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## Dialogue in The Relationships Between Principals and Teachers: A Qualitative Study

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DIALOGUE IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN  
PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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2013

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Bob Crosbee. Thanks for believing in me, encouraging me, and, even at the toughest times, standing by me. Writing a dissertation can be a lonely process and your support kept me going and believing that we would make it to the top of the mountain.

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examines dialogue and discourse patterns between principals and teachers. It analyzes daily verbal interactions in order to identify shared meanings, hidden messages, and the dynamics of power. This study is also based on the belief that democracy in education is vital to maintaining a collaborative, people friendly approach to working together to improve learning for all students.

Although much has been written on the importance of school culture and collaborating effectively, little has been written about the role dialogue plays in shaping school culture. While we know many successful leadership paradigms, including distributed leadership and collaboration, we have no picture of what this looks like in terms of dialogue and discourse. The literature is clear that communication is necessary to develop collaboration and a democratic school climate but is sparse in what communication actually looks like in terms of dialogue and its impact on professional leadership.

This study examines the types of dialogues used by school leaders, the function and impact of horizontal and vertical communication, and the part stories play in democratic leadership. The dialogue and stories were analyzed for their influence on a democratic climate as explored by interviews, data collection, participant observations, and dialogical analysis.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This qualitative case study examines dialogue and discourse patterns between principals and teachers. It analyzes daily verbal interactions in order to identify shared meanings, hidden messages, and the dynamics of power. This study is also based on the belief that democracy in education is vital to maintaining a collaborative, people friendly approach to working together to improve learning for all students.

Although extensive literature has been written on the importance of school culture and using forms of collaboration effectively, little has been written about the role dialogue plays in actually influencing a positive school culture. While we know many styles of successful leadership such as distributed leadership, transformative leadership, and collaboration, we have no picture of what this looks like in terms of dialogue and discourse. The same literature is clear that communication is necessary to develop collaboration and a democratic school climate but is sparse in what communication actually looks like in terms of dialogue and its outcomes (Cohen, 2006; Dumas, 2010; Johansson, 2001; Pellicer, 2008).

This case study examines the types of dialogue used by school leaders, the function and impact of horizontal and vertical communication, and the part stories play in democratic leadership. This study is guided by the value that democracy in education is

important and makes the assumption that power can shift in leadership between horizontal and vertical.

Dialogue and discourse are not the same. Shields and Edwards (2005) describe dialogue as a powerful and creative force that offers a meaningful way to make progress toward a democratic climate. Agar (1991) describes discourse as the way people talk in ordinary situations. The reason for the discrepancy is that in dialogue there is always an attempt for understanding and growth; discourse is simply an exchange of ideas and at times may be considered a monologue. A monologue occurs whenever one person is speaking, often providing information, and is not expecting or waiting for a response in return. More definitions from various experts in the fields of dialogue, discourse, and communication will be provided later in this study.

Horizontal and vertical communication patterns are often associated with power within the conversation. Power, as defined by Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is a position of control, authority, or influence over others. In horizontal conversations, everyone is working from the same level of power; in a vertical conversation, at least one of the people is speaking from a position of power over another person. An assumption sometimes made is that the principal is in a vertical position of power due to his or her position. This study provides examples of situations when employees technically should be under the principal in power concerning chain of command but do not always play that role.

The dialogue and stories are analyzed for their influence on a democratic climate as explored by interviews, data collection, participant observations, and dialogical analysis. I have explored how nuances of language and dialogue influence the

relationships between school leaders and teachers and ultimately are believed to influence the democratic climate of the school.

### 1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Changes to the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, and educational reform incentives have created a challenge for educators to connect the rhetoric of *all children will succeed* with improved, effective leadership that can influence the toxic cultures found in many failing schools (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Kozol, 2006; Delpit, 1998; Gray & Streshly 2008). I maintain the value that dialogue is a critical component in democratic education for principals and teachers to share their vision with each other. Many authors have illuminated the dynamics of oppression in today's school system, whether through segregation, vocationalization, or the requirements of testing (Freire, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1996; and Kozol, 2006). It is here that the use of dialogue to examine a leader's influence on building and/or strengthening a democratic community can begin. Brooks and Kensler (2011) draw from Woods and O'Hair (2009) by pointing out that democratic education is compelling because it:

facilitates the development and sustainability of schools, as well as societies designed to promote a way of living that requires the open flow and critique of ideas with an authentic concern for the interest of the individual as well as the common good... . (pp. 427-428).

This reminds us that democratic education is important because it helps to shape society. Democracy needs to be part of our culture as individuals as well as the many

groups in which we may participate. Supporting this is Shields and Edwards (2005); they postulated that:

If educational leaders are to build educational communities in which all members may participate freely in dialogic moments, they must not only engage in but also model, practice, and indeed live dialogue. They must find ways to facilitate, encourage, foster and create dialogue. They must intentionally open opportunities for significant encounters, new modes of interaction and new opportunities for meaningful relationships. And they must do so in intentional ways.... Perhaps the essence of being an educational leader is to ensure that the dialogue does not end, that attitudes and actions do not become fixed. For if the school does not provide the conditions under which...we may understand more deeply and know ourselves and others more fully, then it fails in its core educational mission (pp. 156-157).

One way dialogue is opened to us is through strong school leadership where the focus is on the collaboration of teachers through dialogue on teacher improvement. Schwandt (2007) indicates that dialogue is “an exchange of speech acts between partners in a turn taking fashion aimed at a shared goal” (p. 68). Further, Schwandt suggests there are different forms of dialogue such as information seeking, inquiry, negotiation, action-seeking, and/or critical discussion. The Education Trust Report (2012) gives examples of these types of collaboration in Boston Public Schools, Ascension Parish Public Schools in Louisiana, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina, and Fresno Unified and Sacramento City Unified in California. Although the approaches used were different, common themes emerged from the use of dialogue such as strong leadership,

commitment to improving instruction by analyzing student data and reflecting on practice, and use of a collaborative environment that encourages individuals to contribute (Almy & Tooley, 2012).

## 1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research is to examine how principals and teacher use dialogue in their daily communications and to discover if there are types of dialogue that influence a more democratic environment. This study will show examples of dialogue, examined to better understand the meaning found within the dialogue and any democratic influence it has. Power messages, which I define as messages given from someone in a position of power, help us to understand the importance of conversations with and without power influence. Power is not interpreted as intrinsically or necessarily bad but rather as a facet of communication on which we can shed further light. Maxcey (1995) defines a democratic environment as being nested in three core beliefs:

1. A belief in the worth and dignity of individuals and the value of their expressions and participation
2. A reverence of freedom, intelligence, and inquiry
3. The responsibility of individuals in concert to explore and choose collaborative and communal courses of practical actions (p. 58).

These core beliefs are critical to my research because they are a key for understanding democracy as framed by this study. A principal would have to express through his dialogue and actions the importance of involving teachers in decision making, respecting their knowledge and ingenuity, and working together towards a common goal. The intent of my research questions lies within the ethnographic

discovery of the importance of dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking in personal communications, the need for awareness of the hidden messages found in the culture of power, the leader's use of horizontal and vertical dialogue, and the influences of stories on democratic leadership.

My belief that the culture of the school environment needs to be based in the core of democracy is derived partly from my personal, moral, and ethical vision. It is supported, however, by the belief of Maxcey (1995) when he asserts, "Democracy forms the context in which children and youth derive the richest possibilities for growing into successful individuals. Schools reconstructed on democratic lines provide the best form of associated intelligent and aesthetic living" (p. 58). He also suggests that the relationship between social and political life and school life is logically connected by democracy. This was advanced from Thomas Jefferson's theories that in order for people to be successful in having democracy as a system for government, there is the need for people to be able to make educated choices. He felt schools would be the operational part of government that prepared people to make democratic decisions. This supported the idea that American citizens needed free schools that could teach children in a democratic atmosphere (Maxcey, 1995).

Examining the idea of maximalists and minimalists in relationship to democracy brings out two points that deserve to be considered (Maxcey, 1995). A maximalist believes that there should be more democracy in schools to allow parents, teachers, and students to have more say in terms of how the school operates. This would have been supported by John Dewey (1937), who believed democratic schools should be part of the social process. The minimalists, however, felt that it was dangerous to operate with



complete democracy in the classroom believing that decisions should not be left in the hands of the untrained. This brings us to the point where clarity is needed on just what type of democracy is needed in schools. Maxcey (1995) believed:

Authoritarian regimes are fundamentally composed of power and force.

Democracies must focus on questions of choice. Once choice has become central, the processes by which choices become informed and enriched are crucial.

Jefferson argued that education was important because informed citizens made the best choosers. The maximization of democracy is thus warranted on the grounds that reasoned deliberation is enhanced by the skills and information derived from education... John Dewey (1938) pointed out that schools had to be democratic if they were to teach children and youth to engage in discussion and exercise democratic choice. Political democracies were the very best systems because they allowed for the fullest type of free schools (pg. 62).

One of the most important elements in needing democracy in schools is the need for students to learn reasoning and critical thinking skills. Dryzek (1990) argued that participatory democracy emphasizes communicative rationality and problem solving. Dewey (1937) believed that democracy's influence on education meant that the formation of the controlling aims, methods, and materials of the school must be placed in the hands of teachers or their representatives. Where schools were arranged in an authoritarian manner, with teachers playing no role in decision-making, teachers would be apt to treat their own students in an autocratic manner. As a result, my belief about democracy in schools is based on the need for educational leaders to use communication, collaboration,

personal respect, and autonomy with their teachers with the expectation that these same approaches will then be used in the classroom.

It is important to recognize that my hypothesis is suggesting that types of dialogue are important to this research in understanding power messages that flow between teachers and their principals and how that power can shift in certain situations. Also, style plays a powerful role in this research and the principals in this case study have distinctly different styles. One rules from a position of dictatorial type power, while another operates from a position of controlled, sometimes horizontal leadership, and the third uses stories as part of how he guides the faculty. This shows how the different leadership styles of dialogue impact a working faculty.

My research questions are:

1. Based on Schwandt's (2001a) typology of dialogues, what types of dialogue do the principals and teachers in this case study most commonly use when working together?
2. How does the pattern of horizontal or vertical messages fit within this communication?
3. What part do stories play in leadership?

These questions are relevant to the research because open communication can be considered part of having a democratic transformative leader, as opposed to transactional leaders who tend to be less democratic by definition. Although transformative leadership has been shown to be effective, it comes up short in terms of the need for a more distributed type of democratic leadership (Woods, 2005). A transformative leader as defined by Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2009) is a leader who "fosters school

reform through maintaining collaborative cultures, fostering teacher development, and improving group problem solving” (p. 33). The literature is clear that communication is necessary to develop collaboration and a democratic school climate but is sparse in what communication actually looks like in terms of dialogue and its outcomes (Cohen, 2006; Dumas, 2010; Johansson, 2001; Pellicer, 2008).

### 1.3 RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING RESEARCH

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Adult Learning Theory (ALT) both support the importance of communication and dialogue. They each provide a holistic model of the learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with research about how people learn, grow, and develop (Sternberg & Zhang, 2001). Teacher and school growth will be natural by-products of using dialogue effectively. Glickman, et al. (2009) discuss how a level of cognitive thought beyond Piaget’s 4<sup>th</sup> level of cognitive development is sometimes referred to as dialectical thought. Cognitive thought, as explained by Glickman, et al. (2009), is the process of intellectual growth in learning from showing and telling to the active construction of knowledge. They also describe a 5<sup>th</sup> level of consciousness that is not usually reached until an adult is in his/her mid thirties to forties that is directly related to dialectical thinking. This means that for dialogue to occur, all participants need to be able to think critically.

The importance of school leadership and its effects, positive and negative, on school climate have been clearly defined in the literature. School leadership is ideally democratic and distributed to be most effective and the goal is striving for a democratic school climate (Jenlink, 2009; Johansson, 2009; Fusarelli, Kowalski, & Peterson, 2011).

This study examines school leadership and the role dialogue plays in building and sustaining a democratic environment. Although there are many studies on the importance of democratic and distributed leadership on school climate (Sergiovanni, 1992; Freire, 2011; Cohen, 2006), they fail to examine the possible role of dialogue in leadership. This study will be a qualitative look into the dialogue of leaders and its influence on teachers and, ultimately, on a democratic culture.

Research also shows that dialogue, as an important part of communication, is an essential tool for school leaders in creating a democratic environment. It is imperative that dialogue be used to increase the critical thinking required for personal and educational growth and continued communication between educational leaders and teachers. It is also critical to examine how leadership affects democracy in terms of dialogue.

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), clearly shows that critical thinking is necessary in the areas of dialogue and reflection. It is a useful tool for showing value and care for others. Educational leaders have the potential to model the higher levels in the taxonomy because clearer understanding of dialogue occurs when we engage, reflect, and extend critical thinking in all our daily practices. This idea is supported by Collins (1998), who believed that "moral perception and imagination necessarily involve an intertwining of emotion, cognition, and action" (p. 36).

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Federal legislation has slowly shifted attention from successful school cultures to business-guided enterprises that emphasize standardized tests and research mandates. As a result, schools are losing touch with the cultural frameworks known to be critical to a

successful school culture. A successful school climate is one defined by the interconnectedness of administrators, teachers, staff, and students in working towards creating a school environment that is not only strong academically but morally and democratically as well (Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005; West-Burnham, 2011).

This case study is valuable because I believe independent corporations and businesses have capitalistic expectations of student/teacher performance and test scores and are working to rid school leadership of its possible democratic culture that can be found within dialogue and school communication. The democracy that has already been found in school leadership is certainly under threat. An example of this can be found in Texas where the Republican Party ruled against the teaching of critical thinking skills in public schools because it can cause students to question the status quo (Republican Party of Texas, Report of Platform Committee and Rules Committee, 2012).

### 1.5 SCHOLARSHIP ON DIALOGUE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

The literature is clear that communication is necessary to develop collaboration and a democratic school climate but is sparse in what communication actually looks like in terms of dialogue and its outcomes. This case study will analyze actual dialogue of principals and teachers and the influence it has on democracy in the schools. It will begin a new body of knowledge and continue with the importance of dialogue and the effects it has on school leadership, teachers, and, ultimately, a democratic culture. Additionally, it will help fill the current gap in the literature concerning actual dialogue use in demonstrating school leadership democratically and collaboratively. Finally, it also

provides specific language that can be examined and analyzed for its effect on a growing democratic school community.

#### 1.6 EPISTEMOLOGIES AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Schwandt (2007) defines constructivism as constructing personal knowledge through actions (pp. 37-40). These actions do not occur in isolation but against a background of shared cultures, languages, and traditions among other things. My research uses social constructivism to uncover the existence and influence of dialogue and power experienced by educational leaders. The methodology involves symbolic interaction, ethno-methodology, hermeneutics, and data/discourse analysis. For example, according to Schwandt (2007), symbolic interaction is significant in that:

First, humans act toward the objects and people in their environment based on the meanings these objects and people have for them. Second, these meanings derive from the social interaction (communication broadly understood) between and among individuals. Third, meanings are established and modified through an interpretive process undertaken by the individual actor (p. 39).

According to Grbrch (2009), ethno-methodology is “a study of the ways in which people make sense of what other people do in the processes of social interaction” (p. 20). The ethno-methodology allows for participation in the research while also stepping back and observing the background cultures and traditions that may affect personal communication.

This also leads to a hermeneutic examination of my questions because as I learned, my knowledge changed and took on different dimensions. This iterative (hermeneutic) approach according to Grbrch (2009) involves “seeking meaning and

developing interpretive explanations through the processes of feedback” (p. 20). As I found with my study, data collection continued until I reached saturation. I learned from a constructivist standpoint because I interpreted and reinterpreted the data throughout the study based on the experiences of the research.

The framework of critical theory is important to my study because I examine the quality or inequality between educational leaders and teachers through their speech. Habermas (1984) indicates that people share everyday activities and that the meanings, different and similar, are often taken for granted. This supports the statement by Baert (1998) that “Society is made and remade through routine practices” (p. 101). Methodological hermeneutics is one way of developing an understanding through dialogue and then continuing to learn so that the original understanding continues to expand. Schwandt (2007) suggests that:

... the fact that every interpretation relies on other interpretations ... points to the finite and situated character of all understanding. The hermeneutic circle thus signifies the universality of hermeneutics – interpretation is a ubiquitous and an inescapable feature of all human efforts to understand. There is no special evidence, method, experience, or meaning that is independent of interpretation or more basic to it such that one can escape the hermeneutic circle (p. 229).

Critical theory is similar in some ways to constructivism in that language and communication take a large role in society and are essential for democratic growth. It is different from constructivism in that it is grounded in the roots of oppression and is looking for solutions to protect the democratic society. If communication is not protected and expanded, democracy can be lost in the everyday practices of schooling. Habermas’s

(1984) critical theory insists “...linguistically mediated interaction is as vital to social reproduction and evolution as is labor” (p. 178).

When using critical theory, I would use symbolic inter-action and hermeneutics. The reason is that hermeneutics require more reflection and unstructured discourse if it is to continue evolving. My epistemological beliefs rest in the importance of understanding what I know and how to explain that understanding. Therefore, constructivism is my theoretical frame. I also think that the imbalance of power often found between educational leaders and their teachers should be examined using critical theory. In breaking down dialogue, I examine any areas that are blocking the flow of dialogue and the reasons behind them. For example, what types of circumstances facilitate or inhibit democratic dialogue.

#### 1.7 METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology was used to identify and analyze the dialogue and discourse between the principal and the teachers in terms of democracy. This case study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. Based on Schwandt’s (2001a) typology of dialogues, what types of dialogue do the principals and teachers in this case study most commonly use when working together?
2. How does the pattern of horizontal or vertical messages fit within this communication?
3. What part do stories play in leadership?

Finding the answers to these questions will be accomplished by using participant observations, interviews, document analysis, and data collection. These methods will be



used to gather information on the types of dialogue and discourse found within the school.

## 1.8 SETTINGS

This study takes place in a public agency in a rural part of the Southeast, United States. This agency is a residential setting where students with behavior issues live and attend school. The study takes place at the school by examining dialogue and discourse of the principals and faculty members. The setting has changed dramatically during the time I prepared to begin my research due to a high turnover in principals.

The school is named after the superintendent who served between the years of 1967 and 1979. While this agency had originally been established for orphans in 1797, it has now changed its mission to assist at-risk youth. The current president of the agency has a business background but has worked with a technical school.

This agency was selected for several reasons. The residential school is different from public schools by nature of the students living on campus and also because the majority of students sent to the school are there due to problems with behavior that have caused them to be expelled from their previous school. The school's being residential establishes a different dynamic as teachers and leaders play a more active parent role. Also, the size of the campus and the small number of faculty members allows me to examine more deeply the dialogue taking place. Finally, the close connection that forms between a small faculty and their students makes the importance of a democratic environment all the more possible and necessary.

## 1.9 PARTICIPANTS

I chose to invite all principals and faculty members to be involved in the study to provide for as democratic and inclusive a research study as possible. The participants are two principals, 14 teachers, a secretary, and a teaching assistant. This study took place over a year and two months time. During that time, three different principals were in charge of the school. Two of the principals participated in the study while the study was put on hold during the tenure of one of the principals.

#### 1.10 BACKGROUND

I began working at this agency in August of 2011. My belief in beginning this study was that despite how good dialogue and communication might be between the principal and the teachers, it would do little to create a democratic climate. It was my belief that school leaders did not have time for conversations that involved critical seeking dialogue and, without that, a true democratic climate would not be found. When I began working for this agency, the principal did operate from an open door policy and asked for input from the faculty in decision-making. This principal left shortly before the research began. The new temporary principal, who was the presiding principal when the study began, also operated from an open door policy and was open to hearing suggestions from the faculty.

Although I began my research in April 2012, it was interrupted for a time by the hiring of a 2nd school principal in July 2012. After several months of discussion, the principal decided not to allow my research to continue. Upon the subsequent removal of that principal in January 2013, my research resumed under the original temporary principal. In April 2013, the 3<sup>rd</sup> new principal was named and worked along side of the current temporary principal throughout the remainder of the study. The reason for the

principals to work as co-principals was to allow time for the 3<sup>rd</sup> principal to stay in the background and observe before beginning his tenure in July 2013.

A little information about the nature of the school may be helpful to understanding the issues faced by the principals and teachers. This agency has been in “triage mode” for at least the past two years. The students exhibit behaviors such as cursing at the teachers and other students, leaving class without permission to wander the halls, fighting, refusing to obey requests, and showing extreme disrespect. The teachers stay in spite of the conditions because they have expressed a strong desire to help these children who are often on their last step before being sent to a juvenile detention center. The president of the agency expects the behaviors to be addressed before academics and the teachers agree that, without appropriate behavior, the students are not able to receive an appropriate education. The school has not met student performance standards in the past two years

#### 1.11 DATA REQUIREMENTS

To answer my research questions I needed dialogue taken from staff meetings and individual meetings between the teachers and the school leaders. I also needed to interview the educational leaders and the teachers for personal reflections about conversations and specific dialogue and for accuracy in the interpretation of the dialogue. I also interviewed principals and teachers on the effects of horizontal and vertical power on a democratic school climate, and the effects of storytelling in leadership. Finally, I kept detailed information in my researcher’s field notebook, including documents of importance used or discussed during the study. For example, if an exchange between the principal and teacher occurred in which the principal praised a teacher for using an

innovative idea in the classroom and the teacher responded that this was nothing new as she had been using it for years, many important things could be noted. First to be noticed might be the positive feedback of the principal and second the response of the teacher. Depending on tone of voice and facial expressions, this teacher's response could be showing modesty or showing irritation that the "innovative idea" was only now coming to light. The facial expressions and tone of voice could also suggest a position of power or an expression of delight. Also, in order to keep the participants of this study anonymous, I used a computer program to create random names for the members participating in the study.

#### 1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Using an iterative (hermeneutic) design in approaching data collection allowed for preliminary data analysis and eventually thematic data analysis. After transcription of the interviews and meetings, I analyzed the data by looking for common categories and eventually themes. The methods used were participant observations, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, data analysis and reduction, and theme identifications. Participant observations of meetings and conversations were appropriate for this research because they allowed fluidity in conversations between the educational leaders and their faculty. Semi-structured interviews were used to determine the meanings taken away from conversations between teachers and school leaders. Data and dialogue reduction were used to sort the information and develop categories from which the research will be rebuilt, hopefully with new ideas. As a result, theme identification will be a part of organizing and reorganizing the data.

#### 1.13 LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this case study was that dialogue can change in the presence of a researcher. This was dealt with by increasing the number of conversations recorded in hopes that the school leader and the teacher will become comfortable with a recorder being used during conversations. I also want to mention my subjectivity about this research. I was interested in how dialogue influences us and what meanings can be drawn from that. It was important that I be objective about the meanings and not reflect my own personal beliefs onto the research. I believed care must be taken to ensure that I did not lead interviewees in their answers by letting them feed into my expectations. This was certainly a problem I was aware of as a member of the faculty. My position could easily have been biased if care was not taken. More information concerning these issues follows in the subjectivity portion of this study in Chapter 3.

#### 1.14 SUMMARY

This case study suggests the importance of dialogue between teachers and principals as supported by morals and ethics that can be shared through dialogue, reflection, and communication. Dialogue is key to developing understanding between and among people but does not come easily. We must work towards a less bureaucratic and more democratic system in our schools if we are to help educational leaders, teachers, and students to perform from a place of desire and understanding rather than a place of external directive.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This case study begins with an understanding of the core need our schools have to establish democratic schooling for all through moral and ethical leadership that values dialogue and reflection as an important part of education. Therefore it will be divided into five sections. The first section will address dialogue, discourse, and communication. The next section will discuss the importance of dialogue in school culture. The third section will discuss dialogue and school democracy. This section will also include the importance of moral and ethical leadership. The fourth section will discuss dialogue and power. The final section will discuss the power of dialogue through story.

#### 2.1 DIALOGUE, DISCOURSE, AND COMMUNICATION

This section will discuss in detail the importance of dialogue and discourse. It will share experiences of dialogue and describe Schwandt's (2001a) various classifications of dialogue. It will also discuss who should be involved in dialogue and the importance of empathy and community.

Dialogue and communication have been an important part of understanding culture and creating a culture of understanding since the days of Socrates and Aristotle. When communication breaks down, growth and new knowledge are stopped. Ross (2002) writes that:

What is fundamentally missing from education is empathy, caring, social imagination, and personal connection: in other words, an ethics of care. One of the biggest enemies of caring is abstract thinking which allows us to dehumanize (p. 408).

While a discourse can occur at any time, it is not always a dialogue. In order for dialogue to take place, there must be empathy for the other person or people, a sharing of ideas, or an “absolute regard” for each other. Absolute regard is a term coined by Starrat in 2004 and refers to treating the partner or partners in conversation as a subject or an equal rather than as an object. Shields and Edwards (2005) suggest that:

The distinction is critically important for educational leaders who want to enter into dialogic relationship with those around them and, hence, leads us to an investigation of the nature of a dialogic relation and how it may promote more authentic being rather than having ways of relating (p. 87).

Shields and Edwards (2005) support this suggestion with Heidegger’s quote, “To say and to speak are not identical. A man may speak endlessly, and all the time say nothing. Another man may remain silent, not speak at all and yet, without speaking, say a great deal” (p. 50). Heidegger believed that communication begins with the other, not one’s self. Buber (1967) conceptualized dialogue as a way of being. Burbules (1993) postulated that in dialogue, a term coined by one “cannot assume that people will speak the same way, mean the same things or share the same concerns when they speak (or for that matter will feel safe speaking at all)” (p. 37).

Shields and Edwards (2005) define dialogue as “a dynamic force that holds us in relation to others and deepens understanding” (p. 4). Muhammed (2009) describes

dialogue as “a platform for an exchange of ideas and a process where we examine our thoughts in order to understand them” (p. 168). Baert (1998) supports this definition by using Habermas’s ideas that the notion of rationality and truth is a procedural one. One might feel that if two people reach an agreement, there must be some level of understanding between them, but a sense of understanding can be a far cry from true understanding, which is necessary for effective communication.

Schwandt (2001b) suggests that the experience of conducting dialogues “...is a genuine hermeneutic experience, a venturing out from which one returns not simply enriched but transformed” (p. 233). There must be an understanding that dialogue will have different meanings depending on the source or person. Every person’s vision or idea or opinion is integrated with his self-understanding so dialogue is an active process (Schwandt, 2001b).

To understand the importance of dialogue and communication, one has to look no further than conversations held at home, school, or a dinner date. Many miscommunications often occur in discussing daily life tasks. For example, two teachers might decide to ride together to a conference. The teachers agree and the first teacher decides to drive. A third teacher may then approach them and ask if they are riding together to the conference. The first teacher says they are, but the second teacher may feel that is not a sufficient answer. She may feel they are obligated to ask the third teacher if she wants to ride with them; however, she feels awkward in offering a ride in another teacher’s car. She may be afraid the third teacher will feel offended if not invited but she may also wonder if perhaps the first teacher has a reason for not inviting her since she



herself did not invite the third teacher. This creates quite a few outcomes from the simple question, “Are you riding together?”

In considering this conversation as discourse, the second teacher might be asking the third teacher if she was driving herself, which simply shifts the question and focus away from sharing a ride. A dialogue could be seen if the second teacher went on and asked the third teacher if she was comfortable driving by herself. If the third teacher said she was a little nervous because she was low on gas, the first teacher might recognize the need for a ride and offer one, even though that may not have been her original intent. These could be considered examples of what Tannen (2007) meant when she pointed out that “Each person’s life is lived as a series of conversations” and also “Much – even most – meaning in conversation does not reside in the words spoken at all, but is filled in by the person listening” (p. 14).

In Abma et al. (2001), Karlsson points out that:

An everyday conversation is a spontaneous movement between asking and answering questions...Discussion is the exchange of opinions in a negotiation context...A dialogue is an exchange of ideas and meanings that develop our thoughts and helps us to be aware of what we think and how we value things. In a dialogue, no one is trying to win” (p. 168).

This is an interesting point. Tannen (2007) might not agree that dialogue is the exchange of ideas in the form of negotiation as she sees negotiation as typically occurring in asymmetric fashion. Communication is asymmetrical when one person is in a position of power over another. It can also be termed a vertical relationship.

It is helpful to examine how Schwandt (2001a) classifies types of dialogue. Schwandt believes there are four types of dialogues: (a) information seeking, (b) inquiry, (c) negotiation, and (d) action seeking/critical discussion (p. 265). Some, however, may disagree that information seeking is actually dialogue (see Agar, 2002; Shields & Edwards, 2005; Tannen, 2007). Schwandt (2001a) uses Walton's definition of dialogue as: "a sequence of exchanges of messages or speech acts between two or more parties" (p. 265). Indeed, Tannen (2007) suggests that this type of exchange would be more accurately considered discourse.

Schwandt (2001b) considers information seeking dialogue to be an exchange of information where the goal may be to gain information that the other person may have. With this perspective, one might begin to see why information seeking could be considered dialogue. With inquiry dialogue, one is still seeking information but for a specific purpose. Negotiation dialogue has both parties seeking information to advance themselves and their need to bargain. It is within these three dialogue types that one may find the drive to understand at its purest form. These types of dialogue are the methods of communication that allow the sharing and giving of information and possibly the growth of self without the need or presence of conflict.

The action-seeking dialogue begins a new course of communication because it is seeking information for a reason that is likely to result in some type of action. This is sometimes known as the argumentative dialogue where people begin discussions to further their own views or values. Schwandt (2001a) further breaks down this category of dialogue to (a) the personal quarrel, (b) the debate, and (c) the critical discussion (p. 266). Tannen (2007) could again argue that if the goal is to win, the dialogue becomes

asymmetrical and cannot actually result in anything but discourse; however, if the goal is to argue one's points while considering the other persons points and perspectives, it could indeed be dialogue. Either way it is relevant because, within the school setting, it is likely that all types of dialogue and discourse will take place.

When examining the personal quarrel, one may see argument at its worst. According to Schwandt (2001a), this type of exchange usually involves "a heightened appeal to emotions, a desire to win the argument at all cost, and personal attacks" (p. 266). While he believes such exchanges may be therapeutic they are generally not an effective way to settle a dispute due to one's own prejudices. In the debate, procedures are followed and both parties argue their case to an intermediary. This is the type of action-seeking dialogue one may see within a courtroom or when a disagreement between two parties is taken to the school board.

In examining argumentative dialogue a little further, one may assume that the dialogue is a result of a difference of opinions and a need to resolve an argument. Schwandt (2001b) believes that argument is a useful tool in evaluation. He contends that:

What evaluators should be doing in offering their professional service is not simply summing up empirical evidence and delivering a report of the 'findings' as it were. Rather, they should be engaging in a process of deliberation – using reasons, evidence, and principles of valid argumentation to combine statements of fact and value to reach a reasoned judgment (p. 266).

Schwandt (2001b) further justifies this point "by appealing to the idea that democratic societies seek to reach informed, well-reasoned decisions about what kinds of changes ought to be made in social life in a way that is neither autocratic or authoritarian"

(p. 266). This would seem to support the idea of evaluation in education being a practice of coming together to share ideas and information in the hopes of improvement. This idea of dialogic evaluation is also supported in the 2012 Education Trust Report.

Shields and Edwards (2001b) suggest that questions cannot be given and information and dialogue cannot be accessed if people do not know the conversation is open for discussion. They suggest asking ourselves, as educational leaders, the following questions:

1. Who is participating in discussions and who is not?
2. Who is being listened to?
3. How can we invite the silent into the dialogue?
4. What topics should be raised with what people?

Empathy is an important element in dialogue. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1995) believe that it should be specifically identified in schools due to the difference it can make to dialogue and relationships. The *Merriam Webster Medical Dictionary* defines empathy as “the ability to intellectually and emotionally sense the emotions, feelings, and reactions that another person is experiencing and to effectively communicate that understanding to the individual.” Noddings (1992) uses the term care to suggest that caring is not something we do but something we are. She stresses that it has little to do with the way we try to make students “feel good” (p. 17) in school. Shields and Edwards (2005) insist that “the criterion of empathy reminds us that when we hold the other in absolute regard, we begin by trying to understand his or her position” (p. 103). Yet it means more. Kelehear (2006) describes empathy among instructional leaders in this way:

“As we provide instructional leadership and help the teacher, we also engage in self-evaluation of our own ability to use the elements [leadership techniques] to think in new and exciting ways about the nature of supervision” (p. 76). This is an example of empathy and caring spreading to someone and returning back to oneself. Sergiovanni (1992) suggested that if “we stopped thinking about schools as organizations and began thinking about them as communities, we could actually change the lived reality for students” (p. 123).

Dialogue, discourse, and communication are critical to this study because they allow us to examine words for actual and/or intentional meanings. They present us with an examination of the importance of absolute regard, empathy, and community and the possible misunderstandings found in their absence. They also allow us to identify dialogue as information seeking, inquiry, negotiation, or action seeking and/or critical discussions.

## 2.2 DIALOGUE AND CULTURE

This section will define culture and community and share the need for positive culture and the understanding of culture. It will also discuss how poor communication affects school, languaculture (Agar, 2002), and the importance of culture.

Understanding culture and the role dialogue plays is a critical part of this study. Culture has many definitions and is sometimes considered different things. It is important to note that culture is different from community. Community is a group of people who shares common membership whether through a school, a neighborhood, or people acting together for a mutual cause. Dialogue is critical in helping communities understand

individuals' wants, needs, desires, perspectives, and interpretations. It requires an open forum to hear the voices of all the people.

Culture, however, is the behavior, beliefs, and characteristics of a group of people (Agar, 2002). Culture is critical to the understanding of dialogue because the different parts of ourselves we bring to whatever group we are attending to at the time have different meanings and understandings.

Culture is a critical part of the success found in many schools and the failures found in others. In The Huffington Post, an article refers to the report from The Education Trust Report (2012) where it maintains that a:

teacher's job satisfaction hinges more on the culture of the school -- namely the quality of school leadership and staff cohesion -- than it does on the demographics of the students or teacher salaries. Teachers who view their work environment in a positive light are more likely to evoke positive outcomes in their students (p. 1).

The Education Trust (2012) recently released a report that supports the need for positive culture in schools and in evaluations. It asserts that teachers are more affected by their work environment than by money. The research also supports the importance of "a focus on strong leadership, a campus-wide commitment to improving instruction by analyzing student data and reflecting on practice, and a collaborative environment that values and rewards individual contributions" (p. 16). This research is further supported by Abma, et al. (2001); Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), Deal & Peterson (2009), Schwandt (2001b), and Shields and Edwards (2005), all of whom stress the need for collaboration through dialogue to command successful leadership. In addition, Whittaker (2003) suggests using collaboration to "get better teachers and improve the teachers you

have” (p. 8). He also suggests that “programs are never the solution and they are never the problem” (p. 8).

An understanding of people, their cultures, and traditions plays a critical role in communication and education. It takes active engagement in communication for dialogue to occur. Agar (2002) writes in support of dialogue that “culture is no longer just what some group has; it is what happens to you when we encounter differences, become aware of something in yourself, and work to figure out why the differences appeared” (p. 20). This idea relates to his deficit theory that people, in struggling to communicate, tend not to look within themselves but rather at what other people are lacking. This is part of his theory that there are two ways of looking at differences. The first way is for people to recognize they are talking about different things and that “two different systems are at work” (Agar, 2002, p. 23). The second way is what he calls a deficit theory where people believe they are completely in the right and the problem must be within the other person.

Agar (2002) suggests that dialogic relationships are more complicated due to the varied meanings of words rather than the words themselves. He maintains that the nature of culture itself is a major factor in communication whether speaking the same language or not. He suggests that “culture is an awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and opens paths to other ways of being” (p. 20). This perspective allows the idea of real dialogue to have personality, thoughts, and theories giving it a powerful suggested self. Agar (2002) also relates that

Communication in today’s world requires culture. Problems in communication are rooted in who you are, in encounters with a different mentality, different

meanings, a different tie between language and consciousness. Solving the problems inspired by such encounters inspires culture (p. 23).

There are common threads in dialogue on education. When asked what is wrong with our schools, people may answer with such responses as the lack of money, parental help, good teachers, motivated students, and the excess of dysfunctional families and uncaring faculties. With the exception of money, these problems often extend from a break down in communication and a lack of understanding of the cultural environment. Unfortunately, stress and conflict often surround most of the dialogue found in schools (Shields & Edwards, 2005). Almy and Tooley (2012) insist that:

For too long, the high levels of staff dissatisfaction and turnover that characterize these schools have been erroneously attributed to their students. But research continues to demonstrate that students are not the problem. What matters are the conditions for teaching and learning (p. 16).

Languaculture, a term coined by Agar (2002) to describe the study of the effects of language and culture outside the circle of words, is a way to examine word frames between school leaders and their teachers: frames that may lead to building bridges or walls. Frames are also discussed by Tannen (2007) when she tells of the frames people put us in when we speak and the frames we put ourselves in as a result of our speech. Agar also brings to light the concept that “differences happen within languages as well as across them” (p. 14). In addition, Agar suggests that “Culture is an awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and opens paths to other ways of being” (p. 20).



So if culture is so important, what makes a positive or negative school culture? The place to start with the culture of the school is with the school leadership (Almy & Tooley, 2012). For a culture to be positive, there must be someone who is guiding the school with a sense of positive purpose, collaboration, and collegiality. There must be open dialogue, conversations about how to improve, and then acting upon collaborated initiatives with further discussions to follow. Negative school cultures lack duality of purpose and the sense that goals can be achieved. Shields and Edwards (2005) emphasize clearly that when looking to build a positive culture, that “a modicum of trust is one of the essential contextual elements for dialogue to occur” (p. 62).

Culture is important to this study because of the impact that culture can have on the success of a school. Recognizing that we speak in our own cultural discourse allows us to open the door to dialogue when working with others.

### 2.3 DIALOGUE AND DEMOCRACY

This section will discuss the importance of democracy and changes in school leadership. It will also describe the history and future aims of democratic schooling.

Research shows that dialogue, as an important part of communication, is an essential tool for school leaders in developing a democratic school climate. It is imperative that dialogue be used to increase the critical thinking required for personal and educational growth and continued communication between educational leaders and teachers. Kouzes and Posner (1993) write that “leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow” (p. 1). Dialogue and discourse are excellent opportunities for administrators to keep open the lines of communication with staff. The purpose of this study is to understand better the ways

democratic education can be brought back into our schools through the power of dialogue, reflection, and communication. Dialogic leadership is necessary as part of moral and ethical living (Shields & Edwards, 2005; Noonan & Fish, 2007; Agar, 2002).

The importance of democracy in having an environment conducive to dialogue needs to be examined and addressed. Democracy is believed to be a form of power that is controlled by the people and demands equality for all. In terms of school democracy, all people affected by decisions made should have a voice in those decisions. This includes, but is not limited to the school board, district staff, administrators, faculty members, parents, students, and community members.

Over the last three decades, literature on educational leadership has been vast with much of the literature suggesting how to be a good principal. Woods (2005) suggests that change is afoot when he writes:

At this moment the educational leadership field is experiencing a paradigm shift in terms of its current theorizing. The traditional view of leadership as that associated with individual role or responsibility is gradually being replaced by alternative leadership theories that extol the virtues of multiple sources of leadership. Contemporary theorizing about leadership has moved away from the traditional ‘transactional versus transformational’ divide into a more sophisticated amalgam of theoretical lenses” (p. 167).

Now the lens for leadership is looking towards ethical, moral, and democratic leadership with a focus on collegiality, collaboration, and distributed leadership (Glickman, et al. 2009; Woods, 2005; Strike, et al., 2005). Woods argues that “the purpose of democratic leadership is to create and help sustain an environment that enables everyone who is

deemed a free, creative agent to be part of ... interlinking democratic rationalities” (p. 165). He further argues that “democratic leadership has an intimate relationship with social justice insofar that democratic participation is a means of offsetting distributive injustices” (p. 167). As mentioned previously, democracy in our schools is threatened by the corporate giants and business models that often seem to want to overtake our schools, assuring that true democratic schooling may not occur. Woods (2005) describes this democratic decline by insisting that:

...this conception of democracy challenges the dominant economic relationships and instrumental rationality of contemporary society and is in turn ‘cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in by these social forces and existing hierarchies. Democracy demands that the world be turned upside down, but worldly powers are resilient and persistent” (p. 402).

Hope, however, continues because it is through democracy we find liberty and the potential of people to strive for a better life. It is through dialogue that voices will be heard and used to strengthen a return to democracy in our schools. Woods (2005) maintains that “democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people practice this ethical rationality and look for ways of superseding difference through dialogue (discursive rationality)” (p. 167). Ethical rationality allows problems to be discussed through the honoring of similar values. Discursive rationality allows problems to be discussed using dialogue in order to reach agreement and/or acceptance. Habermas’ (1984) practical domain of knowledge encourages this type of interpretation and understanding.

The aim of democratic leadership is to empower teachers and promote respect and understanding for different cultures. Jenlink (2009) cites John Dewey stating that “teachers should teach not ‘ready-made knowledge’ but teach using a method that would enhance moral reasoning” (p. 402). This type of reasoning is an extension of critical thinking which is necessary for true dialogue to occur. In reference to the importance of dialogue in a democratic society, Jenlink also quotes Dewey asserting “communication is what holds a democracy together. The process of people discussing their individual and group desires, needs, and prospective actions allows them to discover their shared interests in the consequences of their actions” (p. 402).

I believe motivation plays an important role in affecting successful dialogue and change in our educational leaders and teachers. RSA–Animates (Dan Pink, 2010) provides us with a workable demonstration of Maslow’s and Luthan’s highest hierarchical needs with the idea that true motivation is created not by money but by presenting people with self-directed challenges where they have the opportunity to strive for mastery and fulfill the need for living a purposeful existence. In education, we hire teachers who exhibit positive behaviors and personalities, have certification and training in teaching strategies and their subject’s content area, and desire to make a positive impact in students’ lives. What we fail to do is to provide continuous motivational support and feedback to protect and enhance a teacher’s excitement and desire to make a difference in students’ lives (Cohen, 2006). Research suggests that teachers need to feel valued, respected, and safe before openly sharing and examining their teaching practices and techniques with others (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995).

Resmovits (2012) tells us that a man named Sandy Kress, who worked for the U.S. Treasury Department, came up with the idea of paying teachers based on test scores, an idea still suggested and used by some schools today. Early programs in education administration taught little in terms of educational leadership and democracy, focusing more on how to manage schools, finances, and people. These types of programs did little to extend community, dialogue and an understanding of culture and sometimes affected the relationships of dialogues in a negative way.

Even universities, such as the University of Virginia, are not immune from boards wanting schools to be run as businesses. At the University of Virginia, an appointed board member of six years convinced the board that the school should be run like a Fortune 500 company (Carter & Linkins, 2012), which resulted in the school president's resigning her position.

Democracy in our schools is assumed by many to 'exist'. This lack of awareness of the status of our schools needs to be addressed (Jenlink, 2009). Legislatures are found to be mandating requirements that corrode democracy in schools. In fact, the Republican Party of Texas stated their position on critical thinking skills and, in essence, democracy in Texas. Recently, they published their 2012 platform for education as the following:

We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), (values clarification), critical thinking skills and similar programs that are simply a relabeling of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), (mastery learning) which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student's fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.

I believe that Jenlink (2009) is correct in surmising that:

...recent domestic policy events, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, the impact of state standards and accountability legislation and the concern for strong democratic citizenry, have directed attention to reconsidering leadership for schools concerned with democracy, freedom, and social justice (p. 402).

Democracy is important to this study because of the power it has to influence school leadership in a positive direction. Democratic dialogue is likely not found in schools that are unable to strengthen current teaching and leadership processes through discussions that are open and ultimately powerful.

#### 2.4 DIALOGUE AND POWER

This section defines power and describes the relationship between power and dialogue. It also examines the positives and negatives of power, including the dangers inherent in power. It will describe times when power necessitates not having dialogue and how to overcome power to have dialogue. Further it will discuss the nature of a culture in power, poverty, power and situation, and the use of horizontal and vertical power.

The relationship between power and dialogue is not to be diminished. Power in relationships has the strength to derail and dismantle dialogue. Power can come from a position of hierarchy, a position of knowledge, a position of education, a position of culture, and even a position of gender. Power dynamics may stretch and change as conversation continues. This section looks at the positions that may establish a power context, how position can change the ultimate meaning of dialogue, and what it means to have horizontal and vertical dialogue.

Much has been written about how power can oppose the attainment of justice when it disrupts communication, discourages dialogue, and interferes with communication (Freire, 1985; Starrat, 2004). Yet power is not always a negative thing. Power gives us the strength to fight for what is right, earn our way, and accomplish our goals (Shields & Edwards, 2005, p. 105). Power in connection with people, however, is much more complicated. There are at least three situations in which power can be considered dangerous within a school community: (1) when we must treat people as objects, (2) when we have a lack of access to resources, and (3) when cultural or institutional norms are barriers to dialogue (Shields & Edwards, 2005, p. 107).

Sometimes it becomes easy to misuse power and damage dialogue with coworkers and parents when one feels he knows more than the other party. This puts the other party in the position of being treated as an it or an object. This can be managed by using modesty and humility when talking with others, understanding that while you may know some things, the other party has knowledge that is distinctly different from your own and you could learn from it. (Freire, 2000; Shields & Edwards, 2005; Gardner, 2004). In a sense, humility is recognizing one's prejudices and acknowledging them, essentially freeing oneself from the chains of over-extended self-esteem. Shields and Edwards (2005) cite Foster's (1989) contention that:

Educational leadership is always context bound. It always occurs within a social community and is perhaps less the result of "great" individuals than it is the result of human interactions and negotiations. Roosevelt and Churchill....took advantage of what might be called a "corridor of belief" which already existed in

followers. Each leader did not so much create a new and idiosyncratic universe so much as enter these corridors and open various doors (p. 110).

There are, however, certain situations when administrators and teachers have to evaluate with a standard that prevents them from being in a relationship or dialogue during that time. Empathy and optimism can be used to prevent power from taking a negative position when a principal or a teacher is in the situation of having to evaluate institutional expectations. For example, when a principal has to conduct a summative evaluation or a teacher has to evaluate a student's exam, the principal nor the teacher are in a position to be involved in dialogic relationships. These roles are common in education and often cause confusion about how dialogic conversations can ever occur. A further complication is that during evaluations, information can be gained that could then be used as a form of power against that person. Some researchers, such as Buber (1967) and Sidorkan (1999), believe that equality is impossible to achieve between principals and teachers and teachers and students. Sidorkin (1999) believes that "equality is impossible because you have necessarily another attitude to the situation than he has. You are able to do something he is not able. You are not equals and cannot be" (p. 14).

It is true that in any situation one person may have the power to do over another or have knowledge above another that could prevent dialogue due to an asymmetrical balance in power (Shields & Edwards, 2005; Tannen, 2007). However, these researchers believe that power can be overcome through extended awareness of the elements of the situation. To be clear, not every conversation can be dialogic nor does it need to be. In doing their job, principals must sometimes use monologues to accomplish their particular purpose. Sometimes conversations may move between dialogue and monologue. The



principal can maintain a balancing act, however, by trying to maintain the boundary of the subject as a person and treating the person with absolute regard. This can be difficult in times when the principal has to discipline or reprimand a teacher, but it can be done if the teacher can be left with the feeling he has been treated as a person, while still understanding changes need to be made in his behavior (Shields & Edwards, 2005).

Shields and Edwards observed that:

Situating ourselves, as educators, in our roles, experiences, and beliefs is one thing—attending to the power relations in the wider society is slightly different. Yet, when we attend to issues of justice, democracy, empathy, and optimism, we are addressing both. If our approach to educational leadership is grounded in bedrock principles related to the ethical use of power and to criteria for social justice and academic excellence, we will be guided by some benchmarks to ensure that our use of power is necessary, deliberate, and above all, moral (p. 114).

The lack of access to resources can also prevent dialogue because one may not be able to access the necessary parties needed to have a dialogue. For example, a teacher may have ideas for a new teaching style that she would like to present to her principal and the superintendent. Because the school and district policy dictates how curriculum will be presented, she cannot access support for a new teaching style because the conversation would not be open with either of the parties she would need to involve in a change. This is another result of using scientific methods to try to improve education and doors to innovation being soundly closed.

Tannen (2007) asserts that:

When two people's paths cross, there is bound to be a conflict of interest. We can't both stand on the same spot without one of us standing on the other's foot. If no one steps aside, someone will get stepped on. You and I are not the same person, so some of our wants will be different and conflict is inevitable. Because we can't both get our way we may find ourselves in a power struggle (p. 149).

Sometimes social, institutional, or cultural norms may prevent dialogue because conversations are stopped with words such as "That's not how we do things around here." Although it is hard to imagine that intelligent and innovative educators could be so closed to new ideas, once a program or system is in place, it can be very difficult to change what has always been. Freire (2000) spent his life studying ways that people exercise power over others inappropriately and as a result treating others with something less than absolute regard.

Freire (2000) strongly suggested that:

They [conversations] are different experiences and as such they must be experienced differently. And because they are different, some can teach something to others, and some can learn something with the others. We learn only if we accept that others are different—otherwise, for example, dialogue is impossible. Dialogue can only take place when we accept that others are different and can teach us something we did not already know (p. 212).

Marion (2002) suggests another perspective when he discusses Henri Fayol, a French management theorist, who brings a less cited point of view when he asserts that "...written communication may be abused and...there is less potential for differences and misunderstanding if communications are verbal" (p. 273). While many in today's society

of paper trails through notes, letters, and emails might disagree, Marion makes an excellent point that true understanding can be lost without face-to-face interaction. So much of what is said is said through gestures, expressions, body language, and stance that unless the discourse or dialogue is being held in person, one cannot read all the extra hidden messages. Freire (2000) surmises that, “if we want to work with the people and not just for them we have to know their game” (p. 259). He further asserts that he will always view in a good light:

relationships of mutual respect, dialogical relationships through which we can grow together, learn together. On the contrary, I will always see negatively any so-called organization “of cooperation,” which distortedly, however, intends to impose its options onto us in the name of the help it might give us (p. 236).

The message here is that even when power is intended to help, if it is misused, then the possibility of a relationship is destroyed because it denies the possibility of mutual regard (Shields & Edwards, 2005, p. 105). Freire also reminds us that to “play the same game” as other people, we must understand the others meanings, cultures, and contexts especially when dealing with a dialogic relationship.

Delpit (1988) believes that organizations have unwritten rules that coincide with the dominant power group. She asserts that there are five aspects to a “culture of power” that negatively affect others. In describing these five aspects, she suggests that issues of power are asserted in the classroom, including power of the teacher over the students, curriculum over knowledge, and legislatures over “normalcy.” The codes to power belong to the dominant group in charge and talk, dress, and actions must follow these codes. The rules for the culture of power are derived from those in power. Students can

learn the rules of the culture of power if they are taught explicitly. Perhaps most importantly, the people in power have less understanding of their power and the people not in power understand more fully the culture of power's strength (Delpit, 1988, pp. 66-68).

Kozol (2006) further supports this view when examining the lives of students not living in the culture of power. In visiting poor and segregated schools in New York and Washington DC, he found that the majority of the students—over 95%--were Black and Hispanic and attending failing schools. These schools had the set curriculums, teacher proof models, and standards posted, but they lacked dialogue and discourse and any feelings of optimism and joy. The students would even speak of “over there,” the place where other people lived differently and which they had no understanding (p. 254).

The key to having a dialogic relationship rests in understanding our power and our situation. We must recognize the differences and keep a moral and ethical stance that prevents us from treating others with anything but absolute regard.

Examples of dialogue, discourse, and monologue can be seen in horizontal and vertical conversations. Horizontal conversations are when people are of equal status, whether in actuality or in propriety, and dialogue can occur freely. Vertical conversations occur when one person has power over another. For example if the principal forms a committee to work on text book adoption, even if he or she is a member of the committee, dialogue can occur horizontally with each person respecting the other's knowledge of curriculum. However, if one person in the group has a degree in curriculum and the others in the group submit to her beliefs and suggestions, the group has then become vertical.

It is important to this study to recognize the nature and influences on dialogue and power. Power has the ability to be positive or negative and can influence dialogue found between teachers and principals. It is also important to examine the culture of power that occurs throughout this research.

## 2.5 DIALOGUE THROUGH STORY

This section will discuss the importance of story in dialogical leadership. It will also describe the role of stories and how they meet human needs. Finally it will discuss the power of myths and stories to change lives and caveats of storytelling.

Stories are embedded in our cultures, including school cultures. Stories are important because they help leaders to identify with listeners, gain perspective, and experience school unity. This is done by appreciating differences in people and different approaches to leadership (Noonan & Fish, 2007). Stories influence what we know, how we know it, and, as a result, how we experience the world. In stressing the importance of story, Noonan and Fish (2007) suggest that when:

Communicating a point of view, leaders promote the exchange of stories to encourage self-discovery and authorship as well as influence people to take concerted action to achieve worthy goals...the exchange of stories helps leaders and members acquire and share knowledge as well as transmit individual and collective history and wisdom to the next generation (p. 12).

There is a need for leaders to be aware of the impact of stories and how to use them. Stories can be used to develop relationships, set common goals, and reach for a collective vision. Stories help us to understand life through actual experiences we can relate to on a personal level.

Stories play an important role for leaders in education. They help to set the tone of a meeting, establish how things have been accomplished in the past, and create an idea of how things will be done in the future. In order for stories to work, however, leaders must form relationships and be adaptable to change. Noonan and Fish (2007) suggest that “using story to affirm diversity, establish interpersonal relationships and create belonging within communities, particularly where differences divide rather than draw us together, democratic leaders engage us in story to accomplish moral action” (p. 12). In truth, leadership is always a moral endeavor and difficult without the use of dialogue and story.

People who are able to relate to each other through stories help us to accomplish things as a team. Through a story, a leader can speak to a similar situation or problem, describe how the problem was solved by a group effort, and encourage members of the group to join in solidarity. Bolman and Deal (2008) gave many examples of how businesses lead through the power of story. Often the leaders manage their problems and overcome diversity alone; however, Bolman and Deal warn against leaders taking this approach writing:

....images of solitary, heroic leaders mislead by suggesting that leaders go it alone and by focusing the spotlight too much on individuals and too little on the stage where they play their parts. Leaders make things happen, but things often make leaders happen. Leaders are not independent actors; they both shape and are shaped by their constituents(p. 86).

Pellicer (2008) also uses the power of story to teach moral leadership. By giving examples from his own life, he tells stories of overcoming adversity through the help of the people around him.

Myths are stories that are not real but use powerful metaphors and imagery to involve us in the story and make us care. One familiar myth is Mayberry, the city where The Andy Griffith Show took place. It was not real in life but it is real in people's hearts. Many of us love the idea that communities can be that personal and loving; furthermore, many people still dream of schools with the same sense of community as found in Mayberry. Myths and stories use things common to our cultures and beliefs to describe a dream.

Stories have the power to change lives. They can awaken us to a new calling or ignite a sleeping passion. However, there are some caveats to telling stories. If stories are not told from a good place, a place of love, compassion, and morality, they can be used in detrimental ways. Because stories have the power to engage and persuade people to action, care must be used to tell stories that are for the benefit of all, not just the benefit of the storyteller. Noonan and Fish (2007) insist that "humanity must be accounted for at every turn. Real people interact in their human and social environments, disturbing the "scientific" view of the universe that is devoid of identity, culture, and experience" (p. 27). Stories, if not told with ethical and moral purpose, could be used as a form of manipulation.

Stories are an important aspect of dialogue and therefore are important to this study. Stories can sometimes be the antithesis to dialogue. While dialogue is a two-way flow of conversation, story is usually, but not always, a monologue. Stories give one point of view, one set of goals, one rationale. If they are not given for purposes that benefit the culture or community, they can be dangerous. Put another way, Westheimer and Kahne (2003) insist that "stories make it difficult to have dialogue because ideas that

are put out there in story form tend to be accepted as they are. Narrative analysis is necessary to break down hidden meanings in story forms” (p. 12). Yet we must examine the stories that occur in the midst of dialogue to have a full understanding of the meanings surrounding the conversation.

## 2.6 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This review described the importance of dialogue, discourse, and communication as well as describing types of dialogues and how they are used. It has also focused on the importance of empathy and community when dealing with dialogue. In addition, the review has described the importance of culture and democracy in our schools and the various aspects of power between school leaders and teachers. It closely examined the nature of power in dialogue and how to work within the constraints. Finally, this review has discussed the place of story in dialogical school leadership. It has described both the importance and the dangers of telling stories.

This chapter summary also describes the importance of words and emphasizes the fact that words matter. We need to know whose voice we are listening to and what meanings are trying to be conveyed. Are the messages in our dialogue clear and do the words convey the message intended? This research aims to examine these important areas and to understand how our dialogue affects our work, our culture, and our democracy in schools.

## 2.7 SUMMARY

Dialogue is essential to communication and is needed if democratic leadership is to occur in schools. It is vital not only that we acknowledge the importance of dialogue



but also that we examine it carefully to discover the meanings and effects it can have on teacher dynamics and school climate.

Schools need to examine critically how dialogue is affecting the performance of staff, the education of the children, and the contribution to a democratic learning environment. It is only through opening our eyes to the words we use to communicate every day that we can see the power we contain to affect change.

There is a need to know more about the conversations that are taking place in our schools. Is it primarily discourse or dialogue? What types of dialogue are being used and are they being used effectively? What are the meanings, hidden and unhidden, that are often overlooked in the nature of power in dialogue? When and why do vertical and horizontal conversations occur? Finally, what role does story play in dialogic leadership?

This study answers these questions as it examines deeply dialogic relationships between school leaders and teachers and the positioning that occurs throughout the dialogue. Dialogue is critical if we are to have ethical, moral, and democratic leadership. I also believe that there are movements across the country that would like to continue changing schools into mind factories, places that educate children to maintain the status quo of satisfied workers. What we need to know is the role dialogue and discourse play in maintaining the elements of culture and democracy in our schools.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methods and methodology to be used throughout this study. It begins with a look at research design, including type of research, rationale for selection, and appropriateness to the study. The next section looks at the population and sample chosen for the study. Instrumentation is then discussed including detailed descriptions of all instruments, type of response categories, and information on validity and reliability. It also examines inter-rater reliability procedures, response rate, and procedures used to increase response rate. Finally, I will examine limitations, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

#### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative case study is based on the epistemology of constructivism and hermeneutics and critical theory. This is an ethnographic study because it describes life through common experiences and examines the dialogue through the use of perceptions. Schwandt (2007) describes ethno-methodology as the description of things through the existence of what is perceived and what is thought. Hermeneutics is appropriate for this study because it is looking for the meaning of dialogue outside of what the dialogue means in words. It further seeks to describe an experience as it is actually lived by a person. Hermeneutics, is considered by Schwandt (2007), as the “nature and means of interpreting a text” (p. 133). It is a way of understanding things as a whole but also

through their parts, which creates new understanding that then expands. The very nature of interpreting dialogue is at the heart of hermeneutics.

Symbolic interaction and ethno-methodology are important to this research because both deal with codes and conventions that are found in everyday social interactions and activities. Dialogue should be examined by looking for meanings beyond the obvious.

Qualitative research design was used to identify and analyze the dialogue between the principal and the teachers and also to examine the culture of the school in terms of democracy. In this study, the research seeks to answer the following questions.

1. Based on Schwandt's (2001a) typology of dialogues, what types of dialogue do the principals and teachers in this case study most commonly use when working together?
2. How does the pattern of horizontal and vertical power messages fit within this communication?
3. What part do stories play in leadership?

These questions were answered by using participant observations, interviews, document evaluation, and data collection. These methods were used to gather information on the types of dialogue and discourse found within the school.

The participants in this study included two of the three principals and 16 faculty members. Mr. Bradley, a principal, had been part of the school for 14 months while Mr. Martin served as co-principal during the final two months of school. The principal who did not participate during the actual study was Ms. Johnson and she was employed at the school for six months between Mr. Bradley's two tenures.

Two of the teachers, Ms. Jada and Ms. Shonda, had taught at the school close to or more than 20 years. They were passionate about the school and felt it served an important role for troubled students; nevertheless, they were disappointed in how things had transpired in the past several years. Ms. Lesley, a teaching assistant, had lived at the school as a child and then returned to work there for 17 years. The secretary, Ms. Temperance, had worked at the school for six years while Mr. Decker, Mr. Odell, and Mr. Garen had taught there for four years. The president of the agency had also been employed for the past four years. Mr. Woody, Mr. Blaine, Ms. Lyndsey, and Ms. Mahalia had worked there for three years while Ms. Maynard, Ms. Leta, Ms. Ora, and Ms. Hilda had worked there for one year. It is notable that 11 of the 16 faculty members, or 69%, had been employed with the school for four years or less. This was a distinct change from years prior where faculty rarely left their positions and teaching positions at the school were highly coveted.

### 3.2 INSTRUMENTATION

The main instrument used in this study is I in the role of participant observer and as interviewer. I used a digital voice recorder, my field notes, and Livescribe, a notebook that records audio as a person is writing, to record the conversations between the principals and the teachers and the interviews of members afterwards. I also collected any documents that related to conversations held during the meetings and that provided further information on dialogue such as e-mail and further communication as it occurred between principals and their faculty members. These approaches allowed for triangulation of the data. Frequency counts were also used to identify trends.

The interviews were semi-structured with a list of questions to be asked in addition to more probing type questions based on the responses given. This allowed flexibility in questioning individuals but assured certain questions were answered.

Reliability was achieved by recording and transcribing all interviews and keeping field notes. This assured that the dialogue recorded was correct. In transcription, reliability was further achieved by consistently reviewing the transcriptions and the audio recordings for accuracy and having interviewees read the transcriptions for personal accuracy. Validity was achieved through interviews held as soon as possible after the conversations between faculty members. This allowed the conversation to be fresh in all members minds as they reflected on the meaning found in their conversation. All meetings and interviews were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed.

Two principals and sixteen faculty members agreed to participate in the study. To reassure them of the importance of the study and the anonymity, consent forms were given prior to the study. These consent forms provided information about the study and an opportunity for questions to be addressed and answered. The forms also assured anonymity.

### 3.3 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

Participation in the research, along with the research itself, exhibited changes during the time of the study. In April of 2012, when Mr. Bradley was principal, all members of the faculty agreed to participate and although questions were asked about the type of research and how it was to be used, all participants seemed happy if not eager to participate. Although Ms. Johnson took over as Principal in July 2012, she did not stop the research until September 2012. Nevertheless, none of the information gained between

July 2012 and January 2013 were used as data in this study. However, teacher interviews held after January 2013 did provide information pertaining to how Ms. Johnson's presence affected the changes in the teacher's work performance, self-perceptions, dialogue, and power with the other two principals. In January 2013, when Mr. Bradley again took over as principal, I felt it was important to regain permission of the staff members to ensure they wanted to continue the study. This time teachers were more hesitant to engage in the study and feared repercussions from participating. As a result, three of the faculty members decided to not continue as part of the study. Finally in April of 2013 Mr. Martin joined the school and served as co-principal with Mr. Bradley until the end of the year.

#### 3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data collection occurred during conversations between principals and teachers. Through the study, all participants were interviewed separately for what they felt was said and what they felt happened during the conversations. Interviews were also held using semi-formal questions as well as an opportunity for the teachers to tell about the school year from their own perspective. Field notes were taken and pertinent documents were collected. After transcription and analysis, interviewees were asked to verify the accuracy of the analysis. Also, in order to keep the participants of this study anonymous, I used a computer program to create random names for the members participating in the study.

#### 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Preliminary data analysis began by reading through all of the transcriptions of interviews, evaluation of e-mails, and field notes. After reading the transcriptions and

emails, notes were made in the margin about what I found important or unusual or events with possible underlying meanings. Next I used colored sticky notes on a blank wall to begin developing topic lists and matching colored index cards for more detailed information. I coded the topics within the text. I examined categories for groups that could be combined. I used Mindmeister, a mind-mapping program, to organize the information into a conceptual framework. I reanalyzed my data, recoded, and repeated until I met saturation. I also conducted frequency counts to dig deeper into the data and identify themes and patterns. Finally, I reviewed my recording and transcriptions to see if my findings were supported in the actual research.

### 3.6 LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study was that dialogue can change in the presence of a researcher. This was dealt with by increasing the number of conversations recorded in hopes that the school leaders and the teachers would become comfortable with a recorder being used during private and casual conversations.

### 3.7 SUBJECTIVITY

In addressing matters of my own subjectivity, I evaluated what lenses I used to see and analyze my study. I recognized my personal interest in this study began twelve years into my teaching career. I noticed a shift in leadership styles and a greater comfort when I started working with leaders who, although I did not know a name for it at the time, were transformative leaders. My experiences with the transformative leaders were the first time I did not have fear when dealing with my administrators. After that time, I began to work for a series of both transactional and transformational leaders, and it became clear to me that I was much more comfortable and felt much more appreciated

as well as included by the transformational principals. I began to wonder if the transformational leaders had schools that were more democratic. I had to be careful of this lens because my preference toward the transformative type principals could have lead me to want to find more democracy in their schools.

Another lens I acknowledged was the caring lens. I cared deeply about how well a faculty worked with one another and held the belief that positive camaraderie among the teachers made a better school. It was not my place, however, to decide what actions or words were showing camaraderie as it pertained to dialogue between the principals and the faculty.

The justice lens was also extremely important to me because I felt teachers were treated more fairly under transformative leaders. My personal experiences had led me to deal with situations in ways I felt uncomfortable and did not feel respected. I have questioned these same situations as to whether it was transformational leadership, dialogue, personalities, or size of the school that created the difference.

Also, being a participant observer could cloud my lens with preconceived notions about people formed before the study began. It was critical that I remained objective and kept personal feelings separate from my research. Times when this was not possible, I recorded and recognized that conflict in my research notes. I then reanalyzed my findings based on the recognition of conflict and rewrote my conclusions when necessary.

Finally, having been a participant observer increased the likelihood of bias into the study. I not only observed the school dialogue but I also participated in it. It took many rewrites to weed out personal feelings that tainted my data and revisits to the study many times with new eyes.



### 3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter described the methods and methodologies used to conduct this research. It began by examining the qualitative research design and its ethno-methodological and hermeneutical components. It then described the importance and appropriateness of my study. Instrumentation was described in detail including a data recorder, Livescribe, my research journal, and documents. I also described how validity and reliability would be checked. The final section described the data collection procedures and analysis as well as subjectivity and limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter began with a review of the types of dialogue that occurred between the principals and the teachers. Next, an examination was conducted of the types of dialogue used by the teachers and principals in daily interactions, meetings, and interviews. An examination of horizontal and vertical power relationships between the principals and teachers followed. Additionally, the effects of storytelling on school leadership were reviewed. This was followed by examining the emergence of themes or hidden meanings from the dialogue. Finally, school democracy was discussed from the teachers' point of view.

The focus of this research was to analyze daily verbal interactions of principals and teachers in an attempt to identify the most commonly used types of dialogues, how the dynamics of the dialogue affected power or how power affected the dynamics of dialogue, and the effect of stories on school leadership. It also examined the over-arching themes discovered by examining the dialogue for hidden meanings. Finally, it examined how dialogue, power, and storytelling may affect the existence or growth of a democratic school climate.

#### 4.2 DIALOGUE

The study begins by examining the types of dialogue as classified by Schwandt (2001a). There were four types of dialogue in this classification: information seeking,

inquiry, negotiation, and action seeking/critical discussion. These were examined by definition as well as how principals and teachers primarily used these types of dialogue. There were also conversations termed as discourse and monologue. In addition, the lack of communication was examined for its possible effects on the relationships between principals and teachers.

The first research question was that based on Schwandt's (2001a) typology of dialogues, what types of dialogue do the principals and teachers in this case study most commonly use when working together. This question was important because it allowed us to look at communication in a way that can shed light as to whether certain types of dialogue were important and why or why not. After analyzing the data for the types of dialogues used by the principals, Mr. Bradley was found to use negotiation the majority of the time, while Ms. Johnson and Mr. Martin used action seeking. The teachers, however, spanned the spectrum where three teachers used information seeking the majority of the time, five teachers used inquiry, three used negotiation, while three teachers and the secretary used mainly action seeking. One faculty member did not fall into any specific category. The table following showed the balance in the dialogue.

What was meaningful about the range of dialogues is that Schwandt (2001a) believed that information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation were the purest forms of dialogue because they allowed for the sharing and giving of information while allowing possible self growth without the need or presence of conflict. This means that 12 of the 16, or 75% of the faculty members, tended toward using one of the more pure types of dialogue that does not expect or demand action to be taken. Two of the three principals used action seeking type dialogue that could indicate the need for a different type of

TABLE 4.1: FREQUENCY COUNTS OF DIALOGUE

INFORMATION SEEKING	INQUIRY	NEGOTIATION	ACTION SEEKING	MONOLOGUE/DISCOURSE
Ms. Lyndsey	Ms. Shonda	Mr. Bradley – P	Ms. Johnson – P	All principals in faculty meetings
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Garen	Mr. Odell	Mr. Martin – P	
Mr. Decker	Ms. Jada	Ms. Hilda	Ms. Lesley	
	Mr. Woody	Ms. Leta	Ms. Mahalia	
	Ms. Maynard	Ms. Ora	Mr. Blaine	
			Ms. Temperance - S	

dialogue between teachers and administrators. The reason for this was that the majority of teachers used other types of dialogue between themselves and the principals. It should be noted that the type of dialogues used by teachers did not change with the introduction of new principals.

For example, Mr. Odell displayed negotiation with Mr. Bradley in a conversation about taking the boys to a local college as part of an incentive plan.

**Odell** – I have talked with the Head Basketball Coach (at a nearby college) about having his players work with our male students as mentors. My idea is to take the boy's love of basketball and use it for three main purposes. First, have them build relationships with young men who are successful and in a position where they would one day like to be. Secondly, to show the work involved in achieving such an endeavor and three, encourage better behaviors by using participation in the program as an incentive.

**Bradley** – Would this program be open to all our students or would the students have to earn a certain number of points on their conduct sheets?

**Odell** – I think since it is an incentive program it should be open to all the boys but I think there should be work involved in order for the boys to be able to participate. For example, we could incorporate academics into this program by requiring the boys to complete an assignment in order to participate.

**Bradley** – What kind of assignment are you considering? A writing assignment?

**Odell** – Yes, something like that, and after the first visit, the students would have to complete a second assignment and have nothing below a 20 on their conduct sheet and no zeros.

**Bradley** –... and no blanks on the conduct sheet. We know they will just not have their conduct sheet signed if they know the teacher is going to give them a low grade or a zero. Is this something we would do weekly? Is the coach on board with this?

This example of a negotiation dialogue showed the exchanging of ideas and working towards a program that the principal can support. It showed a positive conversation where both parties wanted to achieve something for the students with no potential benefit to themselves. In fact, programs like this required a lot of additional work and cooperation by faculty members. Negotiation as a form of dialogue played a critical role especially when action seeking was inappropriate or unavailable.

When the teachers and principals engaged in information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation type dialogues the focus of the conversations were almost always on the students or information to help serve the students. Another example of negotiation was when Ms. Hilda spoke with Mr. Martin about starting an afterschool program for the next school year.

**Hilda** – I wanted to talk to you about the SELF grant Ms. Matilda and I have been working on and get your input on it. As you know there are many initiatives we want to develop from the grant for next year but the one I wanted to talk to you about was a homework center we could have as part of an afterschool program. I want to use the money to buy a reading improvement program called Orton Gillingham that we could put on the computers to help students who are reading below say a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level.

**Martin** – Is this the only program you plan to have in the after school program?

**Hilda** – Oh no, no. We could have other programs in addition to...

**Martin** – Because I would like to see boys and girls intramurals every other afternoon and have already spoken to Mr. Odell about heading up that program.

**Hilda** – No, no this could be in addition to other programs we offer after school because...

**Martin** – because I have already talked to some of the teachers and they have programs they would like to offer, like Mr. Marshall would like to do an archeological dig and I was hoping you would be offering an art program...

**Hilda** – Oh yes, I would be happy to do that but what I am talking about would be to have a homework center that goes on at the same time that could be manned by Ms. Ora or Ms. Mahalia.

**Martin** – Well that sounds all right to me. I think that's a good idea.

These conversations show the dynamics that are important within dialogue that allow the staff to work together to create better programs for students.

An example of conversations between teachers where the concerns of the students were lost as the conversation became action seeking can be seen when Ms. Leta, the English teacher, wanted Ms. Leslie, the teacher who ran the computer lab, to allow her to supplement the English Ed-Options program with novels required by the high school curriculum. Ed-Options is a computer program, often used for credit recovery, but also used to provide classes that are not currently being offered by the school in a traditional classroom format. Ed-Options allowed the students to work at their own pace, providing the student with an opportunity to move on to another class when they have completed their first course. For example, a student who may have failed English I, could take

English I on Ed Options and, if they finished it in November, go on to English II. This program allowed students to have more control over the pacing of their subjects and was helpful for older students who were behind on credits.

In the conversation with Ms. Leta and Ms. Leslie, Ms. Leta asked Ms. Leslie if the students could read the required novels as part of the Ed-Options curriculum, and for their extra effort, she would reward them for finishing the novel by showing the movie of the novel and having a popcorn party for the students. Ms. Leta would handle this additional work by having writing assignments for the students to complete and e-mail to her for grading. The students were excited about having the opportunity to read a book and earn a movie/popcorn party. Ms. Leslie, however, decided that she did not want another teacher interfering with her students so, after a few days, she returned the novels to Ms. Leta, telling her she could not do the program. Words were exchanged and it grew to such proportions that Mr. Martin, the principal, called a meeting of the high school teachers, the computer lab teacher and her assistant. The following action seeking dialogue occurred:

**Martin** – It has come to my attention that there is a problem with communication between my teachers. As I have said before, we have to circle the wagons but all we are doing is shooting each other. I drive here for an hour and 15 minutes every day to try to help you people out but we can't be successful with all this fighting and bickering going on. Now, as I understand it, there's a problem with having the students on Ed-Options having an opportunity to read novels. Now I know there is no one in this room that thinks reading is a bad thing...

**Ora** – But Mr. Martin, she (Ms. Leta) came storming into my room in front of the



students and...

**Leta** – There were no students in there when I came in and I did not come storming...

**Ora** – Now you don't need to be interrupting me. I'm telling what happened...

**Blaine** – I really don't see the need for raising our voices and being hostile with each other...

**Ora** – Mr. Blaine you need to stay out of this, these things...

**Leta** – Yes these things need to just be put out in the open...

**Martin** – All right this is the problem and I'm telling you right now that unless you all can get along, I might as well get in my car and go home, and resign as the principal and y'all can find someone else to do this job because I am not going to be a part of this (bickering). We're here for the children and unless y'all can agree to get along, so I want to know right now if ya'll can work together...

**Ora** – Oh I can work with her but she's not coming into my class and taking over what I am doing with those kids...

**Leta** – I'm not trying to take over. I'm trying to add something that...

**Martin** – Now this is what I'm talking about. Unless y'all can agree that you can get along, there is no point in my being here. Now I want to know can y'all get along?

The conversation continued for about 45 minutes without resolution. It ended with the sound of students in the hallway and the principal and the teachers needing to leave to take care of the students. This is an important concept in the study because unless the

action seeking dialogue is a critical discussion, it can bring problems such as arguing or debating.

In this example of an action seeking dialogue we see what Schwandt (2001a) describes as the danger of action seeking dialogue. Schwandt (2001a) broke down the category of action seeking dialogue into (a) the personal quarrel, (b) the debate, and (c) the critical discussion. (p. 266). The personal quarrel and debate were sometimes referred to as argumentative dialogue where people began discussions to further their own views or values. In the above dialogue, personal quarrel and debate occurred and no resolution was reached. It was only in critical discussion where ideas were exchanged without the need for agreement or resolution that true dialogue took place. Tannen (2007) would have argued that if the goal is to win, the dialogue becomes asymmetrical and could not result in anything but discourse. Whether it was considered dialogue or discourse, nothing was resolved and the teachers lost sight of the students needs as they began to debate why they were right. Further research is needed to see if critical discussion has a place in discussions between principals and teachers or teachers and teachers because this study found no evidence of successful critical discussion.

Although action seeking dialogue was the majority style of dialogue used by Ms. Johnson and Mr. Martin, it is not to say that this type of dialogue could not be used effectively. Mr. Martin used action seeking dialogue the majority of the time and the teachers felt it was effective in bringing a sense of having someone in charge who could provide a structure for how the school would be run. For example, after meeting with the staff for several weeks, Mr. Martin set up a plan for improving things for the next school

year. In this conversation with the faculty in a faculty meeting, Mr. Martin said the following:

I've been observing things over the last few weeks because I didn't want to come in and make changes until I saw what was happening. And I've talked to all of ya'll and asked you what you think the main problems are and across the board everybody agreed the major problem was discipline... So I'm going to make a discipline plan and it will work because I've been doing discipline for 25 years and I know it will work... And the second problem was the boys being with the girls, so next year we are going to separate the genders and I believe that will cut down on discipline problems... and finally the third problem is communication. It doesn't matter what school you go to, they can have discipline and they can have a good schedule but if there's a problem with communication then there's a big problem within that school... Ok now the only negative thing I have to say and I haven't said anything negative about this faculty is that there are cliques. And I understand that and I think... a lot of ya'll did that for survival. You know, everybody in this room has had to survive this school year, this chaotic mess that we are having to deal with and I'm not being critical because... you survived in groups because there's an old saying that my daddy used to always say, there's strength in numbers and lone wolves are easy prey. And that means if you're out there by yourself the chances of surviving ain't real good. But if you can find support and then sometimes that support becomes polarizing and what that means is what is important to me is my group and so to survive my group has to do this or my group has to do that. And that's the way we survive but that's also the way

that the organization is destroyed...and one of the things we have to do is come together as a group and, you know, one of the things I said earlier is that we've got to put down our swords and pick up our plows and we have to do that to survive in this chaotic environment where the children are running rampant and are out of control.

This monologue/action seeking style dialogue is a good example of how Mr. Martin summed up the dialogues of information seeking and inquiry that he had received from the teachers and presented what he saw as the needs of the school, the teachers, and the students. Teachers described this type of dialogue as bringing them hope that the school could be turned around and made successful for the students. There was also negotiation in the conversation when he asked the teachers for their cooperation. In interviews, teachers clearly expressed the desire to do what ever was asked of them, if it would help the school become more successful.

Mr. Bradley often used negotiation to help develop relationships with the staff members. Negotiation allowed both the principal and the teachers to seek information to advance themselves and their need to bargain. One way Mr. Bradley used this type of dialogue was in the end of the year conferences he held with each teacher. Negotiation allowed him to gain information from the teachers while finding out what their goals and desires for the next school year were. The faculty expressed that this style of dialogue not only made them feel like Mr. Bradley cared about what they had to say (listening), but it helped to develop trust, respect, and communication between him and the staff. At this time, there was a lack of structure in place for how the school needed to operate and this

provided the teachers with an opportunity to offer their ideas on how things such as discipline, communication, and collaboration could be restructured.

In an interview, I asked Mr. Bradley if there were things he could have said to the faculty before Ms. Johnson's tenure that he could not say now that she was gone. He replied:

That's exactly right. You're exactly right, you know, because anything I say would come off as, some of it would be seen as retaliatory and it wouldn't be. In regard to certain individuals, some of it would come across as uncaring or insensitive and none of that is true. But perception is reality and understanding what the staff has been through as a staff and each individual had its own private hell if you will and I've got to do this situation with kid gloves and in a way that would not have been warranted had I started the year (as principal).

There was a strong desire by Mr. Bradley and the faculty to try to implement structure and normalcy back into the organization. Information seeking, inquiry, negotiation, and even action-seeking dialogue were used by the teachers as they turned to Mr. Bradley about a wide range of issues. Ms. Maynard asked for science textbooks and explained she was teaching without any official materials. Within two weeks, Ms. Maynard had her science textbooks and a computer lab with an instructional science program on the computers. Teachers also asked for his support in planning educational field trips for the students and he arranged for many educational field trips to help expand the horizons of the students. Teachers also wanted assistance in writing grants and Mr. Bradley helped teachers to once again collaborate with one another, especially across subject areas.

In spite of the various types of dialogue used by Mr. Bradley and the faculty, the dialogue was not enough to overcome the problems occurring at the school. One of the reasons for this was that regardless of what types of dialogues were used, tone, verbal messages, and nonverbal messages often had the power to change the dialogue from a positive nature to a negative one. Tone was often connected to the power of the person advancing the conversation. This could be seen in the meeting Mr. Martin had with Ms. Ora and Ms. Leta. The unfortunate tone used by all three made the conversation antagonistic and, as a result, absolute regard was not present. It can also be seen in Mr. Bradley's interview of how he had to speak to the faculty differently after the tenure of Ms. Johnson. This is important because while this study showed that certain types of dialogue were used effectively by teachers and principals, tone and verbal/nonverbal messages sometimes changed the dialogue from positive to negative. Another example of this was found when the president of the agency called for a faculty meeting to allow the teachers and Ms. Johnson to have a critical discussion. Teachers were given a chance to express their concerns and Ms. Johnson was given an opportunity to respond and explain how she planned to address those concerns. Unfortunately, the only response from Ms. Johnson for all the concerns was "I take full blame for what is happening and I will try to do better." The tone of voice she used, however, made the response sound canned and disingenuous. Later, in the interviews, many of the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the meeting because once again they felt she had not listened and that she was simply saying what the president of the agency expected. The president expressed his concern with her responses and said if she could not improve on the

answers, her tenure at the school would be a short one. She was terminated the next week.

When Mr. Martin joined the school in April of 2013, his plan was to be an observer. Unfortunately, Mr. Bradley was out sick with the flu and as a result, Mr. Martin had to hold the morning faculty meetings. The type of dialogue he used during the faculty meetings was a combination of monologues, storytelling and action seeking. While monologues and storytelling are not usually considered types of dialogue, in observing his use of them, the teachers felt he was actually using information seeking, inquiry, and sometimes negotiation while he told his monologues and stories. Their explanation was that the morning meetings were short but he had strongly invited feedback on what he had said in the mornings and requested the teachers to meet with him as much as possible. The fact that the tone of the dialogues was consistently positive also helped the teachers to feel favorably toward Mr. Martin. In an interview, Ms. Shonda noted:

...it is much easier to talk to Mr. Martin because you (I) feel that he is listening and he is also writing things down. The lines of communication feel like they have been broken for so long that when he writes things down you (I) feel like he might actually do something about the problems in the school. Communication is key to this organization and I think the research you are doing is critical because we must figure out why we can't as a team work things out like professionals.

After the morning meetings, teachers could find Mr. Martin sitting in the outer office, observing the school day. During their planning time, they were encouraged to come and sit in the outer office and talk about things going on in the school. If the teacher wanted a private conversation he would grant that and they would move the discussion

into the conference room. Most conversations, however, were held as open dialogue. Teachers came and went through out the day and joined into conversations whenever they had the time or interest. This was extremely effective because teachers filled the office throughout the day and seemed anxious to talk to Mr. Martin. Even when the school day was over, teachers would gather in the office area and talked to Mr. Martin until he left for the day.

The arrival of Mr. Martin brought a quick lift to teacher morale. Not only did they enjoy talking with him and listening to his stories but he brought humor into the every day conversations. Teachers began to laugh and smile and they told me they had a renewed sense of hope. Mr. Martin's use of dialogue helped them to see a plan for structure being developed, brought back the power of group communication, and left the teachers feeling listened to and respected.

#### 4.3 LACK OF COMMUNICATION

Although no data was taken from the time span of Ms. Johnson's tenure, the teachers were anxious to speak about her during the interviews held between February and May 2013. This was especially true during the interviews where I invited the teachers to tell their story about the school year as a whole. The teachers described the damaging effect of negative communication and lack of communication.

Fifteen of the sixteen faculty members interviewed expressed that Ms. Johnson had a negative impact during her tenure as principal. Thirteen of the sixteen teachers felt that dialogue had not taken place and also felt the discussions that were held would fall under the category of monologue and discourse. The other three teachers felt that in the beginning of the year, they were able to have information seeking and inquiry type



dialogues, but that further into the year, dialogue was not possible. There were also five teachers who felt action-seeking dialogue took place but they felt that the actions she was seeking to achieve were destructive rather than constructive.

Quotes from the teacher's interviews present a picture of how dialogue with Ms. Johnson was viewed. Ms. Temperance, the secretary, told me of the first day she met Ms. Johnson. Ms. Johnson expressed to Ms. Temperance that she knew the staff was divided among themselves and there was a need to bring the faculty together. When Ms. Temperance assured Ms. Johnson that was not the case and the staff had good camaraderie, often doing things together as a group, the principal told her she was wrong.

Ms. Hilda remembers:

...working with Ms. Johnson was very difficult, to the point where I actively avoided having any exchanges because every single time she would bring it around to belittle me or bring up something, to find fault with anything that I did and so very quickly, within three to five weeks, I stopped any exchanges if possible and just avoided her.

In an interview with Ms. Jada on dialogue with Ms. Johnson, she confided:

I mean, you know, you could not talk to Ms. Johnson, she was horrific, you know, and any time you went to her with any kind of situation, you ended up leaving feeling worse than you felt when you first got there. I don't think she listened and I think she came in already determined to or already convinced that the problems with the school were the teachers and that we were just a bunch of incompetent imbeciles. And I think that she was just hell bent, excuse me, on proving that the reason we were not doing well was because we were just a bunch of idiots.

When Mr. Odell spoke of his dialogue with Ms. Johnson, he revealed he felt (at that time) permanently damaged by the things said by her. He recalls:

Our first principal (Ms. Johnson) initially had open discussions and then they disintegrated into very vitriolic, condescending conversations where basically you felt like crap. She just about killed me as a person. I was on the verge of writing myself out of work for four months and it was just mental turmoil and anguish, depression which was probably caused in a large part by that. And it led me to seriously questioning my own competence and my own abilities as a person and as a teacher. It severely lowered my self-esteem, my self-worth, de-energized me, and probably caused me illnesses for which I still take medication.

Ms. Shonda related that her initial conversations with Ms. Johnson were helpful but as time went on she felt "...when she (Ms. Johnson) needed something, she found me, and when I needed something, she was nowhere to be found." Mr. Woody described his dialogue with Ms. Johnson as also being good in the beginning as he felt he could talk to her early on but that "...after a couple of months, I could see her mistreating other people and I would talk to her about that, then I couldn't talk to her anymore. You understand." Finally, Ms. Temperance, the secretary, revealed that:

With Ms. Johnson the dialogue was very negative from the time she came in and I could see that from the very beginning. She was very undermining about everything I did. She took away all of my duties basically.

It should be noted that before and after Ms. Johnson, Ms. Temperance was responsible for most of the intricate workings of the school and handled all the responsibilities of being secretary to the principal. She also completed work for other administrators, and

helped with all the students who reported to the office. Having her removed of all her duties, except for making copies and answering the phone, left the teachers and outside administrators with nowhere to turn for information or assistance. This strongly affected the infrastructure of the school.

When Ms. Temperance was asked if she ever felt that she had dialogue with Ms. Johnson or felt listened to, she responded:

No, not at all. She never listened to anything I had to say. And I was dismissed from the faculty meetings so I was never aware of anything that was going on in the school. She also sent a lot of non-verbal messages, like rolling the eyes, just glaring looks, emails, not necessarily derogatory but questioning emails. They (the emails) caused me to second guess myself constantly, her comments making me second guess myself, things like that... To me, her mission seemed to be to create chaos, literally. And she did.

Describing the time of Ms. Johnson's tenure as principal, the teachers felt that the school as a whole had suffered and that the staff had become splintered. During that time, the teachers expressed they were not cared for, listened to, or respected. Although the teachers felt the school had been in a state of chaos before Ms. Johnson came in as principal, they felt that any semblance of structure that previously existed was destroyed and that their voices had been silenced. Teachers expressed concern that Ms. Johnson was getting information from a select few teachers and that the information was not of a positive or supportive nature. Teachers expressed a loss of the sense of trust they had previously had amongst themselves.

Finally, the dialogue between Mr. Woody and Ms. Johnson, as described by Mr. Woody, may give some insight as to why communication rarely occurred with Ms. Johnson.

When I was in her (Ms. Johnson's) office, she mentioned several times that she was not planning to stay (at the school). She said she knew a lot of people in the state department and that her plan, if she could not change things, was to shut the school down. When I asked why she had come here, she said this job was a stepping stone and that she was currently interviewing for other positions. I was surprised and I didn't really understand what she was getting at. I guess I just thought she was blowing off steam or something.

Teachers felt the lack of communication damaged the relationships between the principal and the faculty and also among the faculty itself. As seen from the above quotes, teachers stopped feeling comfortable talking to the principal and/or talking to other members of the faculty. The teachers felt their voices were silenced for fear of repercussions. This lack of dialogue and the ensuing damage shows clearly the importance of open dialogue between principals and teachers.

Another aspect of dialogue that seemed to be very valuable to Mr. Bradley and Mr. Martin was to use dialogue to learn more about their teachers on a personal level. Both principals discussed how important it was for them to know about their teacher's strengths, skills, and interests outside their teaching life because it helped them to know what types of extras they could offer through the curriculum and after school programs. Mr. Bradley also felt it promoted a more personal bond between himself and the teachers.

He said, “I like knowing about my teachers because it gives us the chance to develop a relationship as people and people’s relationships can make or break a school”.

This section described the types of dialogues used between teachers and principals and why the different styles of dialogue were important. It examined the differences in dialogue between teachers and principals and how those differences affected the infrastructure of the school. It also examined the negative effects of lack of communication and how it destroyed trust between faculty members. Finally, it discussed the importance of dialogue in developing curriculum for the students and relationships with the teachers. It also noted that examples of successful critical discussion were not found within the boundaries of this study.

#### 4.4 HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL POWER

Horizontal and vertical communication patterns were often associated with power within the conversation. Power, as previously defined, was a position of control, authority, or influence over others. In horizontal conversations, everyone was working from the same level of power; in a vertical conversation, at least one of the people was speaking from a position of power over another person. In this case study, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Martin were in a position of vertical power by nature of actions and duties required in their daily job performance. That is not to say however, that Mr. Bradley at times did not operate successfully from a horizontal position. For example, in January when a new schedule was needed for the students, Mr. Bradley worked directly with the teachers in designing a new course schedule.

The second question to be answered by this research was how does the pattern of horizontal and vertical power messages fit within the nature of communication as

described by types of dialogues. Through another frequency count, it was discovered that there was a strong divide between the types of power used by the teachers and the principals. Teacher's dialogue were examined from the perspective of horizontal or vertical power and it was found that 75% of the teachers operated from a position of horizontal power while 25% of the teachers, including the secretary, operated from a vertical position of power. In other words, 12 of the teachers used horizontal power while three of the teachers and the secretary operated with vertical power. In terms of the principals, Mr. Bradley operated from horizontal power while Ms. Johnson and Mr. Martin operated from positions of vertical power. The majority of teacher's use of horizontal power compared to the majority of principal's use of vertical power was expected due to the need for collaboration by the teachers and the need for principals to provide school structure. What was new to the study is that people who operated from a horizontal position of power seemed to use more pure types of dialogue than the people who used a vertical position of power.

Since Schwandt suggested that information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation were more pure forms of dialogue, it suggests room for further study to discover if there is a link between types of dialogue and position of power. If a link exists, it could suggest that the teacher's horizontal dialogue plays a vital role in the need for principals to use vertical power. The exchange of inquiry, information seeking, and negotiation of the teachers may be part of a needed balance to the action seeking dialogue of the principals. Is the difference in horizontal and vertical power simply one of teacher or principal position or did something else cause these results? In this case study, the meaning is

TABLE 4.2: FREQUENCY COUNTS OF DIALOGUE AND POWER

HORIZONTAL			VERTICAL	
INFORMATION SEEKING	INQUIRY	NEGOTIATION	ACTION SEEKING	MONOLOGUE/DISOURSE
Ms. Lyndsey	Ms. Shonda	Mr. Bradley – P	Ms. Johnson – P	All principals in faculty meetings
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Garen	Mr. Odell	Mr. Martin – P	
Mr. Decker	Ms. Jada	Ms. Hilda	Ms. Lesley	
	Mr. Woody	Ms. Leta	Ms. Mahalia	
	Ms. Maynard		Mr. Blaine	
			Ms. Temperance - S	

only significant to this school but if further studies were conducted, it is possible a stronger relationship could be found between power and dialogue.

It should be noted, however, that the teachers and the secretary who used action seeking dialogue were seen by nine out of the twelve teachers as creating power struggles. This again may be an indication that the more pure forms of dialogue are needed when teachers are working collaboratively and that the use of action seeking dialogue sometimes made the teachers feel there were too many bosses. An example of this was seen when teachers had to cover each other's classes when other teachers were absent. The teachers who used action seeking dialogue were seen by the other teachers as less cooperative and more demanding. Mr. Odell described the argumentative type behavior by saying:

Most of the teachers are happy to work together, you know? But teachers like Ms. Mahalia and Mr. Blaine make it difficult for the rest of us because if they don't get to decide who does what, they won't participate in helping cover the classes. I just don't think that's right you know?

Interviews from the teachers indicated that there was a need for vertical power from the principals in order to provide necessary infrastructure in the school. Ms. Hilda suggested that:

the roles of leadership are still not well defined and that causes friction. We don't have a system to operate within. We need someone in charge and there needs to be some structure that allows someone to be making decisions on teacher coverage, student's absences, testing, everything that is on the calendar.



Mr. Woody echoed this need for structure when he talked of problems with state testing. He said:

students were supposed to have graphing calculators for the end of course testing and the HSAP. At the beginning of the year, I told Ms. Johnson we needed those calculators but somehow they didn't get ordered. I said something to Mr. Bradley when he took over but when it came time for the test and we still didn't have them, I went out and bought them myself. Mr. Bradley made sure I was reimbursed but it was frustrating. Worse than that, you know, it's like today. We had a schedule for end of course testing, it was supposed to be English on Monday, algebra on Tuesday, biology on Wednesday, and history Thursday. I go in this morning (Tuesday) and they have three tests going on, biology, history, and algebra one.

Ms. Jada felt that

...there are several individuals within this school who seem to think they have more power or seem to think they have more influence on the principal and that sort of thing than others and those people are kind of creating schedules, and creating this and creating stuff like that all the time and I'm sure they don't have as much power as they think they do, but I don't do well with a lot of bosses. I don't need a boss from my peers and that has been a huge issue this year.

This could also have been an indication that tone, verbal, and nonverbal gestures could change the dynamics of the dialogue.

The majority of the teachers expressed their opinion that the lack of structure stemmed from Mr. Bradley and what they felt like was his unwillingness to stand up to

the teachers who used action seeking dialogue. For example, Ms. Mahalia and Ms. Lesley often became angry if students were not disciplined in a way they felt appropriate and would threaten to stay home if Mr. Bradley did not do something differently. Unfortunately, Mr. Bradley's hands were often tied when it came to carrying out discipline.

Discipline was a major concern and the administration did not allow Mr. Bradley the power he needed to discipline the students. For example, many of the teachers had been physically assaulted by the students. Mr. Bradley asked for permission to have the students charged by the police and then dismissed from the school. The president allowed no action to be taken. In an unusual show of vertical power, Mr. Bradley called the police himself. The students were arrested and charged but the charges were later dropped at the request of the President and the Head of Residential and the students returned to school.

Teachers indicated in interviews that they felt Mr. Bradley had no power to make the important decisions that needed to be made for the school. They placed the blame on the president of the agency but their view of Mr. Bradley did not change. While the teachers interviewed expressed that they liked and respected him, they felt all he could do was maintain the school and help them move away from the demoralizing culture Ms. Johnson had created. The teachers wanted to see more action on the discipline issues and felt that there was no structure in place to deal with discipline and other issues.

During his first tenure as principal, Mr. Bradley expressed the idea that power must be used thoughtfully and carefully. In an interview he said, "I forgot where I heard this but the more power you use, the less you have." He explained that while he knew he had to be in a vertical position of power over the teachers, he wanted to be careful that

the power he had did not come across as aggressive. He wanted the teachers to operate with the understanding that while he may have the power, he was not going to use it in any type of a threatening way.

One day, however, during his first tenure as principal Mr. Bradley sent out an e-mail that became a point of contention for a few of the teachers. The e-mail said the following:

To all,

This morning many of you were not in the cafeteria by 7:45. It is my understanding that there is an agreement between the teachers and the counselors to make the transition in the morning at that time.

It is imperative that we are where we are supposed to be at the appropriate time. It is necessary for the start of the school day, it is professional courtesy, and it is what I expect.

Though I am new here, I have enough knowledge of how things were set up to realize that the teaching staff seems to be letting things go that cannot be let go.

As I did on Monday, I implore you to “keep your guards up,” and make these last few weeks as productive as possible. If we don’t set the example and adhere to it, then we cannot expect the students to learn or to adhere to it.

Thank you for all you have done and will do.

Although the majority of the teachers felt the email was a standard request, a few of the teachers took the e-mail very personally and felt that he should have sent it to only the people who were not complying with the rules. This is an example where the use of vertical power was seen by a few of the teachers as a show of dominance over the staff. It

also exhibits the danger of emails because there is no tone, leaving teachers to make independent decisions of how to interpret the email.

All the teachers interviewed described Ms. Johnson as operating from a vertical position of power. This could be described as standard operating procedure for most principals. What made this situation different is that she operated from a vertical position with very little dialogue. As a result the teachers felt disempowered. They also felt Ms. Johnson was acting from an authoritarian position, and some teachers even described her style as a dictatorship. Because there was so little communication, the teachers felt they were not listened to, trusted, or respected.

Upon the termination of Ms. Johnson, Mr. Bradley resumed the position of principal. In an interview, he explained that he wanted to assume a vertical position of power but he felt he had to be very careful. He still believed that "...when you flex your muscles, when you quote unquote, have to make someone do something based on the fact that you are principal, then you just lost." As a result, Mr. Bradley usually operated from a horizontal position of power.

When Mr. Martin began as principal in April of 2013, he asked that the teachers still look to Mr. Bradley as principal. He expressed a desire to stay in the background and observe what was occurring. Because Mr. Bradley was on sick leave during the first week, Mr. Martin was responsible for conducting the morning faculty meetings. As a result, although he did not provide any instructions or directives, he was seen as the person in charge and therefore a person in a vertical power position. When Mr. Bradley returned from being sick, Mr. Martin continued to try to remain in the background, but

teachers continued coming into the outer office to speak with him more often as time passed.

Mr. Martin then made a decision that could have been from a horizontal position of power but was actually made from a vertical position of power. Mr. Martin told Mr. Bradley that, because he had two babies at home to get ready in the morning and because he had to drive an hour and fifteen minutes one way to reach the school, he could come into school an hour to an hour and a half late. While this would have been a horizontal move if it had only benefitted Mr. Bradley, it was a vertical move because it also benefitted Mr. Martin. By allowing Mr. Bradley to come in late, Mr. Martin had the opportunity to take back the morning meetings without appearing to push Mr. Professional to the side. This allowed him to start the day off communicating with the staff and building rapport. He needed this time to involve the staff in rebuilding the structure of the school. Not all the teachers seemed to notice this power shift but Ms. Temperance, Ms. Leta, and Ms. Ora all mentioned that they thought Mr. Martin had allowed Mr. Bradley to come in late for reasons other than the personal reasons given while Mr. Gare, Ms. Lesley, Mr. Blaine and Ms. Matilda expressed anger that Mr. Bradley was allowed to arrive late.

While most teachers continued to take their problems to Mr. Bradley and also began to share their problems with Mr. Martin, some of the teachers began to take all their questions and concerns to Mr. Martin. This further enhanced Mr. Martin's position of vertical power and Mr. Bradley's position of horizontal power. Then something happened that further increased the teacher's view of Mr. Martin as being in a position of power over Mr. Bradley. A student became extremely violent and hit four teachers, three

students, and Mr. Martin. Mr. Martin wanted the student to be arrested and charged but the president and head of residential would not agree. Mr. Martin said, “I will not stand by and have my faculty treated this way.” He then turned to the head of residential and handed him his keys, handed me his computer, and said to the people in the office, “It’s been nice working with you.” and got in his car to leave. The administrators in the office were obviously shocked and after a minute, went after Mr. Martin to try and stop him. The teachers immediately became concerned that he had quit. They expressed distress and many stated that if he was gone, all hope for the school would be lost. No one knows what happened but within a few hours, Mr. Martin returned and agreed to stay on as principal. At that point it seemed clear that the staff was looking to Mr. Martin as the new principal. It also showed that Mr. Martin was in a vertical position of power that Mr. Bradley was never allowed to have in terms of discipline.

This section describes power in the forms of horizontal and vertical conversations. It examines the differences found between the power of teachers versus principals. It also indicates that the more pure types of dialogue are closely connected to horizontal power while vertical power is needed for principals to provide the necessary infrastructure for an organized school. The research also suggests that the use of action seeking dialogue by teachers is a cause of contention and frustration for other teachers in terms of a working relationship.

#### 4.5 STORYTELLING

Stories are embedded in our cultures, including school cultures. Stories are important because they help leaders to identify with listeners, gain perspective, and

experience school unity. This is done by appreciating differences in people and different approaches to leadership (Noonan & Fish, 2007).

The third question to be answered by this research was what part do stories play in leadership. While Ms. Johnson and Mr. Bradley did not tell stories, storytelling played an important role in Mr. Martin's style of leadership. In every meeting Mr. Martin held with the faculty, he used storytelling and analogies as a way to develop a sense of community. In addition, when he held open dialogue meetings in the outer office, he told many stories. Some of the stories related to school and some were stories from his life. The result, however, was that teachers began to meet in the office to hear and be a part of the storytelling as well as to have dialogic conversations.

Mr. Martin loved to tell stories to get his point across. One day, as we were sitting in the office, I asked him about his use of storytelling in leadership. He replied:

I love storytelling. It tells the people you're talking to that you're a warm, kind, and caring individual. I use lines like "This dog can hunt but he can't hunt on a chain" to make the faculty understand that the school can teach but not unless changes are made and the teachers are allowed to teach by changing things like discipline, separating genders (schedule changes), and communication

In a formal interview, I again asked about his style of storytelling and he responded by saying:

I guess this is just my own personal way of doing it, my daddy did it that way but biblically, I think the greatest teacher of all was Christ and he used parables. He taught in parables because he was able to take ordinary life situations that everybody understood and when he was trying to teach something, he would

relate those parables to the situation, okay? And so I think stories break the atmosphere and so my daddy always did it that way and I've done it that way and it makes it easier for me to understand so I figure if he does it that way, who am I to question how to do it.

When asked how he felt the faculty responded to his stories he replied:

I think its effective. I haven't had anyone to complain. But I think you have to bring humor, I think people have to laugh. I think people have to know that principal is real. He's not some person who sits in a room. I guess my thing to say is this: the principal doesn't come to be served. He comes to serve. He comes to take what he knows and help everybody, not that everybody should try to help him. Because he is just a person like they are.

Upon asking the teachers how they felt about Mr. Martin's storytelling, they expressed that they enjoyed it, his stories were funny, and, although it may take a while to get there, the stories usually had a point. In fact, Mr. Martin's style of humor and story were found to make 14 of the 16 faculty members interviewed lean towards preferring his style of leadership. However, it should be noticed that the teachers also preferred his leadership because they felt he had the power to get things done. Ms. Jada did point out that for her his style of storytelling "works better until I get tired of his stories and all the laughter and silliness." Other teachers expressed a liking of the storytelling because they felt it helped ease the tension that had built between the faculty members.

Storytelling was also interesting because it allowed for staff interaction on a more personal level at times. As noted by Noonan and Fish (2007) storytelling helps to bring people together and they suggested that, "...the exchange of stories helps leaders and



members share knowledge as well as transmit individual and collective history and wisdom to the next generation”. This explains why storytelling was so effective in bringing the teachers back to a position where they again started building trust and exchanging meaningful dialogue. This study shows that storytelling in this case study had the power to help mend the climate in the school from negative to positive, as described by teachers in their interviews.

This section described the effects of storytelling in this case study. Teachers enjoyed the storytelling and it helped to rebuild camaraderie among the teachers and hope among the faculty. Because only one of the three principals used storytelling, it was impossible to make any overarching discoveries of whether storytelling is necessary to school leadership but it did show how storytelling was helpful in this case study to reopen the lines of communication. It also provided further evidence that people who were able to relate to each other through stories were able to accomplish things as a team. The majority of teachers also felt that storytelling helped to heal the divides between the faculty and develop a new culture.

#### 4.6 THEMES

The data from my research was examined for themes. From observing, listening and interviewing the teachers, I fully expected the biggest theme to be listening but after conducting another frequency poll where I reviewed all the interviews, meetings, and notes and noted every time a topic came up, I discovered there were five majority themes. Teachers mentioned infrastructure most often in their discussions. Their remarks or comments about infrastructure involved how things were to be conducted, such as

TABLE 4.3: FREQUENCY COUNTS OF THEMES

INFRASTRUCTURE	COMMUNICATION	LISTENING	TRUST	RESPECT
84	56	41	40	37

schedules, field trips, testing, and discipline. The teachers felt it was unclear throughout the year how things should be done and at times, how to get things accomplished.

Communication came in second as teachers described a need for more communication not only between the teachers but between the teachers and the principals. Listening was mentioned much less frequently and when it was mentioned it was from the teacher's perspective that they felt no one was listening to them. Trust and respect were mentioned as things the teachers felt they needed and sometimes did not have. Other issues that were mentioned were student discipline, lack of hope, and infighting.

The fact that infrastructure appeared to be the major concern of the teachers falls at odds with my expectations. It should be noted that, from the perspective of the teachers, infrastructure and communication were the two biggest concerns. This indicates a connection to the premise of the research that communication is dependent on specific types of dialogue and that vertical power is needed by principals to provide necessary infrastructure.

#### 4.7 SCHOOL DEMOCRACY

Democracy was described as a form of power that is controlled by the people and demanded equality for all. The use of dialogue provided excellent opportunities for administrators to keep open the lines of communication with staff.

Teachers had a wide range of opinions on whether democracy could be found in our school. The assumption that democracy was the best style of governing schools comes from my own moral and ethical beliefs and, as mentioned earlier, other scholars' beliefs in the need for a democratic school climate.

Teachers were asked whether they felt there was or had been democracy in our school. The teachers were divided on whether we had democracy now, we did not have it now but we had had it in years prior, or we had never been a democracy. These answers seem to be affected by the number of years each teacher had taught at the school. The teachers who had taught at the school for close to twenty years felt that the school had had democracy but had lost it in the last few years. All other faculty members having served at the school for five years or fewer had varying opinions on the state of democracy at our school.

Ms. Shonda believed that there had not been a democratic environment this year at all, at least as far as she had been included. She said in order to see democracy there would need to be some way of involvement that was proactive rather than reactive. She stated that she would like to see a plan and for that plan to be handled as professionals. She said that she was returning the next school year only because of Mr. Martin. She felt his vision and plan for next year would work and she was willing to give him a chance to fix things. She had been teaching at the school for over 20 years and felt that, up until the last few years, there had been excellent camaraderie and support among the faculty members.

In speaking with Ms. Hilda, she explained that:

The problem with calling it a democratic environment is that we would have a better way of exchanging information...if you want to share your ideas and opinions it's available but we don't have what I would call a forum for exchanging ideas and listening to other people's opinions and hashing things out so that if you're doing a team building, democratic leadership kind of thing where

everybody exchanges ideas, we come to some sort of consensus or we are told that this will be the consensus way of operating, that hasn't happened yet. We certainly didn't have it at the beginning of the school year where everything was dictated but I think we have the potential to move into a democratic society now. We have come together this year on working together on things such as grants and that collaboration is I feel important to having democracy. I couldn't have written the grants if I hadn't had help from the teachers and administrators. I have had people ask me which side I was on. I don't know what the sides are but I told them that I didn't do sides. And we can't do sides if we're going to work collaboratively.

Mr. Woody expressed that to have democracy:

I think we need Mr. Martin because I think he has the backbone and strength to stand up to the administration and to the people he needs to stand up to so we can run the school the way it needs to be run. I think Mr. Bradley has a lot of wonderful ideas and he's on your side and he's trying to make it a better school but I don't think he can deal with the administrative people.

When I interviewed Ms. Lyndsey and Ms. Temperance, they both expressed their belief that, since Mr. Martin joined the team, democracy had been restored to the school.

Ms. Temperance said:

Ms. Johnson severely damaged communication, democracy, and trust. Teachers are still walking around looking shell-shocked. And I understand because they were being verbally abused on a daily basis, and Mr. Bradley and I took the biggest brunt of it. I think Mr. Bradley is now hesitant to say what he might want

to say because he is trying to rebuild a trusting community. We have democracy now, especially since Mr. Martin joined us because he has invited everyone's opinions and has met or tried to meet with everybody on the staff. Where as it seems like Mr. Bradley has given up at times, Mr. Martin is working on bringing everybody together and working towards a mutual goal.

Ms. Jada and Ms. Shonda believed that while there had been democracy in the past, there had not been democracy in the last few years. They also felt, however, that there could definitely be democracy in the future. From their point of view, the only way to reach that goal was to have people do the jobs they were assigned, teachers to be respected for their ability, and then for the teachers to come together and work towards common goals.

This section described the divide among teachers in this case study as to whether democracy was considered to be present. Teachers who had served the school for more than 15 years seemed to feel that the school had had democracy at some point but that it was lost in the past few years. Teachers who have served five years or less at the school seemed to be divided about whether democracy currently exists. The important theme that appears throughout the discussion is that teachers in this case study do value a democratic school culture.

#### 4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter analyzed the daily verbal interactions of principals with teachers in an attempt to identify the most commonly used types of dialogues, how the dynamics of this dialogue affected power, and the effect of stories on school leadership. Themes were discovered to provide further meaning of the dynamics occurring within the school. This

chapter also examined how dialogue, power, and storytelling may have affected the existence or growth of school democracy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter began with a brief introduction followed by an overview of the problem including the purpose statement and research questions and a review of the methodology. Next the major findings were examined and supported by their relationship to the literature. Finally conclusions were provided including implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

This study examined the types of dialogue used by principals and teachers, the function and impact of horizontal and vertical communication, and the part stories played in democratic leadership. It also examined the themes and hidden meanings found within this case study and the meanings they held in relation to the research. Finally, the study examined how dialogue, power, and storytelling can intertwine and affect the culture and democracy of the school.

#### 5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

Dialogue is valued as a critical component in a democratic education for principals and teachers to share their visions with each other. It is also important in shaping society. Shields and Edwards (2005) may have described it best when they suggested:

If educational leaders are to build educational communities in which all members may participate freely in dialogic moments, they must not only engage in but also



model, practice, and indeed live dialogue. They must find ways to facilitate, encourage, foster, and create dialogue. They must intentionally open opportunities for significant encounters, new modes of interaction and new opportunities for meaningful relationships. And they must do so in intentional ways... Perhaps the essence of being an educational leader is to ensure that the dialogue does not end, that attitudes and actions do not become fixed. For if the school does not provide the conditions under which ...we may understand more deeply and know ourselves and others more fully, then it fails in its core educational mission (pp. 156-157).

This quote also supported research findings that a lack of communication could be unhealthy to the climate of a school. The findings also suggested that poor communication could have a negative effect on the infrastructure of the school.

### 5.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research was to examine how principals use dialogue in their work with teachers and to discover if there were types of dialogue that influenced a more democratic environment. It also explored how power related to dialogue and how stories affected leadership.

My research questions are:

1. Based on Schwandt's (2001a) typology of dialogues, what types of dialogue do the principals and teachers in this case study most commonly use when working together?
2. How does the pattern of horizontal or vertical messages fit within this communication?
3. What part do stories play in leadership?

#### 5.4 REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative research case study. The data were gathered from staff meetings, formal and informal meetings between teachers and principals and interview with the faculty. Also, emails were analyzed for triangulation of data. I interviewed the educational leaders and the teachers for personal reflections on conversations and conferences held and for accuracy in the interpretation of the dialogues, discourses, and monologues that took place. I also interviewed principals and teachers on the effects of horizontal and vertical power on communication, and the effects of storytelling in school leadership. The interviews took the form of semi-structured questions and opportunities for teachers to tell their stories.

I analyzed my data by using an iterative (hermeneutic) design. Preliminary data analysis began with my reading through all of the transcriptions of interviews, evaluation of emails, and field notes. After reading the transcriptions and emails, notes were made in the margins about what I found important or unusual or events with possible underlying meanings. Color-coded cards and Mindmeister, a mind-mapping software program, helped me to develop a framework for the data. Data, dialogue reduction, and frequency counts were used until saturation was found and themes were developed.

#### 5.5 MAJOR FINDINGS

Shields and Edwards (2005) define dialogue as “a dynamic force that holds us in relation to others and deepens understanding” (p.4). When answering the first research question, based on Schwandt’s (2001a) typology of dialogues, what types of dialogue do the principals and teachers in this case study most commonly use when working together,

we have an opportunity to explore the strength dialogue had to both deepen and sometimes prevent understanding.

This case study discovered that information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation were the types of dialogue used most often by teachers and by Mr. Bradley, who operated from a horizontal power position. All three principals used monologue/discourse when leading faculty meetings, however, Ms. Johnson used action seeking, while Mr. Martin used storytelling and action seeking with both operating from a vertical position of power.

The understanding of this dialogue was important because Schwandt (2001a) proposed that information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation were the purest forms of dialogue. This study indicated that when the dialogue centered around the students or programs for the students, teachers often used these pure forms of dialogue. The pure forms of dialogue were found by Schwandt (2001a) to allow personal learning and self growth. When teachers used action seeking dialogue, the dialogues became argumentative or a form of debate where the issue became winning and the students needs were often lost within the dialogue. Critical discussion, the only action seeking dialogue that could have been used without the need for a winner, was attempted at times but never successfully.

The fact that teachers used information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation made sense in terms of teachers' need to collaborate with one another, teacher leaders, and working together as members of a department. It was clear that 12 of the 16 teachers or 75% were using effective type dialogues in their daily conversations with other teachers and the principals. This is not an indication that the other three teachers or the secretary did not use successful types of dialogue; it is simply showing that the majority of the

faculty consistently used a positive, pure type of dialogue. It also shows the importance of negotiation and how negotiation can be used to advance both the teachers and principals successfully. It is important to note that negotiation dialogue was used successfully throughout the case study.

There remains a question in my mind as to whether critical discussion can occur within a school setting. The fact that it did not occur successfully in this case study does not indicate that it could not occur successfully at a different school but it does show the need for further research.

Another important finding in this study is that the lack of communication could be so damaging to teacher morale, collaboration, and a feeling of trust/safety within the school. This study indicated that where dialogue occurred, success of some fashion could be found but without dialogue and communication, people lost their sense of belonging and purpose.

In answering the second research question, how does the pattern of horizontal or vertical messages fit within this communication, the research clearly shows that teachers most often operate from a horizontal position of power while administrators seem to operate from a vertical sense of power, although Mr. Bradley was an exception. It is also important to note that in terms of power, horizontal can be used effectively especially in the form of negotiation. Frequency counts indicate that the pure forms of dialogue were used horizontally while the action seeking dialogue was used vertically. When the action seeking dialogue was used in the form of stories, positive dialogue also occurred. In fact, this case study indicated that there could be a link between the need for teachers to use one type of dialogue the majority of time while a need for administrators to use another.

TABLE 5.1: FREQUENCY COUNTS OF DIALOGUE AND POWER

INFORMATION SEEKING	INQUIRY	NEGOTIATION	ACTION SEEKING	MONOLOGUE/DISCOURSE
Ms. Lyndsey	Ms. Shonda	Mr. Bradley – P	Ms. Johnson – P	All principals in faculty meetings
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Garen	Mr. Odell	Mr. Martin – P	
Mr. Decker	Ms. Jada	Ms. Hilda	Ms. Lesley	
	Mr. Woody	Ms. Leta	Ms. Mahalia	
	Ms. Maynard		Mr. Blaine	
			Ms. Temperance - S	

This could be a result of dialogue and power helping promote teachers needs and that those needs are different than the dialogue and power needed by administrators.

What does this case study suggest about teachers who use action seeking dialogue and operate from a position of power? The teachers who most commonly used the pure types of dialogues expressed frustration with teachers who used a more vertical position of power. The teachers felt that the action seeking dialogue of other teachers was an indication that they wanted to run things and that they made collaboration difficult. Schwandt (2001a) supported this discovery when he commented that this type of exchange usually involved “a heightened appeal to emotions, a desire to win the argument at all costs, and personal attacks” (p.266). What may be lacking in these type appeals is a sense of empathy. Shields and Edwards (2005) insisted that “The criterion of empathy reminds us that when we hold the other in absolute regard, we begin by trying to understand his or her position” (p.103). From the perspective of instructional leaders, Kelehear (2006) described empathy in this way: “As we provide instructional leadership and help the teacher, we also engage in self evaluation of our own ability to use the elements (leadership techniques) to think in new and exciting ways about the nature of supervision” (p. 76). Sergiovanni also suggested the importance of empathy when he expressed “if we stopped thinking about schools as organizations and began thinking about them as communities, we could actually change the lived reality for students” (p. 123). I believe the same can be said about the lived realities of teachers and administrators.

Culture was often affected by the types of dialogue we used and the position of power from where we use them. Agar (2002) wrote in support of dialogue that “culture is

no longer just what some group has; it is what happens to you when we encounter differences, become aware of something in yourself, and work to figure out why the differences appeared” (p. 20). This idea related to the deficit theory that people, in struggling to communicate, tend not to look within themselves but rather at what other people are lacking. When the research from this case study is examined from January through March, little change is seen in the morale of the faculty. However, when Mr. Martin brought in a different set of dynamics, often by his use of storytelling, teachers not only expressed more satisfaction but began to open the dialogue again with their fellow teachers. As mentioned in the literature review, for a school culture to be positive, there must be someone who is guiding the school with a sense of positive purpose, collaboration, and collegiality. Shields and Edwards (2005) emphasized clearly that when looking to build a positive culture, that “a modicum of trust is one of the essential contextual elements for dialogue to occur” (p. 62).

Themes played an important role in the interpretation of the data. Infrastructure was found to be the most commonly mentioned topic in teacher’s conversations. Teachers expressed the importance of infrastructure because in order to function as a school, they felt there needed to be plans in place for discipline, scheduling, organization, and communication. The teachers mentioned infrastructure 28 times more than communication. This is an important finding because it indicates that teachers find a need for infrastructure more important than communication. However, this finding may be strictly related to this study because when there was a lack of communication, there was also a lack of infrastructure. The teachers interviewed strongly stressed the need for both for a school to be successful.

Stress and conflict often surround most of the dialogue found in schools (Shields and Edwards, 2005). This could clearly be seen in our school and as communication decreased, the case study clearly showed that stress and a feeling of separation increased for the entire faculty. In examining the dialogue and power of the school, the teachers and principals often expressed that the students were not the thing that made their jobs most difficult. Instead they expressed that working with other adults caused the most consternation.

The third research questions asked what part do stories play in leadership? With Mr. Martin being the only principal to employ storytelling in his style of leadership, it was not possible to compare it with the other principals' use of storytelling. It was clear, however, that for Mr. Martin, storytelling was successful with the faculty. Not only did it help to boost morale, it helped to develop trust among the faculty by telling stories they could relate to in their dealings with students at the school and bringing back a culture of open dialogue.

In stressing the importance of story, Noonan and Fish (2007) suggested that when:

communicating a point of view, leaders promote the exchange of stories to encourage self-discovery and authorship as well as influence people to take concerted action to achieve worthy goals...the exchange of stories helps leaders and members acquire and share knowledge as well as transmit individual and collective history and wisdom to the next generation (p. 12).



Stories could be used to develop relationships, set common goals, and reach for a collective vision. Stories helped us to understand life through actual experiences we could relate to on a personal level.

Noonan and Fish (2007) suggested that “Using story to affirm diversity, establish interpersonal relationships and create belonging within communities, particularly where differences divide rather than draw us together, democratic leaders engage us in story to accomplish moral action” (p. 12). Mr. Martin was able to help accomplish this partly through his storytelling.

While teachers had various ideas about school democracy, they agreed in the importance of having democracy in order to have a more successful school setting. During the course of the year, they were able to see for themselves how authoritarian and dictatorship styles of leadership could lead to the destruction of the confidence and morale of the faculty. They also responded favorably when more positive leadership was put into place.

In reference to the importance of dialogue in a democratic society, Dewey (1938) asserted, “Communication is what holds a democracy together. The process of people discussing their individual and group desires, needs, and prospective actions allows them to discover their shared interests in the consequences of their actions” (p. 402).

## 5.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

This study began with an understanding of the core need our schools had to establish democratic schooling for all through moral and ethical leadership that valued dialogue and reflection as an important part of education. Almy and Tooley (2012) insisted that:

For too long, the high levels of staff dissatisfaction and turnover that characterize these schools have been erroneously attributed to their students. But research continues to demonstrate that students are not the problem. What matters are the conditions for teaching and learning (p.16).

This study benefitted both principals and teachers in helping to understand the importance of dialogue and how different types of dialogue affected the circle of communication found daily in schools. The consistently positive effects that information seeking, inquiry, and negotiation type dialogues had in comparison to action seeking dialogues encouraged further research to see if this would be found true in other schools. It also showed how power is related to dialogue and suggested further studies on the differences found between faculty members who use the majority of horizontal power versus the minority who use vertical power. This case study clearly defined that differences exist and more research could help further delineate those differences.

This research also shed light on the concept that communication is more powerful than listening alone. While active listening has long been stressed as a vital component of positive communication, communication seems to play the bigger role in the overall picture. While we knew that communication played a vital role in a successful, working faculty, this case study clearly outlined that the types of dialogue made a difference in the success of the communication. It also reflected the importance tone, verbal, and nonverbal messages played in changing the meaning of the dialogue. It was important to recognize that the meanings in the dialogues found in this paper were strongly affected by gestures and expressions used by faculty members regardless of their style of dialogue. In addition, it encouraged examining horizontal and vertical power for more ways they

could be used effectively. It also showed that story can play an especially important role in helping heal a broken faculty.

Therefore, professional development that helps train principals and teachers in the effective ways of using dialogue to improve the culture of their schools seems to be worthwhile. It is also important for principals to know how to listen to their teachers and to develop trust so communication can occur. Finally, learning the concept of absolute regard can insure that school leaders are treating their teachers with respect.

On the basis of this research, professional training could be used to help school leaders understand the different roles of dialogue as well as the critical role horizontal and vertical communication played in providing structure and care for teachers. This type training could provide principals and teachers with a deeper understanding of how dialogue, power, and tone can change the meaning found in the communication. Finally, training could be developed that helped principals learn to recognize their style of power and ways it could be enhanced or improved.

Professional development could help school leaders to understand that dialogue and power used together can be a powerful force in developing a positive and or democratic school culture. These leaders could also learn that the lack of dialogue can create an authoritarian and/or dictatorial style of leadership and, if power is not used responsibly, it could negatively affect school climate.

Infrastructure played such a critical to role in this study that further research on how effective communication and infrastructure support each other would provide clearer understanding of how they can be used more effectively.

Another way this study could impact school leadership is by exploring the effectiveness of storytelling. While we may not all be natural storytellers, learning to use stories or anecdotes effectively could be a powerful tool for current and future administrators.

## 5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommended that this case study be conducted again in various settings to see how the results change or stay the same. It is important to know as much as possible about which types of dialogue help to make a school more successful. It is also critical to understand not only the relationship between dialogue and power, but how to use that power more effectively. This could possibly lead to learning how to use more pure forms of dialogue from vertical positions. Another important area for research might be to further examine themes within communication and whether they can be replicated or whether different themes would develop from different styles of dialogue and positions of power.

While this study examined the communicational relationship between school leaders and teachers, it could go further and examine the communicational relationship between school leaders and students or between teachers and students. It could also expand the parameters of the research questions to include residential counselors, teachers, and school leaders. A follow up study could also be conducted examining the communicational relationships between the principal, administrators, and the president of the agency. It might also be interesting to do a follow up study examining the effects of dialogue when one principal is in charge for the entire school year.

Another path for this research is to find another residential school to conduct the study and then compare the results of the studies. In a different direction, this study could be conducted in public, private, or charter schools and analyzed for how different types of schools handle communication. It would also be interesting to know how dialogue, power, and storytelling might affect the relationships of school leaders to students. Regardless of the specifics of the research, this study needs to be followed up with other studies that continued to examine what dialogue looks like, the effects of different power styles, and the impact storytelling can have on developing a positive, democratic school environment.

#### 5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This case study has taken a broad look at communication and narrowed it down to find the importance of different types of dialogue, the effects of horizontal and vertical power on communication, and the effects of storytelling on leadership. It has provided evidence that the types of dialogue used make a difference in the results of a conversation and shows even more evidence of how power can affect dialogue. The use of tones, verbal, and nonverbal messages also suggest a dynamic that could keep the results of communication in constant change.

Teachers' expressions of desire for a democratic dialogue strengthen the importance of a communication that, if not democratic, should at least be consistently positive. Woods (2005) maintained "democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people practice this ethical rationality and look for ways of superseding difference through dialogue (discursive rationality)".

This research is important not only because it shows how infrastructure and communication are important but because it challenges the notion that as long as communication is occurring then it has to be positive. The case study clearly showed that dialogue and power play a large role in the success of communication.

Finally, the underlying core beliefs of this case study came from Maxcey (1995) who defined a democratic environment as being nested in three core beliefs:

1. A belief in the worth and dignity of individuals and the value of their expressions and participation
2. A reverence of freedom, intelligence, and inquiry
3. The responsibility of individuals in concert to explore and choose collaborative and communal courses of practical actions (p. 58).

These core beliefs were critical to my research because they were key for understanding democracy as framed by this study. When interviewing teachers about democracy, teachers expressed that if democracy meant being respected and trusted by the principals, then that was something they felt they needed. If democracy meant collaborating while being given autonomy, then the teachers certainly desired it. Finally, the teachers interviewed expressed that if democracy meant the ability to work together productively through out the school while being respected as individuals as well as a collective staff, they felt they deserved it.

In spite of the year endured by the teachers and the principals, it is in the end the tenets of democracy, as described by different teachers in different ways, that support the importance of this study. Dialogue, power, and story should be used artfully to produce the best working environment for principals and teachers.

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