ABSTRACT
                This study was conducted to explore the process of
teacher and principal change initiated by elementary school teachers
who wished to replace the school's culture of isolation and seclusion
with a culture of collegiality and caring. Their vision of change and
the change process itself was intertwined with the development of a
sense of teacher leadership and teacher voice. The teachers, the
principal, and a university researcher engaged in an action research
project to explore, initiate, implement, and document change at the
school. Data were gathered utilizing participant observation,
ethnographic interviewing, document analysis, and dialogue journals.
Results suggest that voice and reflection are the common threads that
weave cultural change, and that teacher, principal, and researcher
narratives change into one collective narrative. A subsection of the
paper examines the assertion that the nature of one's own voice,
critical reflection, and change are intimately linked. The finding
and silencing of voice, critical reflection, and change are
reciprocal, interactive, and dynamic processes. (Contains 20
references.) (LL)

Teacher Leadership Through Collaborative Action Research:
Implications for Teachers, Principals, and
University Researchers/Teacher Educators

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This paper serves to summarize a year long study that was conducted in order to explore the process of teacher and principal change initiated by the participants themselves from within the four walls of their school, Southside Elementary (For a full report of the study, please see Dana, 1991). Together, the teachers, the principal, and I engaged in action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) in order to explore, initiate, implement and document change at Southside. The research questions that framed this study included:

o What changes do practitioners choose to make?

o How do practitioners make sense of the change process?

o What is the nature of structural and institutional factors that foster and/or constrain change?

o What is the nature of school and community culture with respect to educational change?

o What roles does the researcher play when educational change is initiated by practitioners?

o What is the nature of the relationship that develops between researcher and practitioners throughout the change process?

The methods employed in this collaborative action research project were interpretive (Erickson, 1986), that is, they involved the collection and interpretation of qualitative data through participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, document analysis, and dialogue journals. Following in the traditions of symbolic interactionism (Jacob, 1987), a constructivist epistemology (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) was embodied into the collection and interpretation of data and generation of assertions.

This study progressed through three phases of the research cycle. In the initial phase, my focus as the university researcher was to describe the salient features of the school culture. In addition, I discussed with the practitioners their meanings and their visions for educational change.

In the second phase of this study, I assisted the teachers to further develop and implement their perspectives of change through the process of reflective supervision (Schon, 1988). As the principal was interested in change and was intimately linked to the teachers' visions for change, I engaged in reflective practice with the principal during this phase, documenting his personal process of change. Finally, during this phase I documented what I, the researcher, did and learned from my interactions with the practitioners while in the field. In essence, this was my personal story of change.

During the third phase of study, the research focus returned to the school culture in order to document change. As might be expected in qualitative research, the three phases of study did not progress linearly. Rather, each phase became an evolving process itself -- "a circle of actions, reflections, feelings, and meaning makings" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). The phases, then, progressed as circles within circles. Actions, reflections, and data collection/analysis in one circle continually swept us into actions and reflections in another circle, another phase of research. Synopses of these stories of change are summarized in the following sections of this paper.

A Synopsis: Teacher and Culture Change at Southside

This story focused on the teachers at Southside and the existing culture of their workplace. Their vision was to replace Southside's culture of isolation and seclusion with a culture of collegiality and caring. Their vision of change and the change process itself was intricately intertwined with the development of a sense of teacher leadership and teacher voice. Two assertions constituting grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were generated:

> Traditionally, a culture of seclusion and isolation has served to contain teachers' voices within the four walls of their classrooms. Teachers yearn for professional opportunities for their voices to be heard beyond their four walls.

> The creation of the culture for change begins with the establishment of a culture of collegiality and caring. Such a culture may be fostered by the creation of professional opportunities for teachers to engage in dialogue and construct knowledge with peers.

A focus on the stories of these teachers revealed that teacher voice is a necessary component of change efforts. The development of teacher voice, and hence, teacher leadership, can occur when spaces are created at the school level for teachers' voices to be heard. A culture of collegiality fosters the development of teacher voice. A culture of seclusion and isolation prevents the voices of teachers from being heard. Therefore, it is not until a school culture is changed to one of collegiality that teachers can become empowered to create and sustain educational change in their classrooms.

Accordingly, although one of the initial proposals of this study was to focus on teacher classroom change, it became more important to focus on changing the school culture. A component of the change involved teachers at Southside reconceptualizing faculty meetings to include "idea sharing sessions" and "discussions of professional issues." Evidence to support that the culture of isolation was indeed changing to a culture of collegiality were dispersed throughout my fieldnote and journal entries, as well as interview and meeting transcriptions. These examples are best summarized by one teacher's comment at our last research group meeting of the year, "We became more of a team this year than we've ever been."

Teachers "finding their voices" and "taking leadership roles" in the faculty meetings did meet some obstacles. As the study progressed, data revealed change initiated by

teachers from within the four walls of their school may be constrained by others within their four walls -- teaching peers and principals. Three assertions constituting grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were generated:

> As teachers find voices and become empowered to create a culture for change, their new found voices can be silenced by peers.

> An examination of the nature of one's own voice may be a necessary, and potentially painful component of change. Collaborative action research groups and reflective practice may provide essential support as voices emerge and are silenced, and change transpires.

> As teachers become empowered to create a culture for change, their voices can be silenced by a principal, supportive of school change and teacher empowerment.

The teachers in our research group encountered opposition from their peers when they initiated and implemented change efforts. In essence, the more empowered to affect educational change that the teachers in our research group became, the more their non-empowered peers criticized them. Consequently, we learned that as teachers become empowered through action research, they face a political struggle that may at times be painful. Collaborative action research groups may provide essential support needed to engage in struggles with peers.

Struggles with administration may be encountered as well, even if the administration is supportive of teacher initiated change and teacher empowerment. In this study, the principal unintentionally constrained the spaces that had been created for teachers' voices to be heard. The constraint was a result of the traditional directive roles of the principalship (i.e., running faculty meetings). Instead of a directive role, the role of the principal may need to become one of facilitating and celebrating teacher self-direction, and the development of teacher voice. Accordingly, teacher change and school culture change may be linked to changes in the traditional roles of the principal.

A Synopsis: Principal Change At Southside

This synopsis chronicles the change story of Ted Jones as he engaged in reflective practice (Schon, 1983, 1987, 1988) to make sense of his roles and the desired changes he wished to occur. Metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) were used as a conceptual tool for "sense making."

Two assertions constituting grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were generated:

> Principals use a variety of metaphors to conceptualize their roles. Some traditional metaphors may be inconsistent with visions for school change and teacher empowerment.

> Metaphors may be a tool for reflection. Through engagement in Schon's (1983; 1987; 1988) notion of reflective practice, principals can reflect on the

metaphors they use to conceptualize their roles in relation to their visions for school change. Reflection may lead to change in actions.

In order to create a culture of collegiality and empower teachers to become decision makers, Ted wished to replace a "principal as loner" and "principal as the school" metaphor with a "principal as team player" and "principal as facilitator" metaphor. Two factors constrained his change process: (a) Ted used so many additional guiding metaphors he had little time to be "principal as facilitator." (b) Some of those existing guiding metaphors conflicted with his envisioned metaphors of "principal as facilitator" and "principal as "team player."

Through reflection-in and -on practice, Ted was able to make these constraints "visible," which in turn led to a change in actions. For example, traditionally Ted conducted faculty meetings which would consist of a long list of administrative announcements. When the teachers in our research group organized a professional issues discussion to become a portion of a meeting, Ted initially conceptualized these discussions as additions to his regular agenda. With time and reflection, however, Ted began to view faculty meetings differently and found other ways to take care of his business announcements. The focus of meetings became issue-oriented teacher discussion, where Ted would sit with a small group of teachers and either quietly observe or become part of the discussion.

In essence, Ted realized that in order for teachers to engage in dialogue with one another, his director voice as the principal would need to remain silent as times, and a new facilitator voice would need to emerge. In changing his metaphors to allow this to happen, Ted saw potential for abandoning the "principal as loner" and "principal as the school" metaphors. In the following months, Ted did report feeling less isolated and discussed engagement in colleague to colleague conversations with teachers. They, in turn, reported that they felt Ted was involving them more in professional conversations and decision-making. (For a full report on the actions of the principal, please see Dana & Pitts, in press).

This further supports evidence for an emerging culture of collegiality at Southside. The processes of principal, culture, and teacher change through action research at Southside were enabled when the traditional myths and metaphors that had governed educational research and defined the role of researchers in the past were abandoned and replaced with new, more useful myths and metaphors.

A Synopsis: Myths of Research and Researcher Change

This synopsis documents what I, the researcher, did and learned from interactions with the teachers and the principal while in the field. In order to interact with the practitioners as a reflective coach, the relationship that we developed needed to transcend some traditional myths that govern educational research. These myths included: (a) "There are experts in education who can provide solutions to problems" (Travers, 1987, p. 25), and (b) "Sophisticated statistical methods convert studies into scientific studies" (Travers, 1987, p. 21). In addition, the metaphor of researcher from the "ivory tower" needed to be transcended.

Surmounting the traditional myths and metaphors of educational research was accomplished by building trust through such actions as offering assistance in investigating areas that the teachers and I didn't know much about, attending each faculty meeting, having a mailbox placed in the school right along side the faculty for easy communication, joining the faculty at social engagements, and behaving in meetings as a catalyst. In addition, I learned that in order to coach reflection, I needed to trust the teachers and principal in the same ways they needed to trust me.

Ironically, while striving to build a reciprocal trust and negate the myths and metaphors encapsulated in the phrase "the expert from the ivory tower," I found myself struggling with the issue of my own voice. Additionally, I learned that I too was partially trapped to some extent by the educational research myths and metaphors that have dominated my field. These realizations, as well as my engagement in the processes of action research and reflective practice with the teachers and principal at Southside, led to my personal change as a teacher educator.

Final Thoughts: Voice, Reflection, and Change

A collective examination of the teachers', the principal's and the university researcher's synopses of change reveal two central themes. Themes of voice and reflection are the common threads that weave these individual stories of change into one collective narrative of the change process at Southside Elementary. These themes have lead to the generation of one high level assertion, a process Erickson (1986) likens to pulling "strings of data" from a "large cardboard box:"

> A report of fieldwork research contains empirical assertions that vary in scope and in level of inference. One basic task of data analysis is to generate these assertions . . . An appropriate metaphor for this kind of pattern discovery and testing is to think of the entire data set (fieldnotes, interviews, site documents, videotapes) as a large cardboard box filled with pieces of paper on which appear items of data. The key linkage is an analytic construct that ties strings to these various items of data. Up and down a hierarchy of general and subsidiary linkages, some of the strings attach to other strings . . . When one pulls the top string, one wants as many subsidiary strings as possible to be attached to data. The strongest assertions are those that have the most strings attached to them, across the widest possible range of sources and kinds of data (p. 146, p. 148).

In the following subsection of this paper, one high level assertion generated from an examination of the entire data set created from the study of change at Southside Elementary School is presented and discussed.

This assertion constitutes a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is the teachers', the principal's, and my hope that this theory might be applied to other educational reform movements, inservice teacher development programs, and others involved in the exhilarating process of collaborative inquiry. We share some similar experiences and feel a connection with other collaborative researchers such as Miller (1990) and her teacher-researcher group who write:

In the sharing of our stories, then, we know that others will have different versions and tales to tell. Our hope is that, through the sharing of our interactions and through the presentation of possible alternatives represented in our particular approaches to our work, others will want to gather together and begin (p. 173). We hope that our stories may invite others to join together in creating spaces and finding voices (p. xiii).

Assertion:

The examination of the nature of one's own voice, critical reflection, and change are intimately linked. The finding and silencing of voice, critical reflection, and change are reciprocal, interactive, and dynamic processes.

Changes in the teacher and culture at Southside, the principal, and the researcher all transpired as a result of the examination of the nature of our own voices through engagement in critical reflection -in and -on practices. In addition, our own voices enabled us to articulate our ideas. Articulating our thinking led to additional reflection and change.

For the teachers at Southside, who had traditionally remained silent in change efforts, change meant finding new voices as well as creating structures at the school level for those voices to be heard. Their voices of change, which were previously contained within the four wall of their classroom, emerged as empowering forces, and enabled them to reflect upon the existing culture of isolation and seclusion at Southside, and change that culture to one of collegiality and caring.

An attempt to silence implementation of changes, such as time for small group colleague sharing and discussion at faculty meetings, was forged by peers. Following silencing efforts, the teachers in our research group again reflected and found voices to overcome silencing attempts and to continue in the process of finding voices, reflecting, and implementing change.

For the principal at Southside, change meant reconceptualizing his roles from those that metaphorically governed the school with a directive voice to roles that metaphorically facilitated learning and teacher empowerment at the school with a collegial voice. Ted was able to accomplish this by reflecting upon the existing guiding metaphors that he used to conceptualize his practices. For Ted, reflective practice enabled a new, collegial voice to emerge, and change in his roles to transpire.

For myself, the researcher at Southside, change meant silencing the university researcher authoritative voice that has been perpetuated by the traditional myths and metaphors that have governed educational research in the past. I, as Ted, needed to find a collegial voice, both in my dialogues at Southside and in the writing of the research. I was only able to do so when a reciprocal relationship of trust was built with the teachers and principal that enabled all of us to enter into the reflective hall of mirrors and discuss my interpretations of data. As I voiced my interpretations, the teachers and principal reflected them back to me for clarification, refinement, revision, and change. Examining the nature of my own voice through critical reflection

additionally facilitated my change as a teacher educator.

In summary, the finding and silencing of voices, reflection, and change are reciprocal, interactive and dynamic in that in all of our stories, articulations of our thinking led to reflection which led to change which led to further articulations, reflections, and change again. Thus, reform becomes a circular process of three essential components -- voice, reflection, and change. School reform and restructuring may begin by entering into the endless circles within circles of voice, reflection, and change, illustrated in Figure 1.
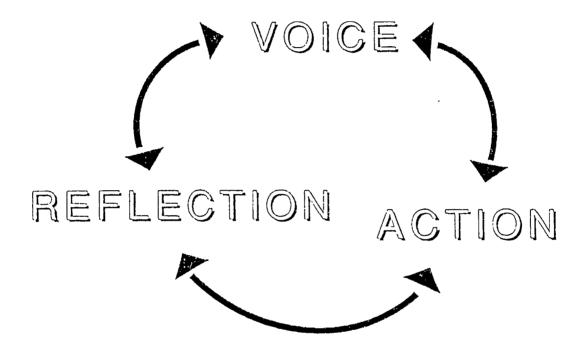

Figure 1. School Reform: Circles of voice, reflection, and change.

Continuing to "sweep" through the circle of reflection, voice, and change, as well as bring others into our research circle, became a goal for our continuing research. We know this must occur if our reform efforts are to continue. "Others" include district office administrators, students, parents and community, and finally, government officials. Such efforts are beginning to be made by researchers and theorists such as David (1991), Foster (1991), Murphy (1991) and Gee, Maddox, Mickley, & Gettys (1991). These efforts, as well as our stories of change, suggest that reform will not come "top down" or "bottom up," but when each of us, whether teacher educators, principals, teachers, district administrators, parents, researchers, or government leaders, join with one another, enter into the reflective hall of mirrors, and continually circle through critical reflection on our practices, the nature of our own voices, and our own needed change. Reform then, does not begin "one rung on the ladder below the reformer" (Barth, 1990, p. 70), reform begins with you and me.

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