.

Donna Willis described the ongoing nature of the fifth grade teams' interactions. "They work together constantly, not just in that little collaboration. They are in each other's rooms after school. They are in each other's rooms before school. They are planning together aside from the collaboration time....Many other [teachers], yes they collaborate at their lunchtime but then it's on their own." The fifth grade team shared planning, resources, ideas and duties. They met at officially scheduled times, before and after school, on weekends, holidays and summer vacations. One observer commented that this continual interaction ensured that the fifth grade team came to school prepared.

> So there's been prior planning. That maybe happens on the weekend. Many times it happens after school sitting in the hall, talking about the next lesson. Shared resources among the three of them. Once they get to school…they are in their individual rooms. However they are in close proximity of classrooms so you are constantly seeing the walk among the triangle, back and forth, back and forth. (Lakeshore District specialist)

The fifth grade team's collaboration took place throughout the school day. "When I'm with one teacher I will notice the others come in to check on things. So there is just that constant communication. Prep time is together. They've asked for their prep time to all be at the same time" (Discovery instructional coach).

As this team sought keys to learning for every student, the fifth grade teachers continually shared responsibilities, developed strategies, improved instruction, and drew out the skills of their students. As a community of truth (Palmer, 1998) these teachers were learning from each other and engaging in an ongoing dialog. The structure of this discourse was circular—learning passed from teacher to teacher, administrator to teacher,

teacher to administrator, school site to district and district to school site. The process of aligned practices was continuous, occurring in collaborative meetings, hallways, and classrooms. Innovations were as likely to be discussed over lunch as they were to come up in a strategic planning session. Breakthroughs might come up in a training session or during a brief exchange between class periods. These practitioners were making opportunities to further their commitment and discover new keys for opening success for every student.

Autonomy and Heteronomy in School Community: An Interpretation

Traditionally, teachers decided which knowledge, skills, and values to include in their classroom curriculum and instruction (Elmore, 2005; Ingersoll, 1994; Lortie, 1975). As such, restructuring processes frequently result in teachers and administrators working around one another, avoiding confrontation, but with each side seeking to gain the upper hand (Scribner, et al. 2002). Therefore, it was at first surprising that conflict in West Bend and Discovery was not more apparent. While it may be that participants were reluctant to report such views, references at both schools suggested recent changes in personnel as a more likely explanation. One Discovery teacher reported that the former principal had consistently filled vacancies with staff that possessed the skills to implement the adopted programs. Discovery's current principal also agreed, "Like I said, one of the things is that we have the teachers, I mean the right ones for the programs we are having." Several teachers in West Bend indicated that teachers who actively opposed the work of school improvement had chosen to move to other sites or had retired. With those who disagreed gone, one West Bend teacher explained that through the learning improvement process the staff had "built that kind of camaraderie." Participants at each

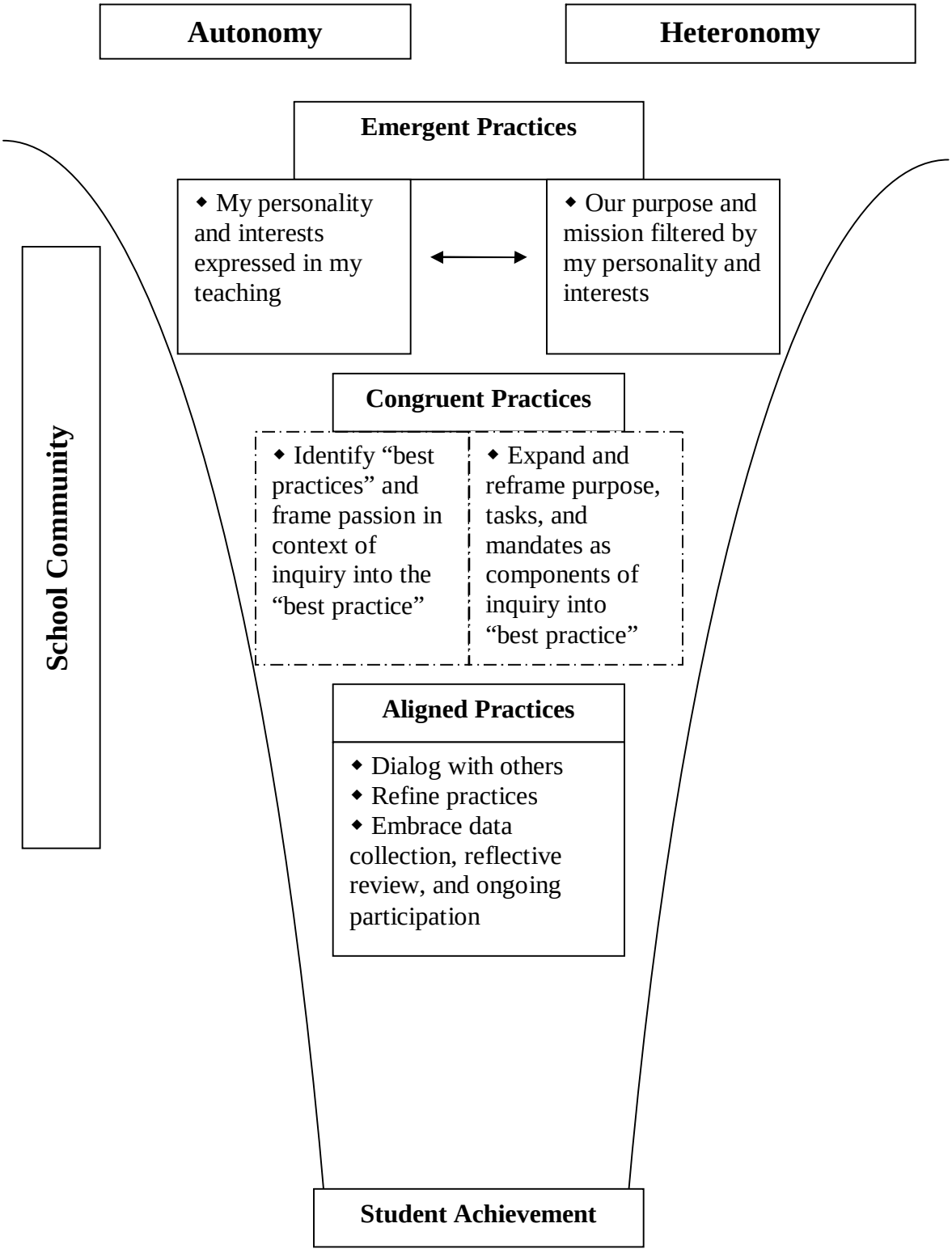
school reported that teachers and administrators worked together to set the direction for their work.

As data collection and analysis proceeded, it became clear that teachers participating in the study at both West Bend and Discovery were working with their colleagues. In both schools, individual teachers were collaborating with peers to support shared objectives and to respond to common expectations. In some cases, the teachers' shared experiences were primarily technical, as for example, when a team of teachers met to establish a timeline for the district adopted curricula, or to orient new staff members to approved instructional materials. These practices were those labeled emergent. In other cases it became evident that teachers were working together in service of some larger purpose. Teachers were committing time and creative energy for seeking out more information and forging new ways of doing things. While these teachers also worked together to pace the required curriculum, they extended their collaborative efforts to inquire into broader questions and formulate interventions to address student needs. These practices were labeled convergent and aligned.

In reflecting on the typology of teacher practices and the ways in which conflict, tension, and struggle were evident (e.g., present and absent, positive and negative expressions, individual and group, reform and traditional) a model of community arose that demonstrated a convergence of autonomy and heteronomy. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between the three types of teacher practices in school community and the place, function, or role of autonomy and heteronomy in community. The section that follows explains this interpretation with examples from the data.

Figure 1

Convergence of Autonomy and Heteronomy



Balancing in Emergent Practices

At West Bend and Discovery teachers were engaged in significant school reform efforts. There was much evidence of teacher interpretation at play whether teachers were implementing district mandates or sharing decision making. District policies specified that teachers teach this curriculum, use this test, report these data, and collaborate. However, scripts and programs were modified by personal touches, typically in minor ways.

Opportunities for individual expression and autonomy, within district adopted programs included teacher enrichment activities such as the example provided earlier about Charlie Scott's creative writing. Additionally, teachers described and were observed engaging in modifications to programs that supported district or state heteronomy. Dan Wyatt's comments contain such an example.

> We also did a data carrousel to find what is the area of the greatest need at our school academically….So we looked at WASL data, we looked at mostly academic data.… Those scores of the fifth grade we felt were the areas of greatest concern and of course we worked on that over time at every grade level. So I took the [Grade Level Expectations], the math process GLEs, and their sub components and broke them out all on a grid and in a series of staff meetings we would look at what that sub component was supposed to look like at our grade level and give a thumbs up, or sideways, or thumbs down as to how Math Destinations is meeting that. So the goal is, if we're not quite sure, we need to supplement it with something. So we did that.

In both types of situation, teachers were attempting to alter what they saw as troubling or incomplete given their experiences, values, interests, and abilities.

> I learned a couple things right at the beginning of my teaching experience. I had really high expectations and I wanted to teach at the level I wanted to teach regardless of the students and how they came to me. I learned very quickly the first year that I couldn't do that. That I had to actually meet the kids where they were. So I think that part of me has not changed and I think at that time that was unusual. Most teachers didn't care how the students came to them. They just taught what they were going to teach and if they didn't meet their expectations they failed them. I didn't want to be that kind of a teacher. (Discovery teacher)

> I sometimes think that the overall fluency goal is sometimes too high an emphasis on kids because I honestly don't think that every kid can meet those fluency goals…. We hope they can, but every kid is different and they are all different learners and I have one little guy that I had in second grade two years ago he was struggling in first grade and we did some pull outs. He struggled in my room. He struggled in third grade. They retained him because he wasn't meeting those bench marks. He comes from a great family, has a good background and his comprehension isn't horrible but he's just not meeting those goals. It's a mystery but I know I sometimes think well, that sometimes they're looking at only that one component when there's really a lot of other things they could be looking at. (Zoe O'Brian, West Bend)

In emergent practices, the analysis of tension suggested that autonomy and heteronomy were in a state of flux. The needs of others overshadowed the needs of the individual or the reverse prevailed depending on specifics of the situation. The guiding question of "What does the district want us to do?" leads right into the question of "What do I want to do?" As such, emergent practices worked to balance or bring into equilibrium what was considered by the teachers or the district to be in error. Therefore, emergent practices were those where the strongest sense of autonomy or heteronomy was manifest.

Building a Consensus in Congruent Practices

The focus of congruent practices on inquiry into "What is best for kids?" appeared to provide a platform for greater unity of purpose or principle between district and teachers. Several participants talked about their school community as being increasingly focused on best practices. As district administrators and teachers engaged in inquiry, the distinction between autonomy and heteronomy appeared less pronounced even when there was potential for significant conflict.

In West Bend, a group of teachers began using leveled math groups. Jessie Gibson commented in an interview, "That's not consistent with Math Destinations and the philosophy of having rich discussions between high, low, and medium kids. So there has been a pretty big discussion on this stuff. Is this the way to do it with Math Destinations? Should we do it? Shouldn't we do it?" Bob Conway described how he and fellow teachers went to visit a school that was experiencing high achievement.

> One of the things they had done is, they had decided to do this Walk to Math [skill level groupings], basically is what it is….At the beginning of the year they

gave [their district benchmark test]. That's kind of how they broke up the kids so they knew which were going into which groups….What we observed was intriguing. I wonder if that would lend itself to improvement in our math….Since I was one of the people who had gone to observe, I said, "Hey, you know what, I'll talk Ginger and Penny [colleagues on grade level team] into doing it." And they were very resistant. But I prevailed.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about that conversation.

Bob Conway: Well, we sat down and I kind of shared with them what they had done and what they were doing over in [the other district] and how they had won this award….I said, "They are obviously on to something and I would at least try it out."

Conway eventually convinced his grade level team to join him but others in the building raised serious reservations. "Well, it was just automatically they came back and they were going to start this math switch for fifth grade. And it was nothing that was shared with the staff. It was just kind of this is what was going to be done." (West Bend primary teacher).

Concerns were raised at the mathematics curriculum meeting. Among the objections was the belief that the student groupings were not in harmony with the recommendations of West Bend's mathematics curriculum. The teacher who raised the concerns looked into the matter further. "I went and talked to another math trainer, two of them....one went and talked to [the principal] and said, 'You know what, this is absolutely not what Math Destinations does,' and she had a lengthy conversation with him and it is

something that is not just to be decided by a couple people but we need to talk about this as a staff" (West Bend primary teacher).

Once the tensions were identified, Principal Wyatt began to frame the issue in the context of the community's inquiry into mathematics instruction. "I called the [publisher] and they chewed it around and they said they thought it was an interesting experiment, so "we'd like to help you design it so it can be a really good experiment" (West Bend principal).

Conway's autonomous initiative brought the initial result of conflict between himself and others. This conflict in another situation might have become a polarizing influence leaving both Conway and his peers entrenched in their opposing positions. In this case, however, because of their mutual commitment to seeking the best achievement outcome for students, the teachers' differing opinions became a catalyst for deeper inquiry into mathematics instruction. Once the controversy had been framed in the context of inquiry, one of the teachers with serious concerns about the project reported, "I'm anxious to see what comes out. If something works out, fine. I just think sometimes as teachers we can jump on the band wagon way too quickly and it's not necessarily the best thing for kids. But I know Bob's interest is definitely for the kids" (West Bend primary teacher). Conway, himself, reoriented his original passion in the context of the inquiry. "Then we'll reevaluate and see if we want to pursue this again next year. We're not all gung ho like – "Yah, this is the only way to go!"…. I think it would be an uphill battle convincing the other staff, because we have some data but it's not absolutely concrete."

Congruent practices, then, are those that engage inquiry, incorporating personal passion and collective purpose in the work of the school community. Differences of opinion are reexamined in light of a shared guiding purpose. Individual preferences are expanded and articulated within the framework of collective inquiry. Adopted curriculum and mandated practices become the laboratory where collaborative investigation yields ongoing improvements. Through this work, the interests of the individual and the interests of the community increasingly move toward convergence.

Interdependence in Aligned Practices

Chapter two illustrated the convergence of autonomy and heteronomy in such a community with the story of a hypothetical committee seeking to select a mathematics text. That illustration demonstrated that an interdependent community must include members who know and respect themselves as a vital part of the whole and who contribute the gift of reflected self awareness to their collective resources.

In this section of the chapter, I will focus on a discussion of these principles as they were observed in the present study. Aligned practices were evident at both West Bend and Discovery, however, the most salient examples of these practices were found in the fifth grade team at Discovery. As discussed earlier in chapter four, these teachers regularly engaged in a continuous dialog focused on student learning. The fifth grade teachers shared resources, worked toward common goals and faced instructional challenges with a commitment to problem solving and student achievement.

The fifth grade teachers expressed enthusiasm for their choice to work with colleagues as an interdependent team. Kate Bailey explained that she had chosen to accept her current assignment at Discovery because she loved “being with this team. We

just collaborated so well together and the administrator was wonderful and encouraging and really supportive….When it comes to my team, I absolutely love my team. I don't know what I would do if I had to go somewhere else." (Discovery fifth grade teacher)

The teachers explained that they preferred working together because it gave them an opportunity to support each other and refine their skills and knowledge about student learning. "And so we're looking at how we can meet all our Grade Level Expectations. Get our kids where they need to be…That's something about our team. We think outside of the box. We depend on each other," (Discovery fifth grade teacher).

The teachers' participation in a community that shared a common focus provided opportunity for each member to operate within the parameters of her particular interests. The team's work in the area of writing instruction illustrates the interdependence between the individual teachers, the team's collective efforts, and the educational community of the Lakeshore District.

> The unifying theme this year with the district and with the school is literacy. Although it is not [measured for adequate yearly progress] we do get tested on it. Irregardless of that, we don't feel like we have been doing a good enough job in our writing….As a school we see it as a school issue and the district sees it also as a district issue. So for our fifth grade training across the district we've just been working on understanding the needs of the students for the WASL….For example elaboration is huge. We need to get our kids writing more focused pieces with elaboration and so how can we do that? What sources can we use to do that with? (Discovery fifth grade teacher)

The teachers collected data to specifically identify their students' needs. They sought out colleagues that included their own team, others from the Lakeshore District and those with expertise from around the state and beyond. One teacher even participated in state training. "I wanted to become a better writing teacher and I figured that [becoming a state assessment scorer] was the best way to do it. I applied and was accepted and went over to [a central training site] and had an awesome training there scoring the writing WASL" (Discovery fifth grade teacher). These teachers worked together developing their understanding, asking questions, gathering data, and reflecting on their practice.

The fifth grade team connected with their building administrator and instructional coach. Combining their voice with those of the coach and administrator, allowed the Discovery team to "influence [how the district decides]…what we're getting trained in for literacy at the school." (Discovery fifth grade teacher). It is a process that is ongoing.

> One of the things we've really continued to struggle in is writing and we chose to have our principal stay focused on writing and our instructional coach has been taking us through a book study of *Journals and Journeys*, and we did *Write On* last year. It's kind of our weak point right now and so we're trying to use the resources we have available to focus into that. (Discovery fifth grade teacher)

In this way, the fifth grade team, participating in a community of truth, sought the keys to unlock writing skills for their students. This community began with the interests and concerns of individual fifth grade teachers, incorporated building level and district educators, extended to the state office of education and reached into the resources of professional literature. The fifth grade team, having led the way for instructional

improvement in their classrooms, was invited at the district level to develop anchor papers for in-district scoring and has provided training for colleagues in other Lakeshore District buildings. As active participants on district curriculum teams they play a key role in instructional improvements for the district. When asked about the team's relationship with the district, teacher Bonnie Hayes remarked, "I feel empowered by the district, they are listening." She refers to the freedom the team has to set schedules and to make curriculum choices. She also credits the district for allowing teachers to research instructional options.

By focusing on learning and teaching and the success of their students the fifth grade team has brought about a convergence of autonomy and heteronomy. Each of these teachers increases the independence of the team. At the same time, each teacher is dependent on colleagues for encouragement, instructional ideas, and teaching resources. Likewise, the Discovery School and the Lakeshore District experience increased independence to set curriculum and support student learning because of the contributions of the fifth grade team. At the same time, the school and district are dependent upon the fifth grade teachers to ensure that the overall instructional program is based on sound teaching that increases student success.

This interdependent community of truth is characterized by both the dependence and the independence of its members. Palmer (1998) shares

> Involvement in a community of pedagogical discourse is more than a voluntary option for individuals who seek support and opportunities for growth. It is a professional obligation that educational institutions should expect of those who

> teach – for the privatization of teaching not only keeps individuals from growing…but fosters institutional incompetence as well. (p. 144)

Chapter Four Summary

Chapter four presented a typology of practices— emergent, congruent, and aligned—that described the ways teachers at West Bend and Discovery collaborate and share decision making related to teaching and learning. These three teacher practices were defined by four attributes labeled focus, expertise, structure, and process. The process of analyzing data exposed differences in the ways in which conflict, tension, and struggle were evident in these practices. A model describing the convergence of autonomy and heteronomy in community was presented. Emergent practices were characterized as balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of others in the community. Congruent practices increased the convergence between autonomous and heteronomous interests by shifting the focus of each toward an inquiry into best practices. Aligned practices brought together an accomplished convergence of autonomy and heteronomy in the development of an interdependent community of truth that increased the independence of the community while reinforcing each member's value and individual contribution to that community. The three practices—emergent, congruent, and aligned—manifest the shared experience of community in the West Bend and Discovery Schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Calls for teacher leadership and collaborative structures in schools are hallmarks of school reform (Blasé & Blasé, 1997; Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2005; Smiley et al., 2002). As teachers and administrators work together to design and implement instruction that supports equity and increases student achievement they encounter numerous barriers (Scribner et al., 2002). As in the past, current reforms fail to achieve desired outcomes, mutate with unintended consequences, and wane in the face of opposition (Cuban, 1998). Explanations for the intractability of educational organizations are many. Westheimer (1999) identifies and attributes conceptual and methodological problems in school community literature as contributing to this predicament. Additionally, Shields and Seltzer (1997), Bushnell (2001), and Gates (2005) name sentimentalism, idealism, and elitism as inflicting school community scholarship and invite others to join in refining and reframing this theory for use by teachers and administrators.

The purpose of this dissertation was to contribute to the body of literature that seeks to clarify school community. It also provided me the opportunity as I collected and analyzed data to think more critically about my assumptions and expectations about teacher collaboration and distributed leadership in the district where I work and how I interact with teachers given my position as superintendent. The response to the aforementioned difficulty of educational intractability should, in my view, be on focusing on the contextual conditions and building on strengths that lead to the next step along the pathway to improvement. This is accomplished, I believe, by first acknowledging that all schools are communities.

I began this study seeking to increase my capacity to create the ideal community in the school where I work. As a result of this study I conclude that our school, like all schools, is a community with strengths and challenges. I was intrigued by the topic of this study because I wanted to deepen my understanding about what direction my administration should take that would build the professional community in my school. My professional experience had taught me that the development of a collaborative educational community poses many challenges; I therefore desired to increase my knowledge of practices in high performing schools with regard to teacher leadership and collaboration. I wanted to build a professional community such that we could achieve the kinds of student outcomes promised in the literature. I now see that while some schools may have identified clearer goals than others, and while some schools may experience greater collaboration and support among staff and students, in every case, each school exhibits some characteristics of community. Community occurs every time a group of people with common stories, shared memories, and common experiences come together. Community improvement is advanced when the members recognize the gifts that each has to contribute to the well being of the whole. And this is best accomplished by focusing on service to the students for which the school is responsible. Both autonomy and heteronomy are necessary for meeting the needs of the community and the individuals in that community.

Studying teachers in West Bend and Discovery I came to a new appreciation for teacher autonomy. I learned that the teachers in West Bend and Discovery engaged in practices that provided opportunity for them to express their autonomy within the context of the interests of their school communities. While some of these practices could be

described as a balance between teacher and community interests, other practices reduced the gap between these interests. This increased alignment between autonomy and heteronomy was facilitated by inquiry into a great thing, a transcendent subject related to teaching and learning (Palmer, 1998). As the members of the school community joined together to seek the truth of a great thing, their various interests converged.

The typology of teacher practices and the associated model showing the convergence of autonomy and heteronomy helped to clarify for me the various ways community could be expressed. Teachers in both schools were working sometimes together and much of the time alone to support school improvement in their buildings. While practices varied, all participants in the study shared teaching decisions with colleagues.

In emergent practices the decisions about teaching and learning were made within the context of district protocols. Teachers indicated that protocols provided latitude to balance their individual preferences with district expectations. These preferences were seen when teachers chose to add supplementary learning activities and materials to district curriculum, when teachers paced required lessons according to their students' needs, and when teachers exercised freedom to design curricula that had not been targeted for district adoption.

Congruent practices focused on collaborative inquiry into teaching and learning that would increase student achievement. When teachers described congruent practices they indicated that they were motivated by a desire to understand "What's best for kids?" This passion to improve their student's learning became a guiding commitment to collaborative inquiry. As teachers described their values and philosophy, they did so in

the context of this inquiry. Comments such as “I’ve always been a cup half full type of guy,” and “I find the way to learn what I need to know to help my kids,” indicated that these teachers had framed their personal passions in the context of a collaborative inquiry into improving their students’ success.

Aligned practices maintained this focus on inquiry, extending it to a continuous discourse at every level of the learning community. Aligned practices extended the inquiry into research and development of strategies to unlock the learning for every student. Aligned practices involved teachers taking leadership in their professional development to expand district curriculum and to research instructional improvements. These teachers contributed to their learning communities by dividing up tasks according to their personal strengths and by sharing classroom successes with colleagues. They both contributed to and gained reward from the community formed by their collegial commitment to student achievement.

As discussed in chapter four, the teachers in West Bend and Discovery Schools responded to tensions between autonomy and heteronomy in a variety of ways. While I did not find evidence of highly contentious disagreement between administrators and teachers, I did find that some teachers sought to balance their interests with the interests of the district. Teachers were also working collaboratively on inquiry with their larger community to pursue mutual interests. Figure one summarized the components of this process with a model that described an emerging convergence from disagreement between autonomy and heteronomy to alignment of these into a common focus of ongoing inquiry.

Teachers and administrators can join together in mutual inquiry and collaboration but each can and to a certain extent must also work alone. The demands placed on classroom teachers are frequently greater than the capacity of any one educator functioning without others to address. However, the needs of students are also manifest one student at a time. It is unnecessary and impossible to plan for all the contingences that surface when instructing students. When schooling is viewed in this light, its interdependent qualities become more evident. The isolated practices that have been typical of many classroom teachers (Lortie, 1975) are not independent enough (Gates, 2005) to adequately meet the needs of all students. The expectation that schools will successfully raise all students to high standards requires that all members of the school community contribute their perspective, energy, and curiosity to the design of practices that respond to this high expectation. Educators are dependent on each other and their students. As every educator brings their unique strengths to the school community, that community increases its independent ability to support student achievement. Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall and Coulter (2005) summarized the need for this interdependent work, "Structures for recovery help little if social norms in the school do not encourage teachers to ask for help and work collaboratively to meet the needs of a diverse student body" (p. 402). The paradox of interdependence is manifested in emergent practices with its dependent focus, expertise, structures, and process (i.e., which are by definition in extreme cases not shared) as coexisting with, giving way to, or providing for aligned practices with their independent focus, expertise, structure, and process (i.e., which are by definition in extreme cases completely shared).

Teaching is a profession conducted in isolation from others and with expectations for classroom autonomy over curriculum and instruction and reward structures that encourage isolation (Ingersoll, 1994; Lortie, 1975). Further, Grossman et al (2001) concluded that "it is far easier to mark papers alone than to negotiate with other adults who do not share your beliefs" (p. 991). It is to some degree remarkable, that teachers at Discovery and West Bend, or any school for that matter, would all express their dependence upon and desire to participate in collegial planning and learning. While differences among their practices were evident, all of these teachers found a way to breakthrough the privacy of individual practice to join colleagues in the pursuit of a broader professional collaboration. In specific ways, relevant to focus, expertise, structure, and process the emergent, congruent, and aligned practices contributed to these teachers' ability to help each other and their students. These teachers' refined instruction and developed structures and strategies that supported student learning to a greater capacity than available if they were to be working alone. This inquiry into uncharted practices could not be undertaken by following a scripted protocol evident in emergent practices on the one side or complete teacher autonomy on the other.

Having committed to mutual inquiry, West Bend and Discovery teachers strengthened the independence of their schools by drawing from their collective resources. This commitment reinforced the dependence of each community member on the others. The resulting interdependence defined and strengthened the community. The autonomy-heteronomy relationship expresses the manner in which the members of an educational community depend on each other to increase their community's capacity to resolve concerns and draw from each member's best thinking. These school communities

experienced differences of opinion. Dialog was characterized by openness and a search for understanding, (Grossman et al., 2001; Westheimer, 1999). This process supported heteronomous goals while enhancing the unique value of the individual members. Bellah et al. (1985) summarized this convergent effect "the individual self finds its fulfillment in relationships with others in a society organized through public dialogue" (p. 218). As we have seen, at Discovery and West Bend, practices that moved community members toward a convergence of autonomous and heteronomous interests offered opportunity to build a growing and improving school community.

Limitations

Visits to West Bend School occurred over the course of several months, allowing me to observe the school on four occasions at different times of the school year. During this period the case of the student groupings in mathematics came to light. Since this provided a forum for teacher collaboration I examined it from the perspective of several informants and through direct observation of instruction and planning meetings. This allowed me to triangulate the work of the mathematics curriculum team through interview, classroom observation, and document review. These experiences increased my confidence in the trustworthiness of the case as an example of the West Bend teachers' leadership and interaction.

The seven visits to Discovery School were spread out over the course of one year. During this time I had the opportunity to conduct formal interviews, observe classrooms and collaborative meetings, and to speak informally with teachers and the principal on several occasions. Based on these interactions, I perceived a diversity of practices among the Discovery teachers. I focused on two grade levels that demonstrated predominantly

different practices and triangulated the collected data through formal interview, informal conversation, classroom observations, reflections of support personnel and document review.

Concentrating data gathering on these salient examples of teacher practices provided greater confidence in the descriptions of these observed practices. However, this concentration increased the chance that other, unobserved practices may have been present in the two schools that differed from those described. Teachers at other grade levels that were not the focus of this study may have held different views or conducted their professional work in a different manner than the practices that were reported here. Thus the conclusions of the present study apply to the specific participants and cannot be generalized to include all their peers or to include other school sites.

Since the selected sites were not schools where I am employed either as a staff member or a consultant, data gathering was conducted with the researcher in the role of observer. The study was limited by the relative access available to a researcher in this role. An observer may never fully know the inter-relationships of a school without serving as an active member of the staff.

The focus of data collection allowed for repeated visits and contact points with selected participants. Sufficient data were collected to ensure that research findings were supported by multiple sources. However, available time limited the collection of focused data and precluded the collection of data from some grade levels or curriculum teams (Glesne, 2006). Although more time at the research site would be desirable, the research was conducted over a period of months, allowing for observations at the beginning, middle and near the end of the school year. Interview reports were compared with

classroom observations. Teacher reports were considered in comparison and contrast with the reports of building principals and with the perspectives of support teachers who interacted with classroom teachers.

The research findings with identifying information removed were discussed with teachers and administrators from other settings. These educators provided perspective on the conclusions with reference to their background and experience. Their comments were helpful to orient the findings in the general landscape of typical teacher practices. This process supported the distinct descriptions of teacher practices embedded in this report. While the participating West Bend and Discovery teachers shared many characteristics with teachers in other school settings, their practices differed in ways that are described in this report from the practices of other teacher practices that are typically seen in the school setting.

While the peer review process supported the conclusions of the report, this process was not exhaustive. Most of the educators who participated in the peer review process work in school settings that are not recognized for their high levels of student achievement. It would be helpful to submit the study findings to educators serving in other high performing schools to consider the observed teacher practices in light of practices in similar schools.

A further limitation of the study is the fact that I am a school superintendent and thus may have been perceived by participating teachers as a formal authority with whom they could not be completely frank. To minimize the possibility of this concern, the study was not conducted in my own school district. Participants were assured that their comments would not be linked to either themselves or their employing school district.

Names of participants and identifying information about their assignments and schools were altered to protect this confidentiality.

A further limitation related to my role as a school administrator is the difficulty of overcoming any administrative bias that might overshadow an understanding of teacher perspective. To increase the ability to reflect upon the teacher perspective, the study began with a literature review relative to the roles and responsibilities of teachers. This literature review assisted in shifting the research focus to common perspectives and concerns of teachers rather than of the administrative perspective (Lofland et al, 2006). This process was aided by my previous experience of more than ten year's as a classroom teacher and the regular classroom contact which is a part of my current assignment.

This perspective with regard to teacher leadership and the development of professional communities is an important consideration. Much of this perspective has been shaped by encounters with teachers and administrators who have experienced significant increases in student achievement. These educators credited collaborative practices and alignment of curriculum and instruction to explicitly articulated standards for the improvement in achievement. As a result, my bias in favor of collaborative teacher practices carried the potential to limit my perspective of collected data. To address this potential concern, I focused the data collection on the principle that a professional community is greatly influenced by the culture, personalities, values, and beliefs of the specific persons that compose it. In approaching the West Bend and Discovery School settings, I searched for an understanding of the context and social patterns of the educators who worked there. This required that I consciously set aside early assumptions regarding the kinds of activities and beliefs that supported professional

communities. The research questions and interview protocol laid a foundation for open conversation with teachers and administrators that sought their descriptions of the realities they perceived in their schools and in themselves (Gates, 2000; Mills, 1959).

Significance

Schools face demands for greater accountability for student achievement. The federal No Child Left Behind law requires that all students make adequate yearly progress toward specified standards. Disabling conditions, the absence of English proficiency, and low socio economic status, although these present barriers to achievement, they are not acceptable rationale for failure to reach learning standards. Put another way, schools are expected to ensure the success of every student all the time. This high accountability environment requires that educators gain new skills and establish new structures that emphasize learning at all levels.

Ingersoll (1994) explains the need for more research to address the integration of top down and democratic school governance models, concluding that, "there has been little effort to explain the simultaneous presence of contradictory images of organizational control in schools, and little effort to test empirically which viewpoint is more valid" (p. 152). This study was designed to contribute to a better understanding of these seemingly contradictory perspectives of school governance, with a specific focus on the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy in teacher professional communities. This case study contributes to the theoretical understanding of school governance and teacher leadership by articulating practices that encompass both individual and collective perspectives in professional communities. The study describes communities that develop a "shared identity" (Scribner et al., 2002, p. 50) by welcoming individuals with differing

strengths and perspectives. The teacher practices in these communities demonstrate a multi-layered funnel of converging alignment for interpreting the interplay between self and others or that of individual autonomy and communal heteronomy.

By describing the perspectives of teachers and their experiences, the study assists school leaders to better understand the legitimacy or value of honoring, appreciating, and incorporating the autonomy of teachers in building strong professional communities. The study offers an alternative to the struggle for power and control that characterizes many schools. This practical significance does not do away with conflict, but it clearly reframes the direction and implications of this presence in schools. Further, the findings of the study support the recommendation that discussion of authority and decision making be made in the context of a mutual inquiry into the "great thing called teaching and learning" (Palmer, 1998, p. 141). As school leaders seek to increase professional autonomy without renouncing allegiance to researched practices and collective action (Scribner et al., 2002) they can draw attention to or promote discussions within their buildings in ways that make this inquiry difficult to miss.

Recommendations for Further Research

The process by which a community works to improve student achievement is variously described in the literature of education reform (DuFour, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Waters & Grubb, 2004). Specific actions that support the formation of teacher community are articulated as well (Grossman et al., 2001; Reihl, 1998; Westheimer, 1999). However, these recommendations stop short of articulating the process by which a community works to bring about a convergence between individual and community interests by focusing on the great thing of learning and teaching (Palmer, 1998). Further

research that articulates a process of mutual inquiry leading to the formation of what Palmer calls a community of truth will benefit educators engaged in the work of school improvement. The following considerations may be useful in shaping the scope of further research.

What impact does the process of working together toward resolution of some issue have on the formation of the community engaged in that work? Does the process of discussion and the presentation of multiple perspectives support creation of a new level of relationship that adds more value to the community than the simple resolution which emerges from that discussion? In some cases does this process build a more cohesive community that raises the level of the discussion and increases the members' commitment to collaboratively continue the quest for truth in community?

The schools that were observed appeared to have worked through a great deal of the overt conflict evident in much of the research literature. This is not to say that there was no conflict. This begs the question, how are emergent, congruent, and aligned practices in schools where there is much overt conflict and hostility evidenced? In other words, might the typology of focus, expertise, structure, and process be incomplete given the nature of the context, the degree of implementation of school reform, and the participants involved? It could also be that the three practices of emergent, congruent, and aligned fail to explain all the possibilities in the kinds of teacher practices.

Summary

Educators are faced with overwhelming expectations for student success. The pressure for student performance is intense (Bellamy et al., 2005; Elmore, 2005). The practices that met previous demands for student success are insufficient to meet the

requirements of the present (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). This high stakes environment requires the best thinking of every educator, the best of researched practices, and the collaborative support of teachers and stakeholders. No individual can succeed in such an environment by going it alone (Scribner, 2002). No community can accomplish this mandate without the combined thinking of diverse members. And therein lies the tension. The community must work together in new ways using the ideas of individuals who at times do not agree with each other to accomplish a shared mission. This is not easily accomplished.

The formation of learning communities with a vision for great things holds promise to work within the tensions evident in and between my way, your way, or our way. These communities gain strength and independence by joining together to know and understand the purpose that captivates their interest. A commitment to learning and teaching builds interdependence between the members and binds the community to a common calling.

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WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
CONSENT FORM
The Role of Autonomy in Teacher Professional Communities

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Researchers' statement

We are asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The study will look at the role teachers play in the school improvement process. The researcher will interview you and will observe professional development activities in which you participate. She will describe what you and others in your school are doing to improve student learning. The educational community will benefit from the study by better understanding the ways that teachers work to improve schools and by better understanding ways to support teachers. You may find that participation in the study helps you to reflect on your own professional practices. The opportunity to review what you do and how it relates to the work of your school and your colleagues may assist you in further steps toward school improvement.

PROCEDURES

The researcher will attend at least one and more likely several professional development activities in your school. Events such as training workshops, school improvement committee meetings or grade level team meetings will be observed. It is possible that the researcher may also visit classrooms and observe instruction. In addition the researcher will interview you individually for a minimum of one half hour and may ask you to participate in a focus group interview with your colleagues as well. Focus group interviews will likely take place for one hour to one hour and a half. The interview time(s) will be arranged to fit your schedule. All data collected from both the activities and the interviews will be confidential. That is, your name will not be reported with the data and both your identity and the identity of your school will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. The study will take place between October of 2005 and December of 2007. The researcher will observe and interview in at least two schools that

have demonstrated success in raising the achievement of all students. A list of likely interview questions is attached for your review. During the interview, if you choose, you may refuse to answer any question that you would prefer to pass. The researcher plans to record audiotapes of interviews to assist in transcription of the interview. Once transcribed these tapes will be erased. The researcher will use the services of a professional transcriptionist. The transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality commitment and will not be associated with your school. If you prefer, you may request that audio tapes not be made. As part of the researcher's observations, she will examine agendas of professional development events, school improvement plans and summary data of student achievement. The study will not include a review of any personal data regarding yourself or other individual staff members.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

While we anticipate that any risk or discomfort to yourself that is associated with this study is unlikely, we do want to make you aware of this possibility. Should you find that participation in the study causes you tension or pressure, for example, because it is taking too much time, subjecting you to embarrassment or interfering with your regular duties, you should let the researcher or your supervisor know of your concern. The researcher will either work with you to eliminate the concern or, if you prefer, discontinue your participation. It should be noted that the researcher will interview and observe a variety of staff members at your school site and that you will not be singled out for unusual attention as a result of the study.

OTHER INFORMATION

Your name will not be used in research reports. It will also not be stored with the data collected. The researcher will maintain one master list of participant names linked to pseudonyms. This master list will be stored in the researcher's home office in a separate location from all study notes. Once the study has concluded, the masterlist will be destroyed. No other persons will have access to identifying information. Notes from interviews and observations will be maintained in the researcher's professional and home offices. Once the dissertation report and any final summary documents of the study have been completed, field notes from the study will be destroyed. At this time the researcher anticipates that the project will be finalized no later than June of 2008. You may refuse to participate in the study. If you do choose to participate in the study you may withdraw at any time without any negative effect. The researcher will honor your wishes. Should participation in the study produce an adverse impact on you, the researcher will endeavor to make amends including clarifying misunderstandings, avoiding activities that have proven problematic and altering schedules and expectations. A copy of your signed consent will be maintained with the master list of project participants in the researcher's home office.

Reseacher Name: Millie Watkins Signature of researcher_____
Date_____

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask the researcher listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509)335-9661. This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____
_____

Printed name of subject Signature of subject
Date

Teacher Interview Themes and Questions

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself and your career? How did you come to be a teacher in _____?

The School and Students

2. Could you tell me about your school? (Who are its students and teachers?)

3. What strengths do your students bring to your classroom/school? What challenges do they face?

4. How do you support students who are facing challenges? How do you encourage and expand horizons with those who are ready to excel?

5. What, if any, difference exists between student groups and their levels of social and academic success in your school?

The teacher and professional practice

6. What are your dreams and aspirations for your students this year?

7. What do you find rewarding in your work as a teacher?

8. What are the challenges you face?

9. Describe for me your teaching style (get at the processes you use, preparing, instructing, assessing, reflecting).

Collegial Relationships

10. Talk to me about your relationship with the teachers you work with here at ____.

11. How do teachers work together here at _____?

12. Do you have opportunities to reflect on your teaching with others? If so, when and how does this take place?

Professional Development

13. Describe for me your professional development this past year?

14. How did you, your colleagues, and/or your administration select this professional development? Who is responsible for planning and implementing professional development?

15. What goals do you and other staff have for the professional development work you do? What are you planning on doing for professional development in the future? How do staff come to decisions regarding professional development?

Closing

16. Please tell me how many years experience you have in teaching? What grade levels have you taught?

17. Please tell me about any committees or ongoing projects of which you have been a member.

18. It has been very interesting learning more about how you interact with your students and with other staff in your building. Is there anything else about your experience in _____ that you would like to share with me?

Administrator Interview Themes and Questions

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself and your career? How did you come to be an administrator in _____?

The School and Students

2. Could you tell me about your school? (Who are its students and teachers?)

3. What strengths do your students bring to your school? What challenges do they face?

4. How do you support students who are facing challenges? How do you encourage and expand horizons with those who are ready to excel?

5. What, if any, difference exists between student groups and their levels of social and academic success in your school?

The teacher and professional practice

6. What are the dreams and aspirations that your teachers have for their students this year?

7. How do you recognize and reward teachers' work with students?

8. What challenges do teachers face in your school?

9. How does your school accommodate teachers' various styles and different strengths and weaknesses (get at the processes teachers use, preparing, instructing, assessing, reflecting).

Collegial Relationships

10. How would you characterize your relationship with teachers? How would you characterize the relationship among teachers in the school?

11. How do teachers work together here at _____?

12. Do teachers in your school have opportunities to reflect on their teaching with others? If so, when and how does this take place?

Professional Development

13. Describe for me your professional development this past year?

14. How did you, other staff, and/or your teachers select this professional development? Who is responsible for planning and implementing professional development?

15. What goals do you and other staff have for the professional development work you do? What are you planning on doing for professional development in the future? How do staff come to decisions regarding professional development?

16. How are teachers in your school involved in committees or ongoing projects?

Closing

17. Please tell me how many years experience you have in teaching, in administration? What grade levels have you taught? What administrative positions have you held?

18. Please tell me about any committees or ongoing projects of which you have been a member.

19. It has been very interesting learning more about how you interact with your students and with other staff in your building. Is there anything else about your experience in _____ that you would like to share with me?