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ABSTRACT

Political, administrative, and territorial types of decentralization are identified, along with their implications for citizen participation in educational policymaking. The Adams-Morgan experiment provides case study material. Preliminary results indicate that "administrative decentralization," despite the claims of school officials in this case, serves merely to transform local school boards into dependent subsystems, with little or no restructuring of decisionmaking authority. "Political" decentralization requires a more comprehensive reorganization of power relationships between central administrative units and local boards. However, school officials in the public schools of Washington, D.C., appear unwilling to accept community representatives as viable policymakers. (Author/DN)

DECENTRALIZATION CONSENSUS OR CONFUSION: DEFINING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL POLICY FORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

A pervasive problem facing American public education as it embarks upon the last quarter of the twentieth century is the task of reestablishing public confidence and support, particularly that of the client populations. Amid charges of inequality, irrelevance, and mismanagement leveled primarily at our larger urban systems, some have insisted upon basic changes in policy-making procedures (Hamilton, 1968; Bloomberg, 1968; McCoy, 1970; Sizemore, 1971). A fundamental restructuring of decision-making authority, it is argued, would serve to relegitimize the programs of our educational institutions. The success or failure of the various efforts made to accomplish this task may greatly affect not only the future course of urban education, but also that of American political institutions and behavior.

One reform strategy which has been employed in recent years is termed variously as "decentralization" or "community control" of governmental programs. In fact, the extension of policy-making authority to previously powerless groups became a highly visible and explosive political development during the sixties. Despite the deluge of literature generated by implementation efforts in numerous urban school systems, there appears to be little consensus among researchers, school officials, and community leaders regarding the basic meaning

and specific dimensions of these concepts of citizen participation. The lack of an appropriate and widely utilized conceptual framework for describing and interpreting highly variable experiences is a deterrent both to understanding and disseminating information relating to new developments.

The present paper undertakes to apply one projected typology for the concept of "decentralization," to the events which have occurred in the Morgan Community School of the District of Columbia from 1967 to 1974. Data concerning these events were obtained from primary and secondary documentary sources, including newspapers, and from interviews with key participants. In addition, the general literature on the school decentralization movement was examined for examples of definitions and typologies suggested or utilized by other researchers. Sources of potential bias are, of course, legion in the study of school policies which generate high emotions, intergroup conflict, and much polemical writing. Thus a special effort was made both to evaluate the views of informants and to utilize a systematic framework for describing the changes which occurred over time.* As to the ideological preferences of the authors, they consider redistribution of policy-making authority to be a potentially useful vehicle for revitalizing urban education, but they have found that the process is more complex

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*The stages of the decentralization process set forth in subsequent pages conform to those suggested by LaNoue and Smith, in The Politics of School Decentralization (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973), p. 225.

and ambiguous in its effects than its proponents generally acknowledge.

DISTINCTIVE ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Among governmental functions, concern as to citizen involvement in the educational enterprise has a long lineage and implications that make the school decentralization movement distinctive. The eloquent language of the documents which heralded our Nation's birth, provided for a "government by the consent of the governed." These words strongly suggested that the realization of democratic values comes to rest squarely on the shoulders of an enlightened citizenry. Indeed no less a figure than George Washington proclaimed in his farewell address to the Union:

> Promote then as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1972, p. 5).

Educators have also viewed the development of public education as an attempt to satisfy the requirements of participatory democracy. Ralph Tyler (1971) notes:

> For the nation, the education of each child was essential to provide a literate citizenry. Since the new nation was ruled by its people, ignorance among the people would threaten the survival of the country [p. 5].

Recently, alleged discrimination against minority students in our Nation's public schools has greatly alarmed persons concerned with the fundamental notions of equal

opportunity and the rights of minority groups in a democratic society. Leonard Fein (1971) aptly summarizes the position of several leading educators such as Fantini (1968) and Gittell (1970) when he wrote:

> . . . schools, as presently organized, are in fact the property of a (single) community--largely a middle-class community of college graduates who define the curriculum, the goals, (and) the techniques of public education [p. 87, parenthesis added].

Similar concerns prompted political scientist Elmer Schattschneider (1960) to note that, "the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly choir sings with a strong upper-class accent [p. 35]. His book, The Semi-Sovereign People, details the difficulty minorities face in attempting to penetrate "the pressure system."

Warner Bloomberg (1966) insists that the key to citizen participation lies in the capacity of our educational institutions to fulfill their role as agents of political socialization. He says:

> The task of creating citizens requires inducing into the personalities of individuals and developing among them as shared values (1) a sense of community and of social responsibility, (2) a concern for the issues which involve the well-being of that community and of its various members, (3) a commitment to action based on the authenticity of this concern and of the relationships which constitute the fabric of the community, and (4) a sense of personal and group potency [p. 9].

Thus, schools and their governance are widely perceived as crucial to the furtherance of citizen competencies, and by inference, of basic democratic values. The public's concern about the performance of their schools tends to be episodic;

but when it does emerge, deep emotions come into play. As LaNoue and Smith (1973) point out in their comprehensive study of the decentralization of urban schools:

> . . . citizens have always expected a more direct access to school politics than any other kind. In most American communities school taxes are the only levies subject to direct referendum. The elected school board is one of the few remaining links to an earlier grass-roots citizen-operated democracy. It is a very special kind of politics. [p. 11].

On the other hand, the same authors point out that local school district government is not as autonomous as many laymen consider it to be, even in the case of so-called "independent" districts. State and Federal laws and funding provisions, court rulings, collective bargaining arguments, and the powers of other local and regional governments result in the sharing of authority among many participants. The realities of educational politics do not match the rhetoric of "community control" when that term is stretched to its broadest implications.

ALTERNATIVES FOR DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING DECENTRALIZATION STRATEGIES

What indeed does "decentralization" and/or "community control" imply: a restructuring of the bureaucratic decision-making process, a redistribution of administrative authority, or an effort to "democratize" policy-making by creating new structures and procedures? So much confusion has arisen about the meaning of relevant terms that both organizational activists and researchers have undertaken to clarify them and to establish

the basis for common usage and generalized findings. Not surprisingly, the ways of conceptualization have been varied and disparate.

The advocates of the more radical versions of change in school governance, especially parents within the black urban community, who are demanding more control over their children's institutional lives, are wary of labeling their goal as "decentralization." Traditionally, the process whereby central administrative units subdivide or create semi-autonomous subdistricts did little to change basic policy-making procedures. As Haskins (1973) notes, this strategy in school districts functions basically to rearrange power relationships within the same decision-making group and involves outsiders either not at all or solely in an advisory role. The activists see the concept of "community control" as defining a complete restructuring of power relationships that would give primacy to previously powerless groups. An example, of this polemical view of terminology was set forth in 1968 by a group of black spokesmen:

> "There must be a clear differentiation between the concepts of educational sub-systems and the movement toward self-determination. Black people will not be satisfied with the compromise that sub-systems present. We view movements toward incorporation of the concept of community control into school systems whose basic control remains with the white establishment as destructive to the movement among black people for self-determination" (Haskins, 1973, p. 23).

Haskins (1973) argues that it is the prerogative of a movement to prevent itself from being defined as statistically

and blandly as those not in the movement might want it to be. While direct and dramatic appeals and slogans may indeed serve the ends of political activism, the development and use of unambiguous and precise definition of terms in inescapable for students of political movements.

Zimet (1973) presents a detailed and scholarly analysis of the dichotomous nature of the concepts which he terms "federal decentralization" and "community control," as it was perceived by leaders of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment in New York City. He concludes that the basic thrust of decentralization as commonly conducted is "organization-oriented," whereas community control is "client-oriented." This suggests that the competing values and goals of those involved in school governance reform were bound to collide. As Sizemore (1971) suggests, community groups are no longer interested in being drawn closer to the decision-making process and seek, instead, to constitute it.

Other analysts have faulted the term "community control" because it has acquired ideological overtones or contributes to misunderstandings in negotiating viable changes in school governances (Fantini, Sept. 1969; Altshuler, 1970; Berube and Gittell, 1969). They have variously substituted a typology which makes a distinction between "administrative" and "political" decentralization. Somewhat more comprehensive, and specific in its statement of defining characteristics in the classification scheme proposed by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental

Relations (1972), to which reference will be made in this investigation. Progressing from the least to the most pervasive form of decentralization the categories are defined as "Territorial," "Administrative," and "Political":

> 1. Territorial Decentralization involves steps taken by local officials to bring the government physically closer to the people it serves in order to facilitate the expression of resident needs . . . [p. 3].

This strategy serves essentially to subdivide large geographical districts into smaller area-wide units. Utilized in school districts, it need not involve any reorganization of responsibility or personnel, although often area superintendents are appointed to perform the coordinative tasks. Variously implemented in a number of urban systems in the past, this form of decentralization has frequently preceded more extensive change. However, it does not happen to apply in the present inquiry.

> 2. Administrative Decentralization is devolution of the administration of particular functions to neighborhood areas with delegation of substantial decision-making authority, discretionary power, and program responsibility to subordinate officials [p. 3].

The administrative model involves the rearrangement of power relationship within the already existing organizational structure. This plan may or may not necessitate a geographical adjustment. However, basic distinctions with regard to school district experience are that discretion to extend or retain policy-making authority remains with the central administration and that the role of parents and other community members, no matter how extensive, is an advisory rather than a regulatory one.

> 3. Political Decentralization involves efforts by local chief executives and legislators to redistribute political power and policy-making authority through the creation of new, autonomous subunit governments. These substructures would exercise substantial control over the delivery of certain services and would possess significant independence regarding fiscal, programmatic, and personnel matters [p. 3].

Political decentralization serves to redesign the basic structure of the policy-making procedure, in order to legitimize decisions on the same level at which authority to make the decision reaches. Thus autonomous subunits would be primarily accountable to a neighborhood constituency, and only secondarily responsible to the central administrative unit. This definition subsumes some of the commonly understood meaning of "community control" as applied to school systems, but it places the initiative for change on official policy-makers and specifies the constraints of "substantial control over the delivery of certain services" and significant independence with regard to program inputs (people and money) and outputs (presumably types and levels of services). The "politics" of decentralization revolves around the manner in which these limiting adjectives are interpreted and operationalized by actual participants at identifiable periods of time. LaNoue and Smith (1973) concluded that "it is the particular elements of a particular decentralization plan in a particular context that determines who will benefit, not the abstract concept of decentralization itself [p. 235]." Thus we will turn to the history of the Morgan Community School for an assessment of the utility of the ACIR typology. Other accounts of the Adams-Morgan experiment,

written from various perspectives, are available (Lauter, 1968; LaNoue and Smith, 1971 & 1973; Haskins, 1973; Feinberg, 1971; Jacoby, 1973). What is emphasized here are those aspects which appeared pertinent to this taxonomic purpose.

APPLYING CONCEPTS OF DECENTRALIZATION: THE MORGAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Placement of the Issue on the Agenda (1966-1967)

As Coser (1967) has noted, each social system contains elements of stress and potential conflict which may ultimately produce change within the system. During the school year 1966-67 Carl Hansen, Superintendent of Schools of the District of Columbia, was under considerable pressure from some irate board members and civil rights groups concerning certain educational policies he had initiated and particularly the controversial system of placing children in "tracks" or ability-groups which had been in effect since 1956.

Hansen and the Board of Education became defendants in a federal suit brought by a board member, Julius Hobson, which charged them with discriminating against black children in general and which attacked the legality of the "tracking system." The issues ran deeper than the suit implied, however.

Many of the younger black parents in the system began to verbalize their frustration. They claimed that the schools were oppressive, employed old and antiquated methods of instruction, and failed to provide a sense of pride in black culture. A group of young "liberal" white parents joined with some of the more

vocal black parents, and formed the D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education. Hansen, feeling the stress, agreed to a study of the District's schools, and suggested the National Education Association for the job. With the NEA national headquarters located in Washington, the more liberal community factions were skeptical about a staff of educators passing judgment upon their local colleagues. The D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education preferred a prestigious university contractor. In June 1966, a $250,000 contract was awarded to Teachers College, Columbia University, for a one-year study of the D.C. Public Schools to be carried out by A. Harry Passow (Lauter and Howe, 1969).

In June, 1967, Judge J. Skelly Wright handed down his ruling in the Hobson vs. Hansen case. Lauter and Howe (1969) discuss the judge's findings.

> Judge Wright found that the superintendent and the board 'unconstitutionally deprive the District's Negro and poor public school children of their right to equal educational opportunity with the District's White and more affluent public school children' [p. 250].

His ruling, moreover, ordered an end to the tracking system, the transfer of students to relieve crowding and achieve maximum desegregation, and the preparation of a plan to equalize services and per pupil expenditures between black and white students.

The day after Judge Wright rendered his decision, Dr. Passow released his preliminary findings on the state of the D.C. Public Schools. The study confirmed the suspicions of many, that the public schools were not doing an adequate job of

preparing District youngsters. The report attacked everything from poor administrative practices to a lack of teacher preparation.

Some of the findings revealed:

> A curriculum which, with certain exceptions, has not been especially developed for, or adapted to, an urban population.
>
> A holding power or dropout rate which reflects a large number of youths leaving school before earning a diploma.
>
> In-service teacher education programs which fall short of providing adequately for the continuing education essential for professional growth (Passow, 1969, p. 247).

Defeated in court, his schools stamped as failures, and facing increased demands for greater community participation, Superintendent Hansen agreed to an "experimental demonstration in urban teaching," later that summer. This concession, in effect, was the genesis of the Morgan Community School project.

The Thomas P. Morgan School was no different than most elementary schools in Washington during the latter half of the sixties. It was overcrowded, run down, and poorly equipped. There was one significant difference, however, which school officials came to realize. The community which surrounds the school contained a cohensive and organized group, with a tradition of neighborhood government and responsiveness to local issues. As early as 1965 a group of mothers had organized a meeting with school officials to protest deteriorating school conditions.

When the central office proposed placing the school on double session to relieve the overcrowded conditions, parents

were aroused. The Adams-Morgan Community Council, an organization which had been formed a few years earlier to fight an urban renewal program, took up the parents' cause. The Council, according to Lauter (1968), was composed of two major factions which were distinct racially, ideologically, and residentially. One element represented the young middle-class professional, who lived west of 18th Street. This member was usually white, liberal, and eager to become politically active. Christopher Jencks, now at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Marcus Raskin, co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies and Arthur Waskow, a resident fellow with the Institute, were representative of this element (LaNoue and Smith, 1973).

The other faction was comprised mainly of older more conservative black residents living east of 18th Street. Most of these members had lived in the area for years, and had weathered many a battle with the D.C. Schools. Bishop Marie Reed was representative of this group. Chairman of the Council's school committee, she, and about fifty other black parents began meeting with some of the younger white parents who, as Lauter (1968) indicates, were looking forward to sending their children to Morgan. They jointly prepared a petition for the school board, hoping to reverse the administration's position on double sessions.

The parents and Council perserved and were able to block the plan for double sessions. Now the more liberal elements on the council's school committee sensed the opportunity to push

for more far reaching reform, specifically a community controlled school which would have as Antioch-Putney Graduate Center in Washington as a sponsor. However, subsequent planning rarely involved the larger community served by Morgan. Lauter (1968) notes that:

> No real program of community discussion or education was conducted; there were, to be sure, large general meetings and a campaign for petition signatures. But there was no sustained opportunity for people to discuss and compare their educational ideas and aspirations . . . (p. 238).

There seems little doubt, however, that both sectors of the community, despite their differing expectations, felt a common sense of urgency to push for greater community involvement, perhaps because the city system appeared most vulnerable at that time.

Reception by the Educational Authorities (1967)

Neighborhood residents were not the only ones excluded from the development of the Morgan community school project. Lauter (1968) relates that community leaders carried on negotiations, "for the most part, with the superintendent and one or two Board members in a semi-private fashion, but backed by the threat of the community's general anger at the schools (p. 238-239)."

The evidence is that Hansen acted more or less on his own initiative with regard to the formation of the Morgan program. On May 18, 1967, the D.C. Board of Education approved a memorandum prepared by Hansen, which turned control of the

Morgan Elementary School and its annex over to Antioch College. The rather tenuous nature of this arrangement is evidenced in Hansen's own words:

> While the details of the proposal are yet to be worked out, the superintendent wishes to advise the Board that the plan concept has the full endorsement of the administration provided the operational aspects can be coordinated (Haskins, 1973, p. 30).

Hansen's claim of "full endorsement" by his administrative staff would appear to be unsubstantiated. However, his memorandum was clear concerning the parents' advisory role.

> The school community will be active participants through the Parents' Advisory Board, to be comprised of parents elected by the parents or guardians of pupils attending the school. The involvement of parents through the Parents' Advisory Board should improve the relevance of the school program to the needs of the community (Haskins, 1973, p. 30-31).

The administration had rejected a proposal for community educational development corporation and designated Antioch as a contractor so that control of the Morgan School could be vested in an established official agency. In the partnerships between school districts and University schools of education, for which there was established professional respectability, the basic authority of the board for school operations was not disturbed.

Thus it appears that, at the outset, the Morgan Community School would be classified as an experiment in "administrative decentralization." The ACIR definition does not take account of its "political" origin, which in this case included citizen demand for increased participation in school management. The

school superintendent acted unilaterally to "devolve functions," and just what this meant was still to be tested by experience. All of the parties involved, the school board, school administrators, the college people, and the community factions doubtless held vague but diverse conceptions of how "participation" would work in practice.

Response of the Pressure Groups (1967-1973)

The summer of 1967 saw the arrival of Paul Lauter from Antioch College to assume the position of project director. Lauter (1968) and Haskins (1973) document some of the headaches of that first eventful summer. Morgan's principal resigned at the termination of the 1966-67 school year, leaving the project with no in-school coordination. Superintendent Hansen then resigned, removing a channel for outside cooperation. Antioch's first innovation was a program of differentiated staffing, which cast community members and college students in an instructional role and forced a cutback in professional staff. The older community residents resented having their children taught by a non-professional staff. A violent debate also developed concerning curriculum matters. The younger white residents wanted a curriculum based on the arts and creative expression, while the black community lobbied for black awareness and the educational basics. This period

brought a weakening of the Adams-Morgan Community Council,* and finally its dissolution by the end of the summer.

That fall the first fifteen-member Parent Advisory Committee for the Morgan School was elected. Showing community resentment over the management role assigned to an "outside" professional agency, the Local Board (as the advisory committee now referred to itself) immediately fired Lauter. Although questions were raised as to whether the board had the authority to make such a decision, the matter was never finally resolved because Antioch withdrew Lauter and never replaced him.

Kenneth Haskins, a former social worker hired by Antioch, was named by the Local Board as Morgan School principal. Under Haskins' able and aggressive leadership the black community began to assume control of the program.

LaNoue and Smith (1973) describe the two years of Haskins' principalship (September, 1967 to June, 1969) as follows:

> "Haskins' leadership, by bringing various factions to work together, kept under control the tensions resulting from the loose structure and innovations in the school" [p. 97].
>
> "The philosophy of Haskins-now the pivotal figure in the Morgan experiment--moved in the direction of the separatist and nationalist tradition of black political thought in America. His strategy was to attract additional federal funding and other sources of funds to build a

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*Morgan and Adams were the community's two elementary schools. Superintendent Hansen had stipulated that the decentralization experiment would be limited during the first year of operation to the Morgan School. In 1969, Adams became a separate community-school, with its own board.

> base that would be useful in various ways. Beyond being a superior educational facility, the community school would serve as an employment agency, a political machine, the social center of the neighborhood, and a center for learning useful job skills" [p. 99].

Haskins (1973) himself recalls, "Soon the school took on the aspects of a community itself and more positive values were substituted for what had been valued in the past . . . children were respected for what they were" [p. 32].

By the end of the first year, friction over the curriculum issue led to withdrawal of the white liberals, whose children, about thirty in number, transferred to other schools. A crucial test of growing political clout of the community occurred in July, 1968, when the D.C. School Board was forced to accede to demands for continuance of the experiment for a second year. Although the Corporation Counsel had ruled that "public officials or bodies may not, without statutory authorization, delegate their governmental powers" (LaNoue and Smith, 1973, p. 98). A fuzzy compromise was reached which permitted the Local Board to operate "within a framework of delegated powers and vaguely subject to the ultimate authority of the D.C. Board of Education . . . (thereafter) the Board and the school system did not identify with and felt no stake in the success of the Morgan project" (LaNoue and Smith, 1973, p. 99). The compromise was formalized in a policy agreement for the period 1969-1972, which was recently extended for five years.

The most important powers granted to the Board were those of determining the number and kind of personnel to be

hired within normal budgetary allotments, recommending staff appointments, preparing budget requests, receiving funds direct from the Federal government and foundations, and formulating curriculum and instructional policies.

When Haskins resigned in June, 1969, John Anthony, a counselor at the school, assumed the principalship and has continued to serve until the present time. Anthony appeared somewhat less committed than Haskins to curricular reforms, but sought to build on Haskins' ideas of a power base and patronage center (LaNoue and Smith, 1973). During the first year of Anthony's principalship, Morgan's local board developed a militant ideology characterized by separatist sentiments and, in the second election for local board members held in the summer of 1970, feuding between "progressives" and "conservatives" in the arena of school politics was resolved in favor of dominant conservative community representation on the new board. Since then, the principal and the board elected in 1973 have weathered charges of "bossism" and fiscal irregularities, and school operations have assumed a more conventional character than existed in the early stages of the experiment. Greater emphasis is placed on teaching of the basic skills. In estimating the progress made since 1967, one knowledgable observer in the D.C. schools stated:

> "The education there is unquestionably better than it was before community control. If you talk about local management and accountability to the community, they are farther ahead than any other school in the city. If you're asking whether Morgan is everything we wanted it to be at the beginning, the answer is no (Jacoby, 1973).

It appears that the board and the school personnel have formalized a concept of education based on a total environmental approach toward learning, wherein the school serves to extract, interpret, and instruct from a curriculum base which has its roots in the common thread of community experience. Plans for the new $10 million Thomas P. Morgan Elementary school, which is currently under construction on a site chosen by neighborhood residents, reflect this concept. Built to community specifications, the facility will house a medical and dental clinic, plus neighborhood recreational components in addition to traditional classrooms.

But "self-determination" is only partially realized. Voter and parent participation in Morgan school affairs is neither as elaborate or extensive as the ideology of "community control" envisions and the educational gains of the students are debatable (Feinberg, 1971). A source of continuing frustration for those who advocate a truly autonomous relationship for the community school is that recommendations made by the local board and at the Superintendent's level have been stalled by lower level departmental personnel.

In terms of the ACIR typology of decentralization, the Morgan Community School, by its second year, had begun to fall within the "political" category. A significant degree of independence over the delivery of educational services was actualized, although the boundaries of such autonomy have never been clearly specified. Observers agree that the Morgan students and parents are among the most politically aware in the city.

Intra-community groups have jockeyed for position, and the resulting emergence of a different but stable power bloc can be likened to the outcome of many old-fashioned city hall political bouts.

However, the central D.C. school administration did not give active support to the redistribution of policy-making authority which occurred in "a new, autonomous subunit government." From 1967 on it was distracted by turnover in the city superintendency, by the shakedown politics of newly instituted city-wide school board elections, and the effort to conform to judicial rulings. Doubtless those with strong reservations concerning the claims made by the community activists put up less effective resistance than they might have. However, the latter prevailed because of determined professionals at the school level and experienced community leaders, aided by their mobilization of funds from external sources.

Alteration of the Existing School Governance (1973-1974)

Officials of the D.C. school district credit the Morgan Community School experience as setting the precedent for several system-wide innovations in recent years. Among the most noteworthy are the establishment of school by school budgeting, the use of parent panels to review qualifications for new principals, and the use of parent aides in instructional roles. The central administration has responded to the national school decentralization movement and has reflected the political currents generated by intense school board controversies of

the last six years. Just prior to his retirement in the summer of 1973, Superintendent Hugh Scott issued a "decentralization" plan which has been in preparation for more than two years. It provided for the creation of four regional sub-systems, each to be headed by its own Superintendent, but did not confer any additional powers on community organizations or individual local school personnel.

In the late summer of 1973, the D.C. School Board, by a 7-3 vote, appointed as Superintendent Barbara Sizemore, a black woman educator who had previously been the administrator of a school decentralization experiment in south side Chicago. Her three-year contract provided "complete freeedom to organize, reorganize and arrange" the school bureaucracy (Prince, 1973). Before assuming office, Mrs. Sizemore discussed at a news conference the methods, associated with social activist Saul Alinsky, of ridding persons of apathy by "raising the level of anxiety." The goal of both the chaos and anxiety, she suggested, is community involvement in the schools, "which she says she hopes to achieve through decentralizing the 140,000 pupil system" (Baker, 1973). She favors "a coalition of parents, school administrators, community residents, teachers and students to initiate policies for their local schools" (Prince, 1973). The former principal of the Morgan Community School, Kenneth Haskins, returned to Washington to assume the position of Vice-Superintendent. Indications that the community may not be ready for, or remains ambivalent about assuming an independent and active role in school management are to be found in the

November, 1973 school board election results. Two of the candidates supporting Mrs. Sizemore were defeated in the lowest voter turnout in five years.

While Mrs. Sizemore is proceeding with plans for regional reorganization, the relevance of the Morgan Community School experiment as a model for other areas of the city is as yet unclear. In terms of the ACIR typology, the D.C. decentralization experience faces the prospect that administrative initiative will be directed to achieving a form of political decentralization not too different from that which was more spontaneously generated through community-based pressures in the Morgan district. A significant difference is that the geographical area affected would be far more extensive than a single elementary school, including a high school and its feeder schools each with a student population of approximately 30,000.

PROBLEMS IN CATEGORIZING SCHOOL DECENTRALIZATION EXPERIENCES

From this exercise in conceptual analysis we must conclude that applying the ACIR typology to a purported case of school decentralization yields only problematical results. Typologies are of course likely to be flawed in their capacity to group commonalities among diverse phenomena and to categorize borderline cases adequately. Where the phenomena under study are complex and dynamic, defining characteristics shift over time, so that classifications are rendered unstable. It was

thus not surprising that the Morgan Community School experience could be classified, broadly, as "administrative" decentralization at one stage and "political" at another.

While these rough distinctions can be defended as less ambiguous than the terms "decentralization" and "community control," which are in general usage, this typology proved to be insensitive to the intermingling of administrative and political concerns in all aspects of the educational enterprise. Its underlying rationale is that of a dichotomy between "politics" and "administration" which is now suspect among public policy and program analysts. Furthermore, the definition of the decentralization process for both categories presumes that the architects of the process are primarily, even exclusively, persons with official positions as bureaucrats or legislators. In the Morgan Community School experiment, it was apparent that both the initial and the ultimate design of the redistributed power was a joint product of outsiders and insiders of the school establishment. The "locals" for all their political rhetoric came to terms with some of the administrative constraints of a large urban school establishment. The Central District of Columbia administrators bowed to the demands of a citizen interest group at the outset, permitted the stretching of their legally-defined authority in delegating responsibilities to the community board, and is now contemplating the potential dissemination of the Morgan School model on a system-wide basis. It is difficult to fit the facts into a conceptual framework which sharply separates administrative

from political behavior.

If it is ever going to be possible to generalize in a meaningful way about instances of urban school decentralization, researchers will probably need to develop in greater specificity a process-oriented classification scheme, such as that suggested by LaNoue and Smith (1973) and used as outline for this paper. It will also be necessary to monitor the research strategies which are applied to related political and administrative developments in the delivery systems for other social services. A more adequate taxonomic exercise would also require attention to the variety of urban contexts in which the school decentralization movement has taken hold. Since the distinctive demographic, economic, and governmental characteristics of Washington, D.C., makes it almost a class unto itself, there was some justification in examining the Morgan Community School experience in isolation from contextual variables that have been crucial in other cities. It is clear that a far more sensitive and fine-tooled classification scheme would be needed to make meaningful comparisons among cities where the complications of racial tension, state educational politics, and teacher militancy figure more prominently in school decentralization politics.

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