DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 578 EA 022 049

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TITLE School Reforms Can Reproduce Societal Inequalities.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization; Citizen Participation; Community Control; *Community Influence; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Participative Decision Making; Political Influences; Politics of Education; Power Structure; *Public Schools; School Community Relationship; *School District Reorganization; *Superintendents

ABSTRACT

Because the ultimate power to control school reform is in the hands of the superintendent or some other similarly positioned administrator, the reforms tend to benefit some student or constituency groups more than others. Judging from the personal characteristics of most superintendents and the political context of the superintendency itself, it can be concluded that superintendents are limited in their understanding of the needs and interests of significant segments of the community, specifically their least powerful constituents. Even if superintendents do attempt to serve the whole community, it is highly improbable that they will succeed, due to the political position of public schools. Results of the reorganization of Johnsonville School District, located within a small western city that was experiencing considerable growth in the middle- and upper middle-class suburban areas, are consistent with observations of the powerful influence of community elites over local public policy. Had the Johnsonville School reform effort proceeded (as initially announced) in accordance with the principles of critical pluralism, a shared decisionmaking process where power--not just the opportunity to participate--is equally distributed, the benefits of the reorganization would have been more evenly distributed among the community's constituents. (52 references) (KM)

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American Educational Research Association Conference
Boston, 1990

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Numerous educational theorists have claimed that schools are strongly influenced by the inequitable distribution of knowledge, power, and resources in society and that consequently schools tend to reproduce these same inequities within their policies and practices (Apple, 1982; Berman, 1985; Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bowles and Gentis, 1976; Carnoy and Levin, 1976 and 1986; Coleman, 1966; Giroux, 1981; Jencks, 1972; Nasaw, 1979; Oakes, 1986; Popkewitz, 1988; Sharp and Green, 1973; Sirotnik and Oakes, 1986; Whitty, 1985; and, Young, 1971). Bates (1980a, 1980b, 1987) and Foster (1986) contend that educational administration plays an important role in this reproduction. Their critique, though, exists mostly at the theoretical, normative, or even ideological level, leaving interested educators with limited understanding of the mechanisms by which administrative practice can contribute to societal inequities.

This paper shows how such inequities can be reproduced within school systems in one crucial area of administrative responsibility, school reform. It begins by examining the dominant paradigms of educational organizational reform--functionalism, culturalism, and critical theory--and by showing how school reform decisions can have an inequitable effect on different student or constituency groups. The second section of the paper assesses notable examples of functionalist and culturalist scholarly work on educational reform and addresses the inadequate development of critical theory in terms of research on actual administrative practices. The third part of the paper presents a case study of one school district's reform effort that illustrates how societal inequities can permeate both the process and product of school reform. The final section offers suggestions for countering the influence of societal inequities on educational practice.

Throughout the 1980s, school reform has been prominent on the agenda of educational practitioners and theorists. Although various models of organizational change have been discussed in the administrative science literature, historically the discourse on reform in education has been dominated by the functionalist or instrumentalist approach, typified by the work of Cunningham (1982). During the past fifteen years, though, a compelling critique of the functionalist approach been developed by several leading theorists, including March and Olsen (1976), Meyer (1983), Scott (1987), and Weick (1979). In response to this criticism, a rival philosophy, often called the culturalist or interpretivist approach, has attracted attention both in business and education. Examples of this are the works of Kilmann (1986) and Peters and Waterman (1982) in business and Sarason (1982)

in education. A third perspective is that of critical theory (Anderson, 1990; Bates, 1982; Foster, 1986; Sirotnik and Oakes, 1986; and Yeakey, 1987). This approach rejects both the functionalist and the culturalist positions because they ignore the inequitable distribution of knowledge, power, and resources in society and the influence of that distribution on schools. But critical theory also has critics who have questioned its application to educational administration on the basis of several issues, chief among which has been its lack of specific, verifying examples (Lakomski, 1984; Willower, 1985; and Yeakey, 1987).

Regardless of which organizational paradigm is utilized, school reforms are policy decisions based on choices about the allocation or reallocation of limited public resources (Sarason, 1982). Several commentators have argued that these choices can inequitably benefit different student groups (such as gifted, at-risk, special education, low or high SES, and majority or non-Anglo race students) or different public constituencies (such as low or high SES parents, real estate developers, the local Chamber of Commerce, or residents of older neighborhoods) (Berman, 1985; Bernstein, 1975; Carnoy and Levin, 1986; Katz, 1975; Kirst, 1988; Metz, 1988; Oakes, 1986; Popkewitz, 1988; and Whiteside, 1978). For example, a district reform effort may involve building a new elementary school that benefits powerful development interests in the community instead of revitalizing older, underutilized inner city facilities with large percentages of at-risk children. Or, a district may choose to fund a new gifted student program, the beneficiaries of which are not likely to be the children of low-income parents, rather than to expand a program for special education students. Thus, the question of who has the power to make decisions about school reform becomes particularly important.

Formally, school boards are the democratically elected representatives of the community, empowered to make resource decisions within the mandate given the board by the state (Campbell, et al, 1985). Nonetheless, because school boards have overwhelmingly been composed of lay people who have very little expertise in education or politics, they have developed various compensating strategies to assist in making major reform decisions. One strategy, consistent with the functionalist approach, has been to utilize administrators, academicians, or other consultants as technical experts. Another strategy, typical of the culturalist approach, has been to employ pluralistic constituency committees as representatives of community opinion. In the first instance, the school board is getting technical expertise; in the second, the board is creating an additional opportunity for community participation beyond the board's own democratically elected status.

Whenever either of these methods is used to develop recommendations on school reform, the ultimate power of the school board is eroded. If the board has turned to experts, those experts will either control the reforms or control the possible range of reform choices. If the board has turned to a community committee, the board will pay a heavy political price if it ignores

the recommendations of that committee. Critical theory asserts that both methods reinforce the inequitable distribution of knowledge, power, and resources in society. Unfortunately, critical theory has offered little in the way of research showing how educational administrative practices reinforce societal inequities or practical suggestions addressing how administrative practices might enhance or support equity.

The Discourse on Planned Educational Change

The Functionalist Approach

Cunningham's Systematic Planning for Educational Change (1982) typifies the functionalist approach to planned change with its emphasis on technical knowledge and expert control:

> The book presents a number of tools--planning process, context, and theory; participation, group process, and communication in planning; management by objectives; function line-item budgeting, planned programmed budgeting, and zero-base budgeting; task planning, Gantt charting, and program evaluation review technique; committee, nominal group, and Delphi techniques; decision making and decision-tree analysis; organizational development and team building; computer and management information systems; and planning for the future-these all have the potential for greatly improving one's skills as an educational planner and agent for change. (p. xiv)

> there is a growing body of systematized knowledge about process, context, theory, structure, tools, and techniques of planning that will improve the administrator's chance of accomplishing his or her organizational and individual goals. (p. xiii)

> The link between knowledge and action develops best when the planning process is built directly into the management system. (p. 8)

> Planning works best when it begins at the top and flows to the bottom. (p. 22, and again on p. 107)

This management-oriented approach is further solidified when Cunningham states that the purpose of the planning is control: "Planning is used to gain control of the future through current acts." (p. 4) In other words, planned educational change "works best" when it is systematically in the hands of the administrator or manager "at the top" and flows from that position down "to the bottom" of the organization for the purpose of "control."

Formally, the school board has power over the administration, and the

voters have power over the school board via democratic elections. However, in Cunningham's book there is very little discussion of the school board or its relationship to the administrator and planned change. When he does briefly mention the board, he says that although it "theoretically" has control over policy, it "leaves room for interpretation [of that policy and]...does not give the direction needed...It is the planner's task, then, to integrate a profusion of goals, on the one hand, and to deal with often ambiguous or vaguely defined goals, on the other." (pp. 38-39) In other words, while the position of the board is formally recognized, the power to make the reform decisions belongs to the administrator as the planner of the reform.

Cunningham also discusses the relationship between the administrator as the reform expert and the school community. He says that involving the community in reform decisions:

> takes time, is costly, may cause issues to be aroused in the community, and may not produce the consensus or the majority for the direction needed....the school community may become divided regarding what schools should be and what they should do. This sort of planning should therefore be regarded as potentially politically charged. The superintendent's review of such plans is advised. (p. 39)

Although obviously very hesitant about community participation, especially if there may be problems of control, Cunningham later devotes an entire chapter to "Participation in the Planning Process." In this chapter he reviews the literature on participation, concluding that "although the research seems clearly to suggest that participation is important to the effectiveness of the planning and decision-making process, there is still much debate on exactly how much participation should occur." (p. 115) He then discusses various technical methods for defining "how much participation," but he maintains his consistent conclusion that ultimate power should rest with the expert, ending the chapter with the statement, "The planner must obtain input and assistance through broad participation but never lose sight of his or her own ultimate responsibility for making the final decisions." (p. 121)

Essentially, Cunningham replicates the traditional hierarchical bureaucracy of Weber with the concentration of power and knowledge at the top of the pyramid. But the application of this model to school reform raises the question of whose needs and interests the school administrator serves. If the ultimate power to control school reforms is in the hands of the superintendent or some other similarly positioned administrator, will the reforms tend to benefit some student or constituency groups more than others?

This question may be answered with reference to the personal characteristics of superintendents and the political context of the superintendency. According to Tyack and Hansot (1982), "Superintendents in the twentieth century have almost all been married white males,

characteristically middle-aged, ..otestant, upwardly mobile, from favored ethnic groups, native-born, and of rural origins." (p. 169) Crowson (1987) in his review of the literature reports that this continues to be a correct portrayal. With virtually all holding master's degrees or higher, with an average of more than 30 years experience as professionals, and with salaries that place them in the top 10% of all working Americans (Campbell et al, 1985; Pounder, 1988), superintendents are certainly part of the upper-middle, professional class. In addition, both Tyack and Hansot (1982) and Crowson (1987) emphasize the conservative values of most superintendents.

If this portrait is correct, it is easy to surmise that superintendents will find it difficult to understand the needs and interests of many low-income and non-Anglo constituencies. This was confirmed by Campbell et al (1985):

> Superintendents [during the time of activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s]...found it difficult to communicate and understand the sentiments of the poor and underprivileged. Some admitted, in interviews, their anxiety during such encounters. They expressed support for citizen participation publicly but were privately terrified of it. (p. 181-2)
>
> As an outgrowth of the civil rights revolution, most city superintendents in recent years have had difficulty interpreting the will of communities made up largely of blacks or other non-Anglo groups. (p. 218)

Thus, it can be concluded that superintendents are limited in their understanding of the needs and interests of significant segments of the community, specifically their least powerful constituents. This would suggest that superintendents' reform efforts are unlikely to be either representative of or equitably beneficial to these groups.

Even if superintendents do attempt to serve the whole community, it is highly improbable that they will succeed because of the political position of public schools. Because a public school system is rarely an important power center within a community, it is highly dependent on powerful players in each community for continued support (Campbell et al, 1985, Kimbrough, 1964). The superintendent then is caught between the practical necessity of acquiring the support of the community power structure and the theoretical option of serving the needs of the whole community. In all but the most exceptional cases, the practical necessity will defeat the theoretical option: the superintendent will choose the needs and interests of the powerful over the powerless. The former group can more easily hurt both the district and the superintendent, while the latter will find it difficult to have even a minimal negative effect. For instance, a conflict between the superintendent and the owner of the local newspaper can mean continual bad press, potentially damaging to any

effort requiring public support and thus to the superintendent's career. On the other hand, a conflict with one low-income black person is likely to cause a small problem at worst.

The Culturalist Approach

Sarason's The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change (1982) is often cited as the leading contemporary culturalist commentary on school reform (Firestone and Corbett, 1987; Sirotnik and Oakes, 1986). As Sarason's title suggests, a major culturalist theme is that in order to successfully create change it is necessary to understand and manipulate the culture of the school as experienced both those within the school and by those in the surrounding community. Sarason contends that without this understanding school reform is doomed to failure. In addition, he is explicitly critical of the technical approach, labeling the functionalists' "step-by-step recipe" as unworkable 'social engineering" that "bypasses the task of coming to grips with the characteristics and traditions of the setting and the ways in which they ordinarily facilitate and frustrate change" (p. 78) For Sarason, the crucial issue is not technical knowledge but cultural knowledge.

Instead of leaving the power to control school reform in the hands of the expert, as the functionalists do, Sarason emphasizes the "participation of all affected constituencies in any change effort." (p. 294) Moreover, he insists that this participatory involvement be based on real power sharing: "Constituency building is not a token gesture or a consequence of noblesse oblige. It is a willing alteration of power relationships through which the self-interests of participants stand a chance of being satisfied..." (p. 293-4) He reiterates this viewpoint when he approvingly cites John Dewey who he says'

> understood in an amazingly clear way that all those who would be affected by the educational enterprise should in some way be part of it, not out of consideration of courtesy or as token gestures to the implications of the legal status of schools, but because the goals of education would not be met unless they had the support off diverse constituencies. (p. 294)

For Sarason, the answer to the question of who should hold power in a reform effort is "all affected constituencies."

Sarason's belief in pluralistic participation is especially evident in his discussion of what he considers to be the most outstanding example of comprehensive research on school reform. He cites with approval Berman and McLaughlin's finding that "to the extent that the effort at change identifies and meaningfully involves all those who directly or indirectly will be affected by the change, to that extent the effort stands a chance to be

successful." He shares their view that "a very large fraction of educators intent on change" simply do not grasp "the significance of constituencies for the change effort." (p.79)

The culturalists' preference for giving control of school reform to "all affected constituencies" follows from their focus on the culture of the school and its surrounding environment. Within the culturalist frame of reference with its phenomenological or interpretist epistemology, those who participate in an enterprise like a school district maintain norms, behavioral regularities (Sarason, 1982), or myths and ceremonies (Meyer and Rowan, 1983) about what attitudes and behaviors are acceptable within that setting. Over time these norms become a culture and assume a life of their own (Firestone and Corbett, 1987), the maintenance of which has great importance to its members. Accordingly, any effort to change the culture of the school must involve those who sustain that culture on an every-day basis. For schools, as Sarason points out, that means not only district staff but also those in the surrounding community.

Implicit in the culturalist's analysis is the assumption that participation alone gives adequate voice to diverse constituencies. However, as Apple (1979) has argued, this kind of pluralism ignores the inevitable consequences of the prior-existing diversity of interest and power. Although representatives from "all affected constituencies" may sit together in the best participatory fashion on a reform committee, those representatives do not leave the knowledge, power, and resources that they command in the community at the schoolhouse gates. Some of these committee members, like the manager of a local television station or a major real estate developer, may control substantial resources within the community. The power implicit in the control of these resources will not magically vanish nor will the need to protect and enhance these resources be set aside during school reform committee meetings. Other committee members with much formal education and experience in participating in professional meetings will also be adept at expressing themselves appropriately, at having the necessary knowledge and skills to persuade others, and at managing the committee process to the benefit of their constituencies.

On the other hand, members of the committee who are uneducated, who are unskilled workers, or who are unemployed or on welfare will tend to be less adept and effective. In fact, it is likely that a conflict between the more and less powerful will not even occur: the more powerful will often dominate the agenda to such an extent that their choice appears to be the choice of the whole committee and community, while the less powerful may have difficulty in appropriately verbalizing their needs (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 1974). Although the ability of educated professionals and community power elites to exercise considerable control over local governmental policies and actions often at the expense of the less powerful is well established (Schumaker, 1990; Stone, 1989), culturalists seem to assume that such power

differentials will disappear when all constituencies participate together on school reforms. Consequently, while the culturalist has a more democratic approach to reform than the functionalist, the culturalists' lack of attention to the considerable differences among community constituencies effectively allows the most influential constituencies to remain in control.

The Critical Theory Approach

For critical theorists, truly democratic governance requires an equitable sharing of power among all affected constituencies. Their critique begins with an analysis of the way in which social and economic inequalities inhibit the attainment of this ideal. In Foster's (1986) words,

> Critical theory... questions the framework of the way we organize our lives or the way our lives are organized for us....A critical theory locates human relationships in structural variables, particularly those of class and power...Thus, a critical theory examines sources of social domination and repression... (p. 72)

Relating the analysis more specifically to schools, Sirotnik and Oakes (1986) argue that

> the critical process provides a means by which the social and political meanings of school events can be understood....The methodology of critical reflection demands that participants attend to how educational structures, content, and processes are linked to the social and economic context in which the school is situated....During the process of critical inquiry, participants...become conscious of how current ways of schooling are grounded in the larger historical and social context of the culture as well as in the particular institutional and social context of the culture of the school. It should also become clear that the range of educational alternatives that are ordinarily considered is limited to those that reflect the dominant social, political, and economic modes in the larger social milieu. (pp. 36-37)

Yeakey (1987) describes critical theory as seeking

> to analyze organizations and their structural and ideological features within the larger social context they inhabit. Prior to the contributions of the critical theorists in the larger body of organizational literature, certain phenomena were rarely discussed. Virtually nonexistent were explanations of organizations which entailed an exposition of how some individuals and groups have access to resources and others do not; why some groups are underrepresented and others are not; why certain influences prevail and others do not. (p.27)

Similarly Bates (1982) says that critical theory, which he often refers to as "the New Sociology," pursues "a systematic analysis of relationships between social, cultural, epistemological and educational domination." (p. 6)

There are three fundamental problems, though, with the application of critical theory to educational administration. First, the language that critical theorists use is frequently overly-dependent on a specialized Marxist terminology (Willower, 1985; Yeakey, 1987). Second, the stance critical theorists typically take toward school administration and administrators is often so negative that it discourages the interest of all but a few administrators (Willower, 1985). Third, critical theory analyses of educational administration are based almost exclusively on critiques of administrative theory with little supporting evidence from practice-based research (Lakomski, 1987; Willower, 1985).

With the publication of Paradigms and Promises in 1986 Foster made a major contribution to the solution of two of these problems. The book's avoidance of jargon and its method, language, and tone make it the most easily accessible discussion of critical theory for school administrators. Foster's stance toward administrators is very sympathetic. This is communicated through such statements as "none [of the ways a crisis manifests itself] is more poignant than the everyday erosion in the self- image of... administrators" (p. 11) or "we believe that administrators and students of administration can generally make a difference." (p. 14) The combination, then, of a non-ideological approach and a sympathetic tone is very effective in improving the reception of the work and its ideas by school administrators. However, these strengths may also be the source of the work's primary weakness. In his effort to make the book sympathetic and accessible, Foster's analysis of educational administrative practice does not make a strong case for the practical need for critical theory. For the most part his critique of the status quo is based on the inadequacies or failures of the functionalist model of school administration. But his characterization of critical theory is severely diluted. It is true that scattered throughout the text are brief allusions to "insensitivity to culture and politics" (p. 9), "the concentration of control in the hands of management" (p. 42), "domination and repression" (p. 72), "the bureaucratically and hierarchically structured way of running our schools" (p. 199), but these themes are never examined in depth. Moreover, although there are brief summaries of three empirical studies, none of these illustrates how school management practices reproduce cultural insensitivity or domination and repression. Without such a research-based portrait grounded in specific administrative practices, the need for critical theory in educational administration and the ability to convince administrative practitioners of its worth are substantially undermined.

Yeakey's (1987) discussion of "critical thought and administrative theory" (p.23) evidences the same strengths and weaknesses as Foster's. She decries the proliferation of Marxist terminology and does not needlessly

alienate interested administrators by blaming them for the inequitable status quo in education. However, she bases her entire critique on an evaluation of organizational theory without any correlation with actual organizational practices. Once again, educational practitioners are left with little understanding of how the central issue of critical theory, the effect on schools of the unequal distribution of societal power and resources, has any practical connection to educational administrative practices.

In contrast, Bates (1980a, 1980b, 1982, 1983, 1987) has provided the most extensive and most sophisticated effort to apply critical theory to educational administration while avoiding the three problems discussed above. First, although his language is somewhat linked to Marxist terminology, it is not overly done. Second, while Bates does not display the obvious warmth of Foster, his sympathetic attitude toward school administrators is appropriately communicated. Third, he makes extensive use of research-based examples to reveal how school administrative practices reproduce societal inequities. Thus, Bates' work can be taken as a model for applying critical theory to educational administration.

The remainder of this paper follows Bates in using a critical theory approach to analyze specific examples of educational administrative practice drawn from a case study of one school district's efforts at reform. The case study illustrates how the inequitable distribution of knowledge, power, and resources within the community affected its educational reform efforts and demonstrates how both the functionalist and culturalist methods can result in the reproduction of community inequities within the school system. The concluding discussion suggests a way in which school districts can avoid the problems illustrated by the case study.

The Johnsonville School District's Reform Effort

The information presented is based on three sources. First, all newspaper articles, a total of fifty-four, covering the three-year period of the district's reform effort were examined. Second, members of committees formed at various stages of the reform effort including district staff, school board members, parents, and community representatives were interviewed for one to two hours each. Included among the parents and community members were representatives of the various socioeconomic groups, races, and constituencies that comprise the population of Johnsonville. In addition, each interviewee was asked to name the most outspoken representative of the major competing viewpoints that the committee had considered, and those individuals were subsequently interviewed. There were eleven interviews in all. During the interviews, all participants were asked both the same common set of questions and various additional questions that arose out of answers to the common set Consequently, approximately two-thirds of each interview session was fairly structured and about one-third was open-ended. The third source of data was a

large notebook of handouts for committee members, including letters summarizing the discussions that occurred at each meeting.

On April 25, 1984, the board of education of the Johnsonville school district, located within a small (approximately 60,000 population), Western city, decided to reconsider the organization of the school district. The next day the local newspaper reported that "the school board members approved a long-range study of enrollments, boundary adjustments, school closings and new facilities for elementary and secondary schools for the next five-year period." The newspaper also indicated that "The study of the issues...will be conducted by a panel of parents, patrons and district employees" (The Johnsonville Daily, April 27, 1984, p. 1). In other words, the board decided to pursue a major reform of the district system and to accomplish this through a pluralist method, much like the one advocated by Sarason.

At the time of the board's decision, it had been over twenty years since the organization of the district had been studied. The city was experiencing considerable physical growth, particularly in the eastern direction, with most of this growth occurring in middle-class and upper middle-class suburban areas. Most of the older elementary schools were located near each other in the center of the oldest part of the city but relatively distant from the homes of many of the district's children. At the same time, the district's superintendent of over twenty years was retiring, and by the time the reform process actually began, the new superintendent was in place. The board itself was also in a state of transition as four new, apparently more liberal, members had recently been elected. In deciding to undertake a systematic program of reform they and their three more experienced colleagues were no doubt influenced by a pervasive call for school improvement from both state and national leaders.

In accordance with the board's decision, a group of 55 parents, patrons, and district employees were invited to a meeting to discuss district goals in December, 1984. According to a district-level staff member, the superintendency team composed of the superintendent and three assistant superintendents decided that the method of selection of the participants for the goal-setting meeting would be to ask the principals of all attendance centers to choose representatives from the parent population of their schools. It was also reported that there was no discussion by the superintendency team as to whether this approach would bias the selection. It simply appeared to be an easy way to collect a group of school parents including at least some from each school.

According to the same informant, the principals handled this task in two ways. Some turned the decision over to the president of the school's parent organization, while others chose the participants themselves. Whether these approaches yielded participants who truly represented the population of their school varied with the demographics of the schools. The Johnsonville school

district at that time had one high school (grades 10-12), three junior high schools (grades 7-9), and sixteen elementary schools (grades K-6). All the schools except the single high school served contiguous geographical areas with some minor exceptions. Some schools were known as "rich" schools socio-economically, others as "poor." For instance, while 24.5% of all students received free or reduced lunches (the district's only data on SES) and 17.4% were non-Anglo, Elkland Elementary School, serving the highest socioeconomic neighborhood, had only 0.6% who were receiving free or reduced lunches and 6.5% who were non-Anglo students. On the opposite end of the socioeconomic scale was the California Elementary School which had 80.7% receiving free or reduced lunches and a 46.2% non-Anglo population. If the two selection methods produced representative participation, it would be expected that the parents chosen from each school would closely reflect the class and race distribution of the students of each school. This result did not occur.

Participants from the wealthier schools were reasonably typical of their parent populations. They tended to be educated professionals, business owners, managers, and spouses of such individuals. Participants from the middle-income and working-class schools were mixed. They included some of the same kind of people that represented the wealthier schools and some more typically representative of their respective populations. For example, there were two blue-collar, white males from one elementary school dominated by middle-class and blue-collar populations. However, participants from the poorest schools were occupationally more typical of the wealthier schools than their own. For example, the only participants selected from the two poorest schools were two white, male professionals, even though one was selected by a principal and the other by the president of a parent organization. While these two men were characterized as liberal advocates for lower class and non-Anglo concerns by other committee members, they were not demographically or culturally representative of their schools' populations. In addition, there were a total of ten representatives from the two wealthiest elementary schools, but only two representatives from the two poorest schools. That is, the two wealthiest elementary schools (10% of the district's schools) accounted for 18.2% of the participants at the meeting, while the two poorest elementary schools (also 10% of the district's schools) accounted for only 3.6% of the participants. The two wealthiest elementary schools thus had over five times the representation of the two poorest schools. Consequently, the initial reform meeting participants from the two poorest elementary schools were not only unrepresentative, but also substantially fewer in number than those from the two wealthiest elementary schools.

Thus, although according to several newspaper articles and several informants, the board of education and the superintendent supported a reform effort that was broad-based and representative of the whole school community, the reform committees had significant disproportional representation by race and SES. Interviews with district school officials, board members, and reform participants revealed no conscious effort to create a non-representative

group; instead it appears to have been an unplanned result of the selection process. Principals who chose their representatives apparently chose those who already were regular participants in school-related parent activities and who were thought reliable and capable to defend their school's and their neighborhood's interests during the reform effort. For the most part, this means that they chose those parents who had the interest, knowledge, and resources to be effective in community-wide activities, and this tended not to be low-income or non-Anglo parents. Parent organization presidents who chose the participants from their schools also chose those who were already active or who could be relied upon to participate. But even in the low-income and non-Anglo dominated schools the parents chosen were not the poor or non-Anglo ones.

Whether the reason for this result was (1) that principals or parent organization presidents were unintentionally eliminating low-income and non-Anglo parents; (2) that these latter parents were eliminating themselves because their lives were already too difficult, because they were socialized not to participate, or because they felt uncomfortable or not understood in school meetings dominated by higher-income whites; or (3) a combination of both is not the critical issue. Whatever the cause, the fact is that the committee assigned to set the goals for the district's reform effort, despite its stated intention of representing all segments of the population, was dominated by one type of parent constituency: middle to upper-middle class whites.

The main task of the goal-setting committee was to rate eighteen possible district goals from a list compiled by Phi Delta Kappa based on an analysis of other district's reform efforts. Although it cannot be known what a proportionally representative committee might have done, the goals chosen seem entirely consistent with the interests and needs of the constituencies that dominated the committee and less focussed on lower class and non-Anglo needs. While a number of purely academic goals (presumably of interest to all school constituencies) were chosen, a number of affective ("Develop feelings of self-worth") and cultural ("Appreciate culture and beauty in the world.") goals of a type often associated with the middle class were emphasized as well. Rated lower were a number of goals that might have appealed to non-Anglo parents, notably, "Learn how to get along with people who think, dress and act differently." Among the lowest rated goals were two that lower class parents might have chosen to emphasize: "Develop skills to enter a specific field of work" and "Gain information needed to make job selections." Whatever the accuracy of these speculations, the fact remains that lower class and non-Anglo parents never had the equal opportunity to influence the goal-setting committee.

Near the end of the goal-setting meeting, the participants were asked to join one of two committees that would study the district and make recommendations to the board of education as to what changes were needed or

desired. One of the committees was called the Organizational Structure and Auxiliary Services Committee. While several participants at this initial goal-setting meeting decided to join this new committee, district administrators also recruited additional participants from the district staff and from the community. The result was a 32 member committee that met sixteen times for two to four hours each time. While the chair was a district-level staff member, other administrative staff--one secondary principal, two elementary principals, and two district-level directors of auxiliary services--were also included. Also participating were three teachers, one elementary and two secondary, two board members, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the head of the city planning department, and a university professor. The rest were parents representing twelve of the district's twenty schools. There was one representative for each of the two poorest elementary schools, the two white, male, professionals mentioned above, and several representatives for the poorest junior high, one of whom was the spouse of a white, low to middle income farmer and another of whom was a white, low-income, single parent. The rest were middle-class to upper middle-class. Consequently, while the district had about one-third of its elementary students receiving free or reduced lunches, there was only one parent participant whose children qualified for this, and while nearly one-fifth of the district's students were minorities, there was no non-Anglo parent on the committee. Again, the committee was a fairly homogeneous, non- representative group.

This membership configuration became particularly troublesome when about half way through the process the committee focussed on the potential effects of proposed boundary changes, busing, and closing or consolidating schools on black children. At this point the lack of representation of the parents of these children became all too obvious, even embarrassing according to some on the committee. The chair of the committee then made special arrangements to add three low-income, black parents to the committee. These people attended the one committee meeting dedicated to non-Anglo issues. The main focus of the discussion at this meeting was whether the blacks preferred that the district close their children's neighborhood schools and bus their children to wealthier white-dominated ones. The response of the black parents was unequivocal: they did not want their neighborhood schools closed, but they did want these schools to be up-graded, to have the same level of funds spent on them as they felt was spent on the wealthier schools. They wanted to keep their neighborhood schools, but they wanted them to be as good as the wealthier schools. But as the committee continued to meet on subsequent occasions and on other topics, several interviewees reported that these black parents soon quit attending. Nothing, according to these informants, was said in the committee about the fact that the black parents were again not participating.

Thus, an avowedly participatory process of school reform proceeded with almost no input from a significant segment of the community. The only time

this lack of representation was even noticed was when the specific topic of the committee's discussion was the attitude of black parents to certain proposals. What was never addressed was that all of the decisions faced by the committee, not just those related directly to the schools with a high percentage of low-income and non-Anglo students, would have an impact on the district's resources that were available for low-income and non-Anglo children. Partially in response to the committee's work, the school board later decided to build one new elementary school and to remodel and expand three others, all of which were located outside the low-income and non-Anglo-dominated areas of the city, even though the schools located in the latter areas were substantially underutilized. In other words, reform decisions were made that budgeted large expenditures for expansion in non-low-income and non-Anglo areas when smaller expenditures could have been made for remodeling and use of the underutilized structures in the low-income and non-Anglo areas of the city.

One aspect of the final report of this committee to the school board particularly illustrates the effect of the non-representativeness of the group. The one real input that the committee received from otherwise unrepresented black parents was that they did not want their neighborhood school closed and their children bused to the newer schools dominated by middle and upper-middle whites and that they did want the physical and educational quality of their schools to be similar to that of the wealthier schools. However, the black parents had no objection to middle and upper-middle white children being bused into their underutilized schools. Nonetheless, three out of four of the possible plans offered by the committee supported closing the older schools the black parents wanted remodeled and busing the low-income and non-Anglo children throughout the city. The district administration also supported closing these schools. The committee and the administration even went so far as to claim the latter approach was in the best interest of the low-income and non-Anglo children, even though this was directly opposite of what the parents of these children had said they wanted.

Early in the reform process, another, much smaller, committee, called the Steering Committee, was created by the superintendent. All recommendations to the school board on possible reforms were to be reviewed by this committee prior to presentation to the board. The apparent effect of this committee was to allow a small, select group to exercise ultimate control over the reforms. The committee had eleven members including seven from within the educational power structure. Four of these were the administrative leadership of the district--the superintendent, who was the chair, and the three assistant superintendents--two were school board members, and one was the past president of the teacher's union. The remaining four participants on the committee were members of the power elite that dominated the city economically. One was the general manager of the local newspaper; another was the plant manager for one of the largest employers in the city and an active

participant in numerous community issues. The other two were university professors both of whom were active in community affairs, including one who would soon be president of the local Chamber of Commerce, the center of economic power within the community.

Thus, the Steering Committee, for which there was no attempt at representativeness, was essentially a combination of the local educational elite (about two-thirds of the committee) and the local power elite (about one-third of the committee). Obviously, the committee was overwhelmingly weighted in favor of the educational elite, a fact that was a source of irritation to one of the members of the power elite on the committee. During the interview he complained that the committee was simply meant to be a "rubber-stamp" for the plans of the superintendent.

Although it appears that the intent of this committee was to provide a mechanism for control of the reforms by the superintendent, it had, according to all interviewees, virtually no actual impact on the reform effort except in one important instance. This exception was the issue of whether and when to build a new elementary school. At one point during the committee's deliberations, the leading member of the local power elite on the committee in an unusually frank statement complained to a newspaper reporter that "The district was shifting away from the traditional policy of building schools in developing areas before the areas are fully built up." In other words, he was suggesting that the school district should build new schools in new development areas before the development is completed, as the district had done in the past, so that home buyers would be drawn to the new areas. He further argued that "it's a 'negative influence' on development to tell families who build homes in the [newly developed] east part of the city that they will have to bus their children two miles to school" (The Johnsonville Daily, April 29, 1985, p.3). That is, he was complaining that real estate agents would have to tell potential buyers that their children would need to be bused, presumably making sales more difficult. The superintendent in the same newspaper article countered that the district could not continue the old pattern of building new schools during the early phases of a large development project. Instead, he argued that the school board should expand schools to handle the influx of new students throughout the district.

As a result of the reform effort the district over a two year period (1987-88) substantially expanded three established elementary schools. Two of the expanded schools were located in blue-collar to middle-class neighborhoods that were showing growth, and the other, Elkland Elementary School, was located in a wealthy suburban locale near the newly developed area in which the local power elite wanted a new school to be built. In accordance with the wishes of the non-educators on the Steering Committee and despite the opposition originally voiced by the superintendent, this new elementary school desired by the local power elite was built exactly where the elite wanted. At the same time, the two predominantly low-income and non-Anglo elementary

schools in the older part of the city, about two miles from the new school, that were underutilized by half were ignored as sources of available space.

Due to the expansion of the three schools and the construction of a new one, the district added space for 950 more students, though by 1989 it was only using 750 of those spaces. The two older schools, the ones with high low-income and non-Anglo populations, together held 350 less than their capacity. Thus, the district built substantially more than it needed. It could have utilized the older schools and saved substantial funds through less construction. Never in any of the discussions on the various committees nor in the newspaper did anyone suggest that the already existing space in the older schools be used. Nor can it be argued that the space in the two older schools was being held for continued future growth. According to both the newspaper and the informants, the new and expanded schools were built to accommodate all of the future projected growth (the 200 yet to be used spaces in the new and expanded schools). That still leaves 350 unused spaces for the time that the enrollment is supposed to peak and start declining. In other words, it leaves unused enough spaces to accomodate almost the entire student body of the new school.

After the report of the conflict between the superintendent and the leading member of the local power elite on the Steering Committee, there were no other newspaper articles or public discussions addressing the issue of whether to build a new school. While those of the local elite who were interviewed reported that the new school was built to meet the needs of local population growth, other informants were not so sure. Several were suspicious about why it was built at all, why it was built earlier than it seemed to be needed, and why it was built exactly where the real estate developers wanted it. None of these issues, including the underutilization of the older schools, was brought out prior to the bond election for the expansions and the new school. The broad support for the bonds included both the educational elite and the economic elite. In a sense, a compromise had been struck because the superintendent gained the expansions that he wanted and the economic elite got their new school in the right location. But, the needs of the low-income and non-Anglo schools, children, and parents were neither represented nor served. Neither were the interests of taxpayers served.

Since the Steering Committee was created by the superintendent and since its membership consisted only of the local educational and power elites, the committee exemplifies a functionalist approach to reform. That the local power elite was able to fulfill its needs even when the chief educational expert, the superintendent, opposed them substantiates the vulnerability of expert-driven reforms to the influence of powerful constituencies. With the Steering Committee there was no pretense that the membership represented all of the district's constituencies. The needs or desires of the low-income and non-Anglo constituencies were not even on the agenda. In the only decision actually appropriated by this committee, no one even raised the obvious point

that the schools dominated by low-income and non-Anglo parents were underutilized. It could easily have been argued that the most economically efficient and the most educationally effective choice would have been to bus the upper- middle class white students from their homes in the newly developed area to these older, underutilized schools. Instead, because of the influence of powerful economic interests, the district chose to build a new school in the newly developed area and bus in some low-income students to provide a little diversity to the new school's student body.

Discussion

School reforms are allocations or reallocations of scarce educational resources. Whoever controls the educational change process has the power to benefit some students or community constituencies more than others. The traditional model of educational administration, functionalism, concentrates power in the educational expert, usually the superintendent in the case of district-wide reforms. The Johnsonville Steering Committee's decision to build a new school in accordance with the wishes of the community's real estate development interests illustrates the defects of this approach. Superintendents will tend to promote the interests of the class to which they belong and can more easily understand. Furthermore, because of the political weakness of local school systems, expert-driven reforms are vulnerable to control by local power elites. Thus, functionalist reforms tend to be to the disadvantage of the neediest groups within the community.

To avoid these problems, culturalists argue that "all affected constituencies" should control school reform. The flaw in this approach, as critical theorists have pointed out, is that all affected constituencies are not equal in their ability to exercise power. Some groups have considerable economic resources that may directly or indirectly affect reform decisions. Other groups, such as educated professionals, have skills and knowledge to excel in participatory decision-making. On the other side, there are those that have neither economic power nor the skills to be effective in committee work. Consequently, constituency-based reforms also tend to produce results that favor the more powerful and more skilled over the less powerful and less skilled as they did in Johnsonville.

The findings of the Johnsonville case study are consistent with the observations of political scientists of the powerful influence of community elites over local public policy (Schumaker, 1990, and Stone, 1989). In his analysis of this influence, Schumaker (1990, p. xi) has coined the term "critical pluralism" to describe a shared decision making process in which power, not just the opportunity to participate, is equitably distributed. If school reform is to become a truly democratic enterprise which affords equal opportunities that benefit to all student groups and all community constituencies, the pluralism advocated by the culturalists must become a

critical pluralism, one that is highly attentive to the significant differences in knowledge, power, and resources of various community constituencies and to the ways in which these differences affect schools policy and decision making.

The critical pluralist approach requires attention to two principles for its application to school reform. First, in a democracy, constituency committee-based reforms are superior to expert-driven reforms, but the participation on constituency committees must equitably represent the community. If a district's student population is 15% black, blacks should occupy about 15% of the places on school reform committees. If 30% of the students come from blue-collar families, so should about 30% of those who make decisions about school reform. No matter how good an excuse there seems to be, constituency-based committees should simply not proceed unless all groups are equitably represented. Second, while equitable representation is a necessary condition of critical pluralism, it is not enough. Critical pluralism requires that committees operate in such a way that all members have equal voice. There must be an equitable opportunity for all participants to exercise control over committee decisions, not simply to be present when decisions are made.

From this perspective, there are several steps that could have been taken in Johnsonville to assure a more truly representative, democratic reform process. First, there should have been aggressive measures to recruit non-Anglo and lower class committee members in approximate proportion to the district's student population. In order to do this, it might have been necessary to provide child care or other enabling incentives. Second, when the more representative committees first met, there should have been a frank, in-depth discussion of the differences among individuals that make it difficult to share power. Participants should have been encouraged to share their own backgrounds and biases and to each make a commitment to respect and consider each other's points of view. Third, it should have been made clear to all members that the point of the committees was not to engage in a power struggle but rather to develop plans designed to equitably benefit all the community's constituencies. Fourth, the committees' decisions should not have been subject to review of an expert or elite-controlled Steering Committee or any other mechanism by which power could be diffused. When the recommendations of constituency committees can be ignored if they do not coincide with administrative or power-elite desires, the community is not participating, it is being manipulated. Finally, these principles should have been addressed throughout the reform effort, not just enunciated early on and allowed to disappear like the black committee members in Johnsonville.
If the Johnsonville school reform effort had proceeded in accordance with the principles of critical pluralism, it is likely that its benefits would have been more evenly distributed among the community's constituencies. In any case, no matter what the outcome, no group could legitimately feel that it had been unfairly excluded from the reform process.

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