THE CREATION OF CULTURE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

John Andrew Harrison

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Dissertation Advisor _____

Committee _____

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The problem of the creation of culture by the school administrator in the middle school is examined through a series of nineteen case studies. The case studies were compiled over a two year period at a middle school in a small southern city that was undergoing a transition to a true middle school concept.

The cases are representative of the experiences of administrators, teachers, and students as the principal attempts to establish a culture which promotes civility. Nine elements critical to the development of culture emerge from the cases and are as follows: Commitment, it is demonstrated, will lead people to places authority cannot (or will not) go. There is a "language" a leader can use to discuss things with people that in the course of normal day to day life would not be discussed. It is important to find common ground to make communication of organizational priorities possible. Enthusiasm--"wanting to be there" really does make a difference in the creation of a culture. It is also important to know what frame of reference one is using when perceiving the world. What one expects to see flavors one's view of reality. Healthy dissent is a good thing in a school. The challenge for the leader is to keep dissent "healthy". The interaction between people as they deal with problems in the institution may be more important than the actual problem itself. Many people wrap the blanket of the institution around them to insulate them from responsibility. The "good" leader knows better than to be comforted or warmed by this insulation. Power is neither bad nor something to be feared, but rather a tool to be judiciously used. Finally, never underestimate the power of a big gesture. Symbols are much more powerful than they are given credit for being.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

For a number of years I have been plagued by the following question about education: "after so many billions of dollars spent, thousands of pages of data collected, and years of debate, why haven't things gotten better?" Schools, instead of being places of joy and learning, are frequently fortresses of isolation and alienation. The secondary science teacher typically has no idea what the social studies teacher is doing. Teachers are also subject to the indictment that they are not concerned with the student and his or her learning experiences. The focus instead rests in the dissemination of the curriculum in preparation for an end of the year state examination. As Nel Noddings (1992) puts it, despite teachers' attempts to try hard to care for their students, they are often "unable to make the connections that would complete caring relationships" (Noddings, 1992,p.2).

As a response to these problems, many school districts throughout the nation have incorporated the "middle school philosophy"--a nurturing, child-centered approach to teaching and learning--into their schools.. Yet the team of teachers who diligently seek the best interests of their students and attempt to provide a curriculum that is rich and relevant to the experiences of the children sadly remains the exception rather than the rule. Again, I must ask. "why?"

Assumptions and Definitions

It is important to note from the outset that I am a firm believer in the ability of the public school to provide a meaningful education for all children. Perhaps no other institution in American history has had the capacity for improving the lives

of children to the extent the public schools have had. The middle school philosophy in particular is one of the finest responses to the special needs of young adolescents ever created. Across the nation, highly dedicated educators are doing extraordinary things--often with meager supplies and less than inviting settings (Kozol, 1988).

While there are many positive and uplifting things that could be written about the struggle of teachers and administrators, the sad reality of the current state of many of America's schools is that they are not institutions in which people tend to enjoy being a participant. For many people--minorities, women, the socio-economically disadvantaged, school is ineffective and burdensome at best. Even the middle-class, white male to whom one may assume schools traditionally cater finds that it falls far short of meeting his needs and expectations. Sarason (1990) has indicated that for the most part, students find empty rhetoric that bears little relationship to their own social experience. What is it that students encounter as they progress through their public education? I need at this point to address three aspects of students' experiences that I see in many schools: the roles they take (or are given), alienation, and relevance.

In the *Dialetics of Freedom*, Maxine Greene (1988) describes a situation in which students are "minimal selves", overwhelmed by the circumstances they face in everyday life. They feel victimized and powerless. They study a curriculum unrelated to their own experiences, one that offers little in the way of preparation for either college or the workplace. Henry Giroux in *Education Under Siege* (1985) makes the same observation that children "have always suffered under their status as second class citizens in industrialized societies because most adults believe they are infected with the spirit of evil" (p. xi). Even at the end of the twentieth century, one can walk into a classroom in any school (or university for

that matter), and find small desks arranged in neat rows and columns as the standard of classroom organization. The focus still points to the teacher at the front of the room. How ironic it is that the first activity we engage in our doctoral classes is to rearrange the room from rows and columns to a circular arrangement in which we may freely interact with each other as well as the professor. How might the experiences of those who learned only from the teacher have been different if they too were taught in a setting where their own input was valued and welcome?

The teacher is still viewed as the disseminator of knowledge, the "Sage on the Stage" who imparts wisdom to empty minds as one might pour into empty glasses from a pitcher. The role of the student is one of subservience from the youngest kindergartner to the oldest graduate student. Giroux utilizes Willis' radical pedagogy of cultural politics to describe the process of reading the style, rituals, language, and systems of meaning that subordinate groups use to map out their position in the "cultural terrain" (p. 99). There is a complex interaction among different aspects of the experience that force him or her to accept a subordinate position in society. The rituals created by students may necessitate many skills and intelligences to carry them out, yet they are not ascribed value by those in a position to set definitions on what exactly value is constituted to be.

Alienation is a common theme found in the books, movies, and songs of both children and adults. Hollywood thrives on stories of misunderstood and alienated youth and has done so for generations. Giroux points out that the common response to expressions by children over their feelings of alienation is that of repression and arbitrary exercise of authority by adults. The point here, obviously, is about control. Habermas (1971) writes that control, along with understanding and liberation, are the three major aspects of human interest.

Clearly, we do not find all three given equal importance in our society and in our institutions like school.

There is a great deal of tension and conflict present over relationships at home, in school, and in the workplace. As the children of a society grow and begin to take a place in that society, many of the beliefs they held become absorbed into the dominant culture and become stripped of their political and social power. An example of this phenomenon is the proliferation among young black students of "X" paraphernalia. The political, moral, and social messages the writings of (or about) Malcolm X hold have been co-opted by those who would profit from the marketing of Spike Lee's movie. Adults have enormous power over the culture in which their children are raised. As adults wield that power, they exercise their prerogative to keep students out of issues that are of direct importance to them such as, "what should high school students know about the war in Vietnam?" or "should we make algebra a graduation requirement?" or even "why are we teaching algebra?".

To say that school is often irrelevant for students is an understatement. Since the *Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Educational Excellence, 1983) report was released eleven years ago, the public's critical eye has focused on schools in terms of accountability for student achievement. We have spent billions of dollars on "Basic Education Plans", yet the curriculum is continuing to get farther and farther away from experiences and interests that are basic and important in students' lives. The data show that the disparity between test scores of boys and girls in math and science is still significant. The disparity between black and white students is still profound--up to 50% or more by the middle school level (Butler & Sperry, 1991; Manning, 1993). Giroux notes that part of this continuing crisis in public education revolves around the fact that student ability to

"interrogate and communicate ideological content" continues to decrease. The teaching of scientific "facts" has replaced the quest for truth and understanding with the memorization of unconnected "factoids". As Adler (1988) puts it, "the imminent tragedy of the contemporary world is written in the fact that positivistic modern culture has magnified science and almost completely emancipated itself from wisdom" (p.73).

Often we find curricula that perpetuate splits between the academic and the vocational. Giroux equates high-status courses as dealing in the theoretical or abstract (like calculus courses), while low-status courses revolve around the practical (like keyboarding courses). This has been noted by other researchers who have found that in computer class selection, boys are preferentially steered toward programming classes while girls are directed toward basic typing and keyboarding skills (Sadker & Sadker, 1982).

As much as some might like to think that educational institutions are insulated from the outside world, the students who make up the institution are not. In a life increasingly void of meaning they look to their schools for answers only to find that their questions and concerns are not considered valid or are "off the subject". Senge (1990) notes that humans are, by nature, designed for learning. No one has to teach a child to walk or talk or stack building blocks. Children come to school, he adds, fully equipped for learning. It is the institutions of our society and their desire for control that reward performance instead of fostering curiosity that stifles so many young people. By beginning with students' questions and creating connections with real world issues, teachers are able to demonstrate high levels of involvement and creativity and counteract the drive for a curriculum that is controlling (Strahan ,1994). Indeed, it seems that student-centered practices can make a much larger difference in the quality of life and education young

adolescents experience. Arhar (1992) concluded that "teaming creates conditions that are directly related to student bonding" and are also indirectly related to improved achievement (p.157).

Greene makes the significant point that part of the problem that we have with highly structured rational, cognitive focus in classrooms has to do with what is left out. She asks, "is reasoning enough?" (p.119). Much of what school children are seeking is not satisfied by a lesson taught with a "six-step" lesson plan. Schools I have observed typically do not place much importance on students' attempts at making sense of their realities, but what can be more important to a student than his or her own life and struggles? The setting of the learning environment is critical to the education of the child.

Sarason (1972) defines a setting as "any instance when two or more people come together in new and sustained relationships to achieve common goals" (p.ix). Brubaker (1994) expands this concept and contrasts the history of settings and the culture of settings. The history of settings, he writes, is the "way we did things around here". The culture of setting refers to the "way we do things around here" (p.82). The way we do things in schools frequently adds little to the existing experiences of students.

The struggles of young people to make sense of their world is only part of what makes up the current version of school. It is also important to consider the effects of teachers on and in the system. One must consider the ramifications of both the roles of teachers and the de-humanizing experience of being a teacher.

The classroom teacher, as we all know, has far more to do with the dynamics of the classroom than introducing a lesson, teaching it, and giving homework. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) view reflective practice as predicated on the belief that organizational change begins within people. Unless behaviors

are changed, organizations will not change. They also feel that many of the roadblocks to change are rooted in the "unexamined assumptions guiding our stable behavior patterns" (p.1).

Giroux (p. 107) asserts that the teacher is involved in a constant tension between knowledge, values, and social relations. There is an antagonism between them that greatly effects classroom dynamics. Thelen (1981) argues that the classroom often seems to exist to perpetuate the virtues of "quiet, order, punctuality, and respect, and participation comes under the aegis of citizenship rather than inquiry or learnership" (p.131). Giroux believes that these actions of the teacher are "reproductive" in three distinct senses. First, the teacher engages in the teaching of skills in such a way that it perpetuates the continuity of the current socio-economic status. Instead of the myth of education as "the way up (or out)", Giroux sees it as, in reality, a leveler of society in that very few are able to use the fruits of their education to rise above their current socioeconomic level. Instead of empowering the disadvantaged, it is, according to radical theorists, about perpetuating the social division of labor. Second, the teacher has a great role in the perpetuation (or extinction) of cultural knowledge. It is not so much that children study the contributions of ancient Greece and Rome as it is that it is done to the exclusion of other cultures that might connect more to the experience of students. Finally, Giroux sees the teacher as perpetuating the current power structure of the state. He also notes the scarcity of research on non-rebellious resistance. Often students (particularly adolescents) act out their frustration with the system in manners that do not include open defiance. The age-old tricks kids play on substitutes and the class that always succeeds in getting the teacher off the subject are two examples.

Greene likewise sees the average classroom teacher as having a manifest lack of concern for the condition of his or her students. Upon reading this, I was struck by the remembrance of how often high school teachers told me "I teach biology" or "I teach history" as if the curricula were what they were teaching to instead of children.

Brubaker (1985) defines curriculum as being that which a person experiences as learning settings are created. It is important to recognize that this experience creates much of the reality of a situation for an individual--and that this is "both natural and desirable" (p.177). Greene, however, mourns the lack of "new visions" (p. 131) and asserts that few educators are courageous enough to try to "see" another way of being. Many teachers are bogged-down in the mundane tasks and inevitable conflicts that confront him or her during the day. Indeed, she makes the point that only those educators who feel compelled to search for their own freedom may be able to inspire children to search for their own. Unfortunately, too often teachers are so constrained that they cannot conceive of such a search. On those rare occasions when they do, we often see oppositional behavior that is based on perpetuating the existing ideologies rather than a liberating vision of reality. We encourage inquiry, but only when it is "safe". Although teachers are cognizant of more effective ways to foster learning, they often teach as they themselves were taught. Adler (1988) addresses this problem as he writes;

> There is a vicious circle in the teaching profession itself. The teachers of today are taught by the teachers of yesterday and teach the teachers of tomorrow. When this vicious circle, which has always existed, gets standardized by schools of education...Even if the great mass of teachers were to feel that there is something wrong with education, they could do nothing about it. They have been subjugated; worse than that, they have been indoctrinated by the reigning philosophy so that they no longer have enough free judgment to be critical (p. 78).

The profession of teaching is subject to enormous control. In his book, *Creative Curriculum Leadership*, Dale Brubaker (1994) notes a comment I once made in class to the effect that, "in what other profession are you unable to use the bathroom when you need to." Giroux gives voice to this frustration in discussing the proletarianization of teaching--a move toward making teaching a technical skill and the downplaying of the importance of human interaction in teaching. Indeed, a number of makers of curriculum materials proudly tell administrators that their method is "teacher-proof". For the last thirty-five years we have seen curriculum "experts" tell teachers how to teach their material. Greene accedes that all too often, teachers quietly submit to this treatment. Even in situations where individual freedom of expression is encouraged, many teachers simply fear being different and do not risk doing things that might prove meaningful for kids but "rock the boat." Despite the prospect of what Marcuse calls "the emancipatory possibility of relevance", many teachers choose to play it safe. The pressure Gramsci calls hegemony, described by Greene (1988) to mean direction by moral and intellectual coercion, to meet government standards for student outcomes as well as community expectations is fierce.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define paradigm as "the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator, not only in choices of methodology, but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p.105). There is no way to prove or disprove any of these sets of beliefs in a conventional sense. No one paradigm is "right". Each is a human construction that attempts to make sense of the world.

Those who seek a liberating view of education recognize the uphill battle that they face against those who see (and use) schools as vehicles for the

production of human capital. Specifically, Giroux (1993) indicts the hidden agenda of American education where children are prepared to take their place in society as orderly, well-behaved workers. Greene (1988) also insists that schools impose value systems and constraints in order to channel the energies of the individuals in such a way that it suits the requirements of our society. Thelen (1981) concurs and adds that to get jobs done,

> you have to have organizations; to have organizations you have to have members, persons have to know who they are, what they value, and what the *quid pro quo* is. On the other hand, the person cannot develop a 'self' except as he tries to participate with others in a variety of enterprises; in order to participate with others, there has to be an organization; and for organizations to exist there has to be some purpose (p.101).

Myers and Rowan (1977) see the organization as a system. They see them as "systems of coordinated and controlled activities that arise when work is embedded in complex networks of technical relations and boundary-spanning exchanges. In modern societies, formal organizational structures arise in highly institutionalized contexts" (p.340).

Much of what I have seen and described in the writings of others focuses on the culture of the middle school. Specifically, many schools have stunted or missing application of organizational history, ritual, and symbol needed to help create a cohesive and effective organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Too many school systems labor under the bureaucracy of a central office that leaves precious little room for people. In addition, not only do many schools lack an understanding of their culture, but at the system level it is also not inculcated (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) write that a critical understanding of the relationship between culture and schooling should begin with a definition of

culture as "a set of activities by which different groups produce collective memories, knowledge, social relations, and values within historically constituted relations of power. Culture is about the production and legitimation of particular ways of life, and schools often transmit a culture that is specific to class, gender, and race" (p.50).

Peck (1993) sees civility as a consciously motivated organizational behavior that requires consciousness of one's self, the people around him or her, and the consciousness of the larger organization, thus relating the self to all of the others. Shulman and Carey (1984) define civility as "the capacity to function as a citizen, as an active member of a group, in a way that benefits both the individual and the aggregate" (p.501).

Purpose of the Study

The beliefs I hold about the current system of education in this country caused me to wonder what might happen if the local school was altered to create an organization built around the rituals, history, symbols, and experiences of its individual staff members. What, I wondered, might such a school look like? This fundamental question led me to examine the organization of the middle school from a different perspective. It became increasingly clear that quantitative analysis was less appropriate for either study or implementation than a qualitative analysis.

I began to examine the culture of the middle school organization by collecting "artifacts" of the culture, observing effective and ineffective teachers, visiting other middle schools where the culture was more (or less) conducive to learning, and interviewing teachers and other administrators to gauge their impressions of what a middle school could (and should) be like.

In order for me to look at the phenomena of public education, I must deal with a number of epistemological issues. What is the reality of the school? For that matter, is the reality of the school what I perceive it to be? How does society perceive it and want it to be? What are the moral and ethical implications of my vision? All of these questions seek to understand the "nature" of schooling (and perhaps education). To be able to frame the discussion, it is necessary to first lay down some ground-work. Does epistemology--the theory of the nature and boundaries of knowledge, precede ontology--the theory of being and existence? Or does epistemology come after ontology? Or, are they simultaneous rather than linear or sequential? What is the "reality" of school and what does it mean to me as an administrator?

I studied much of the current literature on the creation of cultures in organizations to learn what I could from the corporate world as well as the educational world. Writers and researchers like Terry Deal, Chris Argyris, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot, Joseph Campbell, and M. Scott Peck led me to a deeper understanding of the importance of symbol and ritual in the creation and perpetuation of organizational cultures. Most importantly, I had the opportunity to interact with the system and experience the organization first-hand.

I have been greatly impressed by the fact that we still have a tremendous split in education between our espoused theories and our theories-in-use (Osterman, 1990; Senge, 1990). As educators we espouse many beliefs about learning and children. At a deeper level, though, we do not necessarily believe the same things. Our actions tend to derive from these deeper theories-in-use. Our workshops tend to deal with our espoused theories. Consequently, we have not honestly implemented many of the research efforts of the past two or three decades aimed at improving the lot of middle school teachers and students.

My own school is an example of a school in transition. Although it has been called a middle school for almost ten years, this is really only the second year of true middle school teaching and administration. Many teachers are still stuck in old junior high school routines, symbols, and rituals. Our efforts over the last two years have brought great progress at the cost of much soul-searching and upheaval. I am mindful of the words of John Murphy (1992), who wrote,

> Change always upsets someone, especially in public organizations where individuals are tempted to view whatever has become customary as an entitlement. For every bold and courageous effort to reform the existing structure, there will be naysayers, schemers, and chronic dissidents, who will use every strategy, moral or immoral, to fight change" (p.27).

Fostering the development of a culture that promotes the child-centered philosophy of the middle school concept amidst these conditions is challenging, but possible given an administration dedicated to the task and a faculty and staff willing and ready to join them.

Vail (1972) gives us a very concise definition of Heidegger's view of phenomenology--the study of the development of awareness or consciousness. For Heidegger, phenomenology means, "letting-be-seen-that-which-shows-itself" (p.14). The letting-be-seen part of this definition gives the impression of some sort of apprehension (or comprehension) while self-showing requires some sort of an audience. This is a fundamental aspect of our nature. What is important about this is the fact that for Heidegger, an object does not show itself as something, but rather it shows itself in the act of the showing. We hear a motorcycle in the distance and recognize it to be a motorcycle, not an assemblage of sounds that we put together to come up with the category "motorcycle". Olafson (1987) cites Heidegger as claiming that the primary task of phenomenology "is to give an

account of the being of the intentional, and this means the mode of being of the entity" (p. 28).

Heidegger refused to believe that you could experience something and then have a name for it. The occurrence of something and your naming (or recognizing) of that something are both founded in some "primary occurrence", yet until you have language, you cannot name it. The thought intrigues me that it may be the language itself that speaks, and not people like Heidegger who are bound to speak it. Olafson points out that Heidegger believed the "unitary presence of entities as entities is best understood as a kind of saying (*Sagen*), and that, as this 'saying', language, in its unitary essence, is prior to all individual speakers and all natural languages in the same way that presence is prior to all particular perceptions and memories and choices and so on" (p. 187). In *Being and Time*, though, he states that meaning is an integral part of the "world as presence" and as such precedes discourse and language derived from discourse.

To summarize what is a rather involved and convoluted line of argument, this question, like most of those that deal with epistemological issues, comes back to the "knower". All questions of meaning must be examined in context; therefore, I must begin to move into a discussion of issues of reality and meaning from a phenomenological viewpoint in order to make some sense out of the experiences that we call "school".

Language, for Heidegger, precedes all thought. As you expand your ability to speak the language, you expand your scope of "reality". As a person continually experiences new things, their perception naturally improves. Here then is a starting point in examining our ability to "test" the nature of a given reality on the basis of meaning.

Ontology is generated by the phenomenon of our conscious perceptions. Our perceptions, as I indicated, are subject to and modified by, our experiences. The bottom line is that we have no reality without our prior perceptions. Heidegger also believed that we only have reality as it relates to the past. We re-call and we re-member what we have previously learned. The present is interpreted by our impressions of past experiences and all of our thoughts about the future are, of necessity, based upon extrapolations of past experiences into situations that may one day be.

If we can make the assumption that many of us have commonalties in our experiences, we can assume that these common experiences will generate a similar view of reality. The only way I can conceive of being able to come to a "generalized meaning" would be to search for these common experiences. These common experiences will also modify common perceptions into some form of a common version of reality.

The problem I have with this solution is that if we are dealing with an organization or society that is largely homogeneous, this ought to occur relatively easily. In a diverse and heterogeneous institution like the public school, however, there is so much variety in the cultural background and life experiences that the students (and staff) bring to school that it seems rather unlikely that we can have many truly common experiences. Any given public school (at least those in desegregated or integrated areas) is likely to include children from a vast range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. True, there are a number of fundamentally "American" experiences that cut across socio-economic and ethnic lines with which we attempt to acculturate students, but with the modern trend toward multi-cultural education, many of the experiences that previous generations

were subjected to are no longer extant. This diminishes many of the acculturating effects (for better or worse) of school.

Given the great possibility that people may not interpret experiences in similar fashion, we have to deal with the effects of misinterpretation. Heidegger is concerned with ascribing meaning to things erroneously. He notes that it is often difficult to distinguish what is real and what is an illusion. Olafson writes,

> The concept of representation is just the concept of a given, an appearance that is neutral with respect to any question about what is really the case with the world...Supposedly, it was only after various kinds of tests had been applied to these data to determine what kinds of predictions could reliably be based on them that definite assertions about what is the case in the world could be made; and these of course, would be logically posterior to the apprehension of the individual data themselves. This is the distinction between what is really the case and what only seems to be the case; and there is good reason to think that we must be, tacitly, in possession of this distinction if we are to be able to introduce the concept of a sense-datum at all (p.10).

Heidegger's discussion of sense-data reintroduces a phenomenological imperative into this discussion of meaning. It is also important to note that while there certainly is always the possibility for mis-communication or misinterpretation, humans seem to be, on the whole, driven toward finding meaning. Polanyi and Prosch (1975) believe that "man's whole cultural framework, including his symbols, his language arts, his fine arts, his rites, his celebrations, and his religions, constitutes a vast complex of efforts--on the whole, successful--at achieving every kind of meaning" (p.179). Everything, it seems, is full of meaning, but I keep returning to the importance of asking "what reality is constituted by this meaning?"

What was probably my most significant epistemological "rude-awakening" occurred when it became clear to me that organizations do not have an objective

existence as might a chair or a person. Instead, any organization is really the sum total of all of its members who are held together by a common mission, visions, ritual, history, and sense of reality. Thus, no two organizations are ever exactly alike. This is a good news/bad news realization. The good news is, if we can affect the people in the organization, we can alter it in important ways. The bad news is, our attempts to deal with individual perceptions of reality using a corporate response and language of organizational behavior may in fact be inappropriate. In addition, change, though often necessary, is never without conflict and turmoil. As Machiavelli wrote,

> It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution, and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new one.

Methodology

Smith (1979) argues that "every research worker has an interesting story to tell on the evolution of his or her own work. More of these stories need to be told if we are to have a useful and potent theory of methodology." He postulates the following five processes that should occur during the preliminary phases of a qualitative research project:

1) Origins of problems
2) Intuitive feel of the problems
3) Guiding models and images of an end in view
4) Foreshadowed problems
5) Competing theories

Smith notes that there are a wide variety of problems about us. One can intuitively sense or feel whether or not the problem as considered is conducive for study. He also writes that one typically comes across a piece or group of research that captures the essence of what might be done. In "foreshadowed problems" the investigator comes to an awareness of the issues and debates germane to the problem of study. Finally, competing theories attack from various positions and lead the researcher to establish his or her own position. Smith's model has been useful to me in thinking about the creation of culture in the middle school as I have sought to establish a credible methodology with which to study the problem.

A qualitative methodology will be used to study the creation of culture in a middle school. Before discussing any aspect of my methodology, it is appropriate to examine my rationale for choosing such a plan of action. This rationale will be based upon personal professional autobiography, impressions drawn from previous research, problems that make quantitative research particularly inappropriate, and phenomenological framework.

My interest in the creation of culture in the middle school had its roots in the many experiences I have had with middle school faculty and students. The experiences garnered while serving in several different capacities in middle schools have provided a rich opportunity for growth and understanding.

I began my middle school experience as the first lateral entry science teacher in the region. The state had a large shortfall of science teachers and I was hired to teach seventh and eighth grade science in a K-8 elementary school. It rapidly became apparent that my style of teaching was not congruous with many of the other teachers in my 7-8th building. There was a strong desire to modify my curriculum to meet the specific needs and interests of the students. I was fortunate to find a communications skills teacher amenable to team teaching and we

attempted to initiate many of the philosophies of the "middle school concept" into our lessons. It was surprising to discover the high degree of resistance received from many older, more experienced teachers to the innovations brought into the classroom. We were repeatedly told--"who cares about your test scores, we just don't do things like this around here!"

The move to a larger, urban school system was accompanied by the assumption that "surely here everyone will want to do interdisciplinary units, team teach, use multiple methods of evaluation, make portfolios, and the like". To my surprise, most of the teachers were hard working, dedicated, and absolutely uninterested in affecting any change in their practices that might make their classrooms more relevant places for children.

A watershed for me came with the Los Angeles riots following the Rodney King episode. My eighth graders returned to school full of hurt, concern, and confusion. If ever there were the opportunity for "the teachable moment", this was it. After some hasty planning with the communication skills and social studies teachers we threw out the day's plans and spent the time talking, listening, and guiding out students through issues of justice, the Constitution, due process, civil rights, and civil disobedience. Near the end of the day, we went outside for a memorable kickball game--with black and white students having a much different attitude than they came to school with. Several times over the years former students have come up and said, "you know I remember when you..."

One might ask where the math teacher was during all of this. She believed that her lesson on multiplying algebraic fractions was far more important to the children and refused to change her plans. We carried on without her, but two important lessons about culture became clear that day. First, teachers do have the ability to work together to make serious and lasting impression on how their

students see their world. A corollary to this is that teachers often are fearful about taking power or responsibility for fear that if something goes wrong they will "get in trouble". Second, the principal and assistant principals diffused the complaints of the math teacher and actually joined us for brief periods--interacting and sharing with the teachers and students. It was certainly the most humane and liberating day I spent in the classroom.

I entered administration dedicated to perpetuating the spirit of community and civility I experienced in the classroom. My first administrative role was that of a central office supervisor. As a middle school generalist I reported to an assistant superintendent and was responsible for implementing and supervising curriculum in the system's 14 middle schools. In traveling throughout the county I encountered many dedicated teachers who felt as I did--and many more who did not. It was an excellent opportunity to obtain a view of "the big picture" of the organization. This turned out to be particularly handy when I was assigned to the "line" position of an assistant principalship.

This assignment was to a middle school that was coming out of a difficult time. The former principal had left in disgrace and the staff was fragmented, angry and hurt. Also assigned to this school was a first year principal with whom I had worked before and respected highly. We immediately set upon a course of creating a new culture for the school. This process is still ongoing and is quite significant in terms of what we set out to create and what happened to us as we got there. Given the nature of this problem, it seems that my professional experiences predispose me to select a methodology that will allow me to utilize the tools of interpretive inquiry.

A review of the literature will demonstrate that many researchers have come to the conclusion that positivist paradigms have failed to provide the insight

needed to improve the quality of the education we provide our students. It is increasingly apparent that a mode of what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call "naturalistic inquiry" will better serve my efforts to present a coherent vision of the creation of a culture within the framework of the organization.

Quantitative research has the difficulty of being reductionist in nature. I intend to demonstrate a more holistic approach to the problems inherent in the creation of culture and how the professional experiences of the staff have changed.

In seeking a voice with which to construct my inquiry, it is evident that phenomenology will constitute an important aspect of the project. Phenomenologically speaking, what I seek to do is reveal my experiences in context with that of the experiences of others, both in and out of my staff, probe for meaning in these experiences, and consider the realities we have constructed. Suransky (1980) notes that phenomenology is predicated on the experiences of those involved and involves the process of intuition, reflection, and description to produce a work in which process rather than product is important. From this approach it follows that theory will emerge as a result of the process--not an initial assumption or hypothesis to which one seeks to make facts fit. For the purpose of this study, theory will be defined after the manner of E.C. Macdonald, who considered theory in its simplest sense as a "map of the territory".

Campbell (1974) writes that "all common-sense and scientific knowledge is presumptive". He believes that if one designs a study based totally on skepticism, one gives up the scientific ability to "know". On the other hand, to simply give credence to anything at all is to give up consistency and simplicity. He posits that ordinary knowing and science are located somewhere in between the extremes.

I agree strongly with the position of Holstein and Gubrium (1994) that while language and meaning structures are public, they are also locally

circumscribed. They posit that the body of knowledge that exists locally coalesces into a culture. That culture consists of "small groups, formal organizations, and other domains of everyday life that condition what we encounter and how we make sense of it" (p.268). Douglas (1986) is surely on an important track as she notes that institutions are, in reality, social conventions that involve the normal way "we do things around here".

If it is the case (and I propose that it is) that organizations like middle schools are largely socially constructed entities, then it follows that the only way to make meaningful theory about the experience of the middle school culture is through the qualitative study and interpretation of the various aspects that comprise its culture. Autobiography, case study, and narrative play an important role in this study.

Smith (1994) considers portraiture, case study, and autobiography to all be slightly different approaches to "life writing". Writing of life experiences blurs the century-old distinction between "hard science" and "story". Smith acknowledges the great increase in qualitative study in recent years as a sign of autobiography's role in "creating paradigmatic shifts in the structure of thought". He finds several purposes served by writing lives. Among them are the identification of patterns with respect to concepts, hypotheses, theories, and metaphors. Action research in particular is useful in education as educators study their own practices and the effects those practices have on their students.

Carter (1993) concurs with this view and sees the use of story in qualitative research as "capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal, and, thus, redress the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches". Story, for her, is a "mode of knowing" in which the voice of teachers can come forth in an elaboration of their

very authentic experiences. Carter believes that the analysis of cases must be carefully done, but holds the possibility for presenting a framework upon which the experiences of educators can be examined through their "stories".

Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) see importance in the analysis of narrative for its semiotic content. Semiotics is the science of signs and can yield a "systematic analysis of symbolic systems. Although semiotics is based on language, language is but one among many sign systems of varying degree of unity, applicability, and complexity". Manning and Cullum-Swan find that semiotics is predicated on socially-constructed and maintained connections between expression and content. They note that "typically, these connections are shared and collective, and provide an important source of the ideas, rules, practices, codes, and recipe knowledge called 'culture'. Culture is a reference point--a means by which one comes to believe in the reality of the expression".

Stake (1994) also stresses the significance of collective case studies in the search for insight and meaning. Cases are chosen, he asserts, "because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases". In this instance, that larger collection of cases refers to the institution of public school. Triangulation, he notes, is a useful tool in clarifying meaning by looking at multiple experiences from several different viewpoints. By looking at an issue from a number of different aspects, one may use triangulation to help with concerns about "validity". Stake proposes a six-fold set of responsibilities the qualitative researcher must accept if using case study:

1) Bound the case and conceptualize the object of the study
2) Select phenomena, themes, or issues to emphasize
3) Look for patterns with which to develop the issue

4) Triangulate important observations to clarify interpretations

5) Find alternative avenues of exploration

6) Develop generalizations or conclusions about the case.

Davis (1993) considers the impact of narrative on her studies in elementary education. She sees narrative as belonging to a mode that "deals in psychic reality, intuition, and feeling. It employs synthesis, analogy, and creativity". She notes that according to the theory of narrative, one cannot legitimately separate action, cognition, and affect. What we think, do, and feel are all interconnected. Our ability to represent human action is where "story" enters the picture. It is where we can "relate temporal experience through organized structures of memory".

These authors make a strong case for a qualitative research design utilizing autobiography, case study, and narrative. By using these tools, I seek to construct meaning out of the experiences in which I have participated. In chapter two, related literature is reviewed. The research methodology utilized in this inquiry is the subject of chapter three. Narratives, cases, and a professional autobiography comprise chapter four. The theory which will emerge from the cases as well as possibilities for future study will be discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To gain some insight into the numerous factors that influence the creation of culture in a middle school (or any other organization) it is necessary to examine a number of different aspects of schools and other institutions. I have divided this review into five major sections. The first section will consider the institution of public schools as a place where meaning is made and conveyed. The effects of recent paradigm shifts will also be discussed. The second section examines organizations with a focus on leadership behavior. The third section deals with the subject of organizational frames of reference. There are several different levels of perception from which individuals in an institution operate as they seek to make sense of their world. The fourth major area of investigation in this dissertation focuses on some of the people and activities that comprise organizational life. The role and use of heroes, symbols, and ritual are discussed in separate sections. Finally, elements specifically involved with the creation of culture are elaborated upon in the fifth section.

Schools as they are: Paradigms and Reform

In order to better understand the current state of public schools, it is necessary to examine the paradigms and reform efforts that have resulted in education's contemporary form. Fullan and Miles (1992) have analyzed current reform effort and found that educators need to deepen the way in which they think about change. Few people, they believe, know what actually constitutes genuine

change. "Reformers talk", they write, "of the need for deeper, second-order changes in the structures and cultures of schools, rather than superficial first-order changes. But no change would be more fundamental than a dramatic expansion in the capacity of individuals and organizations to understand and deal with change" (p.745).

They cite seven reasons for the failure of typical reform efforts. Faulty maps of change, they argue, often lead to erroneous destinations. Unless a map is a valid representation of the territory, it will not take us where we wish to go. Another major reason for the failure of education reform lies in the fact that the problems are incredibly complex. The solutions, therefore, will have to be as complex. Real reform will require changes in school culture, relationships, values, and expectations. The third reason is that symbolic (and often irrelevant) changes take precedence over substance. While symbols may crystallize feelings and give collective meaning, if they are not followed up with effective action, change will not come. Reforms also fail because of our desire for the "quick fix" to problems. Such attempts ignore important aspects of reform--and frequently make things worse. States are hasty to jump on reform "fads" as legislatures or think-tanks introduce "the solution" to the problems of education. Improvements in the structure and organization of schools are often easy to initiate, but without an accompanying change in school culture, they will not "take". Change, it must also be noted, should be accompanied by things which remain the same. In this manner, change and stasis co-exist.

It is difficult to understand the reluctance many people have toward change. Perhaps this stems from long years of being the "recipients" of reform efforts instead of partners in the process. Resistance can run the gamut from simply not understanding the point of change to disagreeing philosophically and working to

oppose it. In any case, legitimate resistance must be expected and dealt with. The duration of a number of education reforms must also be evaluated. Many efforts that start to demonstrate change and improvement fall prey to politics, are not sustained, and wither. It is not enough, therefore, to simply show isolated pockets of short-term success. For reform to have a genuine chance of succeeding, it must be systemic and supported. Finally, the very lack of understanding and knowledge about reform often leads to failure. It is common to hear statements such as "ownership is essential to reform" . This statement may be true, but cannot serve as a lynch-pin for reform. It is only one small part of the total picture. Ownership alone is not sufficient.

Glickman (1989) has examined the last few decades of education reform and finds that the trend toward legislated, mandated programs is essentially a top-down movement that views administrators and teachers as the *problem* of poor schools, not the solution to them. He also notes that every three to five years we have a cycle of legislated solutions in response to the latest "blue ribbon" commission. The response of these panels is to typically reinforce more of what is currently not working. He takes the view that "there do not, and never will, exist scientifically validated best practices of supervision and teaching. Rather, best practice means what is best for the students closest to them" (p.6). More doses of the same bad medicine will not cure the ails of public education. Glickman declares that,

> Schools will not improve until those people closest to students--teachers--are given the choice and responsibility to make collective informed decisions about teaching practice. The arena of choice, responsibility, and decision making may be small and restrictive for some staffs to begin with, but the direction should be to enlarge choice, responsibility, and decision making over time (p.8).

Sarason (1990) would agree on the tremendous need for change. He concludes that schools have by and large been uninteresting places for children and adults. Because of their physical and intellectual isolation, schools have the difficult task of trying to stimulate and encourage students' curiosity while trying to make the acquisition of knowledge important and meaningful for them.

Sarason contends that,

> The complete inability of educational reformers to examine the possibility that to create and sustain for children the conditions for productive growth without those conditions existing for educators is virtually impossible. If that is true, wholly or in large part, it is because we have so over-learned the standard answer to why and for whom schools exist that we have been rendered no less inadequate than our students in regard to critical thinking (p.147)

Sarason believes that schools should recognize the obvious fact that children come to school already prepared to think and do. They are motivated and eager learners. "They want to conform, but to them, conformity does not mean giving up or setting aside the world most familiar to them" (p.162). They seek instead to integrate new experiences into their existing frames of reference.

Fullan (1985) notes that change is at once both simple and complex. Therein, he writes, "lies its fascination". He observes that while a good deal of research has been conducted on school improvement, little has been made on the "how and why" of improvement. He asserts that "it is necessary to understand the psychological dynamics and interactions occurring between individuals in schools as they experience change before we can decide which strategies are most effective" (p.396). Marshall (1985b) agrees and adds that, given the great complexity involved in educational reform, change introduced into a system not

completely understood is as likely to produce deleterious effects as it is the desired outcome.

Fullan identifies three problems with our understanding of current research on effective schools and school reform. First, the factors authors list as important in one location may not necessarily be extrapolated to other situations. In other places, other factors may predominate. Second, factors listed tend to show statistical correlations rather than explanations of results. He calls for an examination of the relationships between factors across a range of schools with many different conditions. Finally, Fullan notes that the existing research focuses on the effectiveness of schools--not how they got that way. The process of change and causality needs to be explored. How the factors operate in a particular context is of more importance than the mere identification of these factors in isolation.

Deal (1990) provides insight into how school cultures evolve. He notes that reform efforts tend to focus on correcting existing weaknesses. This "tinkering" with the structure of schools has not produced successful results. Instead, he proposes a transformation in the deeper structures of schools and schooling. To achieve this, he writes, we must recognize that in our existing paradigm schools are "complex social organizations held together by a symbolic webbing" instead of "formal systems driven by goals, official roles, commands, and rules" (p.7).

Olson (1988) examines the difficulties in deciding what one wants to restructure. She quotes Lee Shulman who asserts,

> For too many people, restructuring has become an end in itself. They've lost sight of the fact that the purpose of restructuring is not empowerment, but enablement. It's not to give teachers more power; it's to give them the ability to respond appropriately to kids. The way to go about this is first to ask, "What are the sorts of things that teachers are not doing, or cannot do, that would be good for kids?"

> And then, "How would you change the structure to make things possible?" (p.11).

Shulman and Carey (1984) relate that students do not merely learn what they are taught in the classroom. Instead, they transform that information--making sense, actively constructing and reflecting on those constructs as they learn and undergo socialization.

Sarason (1993b) also believes that socialization is a process in which a person becomes what others wish him or her to become. He does not mean this to imply that the process of socialization is inherently good or bad. What is evil about this process is the degree to which socialization can disconnect the goals and values of the person from the organization. Students and teachers, he declares, "live in disconnected worlds" both from each other and the values which guide their lives outside of the institution (p.29).

Giroux (1993) sees a similar threat in our modern education reform movements. He feels that the current paradigm places teachers in the position of being unable to provide the "intellectual and moral leadership for our nation's youth" (p.272). The teacher is often reduced to a technician who carries out the will of far-removed "experts" on education. He sees numerous ideological and material forces leading to what he terms "the proletarianization of teacher work"--in which the art of teaching is reduced to mere *techne*. He cites "teacher-proof" curriculum packaging as an example of this trend. What educator has not seen the "ready to use--straight from the kit" type of lesson? What is gained in providing materials to teachers is lost if the teacher is not given the opportunity to adapt lessons to meet the particular needs of his or her students.

Educational reform is driven by the values not only of the curriculum leaders, but also of the marketplace. As a result, reform often ignores social justice and ethical behavior. According to Giroux, the correct approach to educational

reform starts with considering the teacher as a "transformative intellectual", an integral part of the process of the development and implementation of curriculum. Transformative intellectuals are those who reflect on the ideological principles that inform their practice, connect pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues, and work together to share ideas, "exercise power over the conditions of their labor, and embody in their teaching a vision of a better and more humane life" (p.276).

Giroux believes that school is more than just a place where knowledge and values are transmitted. He sees them as "places that represent forms of knowledge, language practices, social relations and values that are particular selections and exclusions from the wider culture. As such, schools serve to introduce and legitimate *particular* forms of social life...Schools are not neutral sites" (p.276). Since schools are not neutral sites, teachers cannot be neutral either. They must assume a position on what knowledge and values will be transmitted to students and the method through which the transmission will occur. He terms this "the necessity of making the pedagogical more political and the political more pedagogical". School then, for Giroux, is about defining both meaning and power relations. Democratic society cannot tolerate the constantly expanding gap between the advantaged population with knowledge and education and the growing underclass without them.

Adler (1988) adds that, "for the most part, the members of the teaching profession are over-trained and undereducated...A teacher should have a cultivated mind, generally cultivated regardless of his field of special interest, for he must be the visible moving representative of the cultural tradition to his (sic) students" (p.79). Purpel (1993) also acknowledges that education is "a weak profession", but

indicts our society's ambivalence about power and the value of education as being a major contributing factor to that weakness.

Eisner (1988a) considers the role of experience in education. Experience is more than just an event; he considers it to be an achievement. One of the primary tasks of education is to give young people the tools needed to develop the skills and broaden the language required to give meaning to their experiences. "Brains are born", he writes. "Minds are made" (Eisner, 1988b, p.31). He makes the important point that qualities that we cannot experience, we cannot know. The primary tool that we use in making sense of the world around us, he submits, is language. Without language, there can be no knowing or experiencing as they are fully dependent upon it. Language not only conveys information to others, it is also shaped in that it becomes more sophisticated in articulating the world that we see. Language, though is often used (or co-opted) in an attempt to impose one version of reality or truth to the exclusion of others. An example of this is our belief in (and language surrounding) the concept of mind-body dualism.

American culture tends to look at the minds "we make" as being separate from the body. This separation dates back to the philosophy of Plato and is, Eisner feels, "philosophically naive, psychologically ill-conceived, and educationally mischievous. There is no competent work of the hand that does not depend on the competent use of the mind. The mind and senses are one, not two" (p.31). The mind/body dichotomy is not necessarily a given. In fact, it seems to be an entirely man-made and unnecessary problem. As Geertz (1973) puts it, "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs" (p.5). The "language" that the educational leader uses to spin those webs is of great importance as it can yield status or privilege to some and insignificance and exclusion to others.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) warn us, however, that language may not the only source of meaning. It is not capable of encompassing the habits, practices and relationships that "forge collective struggles whose strengths are rooted in lived experiences, felt empathy, and concrete solidarity"--elements which surpass what language can describe. I am not altogether certain, however, that events we cannot put into words have relevance in our culture. If we cannot speak it, how can we know it? Our culture is our language and our language is our culture.

Murphy (1992) believes that "in the new, emerging paradigm for school reform, all school system personnel--the superintendent, central office staff, and building principals--must redesign their activities to *support the classroom teacher*. All staff exist to assist teachers to be more effective" (p.31). He also strongly asserts that "a commitment to improvement means a commitment to more than rhetoric. It means that fundamental policies that guide the behavior of the school system staff must change, and the way in which staff actually practice education must also change" (p.82).

Murphy indicates that there are nine basic principles inherent in fulfilling those changes in educational practice. All nine must be important for any of them to work.

- Change must be recognized as a stressful process
- School system policies and practices must be guided by a clear, compelling, and controlling mission statement.
- Learner outcomes must be clearly understood and assessed regularly, and staff evaluated on the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.
- New school structures must be characterized by a process of decentralization
- Educators must be effective instructional leaders

- Outmoded or inappropriate curricula must be restructured to accommodate student needs
- High expectations must underlie all aspects of the school improvement process
- Restructuring must be based on meaningful data
- Educational leaders must have constant feedback concerning the condition of education in their schools (p.89).

Harrison et. al. (1989) examine the mistakes that schools frequently make when they initiate site-based management practices. They find that, too often, principals incorrectly try to use the decision-making arena for all school improvement issues dealing with management and curriculum. In addition, decisions made at the school level frequently conflict with central office staff who have escaped restructuring and continue to make decisions delegated to schools. The loss of decision-making authority in many central offices has resulted in a control or "turf" struggle in which decisions are blocked or manipulated by central offices. A major mistake made in the development and implementation of site-based management has been the lack of adequate understanding of the need for principals and staffs to adjust to a new manner of "business as usual".

Sarason (1971) has recognized that most of the people concerned with educational reform have little or no basis for understanding the social structure of schools, their traditions, or how they generally accommodate change or reform. Policy makers have been remiss in not considering the affect of reforms on school culture (Deal, 1980). Past reforms, he reminds us, have tended to weaken schools as organizations instead of producing the expected results. He writes that the way to educational reform is to be found inside of each school in the form of the multitude of traditions, symbols, and culture. Telling good stories is a surprisingly effective way to establish and perpetuate effective school culture. Wallace (1991) finds two reasons story telling is valuable to principals. First, it serves as a "lens"

through which leaders may see how to move their schools ahead. Hidden messages, thoughts, and feelings come through to the surface in story and provide a wealth of useful information. Second, principals gain validation and support for the risks they take as they share the joys and pains of leadership. Our modern language is full of jargon but devoid of spirited story-telling. Such story-telling needs to be utilized to communicate and reinforce the values of education in general and school in particular. Finally, informal networks and power structures within the school need to be cultivated and rewarded. Attempting to disarm or otherwise fight this informal network is generally hazardous to an administrator's professional health. Even lounge gossip can communicate important aspects of the school culture critical to successful reform efforts.

The latest reform efforts and educational priorities of the federal government have been enumerated in the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" (1994). The bill establishes eight national goals that are supposed to pave the way for state and local education reform. Through these goals the US Department of Education seeks to address their own goals of equal access to education and the promotion of educational excellence. The act contains the following eight goals:

- All children will start school ready to learn.
- The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.
- American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students will learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
- US students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

- Every adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

- Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

- The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

- Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Individual states are responsible for implementing strategies to meet these goals by instituting processes to develop student performance standards, fair assessment instruments, curriculum alignment, and adequate teacher preparation. (PL 103-227).

Secretary of Education Richard Riley (1994) spoke on the concern that the reform goals of the federal government are rather vague and lack specific mandates. He responded that,

> There is no one formula for success...Each community must find the new connections that uniquely respond to the complexity, demographics, history, and needs of all of its children...Our role--indeed, the new federal role--is to encourage and move reform along...but it is up to you, you who are at the point of learning. You must believe in reform, must work for it, must own it.

North Carolina has responded to the national mandate through the formation of the North Carolina Education Standards and Accountability Commission. This commission has studied the state of education in North Carolina and concluded, not surprisingly, that high school graduates do not have

the skills in mathematics, science, language arts, information-processing, and problem-solving necessary for success in the 21st century work force (Houston, 1994). The commission believes that students must develop and apply skills in the following areas: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, using numbers, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, and working as a team. They are now in the process of drafting benchmarks for these goals.

The National Middle School Association has also prepared its own position paper (National Middle School Association, 1994) in which it presents a call for a change in existing middle school paradigms. They believe that separating the curriculum into isolated subjects and skills must end. They also seek the end of labeling and tracking into ability groups, domination of textbooks and worksheets, departmentalized faculty, and short-term, non-productive staff development. In their place, they envision a curriculum in which knowledge and skills are integrated throughout the learning experience and the curriculum is based on important social concerns that effect the lives of students. This curriculum will be taught in a manner which promotes the use of collaboration between and among students and teachers. The staff will be trained in strategies that promote these practices in a meaningful and long-term manner.

These and other attempts at reform have fallen into several major categories. House (1981) elaborates on three major paradigms of the change process have been popular during the last several decades:

1) The rational-scientific (R&D) perspective. In this paradigm, common throughout the 1950's-1970's,schools simply need to be given the facts about needed changes and improvements, and they will happen.

2) The political perspective. This paradigm enjoyed popularity in the 1980's. Change is mandated by some federal or state agency and change is accompanied by the meeting of a number of regulations.

3) The cultural perspective. This paradigm asserts that improvement only occurs with changes in the values and expectations within the perspective.

Sashkin and Egermeier (1991) state that these three perspectives have given rise to the following four broad strategies for reforming schools.

Strategy 1:Fix the parts by transferring innovations. This strategy entails getting change into the school through giving the teachers and administrators the specific programs that will bring about improvement. Programs that lack follow through or technical assistance often fall short of accomplishing their goals. Programs, such as the effective schools movement, have made strides largely because the improvements emphasize a change in school culture.

Strategy 2:Fix the people by training and developing professionals. This strategy involves the heavy use of staff development to change professional behavior. Programs like Effective Teacher Training often fail to have an impact because they deal with the theoretical or ideal situation and seldom address the culture of the classroom or school.

Strategy 3:Fix the school by developing the organization's capacities to solve problems. This strategy is an off-shoot of the organizational development movement that utilizes instruments such as climate and satisfaction surveys to point out difficulties to be solved. This strategy is particularly effective if the staff is prepared for (and sees the need to) change.

Strategy 4: Fix the system by comprehensive restructuring. This strategy "represents a synthesis of the wisdom about educational change and school reform...It moves beyond single-dimension strategies to address the problems of

the context or the wider environment in which the school must function" (p.38). Deenan (1971) finds that there are seven major categories of responsibilities of school administrators that must be included in any consideration of the "wider environment" of school; planning tasks and their methods of accomplishment, organizing the formal organizational structure, staffing personnel, directing the progress of the school operation, coordinating various related factors, reporting to superiors on the progress of the organization, and budgeting for the organization. He believes that the administrator is one who should serve as a "generalist and quasi-directive counselor" (p.82). There have been several other perspectives. For example, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1992) examined the need for restructuring America's schools and considered the effect that restructuring schools had on the school community. They found that education in this country could benefit from efforts to change current bureaucracies into places where people share a common agenda and long-term, collaborative relationships. They cite an "ethic of caring based on respect for each individual" (p.34).

Fullan and Miles (1992) offer the following seven propositions for success--all of which must be incorporated into the reform effort:

- Change is learning--loaded with uncertainty
- Change is a journey--not a blueprint
- Problems are our friends
- Change is resource-hungry; plan on it costing more than you think
- Change requires the power to manage it
- Change is systemic
- All large-scale change is implemented locally (p.752)

The issue of power relationships in public schools is one Sarason (1990) urges us to confront. All social systems can be described in terms of power relations, yet precious little attention has been paid to the dynamics of these relationships. Without altering the power relationships in the classroom, real educational reform cannot happen. He warns that attempting to unravel these power relationships "is among the most complex task human beings can undertake" (p.7). Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) note that the creation of a new paradigm must be accompanied by the creation of its own language because the old paradigm had its own particular kinds of knowledge, understanding, and relationships that legitimated the power held by that paradigm.

Greene (1988) argues that educators often find themselves being overwhelmed by circumstances that render them voiceless and powerless. In this condition they are utterly incapable of viewing themselves as endowed with freedom or any power. When people cannot name their alternatives or imagine a better condition, they are likely to become "anchored" or "submerged". She also contends that "The person who might indeed find relevant to his/her sense of vocation the dehumanizing forces in the society is not asked to notice them and perceive them as obstacles to becoming. Nor is much done to empower students to create spaces where they can take initiatives and uncover humanizing possibilities" (p.13).

The fact that many strategies which were successful with teachers and students of earlier decades are no longer effective is recognized by Murphy (1992). The students of our grandparents' day came to school with a set of values and beliefs that were shared by parents, teachers, and the community and that could be taken for granted. The participants in the process now in the 1990s are not nearly so unified. The continuation of many of the same practices by modern teachers

without regard to the significant changes our society has undergone is leading to the production of two very different groups of students--one group with a reasonable shot at success, the other bound for a permanent underclass status.

Marshall (1988), and Conner and Sharp (1992) indict the current paradigm in education that has reduced the number of women in school administration to a percentage less than that at the turn of the century. As the position of school administrator gained respect and importance, the role became increasingly filled by men. They note that for organizations like schools to be effective in the decades to come, they must make use of the resources and talents of all parts of the labor pool. They caution against the current trend of labeling participative management characteristics as "female". Women, they believe, do not have a monopoly on characteristics attributed to females any more than males have on traditionally male characteristics. Both men and women, they write, "must come to realize that other realities than the one we know exist; other realities are to be viewed as different, neither better or worse than our own; and other realities are to be valued" (p. 338).

It is a fascinating time to be involved with education. We are, as Kuhn (1970) would say, in the midst of a "paradigm shift". As old paradigms are found wanting, new ones are created to supersede them. The succeeding paradigm is not necessarily "better" than its predecessor, and the choice between the old and new paradigm is often difficult. What Shulman (1986) finds important is that when a new paradigm does emerge it frequently leaves behind many of the important questions that formed the heart of earlier paradigms. As conventional terms and commonly understood meanings have been brought into question, new terms and ways of viewing the world have emerged (Guba, 1985). For centuries, the positivist paradigm has been the cornerstone of "hard" scientific thinking. John

Stuart Mill encouraged social scientists to likewise adopt this mode of thinking. Now at the end of the twentieth century, their rug has been worn thin.

Positivism has as its central aim the discovery of general laws that can be extrapolated for the purpose of either explanation or prediction. In addition, Guba notes that positivists believe that concepts can be defined in concrete, empirical terms, that the universe is uniform and predictable, and that general causes can be established for any effects. He reduces the positivist paradigm to five basic axioms. The first is the nature of reality. Positivists believe that there is one, basic reality that can be predicted and understood. Second, positivism asserts that there is a subject-object dualism in which the observer can maintain a detached distance from the observed. His third axiom holds that the purpose of positivism is to produce a body of knowledge that will hold true regardless of time or place. Fourth, positivism promotes the belief that for every action, there is a single, discrete cause that precedes or accompanies it. Finally, all positivist inquiry is ideally value-free, so the facts "speak for themselves" without any contamination from controls or observers.

The aspect of being value-free is particularly troubling to many researchers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) find a number of undesirable consequences arising from attempts to maintain a value-free approach. First, they note the ritual of method found in modern inquiry. The prevalent assumption here is that there is one "royal road" to truth. Next, if the researcher is to remain value-free, only facts accessible through the chosen methodology can be considered. In addition, the notion of coherence is thought to be value-free since stability in results over time implies (or gives the illusion of) independence from the observer. The scope of moral decisions is also a problem. The researcher who conducts value-free inquiry utilizes methods that are "good" and analysis that is the "best" for the situation.

What are these if not moral decisions? Moral choices in our history and society too often follow, rather than precede, scientific research.

Another major problem with attempts to remain value-free stems from the forcing of political decisions into technical modes. Reducing decisions to cost/benefit analyses has had sometimes dangerous consequences. Finally, the whole idea of objectivity calls the issue of fairness into question. By removing all possible "contaminants" from the design, what has the investigator overlooked?

The shift from a positivist paradigm to a constructivist paradigm is a shift from simple to complex reality, hierarchic to heterarchic concepts of order, mechanical to holographic metaphor (the whole exceeds the sum of its parts, yet each part contains the whole). It is a shift from determinacy to indeterminacy, linear to mutual causality, sequential assembly of theory to the recognition of a multi-faceted morphogenesis, and from objective to perspective views.

Guba (1985, 1994) and others promote a constructivist paradigm (also termed the naturalist paradigm). Guba (1985) presents five axioms that describe the fundamental positions of this paradigm. The first deals with ontology. Reality is constructed, not pre-existing, and there are multiple realities. Second, the subject and object can never be completely separated and do influence each other. Third, the point of inquiry is to develop a body of knowledge that describes a situation and embraces, rather than eliminates, disparity. Fourth, cause and effect are not assumed to be linearly related. There may be multiple causes with interacting factors that come into play for any given event. Fifth, information gathered through inquiry is bound only by the choice of the problem and the focus of the research. Facts never "speak for themselves" in the constructivist paradigm. They are always interpreted.

The constructivist paradigm owes its fullest development to Immanuel Kant (Bruner, 1986). Kant was struck by Hume's revelation that certain relations among things that existed in the real world could not be attributed to events, but were instead mental constructions projected onto an "objective world". Causation, he supposed, is a mental construct the observer imposes on a sequence of events. Kant believed that having a human mind gave us *a priori* "built-in" knowledge. Goodman, on the other hand, believed that no absolute exists prior to reasoning. He thought that what is "given" at the beginning of our assumptions is neither *a priori* nor "a bedrock reality", but instead the results of previous constructs of realities already made that flavor our assumptions.

Sarason (1971) believes that the behaviors of teachers are largely predicated upon these assumptions. In order to understand the current system of paradigms at work in schools, the following characteristics of teacher behavior must be considered:

1. Teachers tend to teach the way in which they themselves were taught. This should not be surprising, but it does point out how deeply ingrained teacher behaviors can be--particularly those we may wish to change.
2. Teachers get little exposure to theories about question asking and the relationships involved in teacher/student interaction.
3. Staff development typically does not concern itself directly with questioning and classroom relationships. Discipline and control are still of primary concern.
4. Given the present curriculum demands on teachers to cover a vast amount of material in a short time, there is a tremendous discrepancy between the rate of teacher and student questions. (p.77).

In addition to having concerns about our current teaching paradigms, Sarason is also critical of many current assumptions about the principal's role. He notes that traditionally the principal is chosen after a number of years in the classroom that have "prepared" him (it is usually him) for school leadership. There are several flaws in this line of thinking. First, one cannot assume that by virtue of being a leader of children, a person is prepared to be a leader of adults. Next, he is concerned that teachers are essentially "loners" who enter the profession without much thought about its design. After some time, they have absorbed the traditions of the culture and are considered "good" precisely because they implicitly accept "the way things are".

A third problem Sarason voices is that of the selective factors surrounding those who would become a principal. The self-made decision to take the course-work needed to become a principal does not necessarily mean that a person should become a principal. Finally, Sarason states that people frequently overestimate how realistic their understanding of the role of the principal is. What they know of the job is almost entirely composed of their personal experiences and interactions with principals. He concludes that being a teacher for a number of years "may be in most instances antithetical to being an educational leader or vehicle of change" (p.115).

Sarason (1971) is also convinced that the power of the principal to legislate change does not guarantee that change will happen. The condition is similar to what the teacher faces in changing the behavior of children. He declares,

> From the standpoint of the principal there is little that he feels he can do about what goes on in the classroom, particularly if the teacher has tenure or has been a teacher for a number of years. As a result, the principal tolerates situations that by his values or standards are "wrong". Because this toleration is frequently accompanied by

> feelings of guilt and inadequacy it frequently has an additional consequence: the tendency to deny that these situations exist in the school (p.120).

As a result, far too many principals turn a blind eye to problems that could be addressed, if not solved. They begin to conceive of the reality of their school as something quite different from what the teachers and students may perceive.

Reality, it seems, can be a rather elusive concept. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define four distinct types or levels of reality. The first is objective reality. It asserts that there is one true reality "out there" that can be fully experienced and fully known. The second type is that of perceived reality. This position asserts that there is, in fact, one definite reality, but whatever it might be, we cannot know it fully. Instead, we gather perceptions of reality--but never the whole. The third type is constructed reality, in which "being" is a human construct. It is doubtful as to whether an absolute reality exists, but even if it did, we can never know it. There are instead an infinite number of constructs which may account for a multiplicity of realities. Finally, they cite the belief in created reality, in which there <u>is</u> no reality at all until someone creates it. Reality is equated to the physical form of a standing wave function of quantum mechanics that is not realized until it is observed. Until that point it remains probabilistic, nothing more.

Schein (1985) discusses the problem of defining what is real and proposes three ways in which people may identify reality. The first way is based on empirical evidence--scientific "fact". The second way is based on what others, particularly those we hold in esteem *say* is true. Schein calls this our "social reality". Finally, Schein believes our own, personal, views and beliefs constitute a reality--regardless of any evidence to the contrary.

Dealing with the question of the effect of the observer on the observation has long troubled researchers. As researchers move from realities that support a

paradigm based on a rational, Cartesian mode of thinking into a naturalistic, constructivist one, the issue of how the observer alters the observation comes to the forefront. Often the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle has been applied to support naturalistic paradigms. The development of our understanding of the nature of quantum phenomena in particle physics demonstrates that new modes of thinking and understanding reality must emerge; however, the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle was developed within the positivist paradigm and simply reflects "where we must stand with regard to empirical research, not how we know" (McKerrow and McKerrow, 1991, p.17). In other words, the sub-atomic reality of quantum mechanics does not necessarily correspond to the macroscopic reality of our existence. Fundamentally, we cannot state that Heisenberg allows us to replace subject-object dualism with a mutual interactively. We must look elsewhere for that validation. The authors stress that "no epistemological uncertainty prohibits knowledge and should not be viewed as the rationale for rejecting the paradigm that allowed the lesson to be learned" (p.20). It seems that we often try to fit our preconceived ideas onto frameworks that were never meant to hold them. A somewhat more useful framework is provided by Greenfield.

Greenfield (1973) points us to the work of Max Weber. Weber examined organizations in terms of *Verstehen*--a concept that involves understanding the actions of individuals in terms that are meaningful to that individual and not in terms of the values or meanings of others. Greenfield expands this to looking at schools as schools, not mere organizations, and encourages us to examine the institution of school for its own sake. He adds that we need to compare the "meanings, experiences, and understandings found in particular schools in one time and place with those found in other times and places. It is only through such

comparison that we may come to understand the frame of reference, the world taken for granted, that defines 'school'" (p.563).

The theories people hold greatly influences their behavior (Argyris and Schon, 1974). There are two dominant modes of action theories; espoused theories and theories-in-use. Espoused theories are comprised of what we can say about what we think we believe. They tend to exist at a conscious level and change relatively easily in the presence of new facts or ideas. If you want to know what someone's espoused theories are, you just ask. It is critical to be aware that espoused theories do not have a direct impact on our behavior--although most school staff development is geared toward this level.

Theories-in-use, on the other hand, are far more difficult to identify. These personal action theories actually guide our behavior. Whereas espoused theories operate on a conscious level, theories-in-use operate at a subconscious or unconscious level. We are not consciously aware of them, so they are difficult to articulate and even harder to change. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) assert that these theories-in-use are built up over many years of acculturation and are continuously reinforced (for better or worse) by our everyday experiences. It is our theories-in-use that keep middle school teachers lecturing to students even after a very convincing workshop on alternative teaching strategies. For behavior to change, leading to organizational change, it is at the level of theories-in-use that change must first occur.

Organizations and Leadership Behavior

Leadership, Bolman and Deal (1991) remind us, is an ancient word. Stemming from the Anglo-Saxon root *laedare*--to lead people on a journey, it retains much of its original meaning. Brubaker (1989) likewise notes that our

word, curriculum, stems from the Latin *currere*--referring to a race course to be run by chariots. The similarities are worthy of note to those who are, or would be, curriculum leaders.

Patterson (1993) examined the shifting definitions of leadership. He notes that over the past 75 years leadership has been defined in terms of power and control. Most of the current administrators in education got where they are through conforming to the ideal of "boss"--directing the people below and deferring to those above in the organizational pyramid .

Patterson considers the concept of manager as something different from that of either boss or leader. Managing, he writes, "is the act of coordinating people and resources to efficiently produce goods or services in an organization". Managing is an important activity performed by leaders, but it is not the same as leading. Leading, according to Patterson, is defined as "the process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization" (p.3). Patterson highlights the fact that influence implies a relationship. That relationship certainly includes persuasion, but does not involve coercion or bossing.

Polite (1994) asserts the importance of leadership throughout the school if a positive and effective school culture is to be established. Support and leadership should come from leaders in positions at all levels in the school. Schein (1985) agrees and adds that "The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture". Berkey, et. al. (1990) also point out that because of the position of principal, the administrator has the ability to "articulate the teachers' voices in places where teachers are seldom free to speak for themselves" (p.225).

Murphy (1992) sees the effective principal as one who is willing to embrace the many roles given to him or her as a result of reform. He lists nine areas in which principals will have to function effectively. The principal must first and

foremost be an instructional leader. All available human and material resources should be brought to bear to maximize student learning. Next, the principal must take responsibility for planning school improvement. Both short-term and long-term plans should promote the goals of the school. Third, the principal needs to demonstrate administrative leadership. Organizational ability is an often taken-for-granted attribute that is necessary if the organization is to remain focused on the school's goals. The principal must also ensure that the central focus of the school is a safe and orderly school climate. The ability to communicate effectively is critical if a principal hopes to gain the support of the many communities with which he or she must interact. In a similar vein, community and public relations skills are desirable. One must be able to balance personal interests with those of the board of education. Professional development includes both the administrator personally as well as the growth of the staff. Weaknesses must be examined and opportunities for improvement and growth sought out. Finally, the principal ought to model the qualities of a leader and serve as a role model for the staff, students and community.

Brubaker (1985) also sees the importance of the principal in modeling these behaviors and challenges definitions of curriculum leadership that isolate the administrator from the learning environment. On the contrary, he sees curriculum as being that which "students and adult educators experience as they cooperatively create learning settings" (p.175, emphasis mine). This viewpoint leads to an integration of administrative and curricular activities and a "holistic" role for the principal. The main duty of the principal should be to provide leadership for the creation of new settings as they emerge in the school.

Noer (1994) also picks up on the "holistic" role of the principal. He defines leadership as "a collective process in which we generate, maintain, and evolve

meaning...leadership is situational: We can all be leaders, depending on the situation, and we often are" (p.10). He thinks that skilled leaders must encourage leadership across the organization, keep his or her mission aligned with organizational environment, and make selected key decisions.

Firestone and Wilson (1985) identify two major sets of leadership activities. The first set includes the creation of "bureaucratic linkages" that compose the normal bureaucratic tasks of everyday school administration. The creation and enforcement of policies, rules, and procedures fall into this category. The second set of leadership activities is what the authors call the creation of "cultural linkages". The establishment of behavioral expectations, use of symbol, ceremony, and story telling fall into this category.

As we move toward the formation of these cultural linkages, we see "instructional leadership" as the focus of educational leadership giving way to "transformational leadership" (Leithwood, 1992). Transformational leaders, he writes, are in continuous pursuit of the following educational goals; the development of a collaborative and professional school culture, the professional development of teachers, and the development of effective problem solving. Those who work with transformational leaders are greatly effected by working in their presence (Sagor, 1992). Coble (1994) noted, "the greatest attribute any leader can bring to the table is his or her human-ness".

Brubaker (1994), however, warns that many leaders are tempted to enter a new setting with the attitude that all history begins with them. He uses the analogy of the late arriving party guest who once asked him, "Oh, the party has just begun, huh?" to which he replied, "No, it looks that way to you since you just got here" (p.79).

Sarason (1978) stresses that the "prehistory" of a new setting will invariably contain conflict and controversy over how problems are being addressed. The very decision to create a new setting or culture implies failure or inadequacy on the part of the current setting--thus highlighting the importance of confronting organizational history. He adds that football coaches tend to be much more realistic than administrators who attempt to create a new culture. The coach, he writes, is cognizant of the fact that much of what he or she designs and attempts will, in all probability, not work. The message is to indulge in hope, but plan realistically.

Senge (1990) summarizes the belief of transformational leadership well as he quotes the Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu who wrote;

> "The wicked leader is he who the people despise.
> The good leader is he who the people revere.
> The great leader is he who the people say, 'We did it ourselves'.(p.22)."

While it may be satisfying to the leader whose ego needs are being met by an adoring staff, the situation tends to only continue as long as the leader is present. The transformational leader sets the stage for the organization to function through the talents of the people rather than the charisma or talent of the leader. To use one's talents to empower the talents of others is the essence of transformational leadership.

Senge (1990) ponders the question, "if learning organizations are so widely preferred, why don't people create such organizations?" (p.8). Could it be that there is a fear over the loss of control? Or perhaps does it challenge the existing hierarchical belief in the "superior" and the "subordinate". The answer for Senge lies in the current paradigms of leadership. There is little understanding on the part of most organizational leaders of either why change is desirable or necessary.

He sees leaders as they could be--designers, teachers, and stewards responsible for building dynamic, expanding organizations. This starts, he asserts, with the principle of "creative tension"--the juxtaposition of our clear view of reality (things as they are) with our vision (things as we would like them to be). The gap between the two creates a natural tension. "All the analysis in the world", he writes, "will never generate a vision" (p.9). Analysis substituted for vision will not succeed. On the other hand, it is also essential to have an accurate picture of things as they really are. In fact, Senge quotes Herman Miller CEO Max de Pree who declares, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality" (p.11). The real leverage in leadership comes from helping people to a more accurate, insightful, and empowered view of reality. This action embodies the view of the leader as teacher.

Argyris (1985), in a study of organizational change, found that in the early stages, leaders were able to effect significant changes. Difficulties arose, he found, when participants in the organization began to encounter dilemmas, paradoxes, and threats. At that point, the defensive communication and routines sprang into action. He believes that staffs are not competent in how to deal with defensive routines and this often leads to regressions back to the status quo. Conflict over change, not the change itself, was the problem.

Gibb (1961) defined communication as "a people process rather than a language process" (p.141). The relationships between people within and without the organization are of paramount importance to effective communication. Much communication within schools (indeed within any organization) revolves around defensive behaviors which engender defensive communication. Sarason (1993) feels that part of this stems from the fact that while teachers are professionally colleagues, they are also, by virtue of their isolation, relative strangers. Gibb

described the vicious cycle: "Defensive behavior, in short, engenders defensive listening, and this in turn produces postural, facial, and verbal cues which raise the defense level of the original communicator" (p.141). As a person becomes more defensive, he or she becomes less able to perceive the original intent of the communicator. Conversely, a supportive culture or climate is less likely to foster the introduction of distortions that arise from the anxieties, motive, and concerns of the communicators. Speech that administrators use to control listeners is bound to evoke resistance. In addition, communication that attempts to alter the behavior of others implicitly carries with it the assumption that the recipient of the communication is somehow inadequate. This invariably evokes defensive communication and resistance.

Fullan (1992) cautions against the excessive emphasis on "vision" in education. He makes the observation that over-reliance on a particular educational philosophy, or over-reliance on the charismatic properties of a leader can be restrictive in that they suppress the search for alternatives as well as the voices of teachers with other questions and ideas. A terribly important point is, "whose vision is it?".

Pajak (1993) cautions that not every vision is necessarily moral--even if it has been democratically agreed upon. He declares that

> A collective vision in a democracy is moral to the extent that it expresses, maintains, and extends the principles of justice, freedom, equality, and responsibility. Negative visions stress threats and controls and tend to only survive in the short-term. Sometime during the 1970s, educational leadership lost its moral compass. The emphasis during the 1980s shifted away from 'what's right' to 'what works' in the short run (p.178).

Pajak admonishes us to remember that ethical responsibility must keep pace with our ability to create vision. Hitler had a vision. So did Stalin. Management by manipulation is just another form of oppression.

Senge (1990) considers how individual visions come together to form a shared vision. He likens it to a hologram in which each small fragment contains a full image and, when combined with other fragments (each of which also has a complete but indistinct image), produces a hologram of much greater clarity than the individual pieces.

Sashkin (1988) identifies three aspects to what he calls "visionary leadership". The first aspect involves creating a cultural ideal. Leaders must be able to take the long-term view and extend their vision several years down the road. Second, he sees the aspect of implementing the vision organizationally. By this he means the creation "of an explicit organizational philosophy and then enacting that philosophy by means of specific policies and programs" (p.247). Deal (1987) identifies the creation of ritual and ceremony, identification of heroes, and telling of stories to make visible this aspect of vision. Third, Sashkin considers the aspect of implementing the vision through personal practices of the leader. Effective and exciting communication and an unwavering position and dedication to the task characterize this aspect of vision.

Marshall (1985b) believes that reflective practice takes for granted the concept of learning as a life-long process. The mission statements of numerous school systems proclaim the value of life-long learning; however, our theories in action do not match our espoused theories. We really believe that the need for continued learning is indicative of weakness or incompetence.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) see reflective practice as an important tool for professional development and organizational change. Many teacher behaviors

have been deeply embedded in their own experiences of education which may date back to their own kindergarten days. They assert that educators are "the most thoroughly socialized of all professional groups" (p.7). One result of this long history of teacher behavior is that children still exhibit the same teacher-centered focus to instruction in the classroom as they did over a century ago.

Thelen (1981) acknowledges that by knowing the teacher's behavior, we can extrapolate with some success the achievement of the class he or she teaches. He posits that the organizing principle for the classroom society is "the personality of the teacher, and therefore the way to improve the classroom...is to fit students to the teacher in such a way that the educative tendencies within his personality will be most reinforced" (p.104). He adds that many classrooms seem to exist to celebrate "the virtues of quiet, order, punctuality, and respect. Participation, in these rooms, becomes civic duty rather than interested inquiry.

Peterson (1988) also finds that teachers tend toward norms of conservatism and individualism. Principals, he asserts can strive to alter these predilections in the direction of norms of collegiality and building cultures. They can also shape the culture of their school by selectively staffing the school with teachers who share the norms and values of the school.

Greenfield (1973) asks two particularly important questions about our conceptualization of organizations. He asks, "What is an organization that it can have such a thing as a goal?" and "How do the goals of individuals bear upon those of the organization--if, indeed, it is appropriate to speak of organizational goals?" (p.553). These are thought provoking questions. If organizations are real (and there is no argument here--whatever else they may be, they are certainly real) but non-human, how can they be ascribed very human things like goals? We speak of organizations as growing, responding, and adapting, yet these are attributes of

living things. Greenfield posits that while there are many analogies between organisms and organizations, we must remember that there is a world of difference between saying that two things are similar and saying that they are the same. Organisms are solitary things. Organizations are made of people and the individual must be concerned with not only his or her personal goals, but also those of others.

Greenfield (1973) proclaims that organizations are social constructs, not biological organisms. He finds it curious that humans create a social reality in the form of the organization and then respond to it as if it were something other than a human construct. In actuality, "organizations are the perceived social reality within which individuals make decisions. The heart of this view is not a single abstraction called organization, but rather varied perceptions by individuals of what they can, should, or must do in dealing with others. When an individual shifts his frame of reference for decision making, he shifts his organization" (p.557).

Peck (1993) asserts that "We are organizational creatures. We are born not only into a society and culture but usually into a specific, complex organization: a family. Our marriages are organizations. We study in schools that are organization; at some time or other we will likely worship in an organization; and when we die there will be organizations to usher us out of this world" (p.5).

Organizational Frames of Reference

Too often teachers have very superficial views of reality, or "the big picture". The view from the classroom is much smaller and much more immediate to many educators. Senge (1990) finds three levels at which reality may be viewed differently by educators in the organizations. First is the level of events. At this

level, organizational reality is the crisis or situation you must react to. From this position (one in which most teachers find themselves), it is difficult to see further than the next hurdle. A somewhat more clear view of organizational reality is presented to those that see from the vantage point of the next level--patterns of behavior. Senge feels that this level is less frequently seen than that of reacting to events. Study of patterns of behavior can lead to responsive behavior in which the individual is able to discern long-term trends and plan appropriately for how to deal with them. The big leap, Senge believes is to the next level, which asks, "what causes these patterns of behavior in the organization?" This represents the level of systemic structure and is reflected by generative behaviors. This level is characterized by reflective thinking and practice. Marshall (1985b) equates this with "constructed knowledge" in which the person uses both objective and subjective ways of knowing, personal experience, and the experience of others. It seeks "a different and more effective way of knowing", and for people to become "constructed knowers" (p.143). Only at this level can one address the causes of behaviors in such a manner as to allow them to be changed.

Bolman and Deal (1991) have identified four major ways that individuals make sense of the reality of organizations. The first is through a structural frame. This mode of thinking emphasizes the importance of formal roles and relationships. Structures are created and utilized to fit the technology and environment of the organization. The structural perspective is predicated on the following set of core assumptions,

- Organizations exist primarily to accomplish established goals
- A structural form can be designed to fit the circumstances of any organization
- Organizations are most effective when structures keep people focused on tasks
- Specialization allows for higher levels of expertise and performance

- Coordination and control are essential to effectiveness
- Problems arise from inadequate structure and can be solved by restructuring (p.48).

The second frame that Bolman and Deal identify is the human resources frame. This frame is based on the premise that organizations are made up of people who bring with them their own feelings and needs. The following four assumptions form the core of this frame:

- Organizations exist to serve human needs (instead of the reverse)
- Organizations and people need each other
- If the fit is not good between the individual and the organization, one or both will suffer
- A good fit between the individual and the organization is mutually beneficial (p.121).

The third type of frame that Bolman and Deal have identified is the political frame. This frame of reference sees the organization as a place in which different groups compete for power and resources. Conflict, negotiation, and coercion mark this point of view. The principle position of the political frame of reference can be summarized as follows:

- Organizations are coalitions of various individuals and interest groups
- Fundamental differences exist between people and groups. Changes in these differences seldom occur
- Decision making revolves around the allocation of resources
- Scarcity of resources and competing views make conflict central to the organization and power the primary resource
- Goals and decisions arise from bargaining among coalitions

Bolman and Deal's fourth frame of reference is the symbolic frame. This point of view treats organizations as tribes (or perhaps carnivals) that are advanced through the use of ritual, ceremony, story, hero, and myth instead of rules, procedures and policies. Fundamental to the symbolic frame are the following assumptions:

- The most important aspect of any event is what it means, not what happened
- Events and meanings are loosely coupled and interpretations can vary widely
- Ambiguity and uncertainty accompany all important events and processes
- The greater the ambiguity and uncertainty, the harder it is use rational approaches to analyzing or solving problems
- In the face of this ambiguity and uncertainty, people create symbols to give the impression (or illusion) of predictability and direction
- Much of what the organization does is more important than what it produces. Myth, ritual, and ceremony give meaning to experience (p.244).

Bolman and Deal are convinced of the importance of this frame in the scheme of the organization. They write,

> Our view is that every organization develops distinctive beliefs and patterns over time. Many of those patterns and assumptions are unconscious or taken for granted. They are reflected in myths, fairy tales, stories, rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic forms. Managers who understand the power of symbols have a better chance of influencing their organization than those who focus only on other frames (p.268).

Another, related frame, is that of systems theory and cybernetics. Systems theory emerged after the second world war as an attempt to cut across all systems and disciplines--so as to be applicable to any cell, person, of society. Cybernetics, according to Bolman and Deal, is the science of control and communication in

machines and animals. This frame of systems theory is represented by the following assumptions:

- Systems are sets of interacting and interrelated parts
- Human organizations are open systems--things and people move in and out
- Human organizations can defy entropy--they can grow, survive and work out mutually beneficial arrangements with their environment
- Systems are hierarchical. Each system has both sub- and super- system
- A system is more than the sum of its parts
- Organizations seek a dynamic equilibrium. When balance is threatened, the system will respond in force to restore or maintain balance
- To maintain equilibrium, open systems adapt to their internal and external environment changes (p.318).

Patterson (1993) notes that a system is created any time individuals and materials are brought together for an organizational purpose. Most systems, he points out, are subsumed by other, larger systems. He believes that thinking of the organization in terms of systems thinking can positively affect the outcome for children and offers the following guidelines for the application of systems thinking in the public school:

- Focus on the system, not the people
- Learn how the current system evolved and how it connects to related systems
- Expect the system to resist interventions meant to disrupt the stability of the current system
- Evaluate the system against the organization's core values
- Look beyond symptomatic problems and symptomatic solutions to fundamental systems issues

- Think whole-system, long-term solutions and allow time for the solutions to take effect

- Anticipate new systems problems arising from current systems solutions (p.68).

Weick (1982) informs us that systems can be either tightly- or loosely-coupled. Schools, he believes are "loosely coupled systems" characterized by loose ties between decisions and implementations. While certain areas of school life are tightly coupled, bus schedules and payroll for instance, many other areas are not. Every time a specialist is inserted between a student and a teacher or administrator, control is loosened. Meyer and Rowan (1977) agree that organizations that reflect institutional rules maintain distance from uncertainty by becoming loosely coupled. In doing so, they are able to create a gap between their formal structures and their daily work activities. In this way, schools and school systems are able to maintain what they call "ceremonial conformity".

Hall and Hord (1984) have examined change in organizational structures by observing the actions of principals in instituting curriculum reform. They documented almost 2000 interventions in one school year as nine principals undertook to change only one minor aspect of curriculum in their schools. Not only is organizational change a tremendously detailed process, but it is also a long-term process. He points to an earlier study he conducted that demonstrates that in organizational development programs, it takes at least five years to establish an effective new program. Sarason (1993b) concurs and adds, "when you face the fact that a school system is a collection of individuals in diverse, direct and indirect relationships with each other, and varying in age, years in the system, status, motivation, different stages of burnout, points of view, and more, change has to be reckoned in decades, not years" (p.47). Maehr and Parker (1993) add that we should not be dissuaded by the prospects of years of effort. They write that

change does come when leaders continue to press for and act in a manner that promotes it.

Clark and Astuto (1994) examined current organizational structures of schools and found the major work of schools revolved around three main communities; the professional community, different learning communities, and "stakeholder" communities--parents, neighbors, and local business.

Heroes

Noer (1994) recognizes that problems cannot be cured by our habit of shuffling leaders when we know that most of our difficulties stem from processes and systems--not people. Americans believe in having heroes to praise or villains to blame. Noer writes

> Our culture has put a lot more Willie Nelson in us than we like to admit. We like our heroes and our villains strong, simple, and clearly differentiated. We distrust ambiguity, equivocation, systems, and complexity. We want a *person* to praise or blame. Problems can be 'fixed' and that's why we have leaders: They represent us, and if they can't do the job, we will get someone else (p.9).

Johnston (1987) finds great importance in the role of heroes in institutions. Heroes, he writes, must personify the values that the school wants shared. They must also be intuitive rather than decisive. Vision is of more importance to them than a well thought out plan. Heroes are also situational and are often elevated to the status of hero by virtue of some special act or behavior. The prudent principal draws attention to and celebrates the heroes and heroines of the school.

Symbol

Bruner (1986) insightfully comments that most of the things that we deal with in our everyday world could not exist "but for a symbolic system that brings the world into existence: national or local loyalty, money, memberships, promises...The "reality" of most of us is constituted roughly into two spheres: that of nature and that of human affairs...a natural and a human one" (p.88). It is the task of the leader, Bolman and Deal believe, to interpret reality and experience through the creation and use of symbols. The symbolic leader, they write, is one who frames experience, discovers and communicates a vision, and tells stories.

Weick (1982) is concerned that many people inappropriately equate symbols with goals. He notes that symbols tell people what and why they are doing things while goals express how well and when people do things. Symbols address the issue of "What is going on here?" (p.676).

Deal (1985) examines the role of symbolism in the creation of an effective climate. He notes that before any attempt to affect change can be reasonably expected to succeed, the symbol and culture of the school must be understood. Perception of "how things are" in any organization are largely based upon shared values and symbols. Deal cites the writings of Swindler, who asserts, "culture, in the sense of symbols, ideologies, and a legitimate language for discussing individual and group objectives, provides the crucial substrate on which organizational forms can be exacted" (p.609). He goes on to add that innovation and cultural change are of necessity interrelated because the culture creates the new view of human nature and the symbols through which new relationships communicate. Meyer and Rowan (1977) take this one step further and hypothesize that organizational structures reflect a socially constructed reality and that instead of being intertwined with and related to the culture, organizations are defined in

institutional theories as "dramatic enactments of the rationalized myths pervading modern societies, rather than units involved in exchange--no matter how complex--with their environment" (p.346).

Ritual

Just as schools have important symbols that play a part in their culture, the role of ritual is also a critical factor. In fact, Deal and Kennedy (1982) propose that without the expressive events that rituals provide, any culture will die. Values, they believe, will have no impact. Rituals in organizations formalize much of day-to-day behavior in organizations as well as establish parameters for interpersonal relationships. They tell people how to behave. They serve to express in a very open way the core beliefs, values, and attitudes of the culture. They can also serve to provide avenues that allow for mediation of problems before they become damaging to the organization.

Good leaders, Deal and Kennedy assert, invest a great deal of time and energy instituting rituals under the pretense of fine-tuning organizational processes. Healthy organizations tend to have a person (or small group of people) who serve informally in the important capacity of "priest" or "priestess"--initiating new employees into the "way things work here" as well as communicating core values and beliefs about the way thing have been and should be. Brubaker (1989) points out that one cannot live and work outside of tradition. Such organizational priests are mediators of that tradition.

Bolman and Deal (1991) assert that only a weak culture will accept a newcomer without any initiation. Initiation, they posit, "reinforces the organizational culture while testing the newcomer's ability to become a member" (p.248). Meyer and Rowan (1977) find that the roles of myth and ceremony are

quite strong in some institutions and that the formal structure of the organization may reflect those myths rather than their actual work activities. Bolman and Deal (1991) write that myths arise to help people deal with uncertainty, but are not intended to be tested. They note that on another level of experience, myths serve a number of diverse functions: "Myths explain. Myths express. Myths maintain solidarity and cohesion. Myths legitimize. Myths communicate unconscious wishes and conflicts. Myths mediate contradictions. Myths provide narrative to anchor the present in the past" (p.254). Campbell (1988) in his book, *The Power of Myth*, also writes of the tremendous impact that ritual and myth have both on school culture and society in general. He believes that much of American society has been held together through an "unstated mythology" but that modern students are living in an increasingly demythologized world. He states, "What we're learning in our schools is not the wisdom of life. We're learning technologies, we're getting information. There's a curious reluctance in the part of the faculties to indicate the life values of their subjects" (p.9). As a result, he finds that children are creating their own myths and rituals in a manner that does not always concur with what our society expects. Gangs and youth violence, he notes, are two manifestations of this problem. Myths and ritual are not always positive.

Ritual can be taken to the extent that it becomes a vehicle for exclusion. Clarke (1983), in emphasizing the role of the educational saga (an organizational mythology), points out that a select few at certain levels become emotionally bound by this saga and form a community, sometimes even a cult, of their own. In these cases, the use of ritual becomes for exclusive, rather than inclusive purposes and can be deeply divisive within the organization.

Bruner (1986) agrees that language is never a neutral entity. It always imposes a perspective from which things are viewed and may create a reality that

flavors our encounters with the world. When we meet the unknown, our first act is to attempt to frame it some way into our understanding of the known. This is an act of language. It frequently falls short (take for example the rather ubiquitous response to the question, "How does it taste?" Invariably the response will be "A little like chicken"). How we talk about something eventually becomes how we represent what it is we talk about. Such is the power of language in ritual.

The Creation of Culture

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (1992) note that there are three powerful forces that work against the creation of community in a school. The first is cultural differentiation. Ethnicity, gender, and other social factors weigh heavily on a school.

Butler and Sperry (1991) considered the role of gender equity in middle school. They report that despite decades of attention to issues of fairness in education, far too much "dead wood" remains in terms of the perpetuation of old stereotypes and behaviors. The typical middle school classroom of today still reinforces three fundamental beliefs about girls; first, that they are not as competent as boys, second, that they lack the ability to achieve in math and science, and third that since they cannot succeed in math and science, they cannot succeed in a public world that relies heavily on being analytical. Butler and Sperry show that it is largely our culture which promotes the very different ways in which males and females are socialized. This culture results in boys and girls having quite different classroom experiences. They look to education reform as a means of providing alternate paradigms that will end the deeply embedded disparities present in our current system of education.

Second, the NASSP finds that professional language of teaching has led to a Balkanization of sorts. Each specialty area has its own particular jargon germane to its subject area and makes communication challenging. Finally, the extent to which a culture values the individual (to the detriment of the group) can cause problems.

Clark and Astuto (1994) note that while many educators begin their careers as self-motivated individuals, organizational factors work to depress ingenuity and achievement. In fact, the organizational environment, the culture, often tends to demand less mature behavior from adults. It frequently gets it. In addition, viewing teachers as simply a "means of production" does tend to depersonalize and deskill the overall culture as Giroux points out. By viewing employees as a tool for production the organization is protected from variation among workers at the cost of creativity. An alternative view that Clark and Astuto promote is that of the people in organizations socially constructing the meaning of their work. This view embraces talent, creativity, and ingenuity, but grates against the very makeup of a bureaucratic framework.

Fullan seeks the development of what he terms, "collaborative cultures". Schools, he writes, "are not in the business of managing single innovations; they are in the business of contending with multiple innovations simultaneously" (p.19). Building a collaborative culture requires that principals foster not only vision-building, but also collegiality that respects the individual, norms of continuous improvement, strategies that promote problem solving, and staff development throughout the career that focuses on the reflective and collaborative aspects of teaching. Changing existing paradigms and developing a school culture, Fullan feels, is a "subtle business" that involves the following practices:

- Understand the culture of the school before you try to alter it.

- Value the teachers and encourage their professional development.
- Extend what you value
- Express what you value
- Promote collaboration
- Make menus, not mandates
- Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not hinder change
- Find the place of the school within the larger environment (p.20).

Bruner affirms that it is not just the child who makes his knowledge his own, but also that the child must make that knowledge in the company of "a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture" (p.127). The creation of culture for Bruner, then, is the object of schooling and a step in becoming part of the adult society in which the student will exist.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) write,

> The building blocks for organizations come to be littered around the societal landscape; it takes only a little entrepreneurial energy to assemble them into a structure. And because these building blocks are considered proper, adequate, rational and necessary, organizations must incorporate them to avoid illegitimacy. Thus, the myths built into rationalized institutional elements create the necessity, the opportunity, and the impulse to organize rationally, over and above the pressures in this direction created by the need to manage proximate relational networks (p.345).

Deal and Kennedy (1983) note that many school principals invest a great deal of time and energy in the creation and maintenance of school culture. They add that many of these administrators are not cognizant of this activity. Benjamin & Gard (1993) agree with this point of view. They challenge the predominant view of the school as a bureaucracy. Instead, they choose to view it as a culture. They acknowledged that what worked best for their culture were operating

principles that fostered collaboration and shared decision-making. They found four types of communication to be essential in this approach. First was the need to address conflict and strive for "win-win" situations in which both sides of a problem realized positive outcomes. Next they stressed the need for empathic communication with a focus on support and nurturing. Third, they identified ways in which professional communication could be facilitated in the course of the school's programs. Finally, the authors found a need for communication for mutual support. Honest and direct talk and constructive criticism set the stage for effective communication throughout the school.

Benjamin and Gard also had the difficult task of translating the values of the organization into everyday practice. By overtly sharing the culture of the school--both with students and new faculty members, they were able to communicate much that is important about their organization. New teachers were taken on a bus tour of their district and shown areas of importance to the lives of the students in order to give them some sense of reference to the community.

Sarason (1978) examined the creation of settings in institutions. He finds the creation of settings "involves values, substantive knowledge, a historical stance, realistic time perspective, vehicles of criticism, and the necessity for and the evils of leadership" (p.6). Few experiences, he believes, can rival the participation in the creation of a setting.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) studied corporate culture and found that many early leaders of American business (Thomas Watson of IBM and Harley Proctor of Proctor & Gamble are but two) paid an almost "fanatical attention to the culture of their companies" (p.5). They identified several elements essential to the development and maintenance of culture. Values are the basic building blocks of an organization and form the core of corporate culture. Values, they believe,

communicate to the employee the standards of achievement the organization holds. Heroes are those people who embody the values of the culture and act as role models for others to follow. Rites and rituals provide tangible and important examples of what the organization stands for. A strong organization will take the time to elaborate a number of rituals for their employees to follow. Cultural networks act as the primary mechanism for communication throughout the organization--albeit in an informal capacity. They point out that "Storytellers, spies, priests, cabals, and whisperers form a hidden hierarchy of power within the company. Working the network effectively is the only way to get things done or to understand what's really going on" (p.15).

Moore (1993) offered twelve characteristics as guiding principles for the creation of culture in schools. Schools with a strong culture tend to demonstrate the following:

- Behavior and beliefs that are altered. The staff understands that in addition to changing the environment, behaviors must be changed as well.
- Pride in the profession and work. Everyone involved in the school hold themselves to a high expectations for their performance.
- Shared decision making. Staffs understand that collaborative decision making must become a genuine practice.
- Visionary leadership. Beyond the principal, the entire staff assumes responsibility for the success of implementing the school vision.
- Clear institutional goals. The goals are developed and implemented throughout the various school communities.
- Value statements. Adults and students enter into an unwritten compact governing the nature of the relationships and foster a high level of trust.
- The belief that they are the best.

- Exemplary teaching. Teachers understand that the organization is secondary to the product--first-rate teaching and student learning.
- A nurturing environment. Every member of the community is welcomed and valued.
- Value in creativity. Without creativity, there will be little innovation and much reliance on the six-step lesson plan.
- Home/school partnerships. The more parents are active in the school, the better student achievement will become and student misbehavior will decrease.
- Fiscal responsibility. The expenditure of resources will be a collaborative effort and will promote school goals.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (1992) makes the point that it is essential to recognize that any organizational structure, like a school, is not likely to either promote nor hinder the valued outcomes of the organization. What matters is how innovations are implemented and used. In light of this fact, the culture created in the educational setting takes on added significance. "We must pay careful attention to school culture, which often seems to be the most powerful factor in comprehending 'everyday life' in schools. Culture affects how structures are used; structures, in turn, provide opportunities, limits, incentives, and sanctions that effect culture" (p.36). The interaction between structure and culture, then, is of critical importance in understanding the organization in an attempt to make any meaningful change.

Deal and Kennedy (1983) cite two main reasons why school cultures can improve school productivity. The first reason is internal. Many (if not most) teachers and students are not aware of what the expectations for them are, nor are they aware of how their individual actions fit into the "big picture" of the overall school. The second reason is external. Deal and Kennedy emphasize that schools

are judged on appearance as much as they are by results. Cohesiveness within the school community and communication of those values, beliefs, and rituals to the neighborhoods and businesses with a vested interest in the schools promote effectiveness and achievement.

Deal (1985) finds that the most important contribution of the move toward applying business paradigms to education has been the re-introduction of the notion of culture in the school. Culture, he defines, "is the way we do things around here" (p.605). It includes all of the patterns of thinking and behaving and interacting that give meaning to an organization.He also writes that the current trend toward utilizing business practices in education has had a positive effect in that it has re-introduced the importance of the concept of building a strong and cohesive school culture. This culture, he believes, is the outgrowth of interpersonal relations and the shaper of experiences. He writes that "in schools where diverse expectations, political vulnerability, and the lack of tangible product make values, beliefs, and faith crucial in determining success, the development of a solid culture is even more important than it might be in business" (p. 608). If core values are the fuel for school improvement, then school culture is the engine (Saphier and King, 1985).

Deal also expands our notions of culture to include the realm of the subculture. Like all cultures, schools have a number of subcultures existing within them. Teachers have a subculture. Deal relates how the literature is rich with examples of teachers undermining efforts at innovation. This subculture directly effects teachers' attitudes toward teaching, preparation time,. relationships with students and administrators and many other aspects of their job.

Administrators also have a subculture. It is, by virtue of staffing, of necessity a small group in any school, yet the administrative subculture exerts great

pressure on all other subcultures. Frequently this subculture is focused (and sometimes obsessed) with accountability and control. Deal warns that "unless bureaucratic values are balanced with professional ones, the principal's influence may encourage procedural conformity rather than inspirational creativity in the classroom" (p.611).

Students, too, have a subculture that often is a reflection of their response to the control and/or authority figures in the school. Student subcultures are further complicated by the many fragments of still smaller subcultures. Indigenous to schools of all locations and generations are the "brains", "jocks", and "brown-nosers". The subculture a student belongs to (or finds himself relegated to) has much to do with subsequent behavior and academic achievement.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) tell us that subcultures can act as an important barometer of the health of an organization. Trouble is ahead, they assert, when subcultures become ingrown and work to the detriment of the entire system, Clashes between subcultures can also cause problems when one subculture becomes too strong and over-extends its position. Since the organization works best when all members work as a team, subcultures that become exclusive are problematic. Similarly, if a subculture begins to espouse beliefs that are contrary to the beliefs of the organization, there is a problem brewing over balance (or lack of it) between groups. Marshall (1988) encourages the prudent leader to engage in "cultural diagnosis" to gain a fix on the state of the culture.

Moore (1993) notes that schools that exhibit a healthy school culture share one overriding characteristic--that of an engaging curriculum. By this he means that conditions demand that teachers be "excited and inquisitive about teaching and students be excited and inquisitive about learning" (p.65). It is this collective spirit that encompasses the entire school program. Learning in these schools is

connected to previous experience and teachers understand and make use of this to extend thinking and learning.

Maehr and Parker (1993) note that leaders are not held captive by culture. They can and do have a profound impact on organizational culture. The most important aspect of culture, they write, is how they perceive value and purpose. "Perceived purpose", they write, "is at the heart of a school's life, work, and ultimate effectiveness. It is on that which we must concentrate in attempting to enhance the learning and growth of students" (p. 235).

Midgely and Wood see site-based management as an important tool in the efforts to reform the culture of public schools. Partnerships between researchers and practitioners can serve as a powerful force in implementing change. The premise of this belief is that by influencing the nature of the school culture, administrators and other leaders can have an impact on motivation and overall investment in learning. They decry the fact that many teachers do not believe they can impact significantly on "the way we do things around here". "Only occasionally have teachers had opportunities to become involved with decisions that they care passionately about" (p.251). Site-based management, the authors assert, diminishes such feelings of powerlessness.

Bruner writes that "a culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and re-negotiated by its members. In this view, a culture is as much a *forum* for negotiating and re-negotiating meaning and for explicating action as it is a set of rules or specification for action" (p.123). This forum aspect provides participants in the culture the opportunity to make and remake that culture. "The language of education," he writes, "is the language of culture creating" (p.133).

Strahan (1994) comments, "The essence of a middle level perspective is to promote caring in action: caring for each other, caring for our students,

encouraging students to care about each other and about ideas" (p.4). It is crucial to the success of the school that the teachers actually believe that their students can succeed and achieve. Saphier and King (1985) add that the relationships between the adults who inhabit the school has a greater impact on the culture of the school than perhaps any other factor.

Denton (1981) makes the point that "students and teachers do not lead lives which are confined strictly to the classroom setting. It is necessary, therefore, for a description of classroom life to include macro as well as micro aspects of interaction". She notes that some teachers are quite willing to share themselves and let themselves be known by their students, fellow teachers, and administrators. Others are content to let their students and colleagues see the sides of them they wish to have seen (Goffman,1959). Administrators, she writes, must understand that some of their faculty will never be completely open or honest with them. This is an important aspect of school culture and power relationships. She cites the importance of the principal in setting the patterns of interactions that affect the culture of the entire school. The macro-dynamics of interactions, she adds, must accompany studies of micro-dynamics in the classroom.

Greenfield (1973) believes that schools are,

> cultural artifacts that people struggle to shape in their own image. Only in such form do people have faith in them; only in such forms can they participate comfortably in them...Thus linked to personal values and beliefs, schools suffer the cultural crises of our times, as alternate ideologies compete for validation through them. Though educational radicals see decadence in all modern institutions, most still keep a place for schools in the new society because they believe in schools as staging grounds for the 'long march through institutions" (p.570).

Peck (1993) writes that "Civility is hardly the only way to live, but it is the only way that is worthwhile" (p.54). Being mannered and polite is behaving morally if those actions increase our awareness of how important each person is to the organization. When they are used to gain the attention or approval of others, they are self-serving and lack authenticity. Brubaker (1994) writes of the "table manners of leadership"--those behaviors that ease the flow of information and feelings between people and lead to better relationships. Instead of a hierarchical bureaucratic technique, the use of table manners can promote a culture rich in lateral relationships. Brubaker (1994) notes that "pretension is the enemy of authenticity, a key to creative leadership" (p.58). Peck (1993) concurs and adds that "most of the evil in this world--the incivility--is committed by people who are absolutely certain that they know what they are doing" (p.91).

The point of civility, Peck believes "is power for the opportunity of service" (p.251). He notes that the way of civility seems difficult precisely because it is difficult. The leader is both more and less than the organization he or she manages and acting in a civil manner necessitates a constant tension. The results, and the opportunity to create a real culture or community, are well worth it. Peck sees the shift from individuals to community as having a spiritual dimension. He writes, "The shift into community is often quite sudden and dramatic. The change is palpable. A spirit of peace pervades the room. There is more silence, yet more of worth gets said. It is like music. The people work together with an exquisite sense of timing, as if they were a finely tuned orchestra under the direction of an invisible celestial conductor" (p.275). This true community, Peck states, is a "group of all leaders" (p.283). Bureaucratic structure, if Peck is correct, can never establish communities. But community building, he also posits, is the very vehicle for the creation of civility in a culture. What does this hold for schools?

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This dissertation seeks to address the creation of culture in the middle school from a constructivist standpoint using qualitative methodology. Bruner (1986) asserts that it is far more important to understand the manner in which people (in this case the faculty and staff of a middle school) construct and experience their world than it is to establish the ontological condition--"the state of being or existing"--of the products (both the students and their work) that are produced. Interpretation in this dissertation is more important than the data collected.

The literature of the effective schools movement as well as other recent reforms are replete with examples of how individuals and schools either met, or failed to meet, a certain set of pre-determined criteria. It is the supposition of this author that much of the difficulties educators have in achieving genuine educational reform stem from sets of faulty assumptions. These assumptions tend to lead the researcher to focus on things that have already been measured. As folklore has it, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, then all of the problems will look like nails". Concentration on details that have already been assumed may lead to important aspects of the creation of culture being ignored (or at least not noticed). Bevan (1991) writes that "I believe that ultimately the integrity of our scholarship must depend upon its being set in the real world of everyday experience; yet our present science-making strategies persist precisely in separating it from that domain" (p.475). He adds, "There is no future in chasing butterflies with the model of 18th and 19th century physical science". This

dissertation does not seek to uncover any universal truth about the "way" in which culture can be created in the school, but rather to examine the phenomenology of the interactions of the administration, faculty, staff, and students as they go about making meaning and creating a culture.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) note that it is "precisely because of our preoccupation with finding universal solutions that we fail to see how to devise solutions with local meaning and utility. It is precisely because of our preoccupation with control that we fail to empower the very people whom we are supposedly trying to serve" (p.47).

Marshall (1985) believes that questions about how organizational culture and goals interact can be explored by field researchers who "make questions larger" (p.75). She adds that "Their choice of field study methodology indicates a preference for exploring in the real setting and describing complexities rather than for experimenting and measuring discrete, previously-identified variables" (p.76).

Campbell (1974) reminds the qualitative researcher that a course must be charted "between the extremes of inert skepticism and naive credulity" (p.1). He adds that if we lean toward the side of skepticism, we miss out on the opportunity for "knowing". On the other hand, if we go for complete credulity, we give up on consistency, simplicity, and will accept anything at face value. We must find a middle ground in the search for relationships as theory is developed. Strauss and Corbin (1994) see this theory building as being grounded in "plausible relationships that are proposed among concepts and sets of concepts" (p.278).

Skrtic (1985) agrees and writes, "the writer's task is to convince the reader of the plausibility of the presentation by including sufficient details to support the assertions he or she makes" (p.198). He discusses four aspects of trustworthiness that are necessary elements in the development of a constructivist inquiry. The

first area deals with credibility. Credibility is the constructivist counterpart to internal validity and includes the use of persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks that constantly refine interpretation by going back to the participants. This dissertation will satisfy this criteria through the use of observation, interaction with teachers as they share their narratives, and case reports that will show the possible outcomes, the outcomes chosen, and the significance of those outcomes to the creation of school culture. The second area is that of transferability. This is roughly synonymous with the positivist criteria of external validity and includes purposive sampling and a "thick description" that will provide sufficient basis of judgment of similarity. To satisfy this requirement, I will have spent nearly three years collecting case studies and two years in gathering "portraits" through the shared experiences and narratives of the staff.

Dependability is the third area Skrtic describes. Dependability determines whether the processes used in the inquiry fall within "acceptable" standards. As I have stated throughout this dissertation, the qualitative inquiry being described here is the proper methodology for examining the problem and the methods of data collection and analysis fall well within the newly emerging boundaries of the constructivist paradigm. This work will closely follow the prescriptions of Stake, Lincoln and Guba, Lather, and others.

Finally, "confirmability" is the reasonable establishment of the relationship between the claims or theories proposed by the investigator and the actual raw data collected. It is the purpose of this dissertation to develop a picture of the creation of culture and the role of the administrator in the creation of such settings. Assertions and claims will be supported by examples from the actual data collected.

This dissertation will examine the creation of a culture in a middle school. The use of a single setting may draw into question the appropriateness of the framework of the inquiry. Marshall (1985) deals with this issue of the legitimacy of an investigation based on a small sample size. She quotes Sennett and Cobb (1972) who make the important point that, "The small sample, not randomly chosen makes generalizability suspect. The anecdotal presentation raises the question of representativeness in the use of the data. The only answer to these criticisms lies in the quality of the work itself--in its ability to persuade by appealing to a level of 'knowing' that exists in all of us is not very often tapped...to generate the 'aha' experience"

Lightfoot (1983) writes of the process of generating and collecting such 'aha' experiences in her data collection methodology that "after collecting descriptive data on the schools we were to create pieces that captured their lives, rhythms and rituals" (p.12). These "portraits" as she termed them allow for the freedom to integrate artistic esthetics with scientific analysis. She sees the need for both the outsider's more distant focus as well as the perspectives of the insider instead of one "objective" point of view. This allows for the emergence of "the deviant voice as an important version of truth" (p.13). Clandinin and Connelly (1994) call this considering the voice that is not heard as well as the voice that is heard. Through portraiture, the investigator can direct attention to questions such as whether students experience the benefits of a caring, child-centered education, or merely are exposed to the rhetoric of it.

Phenomenology

A central premise of this dissertation is that the remembered experiences of a group of educators are transformed into institutional decisions by some formal or informal (or perhaps both) political and social processes. Schwandt (1994)

reminds us that while we may feel compelled to utilize a particular jargon for the purpose of inquiry, at the bottom-line, all interpretive inquirers are observers who watch, listen, record, and interact. How these activities that are eventually transformed into the creation of culture are manifest depends on the purpose of the inquiry which, in turn, depends on the epistemological, ethical, and methodological considerations of both the organization and the observer. This clearly calls for giving the phenomenological a vital role in the inquiry.

Suransky (1980) supports the importance of phenomenological considerations in the creation of qualitative research. He applies the axioms of phenomenology to qualitative investigations by asserting that it;

- Is an attempt to penetrate to the essence of a phenomena
- Is founded on the primacy of experience, including that of the investigator to the research
- Has a critical perception toward theory
- Treats subjects as active participants in the making of theory
- Involves the process of intuition, reflection, and description rather than product (p.171).

Holstein and Gubrium (1994) examine the development of social phenomenology. They note the work of Husserl who insisted that the relationship between human perception and the object of that perception was not a passive thing. Schutz, the authors write, continued to expand this line of thinking and argued that the social sciences ought to be focusing on the way that the experiential world we all take for granted is produced and experienced by its participants. The observer can then concentrate on how those participants interpret and make the world they experience as "real life". Given this, social

phenomenology is based on the belief that our social relationships both construct and convey meaning.

The everyday world we construct seems so real and definite to us that we often presume that it is maintained as we perceive it even in our absence. We frequently make the flawed assumption that our world view is shared completely by those around us. Holstein and Gubrium (1994) point out, "We assume that others experience the world basically in the way we do, and that we can therefore understand one another in our dealings with the world. We take our subjectivity for granted, overlooking its constitutive character, presuming that we *intersubjectively* share the same reality" (p.263).

If we assume that Holstein and Gubrium are correct in their assertion that reality is produced "from within" by virtue of interpretation, then the social circumstances of the members of a community are what the authors call "self-generating". The consequence of this is that meanings will depend on context. Only through the use of language and interaction can objects and events have meaning. In addition, since interpretive activities are both in and about the setting, Holstein and Gubrium consider them to be "reflexive" in that the descriptions of settings help shape those settings while they are in turn further shaped by the very settings they help create.

Interpretive practice, Holstein and Gubrium note, is also organizationally embedded. Interpretation, they write, is a reflection of publicly recognized contexts that have been organized socially. As life for most people is intertwined with organizational participation, the formulation of meaning that people make becomes continually more public as it is "conditioned" by participation in the organization. "The accomplishment of order and meaning is highly localized, artful yet contextually conditioned. The focus on interpretive resources re-

appropriates classical sociological themes--rationalization and collective representation for example--to the enactment of meaningful reality"(p.270).

Schwandt (1994) also calls for a prominent role for the phenomenological as he posits, "we do not simply live out our lives *in* time and *through* language; rather, we *are* our history. The fact that language and history are both the condition and the limit of understanding is what makes the process of meaning construction hermeneutical" (p.120).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have proposed a methodological framework for constructivist inquiry which will serve as a framework for this dissertation. It begins with a set of four "entry conditions" without which, they propose, there is no point in attempting an inquiry utilizing a constructivist framework. First, they state, the study must be conducted in a natural setting. If we accept the assumption that multiple realities may exist and that they are time and context sensitive, then it only makes sense to observe the phenomena in the context the investigator hopes to understand. This study will examine the creation of culture in a school from the base of that school. The participants will be those intimately involved in the actual, every-day process and all of the nuances involved. Second, constructivists typically enter a situation as a learner. Whereas the positivist inquiry begins with what the researcher knows he or she does not know, the constructivist inquiry will assume that the investigator does not know what he or she does not know. The human, they assert, must be the only instrument of choice for the constructivist during the beginnings of an inquiry. This inquiry will begin from that point. Every effort will be made to be aware of the wealth of understanding that will be derived from experiencing the process.

Third, methods that are used should be those that are most readily used with human participants. At its most basic level, it is sensory input that provides the

ground-floor for the responses of all participants and observers. As the creation of culture does not neatly lend itself to the creation of survey instruments, methods that maximize the freedom of the participants to respond in a rich and varied way will be encouraged.

Finally, the use of "tacit knowledge" must be incorporated. The tacit understanding of a situation early in the inquiry process--getting a "feel" or "vision" for a particular place--is exactly what the positivist researcher attempts to eliminate through controls. As with the other elements Guba and Lincoln cite as critical, this inquiry will stress the role of both the observer and the participants in the creation of the setting and the making of meaning.

After these four criteria are satisfied, it is possible to initiate a constructivist inquiry. The process Guba and Lincoln promote is termed the "hermeneutical dialectic" (p.177). The first phase in this circle is the selection of respondents from as broad a scope as possible. For the purpose of this study, the participants will be the administration, teachers, classified staff, and selected students of a 650 student middle school in a southern city of 150,000 people.

Next, the investigator begins with questions framed to allow responses to guide the further development of questions. The development of cases will closely follow the narratives of the teachers. Third, analysis of responses continues throughout the process. Participants have a joint role in the construction of what emerges from the discussions. The voice and vision of the teachers and administrators will continually refine the process. Finally, a design begins to emerge as the process continues. From an initial difficulty of conjecturing, the design unfolds and is refined through the process.

These phases result in the production of a case report that is a joint creation of the investigator and those who participate in the inquiry. The case report should

not only make apparent the situations held by the investigator, but also the motives, feelings, and rationales attending those beliefs. A well written case report may help provide a vicarious learning experience for those who share in it. It is the case report (or analysis) of the inquiry in which theory, in this case concerning the establishment of a school culture, should emerge. This is a critical departure from traditional *a priori* theory.

Skrtic (1985) describes the differences between *a priori* and what constructivists and those of other, non-positivist orientations term "grounded theory". The differences are most profound in the way in which data are utilized. In *a priori* modes of research, data are collected to prove or disprove an existing theory. On the other hand, in grounded theory, the theory emerges from (and is grounded in) the data.

Autobiography

Smith (1994) finds that autobiography is at the core of late twentieth century paradigm shifts in the structure of human thought. "Writing lives", he states, "can serve multiple purposes. In general, scientists seek patterns in the forms of concepts, hypotheses, theories, and metaphors. These patterns are both the fruits of scientific inquiry and practice and the stimulus for further inquiry and improved practice" (p.295).

Smith (1979) also believes that every researcher "has an interesting story to tell on the evolution of his or her own work. I believe that more of these stories need to be told if we are to have a useful and potent theory of methodology" (p.325). Anyone who attempts to investigate something as intricate as the culture of a school must recognize that certain biases on the part of the investigator will be inherently present. The presentation of the professional autobiography of the

investigator will serve to identify many of these predilections. In this way, factors which have influenced both the filter through which my reality is perceived and the voice with which I communicate them may be identified. It is not appropriate to attempt a dispassionate and distanced view of a school. Instead, what is significant is the recognition that what develops must of necessity be influenced by the eye of the beholder and his or her own theories-in-use.

Case Study

Sarason (1978) believes that a case study is far more than an assemblage of facts. Facts, he tells us, do not necessarily tell the truth but instead give a description of the events that someone considers important based on their view of "how things work". He writes that,

> The contents of a case history are determined by *a priori* considerations that may be right, wrong, or misleading--which of these it is will be determined over time by competing considerations subjected to study. In the case of the problem of the creation of settings (and why so many of them misfire) we do not possess adequate case histories, less because of faulty conceptions than because it has hardly been conceptualized as a problem (p.165).

Sarason is quite correct in thinking and writing that conceptualization of the need for case study is a real problem in educational research. In the nearly two decades since he stated that position, far too little has been added to the field in the form of case study. Shulman (1992) has used the case study in the area of teacher preparation and Brubaker (1994) has used it to examine creative curriculum leadership, . It is an ideal tool for this inquiry. Lather (1986) would concur as she writes, "I propose that the goal of emancipatory research is to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched at least as much as it is to generate empirically grounded theoretical knowledge"

(p.266). This dissertation will draw heavily upon the case study as a forum for seeking the establishment of the meaning of the creation of culture in middle school.

Shulman (1990) demonstrates the efficacy of the case study in determining meaning. He cites James Conant's story of Galileo's struggle to understand why a water pump would not work at depths of more than 34 feet. Galileo used the metaphor of water as being a coiled spring to be pulled up--despite the fact that the physics of his day demonstrated it was a matter of pushing instead of pulling. Galileo, however, was trapped by his own metaphor and never answered the question. A generation later, the problem was solved by scientists who did not know about (and were not trapped by) an inferior metaphor. Shulman notes that "The lovely thing about such cases is that they offer not only intellectual lessons but also moral lessons. Galileo failed to solve the problem not because he was dumb, but because smart people can be captured by their own pre-conceptions as easily as and sometimes more easily than people who are not so smart." (p.308). To create any case is to establish a theoretical claim. Not all cases, though, are alike.

Stake (1994) identifies three types of case studies. Intrinsic case studies are undertaken in order to better understand some aspects of one particular case. It is not necessarily intended for extrapolation to any other case but rather a deeper look at one situation. The second type of case study is the instrumental case study. This type of case study is used to provide insight into an issue or an attempt to help refine a theory. Moving away from interest in one general case to an examination of the impact of a number of cases is the collective case study. In the collective case study, a number of cases are examined jointly to inquire into a phenomenon across a general population. Cases here are chosen specifically for the ability to

extrapolate them into some greater understanding about an issue or theory. As I seek to create a dissertation that will offer insight into the process of the creation of culture, it is the collective case study that will comprise the case study component of the research.

Stake notes that "Case researchers seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case, but the end result regularly presents something unique"(p.238). The uniqueness of the case, he writes, extends to not only the nature of the case, but also its historical background, setting, other economic or political contexts, other cases through which the case in question may be recognized, and the informants through whom the information will come.

The use of triangulation is an important aspect of case study. It is generally considered to be a process through which the use of multiple perceptions can clarify meaning and verify the repeatability of observations and interpretations. Recognizing, however, that observations are never completely repeatable, triangulation also serves "to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen" (p.241). The variety of cases will serve to illustrate the different aspects of school culture in a clearer fashion than the presentation of one, larger, case study on the entire organization.

Stake (1994) writes, "The case is expected to be something that functions, that operates; the study is the observation of operations. There is something to be described, and interpreted. The conceptions of most naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological case studies emphasize objective description and personalistic interpretation, a respect for curiosity for culturally different perceptions of phenomena, and empathic representations of local settings--all blending (perhaps clumped) within a constructivist epistemology"(p.242).

Critical to this dissertation will be the discernment of local meanings of cases. The interpretation of the reader is also profoundly important. In creating a series of case studies that will facilitate this development of meaning and understanding, the manner in which case studies are conducted and reported must clearly understood. This inquiry will utilize the situation, possible alternatives, and rationale for the alternative responses format of Brubaker (1994) with the addition of a section of commentary following each case after the style of Shulman (1992). A series of 19 cases will provide a number of representative "snap-shots" that reflect a consistent pattern found in the many cases which occur in a school as culture is created.

Stake (1994) identifies the major conceptual responsibilities of the qualitative researcher in creating a case study. They will act as a guideline for the creation of cases and are as follows:

- Bounding the case and conceptualizing the object of study
- Selecting the research questions to emphasize
- Seeking patterns of data to develop issues
- Triangulating key observations for better interpretation
- Identifying alternative interpretations to consider
- Developing generalizations about the case (p.244).

The writer of the narrative must also be cautious. Easterly (1992) poses two difficult questions about the nature and use of case study. She asks first, "Does the narrative structure itself impose a linear quality to a case that may misrepresent the "buzzing confusion" of classroom life?" (p.228). She then asks, "Does theoretical knowledge derive from a familiarity with a variety of specific cases over time, or do we need some theoretical knowledge in order to interpret the cases initially?" (p. 234).

Narrative/Story

Shulman (1992) notes that "the value of the case for the learning of theory lies in the ways cases instantiate and contextualize principles through embedding them in vividly told stories" (p.5). Postman (1989) writes that children require stories to give meaning to their existence. "Without air", he writes, "our cells die. Without a story, our selves die" (p.122). This holds true not only for individuals, but for societies a well. The "American story" has been told for over two hundred years. Our belief in that story is largely responsible for the success of the nation.

Davis (1993) writes that the medium of stories extends the cognitive structures which people build on and presents information in a manner that will promote retention through organizing frameworks. She adds that according to narrative theory as proposed by Vygotsky, Bruner, and others, posits that one cannot separate action, cognition, and effect. What one does cannot be separated from what one thinks or feels about one's thoughts or actions.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) comment that,

> The problem of studying experience is to lay claim to the integrity of experience itself and to fend off either its formalistic denial through abstraction and structure or its reduction into skills, techniques, and tactics. To do so is partly a matter of participating in the politics of method, a process both Eisner and Pinar (1988) claim is gaining a foothold for the study of experience (p.415).

Clandinin and Connelly write that when people note something of their experience, they do not make data tables or recordings--they make stories. "Story is, therefore, neither raw sensation nor cultural form; it is both and neither. In effect, stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experiences" (p.415). Narrative is both phenomenon and method. It names the structured

quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction, the authors use the terminology of calling the phenomenon "story" and the inquiry "narrative".

Carter (1993) notes that a story is comprised of at least three distinct elements; a situation involving some predicament or struggle, a protagonist who engages in the situation, and a plot during the course of which the predicament is resolved. Time, sequence, and continuity are also important factors in the construction of a narrative. Stories, she asserts, become ways of "capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal and, thus, redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness" (p.6).

Carter acknowledges that the knowledge represented in stories cannot be reduced to "abstract rules, logical propositions, or covering laws of scientific explanation". They represent, instead, paradigmatic knowledge which accommodates paradox and ambiguity. As such, they may go beyond the limitations of being full of meaning only to the story-teller and become part of the larger culture that incorporates the stories. Stories then are constructions that give meaning to a particular experience for a community. They are shaped by the attitudes and beliefs of the author as well as the forces that shape and structure the situation.

Bruner (1986) writes that "Narrative deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions" (p.16). In addition, Bruner and others hold to the belief that there is an inherent "deep structure" to narratives and that good stories are well-formed manifestations of this deep structure. This dissertation will make use of the narratives of two beginning teachers in detail as they go through the process of

being assimilated into the larger culture of the school. The experiences of the principal, assistant principals, other teachers, staff, and students will play an important role in the development of case studies which will each examine a different aspect of middle school culture.

Artifacts

The artifacts generated by schools in the creation of culture can present another facet of the experiences that the faculty, staff, and students share. Goffman (1959) demonstrated the importance of fronts, strategies, and impression management in interacting with individuals. It is important to note that organizations similarly manage impressions and utilize their own costumes and props.

Campbell (1974) believes "In current quantitative program evaluations, qualitative knowing is also regularly present in the narrative history of the program, as well as in the description of the program content, the measures and means of data collection, and in the verbal summary of program outcomes. The numerical evidence would not be interpretable otherwise. Yet such qualitative content is often an unplanned afterthought" (p.15).

Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) note that the connections that are made between the expression and content among signs are mental and depend upon what they term a "primitive phenomenology" in that the meaningful connections between expression and content are socially constructed and maintained. These connections are "shared and collective, and provide an important source of the ideas, rules, practices, codes, and recipe knowledge called "culture"...which is a reference point and a means by which one comes to believe in the reality of the expression" (p.466). A number of artifacts in the form of administrative memos,

team newsletters, miscellaneous correspondence, and student work, will provide an insight into the workings of the creation of a culture in this middle school.

Validity

Validity is a concept made use of in deductive theory and argument. As such, it is of value in logic courses, but carries only a limited, particular meaning in ascribing "the validity of this argument". To guide the collection of data, internal validity will be made by use of triangulation--using multiple sources and methods to obtain a well-rounded understanding of the phenomena of the creation of culture in middle school.

Maxwell (1992) notes that data cannot inherently be valid or invalid. What matters is what inferences we may draw from a collection of data. Marshall (1985) cites standards she believes can be appropriately used in judging the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry. They include the following:

- The procedures for data collection are explained
- Data are displayed and used to elaborate on the meaning of concepts
- Negative instances are displayed and dealt with
- The logic of professional and theoretical biases are explained
- data collection and analysis are "semi-public" and open to later reinterpretation
- The "in-field" analyses are documented
- Competing hypotheses are laid out and evidence presented for choices made
- The data are preserved and open to later re-analysis
- Connections are made between knowledge found to that of other settings (p.356).

The concept of verisimilitude--having the unmistakable ring of truth--will also be an important component of the attempt to provide a platform for the emergence of theory into the creation of culture in middle school. Shulman (1992)

asserts that "Narrative modes are specific, local, personal, and contextualized. We do not speak of the validity of a narrative, but of its verisimilitude. Does it ring true? Is it a compelling and persuasive story? A good piece of physics demonstrates its validity through meeting standards of prediction and control. A good work of tragedy demonstrates its verisimilitude by evoking in its audience feelings of pity and fear" (p.22). The search for the demonstration of verisimilitude, then, will be a powerful constituent in the search for validity in this dissertation.

CHAPTER IV

THE CREATION OF CULTURE

The Setting

The setting for this inquiry is a middle school in the southeastern United States. It is located in a rural area about ten miles from the center of a moderately sized (population approximately 150,000) city. The school has 630 students in grades six through eight. The student population is 62% white and 38% black. The student population is indigenous to the district and is one of only two middle schools in the city/county merged district of 40,000 students and 57 schools not to cross-bus students to achieve racial balance.

The socioeconomic level of the community in which the school is located may be described as generally middle-class. The western portion of the district is comprised of predominantly minority households of middle to upper-middle class socioeconomic status. Many of the parents of these students are employed by the large tobacco and textile companies in the area and live in single family homes. The eastern and northern parts of the district are almost entirely white and of lower to middle class status. Many of these parents work in factories or mills in one of several nearby cities and live in single family homes or trailer parks. The school's attendance district is quite stable, with little movement into or out of the area.

The school itself is situated near the center of a small, un-incorporated town and shares a ball field with the neighboring elementary school. The campus contains over forty acres of land and the middle school has one main building, built in several phases from 1950 to 1970, and a detached gymnasium. In addition, there are seven mobile units (single-wide trailers) used as classrooms. The facility

itself, while typical of post-war schools in construction and appearance, is warm and inviting. Cork panels above the lockers throughout the school are covered with student work that reflect the team identities throughout the grades. A school theme is evident as one walks through the halls. Team spirit is high and students are proud of their work. How this came to be is the focus of the cases.

The school is staffed by forty-nine certified personnel with a classified staff of fifteen and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The teachers range from first-year initially certified through thirty-four year veterans. The average experience level of the staff is approximately nine years. About one-third of the teachers hold advanced degrees in their fields. Teaching styles range from traditional lecture and seat-work to highly innovative, non-traditional methods incorporating teaching and learning styles, stations, multi-tasking, cooperative and peer teaching, and other new strategies.

The principal of this institution has 22 years of experience in education at the elementary and middle school level. She is a white female in her mid-forties, has a doctorate in educational administration, and has been a school administrator for fourteen years. She is completing her second year as principal at this school. She has a highly collaborative style of leadership and frequently utilizes the talents and experience of her assistant principals and staff to meet the needs of the school. She endeavors to keep her door open at all time for staff and students. She also has a high level of visibility--visiting classes and walking the halls to talk with people and "get a feel for how the day is going". Consequently, paperwork is often relegated until late in the evening or weekends.

The principal has two assistant principals. One is a long-time teacher turned administrator who has spent 26 years at this school. She is an african-american female who is a main-stay in the community--having taught many of the

parents of her current students. She maintains excellent ties to the various educational communities and is deliberate and scrupulously fair in her actions with parents and students. I am the other assistant principal.

As I indicated earlier, I came to this position after spending time in central office as an instructional generalist for middle schools. I had visited the campus on several occasions in an official capacity before my assignment to it and had worked with several of the teachers.

I had entered the teaching profession as the first lateral entry science teacher hired in the region in response to a state-wide shortage of teachers. After becoming certified in middle grades science and math I taught science, math, and social studies at the elementary and high school level for five years in a small, rural school system. During this time I also completed a master's degree in administration and supervision. My desire to enter the administrative realm of education led me to move to the much larger, urban school system in which I am now employed. After a year of teaching middle school science in this system, I became one of two middle school generalists assigned to central office.

As a middle school generalist I was responsible for the development and implementation of curriculum at the middle school level. As I traveled from school to school to work with teachers and administrators, I was able to observe the multitude of different efforts with which educators were attempting to provide a quality education for their children. I also noted the resistance on the part of some administrators and many teachers to the reforms we were attempting to promote. When I was assigned to this middle school, I was aware that it would be a place that needed healing and growth. The previous administration had ended badly. The former principal had engaged in an affair with an elective teacher that became quite open and resulted in two very public and very bitter divorces. During the last

half of the previous year, the school was basically run by the curriculum coordinator with the assistance of a guidance counselor.

So it was that when the principal and I came to this setting, we were well aware that an entirely new culture was going to have to be created to replace the one that had previously existed. There was a significant amount of wariness on the part of the school community and staff. Even the children were affected by a year in which consequences were not dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The following cases, along with their various commentary and narratives, will demonstrate the phenomena of the creation of culture in this middle school.

The Cases

Case #1

Who Decides When the Leadership Team Won't?

You are a middle school principal. The school's leadership team is debating the allocation of staff development days throughout the school year. The last principal allowed elective teachers to have all six early dismissal days for planning by having core subject teachers keep their students all day on those days. He also had a close, personal relationship with one of the elective teachers (which was a major factor in your becoming the new principal there). The staff was torn apart by morale problems last year. The leadership team is split. As a result of system-wide scheduling, elective teachers have only one period on planning time per day, while academic teachers in core subjects have one period for individual planning and one period for team planning. Core teachers want a compromise, elective teachers want to balance their perceived inequity in planning and want all six days

again this year. What do you do to keep your staff together? Choose from the following alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Make the decision yourself. Tell the Leadership Team that you inherited the problem and you are going to deal with it. If teachers get mad, they'll get over it.
2) Keep out of it and let the Leadership Team decide. Nobody said site-based decision making was going to be easy. The teachers may get mad at each other, but it will be their decision.
3) Try to get volunteers to cover for the elective teachers so they can plan and core teachers will have regular schedules. Avoid confrontation.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) By making the decision yourself, you spare all the bloodletting at the meeting. This may spare some feelings but it will not address the issue. You also suspect that more may be going on between core and elective teachers than is apparent from the discussion. Besides, by making this decision you invite all other tough decisions to fall into your lap.
2) This course is sure to cause problems. Teachers are going to vent their frustrations and make their arguments. Someone will get mad and yell or cry. Of course, they will also come to grips and deal with the problem themselves and will build a stronger team for having worked through it. Although it is difficult to sit and watch, let them work it out, offer guidance and advice, and support their decision.
3) While this alternative looks attractive at first, it is really a non-decision. The conflict you seek to avoid will doubtless rear its head in other ways if

you don't let it get worked-out now. By choosing this path you also do not encourage your staff to compromise or build consensus.

Commentary:

This was the first major dilemma the new principal had to contend with. Before school even started, she had received several calls and visits from the elective teachers letting her know how important this issue was to them and trying to gain assurances from her that she would continue the scheduling for the upcoming year. She had the foresight to recognize that this would be a highly-charged issue and refused to commit to any decision until she had met with the leadership team and discussed all aspects of the situation.

When the leadership team met for the first time in late July, it became readily apparent that she had a real can of worms on her hands. The previous principal had set up the schedule to maximize the amount of time his elective teacher friend might have to be with him during the day. Naturally, the rest of the elective teachers benefited from this arrangement. The principal commented,

> I knew that this was going to be difficult. The real problem didn't lie with me or even with the previous principal. As I see it the problem really stemmed from the transition to a true middle school schedule. When the core teachers got two planning periods it really set-off the elective teachers [who remained at only one period per day for planning]. The problem had been growing for several years with one teacher in particular stirring things up on a regular basis.
>
> I told the leadership team that I believed there were four types of decisions that would be made in my school. The first would be those that I would make entirely on my own. I always have to reserve the right to make an administrative decision when necessary. The second type of decision would be made by me after consulting with the leadership team and getting their input. The third type of decision-making occurs when the leadership team makes the decision with input from me and the teachers. The final type of decision would be those made by the vote of the individual teachers. In every school there are times for each of these decisions.

The principal in this case let the teachers know that unlike the previous administration, she would expect the leadership team to provide input and guidance. This decision, she informed them, would be theirs to make. She related that "The easy thing to do would have been to make it for them. More important to me than the question of 'who would have how much planning time?' was the question of 'can this group learn to come to consensus?' The first meeting on the subject disintegrated into tears and angry feelings. After hours of agonizing at the second meeting, they decided to split the early dismissal days and give the elective teachers four of them for planning. It was, she believed, a real "character-building" experience for them. Getting them to agree was difficult. Getting them to be responsible for their decisions proved even harder.

Case #2

Why Can't He Fight Back?

You are a middle school assistant principal. Two sixth grade children have been involved in a fight. When you call the parents of the participants to come get their children, one father is furious that you have suspended his son for his involvement in the fight. You invite him to discuss the matter further when he comes to get his son. When the father arrives, he complains that the other boy has taunted his child several times over the past few weeks. This is true; however, you explain to the father that the school policy quite plainly holds that if a student chooses to hit another child, he will be suspended. He spends the next half hour deriding and questioning everything from the school policy to your heritage. He refuses to see your point and threatens to go to the superintendent and the television station if you carry through with your plan to suspend the child. He will, however, agree to your placing him in in-school suspension. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Hold the line and suspend him anyway. Invite the father to complain to whomever he wishes.
2) Compromise and let the student go to in-school suspension.
3) Since the child was being picked-on by the other student, you could consider his actions self-defense and forget the whole thing.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) If you back off on this case, you will be at the mercy of every other parent who makes similar threats. You made what you feel to be the right

decision. If someone in central office forces you to change the outcome, so be it.

2) Sometimes as an administrator you must compromise. This path allows you to discipline the child yet stay out of the six o'clock news and the superintendent's office.

3) This course of action allows you a graceful way out of the situation. On the other hand, you know that it is not true and would be wiggling out of a difficult decision. The father was correct, the other child did taunt his son. His son, though, has been instigating trouble with this and several other children. In addition, he provoked this particular fight. This is not a viable alternative.

Commentary:

The father was correct in his assertion that there were problems between his son and the other boy. Neither child had asked anyone for help in stopping their difficulties. The father's next line of thinking was that his son was merely defending himself. I asked him to justify that statement. He told me that he told his son not to start any fights but to "beat the tar out of anybody who laid a hand on him." I explained to the man that we were concerned about the safety of all of our nearly 700 students and would never want to punish a child for fighting if the child did not have any choice in the matter. Occasionally, one child will go after another child for no apparent reason and the child being attacked must be able to defend himself until help arrives.

In this case, the boy in question told the boy who was taunting him "I'm sick of you calling me names, why don't you go ahead and hit me, faggot", as he pushed the boy. The other boy hit him and they were soon rolling around on the floor like championship wrestlers. The father asserted that since the other boy had struck his child first, he had the right to hit him back.

I explained to him that if his son had a choice in the matter (and he did) and he chose to punch another child (and he did), the consequence for any child would be a three day out of school suspension for the first offense. He informed me that he would continue to tell his child to punch anybody that put their hands on him. I told him that I understood that he needed to raise his child in the manner he thought was right, but we had a policy that I strongly supported that a second fight is a five day suspension and a third fight leads to exclusion from the school and he needed to understand that if his son continued to fight, I would continue to suspend him. At this point he made a series of comments and suggestions regarding my upbringing, education, and parentage and left my office.

What was interesting about the whole scenario was the father's notion that his son was "protecting his honor" by fighting and should be praised rather than punished--despite the fact that the boy admitted to instigating the fight and being a full participant in it. The decision to consciously act from the standpoint of justice seemed to continually collide with what I considered to be his rather primitive concept of fairness. I kept trying to bring the father back to my central concern that his son had voluntarily participated in a violation of the school rules. Furthermore, to be certain that there are no misunderstandings on the part of the children, at the beginning of the school year we meet with each team to discuss rules and procedures. We actually have students act-out different fight scenarios to explain to them the importance of making good choices and getting help when necessary. His son acknowledged being aware of this. The father did not care. It was the rule that was stupid, not his son's actions.

Case #3

Invasion of the "Slugs"

You are a bright and talented first year teacher in a middle school. You are fortunate to be on a four-teacher team composed of one other energetic young teacher who enjoys planning and implementing interdisciplinary units, one veteran teacher who has an interest in middle school activities--if someone else plans them, and one veteran teacher left over from junior high school days. In fact, parents of some of your children comment that they remember when that teacher taught them the same material a generation ago. Several of the older, veteran teachers laughingly call themselves "the slugs" as they see no reason to change the way they have done things over the last three decades and tend not to volunteer for any of the positions of responsibility that lately seem to be assumed by the younger teachers. One day, after a faculty meeting, you are confronted by one of "the slugs". It seems that you have offended them. The principal asked for a volunteer to head up a selection committee for a school-wide award. Unbeknownst to either you, the other young teachers, or the principal, in years past this award was always the responsibility of one veteran teacher. The teacher who confronts you asks how a person could be so inconsiderate as you since "everybody knows Mrs. So-and-so does this award. She always did before". In addition, she berates you for "trying to make us older teachers look bad". She informs you that the methods they use were good enough for your parents and should be good enough for you and your students. "The principal gives you too much attention and credit. You had better learn your place if you hope to make it in education". As she storms off in a huff, you ask yourself, "what should I do?" Choose from the following alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Ignore her. It's not your problem that a group of young teachers are putting pressure on the older ones. You volunteered to head this committee. Do it well.

2) Seek out the older teacher whom you inadvertently offended and apologize. Offer to let her head up the committee and offer her your services.

3) Tell the principal that you are both in hot water with "the slugs" and get her advice on what to do next.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) Who do these people think they are? You are all professionals. The principal asked the whole staff if anyone wanted to do this. You looked around the room twice before volunteering. How could either of you know that this teacher was waiting to be asked?

2) By seeking out the older teacher you can ask for forgiveness for inadvertently "stepping on her toes". You give her the opportunity to be magnanimous and give you all sorts of advice. It's important to feel important. Let her have this one.

3) The principal has no idea that she has stepped on a land-mine. You need to give her the opportunity to either leave the responsibility with you or go with you to see the older teacher whom you have both offended. She needs to decide whether it's more important to appease "the slugs" or remind them that they're still part of the faculty and should expect to be treated like everyone else.

Commentary:

In an interview with two initially certified teachers and one nine-year veteran, this case came to light. The three teachers were sharing in a dialog about the importance of the learning community and how their efforts were not always appreciated by their peers. One of them brought up the issue of "the slugs".

> You know that we have a group of teachers who call themselves "the slugs". They are the older teachers who tend to stay off to themselves and bitch about every little thing. What bugs me the most about these individuals isn't that they're stuck in their ways--and they are, or are hard to get along with--and they're that too. No, I really get ticked-off when they send kids the message that "you're lucky to be here with me. I am education". You would think that knowledge just oozed from every pore. I think that more people need to recognize that we are here for the student, not that the student is here to sit at our feet. I'd say many people's priorities are all messed-up. So what if the kids tend to gravitate toward us. If some of these slugs actually worked with them [children] they might have more to be happy about. Why do you [administrators] allow the slugs to stay around here and poison kids?

This was a good question. I was taken with the importance of my response to her. Somehow my comment that the state board and teachers' organization had made it very difficult to fire a teacher and, unfortunately, not caring about kids was not grounds for dismissal came across as woefully inadequate. All three teachers shared that they felt pressure from many veteran teachers over "rocking the boat with all this new stuff". One teacher thought that our school did a disservice to children by condoning the presence of teachers who did not feel that children were priority one. Another teacher summed it up quite well when she stated,

> I think that how the other teachers feel about me depends on how they feel about what education should be. Some teachers give me a lot of static about doing neat things like stations and plays and

> activities. They'll ask me, 'What are we playing today?' At first I tried to explain to them that there were a lot of objectives I could teach using interdisciplinary units and non-traditional activities. After a few smug smiles I realized they weren't interested in what I was doing, they were just putting me down because their kids hated being stuck in the book and mine loved coming to class... Or maybe they didn't care if the kids were jealous or not...they just didn't like all the attention I was getting.

I asked her if this response was typical of other teachers' reactions to her. She replied that it was surprising how many teachers supported her and came to her with ideas and strategies they themselves had tried earlier in their career. She thought it sad that so many teachers had so many good ideas that they simply did not use any longer. The majority of the teachers were either positive toward her or at least neutral. There was a small group of teachers who openly attacked her and her methods, and while they were small in number, they were powerful in the school and the community.

Case #4

But that Beer isn't Mine!

You are the Assistant Principal of a large middle school. During the course of your routine morning investigations into bus problems a student asks you how you feel about selling drugs at school. After some discussion he proceeds to tell you in detail about the set-up he has overheard for a transaction to take place at the 9:00 locker change. The Principal is out of the building at a Principal's meeting. You believe that you have probable cause to search the lockers of the students in question. After following board procedures for locker searches, you find a "sport mug" in one locker. Thinking it might be an ideal place to stash drugs, you pick it up and notice the unmistakable smell of alcohol. You open it and find it full of beer. The student in whose locker it was found says he was "just holding it for a friend" who was to get it later and tells you he did not know it contained beer. He is also the son of a central office administrator. The other student he claimed to be holding it for denies any knowledge of the mug or the beer. There are no witnesses to corroborate either story. What do you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Since neither boy admits to the beer being theirs, throw out the beer and forget the incident. You don't want to suspend a boy for possession of something he didn't know he had.
2) Suspend the boy in whose locker you found the beer. Board policy defines possession to include lockers, and possession of alcohol is against board policy.
3) Wait until the Principal returns and let her handle it. This looks like a sticky situation and parents will surely be furious.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) By doing this you allow both the innocent and the guilty to go free. Are you sure they are both innocent? Who is guilty here? It would not be fair to risk punishing the innocent for something they didn't do. This battle isn't worth fighting.

2) While it is next to impossible to be sure who is guilty of bringing the beer, you do have the matter of possession of alcohol at school. The smell of alcohol was clearly evident as you picked it up, and it does not seem logical the student could not have known. You are bound to carry out the policies of the board so you suspend the student and take the heat.

3) Your failure to handle this and leave it for your principal would be committing political suicide. What message does it send to the students, teachers, and principal when you choose not to make the tough decisions? Not dealing with it at all is a major mistake. If you even considered this, re-evaluate if you really want to be in school administration. This is definitely not a viable option.

Commentary:

This case was interesting on several levels. On one level the students had obviously continued into their eighth grade year with the faulty assumption that the new administration would pursue the same "hands-off" approach that had been so detrimental during the previous school year. It was important to send a message to the students and staff that substance abuse would not go unchecked at this school. The principal had stated in the strongest possible terms that she would not tolerate drugs or alcohol on her campus. This was the first challenge to that particular assertion.

On another level, the teachers had not had the opportunity to see how the new administration would react to serious disciplinary infractions. Would the students be counseled and returned to class to continue their behaviors as the previous administration had done? Or, would the number of infractions be kept and when the magic number of discipline incidents was reached, the student would be put out of the school like an earlier principal had done. This principal had promised a different attitude.

It was clear to me that in this situation, someone was lying. Although the friend of the young man in question may indeed have brought the beer to school, it was found in the locked locker of this child. Even the most cursory of examinations would have proven it to be beer.

When the mother was contacted in central office, she reacted with surprise and disgust. She believed that the container could not be her son's. As I explained to her that I was suspending her son for three days according to system-wide policy, she went from angry to livid. When she got to the school, the mother, child, and I went back to his locker and I had the child go through the motions of the friend who supposedly (without telling him it was beer) placed the container in

his locker. I had the mother stand in the place of the child. The smell from the container as it passed by her and into the small locker caused the mother to be convinced that her son must indeed have known. As a result of this incident, she called the guidance counselor and had her son quietly transferred to another school. She wanted to get him away from his "friends".

The teachers reacted favorably to our handling of this incident. The principal went on the intercom several days later and advised the students that the drug dog would be visiting the school periodically and stressed her commitment to the children that ours would be a "drug-free" school. Unfortunately, this was easier said than done.

Case #5
Who will Carry the Monkey?

You are the principal of a middle school. The teachers are largely competent, but more than a few seem to lack good management skills--especially with regard to monitoring behavior in the halls and classrooms. Your assistant principals are constantly barraged with discipline notices for offenses that you do not believe are worthy of office referral. Back in August, the school's leadership team set out clear guidelines for behaviors and consequences. That has had little impact on students in classes where these expectations are not internalized by the classroom teacher. These are the teachers who so often come into your office (or send students) to "get the monkeys off their own backs" when they get tired of a child's behavior. What do you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Continue to have the administrative staff deal with the children when the teachers send them out and hope the teachers get better about handling their own discipline.
2) Send the students back to the teacher with a note telling them to handle it on their own.
3) Find a way to make teachers accountable for their own discipline before it gets to your assistant principals.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) By continuing to accept things as they are, you are establishing an aspect of school culture that will exist with your teachers as long as you are at this school. The attitude of, "You deal with this kid" may be the easy way out for the teachers but keeping all of their "monkeys" will eventually drive you all crazy.

2) This solution keeps the monkey off your back but does not firmly re-attach it to the teacher. Just as you want student behavior to improve, you want teachers to develop effective practices. This solution helps no one.

3) You develop a "discipline card" for teachers to follow in cases of routine discipline (serious matters can always be immediately referred to you or the assistant principals). You color-code the cards by grade level and list spaces for dates of interventions. You tell the teachers that you will be glad to handle "their" discipline problems--as soon as they become "our" discipline problems. Students are to be sent to the office with both the discipline notice and the discipline card which records parent contacts, after school detention, and other teacher interventions. The monkey becomes firmly attached back where it belongs.

Commentary:

One of the more difficult aspects of creating a school culture is clearly communicating the expectations of the principal to the teaching staff. Many teacher have been doing things the same way for years (or even decades). It was important for the incoming principal to let her staff know clearly what her expectations were. The difficulty was, when she spoke in generalities about teacher behavior, most thought she was referring to someone else and paid her little attention until the discipline notices started getting returned and teachers started getting visited by the principal to discuss the manner in which things were handled in various situations.

One particularly damaging habit the incoming principal noticed was the high incidence of disrespectful language used by several teachers toward children. In particular, one teacher would repeatedly yell at her children and tell them to shut up. When the child was "backed into a corner" by the teacher and embarrassed in front of his or her peers, more often than not the child would verbally respond to the teacher and then be "written up" for disrespect. As the principal explained it,

> It drives me crazy when adults play 'Gotcha!' with kids. As adults they ought to know better. You could almost tell when a few of these teachers were going to go after kids...You would hear her complain to the other teachers about what a pain this child was being and how she had 'just about had it.' Sure enough, the next day there would be a discipline notice on the child that would read 'disrespect to teacher'. When we'd check it out we'd find that she had gotten in the child's face and embarrassed him to the point where he would mutter 'I hate you' or something like that. Then out comes the D-1 (discipline notice) and suddenly the child is our problem.

She added that the many of the teachers made effective use of the telephone to stay in touch with parents and let them know if their sons or daughters were misbehaving. While some parents were not concerned, the vast majority of them

were quite supportive of the teachers' efforts. The teachers who wanted the office to handle their discipline tended to have poor telephone skills and made few calls to parents. Clearly, the reason few contacts were made was because of the difficulty these teachers would have in justifying their actions to the parents of these children.

The principal instituted the use of a discipline card ostensibly to help the office with discipline record keeping. In actuality, she wanted to provide a list of teacher interventions to be filled-out before referring a child to the office. For most of the teachers this provided no problem as it was a convenient way to record steps they themselves were already taking--moving seats, calling parents, after school detentions, time-outs, and the like. It was not a matter of steps being required in a particular sequence; teachers had the freedom to utilize whatever strategies worked best in their situations. As long as alternatives were attempted, there was no problem. For the others, though, the discipline card proved to be an obstacle to be surmounted. Discipline notices arriving in the office without either a card or verbal explanation of previous interventions were summarily returned to the teacher for action. After a few instances in which teachers did not make a reasonable attempt to deal with the child personally, the teachers were privately spoken to by one of the assistant principals who "assured the teacher of the importance of making the effort.". While this did not solve the problem of teachers not liking to handle children with dignity and in appropriate fashion, it did go far in establishing a set of boundaries for appropriate teacher behavior.

Case # 6

How Much Honor Do We Need?

You are a teacher in a middle school and a member of the school's leadership team. After school there is a meeting of the leadership team and the main item on the agenda is the issue of the honor roll. The debate between the faculty during the day has revolved around whether the honor roll should recognize those students with only A's and B's or include those who have attained a 3.0 grade point average. While you believe that standards for achievement should be high, you are bothered by the outstanding students who get a C in an elective course. Doesn't the philosophy of the middle school include the freedom to explore other courses in which students might not necessarily be as strong? Or is the problem that teachers in elective courses are grading students too hard? When the decision comes to a head, what should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Go with the teachers who want to hold the line at all A's and B's. Make the students meet those expectations.
2) Give the kids a break and allow for that occasional C. Support a change in the policy to a 3.0 for the honor roll.
3) Keep the A/B requirement and make the elective teachers change their grading practices.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) The honor roll should recognize just that, honor. If a student gets a C, he or she has not excelled. If you go to a 3.0, a student could fail a class and still make the honor roll.

2) Every quarter you have to deal with the child who gets a C in PE and gets left off the honor roll. High schools and colleges use a 3.0. Your school should too. Why not honor the student who performs well in core classes but may not excel in the exploratory courses?

3) Elective teachers hold their students to high standards, too. Is this how it should be? Forcing teachers to change their grading practices--most of which are quite appropriate--would create much conflict, but be the easy way out. Perhaps you might consider making electives pass/fail.

Commentary:

This issue at first seemed to be fairly innocuous, but it led teachers to discuss the value of a "C" and whether or not getting one meant that a student should not be honored. Five of the teachers felt that under no circumstances should anyone with a "C" in any class be on the honor roll. Ten teachers, on the other hand, felt that students frequently get/earn a "C" in elective subjects and that children should not be penalized for only being "average" in one of the many elective subjects they are exposed to throughout the year. This caused another teacher to ask that if a student was a "straight-A" student, yet made a "C" in physical education, to what standard of proficiency should the child be held? "And exactly what does an "A" in art mean anyway?", she added. After some rather passionate discussion, it was finally decided by consensus that a 3.0 grade point average would constitute an honor roll level of achievement.

This decision precipitated another discussion as one teacher commented, "if we change the policy to allow a student with a "C" to get on the honor roll, that means that more kids will make the honor roll." This led the leadership chair to ask, "does this mean we are going to say that there is a limited amount of honor to go around? I have a problem with that" "Are we going to set the bar so high that we'll intentionally exclude most kids?, asked another" The discussion then revolved around whether the making the honor roll should be an exclusive or an inclusive process--is it wrong to set it up so that kids can get on it or ought we try to keep the numbers down? The teachers rather quickly came to the conclusion that student achievement should be celebrated and if half of the school made the honor roll, so be it.

Another interesting related issue that the teachers had to contend with was the weighting of grades. If students met for one class only every other day, should

that class count as much as a class that meets every day? This was a rather divisive issue. About half of the leadership team felt that every class was of equal importance and if they received a grade for it, one class should count as much as any other. The other half of the group believed that while all classes were important, it simply did not make sense to give the same weight to a class that met half the time. After much debate and deliberation, it was decided to table the decision on grade-weighting until we could figure out if the computer could weight grades when it calculated grade point averages.

Case # 7
When Is Enough, Enough??

This is a sticky situation. You are the assistant principal at a large urban middle school. You have worked with the principal to establish a safe environment with fair rules and consequences for all students. You are hopeful that it will take the better part of the year for students to work their way through the various steps which lead to exclusion from the school. After only a few weeks of school, it becomes evident to you that there are a few students who are bound and determined to break, disobey, or ignore the standards of conduct the school administration has established. One young man in particular has already acquired a thick discipline folder by committing a number of offenses in a variety of situations. You are close to putting him out of school, but hate to lose him as you have a much clearer view of his future options than he does. On the other hand, his actions have made him a threat to other students and the atmosphere you have worked to create. You are discussing his case with the principal trying to decide how best to deal with this child. You have several options. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) This child deserves the chance to "make it" in this school. Find some other strategies to try with him--he may come around.
2) Get him out of the school before he hurts someone badly.
3) Give him the chance to succeed, but if it looks as if he might do something really dangerous, then exclude him from the school.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) This approach gives the student every opportunity to succeed in your educational setting; however, it also opens you up to serious questions by other parents regarding the safety of their children. It also assures that your

setting will continue to be disrupted severely. It is just possible that he might come around by his own initiative with continued support and guidance.

2) Excluding a child from your school is a painful alternative. It is difficult to accept that some individuals do not want to be helped to succeed, or for some reason cannot succeed, in your school setting. You have done all that you could do to help this child--parent conferences, numerous consequences, even bringing in the child's pastor. You also recognize that the child's home situation is working to oppose your efforts, so nothing you do will be of much help. The only satisfaction you can have is in knowing that you have done everything possible to help this child succeed. Remove the child now before his actions lead to someone getting hurt.

3) This option puts the ball squarely in the student's court. You don't have to make the decision to expel him, his actions will do it for him. On the other hand, it is quite likely that whatever he does next is going to hurt somebody. How do you tell the parent of an injured child that you were waiting for just such an event to happen before you could expel him? As a parent yourself, you find his option to be unconscionable and not a viable alternative.

Commentary:

This case was an important step in the creation of culture at this middle school. The student in question was an eighth grade black male who was having tremendous difficulty in achieving any level of success in the regular school program. What compounded the problem was the severely dysfunctional family the child lived in. The father was continually unemployed and an abusive alcoholic. The mother had changed her phone number twice to keep the school from calling home to inform them of discipline problems. She also tried to keep her current work numbers from the school for the same reason. The principal and assistant principals had made an effort to cultivate a relationship with the boy's pastor--who was assuming much of the responsibility of acting as a role model for this child.

Many of the discipline referrals that came to us about this child seemed rather inappropriate--sharpening pencil at the wrong time, getting up from the lunch table to buy more food, and so on. There were, however, several glimpses of this child's anger and frustration in more serious and potentially violent behavior. The teachers wanted this student out of their classrooms. There was a procedure whereby students with a behavior problems could be referred to the alternative school for placement without having to be excluded from the home school. Several teachers had brought up this option. The principal had spoken with this child on numerous occasions and knew that the boy believed several teachers were "out to get him".

The principal informed the teachers during a grade level meeting that just as she did not expect for the office to deal with most disciplinary matters until the teachers had handled the problem to the best of their abilities, so should the school be obligated to make every attempt to help each child succeed until it is obvious

that another school placement would be in the best interest of the school and the child. She informed the child and his family that while she personally hoped the child would make it, she would not allow his disruptive behavior to jeopardize either the safety of the school or its educational programs.

Three days after this conference the student threatened his science teacher when she chided him for coming to class without his homework. At that point the alternatives presented had to be considered. Given the volatility of this child's emotional state, we decided to exclude the child. Our fears were realized when he ran from the office and began swearing at and threatening the science teacher. Fortunately, the other assistant principal had a good relationship with the child and she was able to talk him out of the room and get him back to her office until the mother of the child (and two sheriff's deputies) arrived. Luckily the child left the school without further incident. Sadly, he had no better luck at the alternative school and continued to create problems there too.

While a number of other students have had to be excluded from the school for various reasons, there has not been a single student recommended to us for voluntary transfer to the alternative school.

Case #8

A Challenge to the Teacher: Whose Curriculum?

You are a teacher of seventh grade middle school social studies teacher. You have been staying abreast of the latest developments in curriculum and have become increasingly dissatisfied with the way everyone seems bound by the book and the Standard Course of Study. Your efforts to construct interdisciplinary units meet with resounding resistance. The teachers tell you "we learned it this way, so can they!" As you share this with an administrator, she tells you to do as much as you can with your own subject and that changing the behaviors and attitudes of other teachers will happen slowly, if at all. What do you do? Choose the best solution from the following choices:

Possible Alternatives:

1) Keep your mouth shut and teach social studies as well as you can. After all, this is what you get paid for, isn't it?
2) Move to a school where you can be interdisciplinary and flourish in an atmosphere where the latest trends are used.
3) Change the system by becoming an instructional leader yourself. Seek out ways in which to provide students new learning experiences using different strategies. Perhaps others will get interested in what you are doing and follow suit--opening the door to future collaboration

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) This approach will safely keep bread upon your table. It is not, however, in the best interests of children who would benefit from some of the strategies you suggest.
2) This choice offers you the chance to really shine in an environment that is conducive to quality education. It would be a great alternative for you, but

not for your students who would continue to struggle with traditional teaching styles.

3) If you aren't part of the solution, you're part of the problem. Hold your ground on teaching strategies and continue to involve your fellow team-mates. By looking for other teachers who share similar feelings, you may be able to build a platform of support from which to expand interdisciplinary practices.

Commentary:

This case relates the experience of an outstanding second year teacher. She had encountered tremendous difficulty and resistance from other staff members who resented her energy, drive, and ability to relate to the students. It was interesting to hear the more experienced, more traditional teachers talk about her without actually mentioning her by name. It seemed that the more traditional teachers focused on the impression that this young teacher in particular was enjoying success because of "being so friendly to the kids." They attributed her good relationships to her students to "not knowing any better". One twenty-five year teacher commented that,

> Sure these young teachers are popular. That's why they get all the attention from the principal and the affection from the kids. That'll all change when they've been at it for a few years. You try to do your job, but after so many years of the same results with the same type of kids, you just decide it isn't worth the emotional investment. If we can teach these kids to read, write, and think a little before they get to high school, we'll have done our job. Having everybody's self-esteem massaged is nice, but it isn't going to help any of them get into college.

This young teacher spoke with me at length after several formal and informal interviews seeking guidance on career opportunities inside the field of education. She has since started working toward certification as a curriculum specialist. With this certification she will seek a supervisory role to try to combat some of the perceptions of the teachers. When asked about the role of the state curriculum in making other teachers unwilling to collaborate, she replied

> The Standard Course of Study is the biggest crutch to ever come down the educational pike. It's fine to say, "we should have a

> minimum standard for everyone to follow". But to say that teachers will rise above it is a lie. Teachers will spend so much time chasing down the huge number of hoops these kids need to jump to pass the darned test that they seldom ever get time to get deeply into anything. Everybody I know who can really teach will tell you about math teachers. They're the worst. They'll tell you, "it's a neat idea. Too bad I need to get to page 274 today or I'd team with you. If I stopped to do interdisciplinary units I'd never get to Algebra for the End of Grade Test."

This complaint is one that is frequently heard. Our curriculum is often described as being "an inch deep and a mile wide". I later asked another young, middle school trained educator what she did about teachers who, for one reason or another, refused to be interdisciplinary or team in any meaningful way.

> I suppose I get a little covert about it sometimes. On occasion I will write up a unit and give already made lesson plans to the math or science teacher in the hope that they will get used. I also went and got a copy of the Standard Course of Study to see what objectives overlap. I don't know if I feel more frustrated at having to do the work or sorry for the teacher for not going along with me. There's bound to be some backlash for doing the same boring, old worksheets. The big, purple ditto-monster eats the joy out of these kids. Sometimes they react badly. I have trouble blaming them. I'd go crazy or act up in some of these rooms myself!

Strong feelings of rebellion can be sensed from these young teachers. They frequently ask their older colleagues if they had to deal with the feelings of frustration by getting to the point where they just went along with the flow and stopped fighting mediocrity. A ten-year veteran teacher overheard this part of the conversation in the teacher's lounge and shared that as the years progressed, he cared less and less what the other teachers thought about him and more about how he felt he was coming across to the kids. He told them his real sense of freedom came when he got to the point that he said to himself, "the hell with the Standard

Course of Study...I'm going to teach science, do experiments, and have fun". Not only was it liberating personally, but his test scores also went up and his administrators never knew any difference about what was being taught and to what extent.

Case #9
Changing Attitudes

Part of the middle school concept is the advisor/advisee period during which students in small groups have the opportunity to interact personally with the teacher--thus establishing better relationships. As a principal, you have seen this program work well at other schools and believe in its merits.

In an effort to improve your teachers' use of teaming and revamp the existing "home base" program, you bring in a nationally renowned consultant. After several meetings with her the academic teachers propose a move to five-day a week small-group home bases. Currently the elective teachers have an extra half-hour of planning two days a week while academic teachers are in large groups made by shuffling students from one teacher to another. You want to improve your advisor/advisee program and stop the complaints some students have expressed over being moved from one teacher to another. You also want to be careful to not widen the rifts between academic and elective teachers you have been trying to smooth over. What should you do? Choose from the alternative responses.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Go ahead and let the academic teachers draw up a plan which includes all teachers having their own home base groups every day and let the staff vote. You'll win on numbers.
2) Forget it and try to work out something for next year that people can live with. There are other reforms you can attempt.
3) Encourage the academic teams to create whatever reforms they can, then bring the elective teachers in too and make it a team effort.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) This is a good way to get what you want--smaller class sizes, but what do you stand to lose? This course of action will very probably alienate your entire elective course staff, who will feel dumped-on and betrayed.

2) The safest thing to do would be to put it off until the summer when a committee can look at it. In this way you do not upset the sometimes tenuous balance between core and elective teachers. On the other hand, you still have a semester of the year left and teachers who are eager to make changes that will be good for kids.

3) In doing this you give free-rein to the consultant and the academic teachers to brainstorm some exciting possibilities. By having the consultant bring the idea to the elective teachers for their input, you give them the chance to buy-in and make meaningful contributions to the plan.

Commentary:

This case illustrates a critical juncture in the creation of culture in the middle school--the selective use of power. It would have been well within the purview of the principal to mandate changes in the programs at the school. She could easily have come in and said that she thought small class size was more important than additional planning time for elective teachers. She chose not to follow this course. Instead, she seized upon the opportunity to encumber several thousand dollars of staff development funds from central office for the purpose of bringing Kathy Callahan Hunt, a noted middle school consultant, to the school for a week.

We believed that in contrast to the typical "spray and pray" staff development our staff usually underwent it would be more beneficial to have each grade level of teachers spend a day working as small groups with her. She spent one day with the sixth grade teachers, one with the seventh, and one with the eighth. She also spent one day working with the elective teachers. It was the intention of the administrative team that each group have the ability to explore honestly and openly areas of interest and concern with Ms. Hunt and generate whatever plans and strategies best met the needs of each group. The principal and two assistant principals floated in and out of the meetings to check on their progress as well as answer any specific questions the group might raise. Dr. Dale Brubaker, professor of educational leadership at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, was also in attendance during part of the sessions.

The idea to explore the make-up of the home base groups was originated quite by accident by a group of seventh grade teachers who were looking for areas in which class size could be reduced. They brainstormed a scenario in which elective teachers kept their home base groups every day to keep class sizes small.

In exchange, the core teachers would hold two "team-times" each month on selected days and times. On those days, each grade would keep their children during their elective class times. The elective teachers could use the time for planning and the core teachers could use the time for group recognition, speakers, special events, and other activities in keeping with the team concept. Dr. Brubaker was fortunate to have been present during the genesis of this idea. He commented that "It was electrifying...The teachers felt and acted truly empowered. Once they recognized they were on to something, they brought everything to bear on making the plan workable. They stopped looking at problems and started looking at ways to get around them". For the first time since the arrival of this principal, we felt that the staff was functioning as a community. As I watched the teachers try to shore-up their plan by considering all of the possible difficulties (and their accompanying solutions) I was struck by a feeling of cohesiveness that is difficult to express. It was as if the entire group shifted their frame of reference from the structural (how can we organize the time) to the symbolic frame (what does it mean to "have time for the team to be together").

Case #10
Sabotage!

You have just spent a week working with a famous middle school consultant. Part of the fruits of your labor is a brand new plan for home base activities. Your seventh grade teachers conceived this idea and as it moved from grade level to grade level, the idea was molded into a plan that will be good for students and teachers. As you get to the faculty meeting, you feel great about the impact the consultant had on your staff. As you are going over the voting procedures for adopting this new plan, one of your seventh grade teachers starts quietly going around the room telling elective teachers that this plan was really forced on them by the administration and that it wasn't their idea. This same teacher sat in the meeting and volunteered to help type class rosters to make the plan happen. After a successful, but not unanimous vote, you learn of her "defection". What do you do? Choose from the alternative responses.

1) Ignore it. Your vote went the way it was supposed to. Why stir up anything at this point?
2) Get the teacher into your office and confront her privately about undermining the process.
3) Confront the teacher publicly at the next faculty meeting. That way everybody will know the truth.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) There is a great deal going for this response. You have made the change you wanted. The plan these teachers developed themselves exceeded your wildest expectations. Why bother? On the other hand, if this person undermined both you and her colleagues once, will it happen again? In addition, the faculty will be left wondering what the truth really is.

2) This alternative takes you to the source of the problem. By dealing with her privately you maintain her dignity and act in an ethical manner. Even if you talk to her privately, everyone will soon find out the truth of the matter anyway.

3) This alternative would probably make you feel the best in the short-term, but over the long-haul would prove destructive for morale. The place to deal with personnel issues and questions of honesty and loyalty is your office, not the media center.

Commentary:

This case illustrates an important concept that must be given ample consideration when examining the culture of a school. Teachers, while typically identified as a group, are in reality a collective of individuals with a variety of wants, needs, desires, and priorities. The individual teacher in this case had a very high level of need for affiliation. After talking to this teacher privately in the office, it came to light that she had gotten worried that her friends who were elective teachers would be angry if they found out that she was one of the originators of this plan. She thought that by spreading the word around that the plan was really the idea of the school administration she might not have to worry about any blame. She then assured the principal that such behavior would not happen again. She has since made a genuine effort to be an advocate of both the school and its administration.

The teacher in this case is one who operates mainly from a human relations frame of reference. While it is true that in the confines of the group she allowed herself the freedom to consider first a structural approach and briefly a symbolic frame, she is far more comfortable in the human relations mode of viewing the world. Looking at this teacher from the perspective of her Myers-Briggs Type Indicator corroborates that she tends to strong favor extroversion over introversion and feeling over thinking. It is interesting to note that thirty percent of the staff at this school share those two predilections. A significant number of teachers in this institution are therefore likely to view the organization in similar terms.

The administrator must never forget that he or she is interacting with individuals who do not necessarily share the same perspectives. Making this faulty assumption may be a major cause of discord in the organization. In this case it was assumed that the support of the teacher was solid. Within the confines of the small

grade level group, it was. In the larger picture, though, allegiance to her friends took precedence over any educational program or reform. She related to the principal "These people are my friends. I'd never want them to think I'd do anything to hurt them or make them mad". The prudent administrator must recognize that as the audience shifts, the allegiances of the individual members may very well also shift.

Case #11
To Move or Leave Them Alone?

You have a group of sixth grade teachers who have taught together practically since the dawn of time. They are competent veteran teachers who are also cliquish and like to be left alone. On the other hand, you have a small number of very energetic eighth grade teachers who have come up with the idea of moving to the sixth grade, picking up a team of students, and following that group of students as they move up a grade each year. This would give them three years to get to know the students and would be a fascinating project. The problem is that the sixth grade teachers will not want to budge. To move them is to invite wide-spread uproar. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Move the teachers needed to make the program work. Assignments are made by the principal. If they don't like it, they can transfer.
2) Don't move any of them. It isn't worth the grief they'll cause. Encourage the eighth grade teachers to try something else.
3) Move the few of them who least resist the idea and start the project with only a few teachers.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) While the idea sounds great, it may take a year or two to get the bugs out. Do you want to uproot the entire grade at this point?
2) Part of the reason the sixth grade teachers behave as they do is the lack of new blood. This path perpetuates that problem.
3) This option allows you to both try out the new project and split up the old sixth grade teams without moving everyone. This could be a "win-win" situation.

Commentary:

A mistake frequently made by administrators is to assume that the culture you see (or try to establish) is in fact the dominant culture in the organization. Subcultures are found in every healthy organization. Problems arise, though, when the interests of the subculture do not align with or undermine the predominant culture. Such is the case with these teachers.

The sixth grade teachers are the most experienced group of teachers in the school. Of the nine of them, five of them have been teaching together for over 15 years. They enjoy the role of organizational historians and love to share stories of "way back when". Unfortunately, this group is also the most traditional in teaching style and has some of the weakest teachers in the building. One teacher in particular has acknowledged on several occasions that she will keep teaching "until I am the only one retiring that year. What a party we're going to have!" While she looks forward to this event she continues to use lesson plans that were created a generation ago.

It was obvious to the administrative staff that this arrangement of teachers was a weak link in the instructional chain. On the other hand, the very cohesiveness of the group and the talent of the stronger teachers made them a block to be reckoned with. At the end of the first year, a major discussion between the principal, assistant principal, and curriculum coordinator revolved around the issue of whether to break this group up and allow a group of teachers to begin a three year experiment in following the students from grade to grade or leave them alone.

After much discussion and debate, the principal decided to hold off for one year the plan to move them. It was also decided that the year would give us the time to make subtle changes and prepare them for the change. The first of such

changes was a change in planning time. For more years than anyone could remember the sixth grade enjoyed planning the last two periods of the day. This meant that their instructional day was effectively over by 12:30 and all interruptions such as state testing and assemblies fell during instructional, not planning, time.

When the teachers returned in August, they were aghast to find that sixth grade teachers now had planning the first two periods of the day and the seventh graders were planning the last two. The sixth grade teachers immediately raised the complaint that "these children just can't come in from electives and get to work on their academic courses. They need their elective courses at the end of the day". This line of argument received little support from those teachers whose children had been taking their elective courses at the beginning of the day and even less from those teachers whose academic day had electives taken out of the middle of it. The principal kindly noted that schedules and even grade and subject assignments had to be made in the best interest of the entire school. She subtly hinted that with the projected increase in future 6th grade enrollment, it might be necessary to "revisit and reconsider" the current alignment. She also added a first-year teacher to one team and forced the teachers to adopt a different team name for each two or three teacher team. These modifications have paved the way for a more peaceful transition in the future.

Case #12

Details, Details, Details (It's the Little Things...)

You are a middle school administrator. Your school is staffed with many capable teachers. While the majority are strong in instruction, they tend to be weak in organizational skills. Before the students even return, it becomes painfully obvious that in previous administrations, "things sort of just happened". You recognize that the school has a history and culture of its own that should be valued and not thrown-off; however, there is no evidence of high expectations for student and teacher behavior. The first week of school confirms your fears. There is little anticipation on the part of the teachers as to what parts of the system are likely to break down or require more supervision.

The first dance is rapidly approaching. You are confident that the student council will come up with the refreshments and the disc jockey. In the past, dance supervision has largely been left up to chance and the three administrators. You want to develop a sense of trust, but you also need to make a statement about your expectations. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Trust is important, but it is the details that will make or break the organization. Present a detailed plan of your expectations and give them a form with pre-established supervision sites to fill in.
2) Dances have been going on for years before you got here and will go on after you leave. There is no sense in getting too caught up in the micro-management of the school.
3) Explain your desire for an orderly dance with adequate supervision. Ask the leadership team to develop a plan for you.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) Once the staff has had the opportunity to see how much more smoothly the dance (and other activities) will run if the details are all covered the teachers will rise to the occasion and meet your expectations. It is not their fault that they lack this skill, but you can correct the situation.

2) Although you wish for a more highly organized staff, they have managed to survive thus far. It is not worth the bad feelings you will certainly generate by "getting on their cases". This is the safest course of action.

3) This plan of action allows the staff to develop their own plan for supervision. On the other hand, what will they have to go on in planning it if you do not provide input?

Commentary:

The setting of high expectations for everyone was a major priority of the principal on assuming the role at this school. In her previous assignments she was able to make significant contributions to the cultures of her schools through her remarkable attention to "the little things". She related to me that "it is absolutely critical to cover all the details. Whether it is field day, dances, tornado drills, or academic teas, an administrator must know how to anticipate where the problems will come from, and why they'll happen".

The week of the first dance, a schedule of supervision appeared on the principal's daily announcement board in the faculty lounge. Each teacher could sign up for a 45 minute supervision shift either in the dance or in a study hall. Several teachers did not sign-up and were randomly assigned to a location by the principal. When it was time to schedule supervision for the next dance, the teachers were not so troubled by the regimen. Subsequent activities like home basketball games and assemblies have become far more successful as a result of the many preparatory memos outlining exactly what was expected.

It is clear from watching the staff rise to the high level of expectation set by the principal that this was not simply an exercise of power by her. While from a political frame of reference there is a strong element of control, from a symbolic standpoint the principal was validating the importance of the teachers in the successful implementation of school activities. The principal spends time on the intercom before each school-wide event reminding students (and teachers) that good behavior is the norm and civil behavior is expected. Unfortunately, many children (and several teachers) lack fundamental social skills regarding personal interaction. The principal believes that one of the roles of the public school is to give children the opportunity to interact with their peers and develop the

interpersonal skills they will so greatly need as they grow up and enter the work force.

It is interesting to note that the supervision of activities by teachers has been the result of buying-into the commitment demonstrated by the principal. She is constantly monitoring and supervising activities and modeling teacher-pupil interactions for the staff. She is out on the dance floor with the students and up in the bleachers during the games. Teachers recognize that she will not ask them to supervise students in any situation she would not handle herself. In fact, she has personally relieved teachers during half-days when they would otherwise not get a bathroom break. Not all teachers notice this, but many of them do. Leading by example and generating many tales for the teachers to share in the lounge and cafeteria has gone far to create a culture in the middle school.

Case #13

Why Should it be "A Male Thing"?

You are an assistant principal in a middle school. You are also a white male. The other assistant principal is an older black female and the principal is a white female in her mid-forties. Both of your administrative colleagues are well-suited to the task of running the school. In fact, the principal has over fourteen years of administrative experience and a doctorate in education. You are still a doctoral candidate with only a third of the years of experience of your principal, and yet, you notice a disturbing pattern. Your female teachers treat you with respect and almost an attitude of deference. They treat your fellow assistant principal with the respect due her years, but on the whole they treat the principal in a most un-professional manner. Several question her administrative decisions to her face and do not show even a modicum of decorum when addressing her. This does not seem to be the case with the male teachers.

You also notice that many parents in the community have the tendency to defer to you in conferences when both you and the principal are present. On occasions when you have mentioned this to her, she tells you she believes that it is because she is a woman that she is treated in this manner.

Not long after this conversation, a parent comes into the office to challenge a decision you have made regarding a suspension. He steers the discussion toward you and frequently interrupts the principal. It is obvious that he has a problem with women in positions of authority. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Ignore his sexist attitude and let him speak his mind. After he leaves you can urge the principal to take a stronger stance in the future.

2) Point out to the parent that the principal is the one to whom he must appeal your decision. Redirect the conversation.

3) If the parent won't let the principal into the conversation, give her an opening and let her demonstrate that she is a capable, educated, and skilled professional that does not appreciate being treated in a cavalier manner.

Rationale for the Alternative Responses:

1) This parent has obviously developed his manner of dealing with women from many years of practice. Pointing this behavior out won't help the situation and would have little impact on his attitude. Besides, if the principal wanted to speak up, she would.

2) This alternative does not address the issue of gender inequity directly. It does, however, point out the inappropriateness of the behavior and provide a good opening for the principal to use to join the discussion.

3) The reason people continue to behave in this manner is because other people continue to let them. Give her an opening and get out of her way. If she couldn't handle this, she wouldn't be principal.

Commentary:

This case deals with the assumptions under which many members of the school community still operate. For much of this century, authority in the public school has been vested in the male administrator. Despite all of the attempts to create an inviting school with a relevant curriculum, it must be remembered that the community comes into the school with an already established culture. In this area of the country it is still somewhat exceptional to find women in positions of direct authority.

While discussing the issue of teachers not dealing with her in a professional manner, she related that

> I know it's because I'm a woman. It makes no difference to them if I am older, more capable, more experienced, or whatever. The bottom line is that with some teachers, they feel that since I am a woman I am "one of the girls" and should not expect any different treatment. One reason for me getting my Ed.D was to be able to say "You may not want to recognize my ability because I am a woman, but I will never be held back because I didn't have the degree.

The parent mentioned in the case was only one of a multitude of individuals I have seen treat the principal as a "non-entity". While a significant number of visitors treat her with the dignity due her position, a surprising number have difficulty in talking with her. Recognizing this fact, she often has me join her in discussions with parents or community members who are likely to take me more seriously than they do her. She admits that in some ways, this course of action is a way to avoid the problem. On the other hand, she notes that

> If the parent came in to argue about a situation or policy, or have their child's grade in a class explained to them, the last thing they are likely to want to do in stop in their tracks and reflect on their gender biases. They want to understand or fix their child's problem. If, in the process of doing that, I can establish credibility with the parent,

> then they are forced to give me some credit and see me as a person. Other times, the person just wants something done and is not interested in my "buying in" to their dilemma. In those cases, if they choose to deal solely with you, and you can figure out what they want and we can do it, great. I'll have other chances with them.

On the subject of dealing with teachers she is more assertive. In their case, she believes, it is a manner of communicating effectively within the educational environment--a part of their performance that is evaluated. She is far more likely to point out inappropriate behaviors to the teachers than she is to the community members. She lets her staff know what her expectations are and refuses to budge on the issue of respect. Sadly, the teachers most in need of understanding this tend to be the one's least likely to hear it.

Case #14

Trial by Fire

You are an assistant principal in a large middle school in a small southern city. Your principal has left you in charge while she and six teachers attend a national convention out west. The morning of your first day as "acting principal" goes from smooth to chaotic with the news that a group of students has massed in the halls for the purpose of "getting them before they get us". Your school has enjoyed good relations between races and socioeconomic groups in the past. Yesterday, however, a newly transferred student entered the school wearing a rebel flag bandanna. The principal warned him about inciting other students--evidently with little results. This morning the child brings a knife to school. Three other students have brought, respectively, a knife, a leaded pool-cue handle, and a pair of brass knuckles. Word gets around to you about the weapons just as you get the call about a group of black males going after the instigator. You get the black males back into class. You search the white males and get the weapons. A similar search of the black males turns up nothing. You spend the rest of the afternoon working with the guidance counselor. You talk to each group of boys separately, then cautiously put them together in an empty classroom. The entire group works out the significant aspects of their differences--except for the instigator, who is polite to you but rude and obnoxious to the other students. You finally get things calmed down and get everyone back to class except for the students carrying the weapons. Here is your dilemma. You have four cases of possession of weapons. You can suspend these students for ten days and allow them to return to school. On the other hand, one student (the instigator) has already had two serious fights at another school and you feel deeply that if you allow him to return, he will be a threat to the safety of your school. He would have used that knife. As an assistant

principal you have the right to exclude him from your school. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Write a detailed report and suspend them all for ten days. If the principal wishes to expel the child, she can do it when she returns.
2) Deal with the problem immediately by passing it along to the division director and letting her deal with it.
3) Go ahead and expel this child. Fill in the division director on the situation and your reasoning. If she wishes to handle it differently, she'll let you know.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) Your principal left you in charge of the school in her absence. Specifically, she empowered you to act in her name and expected you to handle situations as they arose to the best of your ability. Sure, it's a hard call, but they don't pay you to make easy decisions, you get paid to do what's right (and best) for your students. What's right here is to let the principal make the big decisions she gets paid to make.
2) This course of action moves your problem to a level where the decision-making is not under your control. The assistant superintendent could make the call and expel the child. What message does this send to her, your principal, and your teachers? This is the safest course, though.
3) This response puts the onus of responsibility squarely on you. If you can comfortably resolve this situation you will have demonstrated your ability to handle the "tough ones" that come along.

Commentary:

This case demonstrates a phenomenon that keeps emerging in this inquiry. The focus in this case is on the interaction between people in the midst of intertwined problems, not just the individual pieces of the individual problems. One of the problems with many reform efforts is the tendency toward the production of "how to fix it" lists. In reality, the complexity of the dynamics of the many inter-related parts defy a simple prescription.

You decide to recommend exclusion from your school for this one student based on the seriousness of his actions and intent. Before you meet with the student and his parents you call the assistant superintendent to discuss the problem. You ask her if she will give you the authority to remove the child from your school. She responds that none of her assistant principals ever had to assume that responsibility. She wants to hear your rationale and your plan of action for making sure the situation does not escalate. After hearing you out, she informs you that your actions are not only appropriate, but necessary. You exclude the child, fill out the necessary paperwork, and think of how to tell your principal about this when she calls to check on things tomorrow.

Case #15

What's Wrong with the Poems in the Book?

You are a communications skills teacher in a middle school. You consider the writing and editing of original work by students to be a critical part of your curriculum. While you have a number of poems in the textbook that the students could analyze, you view the textbook as a jumping-off point at which the real education begins. At the monthly meeting of the school's communication skills teachers, the other English teacher on your grade level wants to get you to work together on a unit in which a series of poems from the book will be analyzed. While you welcome the chance to work together, you are concerned by the repeated comments that it probably "not a good thing that my kids are doing it one way and yours are doing it another" and the comment that others make about "the books are good--we should be using them more". How do you respond? Choose from the following alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Be nice and try to educate your fellow teachers. Explain to them that you are more interested in teaching the child to communicate than you are in teaching the textbook. Offer to use the poems recommended but assure them that you've already got your kids looking at the writings of everybody from Shakespeare to Langston Hughes.

2) Follow along with the other teachers in selecting poems and creating units that will be consistent among teachers and between grades. This way the students will all benefit from the same experience.

3) Tell the teachers that if they had any heart for their kids, they would be wanting to use poetry that had meaning to the students' lives. Refuse to have any

part in planning a lesson that would limit you to only certain works and perspectives.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) You want to encourage the others to share in joint ventures; however, you do not want to give your children a unit of study that is going to satisfy the needs of the teachers at the expense of the students. Choosing this alternative sends a clear message that you are willing to go along with the group, but only so far.

2) The people who wrote the book knew what they were doing, didn't they? Using their expertise and the philosophy that "two heads are better than one", you can come up with a mutually agreed-upon course of study. If the children want to explore any side avenues of particular relevance or interest, invite them to do so on their own time.

3) This course of action makes a strong statement about your values and beliefs in regard to children in general and curriculum in particular. This is an admirable stance. It is, in addition, quite likely to alienate your colleagues to the point that they would rather not deal with you in the future. While you gain the freedom to do your own lessons, you lose the opportunity to advocate a style of teaching that is relevant to the experiences of the children. You win. Six hundred other children lose.

Commentary:

A recurring and prominent response I received from teachers during both formal interviews and informal discussions was the impression that what they were doing was significant and made a real difference to the world. This, in and of itself, is not too surprising. Most of us would like to think that our efforts in our vocations contribute to an increased quality of life for others. Indeed, the very word vocation comes from the Latin vocare--a calling.

It is their attitudes about children and their relationships with them that fosters such a degree of child-centeredness and advocacy. One teacher felt that the essence of her job was the preparation for the future of her students. Her role, she reflected, was this:

> I see myself as a true facilitator...one whose role in this profession is to instill a love of communication skills into these kids. So many have already been bored to death by poor teaching. You can't salvage all of them, but there are a lot of kids out there with something to contribute. My job is to bring that voice to the surface, to give it meaning and value...and an audience. These students have been told what their voice should sound like for so long that they start to believe it. My role is to break them out of that prison.
>
> I think that the person who decided 13 year olds should be interpreting poetry should be shot. The very idea that something [poems--especially "the classics"] written for the intellectual enjoyment of adults in their leisure should be dissected, analyzed, and regurgitated by children offends me. They should be finding their own voices...not what I envision their voices to be. What can be more important than that?

This teacher sees excellence in teaching and its importance in the larger scheme of things almost as a debt owned her mentors. She referred several times to paying-back what she had received--as if her finest educators gifted her with understanding. Perhaps they did.

Another interesting aspect this case brings to light is the "cliquishness" of the teaching staff. Interestingly, a number of teachers have developed elaborate "extended teams" with other, interested members of the staff. In discussing this phenomena with teachers, it was evident that these informal networks were not divided along racial, gender, or age lines. One veteran male teacher stated that there have always been cliques within the school based on grade and content area. The move to middle schools several years ago caused the creation of a different type of clique--one based on mind-set. Another teacher reacted strongly to this. She sat forward and exclaimed:

> I think that's it...The people I find myself being drawn to are not the ones I'm working with, but the ones who think like I do. It's like there are a bunch of people who go on pretending that this is still a high school or junior high. Then there are those of us who love to teach under the middle school concept. It's sort of like we've unofficially banded together to keep the others from driving us crazy. There's a kind of bond we have with each other. That loyalty is important to me.

Another concurred:

> That's right. If it weren't for the input of those teachers who appreciate doing stations, or plays, or activities, I'd be overpowered by the others. You <u>have</u> to find someone who appreciates what it is you're doing here at school. You guys [administration] have made a big difference by giving more credibility to those of us who are genuinely trying to do something with these kids. I can't stand those teachers who are just putting in time.

What seems to set educators like these apart from those teachers who give-up or give-in is the tenacity with which they seek and maintain a network of teachers sympathetic to their own view of child-centered education. Without fail, the teachers they mentioned as being a part of their community are positive, child-

centered, and believe in the necessity of educating all children to the fullest extent possible.

Case #16
Drugs, Drugs, Everywhere I Look are Drugs!

You are an administrator in a middle school in a moderate size southern city. Like everyone these days, you have heard much about the problems of children concerning drugs and weapons. Over the last several months you have confiscated several weapons (fortunately all small knives), but now the big problem seems to be marijuana. You are convinced that you have several eighth grade students selling to their classmates.

Your lucky break comes when a child flashes a bag of pot to a friend and someone tells on them. You proceed to acquire 7 bags of pot from four students. One student sold it all. When the undercover police officers are finished talking to the student, you know who two of your other dealers are. The police ask that you sit on the information and give them time to set up a larger bust in the neighborhood. You hate the thought of the dealers coming in Monday morning and want to exclude them from your school. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Exclude them anyway. Let the police work the street, you run the school. No dealers allowed.
2) Keep the students but let them know, "you're on to them".
3) Sit on your hands and pray the police will be able to crack the ring.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) This solves the problem for the remainder of the spring, but if the drugs are still that easily accessible to your students, you'll have the same problems in the fall with next year's kids.

2) This is not only a foolish choice, it's dangerous. Whatever you do, you cannot create a situation that would put any of your students or teachers in danger. This is not a viable alternative.

3) Sometimes as an administrator, you have to be patient. You have done well to remove at least this one dealer. Your drug influx will be hampered for a while. If you hope to keep it that way, you need to let law enforcement proceed with its investigations. Keep your head down and your eyes open.

Commentary:

A frightening reality to anyone who would consider the establishment of a school culture is the very real subculture of drugs that pervades schools across the nation. The drug problem at this school took us rather by surprise. One afternoon, I received a call from a local television newscaster looking for a story about the "drug problem" at this school. None of us was aware of the extent to which drugs had invaded the school. During the previous administration a very hands-off attitude prevailed toward many issues of discipline. The result of this was to allow an elaborate structure of drug buying and selling to evolve in the school. Perhaps this might seem a bit paranoid considering the young age of the students, but the truth was stranger still.

Several months into the school year we had our first drug deal observed by a teacher. Over the next six months, we had suspended or excluded 16 students for the distribution or possession of drugs. It was brought to our attention during one such "bust" that the dealers almost always had a look-out in the hall--ostensibly on the way to the office or bathroom. By the time two of us (the required number for searching a locker) got to the eighth grade hall, students had already gotten word from class to class and drugs were stashed or flushed.

It was not until a sufficient number of students recognized the fact of the violence and weapons that followed drugs around--and perhaps more importantly trusted in the fact that they could report to us and remain completely protected from recrimination--that the situation turned. In the past, it would be common for a student to be called on to accuse someone face-to-face. After several of them were beaten-up by the student/dealers no one was willing to talk. The new administration recognized the importance of "walking the talk" and keeping confidentialities.

In the case presented here it was decided to give the officers the time to set up the drug busts in the community. The buying and selling was greatly diminished for the rest of the school year. The remaining dealers were sure that the first boy had turned them in, and they must have been surprised we did not attempt to search them. They exercised extreme caution in having any drugs on their persons at school. We later learned that they had several girls "carry" for them in exchange for money or jewelry.

While only one was caught in the police action in the community, the loss of their distributors up the line greatly cramped their business. The extent of this business, even in a small city, was staggering. One student informed me quite candidly, "Last week was a good week. I made over $2000. I made more than you did with all your years of college. Even on a slow week I still do about a thousand...and that's just to teenagers--I don't sell to kids". The administrator who is not aware of children like this, or worse, ignores the issue completely, cannot possibly hope to create a culture in which students can feel truly safe. It is also critical for administrators to become versed in techniques for dealing with drug dealing and abusing students as well as the scope of the law on issues like drug dogs and locker searches. In addition, school administrators must learn how to interact with law enforcement and make use of the valuable assistance they may offer.

Case #17

How Will We Serve Them?

You are a curriculum coordinator at a middle school. You are involved in a discussion concerning the placement of learning disabled (LD) children onto teams for the upcoming school year. The guidance counselor asserts that it would be easiest for all concerned to put them all on one team at each grade level. Following that course of action would make scheduling much easier. As a former LD specialist, you have grave concerns over "dumping" these children into one classroom. This would effectively segregate the grade level. All of the "slow" children would be in one classroom. This would necessitate all the "bright" children being lumped together in another classroom. Classes would be out of balance along racial, socio-economic, and ability level dimensions.

The alternative you propose would involve an "inclusion" program in which the LD students are disbursed throughout each grade level and the LD teacher would go into the classroom and work with the teacher and students to provide their LD services in a mainstreamed classroom. The counselor correctly points out that in addition to being a scheduling nightmare, a number of teachers <u>like</u> having homogeneously-grouped classes and would resent having LD students and an LD teacher invade their space. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

<u>Possible Alternatives</u>:

1) Stick to your guns and demand that the school implement an inclusion program. Remind the counselor that numerous federal regulations are backing you up.

2) Compromise and develop an inclusion program that will place students into the classes of those teacher you know will not have a problem with the plan. This will make life easier for both you and the counselor.

3) Recognize that you are fighting a losing battle on this one. If you forced teachers to accept children they did not want to teach, they might very well make the children suffer for it.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) This may not be the popular or practical thing to do, but it meets the needs of the children and complies with federal and state regulations. You also know you can count on the support of the administration if it goes to them.

2) This option gets the program started utilizing the talents of people that you are confident will not try to sabotage it. Many teachers are very uncomfortable having someone else in the room teaching with them. Some lack confidence, some lack skill. It is interesting to note that if you pursued this option, the LD students would be placed into the classes of your strongest teachers. This is not coincidental.

3) The guidance counselor may in fact have the correct perspective on what the implementation of this program might do to some teachers. It could easily become a divisive issue in which everyone--particularly the children--loses. Plenty of schools still segregate and pull-out their LD students. It wouldn't be like you were the only one still doing it.

Commentary:

Few issues divide a staff as easily as the issue of "where do we put the 'others'"? Many teachers have worked for years under the arrangement of one or two teachers always getting the low ability group of students. In this school the teachers who have traditionally taught the academically gifted (and their bright counterparts) were the teachers who loved to have their classes compete against others on their grade level in academic "quiz bowls". Their students usually won. The group of teachers who had the "slower children" liked to participate in field day and other athletic events in which their children excelled.

The idea of going to an inclusion model of LD service created much heated debate. On the one hand, there were two talented and experienced LD teachers who had successfully implemented an inclusion program at other schools. They were well liked by the staff. They would not, however, be welcomed with open arms by a number of teachers.

Several teachers overheard the LD teachers discussing visiting children in the classroom of one team during an interdisciplinary unit. They also overheard them talking favorably about inclusion. By the time of the next grade level meeting the staff was in the midst of a small uproar over the issue of "I teach my kids just fine, thank you. We don't need any other teacher in the room telling us how to do our jobs". The curriculum coordinator pointed out that what they were referring to was at this point only for students on one particular team--and that at the request of the team teachers, not the LD teachers. She added that the concept of inclusion of LD children into mainstream classrooms when possible and practical was a definite possibility in the future.

The school guidance counselor was responsible for scheduling and preceded to create a master schedule with the LD students concentrated on just

one team per grade level. When the curriculum coordinator learned of this over the summer, she came in and challenged the counselor on it. Eventually they agreed to an inclusion program that would place children in a more heterogeneous grouping pattern. The administration was alerted by the curriculum coordinator to expect problems from these teachers. She was correct in her assessment.

While all of the teachers did not welcome the LD teachers and their students into their classes, they did "put up with it". Eventually it became clear that the inclusion program was not going to force the host teacher to drastically alter her or his teaching. Instead, the teacher was able to point out areas for modification that these teachers had never considered. Many had never modified their curriculum to meet the educational goals of their learning disabled students. The weaker teacher thus benefited from the strategies the inclusion teachers very gently shared. The stronger teachers reveled in the "two heads are better than one" approach and gladly went to work with them. Had there not been room for healthy dissent and freedom to try new programs, the children would not have benefited as they had.

Case #18

Let's Do Something Really Big!

You are a middle school administrator. For years the school community has been tremendously supportive of school sports. When sports were removed from the middles schools years ago, the parents stepped in and created community leagues for their boys and girls. They now have three separate baseball leagues in your small town alone. Many other children play in the nearby city leagues.

One of the goals you have as an administrator is to recognize academic success. You would like to see academic achievement celebrated as well as athletic. Another priority is to create an environment that values the worth of each and every student--many of whom would not be on any honor roll, academic or athletic.

You are having lunch with an executive from one of your local business partnerships. You have carefully cultivated good relationships with each of your four business partners. As you share your wish to recognize all students, you get the idea of coming up with a joint logo and slogan for your school and the business partner. If the business partner could donate the shirts, you could have the slogans printed and have one shirt made up for each student, and present them during a school assembly. After this is quickly agreed upon, you turn to the idea of an honor roll celebration. You still want to do it, but someone has to fund it to make it possible. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Forget the academic celebration. You can't do everything at once. Put it off for another year and concentrate on this business partner's gift of shirts for everybody.

2) Keep the plan for the school-wide celebration with this business partner. Seek out other possible funding sources to cover your proposed "Honor Roll Tea". Both ideas deserve to be pursued.

3) You need to celebrate academic achievement. After all, that is what school should be about, right? Keep negotiating with the business partner on the T-shirt idea until you get enough money to fund your tea as well.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) This company has made a gift of several thousand dollars worth of merchandise for your student body. In addition, they will provide a speaker for the assembly in which the students get the shirts. This will also be an excellent photo opportunity for your school. They are bound to have their PR department working on this. Let them handle it.

2) This option allows you to explore your desire to honor academic achievement with another sponsor. Big gestures are important. One business partner will get the praise for the shirts, give someone else the chance to get the credit for the academic achievement celebration.

3) While the business partner knows his trade, you know education. It is more important for you to make a statement regarding your priorities for your school. You can convince the business partner of your need without making him feel unappreciated for his generous offer, can't you?

Commentary:

The development of relationships with the business community is an important (though sometimes overlooked) aspect in the creation of school culture. We have been fortunate to acquire partnerships with four local businesses. We strive to ensure that they are two way relationship--all too often schools enter into partnerships with the intention of reaping the financial rewards. Our students' art work may be found in our partners' hallways and offices. Our chorus has played at company functions. Employees of our business partners get time off to come to school and tutor students in several areas.

The partner discussed in this case manufactures sportswear and supplies many Olympic and professional teams with uniforms. They were quite excited about providing each student with a T-shirt bearing the names of both the company and the school. We recognized that the best way to mutually benefit from the relationship was to build several school-wide events around the company motto, "It takes a little more to make a champion". The students wore their shirts to the assembly and continue to wear them to school and around town. The company has also provided members of the Olympic volleyball team for speeches and scrimmages at the school.

With the plans so well established with this business partner, it would not have been wise to ask them to fund the academic honor roll tea as well. The principal was invited shortly thereafter to address a local civic organization. In her talk she shared the many things the school was doing for the students. After her remarks, she opened the floor for questions. The group was composed of local people--many of whom were grandparents of our school children. They wanted to know what they could do to help. After stressing the need for community volunteers in the school, she shared her vision of an awards ceremony for

academic achievement and of providing certificates and refreshments for the students and their families. She left with a new business partner and the promise of funding adequate to cover the event for the next three marking periods.

The first tea exceeded all expectations. Invitations were printed up and sent to the parents of each honor roll child. We had over 200 students attend the ceremonies. Most surprisingly, we have averaged over 200 family members attending each quarter. No other school event--even basketball games--has generated this type of turn-out. The principal stated, "You can never underestimate the importance of a big celebration". We have made a statement in support of academic success for all of our children. The community has responded in kind.

Case #19

Time to Put this One to Bed

Perhaps the most troublesome issue you face as an administrator is the "gap" between your core and elective teachers. For two years you have focused a tremendous amount of time and energy to the cause of bridging a gap that was neither your making nor your predecessor's. The problem began several years ago when the elective teachers' planning time was cut to allow for more "exploratory" classes. The core group of academic teachers saw no corresponding decrease in their planning time. Although the change was a matter of only a few minutes, the symbolic impact on a number of teachers has been profound. A small group of elective teachers have "kept the pot bubbling" for almost two years--challenging decisions and creating division among the staff. One teacher in particular has inflamed the entire group on a number of occasions.

After fierce debate over the success of monthly "team times" for core teachers during which the elective teachers gain additional planning, the staff comes together to devise a proposal for modifying these team activities without sacrificing elective planning time. You are enormously proud of their ability to achieve consensus on this issue. You feel the issue of core teacher versus elective teacher is ready to be put to rest.

As the first day under this new plan approaches, you schedule elective teachers to cover for their academic teacher counterparts to allow for a short bathroom break. After the completion of this day you are aghast to find one teacher is complaining loudly that you were acting unfairly and had no right to schedule them during their planning time. She then asks that you scale back or eliminate this bathroom break. Despite assurances that you do not wish to discuss the issue, she continues to pursue it by trying to gain support from other teachers

and filing a complaint with the teacher's advisory council. What should you do? Choose from the possible alternatives.

Possible Alternatives:

1) Open the issue back up and give the elective teachers the chance to discuss the matter further.
2) Inform the elective teacher that the issue will no longer be considered appropriate for discussion and if she persists she will be considered insubordinate.
3) Fire the teacher. Enough is enough. You have spent two years attempting to get the teachers to work together. If she isn't satisfied, she needs to be doing something else.

Rationales for the Alternative Responses:

1) From a human resources frame of reference, the organization exists to meet basic human needs. This group of teachers has a strong need to feel they are appreciated by the rest of the group. They need to have their feelings validated by allowing them to again re-visit this issue.
2) You have listened to the elective teachers' concerns since practically your first day on the job. You have gone to bat for them every way possible. Now they want to cut out a bathroom break? This has gone too far. Tell the elective teachers that the issue is settled and will not be reconsidered. If the instigating teacher continues to push the issue, cite her for insubordination and proceed with disciplinary action.
3) This situation has separated the staff long enough. It is clear that one teacher in particular is the one who refuses to let the matter die. Since she keeps stirring up trouble she is acting against a direct request made by you. Fire her and hope the staff will settle down once she is gone.

Commentary:

This is a case in which shared decision-making won the day. The staff was unhappy with the arrangements that had been made with respect to their "team times". They liked the activities, but found the scheduling to be constraining. The principal was reticent to allow a change because she wished to protect the planning time for elective teachers. The staff, however, worked as one to develop a reasonable alternative to the present system. With the exception of the one elective teacher who continued to "buck the system", the teachers seemed pleased with the new arrangements.

The teacher in question was called in by the principal, who explained her need to keep the staff working well together. After spending over half an hour with the teacher trying to explain the many things she had done to support the elective teachers, she had still made no progress. The teacher only saw the issue in terms of "the number of minutes taken away from us". The principal made it clear that Friday afternoon that further disruption would lead to personnel action. By Monday morning she had already tried to get the staff to take sides. That afternoon the principal initiated an administrative transfer of the teacher to another school.

The positive aspect of this case may be found in the response of the overall staff to the need to consider reforming their current system. As a group they accepted the responsibility and authority for selecting a procedure that would better meet the needs of the staff of this particular school. "After the teachers made the decision to modify their plan and came up with a workable alternative I was sure that the issue was dead" commented the principal. When it arose again, she utilized some of her positional power to squash the issue. "You have to know what's appropriate. If I had allowed this to go on it literally would have set us back

two years. It was time to put the issue to bed once and for all--whether this one teacher liked it or not".

By selectively using her authority, she was able to deter the disruption of site-based decision making by the voice of a single teacher who falsely claimed to represent an entire group. In the creation of a culture in any organization, the leader must ask the question, "who does this person really represent? Are his or her opinions actually those of the larger group?" To ignore this is to risk alienating the group when the person who purports to represent them in fact does not.

The preceding cases have served to identify important events in the creation of culture in this middle school. As I indicated earlier, the creation of culture in any organization is far too complex to reduce to a simple "six-step" plan. The dynamics seen in these cases are the dynamics which occur between people--both children and adults--across a broad range of backgrounds and experiences.

By organizing the cases in the manner in which they were presented I have attempted to capture something of the phenomena involved in the various interactions. I have endeavored to capture settings in order to answer the question, "As an administrator, what do I see here?" The use of the commentary section following each case has also allowed me to explore what it is that others see as well. Too often we fail to lend credence to the perceptions of those actually involved in situations. I have, in essence, attempted to generate vision without fear or coercion. The alternative responses and their various rationales pointed to several possible ways in which the various situations could have been resolved. The commentary was separated from the rest of the case in order to give the reader the opportunity to ponder the dilemma and consider his or her possible selections of the different alternatives. Given the richness of the settings, it is entirely possible that the reader might have considered several other alternatives that would work equally well (or better) in the circumstances described.

A question that lingered in the back of my mind as these cases were prepared is, "If the use of ritual, myth, history, and symbol are so important in the construction of meaning in this school, what can I do to create something that is different than that which existed before?" This question becomes compounded by the effects of what I consider to be moral behavior in the cases. Again, my perception of reality has been created within a certain frame. How is it possible to get beyond that to which we are accustomed and seeing and doing and make some

important points with regard to the creation of culture in this school? Chapter five will address these questions in the context of the cases as well as offer a number of conclusions generated by the experiences of those endeavoring to create a culture in a middle school.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Chapter one of this dissertation began with the question, "Why are schools as they are?". In light of the case studies presented in this inquiry, it is appropriate to revisit some of these questions and concerns and examine them in light of the experiences related in the cases.

My initial concern in beginning this inquiry revolved around the inability of many teachers to make the "caring connections" about which Nel Noddings writes. This question directly impacted upon my second question, that of what it is that students experience as they progress through their education--particularly through the middle school experience.

It is clear to me that many, if not most, teachers are in fact caring individuals who are deeply concerned about the education of their students. Yes, some teachers are just putting in time until retirement. Others are there for the security tenure provides. These, though, are the exception. Time and time again, in speaking to teachers about their work and in formal and informal observations, I found men and women willing to do whatever it took to help their students learn. Where, then, does the isolation, alienation, and lack of relevance originate?

The root of the problem lies not with the teacher, but with the organization that allows (or forces) that teacher into assuming a set of behaviors that are not in the best interest of all children. This response, however, is not as clear as it might appear. I indicated earlier that an organization is a social construct. It does not have a physical reality in the same manner as a table or chair might. Organizations

are constructed by people and manipulated (positively and negatively) through the use of ritual, symbol, and myth. This being the case, it is both naive and counter-productive to simply blame the school system or the status quo. The creation of culture in the middle school is under the purview of the administrator and his or her relationships with those who create and maintain the rituals, symbols, and mythology of the school.

The cases in this inquiry have demonstrated the power of the principal in conceiving and bringing to life a vision of civility for a school. It is critical to note that the direct exercise of positional power was not the vehicle for the creation of culture. It was, instead, the ability to persuade the keepers of the history and ritual--the ones who had for years told newcomers "This is how we do things here"--to consider the value in creating a culture in which the focus was on a meaningful and inclusive experience for all students. It entailed, in essence, gaining the cooperation, the "blessings" if you will, from the "storytellers, priests, and priestesses" in the creation and re-interpretation of what this school represents.

Maxine Greene asks, "Is reasoning enough?" It is clear that the answer is no. It took a great deal of reasoning on the part of the administrative team to plan and implement the course of change. It took far more than reasoning to actually make it happen. Through the cases I have seen emerge the strong sense of compassion, enthusiasm, and moral responsibility by the teachers and administrators of this school. Sadly, this critical element of school reform is missing from most of the "prescriptions" found in the current literature. The need for civil behavior is strongly spoken for by the cases presented here.

M. Scott Peck sees civility as a consciously motivated organizational behavior that requires consciousness of one's self, the people around him or her, and the consciousness of the larger organization, thus relating the self to all of the

others. It is through civility that "caring connections" can (and must) be made. The organization of the typical classroom makes it difficult for the teacher to be aware of what is occurring with other students and teachers. The creation of a meaningful and relevant school culture demands that teachers have a sense of ownership of the important events in the life of the school. The teacher becomes an integral part of the experience--not merely the player of an assigned role.

In chapter one, I asked the question, "What happens when a school is altered to create an organization built around the rituals, symbols, history, and experiences of its staff members?" After examining the results of the cases presented in this inquiry, it seems that what I was asking really got to the center of the issue of the creation of culture in the middle school. What happens when the administration makes the concerted effort to restructure an organization around elements that have meaning to the teachers and students is that you create a culture that promotes civility and what effective schools practitioners might call "a good school climate". Focusing in on improving test scores may (or may not) be a worthy goal, but it will certainly not foster any kind of particular relationships that will make the school a better place for adults and children.

The cases have elaborated on the creation of several new rituals for the faculty and staff. Two particularly important new rituals are the use of academic teas to promote parent involvement and attendance at school functions and the ritual of reaching consensus by the school leadership team. Both of these rituals are a direct outgrowth of the leadership of the principal and her assistant principals. In like manner, the careful use of symbols to create an impression to the school and community that this school is "special" resulted in a four-fold increase in business partnerships and a corresponding increase in school

volunteers. People entering the school recognize by the new paint and plethora of student work that this is a place students enjoy.

The experiences of older, experienced teachers have, to some extent, been venerated by the principal. Teachers are encouraged to reminisce about "the old days" during discussions. It is difficult sometimes to sit in a faculty meeting and listen to several of the most senior staff members discuss problems in terms of how things used to be. Several teachers have responded to them with comments to the effect of "That was then. Things are so very different now." On the other hand, the history of the school has made it what it is today and needs to be remembered and passed on from one generation of teachers to another. The teachers nearing retirement share the stories not only of their experiences, but also those passed on to them by their predecessors. In this way the stories of the school from the time of its construction pass unimpeded from one generation to the next. It is more than simply a place of work and learning. It is a place with a rich history that makes the staff part of something special. There is a particular reality to this setting and it is crucial to understand this when interacting within the environment.

One of the more profound concepts reinforced by the cases was the idea of theories-in-use versus espoused theory in organizational behavior. During the course of many discussions with teachers, it became apparent that many previous administrators came to this school with the intention of changing the school culture. They did not, however, take into account the enormous culture that was already present. This appears to be a flaw in the logic of a number of administrators who believe that the history of the school commences with their own arrival. The vast majority of staff development activities and programs mandated by previous principals or central office staff impacted the faculty of this school only at the level of espoused theory--what they said they believed. Helping

teachers get to the point where they felt the need to examine their own theories-in-use--how they acted upon what they really believed, regardless of what they might have said--was a tremendously complicated and time-consuming endeavor.

Without a commitment to attempting to reach educators at the level of theories-in-use, school reform is largely worthless (if the intent of the reform was to produce real change) and a relevant and meaningful experience for students and teachers cannot occur. The cases illustrate time and time again that despite the best intentions of those administrators who attempt to create a school culture that is predicated on civility and respect, the teachers in the school are individuals who have a variety of ways of experiencing "how we do things around here" based upon their own conceptions of the reality of the institution. If they are teaching because it meets a need for affiliation or control, the attitude of the teacher toward the school and the student will not change until it is assimilated into the teacher's set of theories-in-use.

Conclusions

Based upon the experiences of the teachers and administrators described in this inquiry, I believe nine specific concepts about the creation of culture have emerged from the cases. There is no particular rationale for the ordering of these concepts. As I alluded to earlier, the creation of a culture is highly dependent upon the conditions of the school as the administrator finds it. In some settings, one of these aspects might predominate. In others, there might be more of a balance. In either case, all of them are important and worthy of consideration by the person who would attempt to create a school culture.

The first concept that emerges from this inquiry is that commitment will lead people to places where authority cannot (or will not) go. While it seems an

obvious point, many people labor under the mistaken assumption that you can mandate "caring". A concern over what students and teachers encounter as they go through the experience of school is not enough. The administrators and other school leaders must demonstrate a visible and vocal commitment to making their school a better place. It is also not enough for the principal to schedule a worthwhile staff development activity for the staff. He or she must be present and share in the activity. All too often, administrators use staff development as a time to get paperwork done instead of as a time to model behaviors that speak volumes about what is important at the school.

A second concept that emerges from this study is that there is a "language" a leader can use to discuss things with people, that in the course of day-to-day life would not normally be spoken of. In education, leaders typically speak to teachers in terms of objectives, test scores, and policies. There is, however, another kind of language the leader can use. It is this language that communicates beliefs and expectations about what is important in the organization. The trick seems to be to find the common ground between the principal and the teacher. This is often harder than it seems.

A third point that has emerged from this inquiry is the importance of "wanting to be there". Brubaker (1994) has explored this idea and I believe it warrants further consideration. Wanting to be there really <u>does</u> make a difference in the way a person, be he or she teacher or administrator, approaches the work of providing a meaningful culture for students. There is, it seems, no substitute for enthusiasm. In this setting, the enthusiasm of the principal has been contagious. She is an advocate of the school and its programs to everyone with whom she has contact. In several instances, teachers who received a lot of attention and had a reputation for "grumbling" have become cheerleaders for the school as a result of

the enthusiasm of the administrative team. Teachers have started to internalize the belief that they are teaching at a "great school". As a result, they are, in turn, conveying this attitude to students, parents, the community, and teachers from other schools. An interesting consequence of this has been the creation of a "feedback-loop" of positive comments about the school. Members of the community see teachers from this and other schools and make a number of positive comments about the changes they have seen. The teachers react favorably to this praise and respond with stories of how different things have become. Many members of the staff have internalized these comments and claimed ownership of their part in the changes. This has led to even more changes in teacher behavior.

A related concept that has emerged from this study is that it is so important to know what frame you are using when you perceive things in the organization. What you expect to see really does flavor what you do see. Bolman and Deal (1991) have elaborated on the four organizational frames of reference--the structural, political, human relations, and symbolic. Much of how people perceive events in the school depends upon the frame in which the person is operating. For example, in the case of the teacher undermining the reform in the homebase schedule, we saw that while working with a group she helped plan the reforms from a structural (and occasionally symbolic) frame of reference, she quickly reverted to a human relations frame--her typical mode of interacting in the school.

A person dealing with a situation from a leadership capacity in a school must always ask him- or herself the question, "How do the people involved see this?" For a person who operates from a structural perspective, it is easy to assume that everyone else involved sees the same kind of problem. In fact, some teachers might see the same problem as one of political control (an issue of who controls the

resources) or one of a symbolic nature (an issue of what the decision means to the organization).

A fifth important concept to emerge from this series of cases is that healthy dissent can be a good thing in a school. The trick to making it a good thing is to keep it healthy. Many schools struggle with the implementation of site-based decision making. Teachers are often reticent to take a position they know their administrators will oppose. Given the autocratic style of educational leadership prevalent over the last several decades, this reticence is understandable. Teachers are not used to questioning policy any more than many administrators are used to having their decisions or policies questioned.

Site-based management has been implemented in schools across the nation; however, little training has been provided to schools on how to come to consensus. Leadership teams in particular lack the skills needed to reach decisions on school matters. The cases presented here demonstrate the fact that the process of learning to deal with disparate points of view in a professional manner is not mastered by a half-day training session. Leaders who are able to build a culture in which trust is earned both between the administration and teachers, and between different groups of teachers, can create an atmosphere in which healthy disagreement and dissent can lead to school improvement.

Another, closely related concept that is made evident through this inquiry is that the interaction between people as they deal with problems is perhaps more important than the actual solution to the problem itself. This observation ties together several other key points. As I indicated earlier, many people approach the same situation from a number of different frames of reference. If they are cognizant of that fact, they are more likely to be able to come to some type of consensus about how best to approach the difficulty. On the other hand, if neither

is willing or able, there will be a considerable amount of friction between the participants as each tries to assert his or her view of the problem.

The issue is further compounded if the problem must be attacked by a group. Consensus building is not easy to achieve even when everyone is aware of how the problem is framed. It is extraordinarily difficult if the staff is ignorant of the possible variations in perception the members bring to the table.

Another concept that has manifested itself as a result of the many discussions with the staff of this school is that many people in the organization tend to wrap the blanket of "the institution" around them to insulate them from responsibility. The "good" leader knows better than to be comforted or warmed by this insulation.

One of the characteristic problems of any bureaucracy is the tendency for accountability to "get lost" as decisions are passed from one level to another. It is easy for teachers to point to and blame other teachers or the administration. School administrators can lay blame on central office who in turn have other people to blame. It is rare indeed for someone to openly acknowledge responsibility--particularly when something has gone wrong. If the leader wishes to create a culture that fosters honesty and integrity, individual accountability is a must and has to begin first and foremost with the principal.

The eighth conclusion I have drawn from the cases in this inquiry is that power is neither bad nor something to be feared. Like a car or a thunderstorm--it's what you do in it that matters. In this school, the principal has been able to use the power of her position to make possible the creation of a school culture that has benefited the students, teachers, and staff by directing a number of changes. She has maintained that there are four types of decisions that will be made in the school on school-wide issues. Only one of those types involves unilateral action on her

part. She has given away a considerable portion of her decision-making power. What has been gained in return is an increase in responsibility for school-wide decisions on the part of the staff and a related increase in "buy-in" for decisions made at the school--however they happened to be arrived at.

Position power is not the only type of power effectively used in this setting. The knowledge power-base has shifted significantly. Matters of policy and finance are no longer on a "need to know" basis. In the past, one teacher characterized shared decision making as the principal coming into a faculty meeting and saying, "Here is my decision. Now I'll share it with you." In creating a culture in this middle school, the administration has been exceedingly careful to bring in the staff on whatever matters require their attention. Of course, many decisions that have to be made in the normal course of operations have little or no direct effect on the classroom and are handled by the appropriate administrator to avoid overloading an already busy leadership team with "administrivia". Of those issues that do impact the teachers directly, the vast majority of them have input into the decisions that are made about their classes.

Finally, the cases illustrate the point that the leader should never underestimate the power of a really big gesture. Symbols and rituals are so much more powerful than we give them credit for being. In this school, the administrative team has devoted a great deal of time and energy to the development of activities and procedures that will make a statement about what the school stands for. Whether it be the hiring of an artist to cover the walls of the school with murals, providing meals and faculty get-togethers, the assemblies and teas, or the many other activities, the use of ritual and symbol have produced more profound changes than any mandated educational reform.

Recommendations for further Study

This dissertation has examined the creation of culture in middle school through a series of case studies. Given the methodology used and the theory which has emerged as a result of the inquiry, I have several questions which I propose for consideration for further study.

Perhaps more than any other level of public education, the middle school level is considered to be "child centered". The middle school concept--the use of teaming, interdisciplinary teaching, advisor-advisee programs, and focus on the student in transition to adolescence--makes for a rich environment in which to study the creation of culture. It would be interesting to examine the creation of culture in an elementary or high school setting in which the focus on the student is far different. At the elementary level, the focus is somewhat more diverse with the early primary years heavily geared toward acculturation and assimilation. At the other end of the scale, the high school experience is heavily driven by the subject matter. College preparatory students experience a far different schooling than those taking a vocational track. In addition, most high schools tend to track their students by ability level, so the Algebra I student in the advanced class is taught far differently than the student in the lowest level who takes two years to complete the course. How is culture created in these settings?

Another question I have as a result of this study revolves around the gender of the principal. A number of studies have examined differences in leadership styles between make and female administrators. Helgesen (1990) and others have shown that there are significant differences in the way people react to female leaders. In what ways might the creation of culture in this (or any other) setting have occurred differently if the principal had been male? In addition, given the

low percentage of women administrators at the high school level, has this affected the implementation of site-based decision making?

Another, related question revolves around the experience level of the principal. Are younger (or less experienced) principals more or less likely to attempt to create a culture with a collaborative style of leadership and a focus on providing a relevant experience for their students? If not a factor of age or length of administrative experience, how do the experiences of administrators play into the cultures that they create?

Given the implications of the creation of culture in any setting, there are a variety of related questions which could be explored in subsequent research. The topic of the creation of culture, in addition to being worthy of academic study, is important as it is through the creation of culture that we may provide an education for children that is rich, varied, and meaningful.

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