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## CONFLICTING VIEWS OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY: THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

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This project was the second phase of a two-phase study of teachers' knowledge of community in an urban, private boys' day school in Canada. The first phase examined a teacher's perception of her classroom community, and this phase asked teachers and administrators in the same school about their perceptions of school community. We found that the school created and implemented an organizational structure designed to foster and sustain a professional community. However, administrators and teachers conceptualized, understood, and experienced community in different ways. Administrators saw community as a management tool to generate support for the school's objectives. Teachers experienced community as social support that served as a remedy for professional isolation. Neither group based its view on community as a capacity-building, reflective process leading to a generative professional community.

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### Introduction

This project originated as single-phase case study of one teacher's knowledge building through research that was conducted entirely online (Barnett & Fallon, in press). A classroom teacher wanted to find ways to create community in her all-male 1st grade class. We had conceptualized classroom community as an educational setting with the primary purpose of learning based on a set length of time (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000). Informed by many authorities, from Rousseau and Dewey to Piaget and Vygotskii (Woods, 1999), we included membership (both teachers and learners), space (shared by the members), and democratic decision making (enjoyed by all) in the notion of community.

We conducted the research entirely online as critical friends of the teacher, using e-mail messages, weekly chat sessions, and personal electronic journal entries, triangulated by documentation on the Web site she had created to demonstrate her efforts and teaching documents she used.

Four domains developed in the teacher's view of the classroom community—trust, membership, power, and capacity. The teacher's perception of success appeared to

emanate from her belief that an adaptive community had developed in her classroom and that her newfound ability allowed her to negotiate the dialectics inherent in each of the four domains. For example, some of these dialectical spaces involved the negotiation and substantiation of individuality within collectivity, as well as self-interest alongside caring and discomfort furthering well-being.

However, as we worked on making meaning of the results of the first phase of the study, we came to see that the story would not be complete unless, and until, we had explored how the domains we uncovered in that phase were seen by teaching and administrative staff to be played out in the school itself (Bolger, 2000; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Hogan, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000) in a second case study. We knew that a school's culture is related to its leadership (Schein, 1985) and the perceptions of its members. We wondered what would happen to other teachers' views of community when the 1st grade students went into their classrooms. Would their new teachers want to attempt to build their own knowledge about community? Would administrators' views of community differ in any ways from those of their teachers?

In the second phase of the research, we tried to capture the teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the ways the school community functioned, both for those who worked within it and for those who were attempting to create it. It began in the late summer of 2004 and concluded in the late spring of 2005. We began by approaching the school administrators, who talked at length about their belief in, and support for, fostering community within the whole school. Five teachers out of eight in the early elementary grades also agreed to sit down and talk with us about their ideas about, and experiences with, community.

Our purpose in this phase of the study was to better understand the various views of community within the school. We asked both teachers and administrators how they conceptualized and experienced community, and we challenged their assumptions to explore, in depth, their perceptions and experiences.

Thus, this study is an attempt to understand the players' perceptions of community as it is rather than as it should be. We wanted to examine these perceptions of school community because we did not accept the popular assumption that educational community is necessarily a good thing (Sergiovanni, 1999), as we had learned from the first phase of the study that community has both benefits and costs for individuals and groups.

### Context of the Study

Both phases of this study took place in an urban, private day school for boys. We dealt with two sets of major stakeholders. One set was the school's board of governors and administrators. Their primary goal appeared to be to protect the school's position as a not-for-profit corporation in a quasi-educational marketplace. Another major stakeholder, the teachers, was less affected by the school's position as a corporation.

Within a quasi-educational marketplace, all private schools have to stake out their territory, whether through increased access to learning technologies, small class sizes, exemplary teaching practices, or high success rates in post-secondary education and the job market. The board of governors and administrators (including the principal, vice principals, and chairs of various school committees) at this school had reacted to marketplace demands by increasing their commitment to an improved infrastructure (building and technology) and by overtly branding the school as a community. They attempted to accomplish this aim through a changed organizational structure intended to increase collegiality among teachers and help them further their work. The administrators' apparent presumption was that organizational change at the macro level would shape teachers' interactions at the micro level, and professional

community would emerge.

The school had implemented a "tribe" system in which its elementary staff was divided into three tribes (early-, mid-, and late-elementary). These tribes were each given a tribe office in which to work. Each teacher was provided with a computer and work area in the tribe office, as well as a laptop computer that could be taken to class. The school was served by its own network and educational and office software, as well as an internal, Web-based e-mail system for contact with parents and others and a network organizer that allowed all to schedule and communicate their personal and professional activities. Every classroom was provided with an electronic whiteboard, a data projection system, laptop computers, high-speed Internet connections, and the like. Thus, the tools for a state of the art communication system, both for teachers and for parents, had been provided to support a sense of community. In fact the principal said quite clearly, "consciously, we decided to organize the physical organization of the building to contribute to that deeper and deeper pedagogical discourse going on." He went on:

Facilities don't make the program, but they make it more pleasant. And this is about delivering a program. The objective here is bigger, better classrooms, so we can deliver the program better; a bigger, better library so we can facilitate [that] better; changing the dining hall [size] so we can change our timetable to contribute to better learning.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame used in this study was underpinned by two main notions: personal knowledge and school community. All teachers and administrators develop their personal knowledge in the same way that all people come to know the environment in which they live. This complex understanding can be better theorized using personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955) and teachers' knowledge in its various forms (Barnett & Hodson, 2001; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1983; Schubert, 1992; Shulman, 1987), including Claxton's (1990) notion of personal minitheories. Ross, Cornett, and McCutcheon (1992) say that teachers theorize professionally when they interact with each other about pedagogy or schooling. Teachers' knowledge is, therefore, linked to community because the actions that come from it are often performed within it (Schubert & Ayer, 1992). To understand a community, therefore, one has to be aware of what its members know of it.

Community is a socially constructed entity (Vygotskii, 1978) composed of a collective of individuals in the same place at the same time. Struggle within that entity, whether

over resources, power, status, gender or something else (finite but inherently valuable), creates a basis for conflict. Thus, the dynamic nature of a school community is one in which its members actively construct and reconstruct their knowledge with each other through their contested interactions about education.

However, communities are not only in constant flux but also function in different ways. Irwin and Farr (2004) have called two such processes of community “adaptive” and “generative.” Adaptivity is a response to policies, materials, or knowledge framed outside the community and imposed on it. For example, some administrators see and employ communities as management tools. In this process, new knowledge is not created within the community but comes down from above in what Clandinin and Connelly (1995, p. 9) call the “conduit.” The dynamic is one of power-over, top-down control. Such use of community as a tool emphasizes the importance of mobilizing teachers to assist in the delivery of programs and services or in the implementation of external policies with a primary focus on recruiting and energizing the community to assist in these processes. Such a community is more involved in generating first-order change, which consists of minor adjustments that are not paradigmatic changes and do not change the system’s core functions (Fullan, 1991; Levy & Merry, 1986; Sheldon, 1980).

Generativity, or second-order change on the other hand, occurs when community members not only define but also solve their own problems. This notion requires the community to have the capacity to mobilize its members for effective problem solving. In practice, it means that the community must either have the knowledge, skills, and resources it requires, or it must be able to access them elsewhere. This new knowledge, required to set goals and strategic directions, reasserts the community’s right to control its own destiny and has to be created collectively within the community. Members have equal voice within a dynamic of power-with, nonhierarchical control. A truly generative community may be more likely to engage in creating second-order change in all of the following categories:

- The organizational paradigm, including the underlying assumptions that shape perceptions, procedures, and behaviors in a school organization;
- Organizational purpose and mission;
- Organizational culture, which includes the beliefs, values, and norms shared within the organization; and
- Functional processes that include organizational structures, decision-making processes, and communication patterns (see Figure 1, page 9).

Generativity emerges from the freely expressed choices made by community members. Thus, the level of adaptivity and generativity in a community can be understood by the degree to which their members are empowered to make meaningful choices and generate different types of change.

The range of change indicators provided by Levy and Merry’s (1986) model (see Figure 1) helps to identify patterns and themes that might, in turn, help to develop an understanding of the nature of changes in the organizational behaviors and actions of members of an adaptive or a generative community.

Working entirely within the qualitative research paradigm, we took what teachers and administrators told us about their community as their individual perceptions of reality. We attempted to understand their personal minitheories of school community in the light of their personal practical knowledge—understandings that had been forged in their experiences at the school. By triangulating their views against those of others and seeking out both the commonalities and the differences, we developed our own theory of the community process in that particular school at that time.

## Methodology

This school was chosen as the site for our case study because it branded itself as an organization functioning as a professional learning community. Furthermore, over the years, the administration of the school had created and implemented an organizational structure allegedly designed to foster collegiality and community among administrative and teaching staff. The assumption made at the time was that a collaborative organizational *structure* would stimulate the emergence of collegial *practices* and a community model of interaction among educators.

Data for this project were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews. At the time of the study, eight full-time teachers were employed in the early elementary grades of the school. Questions were designed to elicit information about participants’ personal knowledge, understanding, and experience of community. Two administrators—the principal and a vice principal—were interviewed on two occasions (prior to the school year and near the end of that year to see if anything had changed). Four teachers were interviewed on one occasion near the end of the school year, and another teacher was interviewed twice during the year. Teacher interviews made up some 187 minutes of recorded conversation. The interviews with administrators made up approximately 144 minutes of conversation. The interviewers asked for explanations for every claim made by a participant and attempted to reflect back,

in their own words, the meanings offered by participants to ensure they clearly understood what the participants were actually expressing. As a further aid to their understanding, researchers sent the interviews to participants for member checking. Two participants took advantage of this process to change some of their wording slightly. Finally, the researchers visited the school in person on two occasions to note the physical structure, attend class sessions, meet with various staff members, and observe the functioning of the institution.

It is crucial to understand the nature of the data that we present. We wanted to understand the ways that community was known by these stakeholders. In other words, we wanted to get into their heads. We do not, however, attempt to claim that what we observed is what actually happens in the day-to-day life of the school. So, we make no claims that community is enacted in the ways that the participants described to us. However, we did use our observations, along with the opinions of administrators, to challenge the views of teachers and to use the opinions of teachers to challenge administrators in order to dig deeper into their perceptions.

All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed using Express Scribe, version 4.01. The transcripts were analyzed using ATLAS.ti, version 4.2. Data were analyzed qualitatively for emergent themes and patterns of commonalities and differences expressed by administrators and teachers.

## Community in the School

In the first phase of this study, four domains of community (trust, membership, power, and capacity) emerged in the teacher's understanding of learning in community in her own classroom. Therefore, we started with those four domains to explore what it meant to be part of a school community. As in our previous work, we again found "community" was used as if it were a slogan (i.e., used by many people as if understood by all in the same way, yet not clearly defined and with multiple idiosyncratic meanings) which can be highly problematic. For one thing, we found that administrators and teachers appeared to be speaking in different languages when it came to the notion and purpose of community.

The principal of the school said that he had been the first one to float the notion of community: "The term that came to mind, and I am not sure its derivations, was a civil community." He alluded to "civil" as coming from "civility"; hence, civil community centered on maintaining a sense of civility within the school. It was implicit that such a sense of community emanated from his need to express an ethic of appropriate conduct in and around the school:

One measure of what civility would be, would be saying, "Good morning," holding the door open for somebody, or helping someone with their work or with a heavy package. But that in itself is not sufficient. That has to grow to an understanding in the hallway, in the hockey rink, in the classroom, wherever it might be, so we recognize what conduct is consistent with a civil community.

Thus we can see that the principal saw community as a tool to support civility in a respectful and meaningful way. As he put it, "I then [started] to think how I would articulate that [idea of civil community] in different forms with small groups, with parents, and ultimately in the larger community." He put the idea into practice in the context of athletics, where community was seen as a means to "educate the parents as to their role and what they can do to contribute to a healthy athletics program. Not questioning the coach—these kinds of things." Extending the notion, he said, "But like in any organization, whether a family or an organization, it needs some vision and it needs some participatory leadership." Clearly the principal saw it as his job to provide the vision, and others would facilitate the process of implementing the idea. The principal claimed to be the source of that vision: "Based on some conferences I had gone to and some educators I had been exposed to who would [have] talked about community, I guess, and civility being important, and I put the two together."

Nowhere in either administrator's descriptions of community did the notion of teachers' voice arise as part of the administration's sense of what community meant to the school. However, the principal did see the teachers as implementers of the vision: "I mean, the administration is here to support what the teachers want to do and should do in class. Obviously, that means direction, vision, all of those things."

Membership was fractured in the administrator's view of community. There did not appear to be just one community but several at different levels in the school hierarchy. The topmost level, policy-wise, was the school's board of governors. The principal took it as his job to take visionary ideas to the board, where policy would be decided:

We had, I guess, four or five significant board retreats to look at the evolution of the school. One part of what you are seeing today, physically [the extensive renovations] is the result of a retreat we had in 1997. Before we addressed other issues in the school, [we needed] to address the facility. Instead of having a facilitator come, I said to the board chair, "I think we can do this. The school [i.e., the administrative team] will put a proposal to the board as to where we would go." . . . We

demonstrated the thinking behind what we were trying to do pedagogically, philosophically, and [I explained] how addressing the facilities would help us to do that. And it was a way to [accomplish] what we did. We said, “This is a way to manage the school. This is a way to deliver the program, and this is a way to support the school in the long run.”

Once decided at the board level, the rest appeared to him to be implementation through a hierarchy:

Administratively, we have three forums. There is a forum of division directors. I am one of those six. And I chair that meeting. Below that, there is a group of about 12 who are what we call [consultants], and that is chaired by the director of studies. And that’s where we do the nuts and bolts of implementing programs that have already been decided upon in the other forum of division directors. . . . And then the third forum is what we call the management meeting, where it’s really logistical and planning logistics. And those meet very regularly. They’re chaired, and their agendas [are set]. . . . But why do I describe all that? It can contribute to, if you want, the understanding of what goes on in the organization. There’s a lot of people hearing the same thing at the same time.

All this language stood in stark contrast to what the teachers told us. They rarely mentioned board members or administrators as members of the school community. Teacher after teacher talked about community amongst themselves, although they sometimes included parents.

Teachers saw community in two structures—the tribes and the breakfast group. The tribes had their own offices where collegiality was fostered and expected. It was a structure implemented by the administrative group from the vision that the top-level administrator had “sold” to the board many years before. He said: “Just the way we’re structured with the tribe system in the elementary permits quite a bit of that. . . [collegiality].” An administrator explained where the idea had come from, “We . . . try to see some of the schools in and around the Boston area and Ontario. This [other school] was one of the schools where they have structured their elementary school into tribes. We looked at it, and we thought that it would be interesting.”

In the same manner found by Magolda & Abowitz (1997) teachers in this study also viewed the tribes as community. “People have talked about the tribe as being a community . . . especially Tribe A.” Another teacher explained, “It is because we are all teaching the same range of ages and it’s easier to meet. It’s easier to meet the needs of the

children we teach because we all teach children about the same age.”

The tribe as community, however, was not always seen as a good thing and, in fact, had some serious drawbacks. One teacher said:

But I do think that, that [the tribe system] is not the right thing right now. The tribe itself is nice, but now we don’t talk to everyone else. We used to all be in the same room where we would discuss particular things. Now we are separated into three different rooms and I find that it has changed the dynamic of the teachers.

Another teacher noted, “We don’t see each other as much, and when we go to see someone in their own tribe office, they are working and we feel very guilty to just sit [there] and chitchat.” In other words, the tribe system has created incentive to work in isolation. In fact, one teacher said that the tribe system was not an example of community because it was “forced,” meaning that it was created in a top-down manner. Another teacher professed a view that, “It was not done to break our spirits. It was done to make sure we each had a place to work, and I guess we didn’t expect it would [make the teachers feel isolated].” She explained that teachers are more committed to the tribe system when it helps their work and less committed when it does not.

There was a divergence of opinion between administrators and teachers regarding the nature of community in the tribe system currently used in only in grades 1 through 6 in the K-12 school. A researcher asked, “So, would you say the overall community. . . is grades 1 to 6; is that the natural community? Or is the tribe the natural community?” The administrator opined, “I think the natural community is the tribe.” No teachers concurred with that opinion. That is not to say that teachers saw the tribe system as having no benefits. One said, “It’s become very personal because we have so much time together that we talk about every aspect of our lives. So we know much more about the 10 people in our room than we used to when there were 20, but [now] we don’t know anything about the others.”

However, other teachers discussed the negative and isolating effects of the implementation of the tribe system by the administration and described how they reacted. One of the teachers explained that reaction:

So we, as adults, said, “If we don’t want this relationship [with other teachers] to vanish, because that is what is happening, then we need to make a point of meeting every morning at 10 to 8:00 in the staff room to make sure that we keep in touch or else we stay in front of our computers in our

rooms and have no clue what's happening with so and so's life and so and so's class." I find we're missing [something] because work is not just work. It's coming to work with friends and colleagues and children. I find that this part is now missing [as a result of the tribe system].

Teachers went into far greater detail about their own community, one that appears to have evolved in response to the isolation of the tribe system. One teacher said, "We just decided, one day [that] we were very, very sad with the situation and being all split. So we decided to just get a coffee in the morning. That is the only time that everybody is free." In fact, the breakfast group attempts to recreate the former social community. One teacher said, "Yes—that is what we do now. So we decided to go down before the beginning of the day, and we all sit together like before." Another teacher said, "Having to look at the computer, with your back to your colleagues [in the tribe office] and facing the computer most of the time, we kind of lost some of the social interaction we used to have. We had to restore a new tradition." Other teachers agreed that a replacement for their previous structures was needed:

It's important for people to be together. It used to be the coffee machine. It used to be the place where people gathered and we had a board, just the simple things. It's not like that anymore. Now, it's e-mail, and that has made a huge difference in the school. We used to have a big board in the staff room, and every morning you had to go to look at the board, which [you visited] to see if you were on the "hit" list [i.e., a replacement for an absent teacher]. So that was the reason you had to go to see [the bulletin board] or special notices or whatever. So everybody had to go to the board in the morning to start work [but we were also] able to see people and to say, "Hi; did you watch TV last night?" or whatever. It's nice to start your day like that.

Almost every teacher mentioned the breakfast group as a community. The need for it seemed to stem from the normal sense of isolation in teaching having been increased by the tribe system. As one teacher noted:

It affects my work in a way that is not related to the work because . . . I miss some people in the staff room because I cannot talk to them or joke with them all the time. When we have discussions, we all talk about the fact that we are split.

Thus, there seemed to be a divergence between the way that administrators viewed community and the ways that teachers viewed the construct.

Next, we set about linking these views with the components of community that had emerged from our previous study. One of the most important components of community is capacity development. When we looked at the data, not surprisingly we found administrators talking about institutional capacity development far more than teachers. The principal reflected on many ways that the school's capacity had built and saw the process of building it as a rational, top-down one:

The plan[ning] principle that we always used is that we were not going to make a change until we felt that we could succeed and it was based in research. So, with whatever we've done, we [have] tried to "sell it," that (a) it is something we think will improve the learning, [and] that (b) there is research and there is experience out there. So when we present it, at least it has not [been] done or perceived to [have been] done on a whim.

In contrast, teachers talked about the capacity development of the school as coming through their own work, such as starting new programs, piloting new courses, and creating electronic projects. A teacher talked about working on adding a new program: "We were [there] all summer and we had to buy everything from the floor to the furniture to the report cards and curriculum." One teacher saw administrative support for special projects as building the school's capacity: "I think that the administration is more supportive. It has always been supportive for one [particular] project. But now, they are more supportive of such initiatives, and they work more with us to make sure that it will keep going." However, there were few other comments expressing that idea.

Teachers did see their interpersonal capacity improving with the new emphasis on teamwork in the tribes:

I did work with a lot of people because I had to. . . . I had a budget, so I worked with the business office. I had to report to the elementary school administrator. I had to work with my teaching partner . . . so we [had to] meet in the summer to discuss objectives and had to meet with the art teacher [and] meet with the computer teacher to set up the whole curriculum because we had nothing. So it [was] mainly with the teachers who were already here or people who were from the support staff and the business office and things like that.

This point was echoed many times:

Well, the school direction at that time was open to give us time to explore avenues, to have discussions among ourselves, [and] to work on [a

curricular] project. For me and my other colleague, we were able to go to some conferences on that matter.

Collegiality (Jarzabkowski, 2002; Little, 1982) came primarily from the sharing of materials or ideas. One teacher said, "I've always been interested, not in competing with my colleagues, but in sharing and being stimulated by my colleagues." A very few did mention a form of collegiality that came from coparticipation in work that required reflective inquiry. Collegiality was only mentioned by the principal in the context of writing a mission statement and within the administrative team. The other administrator seemed to be the go-between for the administrative team and the teachers. Collegiality was a familiar refrain in the administrators' comments. The words used by that administrator included support ("I wanted to support all of what she [a teacher] was involved in, and there was a lot, and she needed that support.") and promotion of collegiality ("With teachers, I say, 'You're good at working with your partner, but then go beyond that partnership.'").

Often collegiality seemed to appear when innovations in the best interests of the school were being promoted by administrators. "When we started [one particular] project, we were able to go to conferences and school visits to see what already existed. We had the chance at that time to choose from a variety on the market."

In our first study, trust appeared as a central feature in the creation of community. Only the principal, talked about trust as integrative (Macmillan, Meyer & Northfield, 2005), which means that it is based on the underlying principles on which an individual makes decisions. He used a hypothetical instance to describe a parent who had a concern about the school and had spoken to a member of the board of governors:

If that member of the board of [governors] is a well-informed, engaged member of the board, what he or she should be able to say, and we even talk with them about this: "You should know . . . the personnel well enough, or certainly the administrators in this school well enough, that you should be able to say to that person, 'You know that doesn't sound like so and so to me. That doesn't sound like the way that [this school] would do things. I'll look into it. I'll get back to you'"

He also talked about trust that came from position: "So that someone could say, 'You know what, I just think that they'll do the right thing or he'll do the right thing or she'll do the right thing.'" At least one teacher echoed role trust, "I trust the grade one teacher to do a good job. And I trust

the grade three teacher that they'll do a good job and I hope they trust me to do a good job."

Teachers also talked about trust coming from known prior practice, in this case, with a school administrator: "I know that with our immediate boss I definitely have a sense that she taught for many, many years." However, teachers most commonly described trust in general terms. One said, "It's fundamental; it's the base. If you don't trust someone, I don't think you can work with them honestly." Another stated, "I think without trust there can't be a community within the school."

## Discussion

There were obviously different views of community at play in the school, and we perceived some insularity between administrators and teachers. Both groups were motivated to create community but for different purposes, functions, or organizational outcomes. However, they appear to coexist within a hierarchically stratified school organization, and the consequences of inhabiting one community as compared to the other were different in terms of the community's status and level of contribution within the school organization. We conceived the views held by teachers and administrators of community in the school as a dichotomy (see Figure 1, page 9).

Administrators were in the business of "selling" community as an instrument of management and capacity strengthening. Along with rebuilding the school's infrastructure, adding new technologies, and promoting projects, community was part of the school's brand for marketing purposes. However, the administrators—especially the principal—still needed to maintain the tradition of the school and used the image of community as a consensual governance tool (Little, 2002) and a commitment mechanism (Brint, 2001). In other words, what appeared to be a community-centered governance organization designed to generate consensus seems to be used as a process to foster the views of the administrators' community.

The administrators perceived the central community members to be the principal and board members; that is, those with the ability to set and enforce policy in the school. First on this list is the board of governors. As the principal said, "That's where it starts, but the parents themselves bought it [meaning a policy initiative the administrators had proposed], and the teachers themselves."

The administrators assumed a certain degree of homogeneity in the nature of community. One said:

I got research and I did some presentations, pretty much on my own, [that] basically we needed the classrooms at 612 square feet. So it was easy to

say [to the board of governors], “Look, we are below standard. [The school] does not want to be below standard in any way.” That was an easy sell.

They assumed the right to be the dominant voice within the organization. When asked about his role, the principal said, “To try to ensure on a daily basis that we are making progress along that continuum . . . when I get up in the morning my job is to try to find out, one way or the other, how I can push along deeper and deeper pedagogical discourse.” Thus, he held up a form of community that was prone to conformism and used it to privilege certain values and assumptions, deemed essential, about the meaning of educating and being educated in the school. He also seemed to recognize that the existence of a multiplicity of democratic decision-making communities within the school might prevent such a dominant voice from developing:

There would be some competing views. I wouldn't think really substantial. For example, we had a debate 12 or 13 years ago on whether we would become a coeducational school—significant debate within the community. We made a decision on that. So, those kinds of things exist. Once the decision is made, we're going to go forward.

Administrators saw the tribes that they had created as the primary communities of teachers and supported those communities by providing group offices, enhanced electronic communication, and support for those teacher initiatives they thought would brand the school better. However, the tribes did not generate their own ideas, plan them, or enact them democratically. They received policies and direction (vision) from above and did their best to carry them out. The teachers, on the other hand, did not see the tribes in the glowing light portrayed by administrators. Furthermore, they did not consider the tribe as their primary community, even though they recognized that the tribe system helped them work better with their immediate colleagues. They felt, rather than saw, the isolation created by the tribe system because it separated them from colleagues that they had enjoyed interacting with over the years. The tribe was great at facilitating top-down communication and helping to make collaborative work more efficient, but it also took away opportunities to interact professionally with teachers who were working with students of different ages.

The purpose of community for the teachers was sharing knowledge and providing support to one another. We saw this purpose in the response of the teachers in creating their own ad hoc community centered on meeting for breakfast every morning. This ritual occasion cemented

group identity and strengthened individuals' sense of vitality, safety, and comfort. The fact that teachers would come to school especially early every morning is an indication that they perceived a lack in generative community in the school but still needed it. The administrators knew of and tolerated this democratically based, open, social community but did not participate in it.

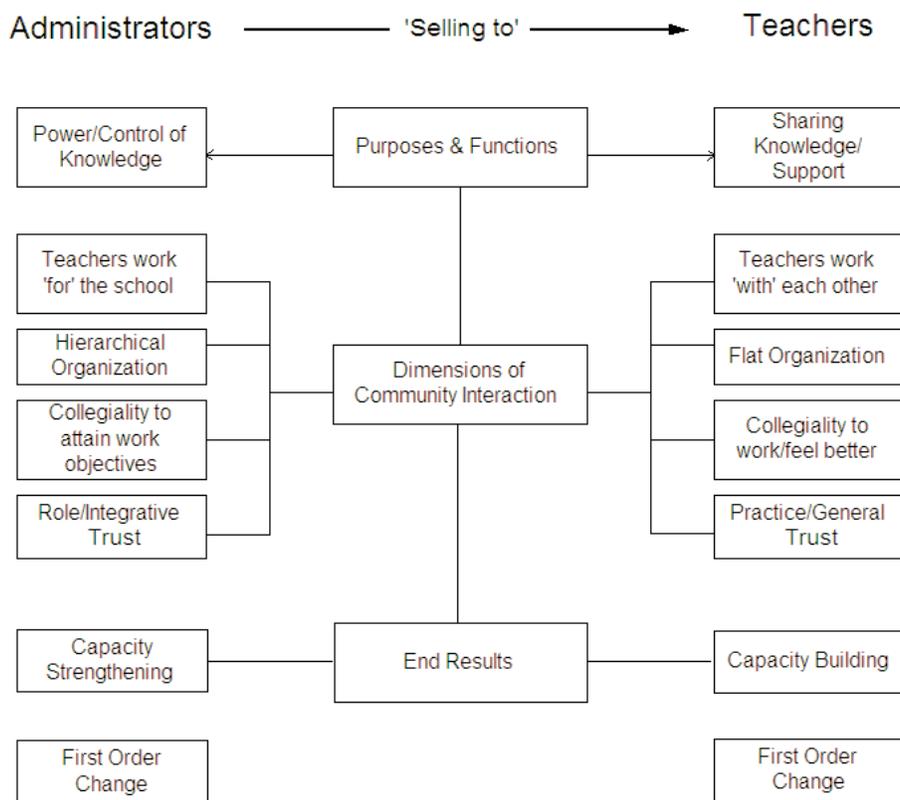
The dimensions of school community were expressed by administrators and teachers in diverse ways: work, organization, collegiality, and trust. The first dimension was that of work. Administrators saw community as a way to help teachers work better *for* the school. They provided the means to do that work more efficiently. The tribe offices were well appointed, and teachers were provided with high technology that rivaled that of a small college. On the other hand, teachers saw their work in terms of their work *with* each other, *with* their students, and *with* the administration, board, and parents.

The way that work was seen changed the very nature of the community experience. When people work “for” others, they are less invested in the process of community. They need rewards for participating. We saw a great difference in the level of investment among the teachers. Those teachers who had conceived individual initiatives that were supported by the administration talked about the value of the tribe more than those who had not been so blessed. Some of those teachers even went so far as to reject the notion of community itself while promoting one-to-one partnership for collaborative work. However, they all participated in the breakfast community. When they worked “with” each other in creating their own space, all were invested.

The second dimension that we saw was that of organization. Administrators tended to see school community as the vertical interaction of groups, while the teachers saw their own breakfast community as horizontal. When the groups interacted vertically, the teachers were the receivers of top-down knowledge from the board through the administrative team. The focus of this knowledge was on producing short-term results for external audiences (such as parents) in the educational marketplace. Thus, the administration supported projects that had external funding and resulted in curricular products that made the school appear in a favorable light to the outside world; products that could be created in a span of a few years at most. All dialogue was driven by the needs of the school in a competitive world.

Collegiality was also seen differently by the two groups. The administrative promotion of “community” emphasized the importance of mobilizing teachers to assist

Figure 1: Dichotomy Between Administrators' and Teachers' Views of Community



in the delivery of programs and services and engage exclusively in generating first-order change within the school, while the community made up of administrators and members of the board maintained a monopoly over the expertise and capacity to generate second-order change such as changing goals and strategic directions of the school.

Teachers saw their social community as horizontal. They believed themselves to be dynamic actors in their own community. They made the decisions, and they engaged in dialogue. Their community was not intended to create anything but rather to define a space where each was supported and felt good. Many teachers saw the community as a haven that would be ongoing.

Finally, we found trust to be a cornerstone of community, one that we also found at the foundation of our earlier study. We contend that community simply cannot exist without trust in some form, at some level, expressed in some way. Administrators believed that trust was based on their roles, integrated into the underlying principles on which they operated and which they made clear to teachers and others. Thus, they hoped for trust from their employers and employees. They expressed trust in terms of the simple expectation of others that they, as administrators, had both good skills and good intentions to

do the right thing. Teachers, on the other hand, tended to see trust based on their prior experience with particular individuals and their own life experience with people and other teachers in general. They expressed trust in terms such as knowing who to trust and how to work with those they did not feel comfortable trusting.

### End Results

Needless to say, the two views of community led to different outcomes. Administrators hoped that community would not challenge the status quo of the school. The capacity of the school would hopefully be strengthened for the competition with other private schools, but the school itself would not change in any fundamental way. Thus, we claim that their view is one of strengthening the capacity of the school to accomplish its task. The growth in their personal and interpersonal capacity would only make them

better, more effective administrators. Teachers, by contrast, saw their community as building their personal and interpersonal capacity. True, they were only rebuilding what they had lost, but it was still capacity building in which they were engaged.

Both groups accepted the way that things were organized and that events would be played out at the school as they had always been. The changes that both administrators and teachers created and experienced simply tinkered with the structure rather than changing it. The school was physically altered but retained single-teacher classrooms that followed the same government-prescribed curricula. The communication system and the teaching technologies became electronic. The breakfast community did not seek to engage in second-order change, only to rekindle the sense of social community that had been lost.

### Final Thoughts

We had originally come to the school to understand the ways that a teacher developed her understanding and perception of what it meant to be educated, and to educate, within a community. We expected that such change would be an exploration of community as expressed in the literature: that community was a good thing.

Community was far more complex than we had anticipated, and it was not always a “good thing” for individuals. The form of community promoted by the school administration is prone to restrictive conformism and a certain degree of intolerance toward second-order change. Such a conception of community might be detrimental for some people because it could place constraints on individual voices, empowerment, and levels of contribution within the school. In addition, the school’s organization was highly robust, and civil community easily constrained any lingering effects from the first classroom we studied. In fact, the change hardly created the equivalent of a blip on the radar. In our second phase, no participant even mentioned a single problem created by the adaptive classroom community of the 1st grade teacher with her students in the first phase of our study. It had been a temporary, first-order change, and the students had simply moved back into traditional classes.

With so much hyperbole surrounding the creation of community in schools, we want to caution the reader to note that schools and teachers have often been highly resistant to change perhaps for good reason (Hall & Hord, 1984; Zembylas, 2003), that community is a very complex phenomenon that is perceived in different ways by different people; and that the term itself can be used to decorate traditional power arrangements. We have to remain aware that, to nurture the emergence of learning communities, change agents should establish new political relations among school administrators and teachers in a horizontal fashion, rather than a vertical one.

For us, the concept of school as community is fundamentally identified with plurality, not with commonality. This school was not one community because there was more than one in evidence to us. Therefore speaking of one school community or labeling different phenomena with the same name would be very misleading. In this study, the notion of community was experienced by teachers as on-the-job relationships among themselves. However, the context in which the teachers experienced “their” community also included administrators who saw steering and policy directions as unquestionably theirs to frame.

The different versions of community experienced by teachers and administrators in the same school at the same time highlights a much more attenuated and provisional nature of community in which the main pattern of interaction is coexistence rather than collaboration or collegiality. From this standpoint, we must always ask who is seeking to foster a sense of community, with whom, and why.

The ideal of community within a school should be questioned and made problematic because the term is widely used in both educational leadership and change literature, and it often appears to imply an unstated, unquestioned notion that schools should be communities of some sort if they are to be deemed innovative, effective, and responsive. What this study taught us, as researchers, is that individuals working in a school may be drawn together by quite different purposes and held together by quite different threads. Encompassing terms like “community” can make groups whose inner dynamics and intentions are quite different from one another appear similar from the outside simply because they exist side by side within a common, collaborative organizational structure (Abowitz, 1999).

There are several problems with the contention that schools or classrooms should be learning communities and these merit further research. For example, does conceptualizing schools as communities obscure the significantly different ways in which innovative and effective administrative practices, learning, and teaching occur? Does fostering community take away time or resources from other, more worthwhile, initiatives? More research is needed to develop a fuller understanding of the ways communities emerge naturally within schools and how they favor some individuals and marginalize others. Finally, we might inquire if, in fact, the traditional association of community with collaborative organizational structure, proximity, and familiarity can be an impediment to the formation of authentic communities.

Ultimately, we hope this study has cast some light on what community has meant to teachers and administrators in one school in hopes that it can help illuminate the problematic nature of the notion itself.

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