

TEACHER COLLABORATION AND SCHOOL REFORM:
DISTRIBUTING LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE USE OF
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS

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by

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Presented by Sheldon T. Watson

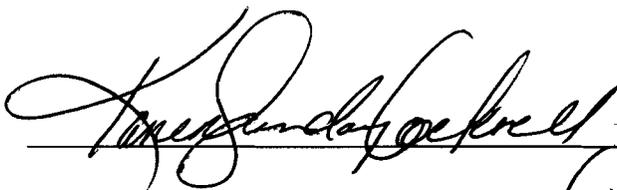
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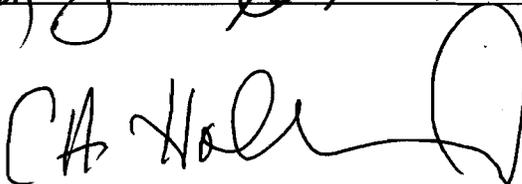
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Dedicated to...

My father,
Who let me become me

Amy,
Who has given me the greatest joys of my life

Aidan,
Who makes me care

Tristan,
Who makes me smile

Caroline,
Who makes me feel oh so loved

And

Jay, Margaret, Peggy, & Karen,
My priceless mentors into the professoriate

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This dissertation reports a study of two professional learning teams of teachers at one Midwestern secondary school implementing a hybrid school improvement process incorporating elements of several reform models. A qualitative extended case-study approach was used to study the role of organizational conditions on teacher team performance, the emergence and enactment of leadership within the teams, and the quality of team outcomes. Organizational factors such as performance alignment and school governance structures were found to interact with *time* to constrain and intensify teachers' work in teams. Patterns of discourse interacted with teachers' perceptions of team purpose and autonomy to shape collaboration. *Interactional routines* were established that are improvisational and negotiated in character, yet exert a powerful shaping force on team performance. Leadership in teams is manifest as a relational phenomenon identified as *emergent reciprocal influence*. The study concludes that collaboration potentially serves both a disciplinary and an emancipatory role regarding the professional discretion and autonomy of individual teachers. These roles are related to broader trends in business management, educational reform, and domestic politics.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Collaborative Mystique

In recent years, the emphasis on groups and teams has gone far beyond any rational assessment of their practical usefulness. We are in the age of groupmania. Teams have become endowed with almost mystical qualities (Locke, Tirnauer, Roberson, Goldman, Latham, & Weldon, 2001; p.502).

The “machine” has evolved. A convergence of world-wide trends in management and business, domestic U.S. politics, and modern educational reform has created the conditions for a 21st century version of the Weberian organizational machine in America’s schools. Collaboration lies at the heart of this transformed machine. The segmentation, fragmentation, and repetition of Taylorist forms of scientific management have evolved. They have become replaced by a vision of flexible integration and strategically diffused decision-making. The labor of workers has become distributed in a new fashion, yet remains under the control of now-distant management entities. Standards, accountability, and performance outcome objectives are the instruments of control in this remote form of management.

This characterization of collaboration may come as a surprise considering the mystique surrounding the practice in many practitioner and researcher circles. The effort to connect changes in the work of teachers to trends of globalization is not a novel idea; it has been the subject of increasing commentary for some time (Ball, 1993, 1998; Bottery, 1996; Fischman, 2001). The key role of collaboration in this process has been recognized as well (Barker, 1993, 1999). The nature and process of

collaboration, however, is not sufficiently understood. Collaboration has dual manifestations in schools, both empowering teacher performance and constraining teacher discretion. It is essential that we understand the interplay of these two functional realities.

In U.S. public schools collaboration is often becoming the handmaiden of centralized control. In these cases collaboration serves an instrumental function of *aligning* performance around standardized curricular components and instructional methods. Collaboration thus has the effect of *disciplining* teachers, of constraining their autonomy and discretion, and of focusing their work behavior in ways that are framed by centralized managers and policy-makers. Despite this limiting and binding effect, collaboration can still have an emancipatory quality once envisioned by reformers (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001). It offers a powerful opportunity for collective professional action by teachers. It creates potentially dynamic forums for the development of innovative educational practice.

Distinguishing emancipatory collaboration from conformist collaboration is not simple. To understand the differences we need to develop a greater awareness of the interactional processes which constitute collaborative activity in schools, the broader organizational and policy context within which these processes occur, and how collaboration is a form of school leadership. The purpose of this study is to contribute to deepening our awareness of these factors influencing the work of teachers.

Distributing Leadership

The continued popularity of shared governance models for school reform has stimulated the extensive use of collaborative work teams of teachers to make decisions and to articulate knowledge across organizations (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Ryan, 1997; Murphy & Beck, 1995b). Recent efforts to refine and explore the concept of *distributed leadership* (Gronn, 2000, 2002b) emphasize a perspective of leadership manifest as an activity “stretched over” an organization (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001b, 2004). Earlier research representing leadership as an *organizational quality*, or resource (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995a), helped lay the foundation for this perspective. Increasingly, principals have turned to teacher teams as an instrument of school improvement; to distribute leadership efforts across school organizations.

Teacher work teams have become a common tool for involving teachers in broader decision-making processes (Clark & Clark, 1994; Gronn, 1999; Sharman & Wright Jr., 1995). We know very little, however, about how these teams actually work, and what specific processes influence their relative effectiveness. Extant research on teams has primarily focused on the traits of individual leaders of teams who were deemed to be effective (Fisher & Fisher, 1998; Hackman & Johnson, 2000). Some research has been done on the organizational conditions, design features, and interpersonal processes that frame teacher teams (Crow & Pounder, 2000; Pounder, 1999), but more is needed.

Gaining greater resolution on the activity of teachers working together to find and solve problems will contribute to our understanding of the collaborative

emergence of teacher leadership, collective team leadership, and school leadership in general. This study documents two professional learning teams of teachers, and the Missouri school context they operate within. The activity of these teams, and the relationship of that activity to leadership, is the primary focus of this inquiry. This activity, however, is emblematic of a number of socio-economic and political trends. As part of this study I endeavor to make connections between the moment-to-moment interactions of teams of teachers and these broad forces impacting schools. To do this I propose a framework, in the form of an activity system, with which to analyze collaborative teacher activity.

In this introduction I briefly describe the focus of the study and identify my working research questions. I then review the main topics that I feel come to bear on this research in a significant way; topics that frame the use of professional learning teams, and my approach to the research. These topics include: the New Public Management; the recent evolution of U.S. school reform; school improvement models; collaboration and teaming; and the developing leadership paradigm known as distributed leadership.

Focus and Research Questions

This study begins with teachers talking to each other. It does not begin by looking at the principal, at program coordinators, an organizational chart, or other aspects of the formal leadership structure of the organization; these come later. It begins with teachers; specifically two professional learning teams of teachers at one high school. Past leadership research has placed great emphasis on looking for evidence of leadership in the practices and attitudes of positional leaders (Gibb, 1954;

Rost, 1991; Yukl, 1999, 2002). Attention must shift from the residual markers, or traces, of leadership (i.e. traits, behaviors, perceptions of followers) to the real-time constitution of leadership. Our interest must be on the actual processes of member interaction that contribute to the emergence and manifestation of leadership (Gronn, 2002a), in addition to the formal positions that contribute to individual leadership. We need to connect social interaction, the activity through which leadership emerges, to the products. This *activity* has not received a similar level of research attention as have the products (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004).

In this study, conversational interaction, or sequences of *talk-in-interaction* (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Psathas, 1995), are the medium of social behavior that are probed for evidence of the activity of leadership. The following questions guide the research:

- How does leadership emerge and become enacted through teacher teams in one school?
- What role does social interaction play in fostering or impeding leadership in teacher teams?
- How does social interaction influence the quality of leadership that emerges from teacher teams?

As indicated by the introduction of this chapter, my interests are also quite broad. Hence these specific empirical questions inform a very broad question that frames this study:

- How is the increased use of collaboration in schools influencing the work of teachers?

This final question is of vital importance in assigning substantive meaning to the findings of this research. The techno-theoretical knowledge of how leadership emerges and how social interaction contributes to this is very interesting, but what is truly meaningful is to connect this knowledge to the work of teachers, to their practice, and ultimately to *how they teach children* (I prefer this term to *service delivery*, but I will go back and forth since the application of a business management lexicon has become so prevalent in our contemporary discussion of schools and teaching).

The most fundamental level of analysis for this study is conversations within teams; conversations that take place between teachers. I will refer to these as *interactions*, but my gaze is always on conversations in particular. From this analytical baseline I extend outward and attempt to articulate these conversations to the collective distribution of leadership activity throughout the organization, and to the broader social forces influencing schools. Interviews with the principal, teams, and individual team members serve to extend the data in this fashion. My findings explore the nature of distributed leadership in the case study school, and the implications of this leadership for the policy of using teacher teams as an instrument of school improvement. What these practices mean to the work of teachers in serving students is ultimately our paramount concern.

Defining Leadership

A Thing to which people attach many labels with subtly or grossly different meanings in many different cultures and times is probably not a Thing at all but many Things (Dahl speaking of *power*, 1957, p.201 – as cited in Cartwright, 1965, p.4).

Educational scholars lack definitional clarity on the concept of *leadership* (Crow & Grogan, 2004; Hodgkinson, 1978; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Rost, 1991). The definitions we use do, however, seem to constellate around the idea of influence. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) suggest that “at the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions: *providing direction and exercising influence*” (p.2). They go on to suggest that leaders work closely with others to develop a shared sense of purpose, that leadership is very much a relational phenomenon, and that leadership is a function more than it is a role or position. Educational leadership has also become associated with particular ethical dispositions. For instance the standards for school leaders developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) states that effective school leaders act as “moral agents and social advocates for the children and communities they serve” (ISSLC, 1996; p.5). Needless to say, *leadership* is a complex family resemblance concept with multiple dimensions, forms, and interpretations.

This study presumes that close attention to the interactional processes of the social activity of teacher collaboration shall reveal dimensions of how a particular form of leadership, conceived as *emergent reciprocal influence*, develops within organizations. An embedded research objective of this study is to refine the operative conception of leadership that guides this work. This relational understanding of leadership is rooted in the paradigm of distributed leadership which is still in its very early stages of conceptual development (Spillane, 2005).

In the past we have created an impressionistic image of leadership. It is an historical construct; one of which we assume we know the meaning. These traditions are rooted

in our social heritage of hero worship and individualism (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985), yet also have strong connections to some of the founding research in leadership studies from the 1940's and 1950's. In work associated with the Ohio State Leadership studies scholars created a link between leadership and the behavior of people in formal positions that has been extremely resilient to modification.

Hemphill (1952) proposed that leadership be defined in relationship to *leadership acts*, saying that leaders are identified based upon how often they “initiate a structure in the interaction of others as part of the process of solving a mutual problem” (p.15). This idea is actually quite consistent with Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) focus upon the *activity* of school leadership. The Ohio State study, however, was confounded by the fact that its sample of “leaders” was skewed to military personnel holding specific offices (Shartle & Stogdill, 1952). These were the subjects whose leadership acts were being studied; therefore the behavior of these positional figures within a rigid hierarchical organization – based upon obedient compliance to superiors – became a classic point of reference for understanding the *acts* of leaders. A largely unquestioned assumption about *who* leaders are led to empirical work that served to reinforce this assumption. Researchers went time and again to similar samples of individuals in order to study *leaders*.

Our historic struggle with specifying the concept of leadership stems from this long-standing “familiarity” with the concept, with our comfort level in using the term casually and assuming common understandings of what it means – understanding that seem to invariably drift towards roles, positions, and individuals. A postmodern

perspective suggests that these conceptual comfort zones warrant some disruption. As Crow and Grogan (2004) have written,

The theories used in the traditional narratives of leadership thought are based on causal relationships, views of a single reality, and other features of positivism that have been critiqued in regard to their value for understanding leadership in a postmodern world. Educational leadership in a postmodern world, where there are multiple realities, shifting perspectives, a rejection of absolute cause-effect relationships, and a broadening of inquiry methods beyond the scientific, technical, and rational, calls into question the confident, seemingly coherent narrative of leadership we have inherited.

This study's findings support a perspective on leadership that is informed by historical tradition, alternative perspectives, yet is also grounded in empirical data. In this inquiry, leadership is viewed as both the process and product of social interaction which influences purposive human activity. Leadership is thus constitutive of, and constituted by, the social milieu. Leadership represents an expression of conjoint agency (Gronn, 2000), or "the satisfactory completion of discretionary tasks... attributable to the concertive labour performed by pluralities of interdependent organization members" (p.318). Leadership can not occur in a social vacuum. A leader is someone who may initiate, perpetuate, sometimes guide, or finalize social interaction reflecting and resulting in purposive activity. In the context of school leadership the desired outcome of leadership activity is ideally identified as improved student outcomes (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2003; ISSLC, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992; Spillane et al., 2004).

My operative conception of leadership is inevitably colored with Western insights, yet I am cognizant of this bias. In Western society we frequently equate purposive activity with visible activity (i.e. decisions, policies, physical action) and

with change or reform. This does not necessarily need to be the case. Non-Western cultures frequently have very different conceptions of leadership which emphasize spiritual activity, harmony and stability (Crow & Grogan, 2004). Leaders within these cultures may *exhibit* behavior that is more subtle; behavior that is more deeply rooted in visionary, motivational, and spiritual objectives (although cross-cultural differences in the meaning of these concepts mediates our understanding even further). Essentially, it may *appear* to the Western eye that less is happening. I suggest, however, that this activity is no less purposive than that which we associate with Western traditions of leadership. Researchers must be open to alternative manifestations of leadership that may emerge from data analysis.

Since leadership is multi-faceted, interactional, and process-oriented it must be regarded in both essentialist and consequentialist terms. Leadership is essentialist because it is necessarily an interactive social process – that is its essence. We must also view it from a consequentialist perspective because without the product of the process – the structures or objects – then leadership has not taken place.

Metaphysically, it is a dyadic conceptual definition; it is both process and product.

This study's conceptual framework (see Figure 3, Chapter 3), synthesized from decades of research and theorizing on leadership as an organizational quality and as a relational phenomenon, offers a model in which leadership is the central process of enstructuration. Leadership is an element of an activity system mediated by both emergent and designed artifacts. The structures resulting from this process of mediated interaction create a context of structuration which shapes further agency and enstructuration (see Chapter Three). Thus a feedback loop is created between the

poles of agency and structure with leadership as part of the active process residing in their midst.

Ultimately *leadership* is a heuristic term we casually use to refer to the process of people getting other people to get things done. Those we call *leaders* are typically the individuals who initiate the process, carry it out, or help it along the way (or maybe just take credit for it). Although the dualism of leader versus follower is one that is conceptually problematic (Gronn, 2000) it does offer some value in signifying individuals we deem to be actively influencing others (Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, in press). Where we get rather muddled is when we try to pin *leadership* down conceptually, because we don't understand the "getting things done" part. As Rost (1991) suggests,

Leadership scholars are dealing with socially constructed reality, which cannot be seen or touched, only inferred through the actions of human beings (p.14).

We must seek to understand the dynamics of human interaction in more complex ways. The huge gulf that lies between the creation of a social goal and its materialization – all the human actions that lie between – too easily slips through our fingers. We must seek to grasp the constituting power of social interaction on the micro level that is necessary to document leadership as it emerges.

Our tendency is to look at what we think we can understand; namely formal offices and structures – seemingly static entities that speak to their own function in overly simplistic ways. The illusory clarity of socially constituted concepts like position and structure veils the fundamental interaction that gives these concepts their meaning in the first place. As we shall see, the idea of leadership as a group

phenomenon and as a relational concept is not new (Cartwright, 1965; Thompson, 1967). The persuasive force of the known, however, has maintained a positional, individual, and techno-rational view of leadership that still dominates our scholarly discourse today. It is the reified standard against which other conceptions of leadership must defend themselves and jockey for position.

We must challenge ourselves to find new common understandings of leadership by looking in those places which are more difficult and less obvious to probe, which are conceptually ambiguous, and which call for unconventional methods of analysis. These places are the loci for dramatically different perspectives on leadership, perspectives that will open up new avenues for grasping the nature of human behavior in organizations. Investigations of this new frontier are critical to developing more complex approaches to improving our schools.

Management, School Reform, and Teams

The following discussion serves as an introduction to topics that are developed more fully in Chapters Two and Three. In those chapters I approach these topics from both a historical and a contemporary perspective. Issues and concepts are examined as they have evolved over time and as they currently influence research and practice. Past and current research related to these areas is discussed and critiqued as appropriate.

Management Trends

Global developments in the world of business and management have had a profound impact on public sector institutions as well as private. Whatever one wants to call these trends; the *New Organization* (Drucker, 1988), the *New Managerialism*,

or the *New Public Management* (Kettl, 1997), they are influencing the world in which we live and work in dramatic ways. Since the 1980's, but intensifying during the 1990's, policy makers around the Western world have come to increasingly rely on market model paradigms of efficiency and performance for public institutions. Flatter hierarchies and collaborative problem-solving groups, or teams, are common elements of this philosophy of management. In the United States debates over public school reform have taken place parallel to this shifting policy perspective on the management of public institutions. These strands of public discourse have frequently converged, almost spiraling together through time like a double helix. At various points in time government action regarding education reform has been distinctly influenced by market model management philosophy. Chapter Two tracks the development of these changes through time and points out the influence of these management and reform trends on school improvement programs.

School Improvement

In Missouri, the state where this study takes place, school improvement is a state-mandated aspect of district policy; however, the specific details of the process are left to the discretion of individual districts, and even individual schools within districts. The state employs a cyclical monitoring system that attempts to enforce district compliance with school improvement guidelines. Within the state's guidelines, shared governance is a fundamental feature that is encouraged.

At the district level, each district is required to maintain a continuing, written school improvement plan which directs the comprehensive and continual improvement of its educational outputs. These plans take forms very similar to site-

based management (Murphy & Beck, 1995b), yet are strongly influenced by external centralized processes and standards. The state provides detailed guidelines on how to maintain, plan, and document the program. The particular model that is used is up to the district as long as it complies with state standards. Different schools within a district may use different models at the school-level. The comprehensive school portfolio (Bernhardt, 1999) is one popular model used for districts involved in systematic school reform, as is that of Professional Learning Communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The Coalition for Essential Schools (Sizer, 1996) and Accelerated Schools (Levin, 1996) are other well-known models. A hybrid of the CES, Accelerated Schools, and Professional Learning Community models is used at the case study school. A more detailed discussion of these models appears in Chapter Two.

One of the hallmark features of these reform processes at the building level is the use of teacher teams to accomplish the substantive tasks of school improvement. The use of teacher teams serves to distribute the leadership activity of school improvement across the vital stakeholders of the organization - the school (Gronn, 1999; Spillane et al., 2004). Collaboration among teachers is promoted as an essential means of developing learning communities, meeting the needs of students, and distributing the expertise of teachers throughout the school. Literature on the use of teams, communication in groups, and creativity is reviewed in Chapter Three.

A “New” Leadership Paradigm

Perhaps a different conception of leadership is emerging, one that sees it everywhere (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

Adopting a distributed perspective on leadership (Gronn, 2002a; Spillane et al., 2001b, 2004) situates this research within a broader organizational context, thus allowing for the examination of multiple levels of interaction between what is happening both internally and externally with the teacher teams. From a more conventional and hierarchical perspective on leadership we would expect that links between teams and other elements of the organization would be rather transparent (Fisher & Fisher, 1998; Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997; Yukl, 2002). Formal leaders would be behind the scenes orchestrating this activity to advance their own leadership objectives, as in administratively controlled school-based management (Murphy & Beck, 1995a); in essence they would be *delegating*. Within a distributed perspective there is a much more dynamic feedback loop between the activity of the teachers, formal leaders, and other organizational elements. Leadership occurs throughout the organization, not just in specific pre-designated locations and individuals (Gronn, 2002a; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995a). Improved student learning is the ultimate focus of these activities (Spillane et al., 2004).

A distributed perspective on leadership suggests that the conditions for student learning may be improved when administrators facilitate teacher participation in meaningful collaborative activities focused on overcoming barriers to student achievement (Crow et al., 2002; Spillane et al., 2001b). Formal leaders need to foster conditions that support such collaboration, and they must draw upon the expertise distributed throughout the organization (Crow et al., 2002). Our knowledge of the discursive dynamics of teacher teams, however, and how those dynamics relate to effective team outcomes, is quite limited (Gronn, 1999) due to a dearth of empirical

studies using a robust conception of distributed leadership as a lens. It appears to be a common assumption amongst proponents of school improvement that teacher collaboration is a good thing that will produce positive results (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996b; Newmann & Associates, 1996). This research seeks to contribute to our understanding of these interactions, specifically how leadership emerges from these contexts.

Group Work

A teacher team is a good representation of distributed leadership in action. Teams are created and given the tasks related to school operations (Gronn, 1999; Leithwood et al., 1997; Murphy & Beck, 1995a). These tasks are often problems that need to be solved. In the past, many managerial-oriented conceptions of leadership called for positional leaders such as principals to make these decisions, typically on their own (Rost, 1991). Shared governance structures operate under the premise that collaborative associations of stakeholders will be well-positioned to tap into the articulated expertise of the organization (Murphy & Beck, 1995b). The team itself is often *leaderless*. Meetings take on a spontaneous quality that promotes creative solutions (Sawyer, 2005). As such, these teams have the potential to solve problems in ways that positional leaders alone might not be able to.

This won't happen like magic, however. Simply putting teachers in a room together and shutting the door will not necessarily lead to innovative solutions. Such collaboration may actually become counter-productive to school improvement (Leithwood et al., 1997). Thus a key role for positional leaders to play is to lay the foundations for productive and creative teacher collaboration which will contribute to

the emergence of leadership that supports transformational, rather than replicative solutions.

Two broad classifications of types of teams are *known problem solving* and *discovered problem finding* (Sawyer, 2005). A problem solving team works with a problem that has been identified and is well-understood. Such a team applies extant methods to deal with the problem. A problem finding team, alternatively, works on an ill-defined problem that is not well understood. Accordingly, there are no established methods for approaching it. Clearly, the two different types of teams begin their work with different purposes, although related to the general idea of working on problems that the school faces. Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, and Myers (2004) found that team purpose and perceived autonomy interact to influence the relative effectiveness of these teams. Organizational conditions clearly play a critical role in the success of these teams (Crow and Pounder, 2000).

Summary

Research that is informed by a distributed perspective on leadership and that can link organizational conditions and the nature of social interaction within teams shall enhance our understanding of school leadership activity within collaborative settings. It is important to have perspective on the promises and the pitfalls of collaboration, even what I suggest may be a *dark side of collaboration* that manifests itself through forced conformity and standardization. Only through developing our knowledge of the nature of collaborative interactions can we further the goal of using collaboration to develop the creative capacities of teachers, as opposed to limiting their creative freedom through forced conformity. These polarized outcomes of

collaboration resonate throughout the study, and clearly delineate the stakes of what may result from teacher collaboration.

Understanding teacher collaboration better will provide knowledge for designing effective professional development activities for practitioners; professional development that can actually tap into the processes of how leadership emerges within group settings and capitalize on the legitimate benefits of collaboration to student learning. It can also guide further activity-based research on school leadership; research grounded in the data of social interaction.

This study probes the conversational interactions of two teams of teachers to find out how leadership emerges and is enacted within the teams of one high school. These findings are merged with an analysis of teacher perceptions of the organizational conditions within which the teams operate. Together, these analytical strands provide a more complex understanding of how these work groups are used within a localized school improvement process, and furthermore how these teams represent distinct contextual loci for the emergence of distributed leadership.

Over the course of the next two chapters I review scholarly literature that is relevant to framing the topic of this study, constructing an argument for the significance of my findings, and developing a conceptual framework for approaching the analysis. The review is historical, interdisciplinary, and conceptual. It introduces many ideas that will resonate through the later discussion of my findings, and my concluding reflections on the broader meaning of this research. The themes presented in the following chapter have guided my thinking and understanding throughout the iterative process of conducting this research. Some were there from the very

beginning, while others have emerged quite recently. Together these ideas constitute the scholarly foundation for my design, analysis, and synthesis of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Sleight of Hand

The individualization of consciousness oriented towards performativity, constitutes a more subtle, yet more totalizing form of control of teachers than is available in the top-down prescriptive steering of state fordism. Resistance in this context threatens the survival of the institution. It sets the dissenters against the interests of colleagues rather than against policies... Management is key to the achievement of 'steering at a distance'. It articulates self-regulation with a micro-technology of control (Ball, 1993; p.111).

The wide-spread popularity of school improvement initiatives has reshaped the organizational landscape of America's public education system. A new division of labor has emerged within our schools over the past several decades (Ball, 1998; Bottery, 1996; Crow et al., 2002; Gronn, 2003), one that places new demands upon all school personnel, and that redefines the work of teachers. A conventional association of particular hierarchical roles or positions with specific tasks and functions no longer holds true to the extent that it once did, or at least appeared to. School improvement is a process aimed at school-wide organizational transformation (Protheroe & Perkins-Gough, 1998), including the reorganization of the structural relations impacting teachers' work (Ball, 1998). In this study I will use the term *school improvement* to represent a spectrum of school reform concepts known by many names, including: comprehensive school reform; school-restructuring; and school and site-based management. Common to all of these concepts is the goal of organizational growth and change aimed at improved student learning outcomes.

There is a widespread perception that teachers are fearful of these kinds of changes. This perception, typically on the part of management, is consistent with what McGregor (1960) classically identified as a Theory X perspective of workers' motivations and attitudes. A Theory X view presumes that "subordinates are passive and lazy, have little ambition, prefer to be led, and resist change" (Bolman & Deal, 2003; p.118). Based upon these views policy-makers, administrators, and scholars employ clever euphemisms such as *improvement* and *restructuring* in an attempt to minimize the "pit of despair" (Dr. Harold Hook, personal communication) that engulfs organizational members faced with dramatic *change* in the workplace.

Shared governance is one of several ubiquitous features of contemporary school improvement models (Crow et al., 2002). It is presumed and promoted that teachers will become more invested and enthusiastic about reform if they are collaborative participants, rather than passive targets (Desimone, 2002; Murphy & Beck, 1995b). Theory X proponents see this as a buy-in process necessary to get faculty on board with change. A less cynical view casts shared governance as a necessary element of improving the delivery of educational services to students (see discussion of school-based management below). Thus, small working groups of teachers and other staff members are often a central structure within these purportedly diffused decision-making systems (Pounder, 1998a).

This chapter explores this evolving terrain of the school workplace through a discussion of school improvement, teacher leadership and collaboration, and the organizational leadership paradigm of distributed leadership. The chapter concludes with the presentation of an integrated framework for interpreting collaborative

activity in schools. This framework is firmly rooted in extant conceptual discussions of distributed leadership, yet also attempts to advance our conceptual understanding by focusing squarely on the emergent qualities of leadership activity embedded in social interaction. I introduce the concept of *emergent reciprocal influence* to characterize the interactional process captured by this framework. Before embarking on this extended discussion of the collaborative lifeworld of teachers, however, it is necessary to briefly reflect upon several broad socio-economic and political trends which frame contemporary educational reform and practice.

Remote Management: Markets, Managers and Worker Autonomy

Kickert (cited in Ball, 1993) coined the term “steering at a distance” to characterize a new approach to public governance that has been gaining worldwide popularity. In this paradigm of management, “Steering at a distance is an alternative to coercive/prescriptive control. Constraints are replaced by incentives. Prescription is replaced by ex-post accountability based upon quality or outcome assessments. Coercion is replaced by self-steering – the appearance of autonomy” (Ball, 1993, p.111). *Remote management* of this sort has come to frame much of the work of teachers (Bottery, 1996), as it does many other workers in other industries. Although these governance trends have a global (Nagel, 1997), at least pan-Western flavor, they are felt in different ways in different locales through processes of recontextualization (Bottery, 1996).

This thesis is an important contextual frame for this study that shall be developed further during my discussion of the evolution of school improvement initiatives over the past two decades. The interaction of management trends and

political policy-making has defined the unique conditions of public education in the United States. Identifying the central ideas associated with the public governance movement known alternatively as the *New Managerialism* or *New Public Management* will help demonstrate the relationship of these forces to organizations such as schools more clearly.

The New Public Management (NPM)

Some commentators have questioned the “newness” of the New Public Management (Kaboolian, 1998; Thompson, 1997), while others describe it as the first true revolution of the information age (Kettl, 1997) and a sophisticated evolution of the state of the art of public management (Lynn Jr., 1998). Although it may be old wine in new bottles it is quite clear that the NPM is packaged in a way that is quite attractive to policy-makers from New Zealand to the U.K to the United States. In fact Clinton and Gore’s plan to “reinvent” the U.S. federal bureaucracy in the mid-1990’s is often held up as both an influence and derivation of the NPM (Kettl, 1997).

To understand the NPM we need something “old” to contrast it with, a foil which the new can be held up against. According to Thompson (1997),

The building blocks of the old public management were bureaucracy and hierarchy. Bureaucracy involves breaking tasks down into their simplest constituent parts and recombining them into organizational units, based usually on function and geography. It rests on the presumption that the exercise of judgment should be passed up the administrative ranks, activities simplified, standardized, and controlled from above (p.167).

This rigid hierarchical model of management is consistent with the Weberian tradition (Morgan, 1997) so commonly associated with past practices in educational administration (March & Simon, 1958; Mintzberg, 1973).

The New Public Management seeks to eclipse these conventional ways of managing organizations by basing policy-making in the public sector on private sector methods, and on market-model assumptions rooted in political and economic theory. There is a strong thread of non-critical isomorphic replication in the adoption of these strategies (Thompson, 1997). Institutional reforms associated with NPM have been heavily influenced by public choice approaches, principal-agent theory, and transaction cost economics (Kaboolian, 1998). The distinctive features of NPM are described by Pollitt (1993) as,

- a bold use of market-like mechanisms for those parts of the public sector that cannot be transferred directly into private ownership;
- intensified organizational and spatial decentralization of the management and delivery of services;
- a constant rhetorical emphasis on the need to improve service quality; and
- an equally relentless emphasis on customer satisfaction (p.180).

A primary motivation of instituting these types of reforms in the public sector is efficiency. Policy-makers have a vested interest in getting the public sector to produce more goods and services for less (Kettl, 1997), because less translates into lower taxes – a political windfall. The orientation to customer service, consistent with public choice theory, places more emphasis on what it is perceived that the customer will value than what an agency, professional, or policy-makers desire (Kaboolian, 1998). Thus direct outputs to the consumer come to take higher precedence over outcomes envisaged within the public sector. This reorientation functions as a point of leverage in regard to the autonomy of public sector workers and managers. No longer can they make appeals to ambiguous or ill-defined outcomes as the result of their labor. They instead become *accountable* for clearly measurable outputs directly

provided to customers. A market-driven conception of tangible outputs comes to replace a socio-cultural conception of often intangible outcomes. Translated to education, these forces have had a dramatic impact on how we view the role of schools in contemporary society.

Later in this discussion I will argue that contemporary policy conditions in the United States incorporate some elements of NPM, yet demonstrate a steadfast retention of hierarchical control. Those aspects of NPM that have been integrated into the delivery of public education have thereby become new mechanisms of bureaucratic control from on high. Ultimately, the management of public education in the United States looks more and more like the “old” management described above, but wrapped in rhetoric of shared governance and collaboration. Despite these new mechanisms of discipline and surveillance, however, we can yet see the promise of new opportunities for worker (teacher) autonomy embedded in the current use of teachers in schools.

These opportunities are constrained, however, by our capacity to transcend their use as control mechanisms. This transcendence can only occur through greater awareness of their agential and structural positions in organizations on the part of both teachers and administrators, and the concomitant conviction to use that awareness to empower worker autonomy and discretion. I shall argue below that policy-makers in the U.S. have borrowed those elements of the NPM that have suited their purposes in breaking the traditional state of local control of public education in the United States. They have simultaneously pursued the creation of centralized

policy management at the state and Federal levels which attempts to relocate the center of district, school, and teacher autonomy.

To retain their autonomy, and the integrity of their professional identities, educators must resist these trends of centralized control quickly. Collaboration is one means of resistance, at the same time that it is a means for control. It offers an opportunity for collective action and the development of a shared *independent* identity. Collaboration is a hallmark of public educators' own models of best practice and reform. However, as we shall see, the pervasive use of teacher teams and collaborative activities lies at the heart of what has become a political façade of decentralization. One brick in this wall is the use of collaboration as a forced public performance.

Performativity and the Public Good

The basic building block of the new public organization is the multidisciplinary team whose members work together from the start of a job to its completion (Thompson, 1997, p.167).

As one of the central structural forms of the NPM, teaming is used as a tool for *aligning* the performance of organizational members (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997). Collaborative performance becomes a bridge between a “private” professional world of workers where they employ their expertise and discretion as individuals, and a “public” professional world where they work towards sameness. To say that there is a private domain to professional labor may sound a bit odd, but I suggest that more traditional hierarchical forms of organizational management made compliance more of an individual matter. Workers failed or succeeded primarily on the basis of their own actions – their own personal, or private, performance. Modern management

strategies focus on bringing that performance into a very public spotlight. What was once a more private matter is now shared in public with the intent of shaping individual performance through public scrutiny.

This public performance serves to *legitimate* a worker's overall work performance since it is visible, subject to the approval and modification of peers, and enmeshed in a group activity centered on established compliance with holistic organizational goals (Lyotard, 1994). That which proves one's capacity as a member of an organization is no longer a matter of personal abilities, of individual distinction or uniqueness, but rather the ability to be like everyone else. This conformity is executed through the process of *alignment*. Through alignment, individualism and deviation, is minimized. "Standing out" is not considered a good thing unless it is in a form which models the general ideal of standardized performance desired for others.

As Arendt (2000) explains to us, individual recognition is generally a private matter in the modern world.

Society equalizes under all circumstances, and the victory of equality in the modern world is only the political and legal recognition of the fact that society has conquered the public realm, and that distinction and difference have become private matters of the individual (p.193).

Arendt was of course talking about society, not individual organizations. However, with the powerful influence of NPM tenets running throughout public sector management today we see many of the forces of the social world manifest in organizations – including schools. Arendt describes some of the mechanisms that society uses to impose a public identity upon individuals.

Society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to

“normalize” its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement (p.193).

Arendt explicitly connects this expectation for uniform behavior with modern economic theory.

It is the same conformism, that assumption that men behave and do not act with respect to each other, that lies at the root of the modern science of economics, whose birth coincided with the rise of society and which, together with its chief technical tool, statistics, became the social science par excellence (p.194).

Self interest, rational choice, and market forces are the determinants of individual behavior. Non-compliance becomes an expression of deviance. Individuals behaving consistently with these principles are considered to be acting in the public’ best interest. Conformity as expressed through public performances that accord with normative expectations comes to be viewed as a commitment to the public good.

Flexible work groups, knowledge teams, professional development teams, interdisciplinary curriculum groups, management advisory teams, and various other forms of collaborative structures consistent with contemporary management strategies are ideal forms of *normalization* for organizational members. This is particularly true when these structural forms are linked to member evaluation by standardized performance output measures. Innovation is, by definition, deviation. For innovation to be a likely outcome of these types of collaborative groups, then deviation must be a standard – or an expectation. This doesn’t happen too often. Innovation is generally incongruous with the implementation of standards, which is more typically an exercise in limiting individual discretion – as we see below.

* * *

Trends in U.S. domestic politics over the past several decades have contextualized the effects of these global influences in a uniquely American fashion. Developments in school reform over this time period have been directly impacted by both the global socio-economic context and our own national political environment. The impact on schools, administrators, teachers, and students has been one of increased *performance* requirements; more calls for what Lyotard (1994) refers to as “the legitimation of education.”

From School-Based Management to Comprehensive School Reform to NCLB

The following review concludes that reforms that originated as a movement to grant more local autonomy to individual schools (school-based management), particularly to teachers and parents, have become transformed into means for centralized authorities to engage intensified site-level participation on the part of teachers and building administrators for the purposes of advancing centralized goals. This has been accomplished through the coupling of school reform efforts with the development of: state (i.e. the Missouri ShowMe standards) and national standards (i.e. NCTM, NCTS, NCSS, NCTE standards); state-level standardized performance examinations based upon those standards (i.e. the Missouri Assessment Program - MAP); state-level accountability programs based upon those examinations (i.e. the Missouri School Improvement Program - MSIP); and Federal accountability programs (i.e. NCLB) based upon annual yearly progress (AYP). Below, I discuss how this *transformation of intentions* (Hall & McGinty, 1997) has led to an intensification of the intervention of state and federal authorities into the work of schools and teachers.

School-Based Management

School-Based Management (SBM) is a philosophy of school reform that earnestly took root in many American school districts, particularly urban environments (Sebring, Bryk, Kerbow, Rollow, and Easton, 1998), in the late 1980's and early 1990's (Murphy & Beck, 1995b). In many ways the SBM movement owed its genesis to the Community Control Movement of the 1960's and 1970's, and even earlier trends of decentralization of the early 20th century (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Weise & Murphy, 1995). Reforming tendencies in domestic politics, rooted most substantively in the release of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983 (USDOE) and Secretary of Education William Bennett's moralist proselytizing from the "bully-pulpit" of the Cabinet, added impetus to the generation of a new wave of school reform programs in the 1980's (House, 1991).

Central to the idea of SBM is decentralization, or the devolution of *some* degree of decision-making authority in *some* domains of school functioning and service delivery to individual schools. Centralized district decision making by central office administrators was the status quo condition that SBM sought to reform. A guiding assumption of this philosophy is that stakeholders closest to the point of service delivery to students are best equipped to identify the needs of students and to modify programs, services, and personnel allocation as necessary (David, 1989). School-based management was a predecessor of some current school improvement models, and a contemporary of others. The shift of focus from SBM to comprehensive school reform (CSR) is illustrative of broader socio-political trends that frame the current context of educational policy and practice.

School-based management operates on a basic premise of the need for decentralization through the development of new shared governance structures. In an extension of earlier work by Ornstein (1983) and Brown (1990), Murphy and Beck (1995b) identified three primary modes of shared governance that capture the variety of perspectives of control which are present in SBM initiatives. These modalities encompass three distinct loci of control: administrative, professional, and community. Identifying the locus of control specified in a particular SBM program is one way of revealing the level of decentralization indicative of that particular model.

Administrative control SBM. Administrative control, or decentralization, represents the devolution of decision-making to the level of a school's formal administrative structure, typically the principal. In these SBM policies the central district authority grants a higher degree of autonomy to building principals than had previously been present. Principals may choose to implement structures that distribute their newfound authority more broadly, perhaps with a faculty or executive council, or they may not. What happens to decision-making at the school-level itself is generally unspecified and unclear (Murphy, 1991). In this form of decentralization decision-making control still remains the province of administrative personnel. The traditional distinction between the spheres of influence of teachers and administrators is preserved. Control is redistributed to different levels of the administrative hierarchy of the district.

Professional control SBM. Unlike SBM initiatives that preserve formal administrative power structures, models of professional control seek to redistribute some of that power among other school staff members – namely teachers. These

programs represent a further step in decentralization. Decision-making power is distributed below the level of the principal to a broader constituency of stakeholders throughout the organizations. Furthermore, teachers are the street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Maynard-Moody, Musheno, Palumbo, 1990) directly proximal to the point of service delivery of the educational program. Principals provide these face-to-face services as well, but not nearly to the extent that teachers do. Granting greater decision-making power to teachers is extremely consistent with the guiding assumption of school-based management identified above (David, 1989). The nature of this decision-making power is quite variable within professional control SBM models, but most frequently takes the form of some sort of a school council through which teachers are able to advise the principal on policy matters (Murphy & Beck, 1995b). The exact nature of the relationship between the principal and such a council will vary considerably.

Community control SBM. The most radical form of decentralization is associated with those programs identified as examples of community control SBM. In such programs decision-making power is devolved to a coalition of stakeholders that includes parents and/or community members in addition to teachers and school administrators (Ornstein, 1983). These models frequently include community school boards or councils which wield considerable decision-making authority (Wohlstetter & McCurdy, 1991). Perhaps the most well-know example of a community control SBM program is that which was implemented throughout the Chicago public schools during the 1990's (Sebring et al., 1998). In this program, school site councils on which parents and community members held a majority were given broad control of

policy-making and hiring at individual schools. Community control models represent the most fully-developed forms of local autonomy within the broader SBM movement.

A Policy Shift

Discourse will become the vehicle of the law: the constant principle of universal recoding (Foucault, 1977, p.112).

The free and fair exchange of views normally suggested by the notion of a debate seems strangely absent; instead a platform is established, a discursive site for privileged critique and assertion... What is achieved is a redistribution of significant voices. As always it is not just a matter of what is said, but who is entitled to speak. The teacher is an absent presence in the discourses of education policy (Ball, 1993, p.108).

Horace is puzzled about much of this [in reference to standards and accountability policies] (Sizer, 1997; p.21).

We have a few states that are loudly protesting, and a lawsuit from one union [the NEA – the nation’s largest organization of teachers]... I really wouldn't call that a rebellion (U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings as quoted in the *St. Petersburg Times*, May 7, /2005).

Elmore (1990) noted in 1990 that the three themes of empowerment, accountability, and academic content were driving school reform at that time, and that these themes were often in tension with one another. He went on to identify three dominant models of school restructuring: 1) reforming the core technology of schools; 2) reforming the occupational conditions of teaching; and 3) reforming the relationship between schools and their clients. Elmore suggested that “the success of restructuring will depend, to a large extent, on how well these tensions are managed and the degree to which the proposed solutions are responsive to the central themes of restructuring” (p.21). Thus we can see that even early in the school reform era

scholars were noting the discordant strands of discourse prevalent in the discussion of how to improve schools. Over the next decade it became quite clear that the state was assuming control over of school improvement in the public schools.

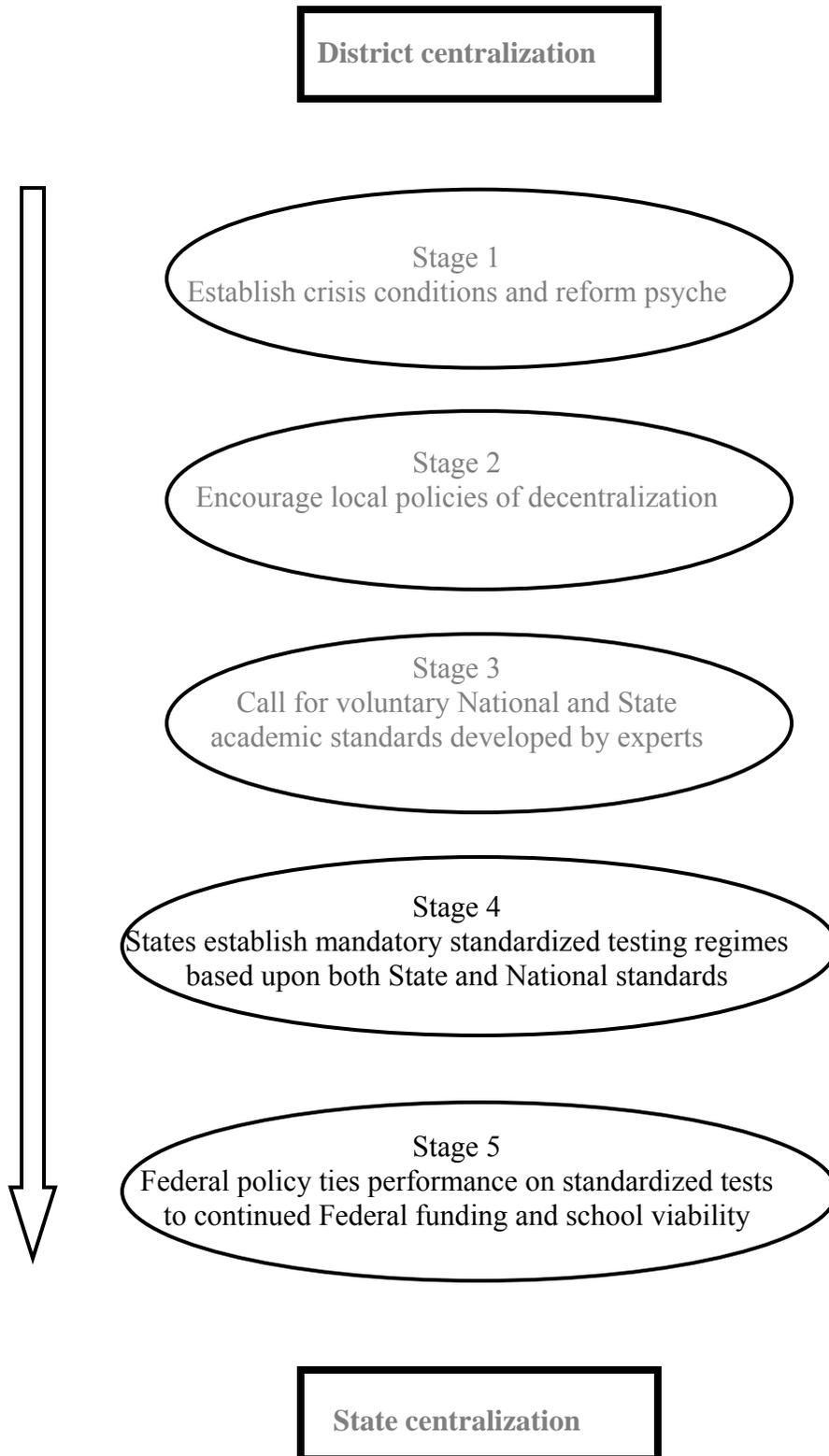
Political developments which were occurring parallel to the development of SBM programs were taking a turn that was decidedly antithetical to decentralization. National politicians were spending a great deal of time talking about national and federal initiatives to improve education. A very different form of shared governance was emerging; the sharing of governance with higher levels of bureaucratic authority, namely the federal government. Loveless (1998) argued that developments in educational policy since the 1970's have undermined the stability of traditional relationships between the state and schools. For a time, trends in decentralization and expanded government authority ran parallel to one another. Now, however, a virtual hegemony of the state is characteristic of public education in the United States.

Recentralization. Figure 1 illustrates a five-stage transformational model of the recentralization process which has taken place in public education in the United States over the past 25 years. This model is not intended to depict a fully intentional and designed process, but rather the socio-political trends that have actually unfolded. However, although there have been ebbs and flows to this process, particularly as Presidential administrations and control of Congress has shifted, there has nonetheless been a steady march towards increasing levels of state intervention in public education. This march has taken us from a beginning status quo of loosely coupled district centralization to tightly coupled state centralization.

Stage 1: Crisis conditions and a reform psyche. The first step in the process of recentralization was establishing the perception that a crisis existed in public education and that something needed to be done about it. This took place in earnest in the 1980's during the early years of the Reagan-Bush era. Earlier events, however, such as the National Defense Education Act of 1958, had already established a precedent of government-led responses to perceived crises in public education. In that act the Federal government significantly expanded its influence into public education based upon a perceived need to stimulate higher performance in mathematics and science to keep up with the Soviet Union after the launch of Sputnik. Government efforts to influence education were refocused on social conditions external to schools with the publication of the federally-commissioned Coleman Report in 1966 (Rury, 2002). This groundbreaking study emphasized the critical influence of social capital on the academic achievement of students and influenced government programs into the 1980's. The rise of American neo-Conservatism in the 1980's led to the abandonment of many of these 60's and 70's era perspectives. Murray's (1984) study that concluded that spending on social welfare had failed to ameliorate social conditions provided what was claimed to be a scholarly foundation for the fiscally conservative reforms ushered in during the 1980's; namely program reduction and elimination. House (1991) credits Murray's piece as being the most influential book on social policy written during the 1980's.

The year of 1983 witnessed the great opening salvo in what was to become a litany of government-backed efforts to reform public education. These efforts did not begin as formal Federal policy, but rather started as state and local initiatives inspired

Figure 1: A five-stage transformational model of *Recentralization*



by a discourse of reform promulgated by various Federal officials and agencies (House, 1991). Over time the concrete role of the Federal government has steadily increased. In 1983, then Secretary of Education Terrell Bell released *A Nation At Risk* (USDOE, 1983), a report commissioned by the U. S. Department of Education. This report, often invoked by President Reagan, claimed to document a litany of failing areas of public education. It concluded that the mediocre performance of teachers and students was a threat to the nation's economic security and called for reform in multiple areas.

Throughout the 1980's the clarion call of the imminent demise of the quality of public schooling continued unabated (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Other voices in the chorus included Bell's successor as Secretary of Education, William Bennett, who explicitly used the "bully-pulpit" of his cabinet position to lobby for conservative-leaning reforms (House, 1991). The sanctity of traditional Euro-centric knowledge of American and Western history was frequently promoted, and threats to that legacy were lamented. Both Hirsch (1987) and Ravitch and Finn (1987) wrote best-selling texts on the inadequate knowledge base of America's youth on valued aspects of our "common" American heritage.

The national media also contributed to this discursive environment by constantly focusing evening news stories and sensationalistic articles on the failure of American students to know "basic" facts, and their persistent lagging behind Asian students in mathematics and science performance (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; House, 1991). This national discourse constituted a powerful meta-narrative of a failed social program – public education. Such narrative power (Corson, 1995a) functioned to

shape public opinion and policy, particularly in regard to state-level reform initiatives (House, 1991).

Stage 2: Local policies of decentralization. Policies that supported local efforts at decentralization and other manners of educational reform began to proliferate at the district and state levels. At this point new Federal programs were minimal and the major impetus for reform was at conventional levels of educational policy-making. The earlier discussion on School-Based Management illustrates many of the main goals and objectives that were popular during this time. Policy initiatives began to adopt the market-model assumptions of consumer choice and flexible discretion for those closest to the point of service delivery; namely teachers. This professional discretion was to be tempered with teacher preparation of enhanced quality, and greater accountability through direct partnerships among parents, administrators, and teachers.

Parallel to these developments, policy-makers and commentators began talking about the need for academic standards, and testing based on those standards, to address the issue of local variation in educational outputs. The idea of discretionary implementation began to be a source of concern. A vertical bureaucratic infrastructure filtering down from the Federal government to local schools had already been in place since the 1960's to manage the flow of money related to ensuring equitable access to Federal school aid (Loveless, 1998). Reformers identified this infrastructure as a means to wield greater influence over local education policy. Sidestepping traditional checks and balances of the federalist system through the use of inducements is a common tactic in Washington (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). The

strategy now became focused on public education in way that had not been attempted in the past.

Stage 3: Voluntary National and state academic standards. One result of this negative discourse of the health of public education was the widespread development of academic standards across the nation. The call for standards did not come simply from policy-makers, but from some educational scholars and organizations as well (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Standards came from local districts, state departments of education, coalitions of citizens, and national associations of disciplinary experts. The latter groups were frequently commissioned by the Federal government to generate these standards as voluntary guides for state and district reference (Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997) . The emphasis on measuring educational outcomes necessitated the generation of more comparable results. Standards were viewed both as a vehicle for facilitating measurement and for emphasizing knowledge of the most worth, or knowledge of “consensus” value, in our classrooms (see Darling-Hammond, 1994; Nash, *et al.*, 1997; and (Placier, Walker, & Foster, 2002) for detailed discussions of standards creation).

Sources of influence for the generation of standards went beyond national figures and included many governors (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). The national conference of state governors was a fertile field for competition between governors as to who would take the most press as the “reform” governor. With the energized national discourse on educational reform taking center stage it was a logical area in which to offer reform-minded policies. Standards generation was an example of an “easy policy” to implement, which were particularly popular at this time (Urban &

Waggoner). Thus the junior policy-makers in the states took up the torch of reform that had been lit by the rhetoric of insiders in Washington (House, 1991).

The reciprocal influence of these state-level policy-makers on the nation was clearly felt when George H. W. Bush was elected President in 1988. Bush was strongly influenced by the reform efforts of these governors. We must be careful here, however, to distinguish the clear flow of policy influence. Where did the governors get the ideas for the policies they enacted? Was Bush simply responding to the “will of the states” as expressed through the governors’ conference *or* was he following a consistent policy trajectory established by the political discourse which initially motivated the programs the governors put in place. Regardless of the answer, the net result was that the Federal government formally stepped on stage with the policy-makers of the states – and has steadily taken over the spotlight. The first performance was the National Education Summit of 1990 where Bush and the governors adopted a joint platform for educational reform (Cohen, 1995). This platform was presented to the nation as *America 2000*, a publication of the U. S. Department of Education (USDOE, 1991). Though not formally endorsed, there was even talk among the Bush administration of developing a national test after this summit (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

The convergence of thinking in this meeting led to the adoption of eight substantive goals for America’s schools to attain by 2000. These goals were made legislative reality in 1994 when they were adopted by Congress as H. R. 1804, the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, and signed by President Clinton, signifying the emergent bipartisan approach to Federal involvement in public education that was

becoming indicative of Washington. Several explicit purposes of the Act have bearing on this discussion of *recentralization* (note that only excerpts of the Act have been quoted):

- 1) promoting coherent, nationwide, systemic education reform;
- 4) establishing valid and reliable mechanisms for –
- C) assisting in the development and certification of opportunity-to-learn standards; and
- D) assisting in the development and certification of high-quality assessment measures that reflect the internationally competitive content and student performance standards;
- 6) providing for the reauthorization of all Federal education programs by –
- B) providing for the establishment of high-quality, internationally competitive content and student performance standards and strategies that all students will be expected to achieve;
- C) providing for the establishment of high-quality, internationally competitive opportunity-to-learn standards that all States, local educational agencies, and schools should achieve;
- D) encouraging and enabling all State educational agencies and local educational agencies to develop comprehensive improvement plans that will provide a coherent framework for the implementation of reauthorized Federal education and related programs in an integrated fashion that effectively educates all children to prepare them to participate fully as workers, parents, and citizens
(Goals 2000, 1994, Section 2).

Thus all the pieces were in place for putting pressure on states, districts, schools, and teachers to adopt specific standards and to prepare their students to demonstrate mastery of those standards on specifically-crafted assessments. The force exerting this pressure was the Federal government; ostensibly enacting a vision brought to them by state policy-makers.

Stage 4: Mandatory testing regimes. It didn't take long for individual states to make standardized testing a mandatory matter, despite lively national debates on the topic of standards and testing (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Many states, in fact, already had such testing regimes in place. Now, however, these tests were much more

correlated to state and national standards that had been recently generated, thus the tests were becoming more alike from state to state. These standards were often passed by state legislatures as recommended guides for local schools, but when linked to mandatory testing became *de facto* state curricula. Some states even established high-stakes testing systems in which test performance was directly tied to a students' opportunity to advance in grade levels or graduate high school. These high-stakes tests have had an impact on students ranging from ambiguous to deleterious in most measures, yet have also contributed to modest achievement gains in other areas, particularly in mathematics (Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Carnoy, Loeb, & Smith, 2001; Roderick, Jacob, & Bryk, 2002; Rose, 2004; Starratt, 2003).

In the past many states had used standardized testing for basic data collection purposes. A new trend that took precedence during the 1990's was to link district and school test performance to accreditation and funding. The net result was that schools and districts became *accountable* for their students' performance like never before. Elmore and Fuhrman (2001) have defended and endorsed performance-based accountability systems such as this and point to the intent of these programs to improve teaching. While acknowledging that these programs can lead to unhealthy curriculum narrowing and "teaching to the test", they insist that the original intent, or assumption, that undergirds performance-based accountability justifies the use of such strategies of school reform. Elmore and Fuhrman suggest that negative responses to accountability systems are the result of professionals' *false* assumptions regarding the *intent* of the policies,

In many schools and communities, the purposes and expectations behind these systems have been reduced to an essentially test-based forms of compliance. The prevailing assumption is that the test measures what policymakers want, and that schools should take the steps necessary to teach what the test measures.

In fact, performance-based accountability systems are not based on this assumption, but on the assumption that calling attention to academic performance induces schools and the people in them to pay attention to what they do, how they teach, and what their expectations are for student learning. Moreover, they are designed to encourage schools and districts to develop the internal capacities to improve their performance on these core functions (p.14).

Given the complex policy environment in which these accountability programs have evolved, a glimpse of which has been sketched here; this defense of the implementation and utilization realities of new policies based upon the *original intent* of those policies seems naïve at best. Darling-Hammond's (1994) reflections on the limitations of the presumed *hierarchical intelligence* implicit in top-down accountability policies warn against such kind of thinking. The original intent or assumptions of the policy designers of *any* policy are severely mediated by both the political process of policy-making and the fluid realities of policy implementation. As the policy instruments of standards and performance-based accountability programs have spread throughout public education, local schools and districts have become enmeshed in a bureaucratic infrastructure of accountability running straight up to the Federal government's involvement via Goals 2000. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Act of 1997 intensified this involvement even more (see below). The bureaucratic infrastructure was in place, the rhetoric was well-entrenched, and a bipartisan climate of Federal involvement in education had been

established. States, districts, schools, and teachers were all soundly conditioned for what came next.

Stage 5: Federal policy tied to funding and viability. George W. Bush came into the Presidency riding the wave of what has been called the “Texas miracle” (Haney, 2000), a purportedly dramatic turnaround in the achievement of students in Texas schools as a result of one of the most rigid state accountability programs in the nation. This miracle has been questioned (Carnoy *et al.*, 2001), but Bush was nonetheless able to cultivate an image as an “education President.” He began promoting his ideas for the future No Child Left Behind Act (2001) while on the campaign trail in 2000, promising to bring Texas-style accountability to the nation. The President’s new plan for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was to be like nothing ever experienced in American public education, but nothing grossly inconsistent with previous political trends.

No Child Left Behind has been analyzed, critiqued, evaluated, and argued at length (Ambrosio, 2004; GAO, 2004; Rose, 2004; Sunderman & Kim, 2004). This is not the place for an extended exegesis on No Child Left Behind, but it is important to point out how this Act has brought together many of the disparate strands of educational reform of the past two to three decades. No Child Left Behind synthesizes the process of recentralization from districts to the state by tying Federal funding to the annual yearly progress of schools and districts on the States’ own standardized tests. These tests are, of course, primarily based upon State and National academic standards. We can clearly see the progression of reform events: a National perception of crisis spurs calls for educational reform; governors and State policy-makers

gravitate to education reform as a political “hot topic”; the Federal government responds to this groundswell and carves out a role for centralized coordination, facilitation, and assistance in the development of standards, assessments, and programs; standards emerge from a range of sources, many as a result of requests from the Federal government, and state-level assessments are designed around meeting these benchmarks; and finally the Federal government steps in and creates a National system of accountability that capitalizes on the development of all of these systems and holds local schools and districts ultimately accountable to both state and Federal agencies for elements of their funding. The state of Missouri, the home of this case study, provides an example of how these different policy instruments have become aligned in a fashion that has relocated the locus of centralization in the educational policy process.

The case of Missouri. In the state of Missouri many state-level education policies have become tools or potential solutions to the difficulties of implementing No Child Left Behind. The Act is very effective in creating mandates, but not so generous in offering tools for compliance (GAO, 2004). In many areas of the country students are experiencing a dramatic shift in both the content and method of delivery of the education they receive as a result of pressures associated with NCLB (Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Annual yearly progress measures in Missouri are generated by student performance on the MAP examination (DESE, 1998), a standardized test linked to Missouri’s standards for public education; the ShowMe standards. Greater and greater emphasis is being placed on preparing students for their performance on this assessment. It is the responsibility of school leaders to maintain a balance

between compliance with policy and not being guilty of teaching to the test. In some instances, districts are forsaking federal funds to avoid the curriculum changes necessary to comply.

Another Missouri program that has become connected to NCLB is the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP)(DESE, 2002). Both MAP and MSIP are state policies designed to promote student achievement; MAP is an assessment based upon state standards, while MSIP is a monitoring program designed to promote excellence in schools through school compliance with state department standards and indicators. Both state programs predate NCLB, yet have become keys to the state's response to the challenge of implementing the federal policy.

In Missouri, the School Improvement process is a state-mandated aspect of district policy (DESE, 2002); however, the specific details of the process are left to the discretion of individual districts, and even individual schools within districts. MSIP review is a cyclical monitoring system created by the state that attempts to enforce district compliance with school improvement guidelines that have been established by the state.

At the district level, each district is required to maintain "an ongoing, written Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)(DESE, 2002) which directs the overall improvement of its educational programs and services." The state provides detailed guidelines on the concept of a CSIP and how to maintain, plan, and document the program. The particular model that is used is up to the district as long as it complies with MSIP standards (similar to Federal CSR programs discussed below). Different schools within a district may even use different models at the

school-level. A more detailed discussion of the comprehensive school reform models, and the three specific models relevant to the case study school, is presented below. One of the hallmark features of these processes, particularly the portfolio model, at the building level is the use of teacher teams to accomplish the substantive tasks of school improvement. The use of teacher teams serves to distribute the leadership activity of school improvement across the vital stakeholders of the organization - the school. In the current national policy climate, MSIP has come to serve as one mechanism for implementing the objectives of No Child Left Behind in Missouri. In this way, an agenda is filtered into school conference rooms across Missouri that is part local, part state, and part federal. Ultimately however, groups of collaborative teachers are the ones sitting around tables trying to solve the “problems” of American education. The nature of teachers’ work has changed and the stakes of the outcomes for which they are responsible have been dramatically increased.

The parallel development of the accountability movement, culminating in the centralized Federal policies of NCLB, has transformed an initial vision of local autonomy to one of localized hyper-vigilance in meeting uniform standards of accountability. In such a context collaboration can easily become a means of structured groupthink rather than a source of innovation. This is not to say that innovative practices may not be diffused more broadly through such processes, but that as a general rule, pressures toward uniformity do not tend to breed divergent thinking. Before turning to collaboration, innovation, and distributed leadership we need to first take a closer look at Comprehensive School Reform – the current face of

much building-level school reform. The collaborative activity of teachers takes center stage in many processes associated with these models of school improvement.

Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)

In 1997 the United States Congress passed legislation supporting the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program Act (CRSD). This legislation, sometimes referred to as the Porter-Obey law after its House sponsors, provided grant funding for schools to adopt and implement approved comprehensive school reform models (Protheroe & Perkins-Gough, 1998). The program would award minimum \$50,000 grants for up to three years to support implementation of scientifically-based reform models. Schools were required to work through their districts and states to apply and receive funding.

The original CSR bill specified nine criteria that programs had to meet to qualify as comprehensive school reform programs under this legislation. Two more have been added under the Comprehensive School Reform bill (it is no longer a demonstration program) to make a total of eleven criteria (USDOE, 2002). Under the new authorization, CSR has been formally integrated into ESEA (Bush, 2001) in Title I, Part F. To qualify for use, a program must:

1. Use proven methods and strategies based on scientifically based research.
2. Offer a comprehensive design.
3. Incorporate high-quality and continuous professional development.
4. Include measurable goals and benchmarks.
5. Be supported by school staff, faculty and administration.
6. Include support for teachers and principals... *by creating shared leadership and a broad base of responsibility for reform efforts...encourages teamwork* (emphasis added).
7. Provide for meaningful parental and community involvement.
8. Use high-quality external technical support and assistance.
9. Ensure accountability by including a plan for annual evaluation.

10. Identify Federal, State, local and private financial support and other resources.
11. Use strategies known to significantly improve academic achievement (USDOE, 2002).

These reforms are aimed at developing the capacity and quality of local schools, yet when concurrent trends of the Federalization of educational policy are taken into account we can see how they have become vehicles for an intensification of teachers work around Federally-defined accountability objectives. Whether this is good or bad can be debated. A central component of this intensification of teacher work is the need for teachers to take on more collaborative task responsibilities – namely decision and policy making in teams. This feature of teacher work is an explicit dimension of most popular CSR models. However this added work to the professional lives of teachers is not always reciprocated by increased organizational autonomy or support in the form of professional development. In many CSR models teachers are being asked to do more work, in new ways, without much modification to the conventional hierarchy of power. In fact one can make the argument that the imposition of increased work expectations with the same bureaucratic structure translates to a loss of power for teachers.

In order to gauge the range of collaborative features present in the large variety of programs that are designated as Comprehensive School Reform models I have compared the 17 federally-recognized (in the original 1997 Porter-Obey legislation) programs along three different dimensions (see Figure 2), and included two additional popular programs for additional comparison. In their Catalog of Comprehensive School Reform models (CCSRI, 2005) the Northwest Educational

Laboratory reviews 45 models. In my own review of models with information available online I identified hundreds of programs, although many of these would likely fail to meet the U.S. Department of Education's (2002) criteria of scientifically-based models. Given that the topic of school improvement models is not the *central* theme of this project, a discussion of these 19 programs seems to constitute a sufficient representation of the range of CSR characteristics. The 17 programs noted in the Congressional Conference Report associated with the 1997 Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program were all noted as proven designs for comprehensive school reform (U.S. Congress, 1997).

In Figure 2 each dimension (shared governance, teacher teams, and professional development for collaboration) represents one method of contributing to the development of a shared collaborative culture within an organization. The profiles of these programs are based on my analysis of the information contained at that the program websites, the catalog of the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (CCSRI, 2005) and on Protheroe and Perkins-Gough's (1998) review of the characteristics of CSR models.

This comparison of popular CSR programs reveals that models that do not incorporate teacher teaming or shared governance as a program feature tend to be more didactic in nature (i.e. Direct Instruction), and are also associated with more traditional perspectives of organizational management. Of the programs that do emphasize collaboration, not all actually include formal professional development on collaborative skills. It must be noted that I have simply indicated whether or not the dimension is an *explicit* component of the program. In some cases the dimension may

be recommended, or frequently present, but still remains an *optional* component. Only some of the programs, even among those focusing on collaboration, include formal structures of shared governance in which teachers are granted influence in organization-level issues. Teacher teaming is used extensively, but is frequently bounded within the domain of curriculum and instruction – the traditional sphere of influence of teachers. This indicates that teacher teams are often being used in an instrumental fashion within the traditional hierarchical structure of schools.

One glaring theme of this comparison of CSR models is that *comprehensive* school reform is not always comprehensive. Hatch's (1998) analysis of the difficulty in reconciling divergent theories of action regarding school improvement may point out contributing factors to this reality. What we find is that many reform efforts are often specifically targeted for the instructional area, leaving overall building management relations untouched. Teachers are challenged to revamp their domain, but not always in unison with a similar restructuring at the administrative level, particularly in regard to the formal administrator/teacher relationship. Such paradoxes can contribute to an intensification of teachers' work without commensurate gains in organizational influence (Gronn, 2003).

To illustrate the dimensions of shared governance, teacher teams, and professional development for collaboration in more detail I now turn to three specific CSR programs – Accelerated Schools, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and Professional Learning Communities. These three programs have all had influences of varying degrees on the case study high school. As a caveat it is important to make clear that none of the three have been imported and applied to their maximum extent,

Figure 2: Collaborative features of selected Comprehensive School Reform models.

CSR Model	Shared governance	Teacher teams	Professional development for collaboration
Accelerated Schools	■	□	□
America's Choice Design Network	□	□	□
ATLAS Communities	■	■	□
Coalition of Essential Schools	□	■	□
Community for Learning	■	■	□
Co-NECT Schools	□	■	□
Direct Instruction	□	□	□
Effective Schools	□	■	■
Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound	□	■	■
High Schools That Work	□	■	■
Modern Red Schoolhouse	□	□	□
Paideia Program	□	■	□
Professional Learning Communities	□	■	■
Purpose-Centered Education: Audrey Cohen College System of Education	□	□	□
Roots and Wings	□	■	□
School Development Program (Comer Process)	■	■	■
Education for the Future (Bernhardt)	■	■	□
Success for All	□	■	□
Talent Development High School	■	■	■
Urban Learning Centers	■	■	■

■ Indicates that this CSR feature *is an explicit element* of the model or program.

□ Indicates that this CSR feature *is not an explicit element* of the model or program.

rather bits and pieces of each program have been put into place in a sort of hybrid model of whole school reform. Furthermore, all three of the CSR models in question

are quite broad and ambiguous in many aspects of their implementation, thus might be better characterized as reform philosophies than as programs. I continue to use the term *program* in deference to the models' recognition as such by schools, districts, and state and Federal agencies.

Accelerated Schools

The Accelerated Schools program traditionally targets elementary schools that serve populations with high concentrations of at-risk students (Levin, 1996). The model specifies a formal governance structure (Hopfenberg, Levin, & Associates, 1993), but retains a lot of leeway for individual schools in precisely how they implement these features and go about the decision-making process. *Cadres* are formed to look into the school's most pressing areas of concern. These small groups consist of teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, students, community members and district officials. Representatives from each cadre serve on a *Steering Committee*, composed of a similar group of people. This committee meets to make sure that the cadres and school are operating consistent with the school vision, serve as a clearinghouse for information, serve as a liaison between the various school constituencies, and helps finalize proposals that go to the *School as a Whole*. This last group is a polity of the entire school community and is technically required to make all decisions that affect the whole school. The role of the principal (particularly related to the authority of the School as a Whole) remains somewhat ambiguous.

While the principal is commissioned by the district or school board with the ultimate responsibility of the proper running of the school, he or she now shares this responsibility and works as a member of the school team... the principal helps keep the dream alive... by maintaining the vision and reinforcing the unity of purpose at every step of the process (Hopfenberg et al., 1993; 269).

Collaboration, meetings, and group communication are heavily stressed within this model, but teacher teams are not expressly required. Collaboration is discussed specifically in regard to partnerships and shared governance with students, parents and community members, and less in regard to faculty-level interaction than in some other approaches to school reform.

No single feature distinguishes an Accelerated School, which can be said of most CSR models. With this philosophy at work each school community is encouraged to use the Accelerated Schools principles as a starting place for developing their own unique response to the needs of their students (NWREL, 2005). Thus, we can look back at Figure 2 and understand more clearly why only the dimension of shared governance is an explicit component of this CSR model. Teacher teaming and professional development for collaborative skills would be strongly encouraged by Accelerated Schools designers, but this decision falls within the sphere of influence of each school's governance structure. Due to the contextual variation that can result from the site-based governance envisioned by this model, localized organizational components, and even the cultural commitment to reform, can differ significantly from one building to another even within the same district (Finnan & Meza Jr., 2003).

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) constitutes a national network of secondary schools and regional centers working towards school reform consistent with their Ten Common Principles. The case study high school has committed itself to these principles, but is not a formal member of the CES national network (CES,

2005). The CES model revolves around the application of these Ten Principles; originally nine (Sizer, 1992). Those principles in abbreviated fashion are:

1. Focus - Learning to use one's mind well
2. Simple goals - Less is More, depth over coverage
3. Universal goals - Goals apply to all students
4. Personalization
5. Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach
6. Demonstration of mastery – diploma by exhibition
7. Attitude - A tone of decency and trust
8. Staff - Commitment to the entire school
9. Budget - Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
10. Democracy and equity (added to the original nine principles in 1997)

Aside from these precepts, however, there is no prescribed program or detailed model to follow. “Models and programs, to have sustenance and integrity, must arise independently out of their communities and schools” (Sizer, 1992, p.225). Sizer, and his colleagues who founded this movement, believed that most existing school structures failed to meet the needs of many students. The needs of students from lower-income groups and marginalized populations were at the forefront of what the Coalition sought to ameliorate. It was believed that these students were deprived of the opportunity of a truly intellectual education and essentially written off in many cases (Sizer).

Empowering teachers lies at the heart of this philosophy, empowering teachers to take risks and prioritize what really mattered rather than being trapped teaching outmoded and irrelevant curricula with insufficient resources. According to Sizer (1992),

Teachers must be given the privilege of autonomy... The existing teaching force has substantial strength. We must empower and enhance the abler folk within it. Our experiment absolutely depends on able teachers. To plan otherwise is to give up (p.235).

Thus it is made clear that teachers are at the center of reform. Supporters of the CES philosophy felt, as did many other reformers, that teachers held the key to changing the culture and practice of public education. They are the professionals that deal most directly with students, hence the lion's share of responsibility falls upon them.

Accordingly, it was believed that reform should be aimed at enabling teachers to perform their jobs more effectively.

Professional Learning Communities

The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) concept is a generalized model of school reform that has become extremely popular. The idea is associated with a number of scholars and practitioners (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Louis et al., 1996b; Senge, 1990). Senge (1990), however, is frequently given credit for stimulating discussion of the ideas of learning organizations within the educational community. His book, *The Fifth Discipline*, was a highly influential publication in business and management circles, and was quickly picked up in the field of education as well. In that book, Senge identified five disciplines essential to creating a learning organization – organizations that can be flexible and adaptive to external environmental changes:

1. Personal mastery
2. Mental models
3. Team learning
4. Building shared vision
5. Systems thinking

I will return to Senge's third point, team learning, in the next chapter when I discuss research on teams in more detail.

The translation, application, and modification of these ideas to educational organizations is often highlighted as the practical origin of the PLC model in education (Hord, 1997), although one can also point to many elements of the concept embedded within the essential schools literature. This would be consistent with Sizer's (1992) assertion that the ideas offered by reform movements of the 1980's and 1990's were not necessarily new, but rather were brought together and recommended as systemic packages for the first time.

One of the best-known articulations of the PLC idea is that developed by DuFour and Eaker (1998). These authors drew heavily from the other research I have cited in order to develop a comprehensive reform model based on the learning community idea. DuFour and Eaker outlined the following characteristics of a professional learning community:

1. Shared mission, vision, and values
 2. Collective inquiry
 3. Collaborative teams
 4. Action orientation and experimentation
 5. Continuous improvement
 6. Results orientation
- (p.25-29).

DuFour and Eaker identify groups of collaborative teams as the basic structure of the professional learning community. Rather than looking to individuals to lead organizational change, it comes from collectivities of individuals. Thus developing organizational capacity for learning and growth becomes a collaborative phenomenon. Their model draws from both Senge's (1990) ideas about learning organizations and Louis, Kruse, and Marks' (1996a) framework for understanding professional community. In the latter piece of research the authors identified the

following five factors as critical to establishing and maintaining professional community:

1. Shared norms and values
 2. Focus on student learning
 3. Reflective dialogue
 4. Deprivatization of practice
 5. Collaboration
- (p. 181-183)

To sum up the relevance of these three reform models to this study we can see that each of these popular programs either explicitly incorporate or strongly encourages a great deal of collaborative activity among teachers – typically through the use of both formally and informally structured teams. Such associations are viewed as critical to advancing organizational learning and development, and improving student achievement. In the case study site for this research the Principal has incorporated elements of all three of these CSR programs.

The concept of shared governance expressed in the Accelerated Schools model informs the Principal's thinking (as we shall see in Chapter Four), but the specific structures advocated by that program, particularly the School-As-a-Whole decision-making process has not been implemented. Both the CES and PLC models stress the use of teams of teachers in the change process. The Principal of the case study site has embraced this concept particularly strongly and it is a driving force in the reform efforts of the high school. Professional development for collaboration is available if needed through all of these programs, but only a formal component of the Professional Learning Communities model. This kind of training was initially provided to faculty by the Principal, but was discontinued fairly quickly. Once again, these issues will be discussed at greater length in the findings section of this study.

They have been previewed here in order to give greater meaning to this review of the evolution of school improvement efforts over the last several decades. The review reveals that reform has been a consistent trend, but that the guiding discourse of reform has become steadily transformed over the same time period.

The locus of control of teacher work has dramatically shifted over the past 30 years. Trends influencing the structural configuration of the school work environment have drifted along a continuum from high local centralization, to local decentralization, and then to high state and Federal centralization. Teacher autonomy and discretion has been a fluid factor during this time, highly contingent upon the specific local conditions of reform implementation, yet steadily drifting from higher degrees of autonomy in the past to lower degrees of autonomy today. Teacher autonomy in today's classrooms is highly constrained by the pressures of meeting accountability requirements associated with performance on standardized assessments. Teaching to these standards and preparing students for assessments has become a powerful instrument for limiting the discretion of individual teachers as they practice their craft.

Collaboration and shared governance, initially conceived of as a means of granting all stakeholders, including teachers, greater autonomy and input have become instruments of control in many school contexts. Policy influences of accountability have become a powerful external force for uniformity and standardization in the schools, and can lead to groupthink in collaborative settings. Structures such as shared governance and collaboration have become means of disciplining faculty dispositions and of diffusing policies and practices based upon

centralized expectations. Collaborative activity within a genuinely decentralized structural configuration can be a means of promoting teacher autonomy, but within a centralized system it becomes a means of limiting discretion, thereby stifling the development of innovative practices from those professionals closest to the point of service delivery. This potential “dark side” of collaboration will be explored more in the next chapter as we shift our focus to teams, communication, creativity, and distributed leadership. These are the structures and processes that are activated, or that at least some reformers intend to see activated, through the implementation of school improvement programs.

CHAPTER THREE

Setting the Stage

Collaboration is the vital factor in the development and maintenance of professional learning communities. Without collaboration, there would be no learning communities (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; p.137)

We cannot stress strongly enough the importance of giving the principal and teachers time to plan and work together, and to organize themselves, not just horizontally, but *vertically* as well (Boyer, 1995; p.38-39)

Working together has become gospel in education. The need for, and value of, collaboration in many organizations has become an unquestioned assumption (Locke et al., 2001). Recent reviews of teacher leadership (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) have emphasized new perspectives on teacher roles in schools. A common feature of many of these perspectives is that teachers can have the greatest impact in their schools, experience the most development as professionals, and meet the needs of students in more effective ways when they work together with one another, and with other groups of stakeholders. Collaboration has become the focal point of finding ways to develop both teacher capacity and leadership.

Teacher leadership has come to be viewed as a “collective, task-oriented, and organizational enterprise” (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002, p.163). Distributed perspectives on leadership have contributed to this view of teachers’ roles. Both Ogawa and Bossert (1995) and Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) have contributed conceptual discussions that have influenced how the leadership

community looks at teachers as members of broader organizations. As discussed in Chapter Two, ideas about the relevance of teachers to organizational performance have permeated models of school reform for decades. It was also noted, however, that teachers' roles in shared governance structures were not always as fully evolved as they might have been. A key factor in this situation was very likely the continued association of leadership with specific individuals and positions within management and administrative circles (Harris, 2002). These long-standing views do not change quickly or easily.

As school improvement processes have taken root in more schools across the country administrators have come more and more to rely on teacher teams as elements of leadership within their organizations (Elmore, 2000; Pounder, 1998b). During the 1990's, when the stakes often seemed higher for teachers than administrators, teacher teams were often turned to as solutions to meeting the tough demands of incorporating standards into school curricula. Expanded professional autonomy frequently accompanied this emphasis on collaborative work-groups. Administrators and districts scrambled to give teachers what they needed, more resources and frequently more instructional discretion, as long as they were working towards meeting standards.

With NCLB the stakes have become even higher for districts and administrators to meet standards. The economy has been down, state budgets have been slashed, thus Federal funding is even more valuable than before. Federal AYP requirements have created a situation in which results need to come very quickly. Increased performance on standardized tests is not something that teachers can work

towards gradually – it has to happen now. As a result there is increased pressure for teacher teams to do “whatever it takes” to get test scores up. There is less time available for substantive discussions of student learning, and less room for experimentation. Under these circumstances there is great pressure to teach to the test and to arbitrarily adopt curricular components that are cleanly aligned with standards and their accompanying assessments.

In such a climate, teacher teams run the risk of becoming instruments of routinization and standardization. Administrators can use them to get teachers *aligned* according to standardized performance expectations. The presence of teams also offers an existing structure for new teachers to be folded into, so that they can be *aligned* with their peers as rapidly as possible. Senge (1990) suggests that “alignment is the *necessary condition* before empowering the individual will empower the whole team. Empowering the individual when there is a relatively low level of alignment worsens the chaos and makes managing the team even more difficult” (p.235). An obvious question is “Who is doing the managing?” followed by “To serve what interests?” What are the consequences of alignment for creativity, innovation, and professional autonomy?

The current contextual conditions of the work of teacher teams are quite consistent with many of the attributes that Janis (1982) has associated with the concept of *groupthink*, and that Weick (1995) has linked with convergent thinking. Groupthink is defined as extreme and consistent agreement among decision making groups that leads to flawed decision making. Janis identified several conditions that can help precipitate groupthink processes: a high level of group cohesion; insulation

from expert knowledge; limited solution evaluation processes; directive leadership; and conditions of high stress to the extent that participants see little hope for finding more amenable solutions than those proposed among the group. For a teacher team, such a scenario creates opportunities for collaboration to function as a vehicle for conformity, whether intended or not. I argue that the current conditions of the work of teachers in many of our schools fit many of the descriptors identified by Janis. Public and private sector policy trends regarding the use of worker collaboration, and the linking of worker performance to standardized output expectations contribute to a situation in which worker discretion, maybe even more so in collaborative settings, is quite bounded. Majority opinions that are consistent with the parameters of this bounding are more likely to be visible than are minority opinions that might challenge it.

The great challenge for teachers and administrators is to find out how to balance the needs for coherent and integrated instructional services with the equally critical need for teachers to operate in emancipatory professional contexts that support the development of innovative and creative solutions to the problems of meeting student needs. One primary means of finding this balance will be to develop a richer and deeper understanding of just what happens in teacher teams when teachers collaborate under stressful and constraining policy conditions.

Key Dimensions of Teacher Collaboration

Looking more closely at several important dimensions of teacher collaboration is a necessary bridge between the earlier discussion of broad policy issues, such as management trends and school improvement, and the conceptual lens

of distributed leadership which will provide the framework for interpreting this case study. It will be helpful to review some of what we already know about teams, the influences upon their effectiveness, group communication, and creativity and problem-solving. This background is a critical foundation for my examination of the emergence of leadership within the case study teams, and for understanding the broader organizational implications of using such collaborative structures. In the last chapter I established the policy context that has contributed to the widespread belief in the value of teacher collaboration and the use of teams as part of the organizational structure of schools. This chapter explores these structures in greater detail. It concludes with an extended discussion of distributed leadership and proposes a new conceptual framework centered on the idea of leadership as an activity constituted by the phenomenon of *emergent reciprocal influence*.

Teaming

As leadership in schools has come to be seen as an organizational quality (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995b), not solely vested in the formal authority of the principal, teacher teams have emerged as a school improvement strategy. The idea, and the reality, of creating teams of teachers had already been very popular within the middle school paradigm for decades (Clark & Clark, 1994). Typical structural characteristics of these teams include common planning time for teachers, a common group of students, a block teaching schedule, and common space for meeting and working in close proximity to one another (Erb & Doda, 1989).

Increasingly schools at other levels have also experimented with distributed leadership by organizing teachers into teams that identify and solve predefined

problems that constitute barriers to student learning. Secondary schools often have greater flexibility to implement these structures, and the widely distributed labor of teachers in high schools, for instance, makes a strong argument for the use of teams. This practice of collaboration for the purpose of making educational decisions embraces the realignment of roles and relationships of school community members. Change is more likely to be effective and enduring when those responsible for its implementation are included in a shared decision-making process (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Crow and Pounder (2000) and Pounder (1998a, 1999) have applied Hackman and Oldham's (1980) model of effective work groups to look at teacher teams. This model suggests that three domains, or factors, are largely responsible for determining the effectiveness of a work group. Those domains are organizational context, design or structural features, and interpersonal processes. These factors both constitute and are mediated by intermediate criteria such as the level of effort of the participants, the knowledge and skill base applied to the task and the fit of the task performance strategies. The effectiveness of these work groups is a function of whether or not a group's outputs exceed or meet organizational expectations, the process satisfies the needs of members, and the social process enhances further collaboration towards professional goals. The domains identified above are a useful heuristic for reviewing literature on the use of teacher teams in schools.

Organizational context. Professional development is a frequent focus of the literature on teams in schools, signifying a regard for the learning curve that is associated with adopting new structural forms for the work of teachers (Erb & Doda,

1989). Aptitudes frequently mentioned as high need areas for training are communication skills, decision-making, planning, and student needs ((Erb, 1995; Wilkinson & Smith, 1995). This set of knowledge and skills are reported by both administrators and teachers as critical to successful collaboration. The presence or absence of a leader on a team is also an organizational factor that appears to influence teams a great deal (MacIver, 1990). Crow and Pounder (2000) focus on time as a critical factor influencing teams. The liberating role of block scheduling, both in terms of simplifying the general teaching process and in granting time for meeting, was identified as a factor that bled through all three domains influencing group effectiveness.

The principal, as the primary player in either ameliorating or ignoring the needs of teams, was stressed by Crow and Pounder (2000) as the most significant organizational factor. The central role of formal school leadership in facilitating and supporting collaborative activities is emphasized, yet must be tempered by teachers' reports that they sometimes felt a loss of individual autonomy when involved in group tasks (Crow and Pounder). This reveals a very thin line that a principal must walk in supporting collaboration, yet also allowing teachers to feel comfortable that they have some independence in their work.

This finding of the key importance of formal school leadership is consistent with the general perspective that emerged from the earlier discussion of school improvement programs, and is consistent with a large body of research on the influence of positional leaders such as principals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). As Cartwright (1965) noted in an earlier era,

Control over behavior settings and over the participation of individuals in them may be used to exert an “indirect” influence on individuals. Since much of an executive’s responsibility is to design behavior settings, he is bound to exert influence by ecological control, whether he is fully aware of it or not (p.21).

The development of a collaborative culture among teachers, which contributes to the overall governance and performance of the school is desirable, yet requires the sustained support of formal leadership structures to succeed. Formal leaders will *inevitably* influence such activities. The nature of that support and influence frequently determines the success or failure of the reform initiative – thus the need for a distributed conception of school leadership (Murphy & Datnow, 2003).

Design features. When talking about a teacher team we are by no means talking about only one kind of group design. Teacher teams, for that matter school teams, come in many shapes, sizes, and configurations (MacIver, 1990; Sharman & Wright Jr., 1995). The particular structure of a team, in particular its task orientation, may have a significant impact on what happens with collaboration in that group (Crow and Pounder, 2000). Some aspects of this structure that come up as significant include team size, the degree of homogeneity versus heterogeneity of the team, and the various roles that team members may or may not assume. Crow and Pounder found that “Groups with greater homogeneity of philosophy and perhaps career stage... seemed to move forward more easily in their planning, consensus building, decision making, coordination, and shared activities” (p.247).

This last point warrants pause for reflection. If similar views, experiences, and skills contribute to smoother collaboration what does this say for the capacity of such teams to develop innovative solutions to long-standing problems. Is it helpful to have

more heads around the table if they all see the world through similar eyes? This appears to be a finding that would encourage policy-makers seeking to standardize educational practice. Homogenous groups would have less “standard deviations” to overcome in order to align their thinking and practice. Thus homogenous teams would seem to be a very effective instrument for advancing many current policy goals in the area of school reform.

Interpersonal processes. Problems with coordination, unequal member participation, and inconsistent commitment were identified by Crow and Pounder (2000) as the most pressing process issues facing the teams they studied. The latter factor, the lack of sufficient commitment by some team members, was singled out as the most significant interpersonal issue affecting the teams. Variables that were found to interact with these process problems included the relationship of teachers’ subject areas to curricular integration, whether or not the teacher taught elective or non-elective courses, and teachers’ basic commitment to teaming in general. When a team member does not seem to be contributing or participating to the level of expectations, it is important for other team members to consider the multiple factors that may be involved (Erb & Doda, 1989). Annual evaluations can serve as appropriate times for teachers to consider their own level of commitments to the teams they are serving on (Wilkinson & Smith, 1995).

In middle school reform literature (i.e. Clark & Clark, 1994) there are frequent recommendations for structural changes that can enhance the interpersonal experiences of teachers involved with teaming. These include making the move to block-scheduling and coordinating the instructional planning time of team teachers so

they are all free at more times when they may work together if they choose. Changes such as these are both a demonstration of the level of commitment that the organization is willing to invest in the team concept, and a means of reducing the level of stress that teachers may encounter when considering how to incorporate “team time” into their already crowded schedule. Pounder (1998a) also noted the potential need for exemplar models of teamwork for newly formed teams to learn from. She posited that without these examples teams may be limited in their ability to develop innovative and creative instructional strategies. Communication skills are another aspect of interpersonal processes that frequently come up as important skills for teams to develop (Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

Communication skills

Communication is *the* process by which one person influences another and is therefore basic to leadership (Gibb, 1954, p.898).

Communication is often mentioned as the essential element of successful collaboration and group activity (Schultz, 1989). There is no shortage of generic lists of *what* to do in terms of group communication (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994), but our knowledge of how to teach practitioners *how* to do these things is not so fully developed. Roberts and Pruitt (2003) recommend that school leaders model and promote the following communicative habits in order to encourage the sharing of information and effective collaboration:

1. Consistently link shared information with improved student learning.
2. Promote collegiality by expressing their support when they agree with comments made by team members.
3. Honestly, clearly, and succinctly describe their points of view about the teaching and learning topics under discussion.

4. Foster a collaborative climate by refraining from making judgmental statements about ideas put forth by others.
 5. Strengthen interpersonal relationship and nurture trust by sharing their feelings so others may better understand their thinking.
 6. Include some time for reflection in group meetings as well as in one-on-one conversations.
- (p.41-42).

Habits of communication such as those listed above are pervasively valued as critical factors of collegiality and collaboration. Rubin (2002) for instance states that “Communication sits at the center of all human relationships... Collaboration, as relationship management, demands the skillful use of interpersonal communication” (p.63). He goes on to list five good communicative practices:

1. Modeling honest and productive communication skills.
2. Asking more questions than we answer.
3. Attentively working to ensure all partners participate in key discussions.
4. Noting and addressing nonparticipation.
5. Never permitting decisions to be made by tacit endorsement but, rather, by making sure that each partner is engaged in the decision with (at least) an active vote or affirmation of support.

Some commentators (Lambert, 2003), however, simply identify communication as a key “leadership skill and disposition” (p.39), yet fail to go into specifics regarding the precise conversational practices that should be associated with these suggestions. Throughout this thread of discourse regarding communication it appears that “good communication” seems to be largely a matter of common wisdom. Even when a checklist of communication skills is provided it may often appear vague, unquestioned, and atheoretically grounded. Discussion of communication skills focuses on *social* skills; being nice, polite, supportive, tactful, and non-offensive. The point seems to be more on reviewing ways for group members to *get along* with one another. An implicit assumption is that many organizational members are going to

have difficulty with this. This links to ideas of the rampant individualism of Western society, and the difficulty that many people have in being part of a group (Bellah *et al.*, 1985).

Research on distinguishing between effective and ineffective group discussion has found that when group members make efforts related to the concepts of attention, comprehension, elaboration, or modification they are contributing to effective group processes (Schultz, 1989). Effective groups make more statements that indicate sensitivity to the opinions of others, and conversational moves are used as attempts at probing and refining the ideas of peers rather than simply pointing out flaws. Blumberg (1994) concluded that the presence of a policy of general reciprocity, as well as individual cooperative initiative on the part of group members, leads to effective interactions. Part of the problem in identifying lists of “good communication habits” is that communication within groups tends to be spontaneous and improvisational (Sawyer, 2003). It is difficult to predict where one statement, or type of statement, will lead a group. It seems apparent, however, that more supportive groups that probe each others’ comments for deeper meaning have a higher likelihood of effective outcomes.

Creativity

A teacher team is an example of organizational collaboration in action. The team is created (typically by the principal) and tasked with solving a problem facing the school. This problem may be rather specific, and known. Alternatively, the problem may be quite broad, perhaps even ill-defined. The former problem-orientation has been identified by creativity researchers as *known problem solving*,

the latter as *discovered problem finding* (Getzels, 1987; Moore, 1994; Sawyer, 2005; Subotnik & Moore, 1988). Problem solving involves approaching a problem that everyone knows about, and applying well-known procedures and techniques to resolve the problem. In contrast, problem finding is required when no one is quite sure precisely how to frame the problem or what procedures would be involved in its solution. The ambiguous nature of the problem can lend itself to the development of creative solutions depending on the task given to the group.

Moore's (1994) ecological model stresses that the systems which influence teacher problem finding are most easily defined at the moment of interaction, thus they are emergent. Moore identified the systems of ideas, of purposes, of interpersonal interactions, of cultural norms, and of textual forms as the key ecological ingredients of the school culture that frame teacher problem finding. Teacher interaction with these systems is only present during the actual practice of teacher problem finding, therefore to understand it better we must look at such activity as it occurs.

Part of the logic behind teachers teams is that it is thought that they are better able to access the distributed and cumulative expertise of the school's staff than, for example, a principal acting alone. Teacher teams themselves are often not hierarchically structured; rather, their meetings tend to be free-flowing. Such a loose structure facilitates the emergence of creative solutions. A teacher team might be particularly effective at solving a difficult problem that does not have an obvious solution. Before this form of group creativity can emerge, the team itself must be organized in a "distributed" fashion, allowing all members to contribute, in meetings

that do not have rigidly structured agendas. Sawyer (2003) identifies process, unpredictability, intersubjectivity, complex communication, and emergence as the five key characteristics of group creativity.

This logic goes against the grain of much of the more popular literature (Erb & Doda, 1989; Hopfenberg et al., 1993; Wilkinson & Smith, 1995) on teamwork that encourages more formal agenda and five-step formula for reaching *consensus* – usually stressed as a more important point than the process that is gone through. Group creativity, on the other hand, is an improvisational and emergent process. There may be identifiable routines, or patterns of interaction, but these are subject to constant recontextualization and subtle variation from instance to instance. Sawyer (2003) refers to this as “combinatorial complexity: A large number of next actions is possible, and each one of those actions could result in the subsequent flow of the performance going in a radically different direction” (p.7).

The outcomes of such group processes cannot be predicted in advance (Sawyer, 2003). Instead, problems and solutions “emerge” from the team’s, ideally the entire organization’s, collaborative dynamic. Since there is often no strict agenda in these meetings, and no obvious solution, individuals may surprise one another, and group interaction can result in the emergence of creative solutions. Such teams manage themselves through a distributed process of *collaborative emergence* (Sawyer, 2003). “Group creativity results in the collective creation of a shared creative product” (p.12). As shall be shown below, research from a distributed perspective of leadership is closely related to research on group creativity, and

effective teams. The characteristic traits of group creativity are complementary concepts to the study of distributed forms of leadership.

Distributed Leadership

Discussion of leadership as a distributive phenomenon has taken place for some time, but has intensified and become much more influential over the past decade. What may be the very first reference to *distributed leadership* appears in a book chapter contributed by the Australian scholar C. A. Gibb (1954) to the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Lindzey, 1954). Gronn (2002b) revived Gibb's ideas in his own influential work. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) included work by Barnard (1960), Thompson (1967), Cartwright (1965), and Katz and Kahn (1966) as early precursors to a distributed view of leadership within organizations. Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) recognized some of these same contributions in their brief review of models of distributive leadership. Bennett's (2003) extensive review of literature on distributed leadership has focused on more recent work, yet also retreads the early pathways that have led to the point of our contemporary discussion of these concepts. What becomes abundantly clear from all of this work is that our conceptual understanding of distributed leadership is still in its infancy, but that the idea is not necessarily new. The conceptual perspective of Distributed Leadership is an aging newborn.

A review by Nigel Bennett (2003) for the National College of School Leadership in the U.K. appears to be the most comprehensive discussion of the range of perspectives on distributed leadership to date. Bennett identified three distinct elements of the distributed leadership perspective. First, the perspective regards

leadership as an emergent property associated with groups or networks of individuals who interact. Second, distributed leadership implies that the boundaries of leadership are permeable. Third, distributed leadership suggests that different skill sets or expert knowledge are spread across organizations, rather than residing in a few individuals. According to Bennett's review, critical variables that influence distributed leadership include: control/autonomy; organizational structure and agency; social and cultural context; source(s) of change; positional/informal leadership; dynamics of team working; institutional and spontaneous forms of distributed leadership; and conflict resolution. Bennett identifies Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001b) and Gronn (2000) as offering the two most robust conceptual treatments of distributed leadership to date. The review concludes with a call for further conceptual refinement of the lens, as well as empirical application.

In their review of new approaches to teacher leadership Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) included a limited discussion of perspectives that they labeled as models of distributive leadership. These models approach leadership "exercised not only by people in formal positions but also by people outside those positions" and aim to "shift our attention... toward organizational and task-oriented conceptions of leadership (p.172). The three different models the authors focus upon are based in the work of Firestone (1996) and Heller and Firestone (1995) , Ogawa and Bossert (1995), and Spillane and his colleagues (2001), respectively. The literature associated with each of these perspectives is addressed below, following a review of some antecedent work on these ideas from the 1950's and 1960's.

Origins

References to the distribution of leadership, or leadership that transcends formal hierarchies, appear to have begun in the 1950's and 1960's among social psychologists and scholars of business management and organizational studies. These works do not all necessarily use the precise term *distributed leadership*, but deal with thematic issues related to organizations that are consistent with contemporary discussions of distributed leadership. A brief review of some of this work reveals that many of the issues we now discuss as “new” perspectives on organizations and leadership have actually been under consideration for some time.

As mentioned above, Gibb's (1954) reference to *distributed leadership* may be the first. According to Gibb,

Leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group. This concept of “distributed leadership” is an important one. If there are leadership functions which must be performed in any group, and if these functions may be “focused” or “distributed,” then the leaders will be identifiable both in terms of the frequency and in terms of the multiplicity or pattern of functions performed. Such a precursory conception appears to accord well with the needs of contemporary research in this area (p.884).

Gibb acknowledges a range of leadership forms, from leadership that is *focused* in particular positions or in specific individuals, to *distributed* leadership that is manifest in the functions performed by a plurality of individuals. Gibb is critical of the over-emphasis on focused leadership that was pervasive at the time he was writing, yet draws upon contemporary literature from the 1950's that was reifying positional leadership at the same time he was calling for research on the relational qualities of leadership.

Gibb (1954) summed up the variety of frames for viewing leadership as: 1) leadership as *unitary trait*, as a quality that will be characteristic of all leaders everywhere; 2) leadership according to a *constellation of traits theory*, which accords that “in each leader there can be recognized a pattern of traits which constitute his leadership capacity” (p.914); and 3) *interactional theory*. He asserts that this latter perspective conceives of leadership as “an interactional phenomenon arising when group formation takes place.” Recognizing distributed leadership is an important step towards an interactional theory of leadership. Gibb identified a number of critical dimensions of an incipient interactional theory: “leadership is always relative to the situation”; “the basic psychology of the leadership process is that of social interaction”; “election to leader status depends upon perception of individual differences” (p.915). Gibb was still wedded to the idea of *differentiation*, that a leader possesses a quality or constellation of qualities setting them apart from followers. This binary construct is difficult to escape, as we can still see in the work of Spillane and colleagues (see below).

Some years later Barnard (1960) drew attention to the importance of cooperative systems within organizations and of the need for managers to understand how these systems function.

The processes of interaction must be discovered or invented, just as a physical operation must be discovered or invented... the interaction changes the motives and interest of those participating in the cooperation (p.60).

Barnard used the word *cooperation* similarly to the way we use the term *collaboration* today. He expressed an awareness of the emergent and improvisational nature of social interaction within organizations, and that these processes were

important for managers to understand. The relationship of leadership to these processes hinges upon the *morality* of organizational actors much more than the positions they happen to hold. Since action is a process of cooperative forces, of social interaction, and contingent upon the morality of individual actors, leadership becomes connected to personal agency more than it does to formal hierarchies. The manifestation of *moral agency* becomes the source of the distribution of leadership through the processes of cooperation. Differing perspectives on agency was also a key element of Cartwright's (1965) discussions of organizations and member influences on one another.

Cartwright (1965) examined the process of social influence, taking as an assumption that many people in organizations have influence over one another. Influence is not limited to specific people or positions. He identified three major dimensions of the influence process: 1) an agent exerting influence; 2) the method(s) of exerting influence; and 3) the agent subjected to influence. Cartwright posited that the interaction of these dimensions was rooted in the processes of social interaction. He reflected upon classical views of organizations that have viewed agency primarily in terms of the acts of individuals or the functions fulfilled by certain roles or positions, suggesting that this view was based on power being related to access to valued specific resources. Cartwright identified the work of Dahl (1961) on the sources of power of elite social groups as strongly connected to this perspective on influence. He viewed Dahl's work as constituting a bridge between the classic individual perspective of agency with more progressive views rooted in social interaction. He noted that some theorists allowed for an agent to be represented by a

group. Cartwright believed that “above all, influence is a social relationship” (1965, p.40). He was critical of the focus on studying *leaders* and studying *followers* but not the relationship between the two, claiming that the latter is really what we are interested in and need to understand.

Katz and Kahn (1966) also put great emphasis on a broadly conceived perspective of influence in their work on the social psychology of organizations. They defined leadership “as the exertion of influence on organizationally relevant matters by any member of the organization” (p.332). They went on to add that they had observed that organizations with cultures in which influential acts are widely shared tend to be highly effective. They referred to this as the distribution of leadership. Katz and Kahn claimed that in such organizations people are more likely to possess a greater commitment to decisions that have been made, because they have had some part in them, and that the quality of decisions is likely to improve. A broad taxonomy of forms of distributed leadership is described. Katz and Kahn discriminate between “delegation, participative decision-making, accessibility to influence, and communication of organizationally relevant information” (p.332). The authors warn, however, against distributing leadership functions too liberally. They assert that the primary mechanism of the modern organization is the division of labor and that it would be inefficient to abandon this in favor of equity in all areas of decision making and access to resources. Nonetheless, they conclude that “the broad sharing of leadership functions contributes to organizational effectiveness under almost all circumstances” (p.335).

Thompson's (1967) work figures prominently in Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) distributed perspective of leadership (see below). Thompson was committed to exploring the sociological bases of administrative and organizational theories of action. He developed a particularly strong conceptual perspective on the concept of *interdependencies*. Thompson suggested that three types of interdependent relationships can exist between parts, or members, of an organization: pooled; sequential; and reciprocal.

Thompson (1967) defined pooled interdependence as a situation when organizational members perform different tasks that are all necessary to the successful completion of a common goal. Sequential interdependence occurs when the actions of one part of an organization are contingent upon the completion of a task by a different part of the organization. Reciprocal interdependence takes place when the outputs of one member or part of an organization become inputs or resources for another. Thompson noted that elements of each form filtered throughout each other form. He added that "In the order introduced, the three types of interdependence are increasingly difficult to coordinate because they contain increasing degrees of contingency" (p.56). As one moves up the ladder in complexity from pooled to reciprocal interdependence the activities of each element of an organization become more reliant upon the performance of other parts of the organization. This point will come up again as I discuss the synthesis framework for this study.

Contemporary Models

Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) identified three general models of approaching distributed leadership differentiated primarily on the basis of how

leadership is conceptualized. In their review of recent trends in the research of teacher leadership these authors noted that the mid-1990's witnessed a renewal of conceptions of networked leadership that first emerged in research from the 1950's and 1960's (i.e. Barnard, 1968; Thompson, 1967 – cited in Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002 and discussed immediately above). This earlier work emphasized looking at what school personnel *do*, more than *who* is doing it. This challenged prevailing conventions of associating leadership with particular positions. Over the past decade a number of scholars of leadership (Firestone, 1996; Ogawa & Bossert; 1995; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) have been attempting to unravel the activities which constitute leadership action, and the complex network of organizational relationships which characterize the manifestation of leadership. Empirical studies of the last several years have contributed to an elaboration of the distributed perspective on leadership.

Firestone (1996) developed a *functionalist* model in which leadership was associated with important tasks and functions. Focus was removed from positions and specific people and placed instead upon the performance of these activities. This perspective can sometimes be misconstrued as suggesting that distributed leadership is simply the recognition that multiple persons in schools have responsibility for leadership functions, or what Spillane (2005) refers to as “leader plus”. What this functionalist model actually communicates to us, however, is that leadership is not intrinsically tied to specific positions, but rather to specific activities that function to facilitate the attainment of organizational goals. The message is that those seeking to study leadership should look for the performance of these key activities instead of

assuming that watching the principal will automatically grant a window upon the enactment of leadership.

Around the same time, another group of scholars (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995) developed an *organizational resource* model of distributed leadership. From this perspective leadership is associated with the interaction of individuals within an organization and the subsequent multidirectional flow of influence that results. Rather than being a task-oriented, functional phenomenon leadership is viewed as a relational construct precipitated by the contact of organizational members across networked roles. Leadership can thus be viewed in terms of the degree of social influence possessed by individuals, groups of individuals, or the entire organization. Pounder, Ogawa, and Adams (1995) successfully associated the aggregate leadership influence in schools with a number of organizational outcomes. Furthermore they were able to link the leadership influence of different organizational roles with particular organizational outcomes. Although roles are still a major element of this perspective, the concept of interaction emerges as the central focus.

Focus shifts from people's isolated actions to their social interactions. The interact, not the act, becomes the basic building block of organizational leadership. Interaction is the medium through which resources are deployed and influence is exerted. And because leadership affects organizational structure, it affects the interactions of individuals in organizations. In essence, leadership through interactions influences the system of interactions that constitute an organization (Ogawa & Bossert, p.236).

An essential corollary to this recognition is that "the interactive nature of leadership means that leadership is reciprocal" (p.237). This work represents a critical transitional step toward a more radical conception of leadership as a relational

phenomenon. Looking at the relationship between the actions of individuals in various roles and other members of an organization allows us to see that leadership is contingent upon interaction – even for individuals holding specific positions or roles that carry a leadership expectation. The next step is to escape the ideas of roles, positions, and status differentiation altogether, in other words to conceptualize and study leadership in *leaderless* contexts. It is essential to escape the assumption that specific roles, and functions, traditionally associated with those roles, are a necessary condition for the activity of leadership.

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2001; 2004) model of distributed leadership integrates several of the ideas of the other models discussed above. This perspective associates leadership with *activity*. These scholars argue that to understand how school leadership works we should use activity associated with *leadership tasks* as our unit of analysis for research, rather than leaders themselves or leader behavior. They suggest that this activity, or leadership practice, "is distributed over leaders, followers, and the school's situation or context" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; p.11). Borrowing from distributed cognition and activity theory, this model locates leadership activity within a networked web of individuals, artifacts, and situations. As noted earlier they also import Thompson's (1965) concepts of pooled, sequential, and reciprocal interdependency as a means of classifying the variety of networked relationships that can be manifest in organizations.

From this conceptual vantage point the challenge for researchers is to reveal links between the broad functions and specific tasks of school leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Distinguishing between a school's espoused theories

of practice and the actual theories in practice that frame daily operations is identified as a critical step in unlocking these function/task relationships. This perspective recognizes the key role that individual discretion can play in task enactment by individual organization members (Lipsky, 1980). The role of interaction in this model also necessitates examining the interdependencies between activities. Noting the presence of pooled, sequential, or reciprocal interdependencies is recommended as a tool for tracking the *distributive* quality of leadership activity. In order to understand school leadership it is necessary to identify the relationship between each step in the enactment of tasks that support leadership functions.

In addition to the relational distribution it is also important to grasp the situational distribution of leadership practice. “Situation or context does not simply ‘affect’ what school leaders do as some sort of independent or interdependent variable(s): it is *constitutive* of leadership practice” (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; p.20-21). Artifacts, or tools, such as administrative and instructional documents and policies serve as externalized representations of ideas and intentions that are constitutive of leadership. Once in place they can also serve as mediating constraints. Similarly, organizational structure can both constitute and filter leadership practice. Spillane (2005) says that “distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures.” This “practice is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation” (p.144). Thus Spillane identifies what he calls the three productive elements of leadership practice: leaders, followers, and situation.

Elsewhere, however (as is noted above), Spillane and his colleagues have marked individuals, artifacts, and situation as the constituting forces of leadership practice. In both formulae it is the interaction of the three factors that is given constitutive force. This inconsistency in identifying these dimensions is curious. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) make it clear that artifacts serve a mediational function between individuals and situation. However Spillane (2005) appears to suggest that the dyadic interaction of leaders and followers is constituted by the dimension of situation. Now, of course, there is room for artifacts to mediate the leader/follower interaction, but the use of artifacts as a link between individuals and situation is not explicit. Spillane and his colleagues have received criticism for their continued reliance upon the leader/follower distinction with their model (J. Sherer – personal communication, April 2005). It is interesting that given this critique Spillane appears to be emphasizing role differentiation more, rather than less. This seems incongruous given his explicit assertion that a distributed perspective of leadership is about interaction, and not about roles. Spillane's (Spillane, 2005, forthcoming) new book on distributed leadership will hopefully clarify this apparent evolution of his conceptualization of the lens.

Recent Research

Recent research in distributed leadership has been strongly influenced by this *integrative* model developed by Spillane and his colleagues. A “Spillane School” of researchers, in effect, emerged. Recurrent symposia showcasing much of this research have been held at the conferences of both the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the University Council for Educational Administration

(UCEA). Both Gronn (2002a) and Spillane, et al (in press) have contributed chapters on the distributed leadership lens to recent edited books. Spillane (2003) has also served as the editor of a special issue of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. Selections of work from this special issue, as well as from other publications and conference papers are highlighted below in order to demonstrate the range of work currently being conducted using the lens of distributed leadership.

Spillane, Diamond, Walker, Halverson, and Jita (2001a) conducted a qualitative study that examined resource allocation in Chicago elementary schools, highlighting how the leadership in one school effectively identified and activated resources for improving science instruction. The authors drew results from a longitudinal study of 13 Chicago elementary schools. The authors focused most specifically on the distribution of resources across subject areas and used a social capital perspective to identify sources of variation in this distribution.

Sebring, Hallman, and Smylie (2001) studied Chicago public schools as well, as part of the ongoing work of the Consortium on Chicago School Research. In this mixed-method study the authors looked at factors that caused organizational retreat from efforts that had once promoted distributed leadership. Three Chicago elementary schools were used as case studies. External pressures associated with high-stakes testing were found to be the primary cause of principals stepping back from teacher empowerment and seizing more direct control of school operations, although one case study school demonstrated the capacity to accommodate these new pressures into the distributed structural forms that the school had adopted.

Halverson and Clifford (2004) focused on the role that local situation plays in mediating policy implementation – in this case, specifically the implementation of a new teacher evaluation policy - in a small suburban Midwestern school district. This qualitative case study found that the *situation of practice* is constituted by more than mere physical context. It is also formed by routines and traditions shaped by situation to create a sort of cognitive inertia that frames actors' interpretations of new situations. Halverson and Clifford's work is strongly influenced by theories of distributed cognition and tries to gain a deeper understanding of how both situation and artifacts interact with individuals to frame their work experiences. The authors connected these insights to school leadership by observing the interactions of principals and teachers throughout the evaluation process.

Wassink, Slegers, and Imants (2004) also examined the influence of situation, but in the setting of Dutch public schools. This study applied the lens of distributed leadership within a more conventional leadership framework, that of looking directly at a principal's actions and decision-making. This multiple-case study inquiry took place in Dutch secondary schools. The authors applied Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2001) framework to look at the situated practice of the formal school leader within the broader networked relations that framed leadership practice in the schools. They concluded that both the interaction of the cognitive and social components of the principal's vision, and the interaction of this vision with the social and structural environment, are critical factors in determining a school leader's capacity for influence.

Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2004) did a quantitative analysis of how schools that have adopted Comprehensive School Reform models both configure and activate school leadership through the definition of formal roles. To do this the authors surveyed principals from a national sample of schools using three of the most popular CSR models: the Accelerated Schools Project; America's Choice, and Success for All. The authors concluded that the CSR models appear to influence the performance of leadership functions. It was found that principals in these schools were likely to offer significant amounts of instructional leadership. It is interesting to note that the leadership being measured is the functional behavior of the principals.

In a mixed-method study based upon much of the same data, Barnes, Camburn, Kim, and Rowan (2004) attempted to probe the connection of leadership practice (of principals) in supporting improved instruction. This was done by looking at the interactions of school leaders and teachers. Interviews were conducted with leaders and teachers at case study sites to gather this data. Anecdotally, one finding of this study was that all case study sites reported using instructional work groups at the time of data collection. The study concluded that two leadership functions, developing teacher capacity and monitoring instruction, were distributed across the systems of the case study sites. They moderated Camburn et al.'s (2004) conclusions by indicating that the adoption of new leadership roles was often tainted by a degree of "caution and ambivalence" (p.38).

Goldstein (2003) conducted a mixed-method case study of a large urban school district to examine the effects of trying to develop leadership roles among teachers through the implementation of a new teacher evaluation program. The

program, called Peer Assistance and Review, called for teachers to become active members of the evaluation process. Goldstein found that even though a cross-section of participants felt favorably about the program, that most still expressed a desire for the principal to take a more active role in the evaluation process. Thus, an attempt at fostering distributed was being met with yearnings for more, not less, bureaucratic structure.

Copland (2003) employs a lens of distributed leadership that is derivative of the general school reform and improvement philosophy (Elmore, 2000) discussed in Chapter Two. His longitudinal study of a region-wide school renewal effort called the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative used mixed-methods to look at the foundations of building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. Copland found that the use of an inquiry process buttressed by distributed site-level leadership contributed to schools' ability to create and maintain reform initiatives. The process *and* the situation interacted to influence reculturing.

Mangin (2005) has looked at distributed leadership from the perspective of teacher leaders in a comparative case study of teachers and teacher leaders in five different school districts in New Jersey. Mangin differentiates teacher leaders from teachers based upon the roles they hold and functions they perform. Teacher leaders were specially designated "coaches" for other teachers' development of improved instruction. The author found that teacher receptiveness to working with the teacher leaders was conditional upon the perceived value of the activity, and the specific help that was being provided.

A striking characteristic of every one of these nine pieces of recent research is that they all focus primarily on individuals that fill certain roles or positions, people we would casually identify as *leaders*. Each piece of research uses some form of a lens of distributed leadership, but all follow the tradition of differentiating between *leaders* and *followers*, and all associate leadership with these “leaders” who fill specific roles. Some cases involve people assuming new roles, but without variation the *leaders* are personnel who perform acts associated with designated leadership positions.

If we are really trying to find new forms of leadership, then why do we keep looking in all the places we have already peered into for the development of past paradigms that we have become dissatisfied with? I contend that the ascriptive role-based differentiation of the professional identities of organizational members as either a *leader* or a *follower* is a barrier to our ability to see non-hierarchical forms of influence behavior – namely distributed leadership as opposed to focused leadership. It appears that much of the research noted above is studying the reshuffling of bureaucratic tasks, or *delegation*. If leadership is truly relational, then there should be dimensions of leadership that are not found in the hierarchy, but rather among the undifferentiated masses – the proletarian forms of leadership, if you will. Following a discussion of Gronn’s model of distributed leadership, I offer a synthesis framework developed with the goal of being able to analyze non-hierarchical forms of leadership.

Gronn’s Model

The work of Australian scholar Peter Gronn (2000, 2002) on distributed leadership has already been noted throughout this dissertation. Gronn’s research

offers a sophisticated treatment of the perspective that warrants detailed review. To date however, there is a dearth of empirical research incorporating Gronn's model of distributed leadership. Bennet, et al's (2003) review of literature related to distributed leadership appropriately identifies Gronn as having put forth the most conceptually well-developed framework to date. For American audiences, however, Gronn's work is still under-recognized. His writings undergird much of the perspective articulated by the influential work of Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001, 2004). However, where Spillane and his colleagues rely heavily on contingency theory, drawing off Thompson (1965), and concepts of distributed cognition, Gronn turns to activity theory (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). Gronn's efforts have been extensive, and deserve an extended discussion. Gronn's work is discussed as a precursor to a presentation of my own synthesis of concepts associated with distributed leadership; a synthesis leading to an analytical framework for studying *emergent reciprocal influence* within organizations.

Gronn (2000) suggests that leadership researchers have created a polarized debate that persistently errs in either privileging *agency* or *structure*. He identifies this as a false ontological dualism. Gronn claims that there has been a,

bifurcation in leadership thinking around two broad polarities: the one, stimulated principally by Bernard Bass's (1985) ideal type of transformational leadership, representing a kind of apogee of individualism, and the other, typified by Elliott Jacques' (1989) managerial leadership, a vigorous reassertion of systemic properties and role structures, but devoid (virtually) of any identifiable sense of agency. (p.317).

Gronn uses activity theory as a means to bridge the gap between the poles of this dualistic approach to leadership, to come to view forms of leadership along a

continuum rather than in binary opposition to one another. I discuss activity theory in more detail below. What influences Gronn the most from this perspective is the focus on activity as a dimension of reality that spans agency and structure; that links them together. He says that the analysis of contextually-bound activities “permits an understanding of agential-structural relations through the process of structuring” (p.317). *Structuring* is the process through which agency influences structure. These structuring actions may either reproduce or transform existing sets of institutional relations.

Activity theory takes collectively performed activity as its unit of analysis, explicitly explores and analyzes the components of activities, and investigates the pragmatic qualities of organizational work. Collaborative teams within organizations, such as schools, are an ideal fit for the type of analysis that activity theory supports. Activity theory is a developmental and emergent perspective that can help researchers understand the relationship of leadership to learning.

A critical conceptual component of this perspective is the idea of *conjoint agency* (Gronn, 2000). Conjoint agency is defined as the concertive work of pluralities of interdependent members of the organization. In schools, one form of conjoint agency would be groups of teachers working together in ways that influence one another’s professional behavior. Individuals experience a sense *synergy* in these situations, as each gains something from each of the others in their development of innovative ideas (Gronn, 2002). Reciprocal influence becomes “the defining attribute of concertive action” (p.431).

Gronn feels that this concept of pluralistic agency is fundamental to the paradigm of distributed leadership. Linking agency only to individual action binds us to viewing leadership as a focused - to use Gibb's (1954) words - phenomenon. Integrating the concept of conjoint agency into our distributed perspective of leadership facilitates the move to looking at interactional processes embedded within activities as the fundamental properties of leadership, rather than looking at roles and functions that we associate with particular individualistic behavior in hierarchical leadership structures.

Gronn (2002) identifies two main types of distributed leadership: distributed leadership as *numerical action*; and distributed leadership as *concertive action*. The latter is further subdivided into three forms. The numerical action type occurs when the total leadership of an organization is broadly dispersed. This is the most well know and common version of distributed leadership. Gronn (2003) prefers not to classify this as delegation. It appears that his distinction rests on the locus of power in organizations. He associates delegation with centralized authority structures that send more work down to lower levels of the hierarchy with no increased measures of autonomy. I argue that this is precisely what is happening in many U.S. schools, so that in many schools that claim to be distributing leadership they are actually delegating responsibilities without also passing on the accompanying authority traditionally invested in those who perform such duties.

Forms of distributed leadership classified as concertive action specifically involved group functions, or the patterns of those group functions within an organization. The three subtypes add specificity and dimensionality to this concept.

Spontaneous collaboration is characterized by “brief bursts of synergy which may be the extent of the engagement or the trigger for ongoing collaboration” (p.430).

Intuitive working relations differ in that they “emerge over time when two or more organization members rely on each other and develop a close working relationship... leadership is manifest in the shared role space.”

Alternatively, *institutionalized practices* are formal structures which are contrary to a traditional hierarchical system. They may be examples of organizational adaptation, intentional design, or both. These forms of distributed leadership can be further classified according to the physical location in which the activities are performed. Gronn (2002) labels work that is performed by members working together in close physical proximity as *co-performed work*.

On the other hand, work that is performed by members spread across a site, or even in different sites, is termed *collectively performed work*. These distinctions are important to Gronn because of his interest on the influence of technology and communication infrastructures on the division of labor, and upon the performance of concertive action. Gronn suggests that collectively performed work is becoming more common because of more complex systems of communication. I suggest that this distinction based upon physical location may become rapidly obsolete in the world of instant real-time communication. When I work with my colleagues over email we are co-performing a task even if physically separated.

Gronn (2002) identifies *interdependence* and *coordination* as two fundamental properties of distributed leadership. Interdependence is defined as reciprocal dependence on multiple organization members. Gronn distinguishes between

overlapping interdependence, which is essentially structural redundancy resulting from common needs for information and support, and *complementary interdependence*. The latter occurs when members pool differentiated resources and skills to perform tasks in a concertive fashion. The whole is literally greater than the sum of its parts. Recalling Thompson's (1967) forms of interdependence, Gronn's complementary independence is similar to Thompson's pooled interdependence. Overlapping interdependence encompasses aspects of reciprocal interdependency, yet also acknowledges redundancy in a way that Thompson did not. Sequential interdependency is one dimension of the pooling of inputs that Gronn subsumes under overlapping interdependency.

Returning to Gronn's (2002) concept of conjoint agency, he also classified the types of synergies that are characteristic of collaborative interaction. These are *cross-hierarchy*, *trusteeship*, *parity of relations*, and *separation of power*. Parity of relations, a form of role-sharing that explicitly eschews status differentiation (Gronn, 2003), is indicative of many teacher team structures. Gronn's discussion probes ways to get at the nature of conjoint agency, at how synergy is created. It ends up being mainly description of *types* of synergy, which provides some useful terms for an analytical discussion of the process of constituting synergy. The conceptual or methodological means at getting at this constitution are lacking, however. This study's use of interaction analysis fills this gap. It is a method that allows for picking apart these relationships to understand the moment-by-moment construction of synergy. I suggest that synergy represents a kind of interactional interdependence that can be probed by examining conversation.

I have indulged in an extended discussion of Peter Gronn's work because it is highly influential in my own approach to studying school leadership and collaboration within organizations. Gronn's work has the conceptual depth and scope to offer clear alternatives to conventional individualistic paradigms of leadership. The model's interdisciplinary roots, drawing strongly from social interactionism and activity theory, contribute to its utility as a conceptual lens. Gronn's work (2000; 2002; 2003) offers the most robust theoretical perspective for studying distributed leadership that is available in the literature. When linked with the significant conceptual contributions of other perspectives (Spillane et al., 2004) this approach to leadership studies offers great promise for new insights. Gronn's references to activity theory in particular suggest powerful new pathways for exploring organizational behavior.

Activity Theory

Mediation by tools and signs is not merely a psychological idea. It is an idea that breaks down the Cartesian walls that isolate the individual mind from the culture and the society (Engeström, 1999; 29).

The origins of activity theory lie in the oft-discarded writings of Karl Marx. According to Engeström and Miettinen (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999), Marx was the first to clearly develop the concept of human *activity* as an object of study unto itself. Marx wrote that the artificial dualism of materialism and idealism could be spanned by looking at the concept of activity. The Russian scholars Leont'ev and Vygotsky continued in Marx's vein and are traditionally looked to as the substantive forebears of activity theory. Vygotsky (1978) had dealt with the idea of individual action mediated by cultural artifacts and signs. However it was Leont'ev who used

the concept of collective activity to bring the notion of mediation via social interaction into a model of a theory of action (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). What activity theory gives us is a conceptual framework for bridging the gulf between agency and structure, between freewill and determinism. Activity theorists posit that artifacts, both physical and abstract, mediate between the will of individual agents and the objects of their action, or structure. A classic example explains how the activity of hunting among tribal people is a process in which the will of individuals is mediated by their available technology and social customs, such as ritual behavior. In social settings this theory of action becomes a theory of *activity* because other people also interact with the agent and the mediating artifacts. Artifacts are viewed as “cultural resources that are common to the society at large” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p.8). In fact, social interaction itself can become a mediating artifact. The use of language, or verbal communication, is one primary artifact of human social interaction. It is an artifact and a constituent element of activity systems.

According to Engeström and Miettinen (1999) a schism developed in activity research around the idea of artifacts. One school of thought, strongly influenced by Leont’ev, focused more on the instrumental tool-mediated production of objects, or structure. Another perspective, more allied to Vygotsky, also put great emphasis upon expressive sign-mediated communication as an artifact. The latter perspective informs my own approach to studying conversational interaction as an artifact that mediates the relationship between structure and agency. I suggest that the former tool-mediated perspective is actually the more dominant influence upon contemporary models of

distributed leadership. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) approach is strongly influenced by this tradition. As a result they focus on what I call *designed artifacts*. In this study I will pursue the investigation of *emergent artifacts*. I define emergent artifacts as mediating instruments of interaction that are improvisational in nature, yet also follow loosely patterned forms of utilization.

Engeström and Miettinen (1999) suggest that activity theory is a form of an *interactive system model* that takes "into account complex interactions between science, technology, and market, between designers and users of new technology" (p.9). This adds a dimension of historicity to analyses using activity theory. The various social and cultural forces that factor into human activities can be gleaned by identifying networks between activity systems that facilitate the flow of artifacts. Such a model lends itself well to the type of analysis proposed by this dissertation; namely to connect macro-social forces of market strategies, policy history, and educational reform to the modest work of individual teams of teachers working together in one high school.

The framework of an activity system model also offers a dynamic means of incorporating multiple perspectives into an analysis of a social setting:

The analyst constructs the activity system as if looking down on it from above. At the same time, the analyst must select a subject, a member (or better yet, multiple different members) of the local activity, through whose eyes and interpretations the activity is constructed. This dialectic between the systemic and subjective-partisan views brings the researcher into a dialogical relationship with the local activity under investigation. The study of an activity system becomes a collective, multivoiced construction of its past, present, and future zones of proximal development (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; p.10).

This seems to offer an ideal means of capturing the complex social interactions of teachers working together in collaborative activities. The conceptual system offers a way to incorporate analyses of organizational conditions, team interaction via conversation, and the influence of broad contextual forces. Thus the researcher can probe the situation, processes, and forces that impact on the work of teams of teachers.

Synthesis: Emergent Reciprocal Influence

The goal of this conceptual synthesis is to capture the process by which the collective agency of organizational members is transformed into organizational structure; in other words, to be able to see the effects of collaboration on the work of teachers and the school(s) they teach in; to see distributed leadership. Within the framework it is recognized that agency and structure are always interrelated. A dualistic perspective that treats agency and structure as separate and distinct is disavowed. Existing organizational structure is a constitutive frame for member agency, yet is also subject to reproduction or transformation by new member agency. The interrelationship of the two is intrinsic. The processes that mediate this dynamic relationship are the central focus of this study.

This framework, grounded in past and contemporary literature on distributed leadership as well as activity theory, offers a vision of the related processes of *structuration* and *enstructuration*. The creation of new structures within organizations is a product of the activity of pluralities of organizational members. This activity is both *constituted by* and *constitutive of* organizational conditions, or structure. *Structuration* is the process by which member agency is constrained and influenced

by existing structures. *Enstructuration*, alternatively, is the process through which new structural realities are created – or old structures are transformed. This activity, through which member agency becomes reified as structure, is the locus of distributed leadership. Individual organizational members' cognitive will to act is transformed into a collective force – conjoint agency. When conjoint agency influences organizational structure it becomes concertive action.

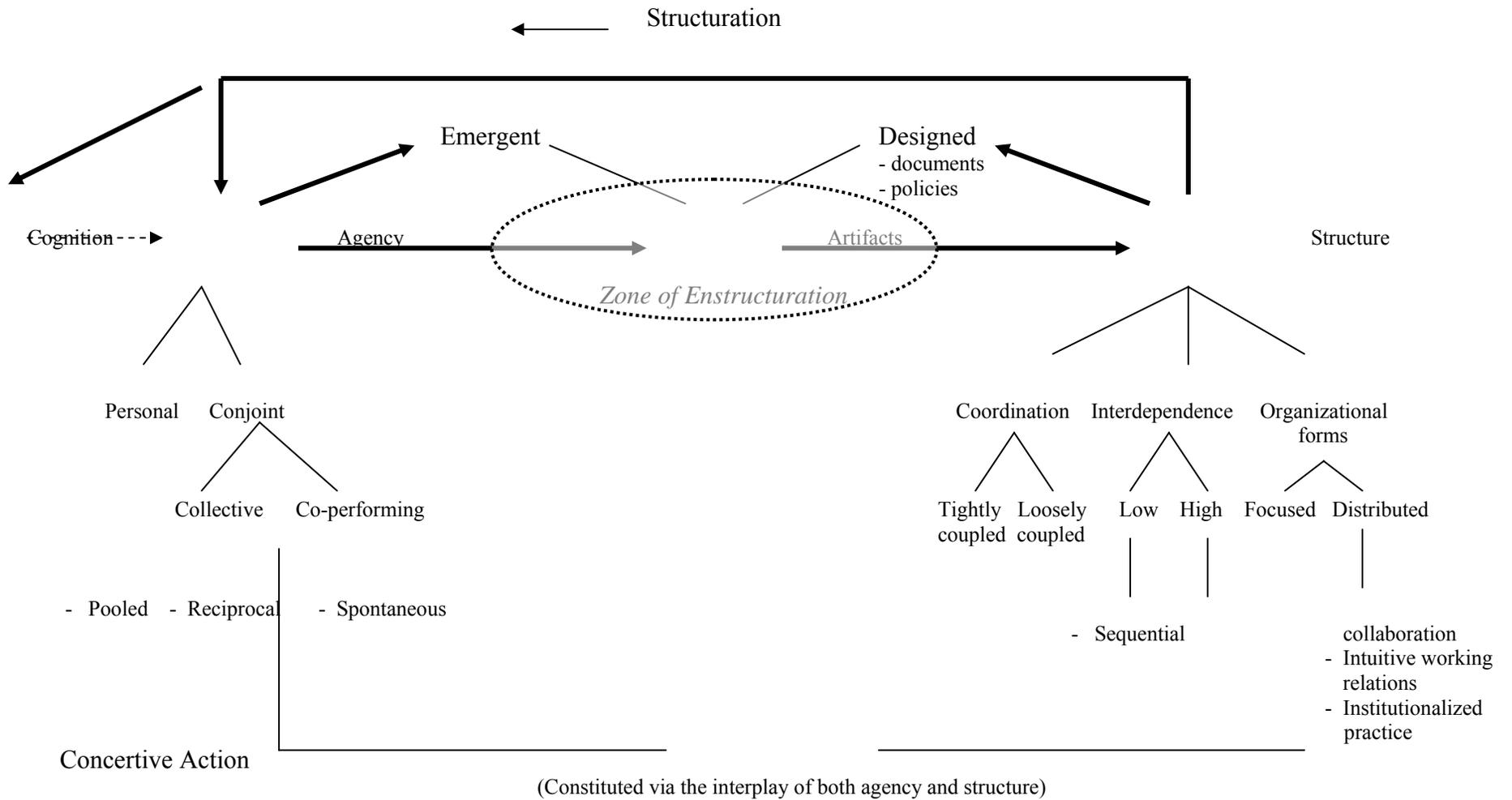
I refer to the process of conjoint agency interacting with structure to produce concertive action as *emergent reciprocal influence*. This term captures the essence of the nature and process of distributed leadership within collaborative contexts, namely that it is a developing phenomenon (emergent), is rooted in social interaction (reciprocal), and involves a modification of the behavior of others (influence). A framework for emergent reciprocal influence is presented in Figure 3. It is presented in the form of an activity system. There are three primary dimensions to this framework; *agency*, *structure*, and *artifacts*. The interaction of these three dimensions is what activates concertive action.

Agency. Action is activated by personal agency. *Activity* is activated by conjoint agency. Conventional “focused” paradigms of leadership deal almost exclusively with what we might call personal agency. This is the type of agency that lies behind the actions of the mythical hero, or the transformational leader. As was discussed above, *conjoint agency*, of either a *collective* or a *co-performing* variety, leads to the concertive action of pluralities of individuals. In any activity system both forms of agency will be at work. After all it is individuals that make up a group. What we are primarily interested in, however, with collaboration are the interactions that

lead to collaborative action, and the effects of collaborative action. Thus we need to look at how conjoint agency is constituted. Personal agency is not ignored. It is an intrinsic component of the analysis, but is ultimately encompassed by the interactive processes that contribute to group activity. In the framework, agency is embedded in a reciprocal relationship with structure, being both influenced by it, and shaping it, respectively.

Cognition, both individual and distributed, is intimately involved with the manifestation of agency, as indicated on the left side of Figure 3. This is a factor of this dimension of distributed leadership that is developed more fully by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004), and Halverson and Clifford (2004). I do not place the same degree of emphasis on this factor as these researchers, yet acknowledge its importance within the proposed activity system. My focus is rather on the conversational interaction of individuals as an expressive and communicative representation of agency. Future syntheses of these two differing foci of investigation should have dynamic explanatory potential.

Figure 3. Activity system of emergent reciprocal influence within organizations: An analytical framework



Structure. The right side of the framework depicts the structural dimension of the activity system. Key factors of this dimension are the nature of *organizational forms*, levels of *coordination*, and types of *interdependence*. Organizational forms may be either focused or distributed (Gibb, 1954). Distributed forms are, of course, the focus of this study. Gronn's (2002) taxonomy of distributed forms (*spontaneous collaboration*, *intuitive working relations*, and *institutionalized practices*) offers a means of conceptualizing these organizational structures. The degree of coordination that is present among organizational forms can be represented along a range from tightly to loosely coupled (Weick, 1976) to indicate how much the form in question is linked to other elements of the organization. Interdependencies are interpreted using Thompson's (1967) tripartite classification scheme of *pooled*, *reciprocal* and *sequential* interdependency. These latter concepts figure prominently in Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) model, which I suggest is more heavily weighted to the structural side of the framework in Figure 3.

Artifacts. Artifacts comprise the third dimension of the activity system of emergent reciprocal influence. It was noted above that there is currently a bias toward the examination of *designed artifacts*, or tools, as the cultural elements that mediate the relationship of agency and structure. In the framework, documents and policies are identified as examples of these types of artifacts. Such artifacts are common foci in studies based upon Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond's (2004) model of distributed leadership.

The mediating influence of such artifacts is absolutely critical to our understanding of the processes that constitute distributed leadership. We do indeed live in a world framed by designed artifacts. However, we also live in a social world constituted

by *emergent artifacts*, many of which are conversational in nature. These artifacts mediate our relationship with existing and immanent structures in familiar and seemingly predictable ways, yet still remain intrinsically improvisational and unpredictable. As Sawyer (2003) indicates, the combinatoric possibilities, the degrees of freedom, of communicative interaction grow exponentially as an interactional episode continues. This study aims to reveal the emergent artifacts that constitute leadership behavior in small groups of teachers; behavior that transforms conjoint agency into structure. Conversations are the media of communicative interaction that I explore.

I suggest that a further distinction between designed and emergent artifacts is that the latter are intimately related to the process of *enstructuration*, the influence of agency upon structure, to a greater degree than the former – the designed artifacts. I premise this on the observation that, being *emergent*, emergent artifacts are necessarily more deeply rooted in the idiosyncratic behavior of agents – either individuals or groups – and therefore are constituted *by* agency more than they are constitutive *of* agency. In short, I suggest that emergent artifacts can be wielded with greater discretion than designed artifacts. Designed artifacts, alternatively, have more of an effect of *structuration*, within the activity system. They are elements of structure that mediate the relationship of agency to structure. In the context of mediation they can, of course, be used to transform structure. It is not easy, however, to use the Masters' tools to tear his house down. Emergent artifacts have a higher likelihood of transforming existing structural conditions due to the more discretionary and improvisational nature of their manifestation.

Crucibles and Cages

Role expansion increases to such an extent that an incumbent becomes responsible for an amount and quality of work output, and a depth of emotional and cognitive commitment and work engagement that might previously have been demanded of more than one person. Moreover, that same role incumbent's zone of discretion tends to be circumscribed and regulated, less by the need to obey the directives of a supervisory superior than by a framework of target-driven accountability requirements [tied to public audits linked to public support] (Gronn, 2003, p.150).

It was noted above that Ogawa and Bossert (1995) assert that leadership should be conceived of as an organizational quality. They suggest that this perspective allows us to reconsider our fundamental assumptions about leadership from a vantage point informed by organizational insights, particularly the role of social interaction. This idea of leadership as an organizational quality has had a dramatic impact on educational leadership studies (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Our next step must be to take this idea further and recognize leadership as the primary organizing force within organizations; for that matter, within human social interaction.

Leadership, conceived of as *emergent reciprocal influence*, is the means by which the abstract notion of agency is translated into organizational structures and social institutions that shape our behavior, both individually and collectively. There are, no doubt, elements of human agency which transcend society and culture. Yet, with the exception of your occasional feral nomad, we all live and act within socio-cultural contexts. These contexts shape, or structure, our individual and collective actions which, in turn, reproduce or transform said contexts.

Distributed leadership assumes the active participation of all members of the organization, rather than casting the majority as masses that must be led to the trough of

productivity. All members are involved in creating the conditions for organizational success; for shaping the contexts within which they live and work. All lead for good or for ill. Formal leaders have the responsibility of facilitating the leadership efforts of the rank and file, and for cultivating organizational conditions that support positive leadership. Members that do not possess formal positions of leadership must be aware of the daily and moment-to-moment power to influence that is indeed in their grasp. The examination of the literature over the past three chapters indicates that in collaborative contexts the singular power of the individual can be *enhanced*, or *emancipated*, through collective efforts at creativity. Alternatively it can be *constrained* by remote management strategies aimed at generating standardized performance outputs. A team can thus be either a *crucible of innovation*, or a 21st century version of Weber's *iron cage*. This study reveals how tempered versions of each scenario have evolved at one school; a school where two very different teams have taken two very different trajectories. Chapter Four presents the research design, setting, and methods for this study. Chapters Five and Six relate the findings, and Chapter Seven synthesizes the many strands of the dissertation and discusses the implications of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Behind the Curtain

Attempts to explore factors determining the *emergence* of leadership in groups have been singularly unsuccessful... Emergence as leader cannot yet be fully explained by personality attributes, or by abilities, or by ratios of these to the needs of the group, although all of these are significant. The final determiners of the rise to leadership remain somewhat of a mystery (Gibb, 1954, p.912).

Many scholars now use the term *emergence* to refer to complex systems which have this property that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In the terminology of these scholars, a creative group is a complex dynamical system, with a high degree of sensitivity to initial conditions and rapidly expanding combinatoric possibilities from moment to moment (Sawyer, 1999). As in many complex systems, the global behavior of the entire system is said to emerge from the interactions among the individual parts of the system, and is thus at a higher level of analysis than the parts – the performers (Sawyer, 2003; p.12).

This qualitative inquiry begins with an examination of the constitution of leadership within the interaction of two teacher teams at one high-school. It then goes on to situate that activity within the broader organizational context of school-wide leadership efforts. I then link these findings to macro-social forces of change in business management, the politics of education, and the general conditions of the labor of teachers. This is a study of both how leadership arises, and the distribution of leadership activity throughout one school. A qualitative case study design has been chosen in order to best explore the specific research questions that prompted this inquiry. Following a discussion of the research design and processes that will inform my findings and conclusions, I will describe the research setting; the two teams, the school, the district and the community. This section will conclude with a presentation of the multi-paradigmatic qualitative

perspective that guides this research; specifically a mixed approach which combines elements of grounded theory with the more structured methods of discourse analysis.

Research Design

A Modified Case Study Approach

The basic case study approach has been identified as an essential tool in the development of the social sciences (Yin, 1994). For Orum, Feagin, and Sjoberg (1991) a case study is,

an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single local phenomenon. The study is conducted in great detail and often relies on the use of several data sources... The case study is usually seen as an instance of a broader phenomenon, as part of a larger set of parallel instances (p.2).

A case study approach was the appropriate tool to answer the research questions of this study. The focus is on the activity of groups of teachers in one school, and how that activity is related to the idea of leadership within that organization. This is not a unique phenomenon. As demonstrated in the literature review, teacher teams have been a popular leadership tool for some time in many schools. According to the definitional criteria stated above, one schools' experiences with the use of teacher teams constitutes a specific instance of a larger manifestation of a similar phenomenon.

The singularity of localized cultural experiences dictates, however, that data are collected which will capture the contextual variation of common phenomena. Case studies offer an analytical tool to document this variation (Yin, 1994). Findings based upon one local case may be generalized and applied to other cases; then refined as necessary in light of subsequent local variation. This is consistent with the theoretical

sampling strategies of the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach to qualitative research.

The distinguishing characteristics of case study research (Orum et al., 1991) fit the complex multi-dimensional research questions that have prompted this study, as well as the choice to employ the methods of discourse and conversation analysis. A case study,

1. permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action and social structures in natural settings studied at close hand
2. provides information from a number of sources and over a period of time, thus permitting a more holistic study of complex social networks and of complexes of social action and social meanings
3. can furnish the dimensions of time and history to the study of social life, thereby enabling the investigator to examine continuity and change in lifeworld patterns
4. encourages and facilitates, in practice, theoretical innovation and generalization (p.6-7).

This study's findings and conclusions will be explored and presented in accordance with these features of case study research.

Conclusions about the relationship of teacher activity to leadership, and the role of the broader organization in this activity, are grounded in the *in situ* experiences of the participants. Team meetings are observed over time with a naturalistic *fly-on-the-wall* approach that captures the real-time activity of teachers with minimal researcher intervention. The meetings are then analyzed using techniques that emphasize the derivation of emergent meaning from the data.

These data are then complemented with alternative sources of information. Interviews are conducted with the principal, individual teachers, and focus groups of teachers to glean their personal understandings and interpretations of the phenomenon of teacher collaboration. These interviews (see appendices for interview protocols) are

open-ended and semi-structured to allow as naturalistic a “conversation” as possible, rather than a guided interrogation. Documents from the school and the teams constitute a third form of data, thus facilitating the triangulation of findings from multiple data streams.

A strong temporal component is built into this case study. This allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the growth and development of the phenomenon of teacher collaboration over a period of time. Data on the team meetings themselves were collected over the period of a 5 month semester in the spring of 2003; transcripts of these data have been analyzed following data collection; interviews are being conducted in 2004 and 2005; and documents are being collected from the beginning of the study in January of 2003 through the winter of 2005. Stretching the study out in this fashion allows the researcher to analyze the initial data from the team meetings, then to go into the interviewing and focus group phase with data to share with the study participants. The triangulation of data over this span of time facilitates a more detailed understanding of the relationship between different elements of the organization, and the complex cultural forces which influence leadership in this school.

In Burawoy’s (1998) discussion of the *extended case* method he calls for an *extension* of the analytical process beyond the realm of mere situational description and explanation; an extension into theoretical domains that would encompass process and forces as well as situation. This call strikes a chord similar to Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) call for the generation of theory at both substantive and formal levels. I suggest that Burawoy’s idea of *process*, “the aggregation of situational knowledge into social process,” (p.15) complements the conception of substantive theory suggested by Glaser

and Strauss. When the researcher is able to transcend the particularities of situation he or she is able to conceptualize factors that have generalized explanatory power for the social domain in question; for instance the domain of collaboration within organizations.

Forces, alternatively, represent a yet further level of abstraction away from the specific empirical situation. Burawoy identified forces as “the effects of social processes that for the most part lie outside the realm of investigation” (p.15). A researcher that reaches this level of conceptualization has tapped into theoretical concerns that transcend the local, thereby offering potential for the development of formal theory that can be applied to social domains other than the one originally under investigation. Each analytical step – situation – process – and forces – leads to conceptualization with greater theoretical power.

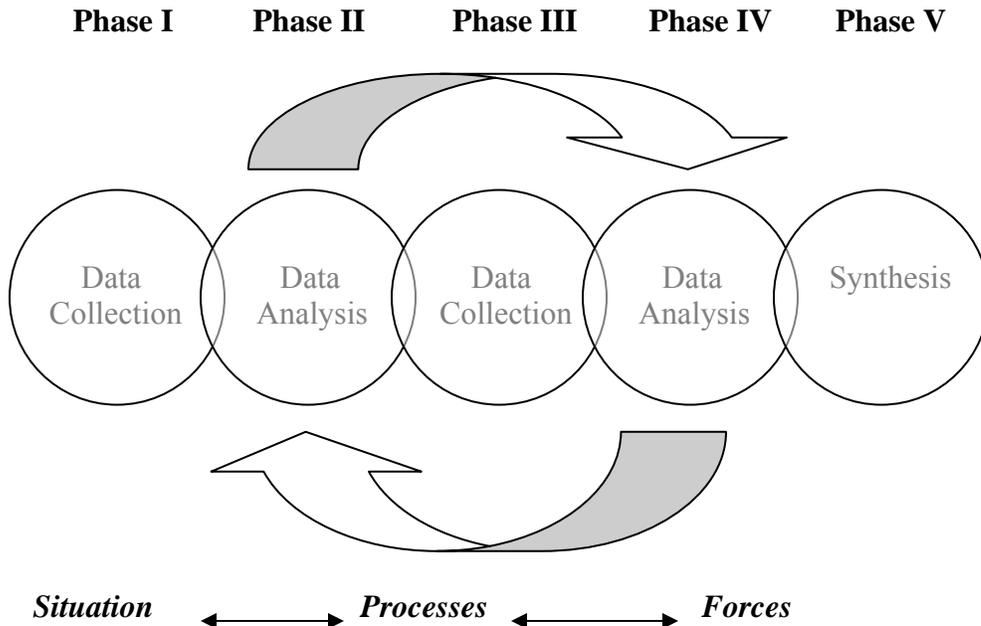
I refer to this process as *outward-mapping*. I start with the local, grounding my concepts in specific empirical data, then progressively map outward from the level of the team to the organization – all the while maintaining clear conceptual links to the primary situational data. By incorporating facets of Burawoy’s (1998) extended case perspective into this research design the power of the basic case study approach is enhanced; it is *extended*. It would not be appropriate to formally refer to this study as an extended case in Burawoy’s sense of the term, because his model calls for lengthy immersion (daily, for years at a time) of the researcher in the environment of the participants for the purposes of conducting a comprehensive ethnography. I have not done this. However, the particular modification of the basic case study strategy that I have described will facilitate theoretical development.

Research Stages

This research study encompasses an iterative process consisting of data collection, analysis, integration and presentation. Figure 4 (next page) represents these project phases, the reciprocal relationship of both stages of data analysis, as well as the directionality of the conceptual stream from situation to processes to forces. This latter aspect of the graphic refers to the outward-mapping, or case study extension, discussed above. Each stage of the research process is designed to add greater theoretical depth to my findings. In different stages of analysis different qualitative strategies took precedence. This differentiation of analytical methods is made explicit below. The analytic strategies themselves are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Please note that Figure 4 is a linear representation of an iterative process. Qualitative research is not a linear activity. Design, data collection, and data analysis are all in constant interaction with one another, particularly collection and analysis. It is useful and necessary, however, to discuss these aspects of the research as distinct entities for purposes of explication, transparency, and to grant readers a greater capacity for independent evaluation of the research.

Phase I. Phase I was the stage of initial data collection and processing. This phase of research was completed as a part of study initiated by Scribner and Sawyer (Scribner *et al.*, Under review). This author worked as a graduate research assistant with the principal investigators in the earlier study. Observational data was originally collected by Scribner, and analyzed by Scribner, et al. as indicated above. Following the initial study this author has worked alone, under the supervision of Scribner and Sawyer (the author's doctoral advisor and outside reader, respectively).

Figure 4. *Research phases*



During Phase I, the case study site was chosen, participants were recruited and the two teacher teams were identified, team meetings were videotaped and transcribed, and copies of relevant team documents (e.g. minutes of meetings) were collected. One professional learning team (PLT), the U.S. Studies, or Instructional PLT (I-PLT), had a curricular focus for two subject areas that teach a block class together. The other, the Student Support PLT, or Building-wide PLT (B-PLT), consisted of teachers and other staff involved with supportive intervention programs for struggling students.

The teacher teams were observed from January through May of 2003. A total of eight meetings were observed for the Instructional PLT. The Student Support PLT was observed ten times. Meetings were video-taped with 8mm video, and then converted to MPEG digital video files. Transanna video analysis software was used for the transcription of select videos. A sample of meetings was transcribed in full. Once coding

saturation of these data was perceived, the remainders were reviewed for spot transcription of useful segments, or potentially new themes. All data were examined, repeatedly, and coded (see Appendix C for a copy of the manual coding data entry form I developed for coding videos) in subsequent research phases, even if not transcribed. Initial work on video conversion and the transcription of observations took place between September and December of 2004, but also continued through later phases.

Phase II. Phase II represents the first stage of data analysis of the material collected in Phase I. The level of analysis is the conversation of the group, using language as an artifact of collaborative interaction (Sawyer, Scribner, Watson, & Myers, 2005). Analysis began in January of 2004 and, given the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry, has continued until the final day of editing this dissertation. In this sense Phases II and IV essentially represent a continuous thread of data analysis woven throughout the entire research process. The apparently linear progression of research phases is ultimately a heuristic tool for describing an intrinsically iterative developmental process. Three different analytical techniques were used to study the data.

Coding procedures consistent with the techniques of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were used to identify emergent patterns and themes. Speech act theory (Searle, 1969) was imported from literature on discourse analysis to provide a selective coding scheme for unpacking the functional relationships of different utterances in the team conversations. Conversation analysis was used to identify key interactional routines that influence the emergence and enactment of leadership. NVIVO software for qualitative data analysis was used to organize and process the data for coding. Results of

this analysis are used to generate theoretical constructs to identify the forces which influence the internal processes of the teams.

Phase III. This phase was a secondary stage of data collection and processing with a focus on interviews of individuals and focus groups. The level of analysis expands at this point to include broader organizational forces, as well as the individual team members of each group. Interview data serve two functions. First, it provides additional information on participant perceptions and views on the use of professional learning teams in the school. Secondly, it offers the author the opportunity of “member checking”; of sharing research findings with participants to determine if such findings are consistent with their own understandings of their organizational lifeworld. This sharing fulfills several needs. It fills an ethical need of the researcher to “give back” to the participants so they can learn and benefit from the research process. It may allow the researcher to gain additional insights from participants, for them to reveal new, or more complex, understandings of the data that the researcher missed. Sharing may also reveal that participants may not agree with findings that are readily evident in the data; in itself a significant observation for the researcher to make.

Phase II findings were reevaluated and revised based upon the Phase III data collection. Each phase of data analysis (Phases II & IV) influences the other. Data collection in Phase III consisted of semi-structured interviews with the principal and team members (see Appendices A & B) collected between January and May of 2005. Focus group interviews using the same questions as for individual teachers were conducted with all of the members of the Instructional PLT, and a portion of the members of the Student Support PLT. Given that the Student Support PLT has a designated leader who serves in

a pseudo-administrative capacity, an individual interview was done with this staff member.

Additional documentation relevant to the two teams and to the use of PLTs in the school was also collected; notably, end of the year status reports for each team from 2003 and 2004. Each interview is fully transcribed. In the focus groups I shared examples of some of my preliminary findings as a member checking activity. Feedback was incorporated into my analysis of the data and served as a catalyst for further reflection on my own understandings.

Phases IV & V. Phase IV occurred contemporaneous to Phase III. This second phase of data analysis involved coding the transcripts and documents collected during Phase III; once again identifying common patterns and themes through coding techniques associated with grounded theory. These data documents were added to the existing NVIVO project created during Phase II. A technical platform such as NVIVO facilitates the synthesis of discrete sets of analysis and documents into a new unified whole. Thus I was able to compare findings from the interview and document analysis with the findings from studying the team meetings. Key points of linkage and overlap were identified, subtle nuances were probed, and new understandings of each set of data were obtained. Phase V, the final write-up and synthesis follows, in the form of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven of this dissertation.

The Case Study Setting

The Teams

The primary level of analysis for this study is the interaction of two different teacher teams at Palatine High School (school, district, and staff names are all

pseudonyms in this report). In this school such teams are referred to as Professional Learning Teams (PLTs). The teams were selected in consultation with the school principal. No formal administrators sat on either team. The two teams differed in the nature of their composition and mission. One was a school improvement committee organized around a particular school program, while the other was a standing team dedicated to specific instructional issues.

The first PLT was referred to as the Student Support Committee (henceforth called the Student Support PLT in this study). This team was composed of the school social worker and faculty from different departments who were all involved with the school's intensive tutoring program. Within the program these faculty were known as *advisors*; their role being to supervise remedial study halls and to offer tutoring assistance and guidance to struggling students. This team was thus composed of school personnel intimately involved with the operations of the program in question. Their mission was to develop suggestions for improving the intensive tutoring program. The team leader served on the school's Executive Council; ostensibly representing the team's interests with this governance structure.

The second team was known as the U.S. Studies Team (henceforth referred to as the Instructional PLT in this study). The team consisted of teachers from both the Language Arts department and the Social Studies department. This group of teachers team-teach different sections of an U.S. Studies/English block class together. The mission of the team was to meet and develop instructional and assessment materials for their classes. Once again, the team is made up of individuals with direct professional experience with the topic in question.

The School: “We will collaborate to promote student achievement”

Palatine High School is a large public secondary school located in a mid-sized community in the heartland of the United States. Palatine High serves grades 10-12, which is consistent with the overall building/grade structure of the district. Total student enrollment hovers between 1,200 and 1,500 students. Palatine High maintains a ratio of 27 students to each classroom teacher in the building. Data for the 2002-2003 school year indicate that 84.1% of the students were white, 9.7% were black, 3.7% were Asian, 2.0% were Hispanic, and 0.4 % were Indian (Eastern). The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch is slightly under 10 percent. The overall school dropout rate was just under 4% in 2003, and had been around that figure for the past several years following a higher mark of over 7% in 2000. Somewhat over 18% of the students are enrolled in advanced placement programs. In 2003 over 92% of the school’s graduates entered either a 4 or 2 year college or university.

As discussed in chapter two, Palatine High adheres to elements of the Coalition of Essential Schools program and expresses commitment to The Ten Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES, 2004). On the website for Palatine High School these Ten Principles are included, as are locally-developed guidelines such as the school mission, vision, and common commitments of faculty and staff. Of the six common commitments identified, the final one is of key interest to this study; “We will collaborate to promote student achievement.” This principle represents visible and public evidence of the organization’s commitment to pursuing collaboration in the interest of student success. In fact this is even more strongly emphasized in the district’s official slogan posted on its student handbooks, “Teaming Together for Excellence.”

The District and the Community

Palatine High is one of three high schools that serve a district of over 15,000 students. Forum Heights Public Schools is one of the larger districts in the state aside from the large urban and suburban districts. District administration frequently point to these metropolitan counterparts as their peers and “competitors” rather than other mid-sized or rural districts. There is a running tension in the school district to keep up with the urban and suburban districts in regard to teacher salaries, physical infrastructure, and educational programs. Forum Heights is within easy driving distance of the state capitol, and thus retains a strong relationship with both members of the legislature and the state department of education. Many administrators from the district go on to positions in the state department of education and/or state professional organizations based in the capitol. As a community, Forum Heights is very much an education town. A large campus of the state university system is based there, as are two private 4-year institutions. The large school district and the university and college presence create a climate where education is a frequent topic of discussion, and just about everybody knows an educator. Census data from 2000 indicate that Forum Heights had a population of over 84,000. The city is dependent upon the university, colleges, and public schools for a great deal of its employment.

Methods: Trying to Answer Ambiguous Questions

The study of society can only be as stable as the self-interpretations of the individuals studied... (The natural sciences) do not have a corresponding problem because their objects of study are not self-interpreting entities: they do not talk back.

Bent Flyvbjerg (2001;,p.33)

Only a fool looks for logic in the chambers of the human heart.

O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000)

I approach this research from multiple qualitative paradigms, specifically the methodological perspectives associated with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and with *interaction analysis* (Sawyer, in press). The structured and normative elements sometimes characteristic of DA may appear to be incompatible with the highly contextual approach of grounded theory. This does not have to be the case, as I shall demonstrate. I borrow from multiple methodological approaches in order to assemble a multi-paradigmatic lens for examining language and communication as artifacts of the activity of team collaboration, as well as to examine the organizational conditions surrounding this activity.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a model of science that does not obsess about detachment from the subject to the extent we see in quantitative research. Quantitative science treasures objectivity, or the detachment of the researcher from the world of the subject. Qualitative research frequently thrives upon the involvement of the researcher with the subject; sometimes physically, but always analytically. The quantitative researcher uses statistical models to mediate his or her influence on the data. The qualitative scientist employs means of systematic abstraction to describe and explain social activity.

Qualitative research *is* a subjective enterprise, but one that can be complemented by rigorous and systematic processes of conceptual generation.

Ethnography, or the in-depth study of the life and behavior of a group of people, is a type of qualitative research that is commonly associated with the use of case studies. In these studies a specific group, or category, of people are observed in detail over time.

Research participants are observed in naturalistic settings while engaged in the behavior of their daily lives. My study incorporates elements of ethnographic analysis. The primary data are collected by observing and videotaping the professional interactions of teachers. The scope of the study is limited however; so the thick description so common to ethnography is not a part of my research. I do not attempt to document *everything* about the moment, just that which appears to be relevant to my purpose. A nice thing about having your observations on videotape, however, is that you can always go back and look for something else later.

Choosing what type of data you will collect, and how you will collect it, is just one part of the research process. The methods and paradigms of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) offer a unified system for generating theory using either qualitative or quantitative forms of data. This perspective on research assumes a constant reflexive relationship between the researcher and the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It offers a systematic and rigorous template for conducting social science research.

Grounded Theory

To generate theory... we suggest as the best approach an initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data of social research. Then one can be relatively sure that the theory will fit and work. And since the categories are discovered by examination of the data, laymen involved in the area to which the theory applies will usually be able to understand it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; p.3-4).

I have conceptualized and designed this research endeavor under the influence of many of the principles of grounded theory as articulated in *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This benchmark work, as well as further iterations of the research perspective (Strauss, 1987; Strauss &

Corbin, 1990) lays a methodological foundation for systematically planned and executed social science research; but of course the details and follow-through are left up to the individual researcher(s). Employing my own discretion, I take elements of the perspective and methods of grounded theory and incorporate them with other methodologies that offer more structured means of investigating social data. One of these methods, conversation analysis, prescribes a paradigmatic vision known as the *conversation analytic mentality* (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) which is highly complementary to grounded theory.

Grounded theory is a theoretically complex methodology. As such, there are many elements that I could discuss in presenting it. I will focus on covering a few central aspects of grounded theory that most inform my approach to this research study; 1) comparative analysis; 2) theory; 3) conceptual categories and properties; and 4) coding strategies. Sampling strategies informed by grounded theory will be discussed later in the chapter in the section on research design.

Comparative Analysis. Comparative analysis is a method applicable to social units of any size, including individuals or small groups – such as teacher teams. The end goal of comparative analysis is to generate conceptual categories and properties derived from *in situ* data. Categories and properties are discussed below. Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasize that concepts generated by comparative analysis stand apart from the data, or the facts, which spawned them,

in generating theory it is not the fact upon which we stand, but the *conceptual category* (or a *conceptual property* of the category) that was generated from it. A concept may be generated from one fact, which then becomes merely one of a universe of many possible diverse indicators for, and data on, the concept. These indicators are then sought for the comparative analysis (p.23).

The basic process of comparative analysis is to constantly compare data back and forth between sources while looking for patterns and themes. These patterns and themes are based upon the researcher's relation of particular *incidents* to one another. The particular facts from one source do not create theory, but rather support the generation of abstract concepts when they are combined and compared to data from other sources within the study. The researcher's task is to develop an understanding of the relationship of incidents across the data. Conceptual abstraction via constant comparison is the mode of theory generation in comparative analysis. This is an ongoing process with no finite endpoints. There is "a high emphasis on *theory as process*; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product" (p.32).

Theory. Social scientists have struggled with the idea of theory. Some suffer from serious *theory envy* of the natural, applied, and hard sciences. The philosopher Richard Bernstein calls this "Cartesian anxiety", or the "fear of ending in relativism and nihilism when one departs from the analytical-rational scientific tradition that has dominated Western science" (cited in Flyvbjerg, 2001). Natural science research relies upon a tradition of accumulating knowledge by building upon universalist theories offering explanatory and predictive power. In response to this contrast, Flyvbjerg suggests that social science may be best characterized as a *pre-paradigmatic* science, one based upon an accumulation of fractured and disjointed *discourses*, rather than natural laws and principles. Theory, within social science, reflects the implicit uncertainty of human behavior.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to theory as "a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining" (p.3).

Notice that prediction is not a part of this definition. This is the key axis on which the idea of theory in social science research differs from theory in natural science (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Many social science researchers, particularly those who employ quantitative methods seek to overcome this perceived shortcoming by importing the tools of technological scientific inquiry. Qualitative researchers appear to be more comfortable with breaking new ground and operating in a less deterministic paradigmatic landscape.

One of the key principles behind the development of the grounded theory approach was a perception that too much emphasis was being placed upon the verification of existing theory, and not enough on the generation of new theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) believed that this propensity limited the growth and development of social science, particularly sociology; leading to conceptual stagnation and the premature reification of existing theories. Accordingly, one of the primary postulates of grounded theory is the need to constantly generate new theory; working with and verifying extant theory is a necessary part of this process, but generation is the central focus. Snow, Morrill, and Anderson (2003) add that the extension of theory to new contexts and its refinement with more details are as important as discovery/generation. By employing the techniques of grounded theory I hope to generate novel conceptual categories and relationships that will facilitate a more complex understanding of collaborative leadership activity. Alternatively, the use of discourse analysis offers the opportunity to extend and refine extant social interaction theory by applying it in new contexts, and interpreting it through the lens of distributed leadership.

Categories and Properties. The products of comparative analysis, the building blocks of theory, are categories and properties. Both terms refer to abstract conceptual

constructs. Properties are conceptual elements of the broader conceptual units of categories. When researchers take the next step of interpreting the relationships between these conceptual units, they are then on the path to being able to make theoretical generalizations. As stated earlier, when discussing comparative analysis, these conceptual units have a life independent of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They arise from the data, they are the product of the researcher's interrogation of the data, but they constitute abstract entities with their own existence. Categories and properties are developed by the researcher during the comparative process as he or she becomes immersed in the data. The analyst applies labels to perceived patterns, themes, similarities, regularities, and discontinuities which are present in the data. A variety of coding strategies facilitate the generation of these conceptual units.

Coding Strategies. Coding is a process used to systematically analyze data in qualitative research. Two of the key types of coding are open and axial. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990),

open coding is like beginning to work on a puzzle. You have to get organized; to sort out the pieces by the color, which sometimes includes noting minute differences in shading; so as later bit by bit to put the pieces together (p.204).

When performing open coding the researcher attempts to keep his or her mind as open as possible to new ideas, to approach the data in an impressionistic way, and to gain multiple levels of understanding and interpretation. Data will be looked at successively, with a slightly different focus applied each time – based upon the categories and properties that have already emerged. In open coding the researcher writes down anything and everything (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw., 1995). One never knows what idea may become relevant later on. As coding proceeds it is helpful for the analyst to maintain

working memos of their ideas about the data. Interpretation is not a compartmentalized element of the research process. It is ongoing and will occur simultaneously with analysis as coding unfolds. The researcher should write down all their ideas about the data. These memos then become data which can also be coded.

There are as many different ways to *do* coding as there are researchers. Some prefer to use note cards, others to write directly on the data, while still others like to use complex data analysis software. When done by hand, some workers prefer colored pens or markers, while others insist on preserving a margin along the side of every page of notes or transcript so as to write down coding memos. For my part I use a combination of hand coding and qualitative data analysis software.

The second form of coding to discuss is known as axial, or focused (Emerson, et al., 1995), coding. I will be making reference to axial coding shortly, when I discuss the use of speech act analysis in this research study. Axial coding is where Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest the puzzle pieces begin to fit together. Axial coding is used to verify and enhance perceived relationships between conceptual categories and properties. Codes that have already been established are looked for throughout the data to identify loci of occurrence and articulation to other conceptual elements. Data are subjected “to fine-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest (Emerson, et al., 1995).

The grounded theory emphasis on constant comparative analysis offers a powerful framework for qualitative research. The paradigm’s focus on theory generation as the desired product of research drives analysts to think about social data in new ways. The generation of conceptual categories and properties grounded in real social data builds a

bridge between the experiences of participants and the abstract theorizing of researchers. Coding strategies offer systematic and rigorous tools for abstracting theory from data, and also allow for meticulous documentation of the research process. The perspectives and techniques of grounded theory are a central influence on my approach to this research. It is also important, however, to move beyond the ideals of grounded theory and to engage in the process of extending and refining extant theory – when applicable. With this final point in mind, I apply the sometimes structured analytical tools of discourse analysis alongside the techniques of grounded theory. My objective is to synthesize multiple research paradigms in the hope of enhancing the analytical power of each.

Interaction Analysis: A Flexible Toolkit for Unpacking Talk

The analytical tools associated with *interaction analysis* (Sawyer, in press) complement both the nature of the data collected for this study and the distributed perspective on leadership that constitutes its primary conceptual lens. Naturally-occurring discourse and conversation is the primary object of study for interaction researchers. By discourse, I refer to the overall trends and patterns of verbal interaction characteristic of social activity; in this case within the teacher teams. *Speech act analysis* and *conversation analysis* are two different approaches that promise utility in examining teacher team interactions for evidence of leadership activity. There is some disagreement within the literature regarding which term – *discourse analysis* or *conversation analysis* – is the more inclusive term for these types of methods. Following Sawyer, I will use the term interaction analysis. I will therefore use *interaction analysis* as an umbrella term under which speech act analysis, conversation analysis, and other methodological strands of looking at talk-in-interaction are encompassed.

Interaction analysis has seen limited use in educational research. Past work has applied it primarily to situations of classroom learning and student interactions. My work is an extension of the efforts of Scribner, et al. (2004) and Sawyer, et al. (2005) to apply these methods to the study of educational leadership and policy. Some of Sawyer's (in press) innovative applications of conversation analysis and cognitive theory to education, and other arenas of collaborative activity, have been reviewed in Chapter Three. Corson (1995b) broke new ground in the application of discourse studies to education with an edited collection of works on such a research approach, yet this work has had limited impact in the United States. I hope that work such as this study, and research, contributes to wider application of interactional methods.

One reason I believe that these methods have been under-used is a lack of conceptual development within the methodologies. Paradigmatic idiosyncrasies related to the nature of grounded discovery have contributed to a minimalist corpus of specific methods. This is a conscious effort to limit the normative dimensions of the approach. Interaction analysis is much more a perspective than a set of discrete methods. A tangential objective of this study is to formulate specific methodological concepts, grounded in the data, which can be applied to new research situations – to generate theory. As shall be shown there *are* specific concepts that are repeatedly utilized by conversation researchers, however paradigmatic doctrine has generally precluded such concepts from reaching the status of *preferred methods*. In the following discussion of discourse analysis I will borrow heavily from the work of Sawyer, et al. (2005). In this work we made the case for extending the use of interaction analysis to the study of

leadership, and offered specific examples of methodological tools that can be replicated in leadership studies that include conversational data.

Speech Act Analysis

A taxonomy, or classification system, of speech acts is offered in Searle's (1969) benchmark article exploring the function of utterances. This taxonomy consists of five categories of utterances (see Table 1) which encompass most sentence-level acts of speech. A speech act, or an utterance, is a discrete functional statement made by a single speaker. This system of classification offers a useful instrument that can be imported into a qualitative study of social interaction.

Table 1. *Taxonomy of speech acts* (based upon Searle, 1969).

Speech act	Function
<i>Representative</i>	To convey information about the world to others
<i>Expressive</i>	To express the inner state of being of the speaker
<i>Directive</i>	To get a hearer to perform a particular action
<i>Commissive</i>	To commit the speaker to a specific course of action or behavior
<i>Declaration</i>	To formally initiate a specific change in a state of affairs

In our previous work (Scribner et al., 2004) we applied categories of speech acts as axial codes for the analysis of data. Such a decision is a transgression of the *grounded* part in grounded theory, but represented our decision that extant theory was going to be very applicable to the analysis of this data. Transcripts or audio-visual recordings of participant interactions are particularly well-suited for such an application of the speech

act concept. Used as axial codes, speech act categories allow the researcher to classify each discrete utterance of a speaker in terms of its functional relevance. When aggregated into *speech act arrays*, the sequence of speech acts can reveal distinct patterns of interaction. This integration of speech act categories into my coding scheme represents a deviation from the principles of grounded theory, yet is representative of the multi-paradigmatic research approach of my study.

Our analysis (Scribner et al., 2004) revealed two distinct patterns of general discourse; *passive discourse* and *active discourse*. We associated passive discourse with interactional patterns which resulted in less effective team collaboration. Active discourse, on the other hand, was associated with more effective collaboration. We might have been able to reach the same conclusions using a purely grounded approach, but there would have been a degree of “rediscovering the wheel” involved; hence the choice to blend grounded theory techniques with existing theory from discourse analysis. In this study I use speech act analysis in a similar fashion with the intention of deepening our understanding of these previously identified patterns of discourse, as well as identifying additional patterns that may be present. I extend this previous work by using interaction analysis to look for routines that are constitutive of leadership practice. In addition I connect these findings of team interaction and organizational conditions to the broader socio-political and economic context of teachers’ work.

Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis is a form of interaction analysis that emerged out of the need for better methods to examine the nature of talk-in-interaction (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Speech act analysis, for instance, has serious limits on how much it can say about

the influence of one utterance upon another. It is a useful heuristic for labeling utterances in isolation from one another, but it lacks the dimensionality to account for the dynamic influence of one speaker's statement upon another. It has a formal normative quality that strains against the sensibilities of a puritanical grounded theorist. Conversation analysis, alternatively, is intrinsically grounded in the data. Four characteristic features (Drew & Heritage, 1992) of conversation analysis are:

1. a focus on activity as a unit of analysis
2. the study of interactional sequences
3. a multidimensional conception of context
4. comparative analysis

There are no prescribed methods or formulae for conducting conversation analysis (Wooffitt, 2001), yet there are some basic recurring conversational structures that may serve as tools for illustrating the analytical approach. The persistent reference to particular types of conversational structures in the literature reveals an inner tension within this analytical approach between normative concept application and empirical concept generation. Theory-confirming and theory-generating strands of inquiry are both present in the literature, yet the primary methodological goal is theory generation via naturalistic qualitative research (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Psathas, 1995). Conversation researchers appear to try to balance this tension, violating the "rules" of grounded theory in the process. This drive for balance influences my own methodological approach; a multi-paradigmatic approach. Decades of work in conversation analysis have resulted in a number of conventional structures that many researchers use in their analyses despite the oft touted goal of grounded theory generation. The *adjacency pair* is the most common example.

The concept of adjacency pairs was first developed by Sacks (1992) in the 1960's and appears in many introductory texts on conversation analysis (Cameron, 2001; Johnstone, 2002; Psathas, 1995; Wooffitt, 2001). Heritage (1984) describes an adjacency pair as a two utterance sequence with the following characteristics: 1) adjacency; 2) multiple speakers; 3) consisting of a first part, or turn, and a second part; 4) typed, such that the first part needs a specific second part to be complete. The following example from Sawyer, et al. (2005) demonstrates the basic form of the adjacency pair; a paired set of turns that are mutually dependent upon one another.

Example 1. A greeting adjacency pair.

Speaker 1: How are you this morning?

Speaker 2: Fine, and how about yourself?

Another conversational structure that is common to the toolkit of conversation researchers is the interactional routine. Such routines, or culturally specific patterns of interaction, are helpful for interpreting more complex social phenomena; leadership for example. Longer stretches of conversational routines can reveal patterns that constitute more complex social activity. In group settings, these routines represent shared norms and practices for enacting such social activity. A routine that my colleagues and I identified in our previous work (Sawyer et al., 2005) was one we called *crafting*. I include a full example of this routine below. The identification of such routines will be a critical task of the analytical phases of this research project.

Example 2. Interactional routine: Crafting. (Note: Speaker 1 is the team leader.)

<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
Identify the problem	1	Anyway, OK. Well, I looked at this and kind of thought, and I talked to Betty at lunch to kinda get their ideas about it, umm, so the one thing I thought would be good, is if we could organize it so it's like, what they need to have in each, like an intro and a body and a conclusion. Like you kinda do that cause you said you'll conclude...
Suggest solution		
Encouragement to continue	2	um hmm
Justification	1	...you know, this is really the body, but I thought it needed to be really clear in the beginning that they need to identify what they think the identity is... How did it progress, I guess, over the course of the century, so that they are not just saying "Here's an example of my identity again", like, cause, I don't think that, that's not very thoughtful. How did it shift and change throughout the 20 th century? And if they don't think there is an identity, then they would have to show evidence of that.
Identify potential flaw	3	What if they think there is an identity but it doesn't change?
Elaboration in response	1	Then they would have to show how it's been reinforced throughout each time period.
	3	OK
Alternate proposal	4	Or I like <i>evolve</i> , that shows kind of a, a, cause effect, right?
Retrospective interpretation	1	But what he's saying is that if it, it could have stayed strong at the beginning and strong at the end...
Accept and elaborate	3	I think you could argue either one.
Accept and elaborate	5	You can say that it is still evolved, you can say that it's still strong, but it's still in every decade... that's evolved in

		some way, either further evolved or change evolve, you know what I mean?
Collective agreement	Multiple speakers	uh-huh

This example demonstrates how each successive turn of conversation is related to what comes before and after, how meaning and function become fluid details contingent upon the social context of talk, and how a string of related conversational turns unite to constitute social activity. I will explain the subtle nuances of such routines, including the one illustrated above, in much greater detail in the next chapter.

Limitations of the Study

Perhaps the most significant limitation of this study is the absence of *diversity* as a key component of analysis. By diversity I am referring to the differences among organizational members associated with gender, race, age, ethnicity, professional experience, and additional personal characteristics. I readily acknowledge that diversity is not an element of my conceptual framework, nor does it directly influence my choice of methods; although these methods do not preclude the recognition of diversity as an interactional factor. Discourse researchers have documented the influence of diversity on language and interaction (Cameron, 2001; Labov, 1972; Silverstein, 1985; Tannen, 1994). I feel, however, that if I attempted to account for these factors in this research that the study would be too broad, and that I would lose the depth which I hope to gain in probing the relationship between interaction and leadership. My level of analysis is the group as a whole, rather than the individuals within that group. The rationale for this has been made explicit in Chapter Three in my discussion of agency. For the purposes of this

particular study conversation stands on its own as the primary artifact under analysis at the group level.

In future work with these data, however, I intend to pursue a line of inquiry related to diversity. Follow-up to this study should include the collection and analysis of comparative data from other types of schools in different types of school districts, and further exploration of the factors that influence group interaction; particularly diversity. This work attempts to establish some baselines for understanding how group interaction influences leadership activity in schools. Many factors influence collaborative interaction, hence the difficulty in using experimental methods to pursue this type of research (Sawyer, in press). I have chosen to focus this study on organizational factors, such as structural constraints on collaboration. I have also chosen to focus on conversation. Verbal exchanges are only one method of social interaction. Non-verbal interaction, such as body language and facial expression, are other aspects of group dynamics that could be examined in relation to leadership.

Role of the Researcher

At the time this dissertation is written, I am a thirty-seven year old white male doctoral candidate. I am of Celtic descent and come from working class origins. I am the first member of my family line to earn a graduate degree. I am a student at the University of Missouri – Columbia in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis planning a career as a faculty member in educational studies, and in performing independent consultancy work in the areas of school leadership and policy evaluation. I have been appointed Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Central Connecticut State University for the 2005-2006 academic year. In 1999 I received my

M.Ed. in Social Studies education from the University of Missouri, following a brief career in archaeology. From 1999-2002, I taught American history in a junior high school. As a teacher I served on an interdisciplinary instructional team and a school-wide school improvement team, as well as the school's faculty council. My interest in exploring the use of teams in schools began during this time. I have not entered this research with any hidden agenda guiding my work, although I did begin with the assumption that leadership is *everywhere* in organizations – it is up to us to try to understand that in more complex ways. I also operate under the assumption that individual professional autonomy and discretion is a good thing. I am not however an organizational anarchist intent on dismantling and demonizing all forms of administrative control. I balance the view that there is a critical role for administrative regulation and coordination of organizational activities with one that advocates for worker independence in utilizing their personal expertise and judgment.

I consider myself a postmodernist thinker. Poststructuralist conceptions of power, such as those articulated by Foucault (1977) and Flyvbjerg (1991) are strong influences on my research and thinking about leadership (see Watson & Grogan, 2005). Correspondingly, a strong interest in language and subjectivity permeate my approach to understanding human behavior in organizations. Thus it was a natural and not-so-unexpected turn for me to devote my attention to discourse and conversation analysis as means to probe the manifestation of leadership. Qualitative analysis is a natural corollary to my paradigmatic view of reality. I view truth as mutable, and contingent upon observer frame of reference. My primary interest is to gain *understanding* of organizational

contexts through the exploration of the social mechanisms through which members construct both their individual and collective conceptions of reality.

I engage in research with one primary ideological interest informing my work; to help improve schools so all children's lives will be better. I am committed to enabling the personal capacity of each child through systems of universal publicly-funded education, both in the U.S. and abroad. I believe in public education as the most vital institution, either potential or realized, of a culture and that, as a society, we must maximize our support of such institutions. That being said, I am by no means committed to the endless perpetuation of past and existing conventions of public education. Some are effective, others are not. In addition, strong and diverse private educational alternatives must be nurtured and supported. Such alternatives should not threaten public education, but rather strengthen it via an expanded discourse of our social responses to the task of educating our children. Methodologically-sound, relevant and practical research, of both qualitative and quantitative varieties, is one key means of supporting the education of our children, and of determining which aspects of educational institutions need improvement. I hope that my research serves such a purpose.

Summary

This qualitative case study of two teacher teams at a Midwestern high school seeks to enhance our understanding of the emergence of leadership within professional learning teams, and school leadership in general amidst the context of school reform. A multi-paradigmatic qualitative research methodology combining the techniques of grounded theory and methods of interaction analysis is used to study a range of data from multiple sources within this school. A tangential objective of this research is to develop

methodological tools of interaction analysis that can be applied to the study of leadership as a process and product of social activity. The generation of explanatory theory is a goal of this project; however I will attempt to ground my conceptual findings in local empirical data as much as possible. This study shall generate findings of high relevance to researchers of both educational leadership and policy, to educational practitioners, policy makers, and to specialists in the use of discourse and conversation analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Performance

In Chapter Three the two teams and the school that comprise this case study were introduced. They are now examined in more detail in the form of a descriptive ethnography. In this chapter, I begin by describing the general status of school reform at Palatine High, as well as how professional learning teams fit into the organization. I then describe and assess what each team did and accomplished over the course of a semester. Their respective work habits and topics for discussion will be described. The frequency of meetings, length of meetings, and attendance rates of members will be explored. The various roles and positions of the members of each team will also be presented. These details capture the *performance* of collaboration by these two teams. The performance was more likely to be seen and known outside of the team (even officially reported), and to be something that the team members were directly aware of. Findings indicate that *time*, *alignment*, and *governance* are organizational dimensions that framed the essential performance of each team. These themes are threaded throughout my discussion of the team's respective performances as I interpret the membership, attendance, and activities of each group. I provide a model for conceptualizing the relationship of these themes at the end of the chapter.

In the next chapter I relate the more fine-grained findings of my interaction analysis of the teams' collaborative sessions, or what I call the *script* of collaboration. The script was also strongly influenced by organizational factors, but in different ways. I distinguish between these organizational factors as *dimensions* when related to my analysis of performance, and as *conditions* when they arise from my study of interaction; the script. As opposed to the performance, which was a *known* commodity that the team collectively produced, the script was not known. The script is improvised and negotiated by team members on a moment to moment basis, but largely invisible to them. More on that in Chapter Six, first the performance!

The Sanguine Taste of Change

Palatine High School is a reform-minded school. Over the past seven years the current principal has led the school on an ambitious effort of fostering the development of school-wide professional learning community. The school has a history of using teams and collaboration to some degree, but under the leadership of Principal Richard Yates these structures have become a focal point. According to the Principal,

I think it has moved to a new level and continues to move to higher levels with our work with Professional Learning Communities, this Comprehensive School Reform model. Using this model we ask ourselves these questions, and we continue to ask them: What do we expect of our students in terms of academic performance and other behavior and performance? What are we going to do if students don't meet our expectations?

He indicates that finding the answer to the first question must be done collaboratively. He suggests that many schools don't answer either of these questions, and that the CSR model Palatine High is using seeks to answer both through the creation of a culture, and of structures, that support a "systematic organizational response" to the questions.

Professional Development

The Principal explains that the school uses a hybrid approach to developing their approach to reform,

We use aspects of Accelerated Schools. We use aspects of the Coalition of Essential Schools, and other reform models, kind of picking and choosing in this eclectic way the best pieces. But the main organizing tool has been Professional Learning Communities.

This piecemeal approach to school reform has contributed to fractured and inconsistent professional development for teachers. Faculty has received training related to both the Accelerated Schools model and Professional Learning Communities. The latter involved visits to Stephenson High School in the Chicago area, and school-level training from one of Missouri's Regional Professional Development Centers. The latter training was begun, and then terminated before it was finished.

Faculty indicate that the extent of their professional development related to the CSR models was limited to basic descriptive information on what the Professional Learning Community model was about. They received no special training in working in groups or on professional learning teams. An exception to this has been the designated team leaders, some of whom received modest professional development on group facilitation. This training, however, was also inconsistent. Not all team leaders received the training.

For instance Julie, the leader of the U.S. Studies PLT (I-PLT), received this professional development, while Sue, the leader of the Student Support PLT (B-PLT), did not. The latter spoke of professional development in this way,

The only professional development was when we first started on the PLTs and our whole school went through some training on what the purposes were and what was required, but nothing really on group work. I mean it

was more “This is what a PLT is and this is what you need to get out of it.” And, of course, mine (PLT) is a little different than the classroom teachers and how they run theirs. That is really all the training we’ve had.

It seems that professional development on collaboration would be important given that collaboration is regarded as the cornerstone of the reform process in this school.

The Principal views collaboration as the essential means with which his teachers can answer the two critical questions referred to above, regarding expectations for students and responses to students’ failure to meet expectations.

When you get back to the first question of setting expectations, we believe that has to be done collaboratively... We have these collaborative teams taking place at different levels. We have the instructional level, what we call the Instructional PLTs. We also have the Building PLTs, what we refer to as the B-PLTs.

He believes that *embedded* training is the best way to provide professional development for teachers for this skill. In his mind they should learn by doing. Yates says “we know this is the best way to do it.” He believes that learning through the apprenticeship of being on a team is the best way to learn the process, especially for new teachers. He does not indicate any concerns about premature assimilation into cultural norms. In fact cultural convergence seems to be the overall goal of embedded professional development at this school.

Dr. Yates wants the teachers to be intimately involved in how the organization responds to these questions. Every teacher is on at least one PLT. Some serve on multiple PLTs depending on what they teach. The Principal legitimates these requirements of teachers by referring to the scope and magnitude of the changes the school is trying to implement.

All of that (reform) is tremendously complex, and it necessitates that teachers not function as freelance educators in a comprehensive high

school, but that they work collaboratively in these teams to get that job done.

Alignment

Being on the same page, or having expectations and responses in common, is emphasized as the primary rationale for this focus on collaboration. Thus, holding divergent expectations for student achievement is not encouraged. When differing perspectives arise they need to be discussed collaboratively in order to find common ground for alignment. For curricular teams, such as the I-PLT, standards become the primary common reference point. For B-PLTs such an external guide to alignment is not as readily accessible. The issues relevant to these teams are more organizational in nature and thus are rooted more deeply in the local culture. *Negotiating* solutions at an intra-organizational level became the primary mechanism of “finalizing” decisions of this group.

The goal of *alignment* is convergence of thinking, and consequently performance. Working toward this common vision is not easy. The principal views it as a work in progress,

We have to have something in common, and I don't think we have enough in common. But these discussions take so much time, and that's been the challenge. We're kind of flying this plane as we're building it, and somehow it's working. We are moving ahead, but it's not always in a perfectly linear fashion.

The Principal refers to himself as “the keeper of the culture” and pledges his commitment to align the governance structures of the school towards this vision of holding common values and expectations.

Conflict

To continue the metaphor; steering the plane has not been without conflict. The Principal makes it very clear that there were casualties in the course of implementing a reform agenda. He says, “there was a little blood shed over the whole thing, and it was partly my blood.” This specific reference is in regard to change to the Student Support Programs that called for a greater coordination of efforts between different student service personnel. The B-PLT was right in the middle of this conflict. All but one member of the guidance department left, or was asked to leave, over these growing pains.

It became a morale issue in the building; trying to make the tough choice. But there was actually a level of unprofessionalism in guidance, just being sloppy and uncaring, and unprofessional in a lot of ways... So that caused a bit of turmoil for a while. It's important not to have too many of those ground fires going at once. I tried not to have too many others going at that time. But we weathered it all.

Thus one potential consequence for educators that fail to align themselves with the vision is voluntary departure from the organization, or forced expulsion. This consequence had an immediate impact upon one member of the B-PLT, which will tie in to the discussion of team attendance below.

Conversations with faculty members today reveal a group of educators who appear to have truly embraced the collaborative process. They like it and value it. That is, of course, based upon the teachers that were willing to talk to me. As will be seen, the two teams that this study is based upon have both experienced turnover and spotty attendance. For the most part I met with teachers who have demonstrated a commitment to the collaborative process. They show up and do the work. Discussions with the Student Support PLT in particular reveal, however, that not everyone is on board

and participating. After two years of teaming, the team leader comments on this year by saying,

This year has been really frustrating. We've had a really hard time getting people together.

Her teammate Bill says,

I wish it was more than just the three of us, because we've been at it for several years. We know what we're doing. I'd like to get some new blood to care as much as we do.

Resistance to teaming is one of the many dimensions of the collaborative experiment at Palatine High that is explored further throughout this chapter. Each team is now profiled in regard to its membership, attendance, use of team time, and conversations and activities during the time they were under observation.

The U.S. Studies Professional Learning Team

As explained earlier, the U.S. Studies PLT, or the I-PLT ('I' is for instructional), is a team composed of both English and Social Studies teachers who team-teach block classes together. The task of this team is to work together to plan, design, integrate, and implement shared instructional methods, curricula, and assessments. The goal is curricular and pedagogical *alignment*. The teachers are not required to teach every class session the same way, but they are strongly encouraged to work together towards a common instructional approach. The curriculum is primarily set by the district, and is aligned with the Missouri ShowMe Standards and Grade Level Expectations. However, the teachers do have some discretion in the day to day details of what they teach. Major assessments are the single most significant focus of their collaborative efforts. This involves designing the assessments that they administer themselves, and coordinating

preparation for required district and state assessments. The team is similar in design to the interdisciplinary teams that have been popular in middle schools for so long (see Chapter Three), but is limited to just two content areas.

Membership

The team consists of six core members, three from each subject area. It might also be viewed as three groups of two partner teachers each, brought together to collaborate on the common class they teach. The team and its occasional guests are listed below.

Names with an asterisk are team members who attended meetings the most regularly (see Figure 5).

Team members:

Julie*	U.S. Studies teacher/Social Studies
Rick*	U.S. Studies teacher/Social Studies
Brenda*	U.S. Studies teacher/English
Jennifer	U.S. Studies teacher/Social Studies
Lynn	U.S. Studies teacher/English
Sandy	U.S. Studies teacher/English

Occasional guests:

Frank	Chair of Social Studies Department (2 meetings)
Emma	Chair of English Department (2 meetings)
Karen	AP U.S. Studies teacher (2 meetings)
Bethany	AP U.S. Studies teacher (1 meeting)
Carol	Guidance counselor (2 meetings)

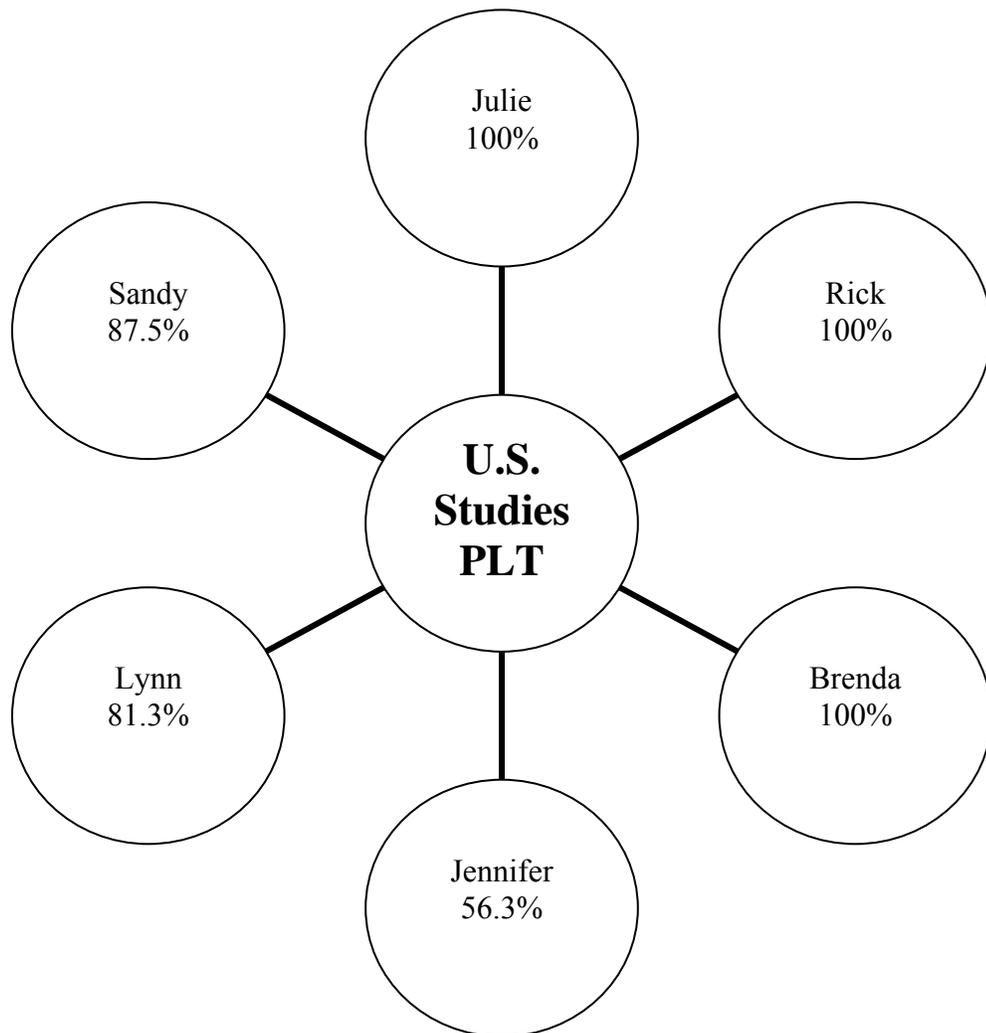
The group is led by a facilitator, Julie, who was appointed by the chairs of the two Departments that contribute to the team. This particular team is mostly made up of younger teachers. Sandy is the only tenured teacher on the team. Participation is a mandatory requirement for teachers assigned to an Instructional-PLT. The PLT reports directly to their department chairs on their progress and activities. Thus they occupy a conventional level of the *governance* hierarchy of the school.

Attendance

As can be seen from Figure 5, however, attendance varies among the members. In this figure the attendance percentage is based upon the rate of attendance at the eight observed meetings over the course of the semester. Partial attendance at a meeting was counted as attending half the meeting. Picture the central circle of the figure as a table. Surrounding the table are the chairs occupied by the PLT members. It is clearly seen that three of the six team members were sitting at the table regularly. Julie, Rick, and Brenda attended 100% of the eight meetings that were observed. Sandy and Lynn both missed a little bit of team time. Jennifer's chair, however, was consistently unoccupied. She attended just over 56% of the meetings.

It should be noted that the three team members who attended all meetings were also the three teachers who generally took the most significant roles in overall team efforts. They initiated and sustained discussions, conducted additional research on topics of relevance on their own time, and volunteered to assume the most responsibility for completing tasks. Alternatively, Sandy and Lynn were often very quiet participants in meetings, and generally offered less overall involvement. Jennifer, who only made it to roughly half the meetings, was highly engaged when she was there. In fact she often became argumentative and mildly belligerent with her colleagues. Later in the chapter I will return to these observations of individual involvement in the collaborative process in finer detail.

Figure 5. Attendance rate for each I-PLT team member.

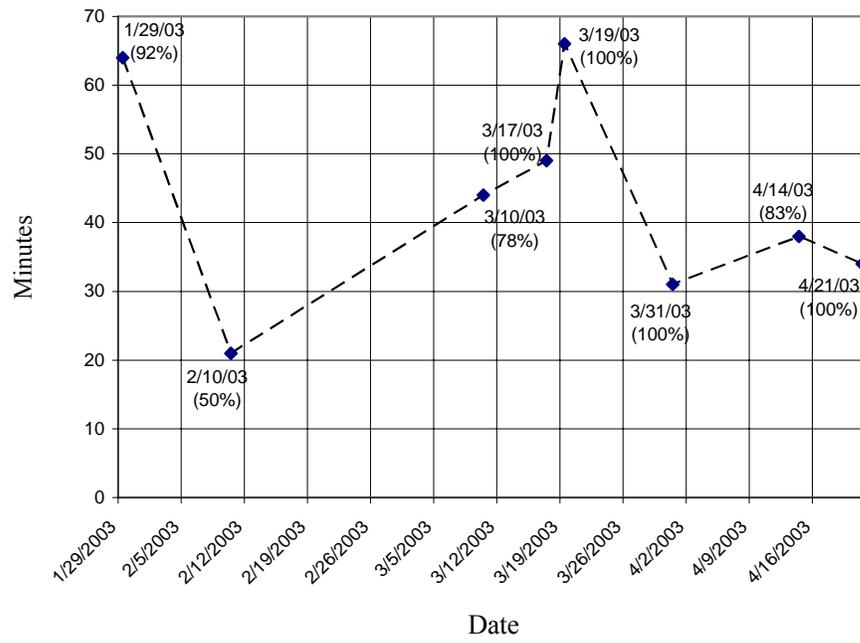


Team Time

Time is something that comes up again and again with the teachers on both of the teams in this study. *Time* is a recurrent theme and a constant preoccupation of the teachers. Taking this into consideration, it seems appropriate to take note of the actual time spent collaborating. In Figure 6 the duration in minutes, and percentage of the team in attendance, are shown for each observed meeting date of the I-PLT. Meetings ranged from 21 minutes in length to a high of 66 minutes, with a mean meeting time of 43.4 minutes.

Longer meetings were held on early release days. Shorter meetings took place at the end of the normal school day. The eight meetings that were observed totaled to 347 cumulative minutes. If we take the mean length of the observed meetings and apply it to the 5 additional PLT meetings that were not observed or recorded, the total team time for the semester becomes 564 minutes (~9.4 hours). This neither includes the extra time taken outside of team to prepare materials and resources for use in team time, nor the time when team members came in on at least one Sunday afternoon to organize curricular materials. Note that attendance peaked in the second half of the semester and that all six team members were present for four out of the last five meetings that were observed. The overall team attendance rate for the observed meetings was 87.9%.

Figure 6. I-PLT Meeting length by date, with percentage of team attending.



Rushing Towards Synergy

The I-PLT, the U.S. Studies professional learning team, spent most of their time over the course of the semester focusing on three topics. They met repeatedly with a member of the Guidance department to get logistical information, updates, and test materials for the administration of the Missouri standardized performance exam for Social Studies (the Missouri Assessment Program, or MAP test). They also discussed how best to prepare students for a Progressive Era District writing assessment given at the end of the third quarter, and spent time in training how to score those essays. Finally, they worked throughout the semester on designing a common final exam, or performance, based on a summative individual oral presentation by each student. These three activities dominated their agenda for the semester that their meetings were observed. The team's performance of these tasks represented a balancing act between a search for consensus, or *alignment*, on how to do things, and the press of *time* to simply get them done.

Alternative curriculum. An item of lesser significance, in terms of team time spent on it, was the selection and preparation of materials for students to use on an alternative education software package called CyberClass. This issue, however, did take up a good deal of time outside of team meetings. This alternative program is available to students participating in the Second Chance program, a pathway to high school completion for students who failed to earn credits in required classes in the past. In this area the I-PLT actually overlaps a little bit with the B-PLT. The latter has some degree of oversight over these programs, and the B-PLT leader has formal responsibility for them. The U.S. Studies teachers got together on a Sunday to pull together resources for students using

this program. They spent some time in team discussing the resources that would be complementary to an online system, as well as their general pedagogical philosophy towards the program.

The Missouri Assessment Program. The MAP test was a topic that dominated a great deal of the team's time and psychological energy considering all they had to do was administer the examination. *Time* was a multidimensional aspect of the MAP test that seemed to place a great deal of stress on the teachers. It took *time* to go over the administration procedures with the Guidance department. It took *time* to get the students to prepare their test booklets ahead of time. It took *time* to administer the test during four different sessions, or blocks, over one week. It took *time* all year to prepare students to perform on constructed response type assessment items. An illustration of the school-wide focus on MAP can be found in an excerpt from a school newsletter.

Teachers in every area, not just the subjects being directly tested on MAP, have been working with students in preparation. One area that has been addressed is how to respond to constructed response questions. Posters have been posted in every classroom to remind students of the best way to attack those types of problems.

MAP testing affected the entire school, not just the I-PLT. Since this PLT covered a subject area that was a focus of the test, however, the team did have to deal with MAP in a very direct way. A final area that the test took *time* away from was teaching the rest of their curriculum. This led one teacher on the team to exclaim to his team members,

The MAP test is the source of all our problems.

And,

I hate the MAP test!

The team administered the MAP test to their students in four separate installments during the first week of April. Test administration involved modifying the school's block schedule in order to create longer blocks for uninterrupted test taking.

Two of the three team meetings (3/17/03 and 3/31/03) immediately preceding that week were dominated by discussions of MAP implementation. These discussions were led on each occasion by a member of the Guidance department who lectured to the team on what they needed to do. Topics included: what days to give what sections of the test on; when to have your students complete the student information sections of the test booklets; what to do with students who are absent for parts of the test; what to do with your test booklets when you are finished; and more of these sorts of details. Teachers were also told that they needed to go to the guidance office and pull all the answer sheets with their students' names on them in order to help the counselors with logistics.

This clerical-oriented information could just as easily have been disseminated via a memo to each teacher, to the PLT facilitator, or to the respective department chairs. This is an example of team *time* being used by administration for a purpose other than that for which it was originally designed. Once teachers are known to be convening in a specific location at a specific time it is tempting to begin to use that time for other matters. This situation, of upper-level *governance* structures intruding upon allegedly "localized" management forms, is similar in microcosm to the *recentralization* process described in Chapter Two. This MAP-related discussion is the only instance of such a cooption of the team's time, but the impact of the diversion was quite strong. The pressure of *time* was working its magic in a plurality of ways.

One example involved the teacher who made such dire remarks concerning the MAP test. In a discussion about how far along each teacher was in their curriculum, this teacher remarked that he thought he was a little ahead. He was excited at the prospect of having more flexibility in managing his lessons for the rest of the semester. One of his teammates, however, reminded him that he had neglected to account for the lost week to the MAP test in his planning. The teacher sighed loudly, slumped in his chair, and appeared utterly deflated. His demeanor changed completely and he began talking instead about where he would need to *cut* content and activities from his planning. In a matter of moments the teacher went from talking about an opportunity to enrich student learning to the prospect of cutting lessons in their entirety – all because of *time*.

The District assessment. Two major assessments that the teachers were much more invested in, and energetic about, were the Progressive Era District Assessment and the PLT's own commonly designed final. The district assessment is a common writing assessment given to all students in the district. It is specifically a writing assessment but is grounded in Social Studies content to provide factual and conceptual scaffolding for the students to use while displaying their technical writing skills. It is also designed in this fashion to encourage writing across the curriculum areas. Social Studies is the most common disciplinary area in which to integrate literacy skills conventionally limited to English classes. Thus the district assessment aims to encourage some of the same cross-disciplinary habits that are already represented in the U.S. Studies block course. It also functions to provide impetus to the *alignment* of instruction both within and between the two content areas. It is a district-level accountability tool that influences both instructional and organizational behavior within the schools.

For this assessment students are required to write a conventional five-paragraph essay on the following prompt:

To what extent did the reform movements of the Progressive Era reflect a shift in power and, thus, achieve a renewed sense of the American Dream?

Student responses are scored anonymously and holistically by two U.S. Studies teachers. Students are scored on a scale of 1-4, which incidentally is consistent with the scoring scale of the MAP test for longer written responses. The district designs all of their common grade-level writing assessments to be scored on this form of a scale, all the way down to the third grade. Elementary students start becoming familiar with this scale as an assessment of writing as early as second grade. *Alignment* is not only a horizontal process, but a vertical one as well.

The teachers received training in scoring during their March 19, 2003 PLT meeting. This was the longest meeting of the year, at 66 minutes, but actually seemed too brief given the task. At this meeting the PLT was joined by teachers from the Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. Studies classes, as well as the English Department chair. These individuals are assigned to other PLTs. The AP teachers for instance are on a separate Advanced Placement PLT composed of all the AP teachers in the building. This AP team, by the way, was noted by a teacher on the Student Support, or B-PLT, as an example of a very poorly functioning and organized PLT due to the broad variation in subject matter of the teachers involved. So again, all these teachers of U.S. Studies, both regular and AP were brought together for this common training time. A scoring day was scheduled, and hosted by a business partner of the school, for the day after this training meeting. In the training meeting the teachers all looked at copies of student work and discussed how they should be evaluated according to the rubric that they had been given by the

district. This was done in a cursory fashion and did not involve extended discussion or the exploration of possible sources of inconsistency in scoring. Only four of the nine available examples of student work were examined. The relationship of student learning to different types of responses to the assessment was probed slightly, but was not a significant focus of the conversation. After 39 minutes (including time to read the samples) the training time was usurped by a group discussion of the year-end final. One teacher said,

We have done this enough times as a group that we are all on the same page.

This comment appears to be in reference to training in past years, because there had been no previous meetings on the topic for the current year. Given the limited exchange and reflection that characterized the conversation, it seems just as likely to conclude that the teachers just didn't want to talk about this anymore as it does to conclude they had all reached "reliability" on the scoring instrument and were *aligned* in their approach to assessment of the essay.

As they went through the examples the teachers did not independently write down scores without knowledge of what others were thinking. As each discussion of an example began, one teacher simply said "I give this a ..." and that teacher was usually one of the consistently vocal teachers. The nature of group influence in this kind of a context is such that divergent opinions are not very likely to come up, particularly when high-status figures are present and voicing their opinion.

The shift in topic demonstrated that the teachers' interest, as a large group, was much higher regarding their *own* assessment than the one handed down by the district. This conclusion is supported by the significantly higher level of conversation that took

place, both in terms of the teachers' own conceptual understandings of history, and the important issue of student learning. This second half of the "training" meeting was actually the best example of a sustained reflective conversation about practice for the entire semester. The English department chair, Emma, was present at the meeting and compared their conversation to the revision process of the rough draft of the assessment:

That's how we've gotten to the point we are right now. It (the idea, like the draft) started with Dan, then it went to me, then it went to you guys, so it's still evolving.

The presence of Emma and the AP teachers was very influential in this regard. They pushed conversations and consistently probed the thinking of the other teachers. Towards the end of this particular meeting Rick commented on his appreciation for the process, saying "I like it when we do this - when we brainstorm and plan together."

In another illustrative example from the meeting, Karen, an AP teacher, pushed and assisted the team in clarifying conceptual details of the prompt for the final.

Example 3. Clarifying talk in the I-PLT.

KAREN: So is there a difference between a flash point... like JFK's assassination, or the challenger explosion? Could those be construed as defining moments, or are those simply big moments because they don't necessarily cut across all three? (social, economic, political domains)

JENNIFER: (raising her voice) I think that you could argue either way.

RICK: With those things it's more about the reaction that America would have to those events.

KAREN: This gets back to what Sandy was saying too. Maybe the Vietnam War is a good example of a defining moment because it does cut across all three of those things because something narrower doesn't.

SANDY: I could see somebody arguing that the assassination of JFK is a loss of innocence for America, that after that time period we go into...

KAREN: It's certainly the social and political. The economic, I'm not sure how you would tie that in.

JENNIFER: But are we saying that they (the students) have to address all three?

Jennifer's question reveals that the team still has a lot about this assessment to think out, and that they really need to keep talking to make sure they are approaching the evaluation component in the same way. Karen's line of questioning seems to be encouraging this kind of thinking on the part of the team. Both she and Emma, the English department chair, adopt a fairly Socratic approach to interacting with the team.

The final examination. As we can see, the oral final was definitely on the teacher's minds. This assessment monopolized team conversation over the course of the semester more than any other. Furthermore, it appears to be what they really care about and want to spend time on. Both the district assessment and the MAP test come across as nuisances and distractions from their "own" test. The other assessments were policies imposed by outside *governance* structures.

The final assessment was scheduled for the last day of classes for the year. The teachers discussed that they wanted it this way for two main reasons. First, it held students accountable for work all the way through the last day. Second, it made it easier to get grades in for the teachers. Final grades were required the day after classes ended and the teachers felt like they were faced with the choice of either giving an objective examination which could be scored very quickly, or giving their final earlier and having to deal with unmotivated students. Their solution was to design an assessment that was an

example of a high-stakes demonstration performance *and* that could be scored quickly. The oral final was their solution.

The final examination was a topic of discussion in all but two meetings during the semester, and dominated conversations in well over half of the meetings. The primary lull from talking about it took place while the team was working on materials for CyberClass and gearing up for the district assessment. As we have seen, however, discussion of the final intruded upon the time allotted to the district assessment as well.

The final, as it evolved over the course of the semester, asked students to give a five to seven minute persuasive presentation on the following prompt:

Does a 20th Century American Identity exist?

Students were required to complete and turn in a graphic organizer for their presentation, and were told they could use one note card. Other visual aides were not allowed. The format was that of a sitting oral presentation to a small (1-2) panel of U.S. Studies teachers. Recall that in Chapter Four I reviewed the conceptual idea of the interactional routine. In Chapter Six I will discuss some of the specific routines employed by the two teams. One of the examples, Voting and Marginalizing Dissent, involves conversations related to the structuring of the final assessment. We will see then how the team engaged in routinized, yet improvised, conversational procedures in the negotiation of the details of the assessment.

Developing the basic parameters of this rather simple assessment was an exercise that took the entire semester, and engaged easily half of the time and energy that the team invested in the context of collaborative work. This struggle may be evidence of the intrinsic difficulty of reconciling the autonomous instructional preferences of diverse

teachers with a policy imperative aimed at promoting *alignment*, or convergent performance. In the context of the discussions of this team, alignment appeared to be an exercise in *reductionism*. Complexity and breadth were consistently compromised in favor of simplicity and narrowness of scope. This was a function of both the collaborative process of finding common ground, and the structural practicalities of implementing a final that the teachers would have time to evaluate.

The Student Support Professional Learning Team

The Student Support professional learning team, or the B-PLT for short (remember from Chapter Four that the ‘B’ is for Building-wide) is similar in size to the I-PLT. It had seven core members. The I-PLT had six. The given task of the B-PLT is to look at building-wide support and intervention programs for students, to monitor the effectiveness of those programs, and to make recommendations for improving them. These programs occur in a variety of locations throughout the organization, involve the participation of personnel in many different areas, and overlap with both teaching and administrative responsibilities. Thus individuals holding positions in each staffing area are incorporated onto the team in order to promote *alignment* between these disparate areas.

Membership

The constituency of the team is very different from the I-PLT. The team has seven members from a variety of different areas (listed below). Coordinator and Director titles refer to building-level administration. Names with an asterisk are team members who attended meetings the most regularly (see Figure 7).

Team members:

Sue*	Coordinator of Student Support Programs
Christine*	Coordinator of Gifted Education Programs
Bill*	Psychology and Sociology teacher
Barbara*	Social Studies teacher
Tracy	Director of Special Education
Cindy	Outreach counselor
Betty	Director of Guidance

Occasional guests:

Nancy	Tutor/para-professional (attended most of one meeting)
Greg	Dean (came for several minutes then had to leave)

Invited guests that did not attend a meeting:

Stacy	Secondary Literacy Support Specialist
Linda	Member of Palatine High Executive Council

This team has a more formal internal governance structure. Sue is the Coordinator of Student Support Programs at Palatine High, a social worker, and the clearly designated *leader* of the team. According to Sue she is responsible for quite a lot.

I have pretty much all the programs that aren't curriculum-based. I'm in charge of our Second Chance program - an online curriculum for students to recover credit in their core classes. We also have a GED option program where students can actually get their GED and then get a high school diploma. We have 2 academic resource centers, which are tutoring programs. I'm in charge of the sophomore advisory program. We also have a sophomore tutoring program which falls under my responsibility. We have a junior tutoring program that I'm responsible for. We have another program called One Step Forward, which I do in conjunction with another community organization to get kids out in the community and get them jobs, and get credit for that. And then I'm also responsible for all of our volunteer troop classes. In addition to that I'm supposed to be continually assessing how things are going, and recommending new programs or changes in the programs.

This wide range of responsibilities puts Sue in a unique position on the team in regard to her grasp of the overall structure and implementation of student support programs in the

school. The PLT supports her performance of these tasks. The influence of Sue's organizational knowledge is clear in the way her team speaks of her. As she says,

They are pretty good about saying "You're the one who sees the whole thing, the whole picture."

This is echoed by the comments of other team members. For instance Bill said,

I don't have as good a grasp of the big picture as Sue does. I mean when I'm coming in I'm thinking of my sophomore advisory class and maybe what we can do for sophomore advisory teachers in general. That's kind of my area of focus. She's got all those other programs.

Christine spoke of the team's role, but emphasized Sue's importance.

The team does a good job of organizing advisory and looking at ways to make the tutoring part better. We still rely on Mary to do a lot, outside of team meetings. I think we give her direction and support.

Aside from its membership this team is different in several ways from the U.S.

Studies team. The I-PLT drew its members from two content areas. This team's members all come from different departments or program areas, thus its designation as a *Building-wide* team. Several administrative-oriented positions are represented, as are teachers who are involved with staffing these support programs. Everyone on the team has some connection, however, to student support efforts.

Another difference of this team to the I-PLT is that it has more veterans on it.

This reflects the role that these individuals play in the building. They are educators with the career experience to warrant positions of great responsibility within the building. One more significant difference is that this team is completely voluntary. Members are not required to attend. According to some team members this contributes to poor attendance at the B-PLT meetings (see Bill's comments below). It must be noted, however, that the personnel on this team have many more duties and responsibilities, on average, than the

teachers on the I-PLT. It is not uncommon for those with administrative responsibilities to become “over-booked” and incapable of being two places at the same time. Thus intensification of work touches upon different personnel in different ways. For teachers it may mean additional *time* on top of, or away from, class preparation and grading. For administrators it may mean *more* meetings and committees and teams, sometimes to the point of not being able to be present for every obligation.

Attendance

The rates of team member attendance for this team are lower than for the I-PLT (see Figure 7). Sue is the only member that attended all ten observed meetings. Bill and Christine were pretty close at 90%, and Barbara made it to 75% of the sessions. Tracy, Betty, and Cindy, however, all had extremely low attendance rates. As with the I-PLT, the level of participation and assumption of responsibilities corresponded to the rates of attendance. The four members who came regularly were the driving force behind the team. This same pattern holds true two years later. It should be noted here that Betty was one of the “casualties” of school reform that Dr. Yates alluded to. Recall that he shared that all but one member of the guidance department left the school. Betty’s limited attendance and participation may reflect these ongoing tensions of the time. For a veteran educator, or any professional, retirement may sometimes appear preferable to dramatically altering the way they have done their job in the past, or taking on new and/or additional job responsibilities.

Today, two years later, three of those four – Sue, Bill, and Christine – still constitute the core of the team. Barbara has since retired. Other members have come and gone with consistently low levels of attendance. Tracy, who attended 50% of meetings,

eventually asked to leave the team as it conflicted too much with her responsibilities as Director of Special Education. The other *core* members of the team lament the lack of involvement they get from other members of the team. Rick said,

Some of my frustration here is that, other than Sue and Christine and I, is that *everybody's* not here (the rest of the team). This is not *their* group, and when there is a meeting (there is not the assumption that) they'll be here.

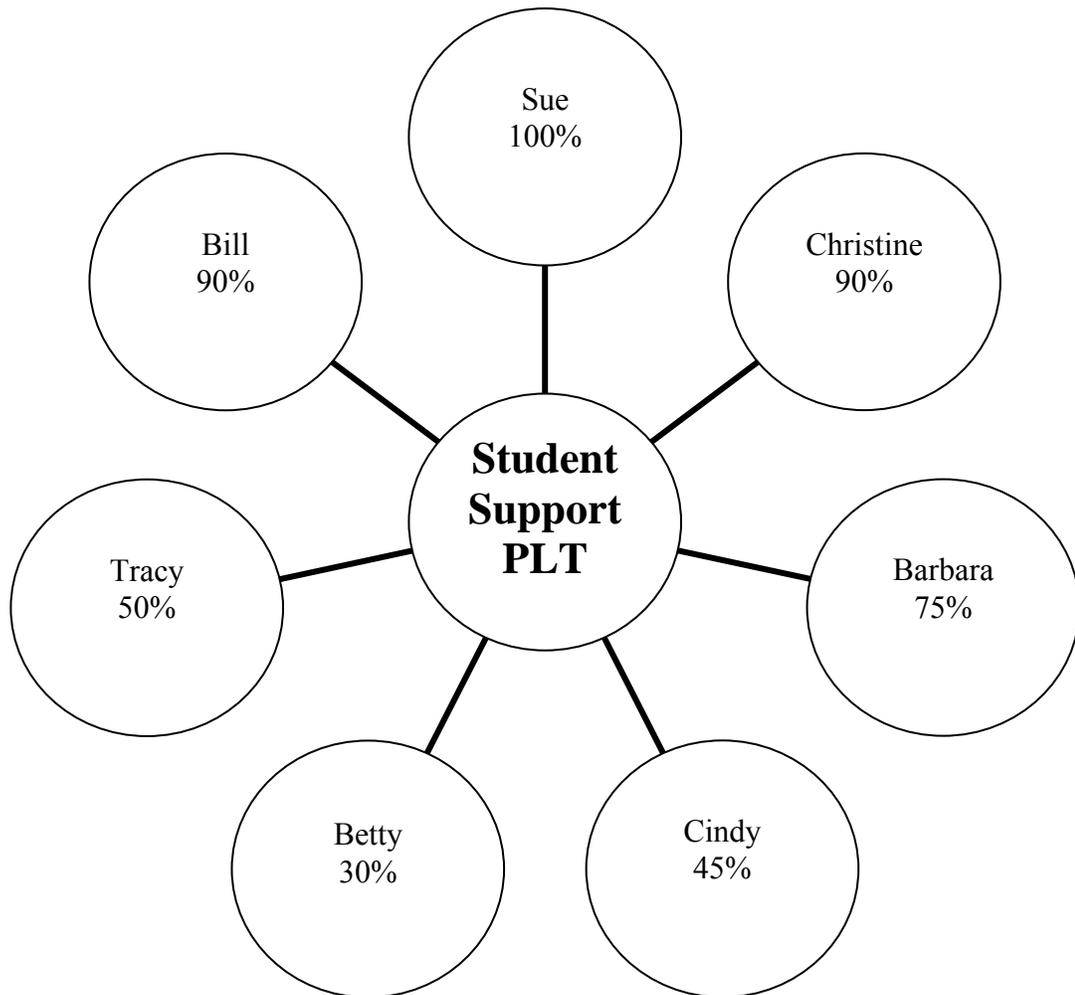
He added a speculation that the pressure of serving on multiple collaborative teams overwhelmed some teachers and made it hard for them to stay involved everywhere.

I think the more professional learning teams you're on the more you're going to be pulled, and the Instructional PLTs are going to win out every time. So to decide how much time I have out of class - with my grading... You basically don't have a choice on your curricular PLTs. These *extra*, like student support, are an extra voluntary type thing. If teachers get pulled in different directions, *and* they're no longer a sophomore advisor where they have personal stake in what is decided here, this (team meetings) is not as important.

Sue commented on potential "new" sophomore advisors *and* team members,

It's scary. You hope you get somebody who cares about the kid that's not doing well in their class instead of the kids that are going to take the AP test.

Figure 7. Attendance rate for each B-PLT team member.



When the B-PLT first began, Sue did not have much input into *who* was asked to serve on the team. She now says that the assistant principal gives her a list of all the potential team members and asks her to let her know who she *doesn't* want on the team. Sue feels that this helps prevent trying to get teachers to serve that are not invested in the mission of Sophomore Advisory. Alternatively, this also seems to allow teachers who do not support the mission of the program they have been placed in to continue holding what might be deemed an unprofessional and uncaring attitude; to use the language of the team and Principal in characterizing staff that don't "buy-in" to these programs. This selective recruitment to the team is the complete opposite of what is done with the I-PLTs. The attendance percentage is based upon the rate of attendance at the ten observed meetings over the course of the semester. Partial attendance at a meeting was counted as attending half the meeting. Once again, visualize a table surrounded by seven chairs. Only four of those chairs were occupied on a consistent basis. Today, with Barbara's retirement, it has become three chairs. This group appears to have evolved into less of a team, and more a triad of committed individuals on a shared mission.

In addition to the poor attendance of the actual team members, the B-PLT also had trouble getting invited guests to show up. Linda, a district specialist in Secondary Literacy Support, and Stacy, a member of the school's Executive Council, were both invited to a meeting when a literacy grant proposal was being worked on. Neither came. Later in the semester the team invited two of the Deans of the school to a meeting to get their input on proposed changes involving study halls. One of the Deans came late to the meeting and was called out after only a few moments. He appeared distracted and rushed for the few minutes he was there. This lack of input from the appropriate *governance*

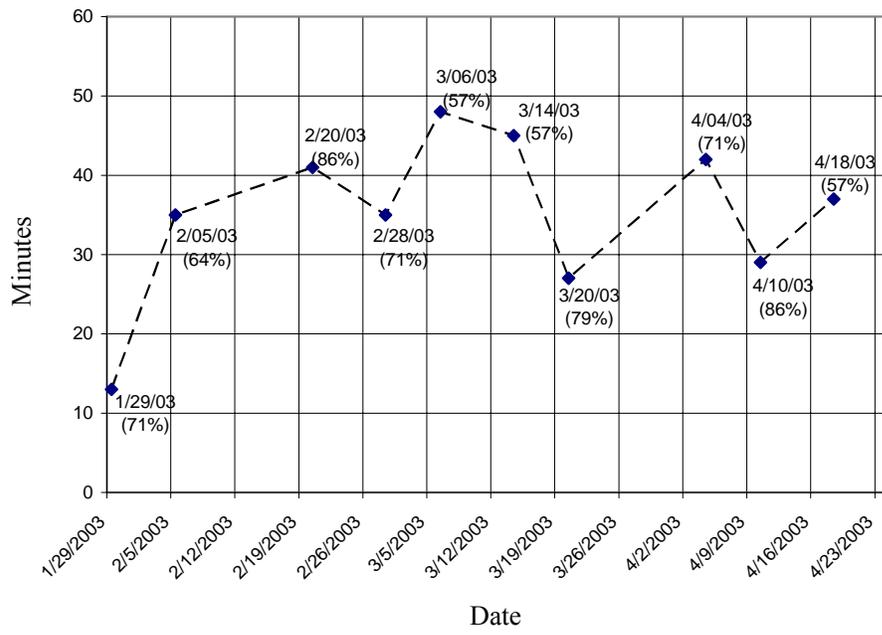
units functioned to complicate the team's capacity to make an innovative proposal regarding study halls. I'll return to this incident below.

Team Time

Figure 8 shows the duration of meetings, dates, and percentage of members attending for the B-PLT. Meetings averaged approximately 35 minutes in length over the course of the semester; about 8 minutes less than those of the I-PLT. The briefest meeting was a mere 13 minutes in length, while the longest was 48 minutes. The team met for a total of 352 minutes in the ten meetings that were observed. Only three of the semester's meetings were not observed, the last three of the term. Timing these according to the average of the observed meetings, and adding them to the total observed minutes yields a projected cumulative total of approximately 458 (~7.6 hours) minutes of collaboration for the semester.

Attendance varied throughout the semester, never being particularly good. The overall team attendance rate for the semester was 70.0% (compare that to the 87.9% for the I-PLT). It is noted that the two longest meetings (48 and 45 minutes respectively) had two of the three lowest attendance rates (57%). It may have been that members knew these would be longer meetings and chose not to attend if they knew it would conflict with other appointments or duties. Both of these longer meetings took place on early release days as opposed to after school. The after school meetings were always shorter.

Figure 8. B-PLT Meeting length by date, with percentage of team attending.



Stumbling Into Innovation

The semester of work for the B-PLT revolved around four different topics. Three of these were closely related, while the fourth dealt with a new topic that the team wanted to see integrated more fully into the school's spectrum of student support services. This last item of business was writing and submitting a grant for a new literacy program within the student support system. The primary inter-related topics of the semester were: 1) evaluating the status of the Sophomore Advisory and Intensive Tutoring Programs (ITP), and making recommendations for any possible changes; 2) development of an "early warning" program for incoming juniors that may be at risk for academic difficulties; and 3) proposing changes to the way study halls are handled in conjunction with the advisory and tutoring programs.

Sophomore intervention. The Sophomore Advisory program and ITP are related efforts to provide a safety net for sophomore students who are struggling academically. All sophomores take the sophomore advisory "class" which is really a study hall with some structured orientation and transition activities. It is intended to serve as a bridge from junior high school to the culture and expectations of Palatine High. Sophomore students who struggle in their academic classes are referred to the ITP for extra assistance. The criterion for referral was a major topic of discussion during the semester's meetings. In the end it was decided that any student that earned an 'F' in multiple core subject area classes would be automatically assigned to an ITP study hall until the grade(s) improved. Teachers also had the option of referring a student on their own discretion if the student was performing below the 70% mark in class. In debating the criterion issue the team discussed factors that might lead to lower percentages, such as

poor performance on one major assignment, as well as the variation in grading policies between different teachers in different classes. They decided that the multiple 'F' allowed some flexibility, but also set a clear mark that represented the time to take a closer look at how a student was doing.

Discussions of these programs dealt primarily with evaluating their performance, finding some new ways to gather data on them, and sharing team member information in order to develop a common understanding of how the program was working. This kind of information sharing was endemic of many conversations of this group. Coming from separate areas and working in different areas of these programs, the team members quickly found that they each had somewhat different understandings of how things worked and what the most pressing issues were. They strived to *align* their organizational knowledge of student support services. However, team members who did not attend regularly did not share their perspectives to the same extent that the regular attendees did. Discourse patterns and conversational routines associated with these information sharing sessions and attempts at problem solving are explored in detail in the next chapter.

According to team members they did a lot of brainstorming, and struggled a lot in the beginning trying to figure out exactly what they were "supposed to do." The steps taken during this first semester reflected this tentative atmosphere within the team. After a lot of brainstorming and circular conversations (see next chapter) the team decided that things were going pretty well in the advisory and ITP programs and that the major issues were mainly logistical/clerical type things. As stated above they reviewed the referral criterion. They also discussed the need for having all teachers become more familiar with the program and how it worked.

Junior intervention. An outgrowth of these discussions about the sophomore programs was the recognition of a need to identify incoming juniors who may be at risk of academic failure. Specifically, the team was focused on juniors that failed one or more courses as a sophomore, and had multiple referrals to ITP. The team decided that sophomore advisors would be in an excellent position to send out a “warning” on students they thought may face difficulties beginning their junior year. The solution that was devised was threefold. First, it was decided to have advisors and counselors interview each student of interest at the end of the year, recommending classes and possibly a guided study hall to begin the next year. Second, the student’s junior year teachers would be notified of the program and asked to monitor academic progress closely. Third, each student’s grades and attendance would be periodically reviewed for possible referral to the student assistance team for intensive intervention. This program was called the First Alert Program.

Over the past two years it has evolved into a different broader program called CenturionCare (after the school mascot) that encompasses intervention services for all qualifying sophomores and juniors. The ITP program is folded under this umbrella program as well. Additionally, the guided study hall option has now become mandatory for the students in this program. The development of the guided study hall was a struggle for the team, but did eventually become a reality. The tentative, awkward, and often frustrating struggle towards new solutions to existing problems took time for this team. One wonders what they could have accomplished during this time with a broader array of structural supports, particularly timely administrative input, to facilitate their work.

Guided study hall. I indicated that a guided study hall is now a mandatory component of the CenturionCare program for at-risk juniors. The concept of the guided study hall was first brought up by the B-PLT during their very first semester of work; when they were being observed for this study. The first reference to it was in the 2/28/03 meeting when Barbara hit upon what the group decided was a core deficiency in their intervention system – study hall rather than tutoring.

Example 4. The emergence of a new idea in the B-PLT.

BARBARA: The thing I've learned is that they don't need a study hall, they need to be tutored. that's it—the tutoring is so important. We need to make sure we can do that.

SUE: I'd like to see a guided study hall. The kids would know it was different.

One of the first in-depth discussions held by the B-PLT concerned the overlap and disorder of concurrently running “halls” or “labs” for students. These included Sophomore Advisory, ITP, regular study halls, and loss of privilege (LOP) study halls. These “classes” were being held concurrently throughout the day and frequently resulted in students from all different kinds of labs sitting in the same classrooms together. For instance, a sophomore advisor might have their own assigned sophomores in a classroom with juniors taking a regular study hall, and with students sent to study hall for disciplinary purposes – three different groups there for three different reasons, with three different sets of supervisory needs. This made it very hard for the advisors to assist their high-need students as well as to appropriately supervise the others. What complicated this even further was that there was no consistency about this throughout the day. The team

spent hours going over anecdotal details from one another to develop this picture of just *who* was in these classrooms during the day, and *why*. They often surprised one another with this information, as in this example:

Example 5. Building a base of organizational knowledge in the B-PLT.

CHRISTINE: I spend most of my time, when we're in the height of this, having Nancy (the tutoring para) explain to me what she just found out from the biology teacher about the assignment, or what she just found out from the world studies teacher about the assignment and I don't (always) have her there to explain the assignment to me. So even though I do recognize that there are different levels, that they need our help in different ways - I think that if we actually put them in another room, then first of all we would be getting away the kids that are just on the borderline. They are going to pass their classes with some extra help. They're the ones that drop in when they really haven't been assigned also if you notice. They get in the habit of coming, because they've been assigned, then they get off – out of having to come - well they still drop in and want help with this assignment or that assignment. So I think if you took them to another room then ITP would not have the same feeling that it does right now. I think if we use both halves of the rooms that might be a possibility. The kids that need more intensive help would be on one side, and kids that needed less help could just do homework on the other side. We would still have access to them.

BILL: But what are you *doing*? What are you doing where you have three advisories in one hour? I mean, how do you do it?

CHRISTINE: Well, it's pretty crazy in the afternoon.

BILL: What are you doing? I mean I can't imagine how you would ever have...

CHRISTINE: You have study hall at the same time.

SUE: Well, *we* have study hall on one side and ITP on the other.

Once this frustrating task of getting a common understanding of an uncoordinated and inconsistent phenomenon was finished, the team quickly decided that the school

needed to develop a “guided study hall”, specifically for juniors, which would minimize overlap with other study halls and academic labs. This has been a constant struggle for the team over the past several years, primarily because of the lack of personnel to cover all those different sections. It is almost inevitable that overlap of these student populations will occur. They appear to be making incremental progress on this situation, however; getting the guided study hall in place was the first order of business. Moving forward more quickly would have been facilitated by getting the administrative input that the team solicited. They attempted to move through the appropriate *governance* channels to see if the guided study hall was feasible, but simply could not get an administrator to sit down at the table with them. This slowed down the process of the team solving problems and getting students the services and structures they felt necessary.

The Reading grant. Early in the semester the team decided to submit a grant proposal to the foundation of a national corporation known for funding small grants to local public schools. Sue, the team leader, and Barbara, a Social Studies teacher and sophomore advisor worked together to write the grant proposal. Rick and Christine made comments on what to include in the proposal during team meetings. Prior to its submission the proposal first had to go through the District Grant Coordinator for approval. The proposal was submitted to the foundation at the beginning of April. It was learned over the summer that the proposal was not accepted for funding. The team views this literacy need as a priority. Christine emphasizes this, two years after the grant proposal was rejected, “We really need a reading specialist to help the struggling readers.” To date, there is still no formal reading intervention program at Palatine High.

The grant did not monopolize a lot of team time during the semester. It was quickly supported by all members of the team. Everyone noted that literacy was a fundamental factor influencing all the interventions they were currently implementing or considering for the future. In the grant proposal the team noted that district-funded reading programs ended at the 9th grade, or Junior High level. There were no reading programs available for secondary students. The district focus for the past several years has been on early intervention at the Elementary grades. This is consistent with the emphasis of No Child Left Behind, and the Federal Reading First grants that are an element of that legislation. In retrospect, Bill supported this prioritization of funds at the lower grade levels feeling that interventions at those levels were most important and would pay off at the secondary level down the road.

All in all it was a rather straight forward process writing and submitting the grant. Without further information on why the grant was not funded, it is difficult to speculate on whether or not *more* or *different* labor on the part of the team would have helped its acceptance. I was able to examine the text of the grant proposal and note that it was not particularly specific regarding program details. This is likely attributable to the administration and Executive Council being unwilling to commit to many details ahead of time.

This is consistent with the general nature of the relationship between the teams and school *governance* regarding specifics of program implementation. The team frequently gave vague and non-committal recommendations to the Executive Council because they didn't know *what* they could recommend. The Executive Council and the Principal, on the other hand, rarely gave the team firm commitments to the team about

the availability of resources and funding for new initiatives due to their own constraints (i.e. budgets that are constantly in limbo and accompanying uncertainty about staffing resources). Thus structure failed to adequately facilitate creativity in both forums. These influences on both of the professional learning teams are explored further in the next chapter.

School Governance: Who's In Charge Here?

Inconsistent understandings of school governance were a major issue for each professional learning team. In particular, each team experienced tense relations with the school's Executive Council. In my interview with Dr. Yates, the school principal, he articulated the school governance structure, in relationship to the administration of the professional learning teams. He describes a hierarchy beginning at the team level, running through departments (the school calls them divisions), and up to the Executive Council. The latter body is characterized as the main governing body for the school.

As the building principal I serve on the Executive Council, with two other building administrators who are *ex officio* members - members but not voting, along with six elected faculty members. It is all of us together meeting once a week. We provide the leadership for school improvement. We work and we interface directly with what we refer to as the academic division chairs, as well as other department or division chairs, and guidance and other areas. We meet with them, although we don't have a regular schedule, and probably ought to; we meet with them several times a year to talk about how the PLTs in their area are going. For example in the math department we might have four PLTs, and we expect that division chair to have some sense of what's happening with those PLTs. Are they focused? Are they getting results? Where are they in the process? Are they making progress? Is everyone attending? Is everyone doing their part? I think – but I don't want to make it sound like a perfect system though – I think it's a perfect idea, but it has so far to go yet. I'm proud of our teachers and I think we're making progress, but we're still not clear on a lot of things.

The Principal is unequivocal in his identification of the Executive Council as the primary governing body of the school regarding school improvement. The professional learning teams are regarded as the most critical organizational tool for this improvement process. The teams, however, exhibit tension regarding the role and influence of the Executive Council and, in the case of the B-PLT (Student Support), a divergent understanding and interpretation of the genuine governance structure of the school.

In the following excerpt from my interview with the team leader of the B-PLT, Sue reveals a more significant role for the Principal than just being a *member* of the Executive Council.

INTERVIEWER: What is the decision making chain of authority for you team (the B-PLT)?

SUE: I pretty much report to Dr. Yates.

INTERVIEWER: To him directly, or to the Executive Council?

SUE: I report to him, then generally I have to present to the Executive Council at some point during the school year. I have to work through the Executive Council to branch out; “How do we do this? How do we get input from teachers to see if this is something we can get buy-in from everybody on?” If we want to get buy-in from them (teachers) then I have to go to the Executive Council.

Sue indicates that she reports directly to the Principal first, then to the Executive Council second, and then primarily when it is a strategic necessity. The subtle differences between her view of the hierarchy and that shared by the principal are not pointed out in order to imply some sort of Machiavellian plot, but rather to establish that what seems like a clear governance relationship to one person within an organization may appear

very different to another. This is particularly true when the different individuals have different daily experiences operating within the levels of this hierarchy. Sue reveals that the Executive Council makes her uncomfortable, saying, “I’m very intimidated by the Executive Council.”

Sue’s team members see her as their ambassador to the Executive Council, and appear to differ from Sue in regard to *who* they report to. They speak of the Executive Council more often, while Sue speaks of the Principal more directly. Team perceptions of the Executive Council are complex and varied. Christine, a member of the B-PLT, noted,

Sue does a good job of communicating with the Executive Council for us. I think they support our work but I am not sure how informed they are about what we are trying to do. In fact I do not think that any members of the Executive Council have served as advisors in our current system. That is probably due to the fact that if they are on Executive Council they do not have time for advisory also. I think it would be cool if they came by and spent some time with our tutoring program occasionally. I would like for them as a group to help find a way to provide a reading specialist and a full time at risk teacher to increase the effectiveness of student support.

Despite this confidence in their leader, the team has had its problems with the Executive Council. During the semester of observation this took the form of a lot of uncertainty about the nature of their relationship with the Council, and just how much autonomy they actually had as team. Sue said,

I felt my hands were tied somewhat because when we first started I felt like I couldn’t do anything without the Executive Council’s approval, and then it was really difficult to get approval of anything. It was very difficult and it was frustrating for me. I think it was probably frustrating for the other team members too.

This relationship has been clarified over the years – through practice. The angst is still there though. Sue actually had a Council member suggest that her own position might be jeopardized by an incipient team recommendation. Sue related the story like this,

My recommendation was that our Second Chance position that we have right now become a full-time teaching position. Someone from the Council came and spoke to me. She *said* “If you *push* this they’re probably going to take your position for that.” They are not going to have two full-time teacher positions in student support. It’s kind of like “Ok, what are you going to do? Who’s going to run all these other programs?” The message I got.

Sue was told behind the scenes that she faced losing her job if she pushed the recommendation that the team had in mind. It was clear that Sue felt threatened by this line of conversation and backed down accordingly. Such tactics do not go far in building trust with governance structures, nor do they contribute to a climate that promotes innovate solutions that challenge current practice. Tensions with the Executive Council were also shared by members of the I-PLT (U.S. Studies).

One of the defining moments for the I-PLT came late in the semester when they had submitted their final proposal for the year-end final to their department chairs. The proposal included details of both how the exam would be administered and what the exam required of students. The department chairs approved the proposal and presented it together to the Executive Council for official final approval. What happened led to the I-PLT’s leader, Julie, opening up their next meeting following the Executive Council session by exclaiming, “The U.S. Studies PLT is finally controversial!”

A discussion ensued of what had happened during the Executive Council presentation on the proposal for the final. The department chairs had shared these details with Julie. Apparently one member of the Council took exception to the idea that the students would be unsupervised except for the time they were making their oral presentation. In other words, not regular class activities were planned for them during that time. An important point to relate is that Palatine High is well-known for its liberal

policies regarding supervision of students during the day. Juniors and Seniors are allowed what is called AUT (alternating unassigned time) in their schedule. This is a block of the day when they don't have to have class and can basically do what they want; leave the building, study, or use computer resources and labs. Unsupervised time is not unusual for students at this school as long as they maintain adequate academic progress. Despite this, one veteran teacher on the Council took exception to the way the students would be managed on this last day. He also asked critical questions about the nature of the final, even though he was not a U.S. Studies teacher.

The teachers on the team were very offended and upset with this situation and spent a good deal of time talking about their feelings. They agreed that they needed to take the Council's "concerns" about supervision into account. The solution was to have all the students "held" in classrooms according to their regular schedule and show movies about history while the individual presentations were going on in another room. The team, however, was convinced that this compromise would ultimately lead to greater behavior issues because the students would be forced to sit and watch movies in a situation when they were no longer accountable. Regarding the nature of their assessment, however, the team was livid that they were being questioned. They felt second-guessed as professionals and became very defensive about their capacity to design what was, in their minds, an authentic assessment of student mastery. Sandy talked about going to the Executive Council and arguing their points. Julie even included their frustration in the official minutes of their meeting, writing:

We also spent some time discussing our feelings about the Executive Council's decision. Many felt that our professionalism was in question as well as the merits of our assessment. We all felt, however, that the opportunity to meet one-on-one with our students at the end of the year was important enough to us that we were willing to do what was necessary to keep that aspect of our format (Minutes of 4/21/03 meeting).

The loss of autonomy for individual teachers was magnified in this situation of events. Not only had each teacher already compromised within the context of team collaboration to create this assessment, but the team as a whole had to reach a compromise with the Executive Council to implement their idea. Collaboration, and the *management* of collaboration, led to a scenario in which both the details and decisions of how individual teachers should best assess students were made transparent throughout the hierarchy of the organization. Teacher discretion was constrained. Was student achievement enhanced?

An interesting side-point to this incident with the Executive Council is that it revealed a great deal of collective identity on the part of the I-PLT. Over the course of the semester they had frequently disagreed with one another on the details of this assessment. As will be shown in the next chapter, they even routinely engaged in conversational practices that marginalized the dissent of particular members of the team. It often seemed that some of the teachers on the team resented that they had to shape their own assessment so that it *aligned* with group members whom they disagreed with. However, when the difficulties with the Council developed, the team rallied together and displayed a unity that had not been seen to the same degree earlier in the semester. They spoke of the final as if it was something that they all had ownership over. It appeared that they had finally reached a point where they felt that it was indeed a collective assessment. The

perceived *intrusion* of the Council into this process created a shared sense of a loss of autonomy.

The Outcomes of a Semester of Collaboration

Both the U.S. Studies PLT and the Student Support PLT were examples of structural forms that facilitated the collaboration of school personnel over the course of the spring 2003 semester. Team membership, attendance, and time spent meeting were dimensions that framed these activities. Each team dealt with a number of important topics that occupied their time to various degrees across the semester. These topics, and the decisions that the teams made had a direct impact on the experiences of students. For the B-PLT there was a lag on this effect due to the fact that they were making recommendations for the following school year.

The U.S. Studies Professional Learning Team, or I-PLT, focused primarily on student assessments. They prepared students for a district writing assessment on the Progressive Era, and spent time training on how to holistically score these assessments. They worked with the Guidance department to administer the MAP test, the state of Missouri's standardized assessment for public school students. In addition they spent a great deal of time talking about, and refining, their own final assessment for their students. This assessment took the form of an oral performance on the last day of school. They also spent time developing curricular materials for an alternative education program for struggling students trying to recover credits. The team met with teachers from other PLTs, their respective department chairs, and a guidance counselor over the course of the semester.

The Student Support Professional Learning Team, or B-PLT, concentrated on student assistance programs. They evaluated both the Sophomore Advisory Program and Intensive Tutoring Program and made modest recommendations for improving them. They spent time brainstorming other areas of need and identified at-risk juniors as a population of students in need of more intervention. They put together a skeleton program that they tentatively labeled “First Alert.” Developing a guided study hall as part of this program was an idea that did not get very far due to a lack of administrative input, but eventually led to the creation of some new services. The team also put together an unsuccessful grant proposal for a reading program. This team struggled to get several members to attend, and had an equally difficult time getting invited guests to attend meetings.

Substantive results emerged from collaboration in both teams. These outcomes are subject to some questioning however. How much *time* did the I-PLT spend on non-discretionary program implementation in regard to the district writing assessment and the MAP test? Did all their high-level conversations about their final assessment really add up to anything when the actual assessment ended up being such a simple exercise? Was this the assessment that everyone wanted, or was it just the best compromise?

The B-PLT’s performance raises some questions too. First, is this team really getting at the problems of student failure? Their main solution to the perceived problem is to create more programs. Are these programs treating symptoms, or the actual problem(s)? This question is not asked within the group. Sue’s first response when she was asked about the effectiveness of the team was to say that they have created a lot of new programs. Also, who does this group really report to? Is it the Principal, or the Executive Council? The

Principal says it reports to the Executive Council. The team leader says she reports to the Principal, and actually frequently confounds him with the Executive Council when referring to him – as if both are the same.

This *governance* issue relates to perceived teacher autonomy, which becomes a central theme in the next chapter. The teachers invest *time* in these teams, and on these issues, striving to *align* organizational performance to school goals, but they wonder what will come of their labor. According to B-PLT member, Bill:

Student support has got such enormous potential to improve the kids falling through the cracks, and what they can do, and how successful they can be, and how they address school.

The ideal is wonderful, but trying to put it into reality and practice is... (He leaves this open-ended intentionally, shrugs his shoulders, and throws his hands in the air).

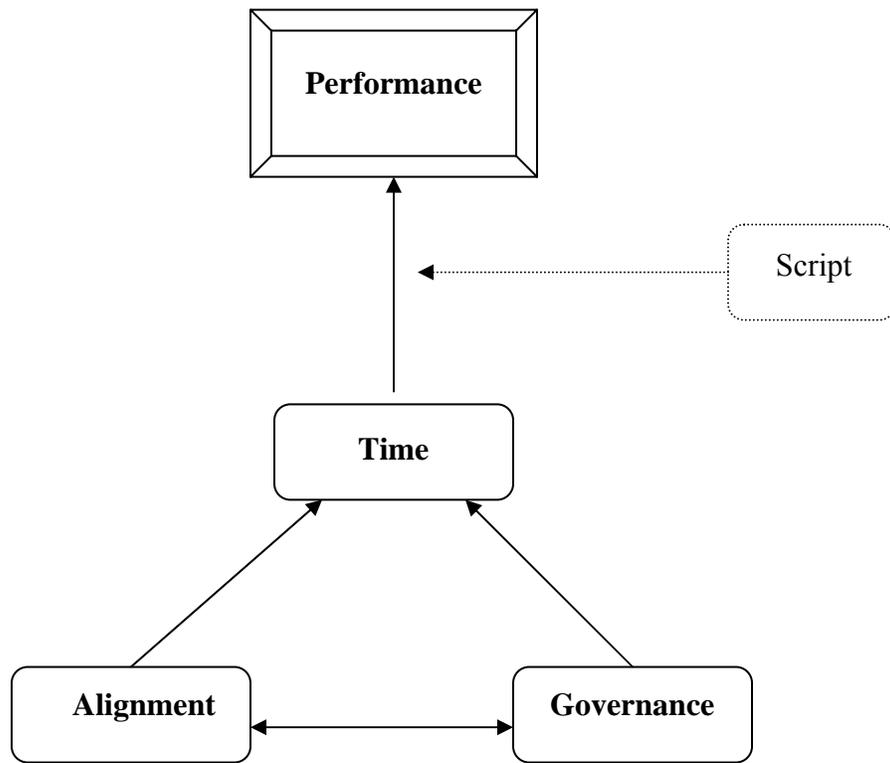
It is now over two years into the collaborative experiment of the Student Support PLT, but Bill's frustration is obvious. Simply establishing the vision and goals of professional learning teams, and creating their basic structure, has not translated into the transformed school that Bill would like to see.

For the B-PLT group, in particular, it is difficult to be patient and accept an incremental pace of change. For these educators, each *increment* may mean the difference between the success and failure of one or more students, and not just in one class, but rather in terms of their entire high school career; they may drop out. These are the people in the trenches, administering and implementing the student support intervention programs, that have been brought together based upon their mutual expertise and familiarity with the issues at hand. They find institutional barriers to change very frustrating, and have developed somewhat of an insulated perspective that *they* are the

ones who really care about the kids that these programs serve. I asked the team about the apparent low priority of these programs within the building and district vision for funding and resource allocation. Team members indicated that there may be more rhetoric than substance when it comes to the overall organizational commitment to student support. Ultimately, the B-PLT simply advises. Others decide what to do with that advice. As we have seen, both teams were strongly influenced by the pressures of *time*, the process and goals of *alignment*, and the complexities of school *governance*. Figure 9 graphically illustrates the relationship of these organizational dimensions to the overall *performance* of the teams over the semester. Time, alignment, and governance framed what the teams actually *did*, and consequently what they produced; be that assessments or program recommendations.

In Figure 9 an inter-relationship between alignment and governance is indicated. The process of alignment, and the use of teams as a structural form aimed at producing alignment, was constituted through existing school governance. Now, however, alignment via the PLTs has become a form of school governance itself. Teams have become one level of the hierarchy within the organization. This complexifies the overall governance structure of the school, and situates individual teachers within a more highly-populated array of governance influences. Teachers contribute to the hierarchy more directly by their participation in PLTs, but also face the possibility of having their professional discretion limited by becoming more enmeshed in this structure. Their individual practice becomes a transparent property of organizational performance; it becomes more public.

Figure 9. *The Organizational Dimensions of Collaborative Performance.*



This critical relationship between alignment and governance however is filtered through the overwhelming dimension of time. Time, more than any other single factor, verges on having a deterministic influence on team performance. Every element of team activity is influenced by the press of time. There is never enough of it. There is too much work to squeeze into too little of it. Time overlaps; teachers are often needed in multiple locations at the *same* time. Time can be taken away from meetings or teaching for other activities. Teachers have to *cut* time, they have to *find* more time, and they often just don't *have* the time. Ultimately, it is apparent that time, in many ways, is the defining dimension of team performance. It influences the content and nature of collaboration, the team members present for collaboration, and also filters the impact of team performance throughout the organization. Thus, time becomes a dominant variable in the intensification of teachers' work, as it is associated with the increased use of collaboration in this school.

In the next chapter I use interaction analysis to explore the manner in which these two professional learning teams constituted their performance within the context of these organizational dimensions, what I call the *script* of collaboration. In Figure 9, the mediating influence of the script is indicated to the right of the figure. The constitutive force of the structural dimensions of time, alignment, and governance are mediated by the emergent artifacts of discourse and conversation, or interaction. This analysis reveals additional organizational conditions that impact the team, specifically the constructs of *purpose* and *autonomy*. The discourse patterns of *active* and *passive* discourse are also identified as emblematic markers of collaborative interaction. Improvisational, yet recurrent, *interactional routines* that shape team conversations and impact collaborative

outcomes are also revealed. In the concluding chapter all of the situational and processual findings of this study coalesce and inform my identification and interpretation of the broad cultural *forces* that influence the use of collaborative structures in schools. These latter findings support the generalizability of this study beyond the mere context of the specific case study school and district.

CHAPTER SIX

The Script

The script of collaboration is *interaction* itself, in this case as represented by the conversations of the teams. This script mediates the influence of the organizational dimensions of PLT collaboration identified in Chapter Three. Close study of the script, however, reveals additional aspects of organization that strongly influence team interaction. These will be referred to as organizational *conditions*. In addition, analysis of the script reveals distinctive patterns of discourse emblematic of the teams under investigation, and the existence of patterned, yet improvised conversational routines. These *interactional routines* suggest the essential nature of collaborative activity within the two groups. They also reveal the emergent constitution of leadership through reciprocal interaction; leadership that is collective in both nature and construction, existing independently of both position and individual.

Analysis of the script of collaboration exposes the phenomenon of *emergent reciprocal influence*, and the manifestation of distributed leadership at the group level. These processes of relational leadership have a strong impact on the forms of learning that are characteristic of each team. Hence, they are intimately related to the outcomes of teacher collaboration within teams. This is revisited at the conclusion of this chapter. Organizational conditions and patterns of discourse are discussed first. Then I turn my attention to cataloging, describing, and interpreting the interactional routines that characterize the two teams. Finally I synthesize these findings, as well as the findings of organizational dimensions from the previous chapter, and relate them to team learning

outcomes. I use *team learning* as one measure of the outcomes of distributed leadership within the teams. The nature of the interactions and products of the teams reveal the essential character of this learning. This character of team learning, as a measure of leadership outcomes, contributes to the overall *performance* of the teams that was discussed in Chapter Five (see Figure 9).

The Nature of Team Collaboration

Three constructs emerged that informed my understanding of collaborative interaction within each professional learning team: *purpose*, *autonomy*, and *patterns of discourse* (see Figures 10 and 11). The first two constructs are associated with organizational conditions, and strongly influence the patterns of discourse that characterize the interaction of the team members. I argue that the nature of purpose and autonomy within a teacher team can, in part, create a situation where a team is *enabled* to participate in distributed leadership, characterized by *active discourse*. Alternatively, purpose and autonomy may serve to *disable* collaborative groups. In this situation, *passive discourse* is the result. In these two groups, *tentative collaboration* is marked by open purpose, disabling autonomy, and passive discourse. *Decisive collaboration* is marked by closed purpose, enabling autonomy, and active discourse. I deal first with organizational conditions as my first level of interaction analysis.

Organizational Conditions

Two of the most significant coding categories that were generated in this analysis related to the concepts of *purpose* and *autonomy*. These concepts encompassed a host of

Figure 10. *The B-PLT: Tentative collaboration.*

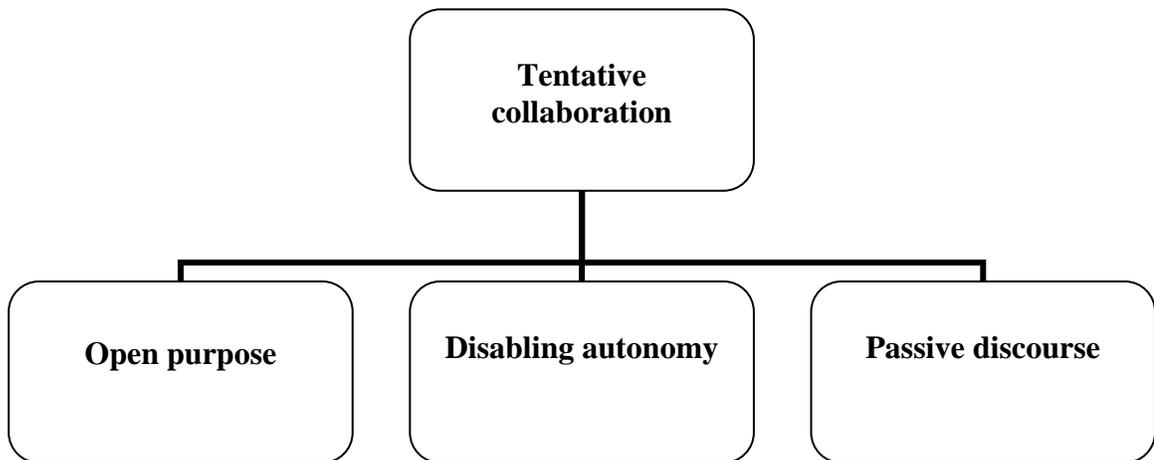
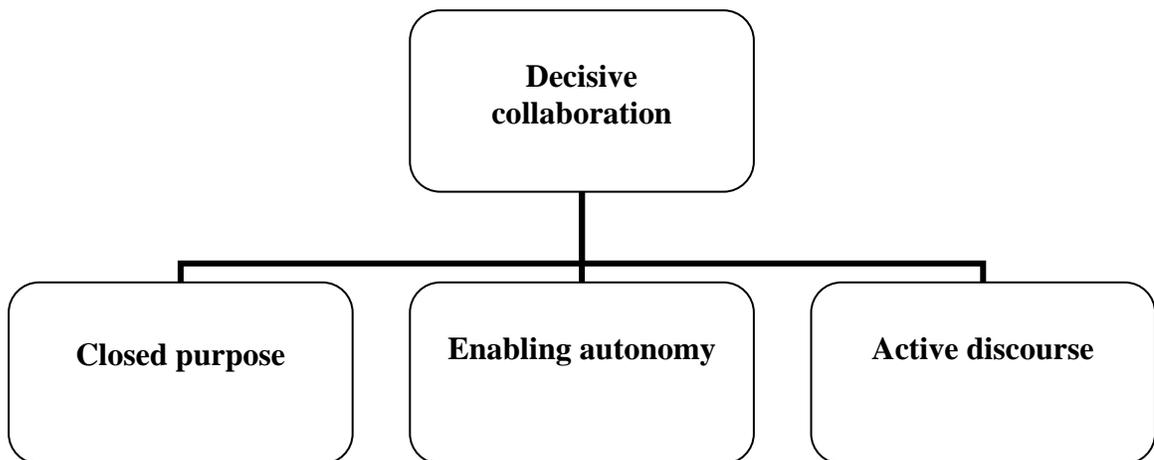


Figure 11. *The I-PLT: Decisive collaboration.*



related incidents revolving around the influence of organizational conditions on the team and the teachers, collectively and as individuals. These concepts created a structural environment that had a powerful shaping influence on how the teams functioned, however, these concepts were themselves shaped by the discursive practices within the teams. There is a continuing reciprocal influence of the external organizational conditions *perceived* by the group and the conversational *realities* of the teachers' collaboration. Frame of reference thus becomes an important aspect of evaluating team collaboration.

Purpose and collaboration. The *PLT purpose* is the understood reason that the PLT was created. The PLT purposes for these two teams fell into two distinct categories of *known problem solving* and *discovered problem finding*. Problem solving involves approaching a problem that everyone knows about, and applying well-known procedures and techniques to resolve the problem. In contrast, problem finding is required when no one is quite sure just how to frame the problem, nor what procedures would be involved in its solution. A team that is created with a well-defined purpose has been given the task of problem solving; a team that is created to work towards an innovative solution to a vaguely understood set of conditions has to engage in problem finding (see Chapter Three for more information on creativity research).

When a team is created with a problem solving purpose, team members conjointly focus on particular information and ideas in order to solve a well-understood problem or set of problems. This type of team has a *closed purpose*. The Instructional PLT has a problem-solving purpose; its task is to create interdisciplinary instructional and assessment materials for their team-taught social studies and English classes. The problem is well known and well understood by all of the team members, and they are all

in agreement about the nature of the problem and the appropriate procedures to use to solve the problem. Collaborative interaction within this team is characterized by close attention to well-understood tasks related to classroom instruction (see Example 6).

Example 6. *Purpose* in action in the I-PLT.

RICK: And here say, you know you need five elements that clearly illustrate the American identity at the time of, or clearly illustrates the lack of a collective identity.

JULIE: Right. And I think it needs to say clearly illustrate the evolution of the American identity, or clearly shows a lack of collective identity. Does that make sense?

JENNIFER: um hmm, um hmm. (affirmative)

JULIE: And make it, and just, I think we understand what this is saying, but they won't. Look we need to really make it clear, what we want, we want ...

SANDY: What types of things are you going to get with identity? What types of things are they going to say?

JULIE: Oh, they could say, you know, that we are all about materialism, material gain, or that we're about, you know that we are about extending democracy, or about....

The team's conversation remains focused on the known problems; other topics almost never come up. Even within the focused domain of instructional issues, there are topics that are not generally addressed with a great deal of creative scope, such as student achievement. Example 7 shows how the team collectively decides not to discuss topics that are too far removed from the known problem.

Example 7. Limiting topics in the I-PLT.

- JULIE: Well, you, do you, are there any little things we need to put in about..any stuff? I mean do we need to have them, do we need to pull a section from the Things that Carried? That's our big piece of literature...
- RICK: And do we want to put the things they carried in on the English course.
- JULIE: Well if, I mean if they are going to learn about Vietnam, and write a perspective about Vietnam, I mean, I mean to me that's where you...
- SANDY: Well, but don't, you know, that's, when you think about the perspectives and everything, that's a lot of work for them to do on top of what they're doing for CyberClass...see what I'm saying?
- JULIE: Well, all they're doing on CyberClass is clicking on multiple choice questions. Well, that's all they do is they read and answer multiple choice questions.
- RICK: I, I don't think, I think, I don't think it's going to be any more for them to do the CyberClass thing and then write a perspective than it would be to do the CyberClass thing and then read all these things we've given them and answer those questions. And we'll see the perspectives as like the same thing as all these chunks that we've given them in third quarter.
- SANDY: Yeah.
- RICK: Only rather than focus on reading, we're focused on writing.
- SANDY: Yeah.
- JULIE: The question's where do we, what literature do we plug in fourth quarter, and do we need to plug in any...you know...

In the example, Sandy presented an opportunity to examine the broader context of the assessment pieces that were being discussed by the group. She expressed reservations about the effect of the planned activities on the students – that it might be too much work. The other members of the team appeared to be preoccupied with finalizing their product.

Sandy's question is treated as tangential, and is rapidly dismissed. Because of the Instructional PLT's closed purpose, the team remains narrowly focused on solving known problems (not finding new ones) and has limited potential to identify creative solutions. The Building-wide PLT has a problem-finding purpose: to determine why certain students are persistently failing or in danger of failing multiple classes and to make recommendations for changes to the school-wide intensive intervention program that should serve these students. The administration has created this PLT to come up with novel, original approaches to the issue—a new way of framing the problem, or a new way of approaching its solution. This problem cuts straight to the core of the school's mission – student learning.

Teachers on the team have the opportunity to brainstorm and recommend novel and creative solutions for this problem. Problem-finding teams are tasked with discovering a new way of framing a problem, and identifying new procedures and strategies for solving the discovered problem. These teams have an *open purpose*. While it would not make sense to establish a strict agenda or to constrain the team's discussion too narrowly, a potential downside facing problem-finding teams is that the overall purpose may be so broadly defined that team members can become overwhelmed by the number of variables that influence their task. Not surprisingly, given the difficult nature of the problem, the PLT often appears to be overwhelmed by the task.

Example 8. *Open purpose* and frustration in the B-PLT.

TRACY: It goes back to the age old question that we've asked every year. What do we do with those kids, because what are we...? Even though they have an F and they can do the CyberClass and recover the credit, what's the underlying reason that these kids are failing so many

classes?

CHRISTINE: So many classes...

TRACY: Yeah, is it; is it that they can't read? Is it that they are on drugs? Is it that, you know, they're working forty hours a week and school, and you know, paying the bills is more of a priority than coming to school? You know -- all those issues... And we've looked at it and looked at it and we've played with it. And then we say, "Oh boy, that's just too big to figure out." And we don't do anything.

SUE: Well, the discouraging thing is that when I was looking through grades, I saw all these juniors that are failing, failing, failing, failing. And they are all kids that we had in ITP last year that were failing, failing, failing, failing... I mean, these same kids are still...

The members of the group are all experienced, and they know that potential problem solutions will involve a large number of people, issues, departments, and details. In the example, they seem to be operating under the assumption that whatever solution they might propose will be ineffective, because any such solution will necessarily involve major segments of the organization. This suggests that the team members do not believe they have the full support of the organization.

When problem finding discussion is creatively effective, the group will spend some time bouncing around ideas—some of them that don't go anywhere—before a worthwhile decision emerges. Different group members will have different ideas about the right way to proceed, or even differences of opinion about what topics are appropriate for discussion. Creative and innovative solutions are therefore more likely to occur. Analyses revealed, however, a potential downside to problem finding discussion; when it doesn't lead to the emergence of a novel, creative solution, it can seem like members are

working at cross-purposes, arguing about ground rules rather than being productive. This can lead to a kind of collaborative paralysis.

Example 9. *Collaborative paralysis* in the B-PLT.

TRACY: Are we going to care about this small group – which, it isn't huge – when you talk about forty kids out of how many...?

BARBARA: um hmm...

TRACY: You know, and even if you take out the special ed kids 'cause we'll meet their needs, you know, do we care, as a school, about that because we really...? We talk about it and it bothers us a little bit, but it doesn't bother us enough to really do something about it. And, you know, that's the issue...

SUE: So maybe our discussion really needs to be, “What group of kids are we talking about, number one? Who are we talking about as juniors that we need to do something with?” And we need to talk about... and I guess what we're trying to do with that group of kids right now is with this reading grant... I suppose, in my mind, it's, you know... Those are going to be some of these kids, but...

CHRISTINE: If we had the reading grant, can they get an English credit for that?

SUE: No. So I've been told.

CHRISTINE: And the reason for that?

SUE: I don't know.

BARBARA: Maybe it isn't English, its language arts. Why wouldn't reading count?

As shown below, this team is often disabled in accomplishing its problem finding task because they perceive that they lack the organizational support needed to freely propose truly creative solutions. During their discussion, team members demonstrate that they believe that issues beyond their control will impact decision-making. Thus, in their attempts to determine the best course of action for dealing with issues in the school's

failure intervention programs, the team is unsure of what to do, how to do it, and whether or not their recommendations will have any impact.

Example 10. Uncertainty in the B-PLT.

SUE: So, it can't count... So, it won't count. They're still going to have to take World Studies. They're still going to have to take U.S. Studies.

CHRISTINE: That's the whole... that's the problem. We're putting these kids in the wrong spots.

TRACY: But at the same time, and you know, we had... And I don't know. That's, that's frustrating too, because we had this whole conversation. I don't know if everybody knows about it, but we came up with these strategies that teachers could use in the classroom to modify, to make, you know, accommodations for kids. And we talked about it. But I don't... you know, I don't think it's being done.

CHRISTINE: It's not being done.

Autonomy and collaboration. Autonomy refers to the capacity of the PLT to make decisions that will lead to action and change. Autonomy varies according to the quantity and quality of the constraints put upon the group by the administration. All teams, groups, or individuals are bounded in some way by the larger organization; all decision-making is constrained in some way. Appropriate constraints to autonomy can be helpful, particularly with teams tasked with problem-solving; the constraints may help them to focus on their closed purpose. But in problem finding teams, constraints may interfere with the level of autonomy required for the team to engage in effective, creative decision making.

The Instructional PLT is an example of a team with a problem solving purpose, and its organizational constraints help to keep the team focused. The Instructional PLT makes only occasional reference to organizational constraints: department chairs,

particular students, technological concerns, or to scheduling issues. Instead, their conversation remains focused on their problem solving task. This narrow mission, however, inevitably limits the scope of leadership outcomes that emerge in this team. We will come back to this later in the chapter when I interpret the overall learning outcomes for the two groups.

This PLT is asked to consider very little aside from curricular and instructional ideas. They don't stray from this purpose to talk about other topics that might conceivably be related to curriculum: teachers other than their interdisciplinary circle, funding, parent relationships, administration, or broad social problems. There is an intrinsic limitation here. As long as they remain focused on solving the well-defined problems facing them, they are less likely to break outside the box and come up with innovative approaches, novel ways of framing or solving the problem(s) of curricular development.

Although the autonomy of the I-PLT is limited, it conventionally matches the closed purpose of their mission. When autonomy is matched with purpose it becomes *enabling autonomy*. The organization has granted the team the autonomy they need to accomplish the well-understood problem solving task. If problems are known, then it follows that many members of the organization will have some knowledge of how to approach solving said problems. Accordingly, the level of autonomy needed to enact these solutions is probably also known and understood. In the Instructional PLT, the conventional division of administrative versus instructional tasks is maintained. The PLT is a novel organizational structure because it uses interdisciplinary collaboration to solve known problems that are within the traditional realm of teacher responsibility. However,

the PLT is not granted any autonomy with regard to traditionally administrative areas of school operation.

The Building-wide PLT, on the other hand, has been tasked with making recommendations on an issue that has traditionally been under administrative control within this school. Consequently, the Building-wide PLT has the potential to truly exercise distributed leadership at a broad organizational level. However, this team is not granted enabling autonomy. The constraining factors on this team's collaborative interaction inhibit effective decision-making. Creative solutions do not emerge, and the participants themselves express sentiments of futility, as in Example 11.

Example 11. Feelings of futility in the B-PLT.

CHRISTINE: Productive brainstorming. But I don't know if we're ever, ever going to reach a conclusion.

SUE: Well, that's ok.

BILL: Seems like every time we get in these groups we come to the same conclusions.

The team has been given the freedom to make recommendations. These recommendations, however, go through the team's facilitator back to an Executive Council of teachers and administrators. As we learned in Chapter Five, the precise details of the hierarchical relationship of the Principal and Executive Council are unclear. Ultimately, the team's ideas must pass muster with the Principal, who is himself subject to the authority of district administration. The PLT is the second lowest rung on a ladder that represents the traditional hierarchical structure of public education – *individual*

teachers being the lowest. They have been given an open purpose—to come up with a creative new way of framing a difficult problem—but how much influence they will have within the organization is uncertain. Their conversation reveals that group members are aware of their lack of enabling autonomy; their conversation contains frequent references to external authority.

Example 12. The impact of external authority in the B-PLT.

CHRISTINE: And I think, before we do anything with it, once you have it kinda, maybe once we've just talked about it, the Deans need to have input too.

SUE: Oh yes.

CHRISTINE: Maybe even before you start on it they should come in this meeting and have their verbal input before you even try to put something together.

BILL: Yeah.

SUE: I'll see if they'll come to our ...

BILL: That's going to be important because they're the, especially when you say they're in charge.

CHRISTINE: And if they disagree ...

SUE: They'll say fine, do whatever, just tell us what to do (stated with sarcasm)

CHRISTINE: If they disagree with the rationale we need to know that before ...

Sue is the team facilitator, and is also the liaison with the school Executive Council. It is common for Sue to share information gleaned from personal communication and other meetings with administrators with the team. Sometimes, however, she chooses to share such information at moments in the conversation when ideas are being generated in a

brainstorming fashion. In such a context, bringing up an administrator's preferences can interfere with the creative flow of the discussion; the team members defer to their superiors' apparent wishes, and stop that line of inquiry.

Example 13. Administrative authority and *idea foreclosure* in the B-PLT.

BILL: That would be the one big step forward, the fact that advisors aren't going to know until the last minute, whether we are going to have, you know, Laurie or another funded position for study halls, another teacher in there. I mean it's been that way every year. We don't know until the last minute...

CHRISTINE: That is really the main problem...

BILL: Other, other than the three or four of us that do it every year, the advisors, Dr. Yates can't get all that stuff done until right before school starts.

In this example the team refers to the Principal in the flow of conversation. He does not sit at the table, nor in fact ever visit with the team, yet the mere mention of his preferences can terminate a line of reasoning. Of course, it might be a waste of time to pursue a line of thought that the principal is sure to reject; but without letting the team's discussion flow freely, problem-finding fails to fulfill its potential. Even though the idea might initially sound like one the principal would reject, a free-flowing discussion could eventually result in a new variant that hadn't yet been proposed; and, after all, that's the sort of outcome that a problem-finding group is supposed to generate.

The team does not believe that they have the appropriate degree of autonomy to accomplish their open purpose. They reveal this in their discussions: they frequently talk about what they don't know, what obstacles their ideas will face, the attitudes of the

broader teaching staff, the principal's desires and beliefs, funding concerns, space limitations, student needs, parent relationships, technological barriers, personal preferences, and contractual obligations and privileges.

Example 14. Perceived obstacles to success in the B-PLT.

TRACY: But at the same time, and you know, we had... And I don't know. That's... that's frustrating too, because we had this whole conversation. I don't know if everybody knows about it, but we came up with these strategies that teachers could use in the classroom to modify, to make, you know, accommodations for kids. And we talked about it. But I don't... you know, I don't think it's being done.

CHRISTINE: It's not being done.

SUE: It's definitely not being done. And I would say some of these kids are passing classes that shouldn't be...

BARBARA: And then we've got kids that we... I think... that are in classes that are... When it's brought to teachers' attention saying, "You know, here's a kid that, you know, fits that criteria – he's not really special ed, but... and does not qualify for those services, but is... is failing in the class..." And they'll say, "Well, we've already done those accommodations, those in class strategies..." I mean every time...

CHRISTINE: And I can understand...

BARBARA: We talk about that. People will say, "Well, those strategies have already been tried."

This team's degree of autonomy is not matched to their mission. They have too little autonomy to effectively engage in problem-finding discussion on a problem that is traditionally an administrative function. This is *disabling autonomy*. The team members realize that they don't have the appropriate level of autonomy, and these perceptions influence their patterns of discourse.

Patterns of Discourse

Differing purposes and degrees of autonomy were related to the patterns of discourse evident in each group. Exploring these patterns of discourse sheds more light on the general nature of collaborative interaction in the teams. Conversation in the two groups was different not only in content but also in form (see Figures 10 and 11). Comparison of the two groups revealed that the Building-wide PLT engaged in a pattern of discourse identified as *passive discourse*, whereas the Instructional PLT engaged in *active discourse*. Each team exhibited some manifestations of each pattern, yet there were definite tendencies toward one or the other pattern of discourse within each team. It is hypothesized that the purpose and autonomy of a team interact to partly determine which pattern of discourse is manifest in collaborative interaction.

Passive discourse and group communication. The meetings of the Building-wide PLT were predominantly characterized by the speech acts that Searle (1969) would label as representatives and expressives (see Example 15). These utterances are used to convey factual information and feelings.

Example 15. A representative and expressive statement from the B-PLT.

Nancy: I think its working fine. Umm... There is one teacher who has chosen to do it every other week, on Fridays. That's just the days they do it. They're coming' in and going' out, and it really works nicely, not that everybody has to do that... But everybody can have kind of their own little thing, so that they are not, you know, every three days, you know, going through and sending five more. That was real easy for those teachers and it was easy for me, and the kids knew. And so, they had... two weeks was enough that if they came in on a Friday, they knew they could possibly if they weren't too low, get that taken care of in two weeks and then be on their way.

Within the context of the PLT meetings, these types of speech acts function to communicate information that enhances the general knowledge of fellow team members. They are means of sharing information. The information they convey, however, is generally a static representation of reality—either from a group or individual perspective. The only action that is initiated is understanding, or an expansion of general knowledge. Sharing knowledge is a critical function of the collaborative process, because it leads to common understanding. The Building-wide PLT, however, seems mired in this stage of communication. Information is exchanged, personal feelings and attitudes are expressed, and questions are asked to solicit additional information. Speech acts that would signal substantive action beyond sharing information are notably absent. This process of continually exchanging and elaborating information is called *passive discourse*. The open purpose and disabling autonomy of the Building-wide PLT resulted in the group members having inadequate information. Team members needed to know more in order to participate effectively in the problem finding collaborative process. Because their level of information is so inadequate, each new piece of information leads to more questions. Questions are a subset of the category of declarations (Searle, 1969). These are active speech acts, yet in this case they serve to perpetuate an over-emphasis on information sharing.

The absence of active speech acts at the end of the meeting signifies the essentially passive nature of the discussion. There is a lot of talk but no action. The cumulative effect of this pattern of discourse is lack of substantive action; a great deal of time and energy is spent on problem identification and re-identification. Team members even comment on their redundant and circular discussions, as in Example 16 below.

Example 16. Redundant conclusions in the B-PLT.

- TRACY: This has been a productive meeting though, even though...
- SUE: It's been very productive meeting.
- TRACY: ...even though there isn't much written down.
- CHRISTINE: Productive brainstorming. But I don't know if we're ever, ever going to reach a conclusion.
- SUE: Well, that's ok.
- BILL: Seems like every time we get in these groups we come to the same conclusions.
- BARBARA: Oh, yeah.
- BILL: We need, we need...
- SUE: We know what we need. We just have to figure out how to get it.

A sense of futility sets in and problems and obstacles seem much more visible than solutions. Tension, and a sense of self-defeatism can also emerge, and potential solutions are quickly “shot down” by listing a litany of obstacles, as in Example Seventeen.

Example 17. Emergent tension over obstacles in the B-PLT.

- Sue: ...what's going on with the grant while we wait for the other people to get here. I finished it up totally, and, you know, I added in the cost of the teacher and the cost of... of... ummm... computers and all that and it ended up being 71 thousand dollars total, I think. And I had to send it to [central office personnel], who reviewed it, and then she gave it to [central office personnel], and [central office personnel] emailed me back and said she'd read it and that... ahh... I had to take out some of the information that we put in there about reading programs at the junior high school because she said they're not required. None of them are required. That if parents don't want kids in those classes...
- BARBARA: Well, ok...ummm... I called the guidance people over at [junior high] and asked them. And they said they were required. Sooo...

SUE: I'm not going to argue with the ...

BARBARA: I'm just telling you...

Team member frustration seems to set in as they continue to discuss what they perceive as obstacles. These obstacles make the team feel as if the job they have been given may be beyond their abilities to perform.

Example 18. Doubts of successful action in the B-PLT.

SUE: ...for that section. And then I got a... I received another phone message from [central office personnel] saying, ok, she needed to meet with [central office personnel] to talk about the grant. And that there was some concern about there being enough... that she was, first of all... she was surprised that [high school principal] would be willing to... to... ah... to allocate all of that... ummm... free text money. And that they, you know, wondered where the extra person was going to come from. So, I emailed her back and I said, "Well, the computers we already have, the person we already have. We are only asking for 15 thousand dollars worth of free text money or 14 thousand or whatever. And the person, you know, was going to come from already... You know, we were going to do some juggling." Well then I had a phone message from her, 'cause I had said I want to get this thing sent in this week if possible. And I had a phone message from her yesterday saying I need to... I visited with [central office personnel] and I need to talk to you about the grant, and she sounded kind of unintelligible on the phone. And so, I went and talked to Dr. Yates this morning, and shared all this with him, and he was going to call her back. And...

CHRISTINE: Good.

SUE: ...explain, you know, what we... how we... what we were doing, so... That's where we're at right now. And unless I hear by the end of the day... 'cause I'm leaving today. I'm not going to be able to submit it, you know, tomorrow. Maybe...

To the casual observer it may appear that the number and quality of barriers prohibits any real solutions to the problems that are surfaced.

Active discourse and group communication. The Instructional PLT meetings were characterized by a much greater balance of active speech to passive. Each meeting contained multiple episodes of substantive action, either performed at the time or initiated for the immediate future. Representative and expressive speech acts were present, yet these were enmeshed within a patterned sequence of discourse that led to specific actions. Products were created, decisions were made, and behaviors were directed. Team members performed commissive and declarative speech acts that committed them to action and/or signified a specific change in the state of affairs. Commissive acts communicated the clear intent of the speaker to perform an action, to do something. Such speech acts were not totally absent in the Building-wide PLT discourse, but they were much less common. Example 19 illustrates a typical commissive speech act from the I-PLT.

Example 19. A commissive speech act from the I-PLT.

RICK: Maybe we just take those... things we've just come up with and split them up and say, ok. I'll go in and look and make sure that, that there's information in there about reconstruction and about Chinese immigration and about you know, this, and then, er, whatever.

In the absence of such statements a group is left with a lot of talk and little action, as is seen in the Building-wide PLT meetings. Declaratives are typically associated with an institutional authority of some sort and often are related to policy change (Searle, 1969). In the Instructional PLT that role was filled by the team leader or facilitator. She "finalized" decisions with declarative statements that represented the cumulative decision-making effort of the group, however it was her speech acts that formally "made

it so” (Examples 20 and 21). These declarations symbolize the granting of institutional legitimacy to team decisions via compliance with established organizational protocol.

Example 20. A declarative speech act from the I-PLT.

JULIE: Now I just have make this, make sure because we always do this, we always say we are fine and then we get to like, right before and everyone hates the assessment. So I have to make sure again...

Example 21. A declarative speech act from the I-PLT.

JULIE: Ok, so the only thing we need to do under Industrialization is the Jungle and The Gospel of Wealth for CyberClass. And then Urbanization would be, umm, Jacob Reis. I have the little excerpt from...

JULIE: Ok, So, that would be that. And then they would use [political] cartoons

A typical sequence of speech acts for this team was very different than for the Building-wide PLT. Similar to that team, directive utterances in the form of questions frequently began a topical discourse strand; however, these strands were more often punctuated by active speech acts, and were more likely to be terminated by one. Active speech acts at the end of a meeting may indicate that preceding discussion contributed to the initiation of substantive action (although there may not always be a causal relationship between an active speech act and the preceding dialogue). These terminal active speech acts generally marked substantive action that either the entire team, or an individual, would take as a direct result of the preceding dialogue. Example 22 is a typical discourse strand for this team. It is also an example of the interactional routine of *Crafting* (see next section below).

Example 22. *Active discourse* in the I-PLT.

JULIE: Ok, here's my question though. Would you do Emma Lazarus, Ellis Island and then the tenements and all that kind of stuff, or would you do...that's how I would do it, cause you...see who's coming into the city, who's coming in the city, what, what... and then seeing how they live. Right?

RICK: Yeah.

JULIE: So. OK. That's what I thought. And then we're ready to move into the reforms. So what we need to come up with then is a template thing that they can do for all these little pieces. So what's the big question they have to answer every time they look at a primary source or whatever ...

RICK: I would say it's who has power...

JULIE: who has power ...

RICK: denied power...and...something like to what extent is power shifting in this...thing...whatever it is.

JULIE: Do they need to do some kind of plain, summarize this section, or what? What's the main idea, you know, something so that you make sure that they actually read it, or, or you, that's the only thing I'm worried about.

RICK: Well, I would think...

JULIE: To lead their reading, because if they're not good readers, you know, they're gonna read Jacob Reis and maybe not get it, you know.

RICK: And not get it.

JULIE: But at the same time I don't want to come up with questions for every little thing we do.

RICK: Yeah.

JULIE: But we forgot Booker T., and ...

SANDY: Don't we have at least generic questions that will kinda go with everything?

JULIE: Yeah, I'm just saying do we need more than this for each reading? Cause that's the big question for the assessment, but when they read Jacob Reis, about tenements, do they need to summarize or something, like what they've read and then answer those questions each time? Does there have to be another step or do you think that...

- RICK: Maybe a constructed response style thing like...
- JULIE: Maybe I'm just making stuff up, I don't know... I mean maybe they don't need to do something else, but...
- RICK: I would, I would think... if I'm given a piece of reading, those three questions, that would help guide me through it...
- JULIE: OK
- RICK: Because I know that I need to be thinking about those things as I'm reading it. And so in my mind I'm gonna have to, of course, you know I'm a good reader.
- JULIE: Yeah. And just by looking at a political cartoon, OK, are they going to be able to say, well I guess, with the information that they've learned from CyberClass, but see that's the big wild card that I'm gonna have to look at it and see what we've got going on. OK. Well. I think that's... We've done a lot. I mean to get all that ready...
- RICK: Yeah...
- JULIE: Now it's just a matter of actually putting all those pieces in a packet and typing up this thing, and giving it to Sarah. Right?

The prevailing organizational conditions of closed purpose and enabling autonomy encouraged active discourse leading to substantive action. Productive discussions that lead to concrete decisions are facilitated by contextual factors that encourage creative solutions to problems. Team members of the Instructional PLT have a task that is within their grasp to accomplish. Their individual and collective skills, their content area and pedagogical expertise, are ideally suited to performing the mission of the team. Meetings draw upon this expertise to solve problems through collective decision-making leading to substantive action. The group's patterns of discourse reflect this process.

The Routinization of Emergent Interaction

This macro-conversational approach of identifying patterns of discourse is a useful means of developing a very basic surface-level image of what team talk sounds like. However, this approach sheds limited light on the nature of the interactional influence of speaker utterances throughout and across conversational episodes. Gaining a micro-conversational level of understanding is necessary to gain finer resolution on the relational nature of leadership in collaborative contexts. The socially distributed nature of leadership becomes even more apparent in longer stretches of conversation. These strands of interaction offer a situated context for observing and documenting the *emergent reciprocal influence* of team members on one another as they collectively construct collaborative activity.

This study revealed patterned instances of leadership distributed across *interactional routines* (Sawyer, Scribner, Watson, & Myers, 2005). Interactional routines are culturally specific sequences of communicative interaction that are repeated, with some variation each time, and are shared and jointly enacted by all participants (Sawyer, et al; Sawyer, under preparation). Routines were identified through coding of the conversational data for patterned instances. Identified stretches of conversation were then examined using interaction analysis in order to determine the specific conversational components constituting these discrete sequences

Interactional routines are presented in a standard form of data representation that I and my colleagues have been using in this research (see the data examples in this section). Each excerpt is presented in four columns. In the first column, I indicate the speaking *turn* that is represented by this particular speaker's utterance. Each example is

typically part of a much larger conversational episode, thus other speaking turns both precede and follow the sequence being denoted. However, as each excerpt is being regarded as a discrete interactional routine, I note the speaking turns as beginning with the start of the routine in question.

In the second column I indicate the *conversational move(s)* that has been executed by the speaker through the specific turn. A single turn may include multiple conversational moves. The conversational moves suggest the function of the turn within the broader interactional sequence. This designation can only be made when the speaker's text is considered in relation to the entire sequence. It has ambiguous meaning at the group level unless interpreted as one element of the collective construction of meaning by all the speakers. Individual statements are interpreted according to their function and contribution to meaning to the plurality of the team, not just to the individual speaker.

In the third and fourth columns, respectively, I indicate the name of the speaker (by pseudonym once again) and the text of the speaking turn. In my relation of the text I have taken editorial liberty to streamline the transcript for smoother reading. In this editing, however, I have endeavored to preserve the language and communicative tone of the speaker to the greatest degree possible. I have not altered their use of language or their vocabulary, nor have I omitted any relevant utterances. Rather I have taken spoken language with all its inevitable fits and starts, repetitions, and self-corrections, and trimmed it down to a more readable text that still preserves the intent and flavor of the speaker. It is the kind of editing we would probably all want done to our spoken communication if it was going to be represented in writing. Whenever in doubt, I left the

teachers' speech just as it was spoken. Any text with emphasis added via italics is intended to represent the intentional emphasis of the speakers themselves. Exceptions are noted as such.

As each category of interactional routine is related and described, connections will be made to the previous chapter. These connections are primarily pointed out for the benefit of the reader's comprehension of the content of the teachers' talk. The conceptual relationships between the findings of my interaction analyses in this chapter, and the ethnographic findings of the previous chapter, are made more explicit in the final section of this chapter where I synthesize the findings of the study. However, they also emerge throughout the interaction analyses. This continues into the next chapter where I focus upon the conclusions and implications of this research. As I proceed through the presentation of these routines the reader may find it helpful to refer back to Chapter Five to refresh, and enhance, their understanding of the specific projects and topics that the teams were working on.

Crafting

The very first interactional routine that was identified is one that I refer to as *Crafting*. The routine was found in both teams, but was more common to the U.S. Studies team, or the I-PLT. Crafting always involved working on finalizing the details of some concrete, tangible commodity. In these sequences the teams are *crafting* a product. For the I-PLT these products were usually assessment rubrics, directions for assignments, lesson plans, and unit outlines. For the Student Support team, or B-PLT, this routine was less common, but did occur in the context of editing proposals for program recommendations, the creation of evaluation surveys, and the drafting of letters. Three

examples of Crafting sequences are presented below. The first two come from exchanges among members of the I-PLT. The third is an example from the B-PLT. Also recall that the example of a conversational strand of *active discourse* that was discussed earlier contained an embedded Crafting sequence.

In this first example of Crafting, we find the I-PLT engaged in their ongoing dialogue over their end of the year assessment. Remember that this assessment called for students to give an oral presentation on the idea of an American Identity. In the example Julie has had a conversation with Emma, the English chair, and wants to talk to the team about how they are putting together the directions and rubric for the final. This launches a Crafting sequence in which the team works collectively toward bringing their product closer to finalization.

Example 23. Interactional routine: *Crafting* in the I-PLT.

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Identify the problem; Suggest solution	Julie	Well, I looked at this and kind of thought, and I talked to Emma at lunch to kinda get their ideas about it, so the one thing I thought would be good is if we could organize it so it's like, what they need to have in each, like an intro and a body and a conclusion. Like you kinda do that cause you said you'll conclude...
2	Encouragement to continue	Brenda	um hmm
3	Justification	Julie	You know, this is really the body, but I thought it needed to be really clear in the beginning that they need to identify what they think the identity is... How did it

progress, I guess, over the course of the century, so that they are not just saying “Here’s an example of my identity again”, like, cause, I don’t think that, that’s not very thoughtful. How did it shift and change throughout the 20th century? And if they don’t think there is an identity, then they would have to show evidence of that.

4	Identify potential flaw	Rick	What if they think there is an identity but it doesn’t change?
5	Elaboration in response	Julie	Then they would have to show how it’s been reinforced throughout each time period.
6	Acceptance	Rick	OK
7	Alternate proposal	Sandy	Or I like <i>evolve</i> , that shows kind of a cause/effect, right?
8	Retrospective interpretation	Julie	But what he’s saying is that if it, it could have stayed strong at the beginning and strong at the end...
9	Accept and elaborate	Rick	I think you could argue either one.
10	Accept and elaborate	Jennifer	You can say that it is still evolved, you can say that it’s still strong, but it’s still in every decade... that’s evolved in some way, either further evolved or change evolve, you know what I mean?
11	Collective agreement	Multiple speakers	uh-huh

Julie opened in Turn 1 with the identification that the rubric was still subject to debate and discussion, thus identifying that the problem is what the final product will actually look like and convey. She suggests a structured outline approach that will scaffold students in expressing their ideas. In Turn 4, Rick perceives a potential flaw. Julie responds to his concern and elaborates on her solution to demonstrate that it can

accommodate what he was worried about. Sandy jumps in and offers an alternative conceptual dimension to the rubric in the 7th Turn. This leads the group to consider the alternative and finally agree, in Turn 11, that it adds something to the assessment. This example demonstrates many of the important features of interactional routines. These routines have a flexible, adaptive structure that leads to variation. Like a snowflake, no two routines are exactly alike. Embellishment is also common to these routines. It is unpredictable at which point one or more participants may add new details or nuances to the routine. They are improvisational in nature, yet coalesce around distinct themes, or functions; such as Crafting. This example is often initiated by a move of the type “Identify the problem” and eventually closes with “Collective agreement”; albeit in a rather informal fashion. Between the opening and closing of this routine, negotiated problem-solving moves can occur in various orders: “Suggest solution,” “Justify solution,” “Identify potential flaw,” “Elaboration,” “Alternate proposal,” “Accept and elaborate.” Most Crafting routines tend to begin with moves like “Identify the problem” and “Alternate proposal” and to end with a shift to moves like “Accept and elaborate” and “Retrospective interpretation.” The closing move of “Collective agreement” is a bit less common, and usually betrays a long history of previous Crafting sequences that have already laid the groundwork for such consensus.

The Crafting routine is collectively managed and organized. This quality is complementary to a distributed perspective of leadership. The team leader opens the routine, but does not control its structure. The specific structure of the routine is a collective improvisational product of the team. All of the participants assume

responsibility for enacting and completing the routine. The problem solution that emerges is collaborative in nature – it is a result of social interaction within the group.

In a second example of Crafting, once again from the I-PLT, we see a continuation of work on the final assessment. In the first example the team was working out structural details of how they wanted students to organize their work. It is very likely this also related to creating an assessment piece that would be easier to commonly evaluate, although this point did not explicitly surface during their conversations. In this second example the team is focused more upon the medium of expression and details of performance that will be expected of the students. They establish whether it is an oral or written performance, what support items the students can use, and what types of evaluation tools they (the teachers) will have. In this example Lynn, one of the more soft-spoken members of the team, initiates the routine.

Example 24. Interaction Routine of Crafting (I-PLT)

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Query practice	Lynn	Are they writing out this persuasive essay, or just...?
2	Clarify	Rick	I think they are speaking it.
3	Elaborate	Brenda	We're going to give them a graphic organizer.
4	Acknowledge clarification	Lynn	I see it's oral (reading off handout).
5	Elaborate	Brenda	And then they will take that graphic organizer, I guess, and...

6	Expand on elaboration; Provide rationale for practice	Julie	We would hold onto those. They can use a note card, I think it says here (referring to handout), and then they would give us their graphic organizers so if you want to be able to follow easier you could, or you could just listen, you know, for errors. But they only, that's what we said last time...
7	Suggest revision	Sandy	It would be easier, it would be nice, if the graphic organizers, if we had like a note margin...
8	Query practice	Lynn	Will we have a common rubric for these?
9	Affirm query; Suggest solution; Solicit input Recommend practice	Julie	Yeah, we'll need to make one up. Ok... It would be pretty basic. We could pull it straight off of here (the handout), but there is some stuff we need to talk about that I think needs to be added in here. What else do we want to see? I think personally we don't mention, we haven't talked yet about the time limit. We've done ten minute blocks of time when they do these presentations. So I think we need to make... I know if we don't say 5-7 minutes or something... That gives you time to talk to them about their words and stuff. If you say 5 to 10 then they're going to go to ten and then you don't, you're out of time. I don't know what the time, 5-7 or... And then I think we need to add something on here about proper presentation skills.
10	Affirm recommendation	Rick	Yeah, I think that's good.
11	Recommend practice; Solicit input	Julie	And that needs to be part of the rubric. And I don't know what those (presentation skills) are.

This example of the Crafting routine is opened in Turn 1 with a move of “Query practice”, a variation on the “Identify the problem” move. Lynn asks the substantive question of practice of whether students are also writing out the essay they will be

presenting orally. Through sequential moves of “Clarify” and “Elaborate” two other teachers are able to offer an answer to Lynn’s question. In Turns 5 and 6, Brenda and Julie appear to sense that the questions betray an underlying *problem*, hence my association of “Query of practice” with “Identify the problem.” Based upon the remainder of the conversational sequence, Lynn’s move in Turn 1 is able to be seen as more than a simple factual question. It revealed a broader lack of understanding of the nature of the assessment.

This reveals the contingent quality of understanding both the function and meaning of speaking turns in social settings. Individual utterances gain their fullest definition through association with the comments that precede and follow the actual statement in question. In subsequent turns, Brenda and Julie seek to ameliorate the situation with moves of “Elaborate”, “Expand on elaboration”, and “Provide rationale for practice.” This discussion leads to Sandy’s “Suggest revision” move in Turn 7, a move that provides even more evidence that a problem existed regarding the group’s mutual understanding of the assessment. Lynn follows up on this in Turn 8 with another “Query practice.”

In Turns 9-11 the questions and new ideas stimulated changes in the team’s overall vision of the assessment. If the rest of the team had not responded with the information sharing and openness that they had, then Lynn might not have felt comfortable asking another “simple” question. These details had been established in the past, but for whatever reason not all of the group was clear on them. The team’s collective enactment of the Crafting routine allowed for further revision and additional

member input. It also expressed a collective commitment to respecting one another and supporting the growth and development of member knowledge.

The next example of the Crafting routine involves the B-PLT. Recall that this team spends much of their time sharing information and developing common understanding. In the semester they were observed, tangible outcomes were modest. Therefore there are few opportunities for Crafting to develop. The contextual conditions are simply not supportive of the emergence of the routine. It was present on occasion, however, and the following example illustrates one of these instances. The team is discussing edits to a letter that will be sent to parents describing the First Alert program that the team wants to develop. The program is not in place yet. It still requires approval by the Executive Council. The team, however, is putting together a sample letter that would be sent to parents as part of their proposal for the creation of the program.

Example 25. Interactional Routine of Crafting (B-PLT).

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Identify problem	Sue	One question I had Christine, where, you know, we talked about each student being interviewed. We're talking about the targeted students, right, not every single sophomore? I probably need to say that.
2	Challenge problem identification	Christine	It says though, at the top, target population.
3	Defend problem identification; Equivocate	Sue	Yes, but then I thought maybe that's confusing when it just says each student. I don't know... (extended pause)

4	Request clarification	Christine	The last sentence, should it say “ <i>if the student?</i> ”
5	Clarify	Sue	“ <i>If the student continues</i> ”, yes.
6	Suggest solution	Barbara	And you could just say each targeted student will receive... be really, say each nominated student.
7	Request clarification	Sue	Could. Where are you? Where are you reading from?
8	Clarify	Barbara	That first sentence up there. <i>Each student nominated for this program</i> (laughs), or suggested...
9	Request clarification	Sue	For which sentence?
10	Clarify	Barbara	That very first sentence where you were saying you wanted to put targeted...
11	Acknowledge clarification	Sue	Oh...
12	Suggest solution	Christine	You could just say the following procedures should be put into place, for targeted students.
13	Affirm solution	Barbara	That’s good.
14	Identify problem	Sue	And I’m wondering if we should say, really, the following procedures will take place, since we’re, you know, once this...

This is a good example of group editing at work. Sue gets her team members involved in proofreading or editing the letter that they want to submit as part of their proposal package. In Turn 1, Sue uses an “Identify problem” move to initiate the discussion of the wording of the letter. She expresses concern that the description of the target population for the program is not specific enough. Christine takes exception to this in Turn 2 and points out another part of the document that she believes clarifies the

suggested problem. In Turn 3, Sue defends her position that the wording is confusing, but then performs an “Equivocate” move, which serves functions as an attempt to defuse any possible tension that is brewing. A long pause follows which seems to confirm that Christine and Sue are at odds over this detail. In Turn 4, which follows the pause, Christine actually moves to another detail in apparent avoidance of the previous contested detail. Sue concurs with Christine’s minor edit. Then, in Turn 6, Barbara moves back to the original problem with a “Suggest solution” move. Turn 7-11 represent the difficulty that can be experienced in getting everyone looking at the same text location in the context of group editing. Barbara consistently steers Sue to seeing the point she wanted to make. In the end Christine seems accepting of the need for a revision (Turn 12) and actually contributes with a “Suggest solution” move. The routine ends with Sue turning to the identification of yet another problem. This suggests that the routine may continue on with another detail taking center stage.

The Crafting routine takes on slightly different manifestations in different contexts. With the I-PLT it appears to be a somewhat more dynamic routine, with more fluid shaping taking place. It also is simply much more common with this team. In the B-PLT, the Crafting routine takes on a bit more of a clerical tone. It is mainly seen when the team is editing work or looking for the right wording for a proposal. It is seen less commonly. This is not to say that this team does not engage in lively problem-solving. They do, as we will see below with the Centering and Reconnaissance routines. Crafting is not as much a part of their interactional repertoire.

Voting & Marginalizing Dissent: Two Frequently Wedded Routines

Interactional routines do not always manifest themselves in discrete and distinct contexts. Sometimes they intertwine with one another. This can be circumstantial, and it can become a pattern of its own. The routines of *Voting* and of *Marginalizing Dissent* offer an example of two interactional sequences that frequently become conjoined. In the most typical form, the routine of Marginalizing Dissent is embedded within the somewhat procedural routine of Voting. Marginalizing Dissent is a routine found in numerous circumstances, but it has a particularly influential presence on team learning when set within the context of the Voting routine. Each routine can also be found existing on its own. They are not always found together. They can also be found in association with other routines. For instance, Voting is often an embedded routine within Crafting sequences. Marginalizing Dissent, on the other hand, is sometimes present in Centering routines. Centering, and its distinctive varieties, is discussed further below.

In the example of Voting and Marginalizing Dissent presented below, the I-PLT is yet again talking about the final assessment. This time they are trying to decide whether students shall sit or stand for their presentation. An extended Crafting sequence had preceded this part of the conversation. In this excerpt, however, voting is definitely the focus. During the voting procedure one team member's viewpoint becomes problematic and is isolated by other teachers. This mini-sequence constitutes the routine of Marginalizing Dissent.

Example 26. Embedded Interactional Routines: Voting and Marginalizing Dissent

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Bid for consensus	Julie	Ok, I'm in the audience, so what's your vote?
2	Accept bid	Rick	I vote for sitting...
3	Reject the bid for consensus	Jennifer	Why couldn't we each do it different with each class?
4	Accepting response	Rick	I guess we could...(incomplete)
5	Clarification	Jennifer	Either stand or sit.
6	Rejection with justification	Julie	I just think it's a good idea as much as possible to know, to have as much of this common as...
7	Bid for consensus	Rick	Should we take a vote?
8	Reject the bid for consensus	Sandy	They don't, they don't get any presentation skills stuff. Then why are we doing this as the very last thing? We should have been doing it the total year...
9	Truncation	Rick	I think ...(incomplete)
10	Accept bid	Jennifer	I vote for sit.
11	Accept bid	Rick	I vote for sit.
12	Modify bid	Sandy	Sit, but kind of structured...
13	Truncation	Rick	I think ...(incomplete)
14	Retrospective interpretation	Jennifer	(Physically demonstrates, standing halfway and holding her hands out in front of her): How about a kind of hover?

Example 9 begins with a “Bid for Consensus” move from Julie that initiates the Voting routine. The conversation that follows is collectively negotiated and enacted, a characteristic feature of interactional routines. Rick accepts the bid and provides an accepted move within the voting routine. Jennifer and Sandy, however, do not agree that the Voting routine is appropriate at this point in the meeting. Jennifer’s objection is satisfied with a “Rejection with justification” move from Julie, thus accomplishing the first step in marginalizing Sandy’s position. The time around, Rick delivers a “Bid for consensus” move, following up on Julie’s initial move of the sequence. This is representative of the collective, distributed nature of interactional routines. In Turn 8, Sandy still argues against the rationale for voting at this time by continuing to debate the basic premise with a “Reject the bid for consensus” move. This leads to the final stage of the Marginalizing Dissent routine in Turn 14. Jennifer makes light of Sandy’s objection with a humor-laden “Retrospective interpretation” move.

Reconnaissance

Some routines are more frequently associated with one team than another. Recall that Crafting is a routine more often found in the I-PLT than the B-PLT. An interactional routine found to be distinctly associated with the building-wide PLT is that of *Reconnaissance*. This routine represents the process of searching for problems, frequently with proposed solutions intimately intertwined along the way. The open purpose of the B-PLT which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter comes back into focus at this point. This is a problem-finding team. Their task is to find problems in the school’s approach to student support services, and to develop novel and innovative solutions to these problems. This is no easy task, particularly when the disabling autonomy of the

team is taken into consideration. The team is there to find problems, but feels constrained about what recommendations they can make. They have a mission that requires them to think outside the box, but have not been given the clear message that this is actually permissible.

Example 27. Interactional routine: Reconnaissance.

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Propose action	Sue	I don't know if we want to call this a pilot program or...
2	Affirm proposal	Barbara	Well, I think we probably should.
3	Elaborate on proposal	Sue	Because we probably ought to <i>see if it makes a difference</i> , you know, keep track of data.
4	Add to rationale for action	Barbara	And I think another reason to call it a pilot program is just to let the parents know we're trying to do something.
5	Accept	Sue	Uh huh, ok
6	Identify potential problem	Bill	Do we have a, a number of kids that would fit here - that don't come back, like they've enrolled for classes, but they don't show up their junior year?
7	Elaborate on potential problem	Sue	Yeah, I was going through last year's to try and find them, and I don't, you know there's no way to know if they drop. Well I looked at the drop list that we got at the beginning of the school year and I think maybe two of them were on the drop list, they actually dropped out of high school, but, you know the rest, who knows. They could have dropped out and we just don't know, they could have transferred somewhere else, I mean I don't have any access to that information.

8	Suggest solution	Bill	So we are looking for some type of data that says this program's a good one. We'll be looking at these kids, if they graduate, at the end of their senior year.
9	Elaborate on solution	Sue	I think grades, too. If we keep the grades, look at the semester grades and how many classes they've passed. And you know I maybe need to include ...
10	Affirm solution	Bill	That would be something to look at...
11	Elaborate on solution	Sue	Include that - how we are going to assess.
12	Affirm solution	Barbara	That probably is a good thing, assessment...
13	Clarify conditions of problem	Christine	If they don't pass it's because of their ...
14	Affirm clarification	Sue	Semester grades...
15	Continue clarification	Christine	I'd say 90% of it. These are my good kids in ITP (Intensive Tutoring Program).
16	Elaborate on solution	Barbara	And high school graduation... I mean what I'm trying to say is - on time. That they graduate with their peers.
17	Clarify conditions of problem	Christine	Miss two more days, a couple weeks later, they just never get through in the appropriate amount of time
18	Modify proposal	Sue	So this is a list we'll actually have to make up this summer, because, we won't know this semester, we won't know what they've failed until after...
19	Identify potential problem	Christine	Do we need to look at both first and second semester?

Note that in Turn 3 of this sequence I have italicized the phrase “*see if it makes a difference.*” This is not a case of the speaker adding emphasis. I want to draw our focus to that particular comment. In that statement the “it” is the proposed solution – the pilot program. The teachers want to see *if it makes a difference* because they are still unsure of the problem. The proposed solution is one means of trying to gain more resolution on the nature of the problem. If *it* works then they have probably succeeded in narrowing down the range of possible sources of the problem. This process is called *Reconnaissance* because of the searching component. The team is really in unknown territory trying to find out what obstacles are in their way and how they may navigate around them. Solutions are proposed and discussed, but primarily as a means to identifying the problem more clearly.

Reconnaissance routines frequently begin with the move of “Propose action”, or the alternative of “Propose solution” when a problem appears to be clearly known. “Propose action” tends to be the opening move when the team is just coming up with an idea of *what* to do, but they are not quite sure *why* they are doing it. The underlying problem is still unclear. Thus, the tendency of this team to keep creating programs, yet to still wonder if they are addressing the root issues of concern.

In Turns 1-4, Sue and Barbara collectively develop the idea of using the term *pilot program* to refer to their new idea. This is a good example of *emergent reciprocal influence*, working together to build up an idea that would be less developed without the social contribution intrinsic to collaborative interaction. In Turns 6-12, a potential problem is raised via Bill’s “Identify potential problem”, but effectively addressed by the group in a series of solution related exchanges. Beginning in Turn 13, the team then

clarifies the conditions of the problem. This is an example of the thoroughness that the B-PLT consistently demonstrates. They are methodical about problem-finding and solving. They try to consider as many details and wrinkles as they can. In Turn 18, Sue modifies her original proposal based upon the conversational exchange that has just taken place. Sue may be the formal *leader* of the team, but the *leadership* in the team is clearly reciprocal.

It is difficult to look at an example like this and not view the other team members as leaders as well. It suggests that we may do better to use the term *leadership* to identify social interactions that result in modified behavior, rather than attempt to label specific individuals within those interactions as *leaders*. In the example we just reviewed *leadership* is not a quality possessed by a particular team member, but is rather a relational phenomenon that is conjointly constructed.

Centering

The routine of Centering is the clearest embodiment of *emergent reciprocal influence* that I have identified in the interactions of the teams. The idea of using the term *Centering* was inspired by the techniques of potters using a wheel to make pottery. In the activity of throwing a pot, the potter must maintain a continual focus on keeping the clay centered upon the wheel. If this is not done then the incipient creation may become imbalanced, disproportionate, or even collapse upon itself. The routine I call Centering seems to perform a function similar to that of the ever-vigilant potter, yet it is a collectively constructed interactional structure; as if a group of people were using a potters' wheel together.

Centering will sometimes lead into a Crafting sequence. Actually, in the I-PLT it appears to be a necessary precursor to an *effective* crafting sequence. Originally I felt that Centering should perhaps have been called *Aligning*, but now prefer to associate alignment with both routines of Centering and Crafting. Alignment is essentially a *compound routine* comprised of those two individual routines. Alignment is both the process of centering thinking and strategy and crafting products that translate that into practice.

Centering takes several distinct forms. These forms are somewhat different for each team. Once again this variation in forms of routines is associated with whether the team is primarily a problem-solving or problem finding team. For the I-PLT there are *pedagogical*, *logistical*, and *conceptual* varieties (all necessarily overlap to some extent – but seem to vary consistent to these topical themes). The B-PLT does not deal directly with pedagogy to the extent that the I-PLT does. In addition, the B-PLT is in more of an advisory capacity, thus logistical issues are less their concern than they might like. The open purpose and problem-finding nature of the team, however, lead to the Centering routine being quite common. What we find is that, with both teams, Centering is an essential element of team collaboration, but that it varies between the teams as to its character.

Note that the Centering routines tend to be longer than those previously discussed. For instance the first two examples that I share are each 31 turns in length. This length reflects the complexity of accomplishing the activity of Centering. Centering involves team members sharing their own practice, thoughts, interpretations, and ideas about problems and solutions. The aggregate of these shared ideas are then “built up” through

social interaction to be “bigger” than they were before, and in such a way that they create a new understandings. This is analogous to a potter’s creation of novel unified forms that transcend the dimensionality of the original lump of clay they began with. The activity of a team is collectively enacted, developed through an improvisational interactional process, and in a state of continual negotiation. It is in danger of collapsing upon itself at any moment, just as the incipient pot spinning upon the wheel.

Four examples of Centering follow below. The first three are examples from the I-PLT. Each example illustrates one of the three different varieties of Centering that I identified for this team. The fourth example, from the B-PLT, depicts a fourth variety that is a blend of both the conceptual and logistical forms found with the I-PLT. Thus, I refer to this variety of Centering as *conceptual/logistical*. The lack of a pedagogical version in the B-PLT is consistent with the differing *purposes* of the team, but also exposes the self-imposed limitations of the B-PLT.

Pedagogical. The first example from the I-PLT is a Centering routine of the pedagogical variety. The team is trying to center their approach to teaching practice. The teachers are in the midst of transitioning from one unit to another and are trying to get their schedules in sync as much as possible. They are also comparing notes on practice and trying to figure out the best way to implement a letter writing assessment. They then transition into talking about how they will each integrate the film and book *The Great Gatsby* into their plans. This occurs in Turn 14 (see below), a turn which serves as a nodal point linking together what may be regarded as two separate, yet consecutive, episodes of Centering. The team members’ influences upon one another are apparent. These influences are emergent, improvised, collectively managed, and reciprocal. Each

teacher ends the sequence being more *centered* on the practice of the team, and the relationship of their own personal activities to the team, than when they began the routine. A critical component of their professional behavior has been modified through processes of conjoint agency manifest as the leadership phenomenon of *emergent reciprocal influence*.

Example 28. Interactional Routine of Centering (Variety – pedagogical; I-PLT)

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
			[1 st Sequence is initiated]
1	Query practice	Rick	How are you going to do the letters with that?
2	Share and give rationale	Julie	We're not going to worry about the war (WWI), because I'm not going to do a perspective with that.
3	Clarify	Sandy	We'll probably start with the 1920's.
4	Rationale in support of clarification	Julie	We'll probably start with the 1920's because we're going to get through Imperialism.
5	Reciprocate sharing and rationale	Rick	I'm having my kids do a speech on Imperialism where they have to take a stand on it. I was thinking that would be the first piece if we had them do something like perspectives. I'm going to have that be their beginning.
6	Recognize alignment	Julie	I'm kind of doing that too. They have to write a position on the Philippines or whatever.
7	Elaborate and give rationale	Sandy	We were thinking, especially for our 4 th hour, that maybe if they had an audience other than us - they know that somebody else in the classroom has to

answer their letter – that it might get them to do either a bit better work or make them do at least something.

8	Query design	Brenda	Are they doing this primarily as homework or in class? Because I know that part of the problem was when all these were homework a lot of them didn't do it.
9	Clarify	Sandy	It will probably end up being a mixture. The first couple will be in class.
10	Follow-up query	Brenda	What happens when Joe doesn't send one to Anne? She just writes back and acts like he did (cheats)?
11	Recognize potential design flaw	Sandy	I guess... we'll have to figure that out. If Joe doesn't do it, then maybe we'll put Anne with another person.
12	Propose solution	Julie	I was even thinking they could be in a small group, where they are a group.
13	Query design	Rick	You mean where they are constantly writing within that group?
14	Clarify and defend proposal	Julie	They are always in that group so whoever did it would always have someone to respond to. I don't know. We haven't really had a chance to figure it out.
	Appeal to timeline		[Opportunity initiated for 2 nd Sequence] We're not really talking about that until the 20's anyway. [2 nd Sequence begins]
15	Query timeline	Rick	What's yours starting... when?
16	Share	Julie	Probably Friday.
17	Follow-up query	Lynn	This Friday?
18	Share and give rationale	Julie	Well, that's why we're trying... we want to start <i>Gatsby</i> (the novel) and get a good...

19	Query practice	Rick	Did you guys write today? Your assessment?
20	Share and give rationale	Julie	We want to get a good start on <i>Gatsby</i> (the novel) before Spring Break, and then give them a goal to read by the end of MAP. And that would be...
21	Reciprocate sharing	Rick	See, we're finishing up before Spring Break aren't we?
22	Confirm	Brenda	Yes. We started (<i>Gatsby</i> , the novel) last Friday.
23	Reciprocate sharing	Julie	For regular, we're going to show <i>Gatsby</i> (the film) the last two days before Spring Break.
24	Confirm	Lynn	Right...
25	Evaluate design	Julie	It works out perfectly...
26	Revise evaluation	Lynn	But we won't be into the 20's though.
27	Query logistics	Rick	How long is that movie? Is it a full two periods?
28	Request clarification	Brenda	Oh no. I've got it, it's like an hour and... Which version are you guys talking about?
29	Clarify	Sandy	Robert Redford.
30	Share and give rationale	Brenda	See, I have the A&E version and I might show that one instead. That's what I showed last year. I think for a compare/contrast essay it might be better than the Redford version.
31	Oppose rationale	Rick	I like the Redford one. It's more entertaining than the A&E version.

[2nd Sequence ends]

The routine is initiated by a “Query practice” move by Rick. Recall earlier that I explained that, contingent upon the content of the surrounding turns, this move can fulfill the same function as an “Identify problem.” Rick’s move initiates a sequence of the Centering routine that runs through Turn 14, at which point Julie’s “Appeal to timeline” move created an opportunity for a new sequence of the same routine, or rather an embellishment of the previous sequence. The interactions that occur between Turns 1 and 14 are highly distinctive of the Centering routine. Once a query is raised, or problem identified, the group launches into a roundtable exchange typically consisting of moves such as “Share and give rationale”, “Clarify”, “Reciprocate sharing and rationale”, “Recognize alignment”, “Elaborate and give rationale.” These conversational moves can be assembled in many different ways that all accomplish the main function of the routine; for team members to talk about their practice with one another and identify points of commonality and difference, and then work on aligning that practice. This entire interactional process is Centering.

Note how Sandy interjects an innovative idea she had for one of her classes into the discussion in Turn 7, and how Brenda asks a pointed question about how cheating can be dealt with in Turn Ten. Throughout the sequence the team works together to build the idea of practice up, to shape it, to smooth out the rough parts, yet always keep it *centered* by relating their own individual practices to it. In this way the team collectively constructs a new iteration of practice, one that may be more robust, yet may also limit the discretion of individual teachers who may have wanted to do things a different way.

The second consecutive iteration of the routine begins in Turn 15 when Rick uses a “Query” move to extend the Centering onto a new dimension of the team’s current

practice. The second sequence is similar to the first in nature, and in the types of moves that are employed. One notable difference is that towards the end Brenda and Rick disagree about which film version of *The Great Gatsby* is best for class use. This occurs in Turns 30 and 31. It appears that they “agree to disagree” and will each show the version they prefer. This demonstrates that some room for individual discretion is still present. Despite going through the process of Centering, the two teachers fail to become perfectly *aligned*.

Logistical. In a second example of Centering from the I-PLT we can see the *logistical* variation on the routine. In this variation the main things being discussed are logistical, or procedural, in nature. They usually do not have an overly direct connection to pedagogy or conceptual content. In this example the team is talking about MAP implementation and what they will do with students who finish early in a testing block window. They then start talking about creating an incentive activity for students, to boost their interest in the MAP. The thrust of the discussion appears to be related to increasing student motivation for participation, more than actually anything to do with their learning of the content. Nevertheless, the teachers are still collectively engaged in processing this topic in such a way that they will all understand how each thinks about the issue, and what specific activities each will implement. For part of the routine the team works on collectively constructing the idea of an aligned activity that would involve competition among the classes.

Example 29. Interactional Routine of Centering (Variety – logistical; I-PLT)

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Propose practice	Julie	We really had it in our minds for <i>Gatsby</i> , and because when we come back from Spring Break we immediately start MAP, and I wanted to be able to give them something over the MAP on the 1930's.
2	Elaborate on proposal	Sandy	We really think we'll be over 100 pages into <i>Gatsby</i> by Break, so then all they will have to do is finish it up and we'll do some sort of culminating activity when they are done with the MAP.
3	Share alternative practice	Rick	I'll probably have to have them do something with the 1920's and 1930's during the MAP rather than just the 1930's.
4	Query logistics	Lynn	Now the MAP – is it full days of it?
5	Clarify	Sandy	Pretty much so.
6	Elaborate	Rick	You have to allow for full days.
7	Support elaboration	Brenda	Some of them get done (early) and some don't.
8	Clarify and elaborate	Julie	You have to have something for them to do but it can't be something that's overwhelming so that if they do take the whole time they would have to do the whole thing outside of class. There are a couple of days where it is timed; where they are multiple choice sections where you know you'll have 45 minutes or whatever.
9	Recommend practice	Sandy	It has to be something they will be interested in after doing the MAP tests for 60 minutes.
10	Identify problem	Brenda	They're tired.

11	Identify alternative problem	Julie	The problem is that half the time I can't remember what; we don't get the materials until right before and I can't... It's hard to remember how exactly it works out.
12	Propose solution to previous problem	Sandy	I wonder if we could set up some sort of little competition between our classes in some way to – especially our regular classes – to give them some incentive to do well.
13	Evaluate proposal	Rick	On the MAP? Problem is, that we don't get the results until like a whole year later, so anything like that...
14	Develop proposal	Sandy	I know, like something we could score or something that day.
15	Specify proposal	Julie	We could have criteria like, if everyone is in class you get so many points; if everyone works hard; so we total...
16	Elaborate	Rick	So say everyone in the class gets an extra-credit point for everyday that we have perfect attendance?
17	Clarify and query past practice	Julie	Well if it's a competition, I'm saying points in the competition between classes. And whoever gets the most points at the end... Didn't we have a popsicle party last year?
18	Clarify	Rick	That was with the textbook drive. But we never did actually have the party, did we?
19	Support proposal	Sandy	Yates (the Principal) would fund this, I know he would.
20	Affirm and elaborate	Rick	Sure he would, especially for the MAP.
21	Specify proposal	Sandy	One day they could come in – they are already doing the doughnut thing – they could come in and win the class doughnuts. Then the next day, it could be a multiple day thing.
22	Request clarification	Rick	Would it be just about attendance? Or would it be about...

23	Equivocate	Julie	Oh, I don't know. We could think of other things.
24	Suggest specification	Rick	Completion. Because we had so many kids who wouldn't even do the constructed responses.
25	Identify problem	Sandy	I just don't know how to get them to do it
26	Propose alternative solution	Julie	I think we'll do what we did last year – tell them we're going to randomly score constructed responses, like we did last year. That will give us a good chunk of them and then give a lot of prizes away like we did last year.
27	Request clarification	Rick	What did you do last year? Because we didn't do...
28	Clarify	Julie	We just bought a bunch of goofy, like pinwheels and stupid things.
29	Elaborate	Sandy	Bubbles and things.
30	Query practice	Rick	What did you give them away for?
31	Clarify	Julie	If they looked like they were working hard.

Julie initiates this routine with a “Propose practice” move. In a sense she is sharing, but what she shares is an idea that she seems to want feedback on. In Turn 2, Sandy elaborates on Julie’s idea. Julie and Sandy team-teach their course together. They are each other’s partner teacher. It is very common in the I-PLT’s Centering routines for this kind of *tag-team* kind of interaction to occur. Partner teachers frequently elaborate on the initial sharing or proposals of the first teacher. Rick enjoins the Centering routine with a “Share alternative practice” in Turn 3. This serves to share his projected logistical plan, but also validates the nascent discussion of what the rest of the team is doing about this. Lynn interjects a “Query logistics” move which ends up really focusing the sequence around the nuts and bolts of test administration. What follows indicates that the team

really needed to talk about this and make sure they were being consistent with implementation. Note that Sandy brings up the idea of student interest in Turn 9. This idea is picked up and threaded throughout the rest of the sequence even though the main focus is very logistical. The objective of the logistical details that the team debates is the enhancement of student interest. Thus the constant potential exists for the conversation to turn to a more conceptual or pedagogical focus. This is the case with most routines, hence the improvisational quality that they bear. The emphasis and character of a routine can shift by the moment, and the routine itself can become transformed into something other than what it appeared to be at first.

After Sandy's "Recommend practice" move, the team dedicates much more attention to developing an activity that will address her recommendation. The details are primarily procedural, however. Moves such as "Propose solution", "Develop proposal", "Specify proposal", and "Suggest specification" are highly characteristic of group centering on logistical topics. Multiple queries, elaborations, clarifications, and affirmations are typical supporting moves within the routine as the team develops a mutual understanding of the many specific factors they must consider. Despite this lively discussion of possible procedures and the important idea of student motivation hovering over the conversation, the team ends the routine in Turn 31 on the note of a clearly inadequate measure of student performance; "If they looked like they were working hard."

Conceptual. The third example of Centering, and final for the I-PLT, is of the *conceptual* form. This version of Centering unfolds very much like the others, but the objective is to synthesize and relate team member ideas regarding *concepts* they are

dealing with. This is often a foundational piece for a later sequence of pedagogical or logistical Centering. Alternatively the routine may come after such sequences when the former routines reveal a deficiency in the team’s conceptualization of an issue or problem, or it may simply stand alone. Not surprisingly, a Centering routine can become a very academic and philosophical discussion. It is in these sequences that we can really see the intellectual and even somewhat esoteric qualities of the teachers emerge. Although these conversations may sometimes appear to be glorified episodes of navel-gazing, they are actually critical pieces of any attempt at creative problem-solving. This is when we see the teams engage themselves in higher order thinking processes that have real potential to transform current practice through deep reflection. In this example the teachers attempt to center their thinking around the issue of their expectations for student performance in identifying and discussing the very abstract idea of *The American Dream*; the topic of the District writing assessment.

Example 30. Interactional Routine of Centering (Variety – conceptual; I-PLT)

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Identify problem	Sandy	Let’s first define American Dream. Let’s do that first.
2	Elaborate upon proposal; Request clarification	Brenda	And I have a question too. By American Dream we’re looking at these five events holistically contributing to and not each as a separate strand, right?
3	Clarifying response	Lynn	I understood it to be what each moment defined economically, socially, and politically – defining all the elements in each one.

4	Suggest alternative interpretation	Brenda	But then I saw that holistically, how did it newly define?
5	Reinterpret problem	Julie	We're supposed to be showing the American Dream as evolving. So you would show how the Great Depression impacted America politically, socially, and economically and, maybe holistically – how these three things evolved to change Americans' views of the American Dream.
6	Suggest alternative definition	Rick	See, I almost looked at it as – and this is from what Emma was talking about the other day – I looked at it as, “How did this event impact...” – it's almost like three separate facets of the American Dream. Like, your economic dream is to be self-sufficient; your social dream is to be accepted; your political dream is to have a voice.
7	Request for clarification	Julie	So they would show those three dreams evolving?
8	Clarify, elaborate, and evaluate	Rick	So they would show those by, the five events that would show the progression of people working towards those three things. What are five things that show us working toward achieving a voice; becoming economically independent; and being accepted? That would be very hard to do when you really think about having to do it. Like, how does Pearl Harbor specifically help me to be more economically independent?
9	Suggest additional interpretation	Sandy	Well, I think it has to show the cause and effect. Because of Pearl Harbor and us getting into the war, women went into the workforce, or something like... it almost has to be a ...
10	Recommend solution	Rick	Maybe they have to pick a specific thing and then show how the effects of that moment.
11	Evaluate solution	Julie	But I know she (Emma) is going to want it to go to a higher level as far as applying it to a larger... that cause and effect thing isn't...
12	Defend solution;	Rick	You'd have to go larger. If you said Pearl Harbor, you couldn't explain it without being able to

	Elaborate		describe all facets or aspects of World War II and all those complications. Maybe they would be forced to going into higher level.
13	Clarify evaluation	Julie	I'm saying that by applying it to some abstract idea like the American Dream its synthesis...
14	Defend solution	Sandy	But if we went... because of Pearl Harbor we got in the war. That changed the economic working power of women and that achieved the American Dream because...
15	Affirm defense	Julie	Yes. They would describe their American Dream as being economic security...
16	Query concept	Sandy	But that's still not high enough thinking?
17	Complexify solution	Rick	But you could also say something like, "It made it harder to achieve the American Dream – the social dream – because we went and opened up these Japanese Internment camps and Japanese-Americans weren't accepted..."

Sandy opens the routine with the move of "Identify problem." She has perceived that the team lacks a common definition of this critical aspect of the assessment. Brenda's quick follow-up with an "Elaborate upon proposal" and "Request clarification" confirms and supports Sandy's observation. In Turns 3 and 4 we see that Lynn and Brenda have divergent conceptual understandings of the nature of the task being asked of students. Julie reinterprets the problem as stated by Sandy with her move in Turn Five. She speaks somewhat authoritatively, as if this should be known and has already been established. Rick, however, comes back with a "Suggest alternative definition" which clearly reveals that this concept is still open for debate in the eyes of other team members; Julie's authoritative statement notwithstanding. In Turns 7-10, Rick's idea is developed, clarified, and elaborated upon. In Turn 11, however, Julie appeals to the external

authority of the department chair to focus the Centering routine on the application of higher level thinking skills. In the remainder of the routine Sandy and Rick debate with Julie over the presence or absence of a higher level thinking component to the idea(s) they have proposed. In this more contested example of Centering, critical moves such as “Evaluate solution”, “Defend solution”, “Affirm defense”, and “Complexify solution” are not uncommon. They reveal the presence of more profound disagreements between team members, which appears to be more common when Centering takes a conceptual focus. This reveals that the team has spent less time developing their common understanding in these more ambiguous areas.

Conceptual/logistical. The fourth and final example of Centering is from the B-PLT. As I said earlier, the Centering routine is more common to the I-PLT. When one considers the impact that *active discourse* plays on that team’s group communication, it is not surprising that this is the case. The B-PLT is much less focused, and consequently less *centered*. They do, however, have times when they demonstrate a more targeted approach to their conversations. The next example illustrates the *conceptual/logistical* blend that is the primary variety of Centering that is found in the conversations of the B-PLT. In the excerpt, the team is discussing an important detail of their fledgling idea of an intervention program for juniors. A key piece of that program is a guided study hall, but as we see, the team does not share a clear understanding of what that idea represents.

Example 31. Interactional Routine of Centering

(Variety – conceptual/logistical blend, B-PLT).

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Identify problem	Bill	Have we defined what our guided study hall is?
2	Elaborate on problem	Sue	No. That was the other thing we were going to talk about today. And we may have to take that out and just say study hall, depending on what we decide, if we really want to call it that or not. I can just tell you right...
3	Propose solution	Bill	Can we put them in what we've got with the sophomores?
4	Request clarification	Sue	ITP? Are you talking about?
5	Equivocate; Request clarification	Bill	Well, whatever my study hall kids, whatever, aren't they just sophomore study hall?
6	Clarify	Christine	My study hall kids are juniors.
7	Reciprocate clarification	Bill	I've got one in mine.
8	Clarify	Sue	Its all, study, that's study hall for everybody; sophomores, juniors, and seniors.
9	Summarize understanding	Bill	Ok. So if a junior is in there, it's because their parents want them there.
10	Affirm	Christine	Um-hmmm
11	Summarize and check understanding	Bill	The sophomores... are a totally different class. I might have juniors or seniors in there that... to class?
12	Affirm	Christine	Um-hmmm

13	Affirm and elaborate	Sue	Yep... Now if they, yeah.
14	Share understanding	Bill	Well, maybe I just lucked out then. You've got a bunch of juniors in yours.
15	Affirm	Christine	Um-hmmm
16	Clarify	Sue	Now some of the kids that are...
17	Elaborate	Bill	I've had a couple of those big... over in LOP. That's where they...
18	Elaborate on problem	Sue	And some of them are actually supposed to be put in LOP if they dropped/fail, if they've been dropped failing a class. They are supposed to go to LOP, but...
19	Interruption: Elaborate on problem	Christine	I have some really good kids in there... that...
20	Continuation of move: Elaborate on problem	Sue	But, I don't know if that's being consistently done by guidance or not.
21	Continuation of previous move: Elaborate on problem	Christine	And I have some that never come.

This example from the B-PLT opens with an “Identify problem” move from Bill. Christine and Sue follow his lead easily, affirming his identification of a key issue that needs to be discussed. In her “Elaborate on problem” move in Turn 2, Sue actually indicates that she had this point on her agenda. This fact suggests that the team is developing a degree of synergy in their thinking of these issues. They are beginning to see the same problems independently of each other. The team still seems very far from developing clear solutions, but they are doing an effective job of surfacing important

problems of substance. Bill suggests a solution to the problem in Turn 3, but this leads to an elaboration of all the variables influencing this issue. By Turn 5, Bill is putting out an “Equivocate” move, which typically represents an abdication of the viability of a proposal. Sue’s very simple “Request clarification” was enough to show Bill that the problem was more complex than he originally thought. In Turns 6-17, Christine and Sue help Bill develop an understanding of the study hall situation that is more consistent with their experiences. Bill uses “Reciprocate clarification”, “Summarize understanding”, and “Check understanding” moves to provide feedback to the others on his learning as the discussion proceeds. Christine continually supports him in Turns 10, 12, and 15 with the back-channeling move of “Affirm.” The sequence is illustrative of the complex logistical variables that mediate the team’s attempt to develop novel conceptual approaches to meeting students’ needs. Thus conceptualization and logistics go hand in hand.

Lounge Talk (or venting out the room)

The routine of Lounge Talk is characteristic of sequences of conversation that might commonly be called “chit-chat.” It is important to note these sequences, both in their nature, and in the most basic sense; that they actually occur. We see that it is not all business all the time in the teams – even when researchers’ cameras are rolling. Common sense suggests that more incidents of the Lounge Talk routine would occur if the camera was not there, rather than that they would be of the same quantity or less. Lounge Talk is a routine that takes place when the team, either whole or in part, is *off-task*. They are not talking about business as such. The topics of Lounge Talk are never on the agenda, and never appear in the minutes. It is social content of collaboration that slips through cracks, flies under the radar, and side-steps official pathways of recognition. Like any other

routine, however, it has the power to shape participant behavior. And like other routines, Lounge Talk is emergent, improvisational, negotiated, and based upon rule-based patterns. The topics of Lounge Talk are generally mundane, personal, and anecdotal. They appear to have little consequence for other matters of the team, yet they do seem to constitute additional evidence of the phenomenon of emergent reciprocal influence. Lounge Talk was found primarily in the I-PLT. The presence of the routine in the B-PLT was negligible.

Example 32. Interactional Routine of Lounge Talk.

<i>Turn</i>	<i>Conversational Move</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Text</i>
1	Tangential prompt	Rick	Do we know yet? Are we getting out on the fourth, or...?
2	Information sharing	Julie	I was told that after spring break, assuming there are no snow days, we'll have off that first Friday in May. They'll give us the day off, and then, our last day will be... the next we'll go through the Wednesday, whatever that day is.
3	Clarification, Personal anecdote	Rick	June the 4th...Which is cool because that's the day I was planning on leaving and now I don't have to take days off school.
4	Follow-up question	Brenda	Is there any, what if we had a heat day?
5	Critical humor	Jennifer	Listen to us; we're not going to have...
6	Organizational humor	Julie	And if we had another day off, they would just add a day on.
7	Follow-up to humor	Rick	They would take away a...

8	Personal anecdote	Jennifer	I want that May day.
9	Attempt to end tangent	Julie	Anything else we want to change to this? (holding up the rubric)

The Lounge Talk routine in this example was initiated with a “Tangential prompt” move by Rick. The team had been in the midst of a fairly long pedagogical Centering routine that everyone seemed to be growing weary of. The routine is composed of moves such as “Information sharing”, “Personal anecdote”, several forms of “Humor. These sequences, as they have been observed in this study, constitute means of taking a break. Occasionally they seem to represent attempts at avoiding taxing conversations. They frequently end with one or more team members bringing the team “back on task.” After this brief nine turn sequence the team returned to the Centering routine they had been engaged in; with apparently renewed vigor. Note however, that it was Julie’s redirection back to rubric development that ended the routine. It may have gone on longer without this intervention via the “Attempt to end tangent” move.

* * *

The interactional routines that have been presented provide direct evidence of the presence of the phenomenon of *emergent reciprocal influence* at work in teacher collaboration. Organizational conditions *structure* the conjoint agency of the teams of teachers. The conjoint agency of the teams, in turn, *enstructures* the organization via the substantive results of their collaborative interactions. The routines of Crafting, Voting, Marginalizing Dissent, Reconnaissance, Centering in all its forms and even Lounge Talk are examples of distributed leadership in practice. The behavior of

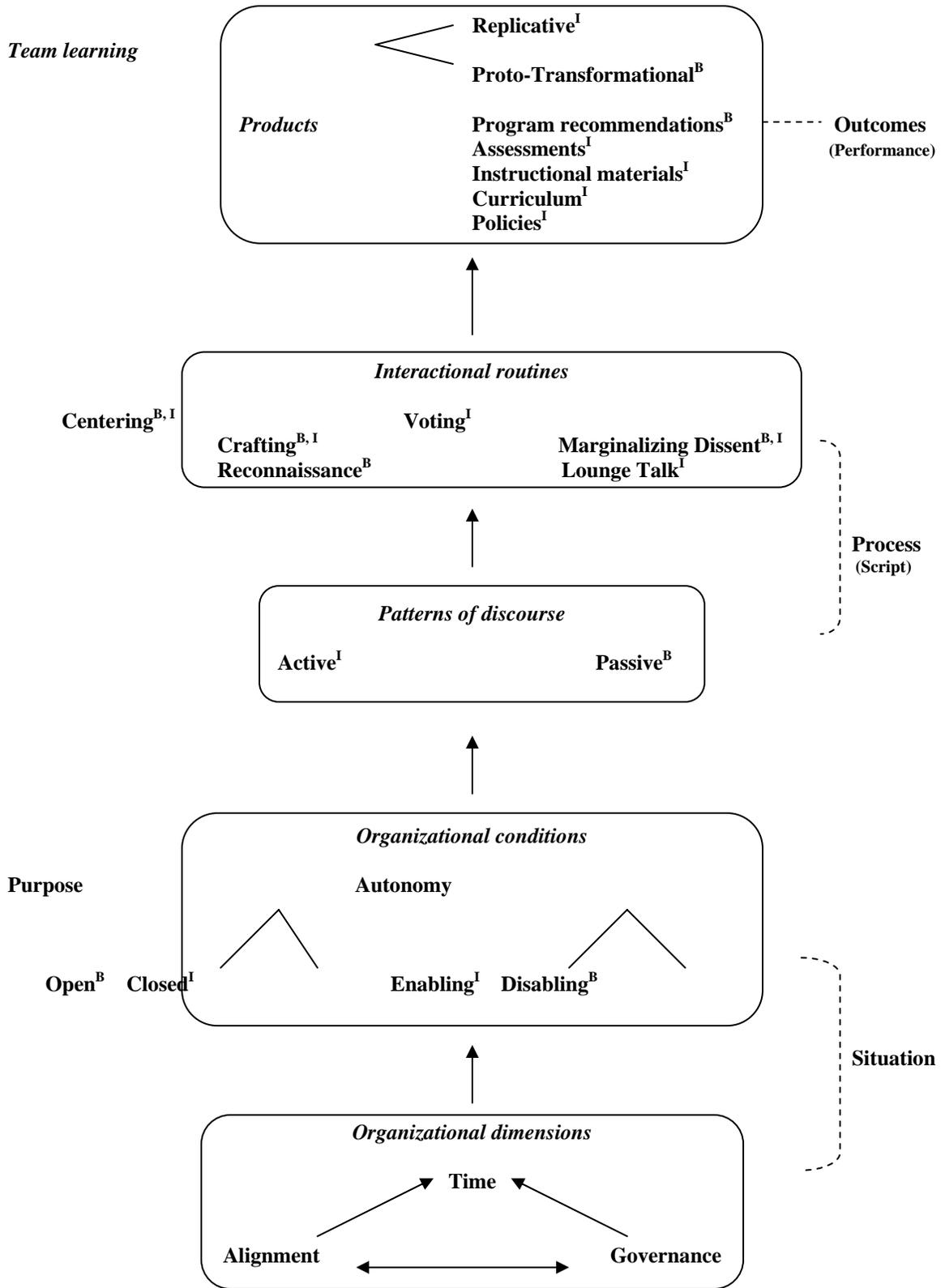
individual organizational members (the teachers) is modified via the enactment of collectively improvised and negotiated sequences of social interaction. This modified behavior contributes to the effect of collaboration on the structures of the organization. These routines, as well as the other findings of this study – such as the role of perceived team purpose and autonomy, and patterns of discourse - also have a strong impact on *team learning*, one of the primary outcomes of collaboration, in each professional learning team. Team learning is a representative outcome of the distributed leadership enacted within the teams. Team performance (Chapter Five) was the outcome of the use of both distributed leadership as an organizational strategy *and* team learning – the latter a product of group-level distributed leadership manifest as emergent reciprocal influence.

The Situation, Process, and Outcomes of Team Collaboration

Within the activity of distributed leadership, constructs related to organizational conditions, organizational dimensions (see Chapter Five), patterns of discourse and interactional routines interact to influence the outcomes of teacher collaboration (see Figure 12). As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, *team learning* is one outcome that is representative of the quality of leadership associated with collaboration in professional learning teams; hence the name for the structural form. Another key outcome is the nature of the products that emerge from teacher collaboration, part of the performance of collaboration itself.

Whether a professional learning team (PLT) operates as a problem-finding or a problem-solving team has a significant impact on the manifestation of the critical constructs identified above, and in Figure 12. In this study, the PLT that operated as a

Figure 12. *Situation, process, and outcomes of distributed leadership at Palatine High.*



problem-finding team (the B-PLT) demonstrated a greater potential for innovation than the I-PLT, which operated as a problem-solving team. This potential was not fulfilled very well in their first semester together. In fact, the team appeared to be quite ineffective at first blush. This suggested potential for innovation developed over the years and was only fully apparent in my conversations with the team two years after the original observations for this study. The team has evolved into a group that now demonstrates the capacity for *transformational* learning and creative problem-solving. In their first semester, however, this was certainly not the case, therefore I refer to the team's early learning outcomes as *proto-transformational*. The I-PLT was characterized by a constellation of construct features that generally encouraged reproduction of existing solutions, or knowledge; in other words, *replication* of existing norms (Erault, 1994). Both teams shared the common task of "improving" conditions for student learning. Open purpose, disabling autonomy, passive discourse, and the routines of Crafting, Centering, and Reconnaissance are characteristic of the discovered problem finding team – the B-PLT. Closed purpose, enabling autonomy, active discourse, and the routines of Crafting, Centering, Voting, Marginalizing Dissent, and Lounge Talk are all associated with the known problem solving team – the I-PLT. The organizational dimensions of alignment, governance, and time framed the work of both teams. These two constellations of attributes substantively shaped the outcomes of each team, both in terms of team learning and the products of the performances. Table 2 summarizes these constellations of attributes.

Table 2. *Attribute constellations of the professional learning teams.*

	Instructional PLT	Building-wide PLT
Organizational dimensions	<i>Time Alignment Governance</i>	<i>Time Alignment Governance</i>
Organizational conditions	<i>Closed purpose Enabling autonomy</i>	<i>Open purpose Disabling autonomy</i>
Patterns of discourse	<i>Active discourse</i>	<i>Passive discourse</i>
Interactional routines	<i>Crafting Centering Voting Marginalizing dissent Lounge talk</i>	<i>Crafting Centering Reconnaissance</i>
Problem orientation	<i>Known problem solving</i>	<i>Discovered problem finding</i>
Learning process	<i>Replicative</i>	<i>Proto-Transformational</i>

The I-PLT: Reproducing Norms

The I-PLT engaged in many conventional acts of known practice. They did not regularly stretch their thinking to include new ways to approach existing problems. Rather they applied known strategies that came from their collective toolkit of practical teaching knowledge. In fact, the promise of synergy and expanded resources promised by collective decision-making was sometimes sabotaged by processes that supported a majority consensus. As a result, there are occasions where *divergent thinking* (Getzels & Jackson, 1962) was received as problematic dissent and systematically marginalized. The

interaction of the constructs of closed purpose and enabling autonomy functioned to give this team a clearly bounded zone of problem solving. The active discourse exhibited by the team provided an effective process of arriving at decisions expediently, yet it also led to premature closure of discussions that warranted further debate. Scant conversational space was allocated for in-depth exploration of critical knowledge domains, such as student learning. Interactional routines of this team supported this drive towards product generation (rubrics, activities, lessons). The routines of Centering, Crafting, Voting, and Marginalizing dissent all contributed to the creation of a collaborative context that was rushed and invariably output oriented. In this atmosphere teachers were unable to participate in a learning process that extended or transformed their thinking. Instead, they collectively supported a regime of knowledge replication. The presence of various forms of the Centering routine offered possibilities of collectively producing more innovative solutions. The routine, however, typically manifested itself as a means of *aligning* performance around known methods of problem-solving. The team's focus on quickly coming to closure on product creation supported this drift toward cursory alignment rather than creative innovation in the interests of student achievement.

The B-PLT: Developing Capacity for Change

The B-PLT displayed a greater potential capacity to develop innovative solutions to ill-defined problems. The teachers in this group engaged in rigorous, challenging, sometimes frustrating, learning that held the promise of “thinking outside the box”; of moving beyond known solutions to known problems. Administrative actions hampered this process rather than empowered it, thus the initial semester that was observed resulted in a drawn-out process of mission identification. This characteristic, which I have called

disabling autonomy, forced the group of teachers to fight an uphill battle toward solution generation.

First they had to identify the critical problem(s), develop possible solutions, consider the many barriers to their solutions, and ultimately develop solutions that could be implemented within the existing structures of the school. These steps manifested themselves as an iterative, and often redundant, process due to the constant rejection of highly innovative solutions; solutions that were abandoned because of poor communication regarding the autonomy and freedom of the team. Transformational learning eventually took place among the teachers, but organizational conditions hampered the development of such an outcome during the first semester.

Since that time the team has developed a number of modestly innovative programs that appear to be creating a much more supportive environment for students with alternative educational needs. In conversations with the three core members of the team, they discuss their problem-solving processes in a fashion consistent with my description of the routine of Centering. In the minds of the members of this team, there was substantial groundwork, both interpersonal and knowledge-based, that needed to be done before real successes could begin to emerge.

Early on, this team was characterized by passive discourse, as opposed to active. The teachers deliberated in a tentative, or exploratory, fashion because they were neither sure of what the specific problems were, nor of the available solutions. This is not surprising given the quite open purpose of the team. The disabling autonomy perceived by the group functioned to paralyze the early stages of their collaboration. They neither knew what precise problems they faced, nor knew if they had the power or authority to

address them. The use of passive discourse in their collaborations was both constituted by these factors, and reinforced them. The ubiquitous interactional routine of this group of teachers was what I have called Reconnaissance. These iterative routines enmeshed the teachers in a spiraling search for both problems and solutions. Through the search for problems, many possible solutions were proposed. Alternatively, the search for solutions raised a litany of new problems – many of which confounded the solutions that had been generated. This process, however frustrating it may have been (for teachers to go through, and researchers to capture), was the pathway to finding innovative solutions to problems no one knew existed. Solutions to these “background” problems may ultimately be the means by which known the “surface” problems were remedied, or at least approached. A history of failed attempts to solve surface problems may be a reflection of ignorance of background, or foundational, problems.

When I returned to this team two years after observing them I found a team that had come quite a long distance from their frustrating days when they first began collaborating. Several programs that they had recommended had been developed and implemented, and appeared to be making a difference. Both the team and the Principal agreed that the creation of these new student support programs had made a difference. The team notably remarked that they had gone through a growth process in learning how to collaborate, and how to work with the rest of the organization. This process took time, but they felt it had been worth it. In the end, it appeared that the B-PLT was the team that truly developed innovative solutions; they just had to find their place in the organization. They still express frustration about the governance structure of the school, particularly the political agenda of members of the Executive Council, and lament lack of resources

and personnel. Despite this, however, the three core members of the team continue to meet regularly and try to develop new and better ways to meet the needs of students. They appear to draw strength from one another and have created a collective team identity that wields more influence than any of them could possess individually.

In the next, and concluding chapter, I return to the framework for analysis that I proposed in Chapter Three and integrate the findings of this study into the model for understanding collaborative activity through the study of emergent reciprocal influence. I will also discuss how this study reveals broad macro-social forces influencing the work of teachers. The implications of the framework and the multi-dimensional findings of this study are then explored. It is suggested that collaboration is a double-edged phenomenon within schools. Collaboration can lead to structural forms of professional interaction that stimulate the generation of innovative practices, provide contexts for transformational group learning, and advance organizational capacity to meet student needs. It can also serve as a means of limiting individual teacher discretion, replicating status quo practice, and intensifying teacher work at the expense of student needs. Understanding how collaboration works, as well as understanding the forces shaping our use of it, are the keys to using it wisely. This understanding will also enhance our capacity to identify, recognize, and utilize distributed forms of leadership.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rethinking the Panopticon

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.

(Foucault, 1977; p.201)

Throughout Western history we have reified the idea of the heroic individual (specifically, the white male Christian). Our cognitive associations with words such as *leader, follower, leadership, followership, power, authority, and influence* are all intimately influenced by this historical emphasis upon the individual. As Gronn (2000, 2002) has suggested, the distinction of leaders from followers is a false and problematic dualism. It may be a useful semantic heuristic, but the impact of such language and concepts on our social world is dramatic. This dualism presents us with a paradox akin to Nietzsche's (1994) slave dilemma. When the reality of one point of reference can only be defined as the *other* to an alternative point of view, or only be known as the absence of that point of view, then we have a semantic identity based upon nothingness. The distinction between the two ideas becomes an exercise in circular reasoning. The critical ingredient that is missed in understanding the two ideas is the basic interaction that results in the dichotomy in the first place. The concepts are intrinsically joined, not

separated. They are flip-sides of the same coin. One can not exist without the definitional otherness of its “opposite”. The question becomes then, if mutual dependency exists, then what is really happening in what we call leader/follower situations? A leader can not lead without followers. Followers can not follow without leaders. The identity of ideas or concepts in these dualistic semantic situations is rooted not in difference, but rather in similarity and mutualism.

Foucault’s (1977) image of the idealized prison, the Panopticon, is founded on the idea of “permanent visibility.” The inmate, or subject of discipline, is *always* under surveillance – not necessarily by guards and wardens, but by themselves and society. Surveillance is internalized. The ideal prison, symbolically representing this idea, is designed with spokes of cells radiating off a central area that allows the authorities to be able to observe *all* inmates at *all* times. The modern Weberian bureaucracy, the “machine,” was based on the same principles of surveillance.

The latest iteration of the bureaucratic machine is the flexible flattened hierarchy of organizations guided by the principles of the New Public Management. In these organizations, the effect of ubiquitous surveillance still exists, but is accomplished via the techniques of remote management. Workers discipline one another by working in collaborative settings in which they are required to align their individual performances according to standardized output measures. The supervisors don’t even have to be there. Surveillance is in effect on auto-pilot. The Panopticon was a tangible metal and brick representation of the abstract forms of disciplinary surveillance that Foucault found so distinctive of the post-Enlightenment social world. In *our* world, leadership has become a

social activity. Formal leaders don't need to be present to guide or direct people. Such influence stems from the interactions within groups.

Thus, two realms of leadership emerge in the modern world. I use Gibb's (1954) language to characterize these two modes of leadership. There are various forms of *focused leadership*, where specific individuals make decisions, often unilaterally, that impact and influence the behavior of others. Alternatively, there are forms of *distributed leadership*. Formal leaders may utilize distributed leadership as a *strategy* for enacting procedures or policies that they advocate. Distributed leadership is also a *process* that is characteristic of collaborative structural forms, such as professional learning teams. In these contexts, distributed leadership manifests itself through the social activity of emergent reciprocal influence.

These modes of leadership often operate simultaneously. For instance, a positional leader may select the organizational strategy of distributed leadership as a means to activate and utilize collaborative interaction for the purposes of advancing organizational goals. Thus three levels, or forms of leadership, are engaged: the focused leadership of the administrator; the distributed leadership associated with the use of collaborative structures; and the group-level distributed leadership intrinsic to such structures. Administrators are generally unaware of the powerful leadership forces that are at work in these collaborative settings. The concept of emergent reciprocal influence captures this process of distributed leadership in groups. With such a range of structures in place, leadership takes on the quality of a multi-faceted, multi-directional force of influence flowing throughout the entire organization. As we have seen throughout this case study, however, this flow of influence is anything but uniform and consistent.

Because leadership is so diffused in modern organizations, many forces contribute to the content, nature, and quality of leadership.

Forces of the New Public Management and domestic educational reform have led to the development of an updated version of the Panopticon in our public schools, as in other institutions, through the use of collaborative work groups striving to align their performance along the lines of performance standards measured and enforced by the centralized authority of state and Federal government agencies. This case study has demonstrated the powerful disciplinary force of contemporary trends in organizational management, and the politics of educational reform. These trends are the *forces* which partially shape the experience of teachers working in collaborative groups in America's public schools.

The lens of distributed leadership has facilitated the exploration of the daily interactions of two teams of teachers. This study has revealed empirical findings that illuminate the organizational context of teacher collaboration, how leadership emerges within teacher interactions, the critical role of conversations within teams, and the types of outcomes that can be associated with the use of professional learning teams. In this final chapter, I synthesize these findings through a discussion of the two very different types of outcomes that bracket the range of possible outcomes of teacher collaboration. I then revisit the analytical framework of the activity system of emergent reciprocal influence; the process of distributed leadership at work in collaborative professional settings. Next, the research questions posited at the beginning of this dissertation are addressed. Finally, I take time to speak to some of the many implications that this

research holds for teachers, administrators, and researchers – to the community of professional educators.

Forces of Accountability: Collaboration as a Cage

As soon as government management begins, it upsets the natural equilibrium of industrial relations, and each interference only requires further bureaucratic control until the end is the tyranny of the totalitarian state (Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*).

In Chapter Two, I documented the policy process of *recentralization* through which states and the Federal government have assumed control of areas of public education that had traditionally been left to local districts, even individual teachers, to control. This hegemony of the policies and standards used to hold public schools accountable for their performance has placed teachers in a situation with little space for discretionary professional behavior. The use of collaborative work teams ostensibly “frees teachers up” to accomplish more through networking with their peers. State management of standards and related assessments, however, places multiple constraints upon teachers that end up limiting their capacity for innovation. With all teachers feeling the pressure of the forces of accountability, collaboration easily becomes a forum for shaping practice towards compliance; in other words, towards convergence of thinking. Divergent thinking, which is more congruous with the goal of creativity, is inconsistent with the idea of standardized performance. This point guides the way we assess student performance on standardized assessments, and it guides the managerial objective of performance alignment.

In the climate of accountability enforced by external government authority, teachers are often faced with putting their collaborative efforts to the work of compliance

and alignment with standardized performance objectives. This was quite evident in the work of the U.S. Studies team, or the I-PLT. This team spent a great deal of time and energy dealing with both a standardized district writing assessment, and the state standardized achievement test. The latter holds the school accountable not only to the state of Missouri, but also to the Federal government since the MAP scores are used as the measure for reporting Annual Yearly Progress for No Child Left Behind. The teachers were not happy with this situation, but spent large amounts of time on these activities because they felt like they had no other choice. Team-time often became a dedicated vehicle to the implementation of these accountability programs. This was time the teachers had to invest in these activities *on top of* the time they were already going to have to spend on them in class with their students.

For this team, the effects of accountability and standards - two hallmark features of both the politics of education, and contemporary educational reform – were such that the teaching performance of the teachers was more tightly bound than if they had not engaged in collaboration. Collaboration became a means of limiting the discretion of the teachers. This is the downside of the concept of *alignment*. Advocates of alignment postulate that standardizing teaching behavior around common practices will result in more students being exposed to the best teaching that is available in a school. What we see in the activities of the I-PLT is a steady stream of compromises, elimination of content due to time constraints, and a consistent downward trend in the amount of time that teachers have available to do things aside from accountability assessments. We see the curriculum narrow. We see teaching transformed into a vehicle for standardized

assessment, rather than a means to facilitate the individual achievement of every student. Frankly, we see the emergence of the test factory approach to schooling.

These teachers operate in a cage because their performance is so closely linked to external regimes of standards and testing. The internal culture of the school places constraints on this team as well. Members of the Executive Council appear to be somewhat cavalier in the use of their authority to limit the pedagogical decisions of the team. The department chairs of the group do an effective job of insulating the team from many organizational obstacles, and individually strive to facilitate the creative development of the team. The barriers to creativity are simply so pervasive that the teachers are unable to move beyond essentially reproducing existing strategies for instruction. In fact, they often adopt rather simplified ideas (such as the final assessment) due to the number of constraints they face.

What these teachers fail to realize is the immanent power to do things differently that they do indeed possess. This power is implicit in the structural form of the collaborative team because it activates processes of group-level leadership. There is not a guarantee, however, that this leadership, in the form of *emergent reciprocal influence*, will be a positive force leading to desirable outcomes. There are times, particularly when the group is engaged in the interactional routine of conceptual Centering that they almost perform at a *tour de force* level of collaboration. They bounce creative ideas off one another, collectively construct new meanings of historical interpretation, and begin to reflect on how students will interact with these abstract concepts. These moments, however, as inspiring as they may be, never really get anywhere. In the end, the team usually enacts a simplified compromise solution that fails to incorporate most of the more

complex and novel ideas that emerged during the groups' conversations. There are a variety of possible reasons for why this occurs, but one is quite clearly leadership of poor quality. This deficiency is manifest both within the group, and externally to it.

Internally, outcomes of group-level distributed leadership are tied to the closure-oriented discourse pattern of active discourse. Active discourse is effective for getting things done, but a group that uses this pattern may become guilty of frequent premature closure on topics that warrant further discussion. This is definitely the case with the I-PLT. In a typical meeting, the team wants to cover its agenda items, reach agreement on instructional tools they can go and use, and get the meeting over with. They are not encouraged, nor do they seem eager to pursue creative solutions that may take more time and more work to produce. The pieces are there to make something more from this team, but the commitment to reach for a higher level of performance does not seem to be there. Reaching this higher level would require additional work on top of the compliance piece the team is unable to escape. The intensification of work associated with the use of the professional learning team appears to have dampened the interest of the teachers to really push the envelope. The collective acceptance of the constrained situation of this team is reinforced as emergent reciprocal influence flows through the interactions in the team meetings. The distributed leadership of the team, their concertive action, is not up to the task of pulling more out of their time together.

Externally, the governance structures of the school fail to facilitate the effective distribution of leadership as an organizational resource. The closed purpose of the I-PLT contributes to their reluctance to pursue avenues of discussion that may lead to more creative ideas regarding student learning, simply because most of these paths lie outside

both the perceived and actual “domain” of the team. Most importantly, however, the administration simply monopolizes too much of the team’s time, both in meetings and in their classes, with activities that are tangential to the core enterprise of these teachers doing their own teaching. They seem to spend as much time doing work that someone else has generated for them, as they do just “teaching.” The organization has failed to facilitate this team’s collaboration as a means to improve student learning. The team is used primarily as a means to administer assessments that constitute compliance with externally mandated policies of performance standardization. In light of the organization’s inability to establish conditions supportive of team innovation, it seems unfair to be overly critical of the teachers for not being more creative. Such an unqualified expectation, however, is consistent with the intensification of work associated with contemporary management trends. There seems to be no end to the amount of new responsibilities that can be dumped in the laps of teachers, responsibilities that frequently interfere with their capacity to do existing work.

Forces of Emancipation: Collaboration as a Crucible

Schools have long been thought of as places of isolated practice. In the past we have talked about them as factories, maze-like institutions, and cookie-cutter organizations. Critical theorists often view them as loci of the reproduction of social stratification; places where people learn their place in society. Part of this expression of stratified relationship has been a lack of communitarian values in our schools. Schools are typically organizations managed through hierarchical top-down structures. Teachers have conventionally stayed put in their own classrooms like business workers in their cubicles. These practices have granted teachers a great deal of autonomy in their classes

in the past. This practice was not always transparent, however, and this made it difficult to know when teachers were performing adequately, and when they were not. The contemporary shift to highly transparent modes of practice has shifted the balance of accountability and autonomy in the opposite direction.

Professional collaboration is like sitting around a *public table*. The metaphor of the table invokes images of families gathering to share anecdotes and reconnect the disparate strands of their daily lives. It also conjures up religious images of people sharing common values communing with one another in the universal practice of dining. Tables represent times when we come together. Meetings in places of work generally occur around tables. We have conference rooms with extra large tables, and lots of comfy chair around them. Many times the conference room is the fanciest and best-furnished room in an office complex.

In a professional learning team, teachers come together around a table to share and develop their practice. The table represents common ground. They all sit around the table and “pass” ideas back and forth across it. The middle of the table is a place where all these ideas meet, get mixed together and interact, and pass back to all the members. No idea ever comes back the same way. Once it is put out on the table it becomes a part of the public discourse. It becomes collectively owned and managed. There is both power and danger in this process of the dissemination of one’s “private” ideas of practice. We have talked above about the dangers.

The potential positive power of displaying one’s practice in this public setting is that practice may become improved upon, either that of the individual who shared, or that of other organizational members. Standards have a tendency to reduce this potential by

establishing pre-determined criteria for what is a “good” or “acceptable” practice. These criteria are imposed on teachers from the outside and are therefore not subject to debate and modification. They exist as they have been handed down. Even within this context of dictated performance, however, there is room for individual expression. We are not *yet* faced with the situation where every teacher in every classroom has a standardized script for how they teach every moment of every lesson. Rather than throw their hands up in the air and give up, teachers can work together to try and accommodate standards into their practice with the least disruption as possible, even to try and find some benefit from them, after all many standards are quite helpful and aimed at improving practice. Creative collaboration is an excellent opportunity for developing these ideas together, trying them out, seeing what works and what doesn’t, and taking *ownership* of standards instead of being a pawn.

In this study, the B-PLT didn’t really have to worry about standardized performance issues, other than the general expectation that there would be a process of alignment at work as the teachers developed a common understanding of the issues at hand. This actually seemed to be a very positive objective in the minds of the teachers, and when ultimately achieved, did lead to the creation of programs that have been effective. The Principal credits this group’s program ideas with contributing to the decrease of the school’s dropout rate over the last two years. For this team, sitting down at a public table provided an *opportunity* for teachers to share understandings that they had each developed regarding student support programs, and to merge these ideas into perspectives on how to improve such programs. What handicapped this PLT were not external forces of standardization, but the failure of school governance to sufficiently

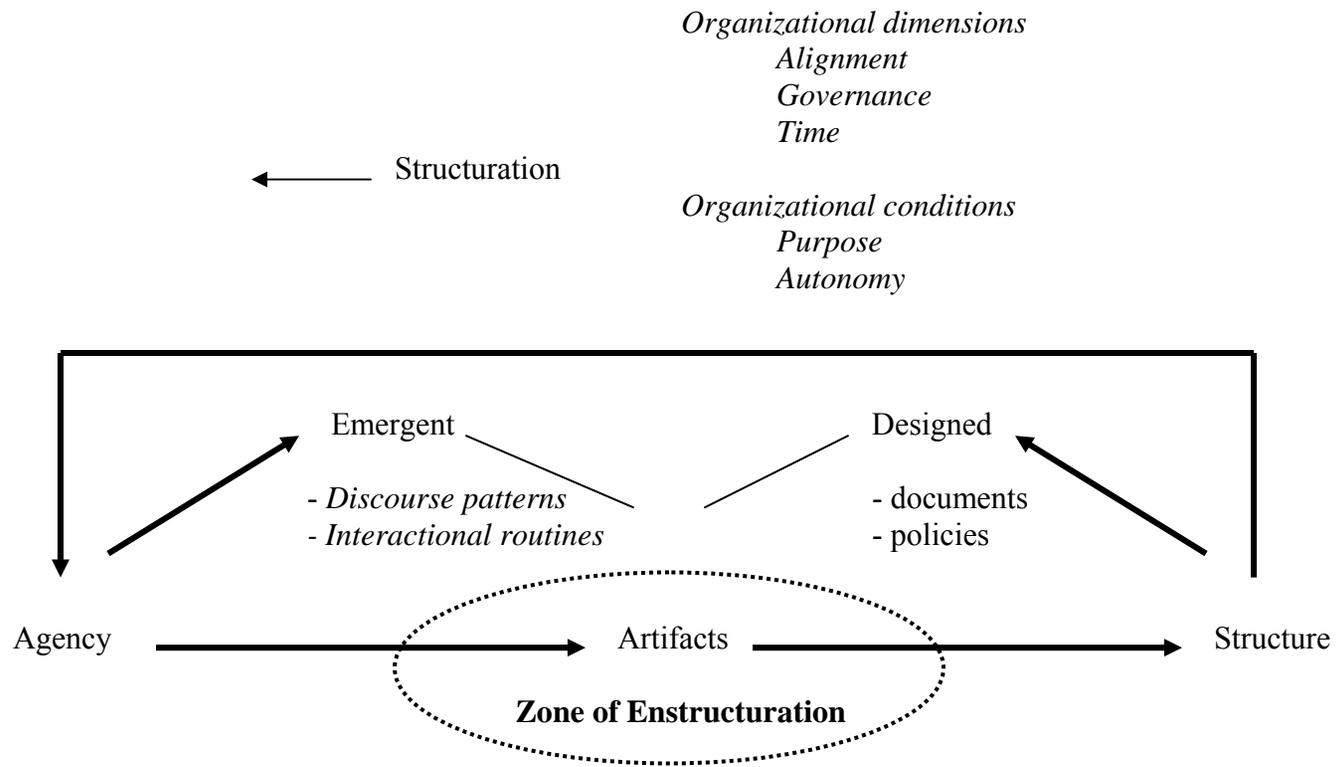
enable the team to do their job. The design of the team was sound, and the team members made productive gains over time. It should be noted, however, that it was a core group of three teachers who led this growth. Other teachers quit, did not attend, or just slowly faded away as team members.

This team was an example of a positive effect of management trends that encourage member collaboration. These forces, along with the educational philosophy of Professional Learning Communities, prompted the Principal to implement teaming strategies. Three committed teachers took advantage of the opportunities of this structure to make a positive contribution to the school community. They are not constrained by external standards of accountability. The main obstacle they have to navigate is the local school culture itself. Working together, however, they have exponentially increased their own individual potential for enacting organizational change. Through their collective activity they have already had an impact on the school, and continue to look for new ways to improve upon what they have done. In addition, this team's interactions with the research seem to have prompted them to look anew at ways to generate broader support for their work throughout the entire organization.

Conclusions: The Activity of Teacher Collaboration

Figure 13 revisits the original framework for analysis of teacher collaboration that I offered at the end of Chapter Three (Figure 3). Recall that I identified emergent artifacts and structural factors as the key pieces of the diagram that I was seeking information on through this study. The results of this research have provided rich insights into both areas. Qualitative inquiry through interaction analysis, supported with constant comparative

Figure 13. Activity system of emergent reciprocal influence within organizations: Findings.



coding strategies, has revealed a complex set of phenomena and circumstances that both frame and shape the collaborative interaction of teachers.

At the beginning of this dissertation I asked three research questions that have led me through this study. Many other questions have arisen along the way, but these questions still constitute the core area of interest that this research has sought to address. I present these questions in brief prior to going on to the implications of this research. To recap, the questions were as follows: 1) “How does leadership emerge and become enacted through teacher teams in one school?”; 2) “What role does social interaction play in fostering or impeding leadership in teacher teams?”; and 3) “How does social interaction influence the quality of leadership that emerges from teacher teams?”.

Leadership emerges and becomes enacted within the activity system of *emergent reciprocal influence*. This activity system links the conjoint agency of team members to the structural elements of the organizations through the mediating influence of both emergent and designed artifacts. Emergent artifacts are tools or instruments that are developed at the point of interaction. Elements of discourse and conversation are abstract forms of emergent artifacts that can tell us a lot about what teams do, and how they collaborate. Designed artifacts are explicitly crafted tools such as evaluation instruments and policies.

As agency influences structure through the mediating influence of artifacts, a process of *enstructuration* takes place. As structure simultaneously influences agency, a complementary process of *structuration* occurs. Agency is both constitutive of, and by, structure – and vice versa. All of the processes and artifacts are constituted through social interaction, thus interaction is the primary constitutive force of leadership within these

teams. The outcomes of leadership are most readily observed in the *team learning* that occurs within each group, and in the nature of the products associated with the *performance* of the team. Social interaction in teams is improvisational in nature, collectively managed, and highly subject to the influence of individual members. The quality of the leadership that results from team interaction is a function of the relationship of organizational dimensions and conditions, patterns of discourse, routines of interaction, and external forces. The quality of outcomes is thus highly unstable and unpredictable. This has significant implications for the use of collaborative teams in schools.

Implications of the Study

For Teachers

This research has implications for teachers, administrators and researchers. A clear implication for teachers is that they need to seek out, and create, opportunities for transformational learning. Only through such activities will teachers create new knowledge out of their existing knowledge. Collaborating for the purpose of sharing one's practical existing knowledge is beneficial, but a rich chance for deeper learning is lost when one does not take the time to explore the foundations of basic assumptions, and to look for problems that have not yet been identified. An element of this commitment to extended learning must be to support the expression of alternative viewpoints and to welcome divergent thinking. We expect teachers to do this in the classroom with their students. The profession should also expect it of them within the context of their own collaborative practice. Therefore, despite the constraining conditions that may often exist within collaborative settings, teachers must commit to doing their part to facilitate

creative interactions. This study clearly demonstrates that the interactional realities of team practice are constituted via improvisation, and through the collective participation and management of the groups. Individual teacher, therefore, must recognize the absolutely critical role that they play in the context of professional interactions. Every moment is an opportunity to make something more meaningful out of the interaction.

Our preparation of teachers, and the subsequent support we provide for them in the form of professional development, should reflect this commitment to cultivating the creative potential of collaborative interaction. We do put effort into preparing our teachers to “play nice” together. This doesn’t go far enough. We may actually err on the side of making our teachers too polite, of always trying to avoid ruffling feathers, and always be willing to compromise to reach agreement. There are times when compromise is inappropriate, and there are times when it is more important to be a “critical friend” than to sooth a peer’s ego. Preservice and in-service teachers should be exposed to a more complex picture of the nature of social interaction in professional settings, and to the impact of those interactions on their own practice and the entire organization. Ignorance of these processes leaves teachers open to ineffective collaborative experiences, the stagnation of purely replicative learning, and the continued marginalization of their autonomy within schools. Awareness of the presence of the disciplining effects of professional work-groups and accountability policies will grant teachers greater insight into how they may transform, and resist, these structures through the concertive action rooted in their own conjoint agency.

For Administrators

Administrators should take careful note of the experiences of both of these teams. One team became so focused on walking out the door of their meetings with a product in hand that they cut short discussion of critical aspects of practice. The other was so paralyzed with feelings of powerlessness and ambiguity that they could get nowhere – or so it seemed in the beginning. This team ultimately rebounded and, through an extended process of group learning, was able to achieve their goals – in spite of the failings of administration in supporting them with clear expectations regarding the team’s purpose and autonomy. Both examples are illustrative of how the reality of what is happening in professional learning teams may be quite different from both the intent and awareness of administration. Formal leaders walk a thin line between monitoring teams too closely, to the point of oppressive surveillance, and leaving them alone too much. Principal Yates’ comments from Chapter Five regarding his preferences for embedded professional development, and the teams’ revelations of little contact with administration, reveal that the latter scenario is at play at Palatine High. In the I-PLT, the administration does have contact regarding work that the team needs to do for them, but is uninvolved in the details of most team interactions – with the exception of the Executive Council’s intrusion into the team’s assessment planning.

In both circumstances, the formal leadership structure of the school could have enhanced the success, effectiveness, and depth of learning of the respective teams. The I-PLT, what I called a known problem solving team, would have benefited from being a little less bound in their purpose and a little more bound in regard to their autonomy. A

broader mission that allowed for more wide-ranging discussions of student learning may have allowed the teachers to learn more from one another – to the benefit of their students. They would have the opportunity to create new knowledge, rather than simply replicate what they already know. A little more oversight and integration with the efforts of other instructional teams, implying slightly less autonomy, could serve to extend the learning of the team throughout and across the faculty. The B-PLT, the discovered problem finding team, needed a clear administrative articulation of just how far they could go. This would have minimized the one step forward-two steps back process that this team went through. The open purpose of the team was a boon to innovation, but the perceived autonomy of the group disabled their capacity to offer solutions that departed from conventional patterns of organizational practice.

A clear implication is that formal school leaders also need greater preparation and professional development regarding collaborative interaction. One place to begin is with how we teach administrators about leadership. Our preparation programs are still mired in the antiquated association of leadership with formal positional authority. When administrators are prepared, they are more often than not conditioned to view themselves or others like them, as the *leaders* of schools. This makes it very difficult for them to then go into schools and recognize that leadership is everywhere, that it is an emergent quality of professional interaction, and that it is an organizational resource that may spontaneously and unpredictably arise at any location or with any member. An undue emphasis upon positional leadership prevents administrators from being able to see the true dimensionality of schools as organizations, as complex social institutions. Administrators need to have a greater understanding of the sociological attributes of

schools as organizations. Such an understanding will help them see that leadership is located not just in their office or person, but in every corner of the organization that is touched by social interaction. They will begin to see that leadership is a concept that refers to many different forms of influence behavior. These understandings will help administrators perform their critical function of supporting the work of teachers. With this kind of knowledge of organizations, administrators can help transform contemporary schools from cages of conformity to crucibles of creativity and innovation.

For Researchers

Education has been plagued with a broad gulf between the theory and practice for ages. This is particularly true in the areas of leadership and policy studies, where the natures of our analyses are often somewhat detached from the everyday world of practice. This study illustrates one means of doing a better job of connecting the theories of researchers to the experiences of practitioners. This research is based upon the actual meetings, or practice, of two teams of teachers. Data consists of video-taped records of these meetings, supplemented with interviews and documentary evidence. This data, collected from an *in situ* provenance, is a direct record of practice. It is what they actually did. Naturally-occurring talk is the primary artifact of practice that is analyzed in this study. It has been shown that this data reveals significant details regarding the emergence of leadership within teams, and the outcomes of this leadership.

Although the framework supporting this study is highly conceptual, it is rooted in the daily practice of teachers. A high degree of conceptualization was required to analyze this practice because we have so little experience analyzing interaction itself. Interaction is a constitutive force. This force should become a greater area of study than it has in the

past. Interaction is difficult and complex to study. My attempts to study interaction in the context of this research have frequently been frustrating and discouraging. More research in this area is needed. In light of the findings of this study it seems particularly important to bring together strands of research from both cognitive and conversational perspectives in order to generate a better-rounded paradigm of social interaction in collaborative settings.

Another goal for researchers should be to translate our growing understanding of collaboration and interaction into tools for the professional development of teachers and administrators. We do this work for them, and for their students, not for ourselves. My first step beyond this dissertation will be to begin working on the difficult task of putting this research into a format that is useful to practitioners. I hesitate to offer a list of “tips of collaboration” or “keys to teaming.” I reviewed some such products in Chapter Three, and find them less than useful. My initial thoughts are to develop a researcher/practitioner model of professional development in which trained interaction researchers go into schools and work directly with teachers and administrators in gaining an understanding of the conditions and needs of that particular school. A clear finding of my research has been that the interaction is improvisational and continually negotiated. This occurs, however, in patterned fashions that are likely to be found in multiple organizational locations. More research is necessary to determine what aspects of interaction tend to be more unique and localized, and which are more consistent across school and organizational contexts. Another critical area to study further is the nature of interaction in teams that have greater asymmetrical power relationships.

Final thoughts

The objective of this research has been twofold. First, I have sought to gain a better understanding of the nature of leadership and teacher learning within professional learning teams. Second, I have aimed to bring less commonly used methods to the study of these concepts. Interaction analysis is not a new methodological toolkit, but one infrequently used in studying the collaboration of educators. The lens of distributed leadership has been very useful in conceptualizing relationships and suggesting the use of the particular methods that have been employed. Focusing on activity as a unit of analysis and conversations as an artifact of that activity offers a promising route to enhancing our understanding of the social interaction of educators. Future research is needed to extend the use of such *in situ* approaches to data collection and analysis. The application of these methods to more comparative case studies and to vertically integrated teams composed of both teachers and administration is particularly stressed. Working with practitioners to apply this research in school settings offers promising possibilities for improving the collaborative relationship of researchers with schools.

Researchers of public education have a moral obligation to engage in research that seeks to ameliorate perceived inadequacies in our schools. Members of the academy have the “luxury” of time to study, read, and research the broad scope of issues that impact schools. As my review of the literature indicates, I am firmly convinced that we are in a period of government hegemony of much of public education. This is most strongly felt in the overwhelming emphasis on standards, standardized assessment, standardized performance, and accountability. These forces are constraining the capacity of many teachers to develop creative and innovative practices for meeting the needs of the

children they teach. Collaborative work groups of teachers have become a vehicle for facilitating many of these performance objectives. These teams, however, also have the potential to creatively transform their practice to the benefit of students – as was originally envisioned by the Middle School movement and, and many models of School-Based Management, and school improvement. We owe it to teachers and students to find out how to make these very popular management structures work best for who it matters the most to – to make them crucibles of innovation rather than cages of conformity.

We should set a goal of creating public spaces that do not require the sacrifice of autonomy for participation and effectiveness. Public participation should not serve a disciplining function. Rather it should be emancipatory in its effects. Collaboration *is* a good thing, but we must see it for what it is. We must recognize all its dimensions, and both its positive effects on teacher performance and those that may be more negative. Collaboration holds the promise of both emancipation and conformist assimilation. Only by knowing that both conditions are possible can we open our eyes and attempt to influence collaborative contexts in ways that promote creative solutions to complex problems. After all, isn't that what we really need to help improve the lives of children? In this author's mind, the only thing that should be permanently visible in a school is the unwavering commitment of every adult to serving the needs of every child.

Appendix 1

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL [Principal]

- Describe your role in this school?

- Why do you use professional learning teams here at this school?

- Do faculty and staff receive any professional development related to working in teams? *Can you describe that PD for me?*

- Are these two teams still operating?

- What was/is the respective purpose of each of these teams?

- How much decision-making autonomy do these teams have?

- What is your relationship with your PLTs?

- What about other administrative personnel, or other school leaders?

- Can you characterize your communication and contact with the PLTs?

- Have these teams been effective in fulfilling their respective purposes? What are your criteria for making that assessment?

- Is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience using professional learning teams in this school?

Appendix 2

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL [Teacher team members]

- What does this team do? How do you spend your time together?
- Have you received any professional development on working in teams?
- Tell me about how this team works together.
- What makes your team work well together?
- Are there any obstacles to the team working well together, or getting their job done?
- What is the relationship of this team to department or administrative leaders?
- What does this team mean to you as a teacher?
- Is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience working on this team?

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