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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study of teacher teaming was conducted at an urban high school, exploring the effects the teaming process had on teachers' and students' experiences. Heritage High School was a relatively large urban school in the Midwest, employing over 100 teachers and serving over 1,200 students. The school has a graduation rate of only about 16%, and most of its students are overage for the grade in which they are enrolled. The 8 teachers observed in the case study wanted to create a cooperative and supportive environment in a system that would promote community among students and teachers and increase the graduation rate of a randomly selected group of 160 ninth graders who were new at the school and not more than 1 year over age for the grade level. The teachers intended to build a school-within-a-school to keep these students in school long enough to graduate. After teaming for the school year, teachers began to see promising results. Eighty-one percent of the teamed students returned for a second year, and about 61% passed their core courses, in contrast to only 34% of the comparison group of nonteamed students. Fewer teamed students than comparisons received discipline referrals. Teachers, administrators, and students believed that teaming, by building a sense of community, made the difference. These results are discussed in terms of social capital. In spite of these successes, the physical and psychological limitations, the utilitarian (and not very supportive) leadership of the principal, and some common sense beliefs about teaching and students constrained the teachers' ability to transform the school, contributing to the return to some preteaming classroom formats and techniques early in the school year. The efforts they sustained, however, did enhance the educational experience for both students and teachers. (Contains 1 table, 2 figures, and 16 references.) (SLD)

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Teaming in an urban high school:

Commitment, collaboration, and contradictions

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Teaming in an urban high school: Commitment, collaboration, and contradictions

by: Elizabeth Lokon -- Miami University

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Teaming in an urban high school: Commitment, collaboration, and contradictions

by: Elizabeth Lokon -- Miami University

Overview

In this paper, I followed a group of eight teachers at Heritage High School[1] who began a teaming initiative during the 1995-1996 school year to address the challenges of urban education. The key questions in this ethnographic case study are: (1) What did teaming mean at Heritage High and (2) What effects did it have on teachers' and students' experiences at Heritage?

I will argue that teaming meant more than the compilation of teaching techniques, classroom formats, and curricular structures. More important than these practical concerns was the ethos of collaboration manifested in everyday interactions among team members. This ethos of collaboration did enhance the Heritage teachers' ability to transform their world of work. By constructing a collective identity and a shared definition of the situation (Goffman, 1959), team teachers were able to generate some social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 1995a, 1995b) that improved their work experience and students' academic and behavioral performance. I found that their capacity to actually transform their world of work was hampered, however, by a lack of leadership, institutional support, and the existence of cultural and structural factors that were inimical to the transformative potential of their actions (Hays, 1994).

I conclude by stating that though teaming may not solve all of urban education problems, it does have the potential to create spaces where transformation may become possible.

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[1] To ensure confidentiality, all names in this paper have been changed.

Methods

From January of 1995 until June of 1996, I was a participant observer at Heritage High School. During this time, I spent over 500 hours observing and interacting with teachers, students and administrators of the new "Heritage Interdisciplinary Team." I observed classrooms, attended various meetings and school events, distributed open-ended surveys to inquire about teachers' thoughts and feelings on teaming, and conducted formal and informal interviews. I collected nearly one thousand pages of single-spaced fieldnotes and interview transcripts. This body of data was progressively coded and categorized (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) to generate an organizational framework of teachers' stories about transforming their world of work in general and teaming in particular. To ensure trustworthiness, the initial draft of the stories was shared with some of the teachers for corrections and modification.

The School

Heritage High is a relatively large urban high school in the Midwest, employing over one hundred teachers and serving over twelve hundred students (Heritage, 1995). Its students are mostly African American (84%) and Appalachian students (16%) with an overall poverty rate of 55% (Heritage, 1994). Approximately half of the entire student population are first year students. In recent years, it has become routine for nearly half of the six hundred ninth graders to not return for a second year of high school. And as a rule, only about one hundred and fifty of these ninth graders actually reach the twelfth grade. Of these one hundred and fifty students, less than one hundred students receive their diplomas (Heritage, 1995). Statistically, this school has a 66% or higher graduation rate. While not inaccurate, this percentage is misleading. It is more appropriate to represent a graduation rate of about 16%, as only approximately one hundred out of over six hundred students earn a diploma.

The students at Heritage are generally one or more years overage for the grade in which they are enrolled. Achievement scores, as measured by the California Achievement Tests, show approximately 75% of Heritage students score below the national norm in reading, and approximately 82% score below the national norm in mathematics. The mobility rate at Heritage (the percent of students entering and/or leaving Heritage during a given school year) is 37-40% (Heritage, 1994).

The Heritage Interdisciplinary Team

The eight teachers I observed for this case study set out to create a cooperative and supportive environment within the system that would bind teachers, students, parents and administrators together and unify their effort to improve the education prospects of a randomly selected group of one hundred sixty first year students who meet the following criteria: (1) that they were new ninth graders at Heritage, that is, they did not fail ninth grade at Heritage in the previous school year, and (2) that they were not more than one year over age for their grade level. Their primary goal was to build a team within the larger school, or a school-within-a-school, to keep more students in school long enough to graduate.

The teachers began their journey in January of 1995. They sought volunteers to discuss school improvement issues on Friday afternoons, after school, in a nearby coffee shop. In these weekly meetings, teachers read and discussed various journal articles about educational reform. By August of 1995, they had formed into a voluntary team of eight team teachers: four core subject teachers (math, science, English, and social studies), one special education teacher and three home economics teachers, the only elective offered to ninth graders. These eight teachers shared the same set of one hundred sixty ninth grade students and called themselves "The Heritage Interdisciplinary Team."

The team began the 1995-1996 school year at a new location, "Building 5," an undesirable building at the back of the big sprawling campus, physically separated from the other buildings. They were given new chairs and tables but otherwise received no additional support from from the school or the district. Mr. Clark, Heritage's principal, told the team teachers: "You can do anything you want as long as it doesn't cost me anything" (Fieldnote, 1-17-1997).

Mr. Clark, the Principal of Heritage High School

Mr. Clark is a tall, white man with slightly stooped shoulders. He dressed in loosely fitting dark-colored suits, white shirt and tie and a walkie-talkie in his hand or hanging on his belt. He seemed to be in his late forties or early fifties. This is his seventh year of principalship at Heritage. One team teacher characterized him as "not really interested in change" (Interview, 6-7-1996). When Sandy Henderson, the team English teacher who spearheaded the whole movement asked Mr. Clark for permission to distribute a flyer inviting all the teachers in the building to the weekly coffee shop discussions, Mr. Clark said: "You can do that but no one will come" (Fieldnote, 12-1-1995). It was apparent that he was not too enthusiastic about the idea. However, by the end of the school year, in June of 1996, Mr. Clark had changed his mind. He called the team a "self-directed, high-performing team." Ruth Jones, the Special Education teacher who became the team leader said this about Mr. Clark's change: "Paul [Clark] has gone a long way since the beginning of the year. He has seen it work. At the beginning of the year different things were going on but now, we're the only ones left. We survived" (Interview, 1-18-1996).

Mr. Clark compared the team with other teachers in the school and said that unlike the rest, the team did not create more work for him as a principal. He said:

> I think often teachers bring ideas to me and in many cases, it means more work for me. . . Some people say what "we" ought to do, meaning what "I" am supposed to do as a principal. Instead [of that], the team came up with good ideas and when they said what "we" ought to do, it meant just that-what the team was going to do. (Interview, 6-7-1996)

Mr. Clark saw his role in this grassroots movement as someone who gives his stamp of approval to ideas generated by the teachers, to be implemented by the teachers, without further assistance from him or his office. Mr. Clark explained his hopes for teaming:

> Ideally, not have any substitutes ever called in for those teams, no counselors, no assistant principals, no visiting teachers. None of those extra resources used. Those five or six teachers would be totally responsible [for everything]. They also would not be given extra preparation time built in. They would have to figure it out. . . . I've been to a variety of meetings and some of the great gurus in the country are saying, "You don't need to put more money into teams; [just] do it."

He continued:

> You are not going to have a visiting teacher because the teams are going to do that. Save the visiting teacher money and hire another English teacher for the team. Or buy some more computers for the team. So, it's a tradeoff. . . . Can you operate a school without a

> secretary? Probably not. But if the team handled early excuses, that kind of stuff would trade off a secretary. If the kids stayed here and were less mobile, we could probably do with one less person to handle transfers. . . . The other thing is in teaming with the various personalities, at least one will match up with the student. That's the person that should become the counselor, the administrator for that child. Somehow we need to group them and [this teacher] becomes responsible for this core of students. [He or she] should see them every day and do some of that affective stuff we don't do anymore at the high school [level]. (Interview, 6-7-1996)

It is apparent that he saw in teaming the great potential for "doing more with less." This was an important matter given the recent budget cuts that had reduced Heritage's staff from five counselors to one; custodial staff was reduced from seventeen to ten; and assistant principals from five to three (Staff meeting, 8-31-1995).

Conceptual Framework

Understanding the relationship between the concepts of social structure and agency is critical to understand these teachers' attempts at transformational initiatives at Heritage High School. I use the term "social structure" or "socio-structural" as an umbrella term which includes both concepts of "structure" and "culture." Though structure and culture are clearly distinct concepts and one is not reducible in terms of the other, they are interconnected and both have socio-structural force that simultaneously constrain and enable agency. Social structure here is defined as:

> durable systems, patterned by more or less flexible logics, that transcend individuals.

> Social structures are both the medium and the outcome of human social action: although they regularly operate above the heads of individual human actors, they would not exist without the willing or unwilling participation of those same actors. Social structures are simultaneously constraining and enabling: although [socio-] structural constraints absolutely preclude the possibility of making certain choices, they also provide the basis of human thought and action, and therefore offer the very possibility of human choice. (Hays, 1994, p. 65)

Social structures both constrain and enable human thought and action. In other words, they constrain and enable actor's agency. A social actor (whether individual or collective) can be said to exercise agency if the following criteria are met (Dietz & Burns, 1992): First, the actor must have some sort of power to make a difference. Second, the actions must be intentional. This is not to say that the actor understands and anticipates all of the consequences of the action, but the action has to contain an element of volition in order to be considered agency. Third, the actor must have some free play that allows for a sense of creativity and spontaneity, choice and decision-making. In principle, an observer can predict "action" only in probabilistic terms. Finally, the actor must have some reflexivity, that is, some awareness of the effects of her actions and an ability to monitor her actions using that information. The implication of these criteria is that a mindless "behaver" who simply behaves without power, intention, volition or reflexivity acts without agency.

Let us now explore the relationship between social structure and agency. First of all, we need to understand that "[social] structure and agency are a duality; neither can exist without the other" (Ritzer, 1996, p. 531). That is to say, both are necessary for the creation of the other. In expressing themselves as agents, people are engaging in practice and through that practice social structure is produced. This cumulative production of social structure in turn contextualizes and conditions the subsequent practices that agents are able to engage in. Held and Thompson put it this way: "[Social] structure is reproduced in and through the succession of situated practices which are organized by it" (as cited in Ritzer, 1996, p. 529). In other words, the relationship between agent and social structure is dialectic.

Secondly, we must understand agency as a continuum: "All actors possess agency to some degree, and no actor has total, unconstrained agency" (Dietz & Burns, 1992, p. 192). Along this continuum, agency can be understood to relate to social structure in four different ways (Hays, 1994): from totally structurally determined to completely voluntaristic relationships. In a totally structured relationship, agents are simply bearers or instruments of social structure and none of the four criteria of agency (power, intentionality, volition, and reflexivity) is fulfilled. By contrast, in a complete voluntaristic relationship, agents have complete control over the social world and all four of the above criteria are completely fulfilled. Neither of these extreme positions in the continuum can be supported by what we have seen in social history.

The two other possibilities in between these two extreme positions in the continuum of agency are "structurally reproductive agency" and "structurally transformative agency" (Hays, 1994, p. 63-4). In both versions, the four criteria for agency are partially fulfilled. In structurally reproductive agency, people are agents in that they make choices, consciously or unconsciously, among socio-structurally provided alternatives. The choices they make as agents, however, end up reproducing existing social structures. For example, Willis's (1977) lads act as agents in making their social choices. Yet, these choices simply reproduce their working class position.

Likewise, Bourdieu's (1974) analysis of the French education system leads him to conclude that schools are "one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern" (p. 32). Bourdieu observes that socially disadvantaged students end up "choosing" educational tracks that reproduce their social/class location. Their hopes for educational attainments and upward social mobility are shaped by "objective chances [for success] intuitively perceived and gradually internalized" (p. 34). Since the objective chances for upward mobility among socially disadvantaged youth is low, Bourdieu believes that they lower their aspirations and make choices that reproduce their social location.

In the above examples, Willis and Bourdieu describe a structurally reproductive form of agency. In the dualistic relationship between social structure and agency, they place a greater emphasis on the structure side of the duality: Agents are so heavily preconditioned by internalized structures that their practices merely reproduce existing structures. Let us not confuse structurally reproductive agency with the totally structured view of agency. Bennet Berger's (1995) quotation below might help here: "The point is not whether they do it [complete voluntarism] or get it done to them [total structural determinism]; but like Willis's lads, they always do it themselves but usually in ways that promote it being done to them [structurally reproductive agency]" (p. 137).

In "structurally transformative agency," by contrast, emphasis is placed on the agency side of the dialectic relationship: In expressing their agency, people engage in practices that have the power to produce new social structures. Here, agents have more power to produce social change than in previously discussed "structurally reproductive agency." Agents' choices are always shaped by and limited to structurally provided alternatives, but there are times when the (intended or unintended) consequences of the choices agents make affect the pattern of social structures in some nontrivial way. In moments of structurally transformative agency it makes sense to talk about social structure as a human creation. Examples of this can be found in all sorts of social revolutions such as the civil rights movement, the anti-war student movement, the women's movement, and the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender movement. Both in "structurally reproductive agency" and "structurally transformative agency" we must remember the dualistic relationship between social structure and agency: that agency constitutes social structure and that social structure conditions agency and that this relationship is recursive. The difference lies in the emphasis on the relative degree of agency that is present in any given social situation and the effects of such agency on the patterns of social structure.

As it will become apparent later on, at Heritage High, the team teachers engaged in both reproductive and transformative acts.

Impact of Teaming on Students

After teaming for one school year, the teachers began to see promising results (see Table 1). Table 1 compares the academic performance and behavior of teamed and non-teamed students at the end of the 1995-1996 school year. The non-teamed students in Table 1 was made up of one hundred thirty five similar ninth graders who received regular (i.e., non-teamed) instructions at Heritage. They were randomly selected from the remaining five hundred ninth graders at Heritage. The same two selection criteria (non-repaters and not more than one year over age) were applied in selecting students for the comparison group.

Table 1:

Comparison of teamed (n=150) and non-teamed (n=135) students' performance and behavior

	TEAM AVERAGE	NON-TEAM AVERAGE
Students returning for 2nd year	81%	54%
Students passing core courses		
1st semester	61%	34%
2nd semester	54%	36%
Students' daily attendance	85%	78%
% students receiving referrals	36%	52%
# referrals per student	0.75	1.5

Not unlike other urban schools, Heritage had a high mobility rate; of the approximately thirteen hundred students attending, only about half of the students stayed from year-to-year. The other half either dropped out, got pushed out, or moved away and were replaced by new students midstream. In recent years, the mobility rate reached as high as 77%, which meant that over two-thirds of Heritage students that year did not attend Heritage for the entire school year (Interviews with administrators, 6-6-1996, 11-7-1996). Inside the team I observed, by comparison, 130 of the 160 students, or 81%, returned for their second year. Not everyone that returned for their second year passed their courses, however. By the end of the first semester, on average about 61% of the teamed ninth grade students passed their core courses (Math, English, Social Studies, and Science) compared to 34% of the comparison group. By the end of the second semester the figures changed to 54% and 36%, respectively. Daily attendance in the team was higher than in the comparison group, 85% compared to 78%. The number of teamed students receiving discipline referrals was lower than the comparison group, 36% compared to 52%. The average number of referrals per student in the team was half of that in the comparison group, 0.75 compared to 1.5 referrals per student for the entire school year.

These descriptive statistics were corroborated by qualitative data that I gathered during my fieldwork. For example, after being in the team for a year and a half, a small group of tenth graders talked about their experiences in the team. In a focus group of twelve students (six boys and six girls, eight black students and four white students), they were asked what they thought of being in a team. These students emphasized the importance of a "sense of community." They believed that this contributed to a decrease in conflict with peers and teachers as well as an increase in academic motivation and engagement. One student explained how teaming reduced peer conflict:

> It helps [being in a team] because we see the same faces everyday. We know each other well. So, when someone is capping [teasing], we know it's just capping. We don't fight because we know each other. We're making friends because we see each other not only one year, one hour. We're making friends for life. (Fieldnote, 11-7-1996)

A teacher who had been actively promoting a team peer mediation program concurred with the above student's observation:

> Last year, we had twenty students trained as peer mediators. When they came back this year, they kept asking me, "What about peer mediation? How come we aren't doing it anymore?" I thought, "It's not working, the peer mediation program is not working." But then I realized [laughs] it's not working because there isn't anyone to mediate! Being

together for almost two years really reduced the conflict between kids. (Fieldnote, 1-27-1997)

Other students explained how teaming reduced conflict with teachers and increased their academic motivation and engagement:

> S1: With the team, the teachers know how you work. You don't have to worry about them jumping down your throat. They know when you are in a bad mood and they let you be.
>
> S2: You have to get used to people, how they teach, get to know each other. In the team it's easier.
>
> S3: You try more because you can relax. So, you get to focus more, concentrate more. You don't have to worry what other people are thinking. It's more like a challenge.
>
> S4: We have more freedom in them team since they [the teachers] know our limits, what we need to do to make us learn.
>
> S5: If someone needs an extra credit, the teachers get together to figure out what you need to do.
>
> S6: We know they [the teachers] care. That makes it easier. (Fieldnote, 11-7-1996)

It is important to note that even though the team teachers would like to have made their curriculum more interdisciplinary, they did not do this in their first year of teaming. Therefore, the differences illustrated in Table 1 were achieved without changes in funding, curricula, scheduling, or class size. They did experiment briefly with alternate scheduling and joint projects across subject areas, but for most of the year the team looked, on the surface, not that different from the rest of the school. When asked, what they were doing that was different from the rest of the school, one teacher said: "I think building a community is the essence of what we are trying to do here" (Fieldnote, 12-10-1996). This reply echoed the opinions of many Heritage students, teachers and administrators.

A Sense of "Community" and Improved Students' Performance

Given the fact that there were hardly any changes in teaching methodology, funding, curriculum, scheduling and class size, were the changes in student performance and behavior achieved primarily through the development of "community" or social solidarity within the team? If so, what is the relationship between social solidarity and student achievement?

Both teachers and administrators, as well as students, seemed to believed that the sense of "community" in the team made all the difference. One teacher expressed this view as follows: "This is the same curriculum, conducting it the same way, same projects, same everything. . . . The same number of children from the same neighborhoods, the same junior high schools, the same setting, the same material, but I'm seeing more success" (Interview, 4-4-1996). This was indeed the case at Heritage. So, what then is the relationship between "community" and student achievement?

James Coleman and Thomas Hoffer's (1987) notion of "social capital" is helpful here. Coleman and Hoffer studied data from a representative sample of 1,015 American high schools. Their sample consisted of public schools, religious high schools private high schools, and independent (nonreligious) private high schools. Among other things, they found that the dropout rates in public and independent private schools were significantly higher than that of Catholic schools: 14.3% and 11.9% compared to 3.4% in Catholic high schools.

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To find out whether Catholicism per se caused this difference, they looked at eight other religiously homogeneous schools: four other Christian denomination schools, two Baptist schools and two Jewish schools. They found that the dropout rate in these schools was as low as the Catholic schools, 3.7%. When they statistically controlled for difference in family background (parental education, race, ethnicity), this difference in dropout rates between public and religious schools reduced slightly, but only slightly. They attributed this difference to the presence of "social capital" in Catholic and other religious high schools and the lack of it in public and independent private high schools.

What is social capital? If physical capital is embodied in productive equipment, machines and tools, and human capital is embodied in people's productive skills and knowledge, then social capital is embodied "in the relations between persons" (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 221). Trust, trustworthiness, and collegiality, are all examples of social capital. Putnam (1993) defines social capital as "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital" (p. 4). These social interconnections are a form of "capital" because they "facilitate the achievement of goals that could not be achieved in its absence or could be achieved only at a higher cost" (Coleman, 1990, p. 304). In other words, social capital is a form of resource. As a resource, social capital "increases rather than decreases through use and which (unlike physical capital) becomes depleted if not used" (Putnam, 1993, p. 6).

Coleman (1988) found three key elements that are critical in the development of social capital: closure, continuity and scale. Social capital is best developed in social networks that

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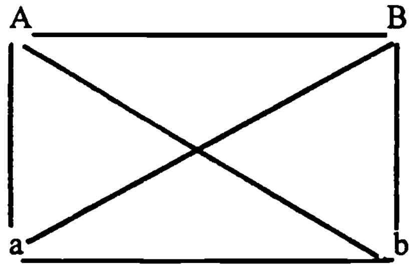
have a high degree of closure, extended continuity and small scale.

In the case of the Catholic high schools in their study, students' parents knew one another and often attended the same church and they knew one another's' children, as well. This high degree of closure can be illustrated with the Figure 1 below, where "a" and "b" are students in the same Catholic school and "A" and "B" are their respective parents. The relationships between the four actors are represented by the solid lines connecting them to one another.

Figure 1:

High degree of closure



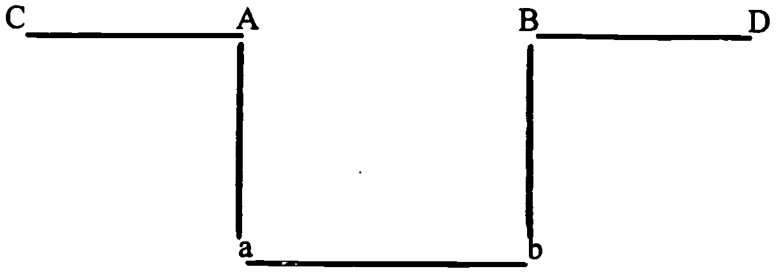
(From: Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p, 222)

The more lines connecting actors in the network, the higher the degree of closure. A high degree of closure has the potential to generate much social capital that is useful in establishing common norms and sanctions that serve as a source of social control for network members' activities.

It is important to note here that "closure" is not identical with having common values. Parents who sent their children to the same independent, nonreligious, private schools tended to have common values that served as the basis for their selection of that particular private school. But they did not have a high degree of closure since they tended not to be connected to one another beyond the school itself. Their relationships resembled more the network of public school parents which is illustrated in Figure 2 below. In this diagram, "a" and "b" are students in the same independent private or public school, "A" and "B" are their respective parents and "C" and "D" are friends of "A" and "B" outside of school connections.

Figure 2:

Low degree of closure



(From: Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 226)

Without closure, even if common values existed, "A" and B" tended not to discuss their children's activities and were in a weak position to establish common norms that served as effective social control for their children's activities. This helped explain the relatively high dropout rate in independent private schools (11.9% compared to 3.4% in Catholic schools and 3.7% in other religiously homogeneous schools). Coleman and Hoffer concluded that the higher the degree of closure, the more the amount of social capital, the lower the dropout rate.

Applying the notion of "closure" to the Heritage case, we can say that Figure 1 represents the teaming situation while Figure 2 represents the non-teaming situation. Instead of being students' parents, "A" and "B" now represent their teachers. Team teachers in Figure 1 continually talked to one another about their common set of students. At Heritage, team teachers engaged in substantive talk about their common students on a daily basis. The high density of talk and interaction among team teachers is represented by a thick horizontal line between "A" and "B" in Figure 1. This was only possible because teachers "A" and "B" shared the same set of students, had the opportunity to interact with one another, and had a sense of common identity. The team teachers' interactions with their own as well as with each others' students are represented by the two vertical and two diagonal lines in Figure 1. The fact that team students moved around as a cohort and attended the same set of classes is represented by the horizontal line between "a" and "b" in Figure 1. All together, these interactions and relationships--depicted in Figure 1 as solid lines, suggest the kind of closure which supports social capital development.

In the non-teamed situation represented by Figure 2, there was an absence of the horizontal line signifying the relationship between teachers "A" and "B." And there was also an absence of the two diagonal lines signifying the relationships between teacher "A" and student "b" and teacher "B" and student "a." The absence of these relationships was captured clearly in Sandy's words: "You know, [before we teamed] I didn't know what happened to these kids after they left my room, or I worked so hard with them and then they went to a class where the teacher slept" (Interview, 12-1-1995). As suggested in this quote, the lack of closure generated a lack of social capital, which in this case, inhibited the establishment of common norms and sanctions to control other teachers' activities.

Coleman and Hoffer also argued that scale has an impact on social capital development. They argued that the smaller the school, the higher the potential for social capital development. Teaming gave the eight teachers the opportunity to reduce the scale of student population to 160 from its original pool of approximately six hundred ninth graders.

In addition to closure and scale, Coleman believed "continuity" to be a key factor in building social capital. Continuity matters in the accumulation of social capital because staying put increases the potential for social relationships to develop.

Coleman (1988) compared dropout rates of tenth and twelfth graders in families that have not moved since the child's fifth grade year with those that have moved once and twice. Through statistical manipulation, he singled out the relationship between the number of moves and dropping out tendencies and came up with dropout rates of 11.8% if the family had not moved since fifth grade, 16.7% if it had moved once, and 23.1% if it had moved twice. He concluded that "for families that have moved often, the social relations that constitute social capital are broken at each move" (p. S113). This conclusion partially explained the high overall dropout rate at Heritage with its high mobility rates. Inside Heritage team, however, 130 out of the original 160 students continued into their second year. It seems possible that the social capital generated through closure and scale actually helped increase continuity in the team.

In sum, the increased closure and continuity and the reduced scale in the team at Heritage helped build social capital in the team. This accumulation of social capital was converted into improved student achievement and behavior. Though scale, closure and continuity do not guarantee the development of social capital, their absence would certainly inhibit such a possibility. Scale, closure and continuity were essential structural factors that enhanced teacher agency. Whether this enhanced agency is reproductive or transformative however, depends on the socio-structural constraints present in that particular time and place. Let us now turn to the impact of teaming on teachers' work life.

Impact of Teaming on Teachers

Students were not the only people who benefitted from teaming. Teachers also reported improvements for themselves as a result of teaming. They talked about teacher empowerment and peer support as two areas of improvement since they began teaming. One of the team teachers said, "I think the mutual support that the teachers give each other is a big, big help" (Interview, 4-4-1996). Another elaborated: "With teaming, the kids' success is not all on you" (Fieldnote, 5-9-1996). And yet another saw teaming as a way to check her own perceptions: "[Teaming] helps me evaluate my perception of [the kids]. I have an idea if this kid is just being a pain in the butt, or maybe they are not. Maybe it's just a personality conflict with me and I have to rethink how I deal with them. Before, I didn't know if it was me or the kid" (Interview, 4-4-1996). In short, the team teachers expressed a general consensus that they found increased peer support as a result of teaming helped them cope with bad days and share the burden of educating less successful students. It also helped them gain energy, brainstorm solutions, better supervise student behavior, and check their own perceptions of students.

Though team teachers spoke enthusiastically about teaming, they also were quite vocal about the persistence of chronic urban education problems that were not at all affected by teaming such as the lack of time, control over the curriculum and institutional support. Ruth, the team leader, put it most succinctly when she said: "[W]e don't know how, we don't have time, and we don't have the energy to get outside the box while we are still in the box" (Fieldnote, 1-14-1997). Extending her metaphor, one can say that "getting outside the box" requires acts of transformative agency while "continuing to be in the box" requires mostly reproductive agency. To be engaged in a grassroots reform initiative in a large urban school is to perpetually engage in both transformative and reproductive agency at the same time.

Teaming at Heritage had partially broken down the isolating barriers among teachers, among students, and also between teachers and students. It had created social capital and a sense of collective identity that supported teachers' commitment to each other and to their students. When I close one eye and focus only on this image, I saw the transformative side of teacher agency. I heard team teachers say that since they began teaming, they liked their work more:

> "I feel more like a professional. I feel more engaged. I have more time to reflect" (Fieldnote, 2-1-1996);
>
> "This is the only job I've ever had that when I wake up in the morning, I'm looking forward to going to work" (Interview, 4-4-1996);
>
> "This has probably been one of the best years I've had here" (Interview, 4-4-1996).

With teaming, teachers felt strengthened, empowered. They felt that they were making meaningful and worthwhile changes for their students and for themselves.

However, when I close the other eye and focus only on teachers going up against the larger structural and cultural routines of the large urban school, I saw the merely reproductive side of teacher agency. This time, I heard the same teachers say:

> "I think we are losing our vision. . . . I just don't know what's going on. The class is really out of control" (Fieldnotes, 9-28-1995, 12-07-1995);

"I couldn't keep them focused for two bells, that's a long time, 110 minutes" (Interview, 4-4-1996);

"It's very hard to get them to have their act together" (Fieldnote, 6-6-95).

I believe that these sentiments are rooted in larger issues that are not easily transformed by teaming. Using Dietz and Burns' categories (1992) of factors that may constrain agency, I will discuss structural and cultural factors that inhibit team teachers' transformative action at Heritage High.

Factors Inhibiting Teachers' Transformational Capacity

Dietz and Burns mention three agency constraining factors: (1) certain actions may not be possible given physical or technological realities (and, I might add, psychological realities), (2) the agency of some actors may be limited by more powerful agents who have the ability to negatively sanction others' actions; (3) the taken-for-granted rules and norms embedded in social structures may make certain actions seem impossible while others are made to seem "natural" and necessary.

Physical and psychological limitations.

Team teachers at Heritage High assumed many roles. They were pedagogists, role models, informal mentors, urban student advocates, counselors, therapists, conflict mediators, one another's substitute teachers, extracurricular leaders, coparents, parent educators, and students' friends. They were also gate-keepers, distributors of scarce resources, disciplinarians, and as representatives of the school and the state, they implemented school and state policies.

Additionally, they were also school change pioneers and innovators who attracted both grants and institutional support from outside the school and envy, criticism and hostility from some peers inside the school. Each role was highly demanding and in combination, they were often contradictory and overwhelming. As pioneers for school change and urban student advocates they needed to transform existing structures. As gate-keepers and representatives of the school and the state, they were obliged to reproduce existing structures. The continuous straddling between transforming and reproducing existing structures seemed to be a perpetual paradox that team teachers inhabited in their daily work lives. To fulfill all of these contradictory roles well, without much resources in the form of time, additional education, and institutional support, was clearly a very difficult venture. It is a constant source of tension that can easily lead to teacher burnout, a phenomenon which diminishes all forms of agency.

Mr. Clark's leadership.

The power of Mr. Clark, as Heritage's principal, to limit the agency of team teachers is another factor that inhibited their transformative capacity.

It appeared to me that Mr. Clark operated along the lines of social exchange theory. John Wilson (1983) explains the fundamental assumption of social exchange theory: "At the core of exchange theory lies the very simple assumption that human beings will form and sustain relationships if they believe that the rewards they derive from such relationships will exceed the costs" (p. 19). "Costs" here are not limited only to material things. For instance, a person may refuse to cheat even though cheating would help him better attain his goals because the cost of anxiety and social disapproval as a result of cheating is too high compared to the gain obtained by cheating. Given the above assumption, the amount of valuable exchange resources an individual is perceived to possess determines her "utility" or social status.

While social exchange theorists believe that all human interactions are motivated by and can be explained in the above utilitarian terms, the scope of social exchange theory used here is much narrower. I simply use this theory as a metaphor that I believe illustrates Mr. Clark's leadership approach.

The teachers' exchange value increased as a result of teaming. They handled many of their own disciplinary cases (instead of sending them to the assistant principal); they substituted for one another (instead of charging the school for substitute teachers); they counseled their own students (instead of sending them to the single overburdened school counselor). The teachers did all these and more without asking for anything from Mr. Clark, aside from the occasional stamp of approval (such as his signature on grant proposals the team teachers wrote). He hardly visited the team and infrequently communicated with team teachers in person (except with Ruth Jones, the team leader). It was in April of 1996, near the end of their first year of teaming when Joel expressed his regret about Mr. Clark's lack of attention: "I get most of my feedback from [Mr. Clark] through Ruth. She talks to him more than anybody in the team. What I gather from her, he's pretty pleased with the general outcomes that we're having. Unfortunately, I don't get a chance to talk to him in person" (Interview, 4-4-1996).

The team teachers were able to show improvements in student achievement and behavior records in terms that Mr. Clark understood and could easily show to his superiors and to the general public without incurring much tangible or intangible cost to Mr. Clark or the school. This fact essentially increased the team teachers' exchange value in the eyes of Mr. Clark.

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Operating under social exchange theory, it would not make sense for Mr. Clark to make any investment in the team if the team was able to increase their exchange value with very little input from him. Investing further in the team would only make sense if greater gain could be expected. Without such guarantees, increased investment in the team would only narrow the gap between the cost and its benefit, which is an undesirable situation. Social exchange theory, as a metaphor, seemed to me to explain the contradiction between Mr. Clark's positive assessment of the team and his lack of support for them.

Taken-for-granted rules and norms.

Although teaming at Heritage brought the norm of teaching in isolation into question, there were other norms and rules that remained in place and undermined team teachers' transformative agency. Particularly problematic was the condition related to the physical and psychological limitations mentioned earlier. The taken-for-granted norm that urban school teachers must assume a large variety of contradictory roles can lead to exhaustion, alienation and burnout. The belief that a school can not afford and need not support any parts of the teaming initiatives other than to give tacit approval for whatever works, can exhaust teachers' energy for continuing what they have started.

Teachers also held additional common sense beliefs about students and parents that seemed to limit their own sense of transformative agency. Some teachers believed that one of their roles at school was to compensate for poor parenting at home. There was an underlying assumption made here that their students' parents were uninterested or incapable of participating in their children's education. This belief hindered the development of equal partnership with

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students' parents and contributed to the relatively minimal effort to collaborate with these parents. Parents were contacted mostly when some disciplinary action needed to be discussed. Partly this was also due to the lack of means and time for building good parent relations. This lack of collaboration with parents prevented the development of teacher-parent networks that potentially can generate additional social capital.

Conclusion

Physical and psychological limitations, Mr. Clark's utilitarian leadership and certain common sense beliefs about schooling and students constrained teachers' transformative agency at Heritage. These factors contributed to the team teachers' decision to return to some preteaming classroom formats and techniques early in the school year, even though they saw the gains brought about by teaming in general. The presence of these constraining factors may not be unique to Heritage High School. What is unique to Heritage, however, is the persistence these eight teachers put forth in their effort to transform their environment despite existing constraints. Straddling the demands for both reproductive and transformative action, these teachers in fact did both reproduce their students' social location and democratize their students' educational experience. This internal contradiction may at times lead to structural transformation but it also can generate the paradoxical reality of urban school reform--a reality which Sharp and Green (1975) define as follows: "Although they appear generally to be satisfying their own ideological commitments, they are unconsciously accommodating to a situation which renders it impossible to realize their commitments" (p. 240). Teaming should aim at enhancing teachers' transformative agency. But, as shown in the case of Heritage, this is not a simple matter. There are no guarantees that teaming will necessarily tip the balance towards enhancing transformation. Teaming is not a cure all for the urban education problems, but it does have the potential to create spaces where transformation may become possible. It is one way for people to practice conversing with others, building coalitions, and organizing for joint actions. Teaming may lead to the development of social capital that is essential in making democracy work. It is one way to begin the process of redefining schools as institutions that make interdependence morally significant (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1991). As they struggle in this transformation effort, however, teachers need everyone's support--from local principals to federal officials, from parents to community leaders. As Putnam (1993) has said, "Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital" (p.4, emphasis mine). But it cannot substitute for or survive an insufficiency of physical and institutional support. The teachers' work needs to be organized differently, with more time to collaborate, experiment and reflect on their work. The number and variety of roles they assume need to be reduced. Without these and other changes, hard working, well-meaning, committed teachers, like the eight teachers at Heritage, can only partially transform the urban school. These eight teachers took teaming as far as they could given the constraints present in their situation. Grassroots movements like the Heritage teaming initiative will not be sustained or expanded without a fundamental rethinking and revaluing of our goals for education.

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