

**THE ROLE OF ATTACHMENT IN THE SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITY:
A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF SECONDARY TEACHERS
IN THE MIDST OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

by

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**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York
2006**

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Personality Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract**THE ROLE OF ATTACHMENT IN THE SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITY:
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IN THE MIDST OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM****by****Jennifer J. Pastor****Advisor: Professor Michelle Fine**

This qualitative dissertation explores how a team of teachers in an urban high school evolved as professionals in a small learning community that was designed to help the school improve educational outcomes for at-risk students. The study utilizes previously unexamined data (audiotapes of daily teacher team meetings) that were collected for an evaluation of a reforming urban high school during the 1996/97 school year. At that time, field research (interviews and observations) revealed the importance of group dynamics, coaching, leadership, and ongoing professional development for the effectiveness of interdisciplinary teacher teams. However, the degree to which the teacher teams developed innovative classroom practice and improvement in teaching varied widely from one team to another, leaving questions about the causes of these variations unanswered. For the current study, audiotapes were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to examine the social conditions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of teachers within one high-performing team. Analysis revealed that relational events which provoked “positive dissonance” among teachers could expose pre-existing attachment strategies within teachers. Thus, attachment theory emerged as an explanatory tool for patterns that were identified in the data.

Using the language of attachment theory, the investigator categorized attachment strategies among teachers as secure, ambivalent, or avoidant, based on repeated behavioral responses that teachers revealed as they discussed their interactions with others. At the same time, the investigator considered how attachment strategies were related to each teacher's ability to engage in exploratory behavior. The study concludes that, within a small learning community, teachers' ability to develop more secure attachment strategies coupled with increases in exploratory behavior helped teachers to develop a relentless focus on instruction and improve their instructional practice. In the context of school reform, the strategies that can foster secure attachment strategies among teachers are discussed along with the potential of emotional intelligence as a professional development strategy for teachers. Beyond a focus on cognition and content, the role of emotions deserves careful consideration as secondary schools attempt to create more personalized learning environments for students and teachers alike.

Acknowledgements

The completion of any scholarly work depends upon the scholar, but the scholar depends upon so many others to achieve their work. My family, friends, colleagues, and collaborators have all been part of this intellectual process in innumerable ways. I am deeply grateful for their support over the years.

I can never sufficiently thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Michelle Fine, for her guidance and unwavering support of my work. With the example of her leadership, intellectual integrity, and patience, I shall continue the struggle to bring light into the world and empower others, one person at a time, as she has taught me.

I am also deeply grateful to my dissertation committee and other faculty members who have nurtured me through the years. Roscoe C. Brown, Suzanne Ouellette, William Cross, Martin Ruck and Vita Rabinowitz were all wonderful to work with and made a great team. As every graduate student knows, a great committee makes all the difference.

This body of work would not have been possible without the support of my former colleagues from MDRC, the social policy research organization that employed me as a researcher for eight years. The permission of MDRC to have access to previously unanalyzed audiotapes was crucial to the existence of this study. I would especially like to thank Dr. Robert C. Granger and his successor, Dr. C. Kent McGuire, directors of the department of Education, Children, and Youth. Bob Granger encouraged me to begin utilizing qualitative data that I was collecting as part of a study on school reform. Kent McGuire encouraged me to finish the analysis and complete the work. In each case, their mentorship was marked by kindness, diplomacy, encouragement and wisdom. I shall always cherish their support, and the support of many others at MDRC.

This study would also not have been possible without the support of the teachers and staff of the high school that was utilized for this project. While they cannot be named, they should know that I am forever grateful to their trust in me as a researcher, and their participation in this project. Their reflections will truly enable other educators to grow in wisdom and understanding.

I also wish to thank my parents and stepparents, especially Dr. Lionel McMurren, my brother and sister, and my step-brothers and their families for all of their love and support. Their material support, enthusiasm, and encouragement truly amazed me. Until this period of my life, I never fully realized how much I am cherished and loved by my family. It is a gift that I will carry in my heart for a lifetime. I especially want to acknowledge my son, Michael Timmons, whose discipline and dedication during his military training to become a Marine inspired me to push forward when my own work challenged me greatly. His faith in my ability to finish compelled me to push on. My partner/lover/best friend and confidant, Leon Pinkney, also kept the faith and supported all of my efforts to complete this work. I am forever grateful to his questions, suggestions and deep intellectual respect along with his spiritual conviction and belief that this work would empower others.

I also wish to thank all the good friends who supported me throughout the years. They shall remain nameless, but they know who they are. Those who “breathed with me” during the final push when I gave birth to this dissertation deserve special mention: Sandra Ham, Mary Ellen Lewis, Vivian Mateo, and Elsie Vera shall forever be the “godmothers” of this dissertation.

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Introduction

Background on the Initial Study

Project Stay in School¹ (PSIS) was an intervention that was implemented in a reforming high school in a moderately sized Mid-western city during the 1996-97 school year. Prior to implementation, the designers of the intervention worked with the school and its district leaders for 14 months to gain the support of the teaching staff. This planning period was effective as it resulted in a group of teachers who volunteered for the intervention, and who continued to express strong buy-in when implementation began.

PSIS was designed to offer structural and social supports to ninth graders who were beginning high school in order to increase the likelihood that they would graduate in four years. Research has shown that ninth grade is a critical time when many urban youth disengage from school and eventually drop out, albeit unofficially (Roderick, 1993). PSIS was also designed to support high school teachers by reducing their isolation and providing them with social and institutional supports that would enable them to solve problems collectively.

Three teams were created that would bind ninth grade students and teachers together in a small learning community that was designed to foster a more intimate and supportive environment. Each team consisted of four academic teachers representing the core academic subjects of math, English, science, and geography. Approximately 120 students were placed in each of the three teams resulting in a ninth grade of about 360 and 12 core teachers. A special education teacher was also hired to support the new ninth grade community. In addition, a few elective teachers provided instruction to the ninth grade students (i.e., speech, physical education), but these teachers were not considered part of the teacher team structure. The three teacher teams met daily, each team meeting during a specific class period that was established

¹ Project Stay in School (PSIS) is a pseudonym.

for them. These meetings provided an opportunity for the teachers to engage in problem solving and to collaborate on issues affecting their professional practice and development. A coach (e.g., master teacher) was hired to work with the teacher teams to help them stay focused on team goals and to support their efforts at improving instructional practice. A local teachers' professional development organization was contracted to provide additional technical assistance and support to the coach, teachers and administrators involved in the program.

Like other process-oriented reforms (Comer, 1988; Levin, 1996), teachers were encouraged to identify and pursue areas that they could improve in their teaching practice, or challenges that they wanted to address among students. Invariably, they focused on the latter issue, particularly the management of student behavior that they identified as problematic and an obstacle to learning. However, upon observing teachers in their classrooms, the coach and other school leaders arrived at a different conclusion, one that positioned the role of the teacher as central in the ability of students to learn. According to interviews and field notes collected during the 1996-97 school year, the coach, assistant principal, and technical assistance provider reported that they had worked hard to convince teachers that problems of student learning stemmed from their own routine classroom practices. These school leaders and others² also recognized that race, class, and cultural differences could be a powerful, although unconscious, subtext for many teachers' views about the causes of poor academic outcomes among the largely low-income, African-American student population.

The social constructions of meaning that these teachers (Caucasian, African-American, and Asian) brought to bear on their interactions with students and on their classroom practices becomes a critical issue because these meanings could lead to lower expectations for student

² Others included a group of independent ethnographic researchers hired to assess the climate of the school prior to the start of the Project Stay at School intervention.

performance (Quint, Miller, Pastor, & Cytron, 1999). Left unexamined, a teacher's classroom practice may reinforce a false perception that his or her minority students are academically or socially deficient leading to self-fulfilling prophecies that continuously reinforce inappropriate teaching strategies (Rosenthal, 1991). These inappropriate strategies, in turn, contribute to student disengagement and poor academic outcomes, and reinforce the teacher's belief that students are unable to learn. The PSIS leaders recognized that many of their teachers were operating under such a belief system and, likewise, that inappropriate strategies were in use in the classroom.

Despite these observations, one of the three teacher teams gradually overcame the hidden agendas that could threaten their effectiveness as teachers. The current study will examine how this particular teacher team developed new social constructions of meaning about their students and themselves within a school reform context. Likewise, it will examine how these new constructions of meaning led to changes in instructional practice and an opportunity to engage in teacher-driven educational reform. The central questions of this research are: What psychological processes influence the attitudes and behaviors among members of one team of teachers within a small learning community? What environmental processes influence the members of this team so that its members can successfully cooperate as a group and develop a relentless focus on improving their own educational practice? In particular, does conflict resolution play an important role in adult learning in the context of team behavior? This case study will rely on previously unexamined data stemming from a collection of audiotapes of recorded conversations that took place among teachers in their daily team meetings. It should be noted that teachers taped the meetings themselves and mailed them to the researchers. In addition, the teachers agreed that the data could be used for the present investigator's subsequent

dissertation work. The organization sponsoring the research has permitted the investigator to utilize this data for secondary analysis as long as confidentiality of all parties is maintained.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

A. Statement of the Problem

The importance of developing teachers to become team members

Research is beginning to reveal the importance of teacher characteristics on student achievement outcomes (Haycock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Furthermore, improvement in professional practice is often needed among teachers in poor performing schools in order for at-risk students to experience higher achievement (Elmore & Burney, 1998; Fullan, 1993) Given the importance of teacher characteristics on the educational outcomes of students, this study will look closely at a team of teachers, and examine how their unique characteristics as individuals, and their experiences as a team enabled them to evolve into a community of practice that focused on instructional improvement while increasing their effectiveness with at-risk students.

The pathway leading to a focus on instructional improvement is critically important. During the last 20 years of educational reform, an enormous amount of institutional effort has been mounted with the goal of improving teacher practice and implementing best practices in the classroom. Yet, many of these attempts to improve professional practice have fallen far short of reaching their goals. Often, the bureaucratic and cultural impediments to school reforms are very deeply entrenched in urban school systems (Datnow, 2000). Well-meaning reformers who do not fully understand the power dynamics and politics of these systems will not be prepared with the necessary strategies and safeguards that could protect their interventions as they are implemented in schools (Datnow, 2000). Furthermore, there is a deeper problem in the implementation process. The front line delivery system of any implementation effort in schools consists of teachers. Unfortunately, when teachers are excluded from the reform process, or are

only included on a superficial level, teacher perceptions of exclusion and lack of respect may result in a set of behaviors that can be characterized as uncooperative or resistant (Cuban, 1998; Elias, Zins, Graczyk & Weissberg, 2003). But what exactly are teachers resisting?

Resistance by teachers needs to be defined and examined carefully. Research has shown that teachers express a strong desire for administrative and social support in their schools as they carry out their work, yet they often voice the opinion that this support is lacking (Johnson & Duffett, 2003). What may look like resistance by teachers, may simply be a lack of understanding of the expectations of a particular reform, a lack of knowledge on how to complete the process of change effectively to comply with the reform, and a perception of institutional intolerance to the learning needs and supports of teachers that block teachers from making progress on the very intervention that the institution desires to implement (Elias et al, 2003; Hatch, 2000). Furthermore, a lack of institutional understanding on the learning needs of teachers can cause administrators, change agents, and political stakeholders to impose a series of mandates and requirements (Datnow, 2000). These, in turn, may instigate resistance among teachers simply because the voices of teachers have been ignored or silenced. According to a national survey of parents, teachers, and administrators commissioned by the non-partisan organization, Public Agenda, the concerns of a majority of teachers in America are not respected by those who manage school systems or design the interventions that are mandated for implementation in schools (Johnson & Duffett, 2003).

Recognizing the need to bring teachers into the process, reformers and researchers have pushed for team structures to be implemented in schools to empower teachers and to give them an effective voice for leading the change process on their own terms (Louis & King, 1993; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; MacIver, 1990; MacIver & Epstein, 1991). Teams are hypothesized to

reduce isolation and shift the culture of the school into a collaborative, problem solving work environment based on the ideas of total quality management (Deming, 1982). Over the last two decades, teacher team structures have been implemented in schools as a way of improving school-based decision making (Finnan, St. John, McCarthy, & Slovacek, 1996), increasing professional accountability (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996), and improving school climate (King & Newmann, 1999). Educational leaders recognize the importance of providing well-designed professional development opportunities that can enhance teacher effectiveness in schools (Elmore & Burney, 1998) and for this reason the focus is on the individual teacher as a unit of analysis for measuring teacher effectiveness. Less attention has been given to understanding the effectiveness of teachers in teams, particularly in how teachers develop and improve their practice as they become members of collaborative work groups (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000).

Teachers are often expected to form into professional communities as part of national networks, district committees, or school-based teams in order to advance their content knowledge and pedagogical skills among peers (Grossman, et al, 2000). But at the local school-building level where little direct guidance in this area is available, teacher teams may fall short of achieving their full potential as a group, and may be unable to pull ahead of the institutional impediments and individual differences that separate them from each other and keep them from becoming more effective (Achinstein, 2002). Lipman's (1997) study of teacher teams in a southern school is one example of how racial and socioeconomic stereotypes among individual teachers influenced the work of teams and prevented them from developing instructional practices that addressed the learning needs of students. Furthermore, Lipman's example shows how leadership at the institutional level is needed to raise awareness among teachers and shift

their efforts in a more promising direction. Yet, a question remains concerning the ability of administrative leadership to combat the pervasiveness of stereotypical thought patterns that have been well established over the teacher's lifetime. Would a principal be able to re-shuffle a teacher's deepest cognitive schemas in a matter of a few weeks or months? Even psychotherapists that meet regularly with clients with the purpose of helping them analyze their issues and concerns would be hard pressed to say that they could change their clients' deepest cognitive schemas within a short time frame. The school principal, with far less time and focus on each individual teacher, and far less expertise, should not be expected to accomplish what a psychotherapist would be challenged to achieve under the best of circumstances.

The situation becomes much more complex when the unit of analysis is a team. Because time, experience, and profound self-analysis is often necessary for an individual to change deeply embedded cognitive schemas, it is only reasonable to expect that teacher teams should require more time, experience, analysis and reflection to develop an identity as a team. Moreover, these resources may be necessary for teacher teams to develop a level of group efficacy that would enable them to reach goals that they would like to achieve.

The institutional culture of most schools does not lend itself very well to the learning needs of teacher teams, nor to the learning needs of individual teachers (Sarason, 1982). The traditional institutional structure of teachers' work, organized as it is around the individual classroom where teachers work in isolation from other professionals, has been shown to interfere with teacher growth and development as educators (Little, 1982; Lortie, 1975; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Given that the creation of team structures may challenge how teachers are accustomed to working in traditional schools, and given the demand for teacher teams in reforming schools to meet new social realities with respect to how they work together and

conduct their practice, teacher teams will need assistance as they learn to manage the process of working together as a group (Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1997; Grossman et al, 2000; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Little 1993).

Teachers themselves know that in the current national climate of school reform and accountability, more practical research is needed to understand how teachers develop in-depth understanding of pedagogy and educational practice that can be applied at the classroom level (Johnson & Duffett, 2003). Real reform requires more than perfunctory compliance to mandates; it requires a major shift in the thinking of the individual (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999). The change process can be a daunting challenge that taxes the mental life of teachers on a social, cognitive, and emotional level because the context of teaching is itself so demanding (Fullan, 1995). With the addition of team structures as a method of reform, the stress of any change process can be greatly affected by the presence of others (Tompkins, 1997). The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of others may facilitate positive growth among team members, or these may hamper the progress of others in the group. As people get to know one another and develop relationships with each other, they may develop warm and lasting friendships. Conversely, they may develop intense dislikes and rivalries that create irrational conflicts and dissent. In either scenario, the centrality of the relationship and the importance of the relationship to instigate change in either a positive or negative direction is clear (Gallego, Hollingsworth, & Whitenack, 2001). The following sections consider how attachment processes may be an important factor in a relational space that takes place between teachers and students, and among teachers themselves. The investigator will also consider how the current sociological and institutional demands of American education systems can interfere with the professional

growth of teachers, and the development of healthy relationships among all members of the school community including teachers, parents, administrators, and students.

1. Attachment in the Context of Poor Urban Schools in an Age of Reform

Attachment strategies are cognitive working models that are evoked when individuals (typically infants and toddlers) experience stress, particularly the stress of problematic social situations that evoke a sense of danger (Bowlby). More recent research on attachment strategies in adults demonstrates that a person's history of attachment plays a pivotal role in the quality of relationships with others throughout the lifespan (Main, 1990). When people experience stress in their relationships, attachment schemas are likely to become activated and to become influential in decision-making and behavior.

Schools are intense social environments because teachers interact with students and other adults on a daily basis in ways that evoke connection to others. However, because schools can also be stressful environments, defensive attachment strategies may surface when individuals feel vulnerable to the environment, or to certain individuals within it. More specifically, teacher effectiveness may become compromised by subconscious schemas that influence their interpretation of students, parents, administrators, and other teachers. Whether subconscious or conscious, these schemas are developed and reinforced based on the person's perception and interpretation of an external reality. The stress of schools is very real and has powerful affects on teacher functioning because it brings these schemas to the surface in ways that they may not be prepared to accept or handle (Elias et al, 2003).

There are many societal impediments to improving urban schools. On the societal level, urban schools and districts are often located in poor neighborhoods that may be overwhelmed by crime, drugs, unemployment, overcrowded or substandard housing, and families who are

affected by crisis situations (Comer, Ben-Avie, Haynes, & Joyner, 1999). On the institutional level, urban schools and districts have historically received insufficient funds and resources to help their client population (students and parents) navigate through the social stressors that could interfere with learning and achievement (Cross, 2003). Compounding these issues is the high staff turnover that affects urban schools further exacerbating instability and inequity that plague urban schools (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

The teachers who often end up working in challenging neighborhood schools are often the people with the least amount of teaching experience and preparation to work in tough neighborhoods (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996). This is a partly the result of the law of supply and demand in a capitalist society (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The demand for teaching positions in the most desirable neighborhoods, with well-financed schools, and well-prepared children is extremely high. As a result, the vacancy rate in schools with a desirable profile is extremely low. When a position does become available, the school can choose from a pool of experienced applicants that allow them to choose the very best teacher. In sharp contrast, schools in poor neighborhoods often have large numbers of vacancies at the beginning of each school year and these schools must scramble to find teachers with which to staff their schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Under this circumstance, administrators tend to hire whomever they can get as quickly as possible. What they often get are the most inexperienced teachers, some with emergency credentials, who are minimally prepared to teach the children of poverty-stricken neighborhoods.

When factoring in the individual personalities of teachers and the social support that teachers may require to navigate the challenges of working in poor urban districts, the social climate of schools may become even less supportive provoking individual tendencies to react to

stress in particular ways. As stated above, sub-conscious patterns of attachment may be evoked under situations of stress for adults as well as children. However, unlike children, adults have acquired a lifetime of cognitive schemas with which to manage the realities of stressful situations. These cognitive schemas are also influenced by the emotions, and stressful situations tend to induce emotions of fear, panic, anxiety, anger, or rage. In terms of personal attachment styles, even teachers with the most secure-based strategies might find themselves feeling emotionally taxed when they begin their employment in poor urban schools under conditions of high stress. Reacting to the stress of a teacher team situation, teachers with insecure attachment styles would be predicted to respond even more severely than teachers with secure attachment styles. Furthermore, their emotional anxieties might activate schemas that translate into behavioral strategies that could have negative effects on their performance and decision-making within a team.

The research shows that many new teachers will leave the field of teaching within the first few years, only to be replaced by new inexperienced teachers who will experience just as much difficulty as they did (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). The most prevalent reason that teachers give for leaving the profession is the lack of support from administrators and other professionals within the school (Brewer, 1996; Johnson & Duffett, 2003). Perhaps if the emotional stress that teachers experience was taken more seriously by administrators and educational researchers, the high turnover in challenging school environments might begin to decrease with the appropriate supports to teachers. In addition, teachers might have more emotional energy to devote to the partnerships that are central to creating and maintaining a stable school community. Cooperative partnerships with parents, students, support

staff, and others can evolve when positive relationships are nurtured and strengthened by the larger community.

2. Historical Inequality of Urban Schools and the Legacy of Alienation in those Left Behind

Since the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, Schools of Education have attempted to inculcate in future teachers the idea that all students are entitled to a good education, whether the child is rich or poor, whether urban, suburban, or rural. However, even in an era of desegregation, equal access to integrated schools has not translated into equal access to a high quality education for all students (Ogbu, 1993). One can point to the history of the United States, which established institutional racism as an enduring legacy in spite of the eradication of slavery in 1865. The legacy of racism sanctioned the unequal distribution of resources to schools based on race, ethnicity, and/or geographic location from the early 19th century well into the 20th century. In the South, institutional racism was part of a culture that was well-maintained by the rule of law (Siddle Walker, 2000). Southern education policy dictated that support for African-American schools would be minimal (Siddle Walker, 2000). Likewise, this policy dictated that African-Americans receive only limited training in the acceptable trades or farming to set the stage for a life of menial occupation and servitude (Siddle Walker, 2000).

During this era, American class privilege also limited opportunities to the European immigrant population that was pouring into the United States during the late 1800s and early 1900s (Anyon, 1997). Poor European immigrants who found themselves in the large cities of the Northeast rarely had access to the high quality education of more privileged white Americans (Anyon, 1997). Expectations for education were quite low given the social demand that poor

urban whites enter the work force at young ages to earn meager wages under the terrible conditions of industrial factories and mills.

After 1910, industrial needs became more complex and American industry required a more educated population for its growing economy, creating a demand for more people to attain a high school education. Yet, many urban students, both black and white, did not require a high school diploma to enter a workplace still dominated by manufacturing and trades. At the same time, high school facilities in the working class neighborhoods of Northeastern cities were not supplied with the same resources or finances as high schools in the wealthier communities of the Northeastern cities and suburbs (Anyon, 1997).

By the 1930s, cataclysmic social events began to affect the cities and school systems of the Northeast. These events included the mass migrations of African-Americans from the south to the North beginning in the 1930s and the new wave of immigrants entering the country from the Caribbean, exacerbating the overcrowding of low income urban communities and schools. The middle twentieth century brought more dramatic social changes that were designed to bring more equity and opportunity to racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. The Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954, the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and the implementation of affirmative action policies of the 1970s were designed to help African-American students, and eventually other students of color to gain access to a high quality education in the public schools. Ironically, the more things changed on a sociological level, the more they stayed the same at the social psychological level. Because attitudes would prove far more difficult to change, institutional practices such as the inequitable financing of poor urban school districts, and the low expectations of teachers would continue to degrade the quality of education that ethnic and racial minorities received in poor urban schools.

The civil rights movement during the second half of the 20th century shook the culture of inequality that had dominated the American culture landscape, but could not eradicate it. Instead, the overt prejudice morphed into a much subtler set of racist attitudes and behaviors that were more difficult to detect among socially conscious people, yet identifiable when one identified outcomes in African-American communities. One major consequence occurred in the South in the aftermath of desegregation policies that were supposed to produce more equity. While white schools were being integrated, a well-established network of African-American schools that had thrived through the years of segregation was forced to shut down. The African-American community was now at risk of losing their autonomy through the loss of local control of their schools, including the loss of African-American principals and teachers who knew their students well. These educators had once been powerful in their ability to control the culture of their schools, maintain their connection to parents in the community, and communicate an ethic of care and compassion that enabled them to engage in a careful policy of racial empowerment of their students through education (Siddle Walker, 2000). It is ironic because the optimism and hope of *Brown v. Board of Education* was that integration would achieve equity. Instead, a mixed bag of unintended consequences created new dilemmas that would impact the quality of education for ethnic and racial minorities for years to come. These consequences would stem from a new set of social practices that would arise in response to the social psychology of prejudice and racism.

As the turbulence of the 1960s moved forward, social resistance to equality of opportunity would arise through white flight from urban areas, property devaluation in those same urban areas, and a reliance on local tax bases to finance urban school districts that were becoming poorer as the tax base eroded. Over a period of years, stretching into the 21st century,

schools in minority urban communities would not get services and upgrades that more politically connected and prosperous communities received. As urban schools became leaner, the streets became meaner, and urban schools began to absorb the social stresses of the communities they now represented. Communities where poverty, joblessness, and helplessness reign prompted the creation of a new term called “the underclass,” - a term that conveyed the extreme difficulty for certain members of ethnic and racial minorities, bounded by geographic location, to rise above the circumstances that poverty had created in their lives. When the inadequate resources of poor urban districts collide with the enormous social needs of people in poverty, then educational institutions can become the unwitting instruments of oppression - sustaining inequality over generations of parents and their children. It is at this point that the “underclass” begins to view their educational institutions with distrust, particularly for African-Americans who can no longer buy-in to the promises of the civil rights era, the optimism of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and the premise of integrationist strategies. With the loss of once nurturing school communities of the segregated south, and the loss of supportive communities in the eroded cities of the Northeast and Midwest, a process of disengagement develops and sets the stage for adaptive strategies that seem to make sense given the social realities of survival. (Lareau, 2003).

One needs to ask: What happens to the children who are the recipients of this deep and powerful cultural legacy? As children become adolescents, they may recognize the abstract importance of education, but reject the version of education that they have actually received in daily life based on their experiences at home, in the community, and in school. The failure of adults to recognize their strengths and help them overcome their weaknesses without labeling them as deficient may be enough to alienate students from educators and lead to disengagement from school (Cunningham, Swanson, & Spencer, 2003; Davis, 2003). Eventually, students may

seek other ways of validating their human existence, and will seek opportunities to exhibit competency in other areas of life such as relationships, children, employment, street culture and arts, or profitable illegal activity (Fine, 1991). The front line workers of educational institutions (teachers, guidance counselors, administrators) may be disregarded and avoided by students who have acquired the belief that the system doesn't really care about them. In other cases, students might develop hostility towards teaching staff and administrators, acting out in ways that provoke others to develop a negative view of them (Cunningham, Swanson, & Spencer, (2003). In short, the historical inequality of poor urban schools leaves a generational legacy of children who are alienated and disengaged from oppressive institutions that pretend to be their guardians for future opportunity and success. By adolescence, many urban students no longer believe in the fairy tale.

3. The Historical Inequality of Urban Schools Creates a Stressful Context for Teachers

It is into this mix that teachers of urban students step when they begin teaching in urban schools. Some teachers may have a theoretical understanding of the issues affecting their students, based on what they learned in college, and they may be highly motivated to put their knowledge to use to have a positive impact on the lives of their students. Indeed, a survey by Public Agenda (Johnson & Duffett, 2003) shows that the majority of teachers are motivated to enter the profession because they care deeply about students and want to make a difference. However, the same survey reveals that teachers feel woefully inadequate to deal with the social issues affecting their students, and are disappointed that their teaching degrees did not prepare them for the realities of dealing with these issues on a practical level in the classroom.

What happens when the hopeful optimism of a new teacher collides with the alienation and disengagement of students, particularly adolescents, who no longer believe in the fairy tale

of school? What happens when the biggest challenge for a new teacher is to master “classroom management” techniques in order to present a state-driven curriculum that cares little for the community stresses that impact an adolescent’s sense of safety and security? One answer, popularized in films but experienced by many teachers in reality (Johnson & Duffett, 2003), is the proverbial war zone: a situation where the teacher attempts to assert control over the classroom environment, and certain students (with strong leadership abilities) attempt to take it away from her. This scenario creates an enormous amount of stress for teachers. We can predict that many teachers experiencing this type of classroom war zone will react negatively to the stress of the situation. Moreover, some may come to develop an increasingly defensive dislike for the students who make their life a living hell. If the student is a member of a racial or ethnic minority, then racial stereotypes and prejudices may influence the thinking of the teacher, making a clear reasoned response to the situation even less likely to occur.

In these situations, teachers are likely to feel unsupported and fearful of administrators whose job it is to evaluate their performance. Teachers may also experience a sense of shame and loss in relation to their colleagues because their competency as a teacher has been compromised by the behavior of their students. Ultimately, in poor urban schools, an atmosphere of fear and dislike interferes with the possibility of authentic positive relationships emerging among teachers, students, parents, and administrators. This negative atmosphere feeds into the historical oppression of urban schools and makes it appear as if the situation is impossible to turn around. Indeed, Deal and Peterson (1999) describe how this belief system may be the most important factor preventing a positive culture from emerging in schools with a history of toxic relationships.

4. The Emergence of New Solutions: The Small Learning Community

During the 1980s and 90s, researchers began to study how the social and emotional needs of students in poor, urban communities of color could be met more effectively (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, & McIver, 1993; Felner Primavera, and Cauce, 1981). Some began to experiment with and implement new educational approaches and designs that could create caring social environments within schools (Felner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1982; Felner, Brand, Adan, Mulhall, Flowers, Sartain & DuBois, 1993; Meier, 1995). These approaches included schools-within-schools, small learning communities, charters, magnets, and career academies among others. While a more personalized academic focus was one common goal across many of these new designs, a second goal was the creation of more personalized relationships that could nurture students and meet their social and emotional needs. Project SIS was an intervention designed to follow this new paradigm of restructuring that attempted to turn large anonymous schools into small supportive environments. However, on closer examination there is some evidence that small schools can become just as problematic as large ones, particularly when they have been restructured as part of a school reform strategy (Gootman & Herszenhorn, May 3, 2005). Keeping within the framework that has been presented thus far - that historical inequalities in educational systems across America are impacting the attitudes and beliefs of the participants of this enterprise in deeply felt ways – then we must consider that the collective attitudes and beliefs that have accumulated over a long period of time and across many experiences are carried within the memories of each individual. As such, the social schemas and emotional memories of both teachers and students will influence their behavior as they move from the large comprehensive high schools they have grown up in, to the small learning communities that are theorized to transform the teaching and learning enterprise.

With belief systems firmly entrenched, it is not hard to surmise that teachers in small learning communities may still be overwhelmed with the fear and anxiety of teaching in tough urban schools, whether the school is large or small. Consequently, they may resort to compensatory strategies as they attempt to engage with students whom they are fearful of. At the same time, alienated students may resort to compensatory strategies that allow them to disengage from the teachers that they've learned to characterize as distant and uncaring. When administrators and parents are added to the mix, a vicious cycle of blame and miscommunication can dominate the conversations of the school enterprise in ways that re-enforce the historical inequality of urban schools whether they are large or small.

Yet under certain circumstances and exemplary leadership, the conversation **has** shifted and extraordinary school environments have been created that enriched the lives of both teachers and students. For example, under the extraordinary leadership of Debbie Meier, former principal of Central Park East High School in New York City, an environment was created that allowed a staff of teachers to reinvent themselves as change agents who could work against the social assumptions that society reproduces about racial and ethnic minority youth .(Deal & Peterson, 1999). It would take extraordinary strength and courage for teachers to break through the numbness that imprisons disengaged students in a fog of self-imposed alienation from academic achievement – an alienation that is the result of their shutting themselves down so as not to risk the rejection that society communicates to poor urban youth of color (Steele, 1997). It would also require a major shift in the expectations of what racial and ethnic minority youth living in poor urban communities could accomplish academically with “strong habits of mind.” These “habits of mind” were carefully developed through a curriculum that stressed creativity,

innovation, and a focus on solving relevant problems that existed in the lives and communities of the students themselves (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

The tragedy of public education in poor urban communities is that the Central Park East experience is so rare that it is often perceived as impossible to replicate (Elias et al, 2003). While small learning communities are admired for their effects when they are judged to be successful, more information is needed so that the processes and pathways that allowed them to make great progress with students can be replicated on a broad scale. In the ensuing sections, I will explore various social factors that may be important for the success of school reform efforts. I will also discuss the tensions that may arise when these factors are applied in the context of a small learning communities that utilizes teacher teams to create new cultures within a school.

B. Challenges of Reform Efforts in the Small Learning Community

1. Challenge: The importance of developing a focus on instruction

When teachers are brought together to work in teams as part of an educational reform strategy, teachers may use these opportunities to reinforce pre-existing belief systems about the causes of academic failure among students (Lipman, 1997) which can ultimately lead to a reinforcement of the status quo in teaching practice. When this pattern occurs, true educational reform is not achieved. Yet, this pattern can be interrupted by incorporating strategies that “soften teachers’ preconceptions” about what is possible, and by giving teachers specific information about strategies that they can employ to improve their classroom practice (Elmore & Burney, 1997). According to Elmore & Burney, this is what schools in District 2 of New York City did under the leadership of Anthony Alvarado, an administrator who created a district-wide mandate focused on the improvement of classroom instruction (Elmore & Burney, 1997). This district-wide mandate re-organized the nature of principals’ work so that they could become

instructional leaders who reinforced the message that classroom innovations were the district's first priority. The district-wide mandate also re-organized the budget so that professional development could be provided to school faculties. Professional development was focused on instructional improvement across all classroom and all schools, and its goal was to create a process for building awareness, planning, implementation, and reflection among teachers.

According to Elmore & Burney, this was accomplished in a number of ways:

- by replacing and recruiting principals and teachers, and hiring a team of educational consultants to work with staff across schools;
- by creating task forces and committees to create innovative curricula;
- and by creating a climate of collegiality and trust so that people could work together to create innovative practices.

Alvarado's enterprise of developing a focus on instruction in District 2 demonstrates Kurt Lewin's theory about the nature of groups and social interdependence. Johnson & Johnson (1995) explain:

“The essence of a group is the interdependence among members (created by common goals), which results in the group being a dynamic whole; a change in the state of any member or sub-group changes the state of other elements of the group” p. 207.

Alvarado created a common goal for the entire district (focused on instruction). Furthermore, he changed some of the elements of the group (by replacing staff and adding consultants) in an effort to make the group cohesive and focused on the common goal. And finally, he attempted to create a cooperative climate whereby professionals in the group could learn from each other and promote each others' learning to advance the district's goal. This cooperative aspect is critical. It is reminiscent of Deutsch's (1949, 1962) extension of social interdependence theory, which

examines the effect of cooperation and competition on social outcomes. Without attempting to establish a climate of cooperation in the district, and without strategies to achieve positive interdependence among staff, the superintendent's efforts to achieve change would probably have faltered.

It should be noted that Alvarado's efforts may have been easier to achieve during the years that his reforms were implemented in. The reform effort began in 1987 and continued for the 10 years that Alvarado led District 2 of New York City. After the year 2000, a punitive climate emerged nationally on school reform with the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. This legislation raised the bar on national accountability and consequences for school districts that did not raise student test scores by a certain time, creating enormous pressures for school districts who could no longer afford the luxury of experimenting with new strategies to raise achievement. As Vanderslice (1995) points out, creating a cooperative environment for workers in any industry is extremely difficult when the larger society in which that industry is embedded is highly competitive.

In fact, when Anthony Alvarado moved to San Diego to implement a similar change process beginning in 1998 (check date), resistance to his strategies arose in the new context making them more politically difficult to implement (Hightower, 2002). According to Hightower, the resistance may have surfaced due to the "speed, abruptness, and top-down character" of the reform effort in San Diego as well as the new national focus on testing and accountability that may instigate a climate of fear as educators attempt new reform efforts. A climate of fear is based on coercion and is not conducive to the creation of social interdependence and cooperation (Deutsch, 1962). However, Hightower's research also revealed that educators in the San Diego system did benefit from the professional learning

culture that was ultimately created, and that this learning culture was successful in getting educators to focus on research, performance data and teaching practice. Hightower's (2002) report shows that it may be necessary for large, urban school districts to instigate a change process in a way that disrupts the comfort level of educators on the front lines, however, her report also raised questions about the longevity of a set of reforms that are so heavily resisted by the rank and file, particularly the teachers union. Is there a better way to create learning among teachers and administrators that may help them to internalize a process that is focused on improving the practice of teaching? The theoretical construct "Communities of Practice" has generated interest among researchers who are searching for an answer to this question.

2. Challenge: Developing Communities of Practice

If one believes the notion that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), then how does learning proceed when the social reality is changing faster than one's internal social constructions can keep pace? In 1991, Lave and Wenger proposed that "communities of practice" provide natural opportunities for individuals to learn in uniquely social ways. Putting these two notions together, perhaps communities of practice can provide a context for a socially constructed reality to emerge. That is, communities of practice may provide a safe structure for new knowledge and understanding to emerge among people who are dealing with rapidly changing social contexts that might otherwise be perceived as threatening.

In 1998, Etienne Wenger published his theory of learning (Communities of Practice) as a process of meaning construction through social participation. It is based on the assumption that, "engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are." Wenger defines this process of learning with four broad components: meaning, practice, community, and identity. Wenger proposed that meaning is what we learn by

experience; practice is what we learn by doing; community is what we learn by belonging, and identity is what we learn by becoming.

Furthermore, meaning is located in a process called negotiation of meaning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This process is further defined by two processes Wenger called participation and reification (Wenger, 1998). Participation is based on the social experience of living, and being actively involved in social enterprises. “Participation ...combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. It involves our whole person including our bodies, minds, emotions and social relations” (Wenger, 1998). Reification is a process that gives form to our abstract experiences by creating concrete material objects that record our abstract experiences. Therefore, participation gets reified into tools, symbols, stories, and similar “points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58.) In other words, while participation is the doing, reification is the objectification of what we do. According to Wenger, both processes are essential partners in the construction of meaning and meaning is an essential component of learning.

Activity is an important part of communities of practice because it is the actual work that the members of the community produce. However, an evolving community of practice is a complex organism because every participant will not participate in the same way, with the same intensity, with the same meanings, or with the same knowledge³. As a result, activity among participants should vary along many dimensions. According to Lave and Wenger, one of the ways that activity varies for new learners in the community is by their production of actions, tasks, assignments, and by their creation of plans and goals. According to Wenger (1998), activity is also an indicator of engagement within a community of practice.

³ Stephen Turner (1994) argues against this notion. His explanation is that practice should not vary from person to person when it is transmitted if the notion of practice is to be used as a causal explanation in a theory of practice.

This study will document the activities of each team member to determine the quality and nature of participation as defined by the quality and nature of mutual engagement, joint enterprises, and shared repertoires.

3. Challenge: Accommodating conflict and cooperation in adult learning

“Communities of Practice” offers a useful framework for understanding team behavior in the workforce, but the framework tends to be overly optimistic, assuming that processes of learning in a community will involve cooperative effort and consensus. Adult learning within communities of practice may not be such a neat process if there is disagreement about the goals and strategies that the community should adopt. For a different approach, Smylie (1995) offers socio-cultural theories of learning among adults that focus on dimensions of adult learning and change in organizations. It is one framework that has roots in the early work of John Dewey who explored the importance of experiential learning for problem-solving and analysis in ambiguous situations (Dewey, 1933). Smylie describes how prior knowledge and beliefs can affect current learning through the cognitive schemata through which new information gets filtered. Coupled with this process, Smylie proposes that adult learning is problem oriented because learning occurs when problems relate in meaningful ways to life situations. Smylie believes that adult learning arises out of dilemmas or conflicts that challenge “routine practice, knowledge, beliefs and assumptions” resulting in disequilibrium for the adult learner. Furthermore, disequilibrium may arise when shifts in the meanings one has acquired through one’s life experiences which give form to one’s personal “biography” conflict with current life situations (Jarvis, 1987).

From cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), we can surmise that conflicts of this nature may cause individuals to revise their biographies to accommodate new experiences, or

conversely, may cause individuals to revise the meaning of their conflicting experience to fit their biography. This research will examine the situations that give rise to disequilibrium among the teacher team members and will seek to demonstrate whether or how these dissonant moments create new learning opportunities for teachers.

Learning how to manage dissonant moments in a team context may create conflicts among team members. Morton Deutsch's studies of conflict led him to describe a number of factors that can influence whether conflicts get resolved constructively, or escalate into destructive situations with little hope for resolution. According to Deutsch (1973), three interrelated processes that escalate conflict are:

- 1) "competitive processes involved in the attempt to win the conflict;
- 2) processes of misperception and biased perception; and
- 3) processes of commitment arising out of pressures for cognitive and social consistency;"

Deutsch also described factors that could limit and prevent the escalation of conflict.

These factors are:

- 1) "the number and strength of the existing cooperative bonds, cross-cutting identifications, common allegiances and memberships among the conflicting parties;
- 2) the existence of values, institutions, procedures, and groups that are organized to help limit and regulate conflict; and
- 3) the salience and significance of the costs of intensifying conflict." p. 352

While some of the factors that Deutsch identified appear to be based on individual cognitive processes and the subsequent meanings or biographies that individuals develop, other factors appear to be influenced by contextual circumstances that surround the individual,

particularly when there are close personal bonds with others. For example, the pressure to commit to certain meanings as a way of maintaining cognitive consistency is a highly individual process, although it can affect groups as well (i.e., groupthink – Janis, 1982). On the other hand, crosscutting identifications and allegiances among conflicting members of a group pertain to group identity issues and the contextual circumstances surrounding that group. Thus, the six processes that Deutsch identified appear to be very useful heuristics that one can apply to the study of teams, particularly teams that are trying to solve problems when members have differences of opinion about the course of decision-making to take - based on their own personal biographies and the need to be cognitively consistent with those biographies.

An underlying assumption of Project SIS is that team structures will encourage teachers to engage in behavior that allow them to produce a collective identity and a set of common or complimentary practices to achieve certain outcomes. However, conflicts within the team might prevent them from achieving common goals. This research proposes to study the conflict resolution process that one teacher team engaged in so that the process can be clearly understood within an intra-group context. This is important because much of the research on conflict resolution focuses on intergroup conflict (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Katz & Taylor, 1988; McCallum, Haring, Gilmore, Drenan, Chase, Insko, & Thibaut, 1985; Pettigrew, 1978; Pettigrew, 1986), or interpersonal conflict in dyads (such as married couples) (Grush & Glidden, 1987; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Sternberg, 1998).

The proposed research will explore the social mechanisms of teamwork among a group of teachers by exploring the processes of cooperation and conflict and their movement toward a focus on instruction. This type of knowledge is especially pertinent in elementary and secondary

education given that team structures are increasingly being implemented in schools as a reform strategy to improve the functioning of schools, nationwide.

4. Challenge: The role of leadership in building and sustaining communities of practice

An important dimension of Communities of Practice concerns the role of leadership.

New learners in a community may be influenced by the support and assistance offered by their mentors, leaders and other expert members of the community. Based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) it is plausible to propose that newly created teams within an environment that was formerly without team structures may have much more difficulty than newly created teams that are formed in an environment where teaming is an established practice. One reason is that new team responsibilities demanded of teachers who previously operated “in solo” may evoke uncertainty or a sense of threat to their professional identity (Schon, D.A., 1983). Lave and Wenger (1991) would suggest that newly formed “novice” teams need guidance from more experienced “master” teams, and where none exist (as is the case in many reforming schools), problems could ensue. Given the “novice” character of newly formed teams, teacher teams may not view themselves (or be viewed by others) as legitimate sources of change in any given reform effort without considerable support from the environment (Louis, Marks and Kruse, 1996). One appropriate source of support is from their leaders.

Leadership in schools, particularly the guidance and support provided to teams by administrators or facilitators, is an important contextual variable and often a critical mediator of effectiveness of teacher teams (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). From a socio-cultural perspective, guidance and support from leaders depends on the “learning assistance” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) that they are able to provide to followers so that new meanings and insights can be co-constructed between leaders and followers (Hollander, 1990). According to Tharp & Gallimore (1991) learning assistance includes modeling, feedback, contingency management, instructing, questioning, cognitive structuring, and task structuring. In this study, the actions of leaders will be examined to assess their interactions with teacher teams in terms of the guidance and support that they offer.

Relationships are an important dimension of leader and follower behavior because leaders are only as effective as their followers permit them to be (Hollander, 1992). The participation and effectiveness of school leaders, as they engage with teacher team members, will be examined to better understand how leaders, in

relationship with followers, can facilitate the dynamics of participation, conflict resolution, learning, and new social constructions leading to altered communities of practice.

To assess the role of leadership on the team, the activities and/or learning assistance provided by leaders will be documented by analyzing the dialogue that took place in team meetings, and by analyzing the significance of leader messages on the attitudes and behaviors of team members.

5. Challenge: Attachments and relationships within the small learning community

Teachers' ability to define and solve problems collectively may depend on their ability to bridge their individualized conceptions of reality and their unique patterns of engaging with others. It might also depend on how well they trust each other, and how secure they feel in revealing parts of who they are. According to psychodynamic theories, sense of security is embedded in one's personal history, particularly one's history of personal relationships and attachments to significant others. These attachment histories can affect the level of emotional energy that teachers have to support each other, trust each other, and be open to new ways of managing relationships within the larger community. Within the educational psychology literature, little thought has been given to teachers' historical patterns of attachment and how these patterns may affect teachers' interpretation of the environment and the behavior of others, particularly as stressful situations arise and emotions are provoked. Trust, security, and an ability to connect with others all point to the importance of the attachment system in the context of teacher team membership, and by extension, the small learning community.

The attachment system was described by Ainsworth (1972) and Bowlby (1973, 1968) after years of research on attachment processes in infants and children. Attachment theory was further studied by developmental psychologists who continued to focus on the attachment

behaviors of infants and young children as they interacted with their primary caregivers. In more recent years, social and personality psychologists have begun to examine attachment theory as an explanatory tool in research on intimate adult relationships.

a. Attachment Theory: Attachment is theorized to be a stress-activated behavioral system (Bowlby, 1973) that human beings and animals have evolved in order to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable offspring. Attachment seeking behavior is instinctual in both human and animal newborns. Humans continue to develop complex attachment strategies in response to their caregivers and their own internal emotional reactions that develop over time (Bowlby, 1973; Ainsworth, 1972). In short, attachment strategies are theorized to affect the personality of the individual, their cognitive functioning, and their behavior under stress throughout the lifespan.

Attachment research with infants demonstrates how the attachment system is provoked. When something in the environment creates a threat to the infant comfort and safety, the resulting fear and distress motivates the infant to seek the proximity of others, particularly the primary caregiver. Depending on the quality of the infant's experience with his/her primary caregiver, and the infant's own temperamental proclivity, the infant will develop expectations of the caregiver to meet his/her needs. These expectations result in attachment patterns to the caregiver that are either secure or insecure. Furthermore, the infant's attachment pattern will influence their ability to engage in exploratory behavior as they interact with their world.

When attachment is established insecurely, the infant must resort to secondary attachment strategies in order to achieve self-calming and the illusion of contentment (Main, 1990). However, secondary attachment strategies come with a price because they leave emotional residues of discontent and distrust. The infant learns to develop distrust of the caregiver because

its needs were not met satisfactorily or consistently. If the social context continues to reinforce discontent and distrust, these emotions will continue to be generalized to new people and situations. These generalizations can then become adult cognitive working models that can influence how the individual interprets the social behavior of others and the environment as a whole well (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

Research into the cognitive working models of adults shows that attachment systems have developed into relatively stable personality traits that are regulated by either secure-based strategies or secondary attachment strategies (Main, 1990). Secondary strategies are aligned with human body's response to stress, specifically the flight or fight response (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Hyperactivation is a secondary attachment strategy that corresponds with the *fight* response. Deactivation is the secondary attachment strategy that corresponds with the *flight* response. Both hyperactivation and deactivation can also be categorized as sympathetic nervous system reactions to stress. In contrast, secure-based strategies do not activate the sympathetic nervous system in the same way that these other processes do, thus enabling the person to engage in a more measured cognitive problem-solving process that avoids emotional volatility.

b. Characteristics of Security-based Strategies: According to Mikulincer & Shaver (2003), the secure person is more likely to address threats successfully because they are operating with three core principles:

- **optimism** (positive emotional self-management)
- **trust** (belief in the availability of others)
- **self-efficacy** (trust in ones own ability)

These core principles and beliefs allow them to engage in secure-based strategies, which include:

- The formation and maintenance of close bonds with others

- The acknowledgement of emotional distress (their own and others)
- The ability to request support from others in a healthy manner
- The ability to deliver support to others in a healthy manner
- Action based problem solving that transforms crises into manageable challenges.

People with secure attachment styles tend to be creative and flexible. Their creativity and flexibility allows them to take risks, experiment, and work with others in a positive manner. Their ability to be open to new information about others also allows people with secure attachments to avoid stereotypical judgments or prejudices. Ultimately, these prosocial tendencies allow the securely attached person to develop a humanitarian orientation that enables an altruistic concern to manifest in their interaction with others.

c. Characteristics of Hyperactivation Strategies: Hyperactivating strategies are a **fight** response. With this response, the person aggressively intensifies efforts to receive love and support from others to prevent the emotional pain that would occur if love and safety were not experienced. Because of past experiences that taught the person to believe they were not worthy of love and support from others, the person overcompensates with strategies that artificially create closeness and fusion with another person. However, because the person carries a burdensome negative view of themselves, the only way to merge with another person is to project negative views onto the relationship and create a partner who is congruent to oneself. This means that the partner will be defined as negatively as the person defines themselves. When a person sees themselves as unworthy of love, the partner they choose will be defined as unworthy of love as well. In this way, the anxiously insecure person creates congruent bonds and an illusory sense of closeness with the other.

The expectation that love and support will not be forthcoming is based on memories of past events and is often below the person's level of consciousness. Over time, hyperactivating strategies reinforce an anxious style of attachment to significant others because the attachment system stays in a chronically activated state. This leads the person to develop cognitive biases that are "over-generalized and applied inappropriately to new people and situations" p. 16. In a hyperactive state, the anxiously attached person becomes unwilling or unable to suppress negative thoughts and their emotional state is "constantly pervaded by negative affect" p.16. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) point out that hyperactivating strategies are equivalent to "emotion-focused coping" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) – whereby vigilant attention to internal indications of distress results in certain behavioral manifestations:

- Intensification of negative emotions
- Mental rumination on related negative cognitions
- Self-preoccupation
- Self-criticism
- Overt displays of distress

d. Characteristics of Deactivation Strategies: Deactivating strategies are a **flight** response to the danger of the unavailability of an attachment figure. With this response, the person effectively **shuts down** efforts to get love and support to prevent the emotional pain that would occur if love and safety were not received when needed. Deactivating strategies are a numbing process because the attachment system stays in a chronically suppressed or inactive state. Deactivation is maintained with the chronic action of dismissing or ignoring threatening thoughts or aspects of the environment that could potentially activate the attachment system. The

individual's efforts to distance themselves from emotions or situations that could trigger fear of rejection reinforces the development of an avoidance style of attachment to significant others.

Because deactivating strategies suppress the attachment system artificially, it cannot restore a sense of attachment security. The person attempts to fill the void with an exaggerated sense of self-reliance – a strong denial of needing help from anyone and a willingness to confront dangers alone. Over time, this self-reliance becomes compulsive and leads to a comfort with emotional distance from others. The person avoids interactions that require “emotional involvement, intimacy, interdependence, and self-disclosure” p. 17.

Ironically, people who develop an avoidant style of attachment to others often display an inflated sense of self-worth and may appear to have high self-esteem. This appearance is driven by the need to convince others that their support is not needed. The suppression of thoughts that might trigger distress extends to the suppression of negative thoughts and opinions about the self. Avoidant people abhor weakness in themselves. At the same time, the enormous psychic energy that it takes to maintain the appearance of self-sufficiency results in a low tolerance for weakness in others.

The avoidant person is able to maintain distance successfully because deactivating strategies limit the degree to which positive information about the other can be processed at a deep level. Because negative information about the other is important for maintaining distance, positive information tends to be ignored or quickly forgotten. This leads to a cognitive tendency to create negatively biased social judgments about others that, at the very least, are based on incomplete information when positive information is purposefully ignored to maintain “a negative and inflexible image of others” p. 17. In this way, the positive self image of the avoidant person is maintained by harboring negative beliefs about others. .

The avoidant person's dependence on deactivating strategies creates a façade of security and calmness that shatters easily under prolonged periods of stress. The "coping adaptations" which are dependent on distancing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) are not adequate for problem-solving when confronting major life stressors such as job loss, catastrophic illness, divorce, or death. Adequate problem solving is further hampered by reliance on deactivating attachment strategies because shallow cognitive functioning inhibits links with other behavior systems, including the exploration system. The creativity often needed for problem solving is blocked because the avoidant person is unable to incorporate "new evidence...because such thoughts may challenge prior knowledge and lead to uncertainty, tension, and confusion" p. 18. As Mikulincer and Shaver conclude, "the **loosening** of cognitive operations can open the door to threats and dangers, which activate the attachment system. Thus, deactivating strategies favor cognitive closure and rigidity...and the distance of a person from ... all kinds of closeness to others." p. 19

To summarize, Mikulincer and Shaver's model of attachment system activation is a behavioral map that allows prediction of behavior based on the attachment style of the person and the security strategies they are likely to engage in once the perception of threat has been activated. If the person has cognitive working models that enable them to connect with attachment figures that are perceived as available, attentive, and responsive, they will experience attachment security. They will also engage in security based strategies that lead to successful coping, problem-solving, exploration, and growth. These strategies, in turn, lead to a prosocial orientation that enables one to develop positive relationships with others and, especially, with one's self. On the other hand, if the person has developed cognitive working models that prevent the identification of attachment figures who can provide attention and support, the person will

either engage in deactivation strategies that distance themselves from others who are seen as a potential threat, or the person will engage in hyperactivated strategies that strive to artificially connect to the unavailable attachment figure while experiencing extreme emotional distress.

C. Tensions Important in this Study

There are a number of important factors to consider as part of the effort to understand why teacher teams can be so difficult to create and sustain in reforming, restructuring schools. A central concern is that teacher teams are charged with creating new communities of practice. However, teacher teams in schools are particularly sensitive to the social context within schools (e.g., historical, political, financial, relational), because the social context already provides an existing community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The existing community of practice can either enable or interfere with learning among individuals who are newly brought together to operate as a team because the old, existing practices within the community may or may not be amenable to change. Resistance to the possibility of a new, evolving community of practice may surface in this context. Furthermore, tensions and forms of resistance may surface within team members as they struggle with attachments to the dynamics of a pre-existing community of practice while attempting to build a new one.

According to Wenger (1998), resistance is healthy and necessary because it indicates that the person is negotiating the meaning of something that is important to them. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), “participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world” p. 51. But in the context of teams, a danger exists when the negotiation of meaning threatens to break down through conflicts and through the layered interpretation of meaning among individuals that are based upon their unique past experiences prior to becoming members of a community of practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) have identified a process in communities of practice where apprentices (or new learners) are engaged in “legitimate peripheral participation.” In this process, the learner participates in a peripheral manner gradually increasing their participation over time. This peripheral participation is legitimate because the learner must gradually be introduced to experiences that enable them to construct meanings about their experiences in a way that does not overwhelm their learning process. Participation is defined by engagement in activities and situations that allow a person to gradually negotiate and renegotiate meanings about their world. However, a pitfall may arise if the community of new learners are rushed through a process that has been judged (by leaders) to be the appropriate speed of learning, when in fact, more time and information are needed by the learners. If this should occur, the community of learners may become resistant to the process and to the information they are expected to absorb and master.

A community of practice may also become constrained by social cognitive processes among its members, such as dissonance, which can generate emotional discomfort and interfere with learning. Furthermore, the stress experienced by teachers within schools that are undergoing structural reforms may elicit emotional responses that have been learned over a lifetime and stored within the attachment system. When relationships among staff and students become taxing, these attachment systems may activate emotional responses that can be counterproductive to problem-solving, adaptation, and learning.

With these tensions in mind, this study will examine the process and context that enabled one teacher team to become a group of highly effective problem solvers. By closely examining adult learning through participation in a community of practice – a teacher team that met daily to discuss their practice - I hope to discover the pathways that led to change and growth in

pedagogy and instructional practice, and to understand how change and growth were reified in the stories that were ultimately told by these teachers.

D. Research Questions

When the study began, the central goal was to search for the social psychological processes and environmental conditions that enabled a team of teachers to successfully cooperate as a group and develop a relentless focus on improving their own educational practice. I pursued this goal by focusing on the role of cooperation and conflict in the formation of the teachers' community of practice. I started by asking, "how is cooperation fostered and maintained in the community of practice when the community of practice is under stress?" "What, if anything, produces conflict in the community of practice?" Similarly, "how are conflicting beliefs or ideas among individuals managed within the community of practice?" In terms of the environmental conditions in the school/organizational context, "what is the role of leadership in the sustenance of a community of practice?" Similarly, "how are teachers' beliefs and learning fostered by the schools' leadership and organizational context?"

I proposed to examine how participation, activity, cooperation, conflict resolution, and leadership contributed to the development of effective teacher team behavior in one community of practice. In unearthing how these teachers were able to develop a relentless focus on improving their own instruction, I decided to focus on what they learned and how their beliefs changed over time. This led to a focus on the construction of new meanings: how they emerged, how they were negotiated and how they were concluded through shared interpersonal experiences within the community of practice. I decided to focus on the sources of potential conflict: disagreements, differing perceptions of reality, or cognitive dissonance among team members over time.

Without knowing what the data contained, these initial assumptions led to series of research questions that enabled me to structure a qualitative analysis of the data. As the analysis proceeded and new patterns were identified, I added attachment theory as an organizing framework. This new framework led to a new set of research questions and hypotheses.

Primary Hypotheses - My first primary hypothesis is that by engaging in communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution team members would construct new meanings that could alter their professional practice and shape their community of practice. Second, the management of conflict would be an important dynamic in the learning and growth of team members. Third, the social influence of the intervention's leaders would be an essential component in the learning and development of team members.

Secondary Hypotheses – My first secondary hypotheses is that the process of creating a team identity, building a small learning community, and implementing a new program of school reforms would tax the energies of team members and create stressful conditions that teachers were not prepared to handle. Second, these stresses would instigate defensive mechanisms among team members, including individual affective and cognitive processes that could undermine their ability to implement the reforms. Third, attachments and relationships in the small learning community would intensify leading some members to respond with secure-based strategies and others to respond with insecure-based strategies. Fourth, learning, change, and growth would depend on the successful management of intense relationships commingled with attachment patterns within the small learning community.

To summarize: the goal of this study was to identify the pathways and dynamics which enabled a team of teachers to become more productive as a community of practice, and to develop a self-reflective focus on their own learning and development as teachers. The

assumption was that extra supports to teachers, and the opportunity to meet and discuss issues on a daily basis would enable teachers to focus on improving their instructional practice and improve learning outcomes for the students in their care. This research is an attempt to understand how a team of teachers evolved over the course of a year, and the processes that enabled them to develop a relentless focus on improving their instructional practice.

Chapter 2

Methodology

1. Background of the research project: My involvement with Project SIS began in July 1996, when I was hired by the research firm that designed the intervention. I was assigned to cover the implementation of Project SIS, which was scheduled to begin about 6 weeks later. During the 1996/1997 school year, I visited the school five times (about every two months) and each visit lasted from two to three days. During those visits, I would observe team meetings, interview teachers and administrators, observe classrooms, and conduct focus groups with students. However, I should note that these research activities were dispersed throughout the five visits and not completed simultaneously. In addition, to my own direct data collection, the teacher teams recorded their daily meetings on audiotapes and mailed the tapes to the research firm. However, the research team was not able to listen to, or transcribe any of the tapes at that time

and they were subsequently sent to storage. Quantitative data, including a student survey, were collected and analyzed by other members of the research team. After the team analyzed all of the data, a report was published by the research firm in 1999 detailing the results of the Project SIS⁴ intervention at the end of its first year of implementation. The current study continues the work that was completed in 1999 by analyzing the audiotapes that were recovered from storage in order to assess the process of one team and to understand more completely how they evolved as a team.

2. *Characteristics of the school:* The school was located in a medium sized, mid-western city that had been struggling economically since the 1980s. The inner-city neighborhoods of this city were characterized as having major challenges with crime, drugs, inadequate housing, and job losses that deeply impacted the families of students who attended the high school. Most students at the school were African-American (about 75%). The remaining students were of European-American ancestry (about 25%). About 1.5 to 2.0 % was characterized as “Other” and included Hispanics, Native-Americans, and Asians. Although the school was located in a well-preserved area of the city, many of the students (about 80%) were bussed in from inner-city areas in two zip codes. About 50% of the students received free or reduced lunch. The school had an official drop-out rate reported as 18%, but when you examined the amount of students who progressed in each grade from freshmen to senior year, the actual graduation rate was closer to 53%. This graduation rate is descriptive and doesn’t represent any plausible explanation as to the possible cause of this outcome. Possible explanations may be that some students have repeated grades, some may have transferred to other schools, some may have temporarily moved to alternative

⁴ This report was published by The Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. Please see Quint, Miller, Pastor, & Cytron (1999) in the reference section for a full citation.

schools, and so on. In general, graduation data in urban schools tend to be highly volatile and unreliable (Roderick, 1993).

During the pre-implementation year, the size of the 9th grade class equaled 398 students. During implementation of Project SIS enrollments increased to 437 incoming 9th graders. This increase was unexpected and created conditions of overcrowding for the Project SIS classrooms. The Team Five teachers that I decided to focus on for this study were experienced teachers. They ranged from 3 years to 20 years of experience with some of that experience occurring in middle schools. All of the teachers in Team Five were of European-American ancestry. The coach was an African-American woman with 28 years of teaching experience and 7 years of experience supervising teacher teams in the middle schools of this same geographic area.

As a third generation New Yorker of Caribbean descent (Puerto Rican and black West Indian), I felt a certain affinity with the coach immediately, in part because she was a woman of color, but mostly because she was very nice. I soon discovered that the majority of the staff was very nice, and I ended up attributing this to a mid-western charm and culture that I had never experienced before (and found very refreshing). As time went on, I felt that I had established good rapport with the staff and gained enough of their trust so that they could be honest with me about the implementation of Project SIS and their personal reactions to it. Some of the staff may have found me a bit fascinating as well, particularly when they discovered that I was the single parent of a son who would begin his own high school career the following year. If anyone was expecting a white, middle-class, married woman from a prestigious social policy research firm, they quickly discovered that I did not fit that description. Perhaps that was to my advantage. No one would question my interest as an evaluator in observing positive outcomes among students of color who were participating in the intervention. More importantly, I hoped that the teachers

would know that I cared deeply about the important work that they were about to engage in, and wished them much success.

3. Data: A total of 54 audiotapes (n=54) were collected from Team Five's daily team meetings during the 1996/97 academic year. Taping was handled by the teachers themselves and so they were able to turn off the tape or determine whether or not a meeting would be taped according to their own judgments. Daily audio taping was most consistent during the months of September, October, November, February and April, although a smaller number of tapes were available for December, March, and May (the end of the school year.). Limited taping during December and March was affected by the holiday season and by Spring break, respectively. In addition to audiotapes of daily teacher team meetings, I returned to the original notes that I had written when I was conducting qualitative field work during the 1996/97 academic year. These notes included individual interviews with teachers conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year during 3 day site visits. During these same visits, I also interviewed the assistant principal and coach. I observed classrooms and team meetings, ate lunch in the student cafeteria, and engaged in conversations with students and staff when the opportunities presented themselves. In order to inform the analysis of teacher behavior and attitudes in this study, I have also referenced selected student survey responses from the original research report⁵ as these responses help to illuminate the unique qualitative findings of this study.

4. Sampling Plan: Concentrating on audiotapes collected during the months of September (n=10, November (n=9), December (n=6), February (n=10), March (n=4) and April (n=8), I reviewed a total of 47 tapes which had been transcribed (or partially transcribed for the most relevant content). Tapes were chosen partly based on availability, but also with the purposive

⁵ Source: Student surveys were collected and analyzed by the MDRC research team. See Quint, Miller, Pastor and Cytron (1999) for full citation.

goal of tracking as many different time periods as possible during the school year. The initial review was used to identify points in time during the year when critical events were taking place on the team so that the attitudes and behaviors of team members could be analyzed more carefully in the context of the school's daily environment. Initially, I anticipated that a small number of transcripts (approximately 5) would reveal the critical moments that could shed light on teacher activities and practices leading to a focus on their instructional practices. However, after the initial review of 47 transcripts, I identified 25 transcripts that proved to contain important information about teacher attitudes, decision points and practices leading to a focus on their instructional practices. Of those, I highlight 16 episodes or events that proved relevant to the thesis of this study.

5. Analysis Plan: I began this study with a top-down approach to code and analyze the transcripts. I was motivated to take this approach because I was essentially engaging in analysis of new data that had been collected previously, but with prior knowledge of the team's achievements by the end of the 1996/1997 based on my field notes of that time period. This initial data collection had already revealed that Team Five teachers developed a focus on improving instructional practice by the end of that school year. However, their accomplishment would now be informed by a sizable amount of new longitudinal data that had never been analyzed before. With the initial review of the audiotapes, I realized that my top-down approach was not sufficiently able to capture the processes I was observing in the data. While my initial Top-down coding scheme appeared broad enough to capture the certain themes and research questions that I was initially interested in, the review of the 47 transcripts revealed recurring actions and behaviors that were transpiring among teachers and students that were not being addressed by the first coding scheme. These actions and behaviors were more complex than I had anticipated. As a result, I developed a new set of "bottom up" codes that could capture and organize what I was observing in the data. What emerged was a new set of theoretical codes that generated a secondary set of hypotheses about the potential causal links leading to the final outcome: teacher focus on improving their instructional practice. Table 2 summarizes the primary (stage one) and secondary (stage two) hypothetical causal links that emerged as the data was analyzed. In both stages of hypothesis development, cognitive dissonance emerged as a key variable in the causal chain, leading to a focus on instructional improvement.

Table 2

Summary of Causal Links Leading to a Focus on Instructional Practice

Primary Hypotheses: Top-Down

Secondary Hypotheses: Bottom-Up

| | |
|--|---|
| Participation in a community of practice generates opportunities for new meanings to be negotiated | Problems in the environment, including student behavior, leads to teacher stress. |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|--|
| among members. | |
| Cooperation and conflict within the community of practice fosters activity that leads to learning and growth among members. Cognitive dissonance plays an important role in conflict management. | Cognitive dissonance, created by unexpected positive student behavior or parental actions, loosens old schemas and activates attachment systems within teachers. |
| Leadership is essential to assist members of the community of practice in progressive learning and growth. | As attachment systems within teachers become more secure, teachers can begin to engage in more exploratory behavior, including instructional improvement. |

7. Implementation of Analysis Plan

a. Stage One/Top Down Coding Scheme:

Most of the data were based on taped conversations among teachers in attendance at their daily team meetings. This was supplemented by my interview notes with individual teachers or administrators taken during the year of implementation. The codes that I applied to the data would need to reflect opinions, decisions, or behaviors expressed by teachers or other staff in their conversations with others. The following codes were created to organize dialogue that could address the research questions and concerns of the study.

Top Down Codes:

- Student Behavior
- Student Achievement
- Educational Practice and Instruction
- Leadership Decisions
- Parental Involvement
- Teacher Beliefs/Attitudes
- Disorienting Dilemmas
- Conflict Resolution
- Cooperation

- Teacher Team Decisions

b. Stage Two/Bottom Up Coding Scheme:

As I reviewed the November transcripts, emerging patterns suggested a causal link (Maxwell, 2004) between student behaviors and teacher responses leading directly to dissonant moments for teachers. In turn, these dissonant moments appeared to shatter teachers' cognitions about their students and seemed to alter their emotional affect. The evidence for this was borne out in teacher discussions with colleagues during their team meetings. Teachers clearly described events which took them by surprise and articulated their own emotional affect to the group. Over the course of the school year, dissonant moments, shifting emotions, and new conceptualizations about students and parents converged within teachers and within the teacher team allowing them to question their own routines and eventually explore the development of new practices. As I examined these transcripts, I developed the following codes to capture what I was reading.

c. Initial Bottom Up Categories:

- Teacher Actions/Decisions
- Pivotal Environmental Events Leading to Dissonance in Teachers
- Student Actions/Responses Leading to Dissonance in Teachers
- Parent Actions/Responses Leading to Dissonance in Teachers
- Teacher Cognitive Models of Students
- Teacher Attachment Styles
- Reactions to Internal Dissonance: Exploratory Behaviors/Instructional Leadership
- Accountability Dynamics

Starting with these initial bottom-up codes, I refined the codes further as I applied them to the transcripts to produce the final theoretical codes listed below (also, see Appendix 1).

d. Final Theoretical Codes:

1. Teacher Cognitions of Self
2. Early Teacher Attachment Styles: Hypervigilance or Deactivation
3. Teacher Attributions of Students
4. Teacher Attributions of Parents
5. Accountability Discussions
6. Discussions of Behavior
7. Discussions of Instruction
8. Discussions of Student Academic Performance
9. Discussions of Non-Instructional Procedures
10. Dissonance Provocation
11. Dissonance Reactions (D.R.)
 - D.R. - Teacher Attachment
 - D.R. -Teacher Exploration
 - D.R. - Teacher Leadership
 - D.R. - Team exploration/cooperation
 - D.R. - Team Awareness
12. Resistance/Tension)
13. Altruism
14. Positive Dissonance and Teacher Attachment

8. Operational Definitions of the Final Theoretical Codes

Emergence of positive dissonance: Individuals who are experiencing stressful social situations are often motivated to protect their subconscious needs, including the need to protect their self-esteem. As a result, a great deal of emotional energy gets centered on the unconscious needs of the self. Emotional and cognitive shortcuts may emerge from a storehouse of well-established patterns of behavior that have been established throughout an individual's lifespan. These emotional and cognitive defaults are often relied upon when a person experiences cognitive dissonance: the uncomfortable experience of holding two discrepant or contradictory thoughts at the same time. The emotional or cognitive default patterns are relied upon to return

the person to a state of psychological comfort, despite the cognitive dissonance they have just experienced.

In educational settings that provoke anxiety, particularly settings that highlight difference based on race and/or socioeconomic level, a teacher's need to protect their own emotional space, or self-esteem may interfere with the need to respond to the emotional needs of their students. Over time, these responses may become habitual among some teacher, producing emotional or cognitive defaults that may be harmful to students. However, when students are able to interrupt this process by demonstrating a positive connection to their teachers, positive cognitive dissonance may be experienced by the teacher who once harbored negative cognitions about their students. In other words, the cognitive dissonance that is created from this interaction no longer produces a negative experience, but a surprisingly positive one. This positive surprise allows the teacher to shift from a focus on protecting themselves, to a focus on developing a new appreciation of their student who is now viewed as a source of pleasure instead of a source of pain.

Dissonance Provocation is any precipitating event that causes a teacher to experience cognitive dissonance. Sometimes the experience of dissonance, whether positive or negative, was produced by the actions of students or their parents. Other times, it was produced by the actions of other teachers or their supervisors. In this study, dissonance provocation by one actor (or set of actors) was viewed as an essential causal link leading to a dissonant reaction in the receiver of the action.

Dissonance Reaction is the response of the receiver as a result of experiencing either positive or negative dissonance. Sometimes the receiver is only one person (i.e., a teacher). At other times the receiver is a group of people (i.e., the team of teaches). In this context of this

study, behavioral responses were coded as awareness, cooperation, attachment, exploration, and leadership. Overwhelmingly, positive dissonance experienced by receivers generated positive emotional responses that, in turn, generated positive behavioral responses among receivers.

Altruism is both a commonly understood noun and a social psychological construct. In the psychological literature, the concept of selflessness emerges in the study of altruistic behavior. Furthermore, empathy, trust and compassion towards others all emerge as important aspects of altruistic behavior. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, altruism is defined as "an unselfish concern for the welfare of others." In this study, altruistic behavior among students or teachers was documented in order to describe instances of dissonance provocation and/or dissonance reaction.

Early Teacher Attachment Styles is a code which attempts to capture evidence of a teacher's attachment pattern of relating to others, particularly when they are feeling distress. As explained in the literature review, little thought has been given to teachers' historical patterns of attachment and how these patterns may affect teachers' interpretation of the environment and the behavior of others at the subconscious level. In the context of teacher team membership and by extension, the small learning community, trust, security, and an ability to connect with others all point to the importance of the attachment system in establishing positive relationships with others. However, under conditions of stress, teachers with insecure attachment histories may be unable to create optimal relationships with others because their anxieties may get in the way. These anxieties can provoke secondary attachment strategies, which may leave the teacher with residues of discontent and distrust that continue to affect their relationships with others. In general, insecure secondary attachment strategies result in two important dynamics: an avoidant response or an ambivalent response. A secure secondary attachment strategy, on the other hand,

influences a teacher to interpret the social behavior of students or colleagues in a more positive manner, thus reducing their own defensiveness and facilitating more positive relationships with others.

Teacher Cognitions of Self, Attributions about Others (students or parents), or Discussions of Behavior, Instruction, or Non-instructional Procedures are the remaining theoretical codes. When teachers discussed events that occurred in their classrooms, or their interactions with students, parents, or other adults in the building, or even in the innermost thoughts that they chose to reveal to the group, teachers were often describing events that were meaningful to them. **Student Behavior** was particularly meaningful because it had a great deal of impact on the quality of teaching and learning that occurred in the classroom. **Instructional Practices** were also meaningful because teachers were under pressure to implement certain practices that they were not comfortable with. Teachers' **attributions** about Student Behavior, Parent Behavior, the Decisions of School Administrators, and Instructional Practices were important in that they revealed what types of cognitive beliefs and attitudes that teachers held about themselves and others, and the strength of those beliefs and attitudes over time. These cognitive beliefs and attitudes also revealed teachers insecurities within themselves, and when they chose to talk about it, their **self-cognitions**. However, what became crucial as an organizing dynamic was the reaction of teachers to events that provoked **dissonance** within themselves, especially when their pre-existing cognitive beliefs or attitudes were shaken by the **positive** behavior of others, particularly students. These reactions revealed the importance of **attachment systems** as a pre-existing cognitive working model within teachers, and the potential for these attachment systems to be altered by the changing relationships that were developing in the small learning community as the school year progressed.

9. Reflections on the Analytical Process

In attempting to understand this process, I wondered what the underlying mechanisms could be within the teachers that enabled this reorganizing response to occur. It appeared that the teacher's ability to recognize something of themselves in the student, and on a broader level, the student's value as a human being, was contributing to this reorganizing process.

This led me to theorize about "selflessness" as an organizing principal because the shattering of old cognitions regarding students seemed to create a temporary void within the teacher that allowed them to "forget themselves" and their typical way of reacting towards students. Teachers seem to be thrown into a state of dissonance when the perception of student as a source of intense discomfort changed to a perception of student with promise and potential. As a result, the teacher's usual pattern of response toward the student was temporarily shut down, resulting in what seemed to be a temporary state of selflessness, that is, the loss of an old self based on the loss of old cognitive schemas that no longer fit the situation. Over time, repeated instances of dissonance seemed to upset teachers' core beliefs about themselves as educators, leading them to engage in self-reflection that could redefine their sense of identity.

Perhaps when a teacher's sense of efficacy or self-esteem as an educator becomes dependent on a concept of "student as problem," a new concept of "student as problem-solver" may disturb the teacher's established schema about students, particularly when they work with students that the school district has already identified as "problem" or "high-risk". Perhaps a new and positive re-cognition of the student has the power to modify the negative attitudes and beliefs that are encrusted within teachers' schemas, particularly teachers who have established defensive or avoidant tendencies over time.

10. Reformulation of Research Questions with the Integration of Attachment Theory

As stated earlier in this dissertation, the central question driving this study, when it first began, concerned the nature of social psychological processes and environmental conditions that enabled a team of teachers to cooperate as a group and develop a relentless focus on improving their educational practice. The study was organized by a set of **top-down questions** such as:

1. “What is the role of cooperation and conflict in the formation of the teachers’ community of practice?”
2. “How are teacher beliefs influenced by cooperation and conflict and how do teachers learn and grow as a result?”
3. “What is the role of leadership in the sustenance of a community of practice?”
4. “How are teachers’ beliefs and learning fostered by the schools’ leadership and organizational context?”

My assumption as I began this study was that effective engagement in communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution could position team members to construct new meanings that could alter their professional practice and their participation in schools. Secondly, I hypothesized that the ways that team members manage conflict would be an important dynamic in the learning process.

During the second phase of hypotheses generation, I created a set of bottom up codes that reflected patterns that were emerging in the data based on theories of cognitive dissonance as well as attachment. These patterns generated a new set of questions that helped me to identify when important shifts were occurring in the learning and growth of teachers. These questions included:

1. “What is causing teachers to experience emotional stress, and how do their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior towards students change in response to emotional stress?”

2. “When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards students.”
3. “How is attachment between teachers and students influencing teacher reactions to students?”
4. “What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers?”
5. How do attachment systems within teachers get “loosened up” by the actions of students?
6. When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice?

Chapter 3

Data Analysis and Results

Episode 1 –September 17th Transcript

Bottom Up Question: “What is causing teachers to experience emotional stress, and how do their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior towards students change in response to emotional stress?”

Codes: Teacher Attribution about Students; Discussion of Behavior, Early Teacher Attachment Styles

The stress of managing the small learning community led to a focus on establishing control over students by using the threat of punishment and removal from the small learning community. The theoretical meaning of the small learning community had become a mirage in a desert. Once the teachers were close to the mythical oasis, it disappeared on them. Old attitudes and beliefs about students, along with its attendant cognitive schemas about race, gender, and class resurfaced as the dominant lens with which to analyze their difficulties with students. Unbridled intolerance toward student misbehavior emerged, and was only held in check by more cautious administrators. During September and October, Team Five teachers met on schedule everyday and soon developed a pattern of discussion that focused on students who were causing them problems in their classrooms.

9/17/96 transcript

Gerry: ... Larry Houston is a total disruption, shows off constantly. Steven Mason could work, but he is extremely immature and then he gets silly and all the others follow. ...It took 15 minutes to keep their mouths shut so that I can start [teaching]. It wasn't the whole room but there were these troublemakers in the room. (*Code: Teacher Attributions about Students; Discussions of Behavior*)

What was most striking about these discussions was the level of emotion that some teachers displayed as they talked about problem behavior and situations. Anger, outrage, and a sense of fear and helplessness permeated teacher reactions on one end of the continuum. Gerry often embodied this type of response. On the other end of the continuum, George could sometimes express disdain, coldness, and a sense that nothing could be done with certain types of young people, and as a result, they were expendable.

George: ... my personal belief is that no class should be sacrificed for four or five individuals. I will pull him [a student] out. That is the most important thing in a room - that you can conduct a class.

Problem students were making their teachers intensely uncomfortable and insecure in the context of the small learning community. Teachers were also frustrated that the new small learning community was not solving the problem of student disengagement from learning in the way they had anticipated. Students were not depending on their peers for positive reinforcement as the Project SIS model predicted. Instead, the peer group was becoming spoiled by a few bad apples.

9/17/96 transcript

Gerry: Anyway, I don't know (how), but we have got to do something because I can't make any progress. There are so many kids in that room that if I have to contain these people I'm not getting anywhere with the rest of them. There are kids that are really trying to work. They are not getting it because I can't go through the lesson. ... I mean it is just ridiculous. (*Code: Discussions of Behavior*)

Problematic Project SIS students instigated anxiety that created defensiveness in teachers.

The 9-17-96 transcript provides an example of Team Five teachers attempting to resolve vexing student behavioral issues, by appealing to a vice principal who was located down the hall

Karla: Larry is the one we are talking about. Larry, we've worked with him, we've called home. We have done several things with him. In one of the classes he did something to one of the girls.

Admin: Is he special ed.?

George: We don't know.

Karla: He should be. (*Code: Teacher Attribution about Student*)

Gerry: He should be tested for drugs. (*Code: Teacher Attribution about Student*)

Karla: His hands are all over everyone, always grabbing other people's instruments, and things off the desk. (*Code: Discussion of Behavior*)

Gerry: The only way I have gotten anything out of him is to sit him completely off in the corner and then he just sits there and doesn't do anything. He won't listen to the instructions so that when it gets time to doing it he doesn't know how to do it because he hasn't paid attention. He disrupts everyone else in the room. (*Code: Discussion of Behavior*)

Admin: I don't believe I have received one disciplinary referral for this young man. What do you have?

George: I really think he is low functioning. (*Code: Teacher Attribution about Student*)

Karla: He is - in my class.

Gerry: He is not working and he is disruptive.

George: Is it possible to have him suspended pending parent conference to apply?

Admin: A parent can say he hasn't been sent to the office. All of a sudden here we are suspending him because he is disruptive in the classroom. Without some kind of paper trail I am going to be in a bind.

George: Okay, so let's go to plan B then. Maybe what we need to do is find out if he is Special Ed.

Barry: We can still have a parent conference

George: ...we can still have his mom come in.

Admin: Like you said, take all the intervention steps that we can and then we can start looking at suspensions ... Because you guys are fed up with him, now, it is time to suspend him? No - we have to do something first.

As the above text shows, Team Five teachers were ready to apply the most punitive remedies that were available to them to address relatively minor, although annoying, behavioral problems in one student. It should be pointed out that neither the Team's coach, nor the Project SIS assistant principal was available to assist Team Five in a more careful problem solving process. Had they been available, Team Five would likely have avoided the use of another administrator to intervene on their behalf with punitive measures. The administrator, Mr. Hardy, listened to the teachers but exercised caution. He reminded the teachers that a layer of bureaucracy existed that would prevent the teachers from suspending, expelling, or removing students to special education without the appropriate paper trail. In addition, they needed to document efforts that they had taken to engage with students and parents so that students could have a chance to alter their behavior and conform to school rules, before extreme measures were taken.

This particular team meeting, which took place on September 17, was pivotal to Team Five because it galvanized the teachers to reserve one day per week for Team Meeting Conferences with parents and their children for the remainder of the academic year. In this manner, they began to construct the paper trail that was demanded by the educational bureaucracy and its school administrators. As Team Five became more adept at this process, the administrators would gradually support their efforts to suspend or transfer students to alternative schools.

Episode 2 – September 20th Transcript

Bottom Up Question: “When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards students.”

Codes: Teacher Attributions, Discussion about Behavior, Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reaction

In a team meeting on September 20th, the science teacher, Barry, led a discussion with the assistant principal, Donna, on problems they were having with Larry and the need to bring Larry's mother to meet with the team.

9-20-96 Transcript

Barry: ... We've been having some problems with Larry Houston. ...and we're going to describe them to you and they're a little upsetting. It's very sexual in nature. ... We were hesitant to even discuss it with you, we didn't know how to approach it.

Donna: Well, I wouldn't want you to keep it from me.

Barry: ...He has been bothering a lot of the girls. He is – I'll just flat out say it to you – he told one girl to 'suck his xxxxxx'. He told another girl in class, he said something about 'xxxxx'. He's calling the other girls 'tricks'. And it's just, it's ongoing now. And we're having a very difficult time-- (*Code: Discussions of Behavior*)

Larry Houston, a strong, stocky African American 9th grader who entertained himself by disturbing other students around him, was part of a wider group of students who did not have the ability to get along with each other. Despite the theory of a small learning community, Project SIS some students were not happy being with the same students everyday and they increasingly wanted to distance themselves from the group. During the 9/20/96 meeting, Larry's teachers described how they had to move him to different sections of their classrooms to keep him from harassing other students. But as Barry pointed out, Larry could not seem to sit anywhere and feel comfortable:

Barry: ... You know, you mentioned him moving himself – he asked if he could just sit in the hall. Because he is blaming a lot of the other kids, and I know they're a part of it, too. But he's also – I asked him, "Now, Larry, you tell me where you want to sit. Who in this room can you get along with it?" He said, "Nobody." He flat out said he could not get along with anybody. I said, "Larry, that indicates to me that a lot of the problem originates with you... (*Code: Dissonance Provocation*)

So I was dumbfounded when he said ‘Nobody’. ... This concerned me. And I’m not sure what to do...

Barry was dumbfounded that Larry wanted to leave the community that Team Five tried to make so hospitable at the beginning of the school year. It was an uncomfortable moment for him, creating dissonance in his thinking about the Project SIS intervention and prompting him to think more deeply about what was really affecting this student.

For many students, the peer group had become toxic. It was marred by adolescent social comparisons, boy/girl relationship failures, jealousies, gossip, and emotional upsets. In a few cases, such as Larry’s, students deliberately created disturbances so that they could get transferred to another Project SIS team in order to get away from tormenting social situations. His math teacher, Gerry, pointed out that it was the social situations that were problematic for Larry, not the work itself:

Gerry: He can do the work. He can do it quickly and he knows what he’s doing better than any other kid. So he’s just turning into this little behavior problem – not little, it’s big... He is an instigator and he’s smart. This is so sad, because the child knows the math. He can make (*Code: Discussion of Behavior*)straight A’s in my class without any problem.

George: You want to believe in him, too. (*Code: Teacher Attribution about Student*)

Gerry: But his behavior is out of line and too many people [are] complaining about him ...

With pressure mounting to get students under control through other means, Team Five teachers turned to the parents, and kept their fingers crossed, hoping for the best. If parents could become allies, then perhaps, the teachers would have another method of control and a way of ensuring that students did the work they needed to do in order to succeed. When Larry and his mother arrived for the Team Five meeting for a discussion, the teachers seemed to recognize how

important it was to establish a good relationship with the parent and turn her into an ally as the following excerpt shows:

George: I think, Miss Houston, I think the biggest thing that you need to understand is that we're so completely on your side and Larry's side that we want him to be successful. I mean completely, 100%, without a doubt and we're just not sure right now how we can do that. And that's why we've asked you here to help us out with that. Because I think we're all wanting the same thing, we want Larry to be successful, Larry wants to be successful. I know he does. And we just ... how we can do that? (*Code: Accountability, Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Attachment*)

The parent, Miss Houston responded in a reassuring way for the Team Five teachers. She questioned her son and put him on the spot. She would not accept his excuses, and confronted him about the sexual harassment charges. By placing herself in control of the situation with her son at the team meeting, she allowed the teachers to feel that she was their ally and stood ready to work with them. This was a crucial moment for the team. Feeling secure with the knowledge that the mother was in their corner, the team took the reigns and exercised positive leadership. The male teachers, Barry and George, spoke to Larry directly, giving him guidance and support. They instructed him on how to improve his situation and led him to agree with the advice they provided in a way that left his dignity intact.

Barry: ... The thing is, Larry here, he's quiet in class, ... If he really feels like he can't get along with people, then we need to teach him how to be able to do that. And so the first step, Larry, is you have to pick somebody to sit with. And you have to learn to deal with them in an appropriate manner. And when you talk to them, talk with people in a polite manner. Because, if you don't, it will get their dander up, they'll get angry. And then they'll say something and you say something and so it starts things going. And we have to find some way to get you to function in a classroom where people aren't getting angry at you, and you're not getting angry at other people. (*Code: Discussions about Behavior, Altruism, Positive Dissonance –teacher attachment*)

George: ... We want you to be successful and if that's a way for you to be successful right now, then by god, that's what we're going to do. Somehow, we want you to be successful. Do you feel like you've been successful this year? I mean, quite honestly, I want you to think about that. Do you feel like you have been? Would you like to be? (*Code: Positive dissonance – teacher attachment*)

Larry: Yeah.

Episode 3 – December 2nd Transcript

Bottom Up Questions: What is causing teachers to experience emotional stress, and how do their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior towards students change in response to emotional stress? What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers?

Codes: Teacher Attributions, Discussions about Behavior, Resistance/tension, Early Teacher Attachment Styles: hypervigilance or deactivation

The small learning community and daily team meetings were exposing teachers to each others' personalities and idiosyncratic behaviors. Furthermore, when teachers shared their concerns and problems about students, the information began to reveal the insecurities of teachers in the classroom and with students in general. Discussions about students began to reveal important personality differences among the teachers including their sense of efficacy as classroom teachers, and their reactions to stress, particularly those conditions and situations that evoked fear or anger in a teacher. Some teachers were more adept at keeping their insecurities hidden, but over time, the intense interactions of the group revealed raw emotions in everyone.

Gerry often led the group in complaints about the behavior of individual students and the need to punish them. She wrote the most referrals to the principal's office for behavioral infractions, and often tossed students out of her classroom. During team meetings, her opinions were often punctuated by strong displays of emotional anger and frustration, accompanied by statements indicating a high degree of inflexibility and intolerance. Gerry could not tolerate a noisy classroom, "backtalk" from students, and students that asked too many questions because

they didn't put the time in to "do their work." Students tended to react badly to Gerry's controlling personality and would match her attitude with attitudes of their own. For example, during a parent/team conference, the student began to challenge Gerry in view of everyone at the meeting. Most students would be sufficiently cowed by the presence of a team of teachers, a parent, and possibly one or two administrators on a panel together. But Alicia, the student, was so angry with Gerry that she was unable to hold back. Alicia was responding to Gerry's tone, which tended to be judgmental and sarcastic. A comparison between the two teachers, Karla and Gerry, illustrates this point from the 12-2-96 transcript:

Karla: I just need Alicia to be more focused. She has done better. I have to say she's done better. ...She can do the work and sometimes she fails to turn it in, and then she wants to turn it all in late. ...she can make an A [its] within her reach. **She's easily one of the best writers in the room without even trying, but could be a lot better.** ... I mean, lately when I ask her to talk she does so, ... **If you ever have any questions, please call me. Thank you.** (*Codes: Discussion about Behavior, Student Academic Performance, Teacher Attributions about Student*)

Once Karla finishes her dialogue with the parent, Gerry begins to speak. However, Gerry's tone is much more hostile than Karla's as the following text demonstrates.

Gerry: Okay, I need your help with Alicia. I'm not reaching her. We're in conflict constantly. She talks across the room right during my lesson, ... She disturbs about three or four other students and I see their grades going down. When she's disturbing them they're not listening. **Right now she has an F in my classroom, which is ridiculous. She's much smarter than that.** She hands almost nothing in, then she'll come in with a handful of papers three weeks late, and I don't have to accept them. I've accepted some. She still has a number of assignments out because she doesn't do the work, ...(*Codes: Discussions of Behavior/Student Academic Performance, Teacher Attributions about Student, Early Teacher Attachment Style-Hypervigilance*)

Gerry's tone differs remarkably from Karla's because of the undertone of hostility that it conveys. It seems as if she doesn't have any tolerance for young adolescents, particularly girls who are more flirtatious with boys than she is comfortable with. This intolerance demonstrates a hyper-vigilant strategy that maintains Gerry's attachment system through an ambivalent filter.

Gerry: I don't care if she has relationships with other people and boys and so forth, but there's proper bounds for those relationships. She will be quiet sometimes when I tell her to, but it's always with this look on her face that she has right now, you know "I have to be good, but I don't want to be good" and **I think Alicia has potential, I really do. But I'm not seeing it, and right now she's going to fail Geometry if she doesn't get her act together. So if you can help me get her on track I would be very grateful.** *Codes: Teacher Attributions about Student, Discussions about Behavior/Student Academic Performance, Early Teacher Attachment Style-Hypervigilance)*

Later on, after more heated discussions between Alicia and Gerry at this meeting, Gerry finally tries to appear as the less emotional/more reasonable adult in the room in response to Alicia's anger. However, even her attempt to appear reasonable reveals her own need to assuage her own insecurity:

Gerry: It [Math] is hard. If you don't do it daily, you can't keep up, and I have students that have trouble all the time but they do everything they can to keep up. We go over it on the board, I have kids after school every single night and doing homework together. They work together and they ask me questions. ... I know she's very angry with me right now. I just don't see sitting and watching her fail, so I am trying to help her to change. **I am very glad to help her, but I need to see her behavior change and I need to see her doing work. That's the only way she's going to succeed.** *Codes: Teacher Attributions about Student, Discussions about Behavior/Student Academic Performance, Early Teacher Attachment Style-Hypervigilance)*

Later in the team meeting, after Alicia, her father, and other staff left the room, Gerry may have been trying to express her sense of vindication when she said,

Gerry: Did you see the attitude? This is exactly what I deal with every time I correct her. And then she says I'm lying. Did you hear that? That's what I'm dealing with (...) *(Code: Teacher Attributions about Student, Early Teacher Attachment Style-Hypervigilance)*

I mean, if that didn't come out pretty obvious – **if my kid was acting like that I'd knock him off the chair in front of everybody. Now, that is what I'm dealing with, and that's why I said we had to do something. We have to get strong with her.**" *(Code: Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance)*

Despite the tough language, the paradox about Gerry was that she really did care about students, she just didn't believe that they cared about her. Based on her own attachment style,

Gerry had a terribly difficult time connecting with her students in a way that allowed her to maintain a positive relationship with them. The scenario between Alicia and Gerry was a pattern that repeated with other students throughout the year. It was almost as if Gerry enjoyed bringing students to an angry point, because anger was an emotion that Gerry seemed to recognize and feel very comfortable with. At the time when I was doing my fieldwork, I wondered if Gerry might be using anger as a way of masking something else i.e., anxiety or insecurity. I wondered what kind of childhood experiences she may have had, what her school years were like, and whether or not her parents had been intolerant of poor performance in her, as she was intolerant of poor performance in her students. I wondered what made it so difficult to show compassion and support to her students, in the ways that her colleagues had been able to. I wondered all of this because I had also been exposed to another side of Gerry. During one of my early site visits to the school when I was visiting teachers' classrooms, I had an opportunity to observe Gerry Robbins. While the math lesson was ordinary itself, what was extraordinary was Gerry's response after the class. Gerry Robbins was so anxious about how I would judge her performance that she broke down and sobbed as I began to interview her after class. She seemed to think that she had taught the class terribly and that I would surely condemn her. Before I could become a jury, she had already made me into an executioner.

Episode 4 – November 1st Transcript

Bottom Up Question: When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors towards students? How is attachment between teachers and students influencing teacher reactions to students?

Codes: Discussion about behavior/Student Academic Performance, Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reaction, Positive Dissonance & Attachment, Altruism

By November, Larry Houston, the African American boy who vexed his teachers and harassed other students, had not reformed his behavior despite additional parent/teacher conferences and the full cooperation of his mother. By the end of October, the Team Five teachers considered his transfer to an alternative school and were ready to let him go. Then dissonant provoking event occurred. A fight had broken out among some students, and Larry helped the teachers break up the fight. Karla Bearison was in danger of being hurt in the altercation, and Larry's actions saved her from injury.

According to Team Five teachers, they had been experiencing a great deal of headaches with their Ninth grade students that came in the form of peer-based behavioral problems, arguments, and fights. Although none had been life-threatening, the Team Five teachers were becoming worn out. Feeling somewhat discouraged by the failure of the small learning community to deliver engaged students, they were beginning to develop low expectations about many of the students, including Larry. Larry's valiant actions provoked major dissonance among the teachers to such degree that they were now willing to explore the possibility that Larry's academic weaknesses may have been the underlying problem of his behavioral outbursts. As the following transcript from November 1 shows, they were now willing to accept accountability for his educational progress:

Barry: Good to see you again [Mrs. Houston]. I'm the facilitator this quarter.. When we last talked, we talked about a next step for Larry, and what our concerns were, ... We then decided maybe we should look at the next step. Our concern was that [we should] offer an alternative program. (*Code: Altruism, Discussion about Behavior*)

So we decided before we did something like that, we needed to evaluate more from other teachers...and see if we can try to pinpoint where it's coming from, and what we could do to solve it. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction- Teacher Leadership*)

I was in charge of going and talking to the other teachers. And so I wanted to inform you of what they said. .

Mrs. Houston: Okay.

In this scenario, Barry displays a personal comfort with the parent and communicates that he takes his social responsibility as a teacher very seriously. As a sociable person who enjoys taking the lead when called for, Barry demonstrates the advantages of relying on secure-based strategies, as these enable a person to interact with others easily. But combined with his personality strengths, the environment in the small learning community was helping Barry to build his capacity as a problem solver and positive risk taker. By approaching other teachers and asking them to reveal their failures with a particular student, Barry was inadvertently placing other teachers at risk of being exposed as less than fully competent teachers – something that teachers will not readily admit to their colleagues. However, Barry's secure-based strategies enabled him to approach other teachers with ease and get the information that he was looking for.

Barry: Because a lot of the teachers and administrators were concerned that **maybe it was only in one class that the problems were occurring, because there was referrals written for basically from one teacher** [*Comment: Gerry Robbins, as it turns out.*]

By this point in time in the school year, the small learning community had expanded beyond the four teachers of Team Five. This expansion enabled Barry, as a participant of the community, to conduct his own research among all the ninth grade teachers who interacted with Larry Houston. However, he discovered that Karla from his own team had a very different relationship with Larry Houston – as a result of Larry's surprising positive behavior. The team five teachers could not avoid responding to this dissonant moment. In addition, Karla, a teacher who often depended on the use of deactivating strategies commonly found among avoidant personalities, found herself responding quite warmly to the student.

Barry: Other teachers like George...he's not having any problems. George has an unusual quality to be able to handle or deal with him. Karla's had some difficulties.

Karla: No, I have to say that --

Barry: I shouldn't speak for you. I'm sorry. (...) Go ahead.

Karla: I have to say it's improving. (...), you know. I think my problem is, academically he struggles. I don't know if writing is not your favorite thing. And I can't be negative. He comes in and he says "How are you, Mrs. Bearison?" And I find that good. I can't -- nobody's perfect. He's not perfect. But I guess I see us getting there.

Barry: And so we started to look at the problem here, and just asked ourselves. **Because we noticed one thing I've heard in school that indicated a lot of positives for Larry.** There was a fight in school. And Larry joined to help the teachers.

Karla: That was neat that he helped. It was very good. I don't know what I'd have done without him that day.

Barry: Which indicates values that are good. And we look at that and say, ...that's something we can work with... Larry, clearly has values that we need to work with. (*Code: Positive Dissonance and Attachment*)

So then we asked, "What are the problems?" We have peer relations that cause problems. We can't always deal with all of those. **But then we also looked, and a concern that Karla brought up, an excellent point is, if you've got that, plus you're having academic problems, it comes out in different ways.** (*Code: Discussion about Student Academic Performance*)

Karla: I wanted to say, on Fridays, we read. And I don't know, you may not like this at first, but I know you like Mrs. Davis. She's going to take you (...) possibly another student, and we're going to build a library.

And you're going to read with her. **Now, I don't know how you feel about that, but I'll tell you what, we can handle it real smoothly.**

All of the teachers, particularly Karla and Barry, were stunned by Larry's extraordinary behavior in a risky situation. By his actions, Larry demonstrated that he cared about his teachers and was willing to risk his own safety and reputation as a trouble-maker to come to their aid. Perhaps all of the efforts that Larry's teachers had put forth to rehabilitate his behavior had been recognized by Larry on some level, and were showing signs of paying off despite his surface

resistance. Larry's actions demonstrated that he had formed an attachment with his teachers, and that attachment compelled him to overcome any historical negativity in the relationship with his teachers. His growing connection with them motivated him to show care and compassion by jumping into a fight to save a teacher. The dissonance that Larry's behavior created caused the teachers to question their own assumptions and ponder whether they had examined all possible explanations about Larry. This dissonant moment, provoked by positive student action, provided the motivation that the teachers needed to think about their responsibility as educators and to develop a more compassionate and altruistic response towards this student. Larry's behavior shook their cognitive working models to the core. This crucial finding was a causal link that explained how teachers were able to loosen their defensiveness and develop a new approach to students as a whole, particularly students who were of a different race, class, and gender.

The episode with Larry Houston was important in another way as well. The Team Five teachers began to consider that they might have to reach out to students who were having academic difficulty, and not wait for students to approach them. In particular, Karla and George began to realize that some students did not know how to ask for help, and some students who needed help didn't even know that they should seek it. However, Gerry Robbins was still quite resistant in this regard. With hypervigilant defenses solidly in place, Gerry was only willing to help students under certain conditions: that they approach her first, that they recognize that they are the problem and she is the solution, and that they pass qualifying behavioral requirements such as not talking in class, and doing their work.

Episode 5 – November 25th Transcript

Bottom Up Questions: When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors? When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice? What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers?

Codes: Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reaction, Discussion about Instruction

On November 11th, a school-wide Parent-Teacher Conference took place. The next day, after the data was compiled, Team Five discovered that about 74% of their students' parents had attended the conference. The other Project SIS teams had also enjoyed high attendance rates, but Team Five had the highest percentage based on their population of students. The high attendance rate was record-setting, far surpassing the attendance record of previous years. The Team Five teachers were astonished with their success and their surprise provided a powerful moment of positive dissonance. Because of this event, Team Five teachers could no longer say that poor, working class urban parents did not care about their children's education. As a result, teachers had to assume more responsibility for their students' achievement, given that could no longer rely on parental apathy to explain poor student outcomes.

Two weeks after parents had visited the school for Parent/Teacher Night, Progress Reports were due. Team Five teachers were dismayed to discover that too many of their students were failing their classes. After the highpoint of the previous two weeks, the team was now hitting a low point that they did not seem prepared for. This would create a great deal of negative dissonance for the team.

Transcript: 11-25-96

George: A lot of Fs?

Gerry: O, yeah.

Karla: I didn't count them. **I didn't want to count them.**

George: I didn't count them because I knew

George: The kids were either there or they weren't. It was either an A and B, or a D and an F. Very easy.

After the successful Parent/Teacher conference and the strong connection with parents that the team had developed, it was quite disconcerting to have to report to these same parents that many of their students were failing. Adding to the dissonance, Team Five had made a mistake in processing the paperwork and they were late in delivering their progress reports – a task that the other teams had already completed. The team began to bicker and become sarcastic with one another until finally, Barry Cunningham intervened.

Barry: To facilitate...

Karla: Yeah, what direction [do] we go in.

Barry: We are working on our team planning, I guess, on Mondays. And have we come to a consensus about the progress report?

George: Progress report consensus?

Barry: Yeah. About what to do.

George: I think it was just decided that next progress reports would be done on district-provided sheets.

Barry: Good. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership*)

Barry Cunningham was the only teacher on Team Five who consistently demonstrated the greatest use of secure-based strategies, particularly during times of team stress. He maintained evenness in his emotions, maintained his enthusiasm and positive attitude when trying to solve problems, and showed a great deal of tolerance for the difficult behavior of others. While the specter of student failures and delayed progress reports created tensions within the team, Barry was able to stay-focused on problem solving in a creative manner.

From the Project SIS design perspective, one possible way of dealing with the high volume of failing grades was to design more interesting educational events to motivate students and get them more engaged in the learning process. Based on the strategic planning that took place during the previous Project SIS Summer Institute, Team Five teachers knew that they were expected to develop an interdisciplinary focus. There was also pressure to keep up with another team of teachers that had already designed their first educational event – to the rave reviews of their students.

Based on the transcripts, it is clear that Barry was motivated to get the team to start thinking about educational strategies that they could implement for the students. At the start of the second quarter, he used his role as facilitator to push his colleagues toward making progress in this area. There was one major problem. Despite Barry's best efforts, the secondary attachment strategies employed by his team mates tended to interfere with the team's ability to explore new ways of teaching and learning. As the following text from the November 25th transcript will show, Karla's avoidance strategy tended to slow the group down:

Barry: ...I was wondering if we can talk some more about the trip. If we are going to see if we can come up with a decision. Do we want to go ahead and book a day, and then maybe --?

Gerry: I think we need to book a day and get started on it.

Barry: That's kind of what I feel. **I know that, Karla, you're still unsure about Planet Earth.**

Karla: I said, if you want, that's fine with me, because -- you know. In the future I hope we plan an activity ...not take a field trip then plan an activity. But I'll go for it.

Barry: **We can plan an activity now with it.**

Karla: Yeah.

Karla: **After I hear you brainstorm, maybe I'll come up with something.** (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation*)

Barry: **Come up with something.** The general theme behind the Planet Earth is appreciation ... It gives a concept of a global view of ecology, and kind of tries to take away -- **I've mentioned this before** -- tries to take away the boundaries that exist between countries, and look at the Planet Earth.

After Barry explains the significance of the film that he wants to use as a basis for a field trip to an IMAX theater at the local zoo, he tries to make the link with Karla's content area of instruction to help her see the interdisciplinary connection.

Barry: That's kind of the impression. It's a very poetic type movie. **That's why I thought it would lend itself real easily to some kind of a writing exercise...** (*Code: Discussion of Instruction*)

Karla: I don't know yet, but it sounds like teamwork lends itself to that. But I can't think of something off the top of my head without -- I almost feel like I need to see it first. I would feel like I need to see before they see it. Otherwise, how can I plan? So maybe we [the teachers] can take a trip to the zoo...[with] the whole family. (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation*)

Barry: Thursday, 10:50.

George: How's Thanksgiving, all right? I'll be up there. (*said with sarcasm*)

Barry: Oh.
[TALKOVER]

Karla: I might be able to in the morning. But it's hard to do, ...I'd like to see it, Planet Earth. But when you said Thin Blue Line, I'm thinking of the police officers' story, the documentary.

Karla: But now I understand. **I just have to mull it over.** (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation*)

Barry: I mean, what can't you write --?(Code: Discussion of Instruction)

Karla: Let's see what **they** come up with, and then I can, **I'll just have to think about it.** It'll take me a while to plan it, because there'd be like four different stages to a writing project, and I just have to think of it and type it out. (*Code: Discussion of Instruction*)

Gerry: Would this becoming our big project, or would this just --?(*Code: Discussion of Instruction*)

Karla: I don't know. (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation*)

While the team is clearly engaged in the conversation, Karla is not ready to commit to Barry's suggestion. Yet, she is not able to offer any alternative suggestion. At the same time, it appears as if her reluctance is partially based on Barry's leadership style. She reminds him that the interdisciplinary effort has to be carried by the entire team, meaning that George and Gerry

need to explain how they would connect to Barry's idea. Yet, she clearly demonstrates that she cannot move forward without first knowing what everyone else is going to do first.

Gerry: Would this becoming our big project, or would this just --?(Code: Discussion of Instruction)

Karla: I don't know.

Gerry: That's what I think it does.

Karla: I think it should be related to the project somehow.

Gerry: If that's our case, then the project, we've got to come up with a project. I don't know.

Karla: I think we should use it for something. **How would you all use it? I want to hear what you would do with it.** (Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation)

Karla cannot take a leadership role within her own creative sphere. Furthermore, Karla's avoidance style is blocking the team from moving forward. In order to appear as if she is more capable than she may actually feel, she continues to throw the responsibility back toward them. George, who also has an avoidant style, is not happy about being placed in this state of limbo.

He responds:

George: Well, then, **let's make a decision on what we want to do.** Are we going to make it -- if we go to this, are we going to make a unit out of it, or are we going to just have a field trip?

Karla: **I think we should build something out of it.**

George: **That's what I'm asking.** Do --?

Karla: That's what I'm saying. I think **we should build something around it or wait and come up with something afterwards.** What do you think, Gerry? (Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation)

Part of the team's difficulty is that they are not sure what they are planning for. Barry suggested a field trip because the other teams had already taken their students on field trips and Team Five students had not yet experienced what other students had received in educational activities. Karla did not want to go on a field trip unless she could connect it back to a lesson she could deliver in her classroom. Yet, Karla was making things more complicated by suggesting that she couldn't do any lesson planning unless she knew what the other teachers were doing. In essence, Karla was trying to turn a simple field trip into a more complex interdisciplinary unit,

and she was pushing the team to do the thinking for her so that their responses could create a framework for her to operate under. Karla needed to feel the security of having that framework in place before she could proceed to create a lesson plan. Karla's reaction demonstrates her reliance on secondary attachment strategies, namely avoidance of leadership and responsibility, to push the team into creating a more secure base for her. However, her distancing behavior, which is evasive and noncommittal, continues to frustrate her teammates. They are trying to create the framework, but she keeps stopping them. Finally, Gerry's need to maintain integrity for the students' sake motivates her to clamp down on the situation.

Gerry: I can't see anything I can do with it. But I think it would be a nice trip. But if we're going to actually do a project around this, we need to get our projects planned. And I mean planned, not just talk. **We've talked and talked and talked, but we haven't done anything.** Is this going to be our big interdisciplinary unit? (*Code: Accountability, Teacher attachment style – hypervigilance*)

Gerry: **We do have to have a field trip for these kids, because they're expecting one, since that other group went on one.** (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher attachment*)

Karla: I just feel like, if we do come up with something later, and we do want to take a field trip related to it, we can't. But I don't know. (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Deactivation*)

Gerry: But if we don't plan --

Barry: Then let's look at what we can come up with. **Let's think now, then, rather than later.** (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership*)

Barry's sensitivity towards the viewpoints of others enabled him to become a political maverick, one who could easily agree with his colleagues in order to win points with them. At the same time, when he felt strongly about an issue, he would pursue it in a systematic way, until he acquired all the information that he needed to present his case persuasively to his colleagues. However, despite Barry's sensitivity towards others, others did not always reciprocate the generous nature he often extended to them. Furthermore, his ideas were often overshadowed by the agendas of his colleagues, who tended to take his easygoing personality for granted. At this

meeting, Barry was beginning to show impatience with the sluggish movement of his team mates, which was primarily driven by Karla's deactivating strategy.

During the remainder of the meeting, George created another proposal based on an outdoor education project that he once participated in as part of his graduate training in education. He clearly mapped out all of the content areas: math, science, language arts, and geography, and he painted an exciting scenario. Barry and Gerry responded to George's proposal with enthusiasm and offered additional ideas. When Barry said, "sounds like everybody liked that" Karla responded, "I'll have to think about it." Gerry ignored the comment and suggested a scenario that was similar to George's when she remembered an interdisciplinary unit that one of her daughters participated in during middle school. Gerry enthused about the methods the teachers used to integrate math, history, science, and language arts. Barry liked Gerry's idea and pushed the group to find out about resources in the local community, such as the Chamber of Commerce, tourist centers, and educational facilities. Perhaps because the meeting had to end, the group was able to come to closure on an area of educational activity that could satisfy their interdisciplinary requirement and also serve as an exciting field trip for their students. Once the structure was created, Karla was on board with the team and offered little resistance other than a bit of her trademark sarcasm, a very effective numbing tool which kept her emotions at keel and maintained her deactivating behavior.

Episode 6 – February 4th Transcript

Primary Questions: How is attachment between teachers and students influencing teacher reactions to students? What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What

examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers? How does a loosening of attachment systems within teachers create new opportunities for growth?

Codes: Discussions of Behavior, Dissonance Provocation, Teacher Cognitions of Self, Altruism, Positive Dissonance and Teacher Attachment, Teacher Attributions about Students, Teacher Attachment Style - Hypervigilance

New attachments, based on positive dissonance, enabled new behaviors towards students to emerge. One new behavior, at least for Gerry, was the use of self-disclosure as a teaching tool and method of establishing rapport with a student. Gerry may not have been able to engage in this type of behavior in the classroom, where there is more pressure to maintain authority, but she was beginning to venture out in this manner, within the safety of the team meeting. Gerry could engage in this new behavior more confidently because Team Five was developing a unified manner of communicating with students as a group. The next transcript is an example of this emerging pattern of communication – a pattern that strongly suggests that the Team’s confidence as a group coupled with their attachment to a misbehaving student was now strong enough to disarm the student’s childish resistance and negativity.

Transcript: 2-4-97

George: Hey, how was your day yesterday?

Stephanie: Mine?

George: Yes. How was yours? Was it okay? Did you have a hard time during the day?

Stephanie: [unintelligible].

Gerry: Well you were in a real bad mood. You couldn’t find your homework. **I didn’t say anything to you and you just got real mad, and you got real verbal ... Remember what you did? I finally had to tell you, “that’s it!” Remember that? I haven’t seen that [since] way, way, way back, and I’m glad I haven’t seen it. I just don’t want to see it again, ...** And then I heard you cut a couple of other classes and I thought, whoa, something’s going on ... we don’t want that ... **we want to help you ... That’s all I’ve got to say.** (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style-Hypervigilance*)

Gerry felt compelled to interrupt George's attempt at a friendly opening so that she could remind the student of the provocation which brought her before the team. Gerry also appeared on the verge of falling into a hyper-vigilant mode of communication, however, Gerry seemed to have caught herself and re-positioned her tone of communication by stating that their goal was to help the student. However, Barry also seemed to feel the need to put the student in her place.

Barry: If you do have problems, **don't take it out on** us because we can only help you, ... **You take it out on us and we [take it personally]** and the Board looks at that very unfavorably, then you get suspended - for a fight you get expelled ... **Be very careful about that ...**(Code: *Dissonance Provocation; Dissonance Reaction-Teacher Leadership*)

Barry's communication projects a strong warning to the student, but Barry also attempts to explain why the teachers might react badly to her behavior when he says: "we [the teachers] take it personally." For a person to take another's actions personally implies that an emotional connection has been established between the two individuals, even if the connection is a temporary one. At the same time, teachers have greater leadership authority in schools and this normally prevents any appearance of equal social relations between the teacher and the student. However, in the Project SIS small learning community, the emotional connection between teachers and students are affecting social relations and roles in new ways. One way is that students with poor communication skills feel empowered to challenge their teachers more openly. Yet, George did not feel threatened by this show of student bravado, and he pursues a course of action with the student that attempts to keep the lines of communication open:

George: What happened [with your little finger]?

Stephanie: Nothing.

George: Why did Mr.[Butcher] say you did have a problem with [your little finger]?

Stephanie:[unintelligible].

George: ...So why would Mr.[Butcher], a person I've know for six or seven years, say that?

Stephanie: I don't know

George: So [why would he say that]?

Stephanie: [Ask him].

George: [I did ask him].

George decided to move the focus away from the student's interaction with another teacher so that he could focus on his interaction with her in his own classroom and gain more control over the discussion.

George: ...I thought I was [polite in asking you] ... Maybe I wasn't, maybe I just said, "Stephanie, take those headphones off!" I don't know... did I do that? (*Code: Discussion about Behavior*)

George: **I think I said, Stephanie, please get rid of the headphones, something like that. Is that what I said?**

Stephanie: Yes.

George: **And I was kind of quite concerned ... because it's a sign of disrespect.**

Stephanie: I would have done it to your face though...

George: You think so? Would you? Would you really have done that to my face if that's the way you felt? (*Code: Dissonance Provocation*)

Stephanie: If that's the way I felt, yes.

George: No, I don't think so. I [can't believe it].

Stephanie: I would.

George: **I think you would have thought it, but I don't think you would have done it.** (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership*)

At this point, George is interjecting a mini-lesson in maturity and good judgment so that he could socialize Stephanie as a student. His approach allows him to shift the conversation into discussion of what the underlying issues are that are contributing to the student's negative behavior and attitude.

George: Well, I think [the issue] is greater than that.

Female staff: You gave us a reason.

George: You gave us a reason to be concerned. ... **Is there anything going on? Is something wrong? Has something happened?** (Code: *Dissonance Reaction – Attachment*)

The above dialogue reveals a strength that George has in his interactions with students. George always stays in control, and does not allow Stephanie's rudeness to affect him. His ability to stay cool and emotionally detached is augmented by his ability to insert his own moral teaching over the negative expression of his student (i.e., "I think you would have thought about it, but I don't think you would have done it.") In that moment, George is demonstrating a behavior that he wants his student to absorb: the behavior of self-restraint. By refusing to get angry or retaliatory, George is reinforcing the values that he wants the student to absorb by demonstrating his own restraint. George is also setting the stage for power of positive dissonance to persuade the student that his approach is superior to hers. In a group setting, the emergence of positive dissonance can affect teachers as well as students. As a person who relies on hyper-vigilant strategies, Gerry understands anger and rudeness very well. George's modeling of control and restraint becomes a visible lesson that she can draw from to move her communication with the student in a new direction:

Gerry: ... in life something's going to happen. People are going to make you mad, people are going to do things to you that might be real bad, people are going to do things to you that might just make you mad. How are you going to handle [it]? Are you going to lose control? Are you going to grow out of it? ... (Code: *Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

Stephanie: [unintelligible]

Gerry: Because I didn't know you had trouble [in everybody else's classroom] ... and then I started hearing it, and I think gosh, she did that in my room too. ...

Gerry: ... **My concern is that you don't know how to control that temper, and you don't know how to act when you have bad things happen....and it gets you in trouble, [we've seen it before] and ...you lost control and you took it out on lots of people who had nothing to do with [the situation]** (*Code: Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

George: Yes, I think so too, but I think that you're kind of missing the point and feel like we're kind of, you know, like this is the Salem witch trials all over again, and it's not. **We're not here throwing things at you, saying Stephanie, you're being [a little turkey] and we're going to take you out of school. That's not what we're saying. And the point of all this, is that we're trying to figure out (a) is something wrong? (b) is there something we can do?** ... So, I mean ... hey, what were your grades like last quarter? (*Codes: Discussion of Student Academic Performance, Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Attachment*)

At this point, George points out something good about the student, which causes the student to experience even more dissonance after he just told her that the Team is trying to figure out what bothering her, so they can help her. Once George establishes 'care,' he reminds the student about her responsibility as a student: to work hard and get the best grades she can. Knowing that she has academic talent, George builds on her strengths.

George: What were they like first quarter?

Stephanie: Better, at the beginning ...

George: What [grades] did you make ...?

Stephanie: [unintelligible, but apparently listed her grades].

George: You think everybody gets [those grades]?

Stephanie: No.

George: You've got to do something [right] [to do that] ... **And it was just really a surprise. And I think the only thing I'm asking is that you just be honest. You know, that you be honest with all of us. You come in and say [I'm having a hard day today]. You know, I can accept that. Do I tell you when I'm having a bad day?** (*Codes: Discussion about Behavior, Teacher Attributions about Student, Altruism*)

Stephanie: Yes.

George: Yes. Isn't that fair? Wouldn't it be fair for you to say, Mr. Johnson, I'm having a bad day today. ... **And you know, it's alright to have a bad day once in a while.** I mean, that happens. We are human, all of us. That happens. **So, I think we just want you to be honest, you understand? Tell me how you feel.** (*Codes: Discussion about Behavior, Altruism*)

George has now solidified his relationship with Stephanie by appealing to the vulnerability that all people have, including his own vulnerability to her when she is not honest. George is asking her to solidify her connection to him by allowing herself to think about what she is experiencing emotionally, and to share that information with him. George is also letting Stephanie know that he will respect her emotional needs and handle them safely as long as she can trust him enough to be honest about what she is feeling. Gerry is also affected by what George is communicating to Stephanie. Gerry is hearing that she also has permission to be honest, and this opening motivates her to reveal her personal struggle with negative emotions such as anger. In essence, she is warning Stephanie not to become like her.

Gerry: ...Say, "...can you leave me alone? I'm really feeling [terrible] today," and that's honest. **If you just work on that part of you ... because I'm going to tell you a little secret.** **Stephanie, I feel terrible ... But there has to be a [stop gap] [This anger is] going to affect every relationship you have ... whether it's in the job anything, and that's my concern ... whatever it is, you've got to do something to get rid of the anger and to get past it so you can deal with it. That's what you do... Just find a way to deal with the immediate physical [growling sound] within you. Everybody has it, and I have [this anger too] so it's not something I don't understand.** We want to help you, so ... if you need to go scream somewhere, we'll find ... because we all have to do it. [Gerry says to George: You think that's funny?] (*Code: Teacher Attachment – Hypervigilance, Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

George: No, it's not. I know.

Barry: I go for a walk in the hall.

Gerry: I go for long walks and I talk out loud to myself, and anybody that's around thinks who's that crazy woman walking by, you know, but by the time I get [back] I'm over it, or at

least I've found a way to deal with it. So, we're going to draw closure to this, ...Does it all make sense to you? (Code: *Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

What is striking about the above dialogue above is the dominance of discussion that acknowledges the human frailty of emotions and the need to respect emotions so that they can be managed in a more productive manner. George has taken the lead in this regard and Gerry has been able to follow in his tracks. What becomes interesting in the drama of the dialogue is the interplay between George and Gerry. George's Avoidant/Dismissive attachment pattern and reliance on deactivating strategies seems to have provided him with a certain advantage in dealing with disruptive/disrespectful students such as Stephanie. He not only disregards her negative attitude and rudeness, but he is able to bait her by playing the "good cop" and positioning himself to talk about the need for emotional honesty and maturity. This message resonates with Gerry, who operates from within the deep insecurities that drive her to react with hyper-vigilance. At the same time, a part of her recognizes a fundamental truth in what George is saying, because it speaks to a deeper need within herself. Gerry also needs permission to be emotionally honest with others. She also needs to feel safe and to know that people will be there for her. She can also see a younger version of herself in her student, and understand that she needs to grow as much as her student needs to grow. The dissonant message that Gerry has absorbed has led to an opening that will allow her to develop new modes of behavior for her own emotional growth.

Episode 7 – February 13 Transcript

Bottom Up Question: How does a loosening of attachment systems within teachers create new opportunities for growth?

Codes: Discussions of Behavior, Teacher Cognitions of Self, Dissonance Provocation, Early Teacher Attachment Strategies – hypervigilance, Positive Dissonance and Teacher Attachment, Dissonance Reaction - Teacher Attachment, Dissonance Reaction - Team exploration/cooperation, Dissonance Reaction - Team Awareness, Altruism

The February 13 transcript shows Gerry's evolving relationship with her teammates. During this team meeting, Gerry revealed that she was having a great deal of difficulty with a group of new students in a math class. The students were also new to the school and to the small learning community, which had finally settled into a comfortable community by the end of the first semester. In essence, the new students were like foreigners who needed to be assimilated into the small learning community and the sub-culture of the Team Five classrooms. At first, this did not happen. Instead, students brought their knowledge of "school" from previous settings to the new community. The teachers considered some members of this group disruptive and destructive to the peace that had been established up to that point. Gerry Robbins seemed to have the most difficulty. But by this time, Gerry felt that she could rely on her team mates to help her work through the difficulty she was having without fear of being judged.

Transcript: 2-13-97

Gerry: Yesterday was just horrendous. It was so nice for several days, when all those kids were suspended [INAUDIBLE]. The only one I didn't have to deal with was Jamie. ...And it's overwhelming. There's so many personalities. ... **We're up to 35 students, wall-to-wall chaos.** (*Code: Dissonance Provocation, Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance, Discussions about Behavior*)

After some more discussion, Karla tried giving Gerry a suggestion:

Karla: Gerry, I had a lot of those kids fourth hour. And what worked for me -- because detentions are not fast enough and immediate enough, say "If you're not going to close your mouth when given your assignment, take a zero for the day." (*Code: Discussions about Behavior*)

Karla: ... Now, I can't say that it would work on every kid, but –

Gerry: Well, see, they won't even do the hand-raising. First hour, they wouldn't shut up. I said, "Be quiet, be quiet!" Finally I had to yell at the top of my lungs just to get their attention. They're all like, "Huh!" But I had to get that loud for them to even hear me. (*Code: Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

Of course, yesterday everybody was back. ... **But if you have any suggestions...** They are much better than they were the [beginning of the] year. I don't mean I'm going back to that. But I don't want to go back to this chaos. (*Code: Dissonance Provocation, Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

Regina: We'll have to figure out something to do ...

Regina, the coach, was in attendance at this meeting. When the Vice Principal, Donna, joined the meeting, more discussion about Gerry's overcrowded classroom took place. Gerry continued to reveal more of her dilemma as a teacher.

Donna: Hello!

George: The problem-solver is here. **We have a problem**, and we need some help with it.

Donna: I can't solve it, but I can sure brainstorm it.

George: **Our problem** is, is that Gerry has 35 students in a math class. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness*)

Donna: Shit.

George's comment is striking because he is letting the Vice Principal know that Gerry's classroom problem is a Team Five problem, and not simply Gerry's problem alone. This is exactly what Gerry needed to hear in order for her to feel supported by the team. Gerry's risk in revealing her failure to control her classroom has not led to her demise. This encourages her to reveal more of her fears to the group:

Gerry: I mean, failure syndrome. I do feel like I'm not doing what ..., but I've tried so many things. (*Code: Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

Karla: We've tried ... Sometimes the roll is stacked against you. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness*)

Gerry began to reveal how she was also having difficulty because of her growing attachment to students:

Gerry: ...the boys ... are better than they used to be. **They aren't treating me disrespectfully** ...they're quiet and working. You see what I mean? **It's such a dilemma to me.** If they were really bad, I'd have gotten rid of them a long time ago. Most kids like this, I can say "get back to work" or "be quiet," and they will. (*Code: Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Attachment*)

These [students] will [work] for five minutes, and then they're back on it. **And I'm sitting there feeling guilty. "Why don't you send them out?" But then if I send them out, I feel bad about that, too.** You know what? I'm -- I don't know. Maybe I'm getting to be a wimp in my old age. (*Code: Dissonance Provocation, Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

After more discussion, Barry jumps in to suggest that Team Five teachers become more coercive with the students. However, this suggestion is not satisfactory to Gerry. Gerry is beginning to move beyond the “control by punishment” approach because she truly wants to teach math to her students. She simply does not know how to reach them. Her frustration touches a nerve with the other teachers:

Barry: We can't teach under those kind of conditions, ... But they [students] are deleting from the education of those other kids. And I think they need to be removed. And I think we need to start creating a paper trail, and if necessary, move them out. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership*)

Gerry: A lot of those kids have a paper trail already.

Barry: Yeah, they already do. They've got a long one. And it's just, ... If we deal with it, I think we'll be lot more effective in the classrooms, so we can do the things that we are starting to get to do. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness*)

Gerry: ...I can tell you that if I tried to do that [M&M lesson] yesterday, it would have been hell. And I would have absolutely run out of the room screaming. (*Code: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

Karla: Gerry, one day -- and I hope you don't think this is sacrilegious, but I didn't mean it in my heart. I said [loudly to the students] "God, do you hear me? I'm talking to you!" I started doing this, and saying "I need to tell these students..." I meant to do it today. (*Code: Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

Barry: That was the day the students said you were losing your mind.

[LAUGHTER]

What is beginning to emerge here is a changing sense of community among the teachers of Team Five. Gerry's strong dependence on hyper-vigilant strategies is gradually giving way to more secure-based strategies with her team as she develops more confidence that they have accepted her and are there to support her. This allows Gerry to reveal more of her fears and to become more self-reflective in the process. What is also beginning to emerge, on a collective level, is the shared perception of life's absurdities within the team. The power of the group is their ability to transfer an individual's perception of a threatening reality into a non-threatening perception of the same reality. The group is able to afford this protection to the individuals within it, when the group has been able to accept the individual as part of its community. Humor emerges as a cognitive tool that the group can use to make some sense out of situations that may feel threatening, to protect the self-esteem of group members, and to provide overall security and sense of emotional well-being to the group. Gerry's fear that her colleagues were laughing at her, was replaced by their reassurance that they were laughing with her, essentially because they could identify with her fears and hopes, and see themselves in her experience.

Episode 8 – February 3rd Transcript

Bottom Up Question: When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice? What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers?

Codes: Dissonance Provocation, Accountability, Discussions of Instruction, Dissonance Reaction -Teacher Exploration, Dissonance Reaction - Team exploration/cooperation

By February of the school year, a major challenge remained for Team Five in the area of interdisciplinary practice. Another Project SIS Team had made great strides in this area under the leadership of one of their team members, a dissonant provoking event for Team Five that threatened to undermine their collective self-esteem. Team Five teachers were still grappling with the creation and coordination of an interdisciplinary instructional practice across their separate academic content areas. The team members' individual attachment strategies often interfered with the group's ability to reach certain goals. For example, Gerry Robbins' hypervigilant focus on student behavior dominated the teams' discourse and prevented the team from moving forward with academic concerns. At the same time, Karla & George's avoidant behaviors, with their unique deactivating strategies, were also contributing to the team's inability to make progress.

The team finally made headway when they decided to create a theme based on Survival for their interdisciplinary unit.⁶ The unit would include two student field trips that could engage students in various cooperative tasks based on survival. Thereafter, students would be responsible for writing a paper based on their experiences. However, the team was having difficulty establishing a common set of assessment questions and a common framework that students would be held accountable for.

During February, the team was also adjusting to new leadership under Gerry Robbins, who now had the role of Team Facilitator. As the new team facilitator, how would Gerry Robbins respond to the demands of her leadership role when her attachment style suggested that the role would be stressful for her to maintain? Surprisingly, Gerry did quite well. With Gerry leading the discussion, the transcript of February 3 is almost completely devoid of any discussion

⁶ Team Five theme of Survival as a unit pre-dates the successful reality show television series, "Survivor" which began about 6 years later on NBC.

about student behavior. Instead, the entire meeting is focused on planning for the first student field trip and developing questions for Survival Unit.

Transcript: 02-03-97

Gerry: [*Lets the Team know that she has come up with a plan, but that she welcomes their input*] ...and these are very [up] for changes. **You know, you guys don't have to like them.** I just sat and tried to figure out something that could work. ...(*Code: Discussion about Instruction*)

After more discussion and logistical planning by the team, Karla raises the issue of developing thematic questions for the unit. While Gerry and Barry are still somewhat stuck on thinking strictly about their own subject matter, Karla insists that more coordination is needed across all content areas. She is backed up by two new people in the room: non-Project SIS teachers who have been invited to participate in the field trip and pre-planning. Interestingly, these new voices add power to Karla's voice, enabling her to discard her usual avoidant style and push to develop a strategy for developing thematic questions.

Karla: I want to know the ... question. ...I'm just going to say we're looking at survival in all aspects(*Code: Discussion about Instruction*)

Gerry: Yes, you can narrow it down to **whatever you want in your room** ...

Karla: That's the thing. I ...

From this point in the discussion, Gerry and Barry describe the questions they are planning for students which address their own specific content areas. Another male teacher from outside of Team Five pushes them to think more broadly about objectives. He asks the team if they have thought about specific learning objectives. Karla finally finds her voice and expresses her fear that the questions proposed thus far might not be cohesive enough and could "just be jumping all over the place." She continues her query to the team, albeit in a very tentative voice that reveals her discomfort with stepping out on a limb.

Karla: Shouldn't I ... I shouldn't have to ... don't I have to incorporate some of all ... **they need to be general questions about survival.** (Code: *Discussion about Instruction*)

Gerry tries to respond to Karla's concern by saying that the process of separate questions can help Karla design her own questions for her own content area, something that Karla had been grappling with for several weeks.

Gerry: ... I think ... this is my opinion, jump in and tell me if you disagree. **This is basically ... for you.** Basically. Now does that mean that they culminate in questions and those are answered in [History]? I mean, they can be with English too. **I'm just saying, that if this is wrong and you disagree, tell me. You know what I'm saying.** (Code: *Team Exploration/Cooperation*)

Karla: The key questions need to be answered by every student.

Gerry: That's what I'm saying, but isn't it within the ...

Female: No, they need to be general questions on survival, like – depending on what it's going to consist of – like, a general question could be, maybe, how do you survive or how would you survive if you were left on a ... you know, this is just something I'm ... on a deserted island. **You know, general questions, nothing specific to a particular subject, is what you need to try and come up with.** And they don't have to be like three questions or four questions.

[Talkover]

Female: The purpose of the key questions is to try to tie everything together. We're going to be doing different things, but the kids need a focus, and those key questions will provide a focus. (Code: *Discussions about Instruction*)

Barry: I think an example would be how can Math, Science, so and so, and so and so, help you survive in ... and give them a couple of options, within an [urban] setting or [wildlife] setting? (Code: *Discussions about Instruction*)

Gerry: [That's what I was going to bring up]. We have the same idea. I just wrote these down. I was brainstorming in my head while you guys were talking. Survival in a disaster, like a flood, a wreck, a disaster, on the street, at home, or if you're out in the wilderness, and then you mentioned something about life [on your own] away from family, like going to college, or moving out [unintelligible]. Those were the four things that I heard [said]. (Code: *Discussions about Instruction*)

Gerry: I'm sorry, the time has almost gone. I said those things, let's add to that tomorrow. ... **And then one thing we could do to wrap them together is ... what do these four or five**

[questions], whatever we come up with, have in common? What do you have to have in all these situations? What is specifically different to each situation? Would you pull it together? (Code: Discussions about Instruction)

Barry: Sure.

This discussion reveals a lack of coordination among the Team Five teachers because they were not used to planning with other teachers across subject matter. In addition, patterns of communication had been established within Team Five that had been interfering with their creative process. For example, Karla had a great deal of difficulty overcoming her avoidance pattern, but her fear of creating a chaotic interdisciplinary unit was more powerful than her own personal need to maintain her personal space and distance – hallmarks of her reliance on deactivating strategies. Although Gerry’s need to dominate and control had been softened by the support she had received from her team mates over several months, the dialogue shows that she was less able to give more than token appeasement to Karla’s concerns. Gerry was used to dominating the team discussions and she knew that Karla had difficulty opposing her strong voice. However, the addition of two new staff members shifted the group’s dynamics and they were able to interrupt the typical flow of “cooperation” in Team Five which had been keeping them stuck for so long. They did so by supporting the minor voice of Karla, recognizing that she needed support to get her concerns placed on the table.

Episode 9 – February 5th Transcript

Bottom Up Questions: When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors about instructional practice? When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice?

Top Down Questions: How are teacher beliefs influenced by cooperation and conflict and how do teachers learn and grow as a result? What is the role of leadership in the sustenance of a community of practice?

Codes: Accountability, Resistance/Tension, Dissonance Provocation, Discussions of Instruction, Dissonance Reaction-Teacher Exploration, Dissonance Reaction- Teacher Leadership, Dissonance Reaction-Team Awareness

The next transcript, dated February 5, is the transcript that discusses the survival activity, which took place the day before. It quickly becomes apparent that the event had many problems, provoking dissonance. One indicator of this is the fact that Regina is fully present in this meeting and is using her full authority as a coach of Team Five to lead the discussion. According to the transcript, the problems of the Survival field day seemed to stem from insufficient planning and a lot of miscommunication. Much of the blame for the miscommunication was placed on George Johnson, a Team Five teacher with strong avoidant-dismissive pattern that often surfaced when he working with his peers.

Transcript: 2-5-97

Regina:

I just wrote some notes ... I'm going to read through it and some of you have already said it. The door wasn't open. We need a person in the auditorium to direct the students ... [Cards to split up the students didn't work, they always threw them around – that process did not work. ...

Upperclassmen came in and [took] pop and chips. So there should have been somebody, the upperclassmen should have been moved to another location or something...

Moving [to] locations was difficult, ... And I couldn't find who my group was, they all got mixed in with another group and I went, okay, A, A, A. And big kids came, and I did have eleven kids, so I think I did get most of the group. ...*(Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership)*

After more discussion about the inability of the teachers to connect to their designated students for the field trip activity, Barry finally brought George's name up in the discussion.

Barry

That was a problem – George accidentally took two groups. He said, Number 5s on this side and then he kept telling me, no, I’m going take number 11. So the group over on the side all of a sudden didn’t have anybody. (*Code: Discussion about Non-Instructional Procedures*)

Regina

That makes sense now.

Gerry

I heard him say he was going to put them in groups, choose your groups and then he was going to rotate them. That’s what I heard him say. (*Code: Discussion about Non-Instructional Procedures*)

Karla

That’s what I thought about the numbers. When we got a group, we were supposed to give them a number. Then ...whatever number we had, we got that. They told me I was wrong. I was wrong. (*Code: Discussion about Non-Instructional Procedures*)

Regina

He changed it. ... That’s the way it was supposed to be, that’s the way we talked about it ... (*Code: Discussion about Non-Instructional Procedures, Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness*)

For whatever reason, George Johnson was absent from this meeting the day after the first field event. Team Five teachers and their coach, Regina, were not happy about the disorganization that occurred at this event. While they were pleased with the survival discussion that they did have with groups of students (once they found students to work with), they knew that the event could have proceeded much more smoothly than it did. The team also knew that they had better improve on their performance for the next scheduled field trip, when they had to take students out of the school building to a nature park. Later on in the meeting, the non Project-SIS speech teacher kept the team accountable when she asked the following question about the next trip:

Speech teacher

Have we narrowed down our questions? ... See, I don’t even know what else we can talk about as far as that is concerned right now. Because I know what you’re doing. I know what Gerry’s doing. **I know we need to talk about what we’re doing** – I think I know what I’m doing there.

I think I'll take one poem out in the field with me. And they'll reflect on what they've done – **if I know what you all are doing, I'll know what questions to ask them that day and we'll share. That's what I picture.** (*Codes: Dissonance Reaction: Teacher Exploration, Discussion about Instruction, Accountability*)

A few minutes later in the meeting, the team buckled down again when Regina, the coach, began to push the team on their planning process. From this point forward in the meeting, Regina's voice becomes increasingly powerful. In fact, Regina ends up giving advice as a coach that becomes pivotal to the effectiveness of Team Five from this date forward. I was quite stunned when I read this particular transcript because I had interviewed Regina at the end of that school year and had specifically asked her what caused the team to turn around. In response to my question, Regina manipulated the truth quite substantially. While the general theme was true, the details were quite false.

Interview Notes: 5-19-97:

[Regina] said that after January 1st, [Team Five] began to operate on a different level by focusing on a weekly team agenda that they developed themselves in which they would compare lesson plans in each subject and then talk about areas of overlap that they could reinforce in their own subjects when teaching their classes. When I asked [Regina] how this came about, she answered,

“One day they were just sitting around talking about lesson plans that they were developing and as they talked about what they were doing in their classrooms they began to come up with ideas for integrating different things that the other teachers were doing into work that they were developing.”

When Regina made this statement in May, I was quite amazed at how successfully Team Five had collaborated to move from a focus on student behavior to a focus on improving instruction. By far, this was the essential reason that led me to decide to study Team Five more closely for my dissertation. I wanted to know, “how did they do this!”

As the rest of this February transcript will show, Regina, played quite an important role in the trajectory of Team Five's focus on instructional practice. In a sense she had to. Karla and Gerry had become quite frustrated with George's misguided attempt to appear in control by

maintaining an independent distance. George was not allowing anyone to depend on him. His communication with his colleagues was becoming increasingly undependable and his actions were jeopardizing the effectiveness of the group.

Karla

Let me explain. Some are [working with visuals], **we just need to inform each other what we're doing, because I feel frustrated, ... and I don't want to be critical, because he [George] is going through so much.** (Code: *Dissonance Provocation*)

Karla

But – he just – it's like yesterday's organization. This is how he works...I'm not saying it doesn't frustrate me. (Code: *Dissonance Provocation, Resistance/Tension*)

Karla

I don't mean it bad, but it just doesn't always work and we're wanting [something] a little more concrete ... So I just think we have to do our own thing ...(Code: *Dissonance Provocation, Resistance/Tension, Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness*)

Gerry

You said it.

Karla

And I don't want to be critical, because I can tell this is just the place where George and I are different. And it works for him and he's an excellent teacher, I'm not complaining. So I'm just going to organize mine...the best I can (Code: *Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness*)

Regina

And see, a lot of times, also, whenever you're doing any kind of interdisciplinary unit, it's very difficult for men to fit into a lot of stuff that happens.

Karla

I agree.

Karla has finally taken off the kid gloves and revealed her frustrations to the group.

Regina is also showing a rare display of opinion, even to the point of commenting on the ability of men to engage in the cooperative process of interdisciplinary planning and instruction. What this indicates is that everyone was frustrated and perhaps even angry by the blunders of the

previous day. At this particular meeting, it was easy for the group to focus on George, given his absence. However, if Regina could have maintained a more objective position, she may have been able to show the group how each of them had contributed to the current dilemma. George did not act alone, nor could he have made any decisions without the cooperation of the group, whether that cooperation was conscious or not. The responsibility to plan and follow through belonged to the entire team, but the team had not evolved to the point where they could follow through because of the hidden dynamics which were affecting their process, which they were not consciously aware of. However, Gerry's awareness of own anger was motivating her to be truthful about her feelings and this was important in bringing the subconscious feelings of others to the surface:

Gerry

I just want this stuff written up ... Because I hear us ... groping – I hear them groping ...and then I get mad and I think, “Don’t get mad.” (Code: *Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness, Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

Regina

But, Gerry, it's like, for me, I have so many things to pull from, it's hard to manage it and narrow it down to – it's just hard. (Code: *Dissonance Provocation, Resistance/Tension*)

Gerry

See, that's why I think you need to write up what you're doing. So you teach one course, it's freshman English. You teach freshman science. You teach freshman [unintelligible]. I teach three courses. It's completely different. So I think we just need to narrow down, we need to write up this thing so we have ...a general statement and the basics underneath it. We need to write that up on a piece of paper, have it in our [view]. That's what I think we need to do. Now, ... please speak up. (Code: *Dissonance Reaction – Team Leadership, Early Teacher Attachment Style – Hypervigilance*)

One major reason for the process difficulties of Team Five was the fact that they did not have a full-time coach. As the transcript shows, Regina had become a classroom teacher and this was in direct conflict with the role she was hired to fulfill for Project SIS. The fact that this was

kept from the evaluation team is significant for evaluation research in general, as it demonstrates how implementation can stray from the original research design in significant ways. More importantly for this study, is the fact that Regina was not fully able to give her expertise and support to the team, and the team, particularly Gerry, was desperate to get that support. Gerry's insecurity about the interdisciplinary process coupled with her growing sense of responsibility to the students and parents motivated her to confront the coach and ask for direct leadership. Her actions can be viewed as a constructive turning point because it was forcing a hidden issue out into the public discussion where a resolution could conceivably be achieved. Thus Gerry's hyper-vigilant energy enabled her to take a bold step indicating that this emotional energy can play a constructive role in conflicts and in conflict resolution.

Karla

Well--

Gerry

That's not to say, the thing that gets me--

Regina

I guess – it's not to say that we don't have to adapt to ...classes, because in my third hour, I cannot do exactly the same thing ... **But, for me, I'm as confused in a way as you are, because I can go – that's the problem with English. You have to please every race. That sounds bad, but we do. I'm always going to leave someone out and I always – I have to get everything in and – I don't know how to describe it.** (*Code: Teacher Cognitions about Self, Resistance/Tension*)

...

When I saw that Regina was admitting her own confusion, and her personal dilemma about teaching children of different races, I realized that that she had lost sight of her coaching role. This was not necessarily a bad thing! Up until this time, Regina had been able to maintain a very controlled veneer of a woman who walked very carefully and was careful not to make waves. Being an African-American woman, Regina was obviously aware of her own racial status in comparison to the racial status of the teachers she was hired to support, which in Team

Five, were all white. Perhaps Regina felt uncomfortable providing an authentic level of coaching to teachers who might subconsciously question her authority on the basis of her race. Perhaps Regina felt more comfortable becoming a classroom teacher and interacting with students where her authority would not be questioned. Perhaps Regina had been used to teaching African-American children exclusively in her previous roles as a middle school teacher, and her new position at the high school was a challenge to her. Whatever the situation, it was clear that Regina had been experiencing her own inner conflict balancing her role as a coach with her role as a teacher. At the same time, it seemed all too easy for Regina to make herself a victim of circumstances in order to avoid taking a more pro-active leadership role, even with the full brunt of Gerry's honesty confronting her at that very moment. However, Regina also did something very interesting in her move to evade Gerry's challenge. Regina knew that Gerry was avoidant when it came to issues of race. Gerry had shown in previous interactions that she disliked discussions about race and she often profess "color-blindness" in order to diminish any discussions about race. By bringing her own racial challenges to the group discussion, Regina was effectively throwing water on Gerry's fire because Gerry would be ready to run from a discussion where race had been introduced. Whether Regina was consciously aware of using race to create a defensive mood cannot be determined from this context, but the effect on Gerry was the same. Gerry changed the tone of her challenge to Regina and began focusing on her discomfort with George Johnson.

Gerry

No, I understand exactly. **But I think that's what's bothering me and I need to let go of it. Because George's just ...[stuck in his ways] and I got to let go, because I can't deal with ...** I'm going to do my part ...get out there that day so I know what I'm doing, so I don't feel pressured with it and I'll be fine with it. And ...I have no doubt. It's not his comfort zone. *(Code: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Dissonance Reaction – Team Awareness)*

Gerry's comment about her own discomfort and her need to find a way to carry out her own teaching responsibility despite the challenges of the situation was something that Regina was able to build from. From this point on, Regina abandoned her victim role as an overworked, confused teacher and once again embraced her leadership role as a coach.

Regina

... But what my concern is ... what are you doing? **Are you doing anything that is interrelated, for instance – let me back up a minute – like with a Team VI and their unit? Jim, well, he just took it. And did it. He did the plans for every subject area.** And he did, you know – because they didn't know, the other teachers did not really know that much about criminology as such. So he took it and planned. But the other teachers in the subject area, they gave input, they decided what kind of ... what kind of descriptive paragraphs or whatever he was going to do within his classroom – they kind of decided. But he was the one that took it and planned it out, because it was basically his idea and everybody else went along with it, because they thought it would be a good thing for the kids.

And then they talked and worked in all of the other stuff. And, see, that's kind of where I think you're coming from as far as what George should be doing. But since that is not happening now, what I think needs to be done is that each one of you, for instance – science. You know what you're going to be working on, you know what the theme of your unit is. What kind of plans are you making – is it going to be for four days or five days or however many days, and it might be spread out over that period of time, it isn't something that you have to do on a daily basis. But have it down in black and white. I'm going to do such-and-such. These are my plans for this unit. Okay?

Then all of you can sit down together and share that information and then maybe once you hear what somebody else is doing in their area, it will make something click in your mind and say, well, I think, okay, I might bring this such-and-such in, you know. (Code: *Dissonance Reaction – Team Leadership*)

Speech teacher

That's why I put that folder there with what I think that I will use – on my final, there will be an essay question about this. And I'll expect them to write about all of us. **That's why I have to know. And if I take the story or a poem, I'm hoping somewhere in there I can refer to something that you're doing. I mean, I have to know ...**I specifically need to know what he might be doing in that classroom, because I can use literature that matches with what he's doing.

Gerry

That's exactly what I'm talking about.

Speech teacher

And they should see that connection. I shouldn't be – do whatever you want, I shouldn't be out here floating around ...

Regina

... I mean, you might want to spend tomorrow or the next day or a couple of days next week or whatever sitting down and writing out your plans, what you want to do and then taking time [unintelligible] to talk about it, to share it with each other and then dialogue and get it down in black and white. You can put it all together in a little packet and each one of you can have one, so you can have it. (*Code: Dissonance Reaction - Team Leadership*)

Episode 10 – February 5, Transcript

Top Down Question: “How are teacher beliefs influenced by cooperation and conflict and how do teachers learn and grow as a result?”

Bottom-up Questions: What is causing teachers to experience emotional stress, and how do their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior ...change in response to emotional stress? When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors ...How is attachment between teachers ...influencing teacher reactions ... ? What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers? How do attachment systems within teachers get “loosened up” by the actions of others? When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice?

Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Accountability Discussions, Discussions of Instruction, Discussions of Non-Instructional Procedures, Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reactions - Teacher Exploration - Teacher Leadership - Team exploration/cooperation - Team Awareness

Team Five was also becoming a close knit community of practice so that emotional pain in one member could affect the other members as well. For months, the team had listened to Gerry's complaints about student behavior and classroom management problems. But more and more frequently, she began to revealing her deeper emotions to the group.

Gerry
I feel guilty, I feel really guilty--

Regina
 Don't.

Speech teacher
 Don't, Gerry.

Gerry
 I'm having a very bad time right now, but **I just can't get George to settle down** and ... [I'm] talk[ing] behind his back right now.

Regina
 You're not--

Gerry
 No, because that's not a team thing. ... **But I just – I don't know where to go with this and I feel like we come in here every [day] ... and we never do anything concrete and it's just driving me nuts.**

Regina
 Well, I think we're there now. I think everybody realizes what you're talking about and it will happen now.

Gerry's emotional honesty had opened a door so that she could begin to talk about her frustration with the team's rate of progress. The team's inability to operate at an optimal level was provoking dissonance for Gerry, and prompting her to talk with her team mates to reduce the tension she was experiencing. Her sense of guilt led to an awareness of personal accountability and an examination of her sense of self as a teacher. But it was Gerry's growing sense of security with her team mates that led her to open up and explore possible solutions that could help the team solve their problems as a group. The dissonance felt by Gerry also provoked dissonance in her team mates. With the teams level of awareness heightened by Gerry's dissonance, the team members were motivated to reduce the tension they were experiencing by offering moments of guidance and leadership. At the same time, their ability to trust each other

allowed them to explore solutions with Gerry, and cooperate with each other to achieve better outcomes.

Barry

... And if you talk with George, his only thoughts right now, they are so far from us and everybody, he's not concerned with that. **We all care about George and we know what he's going through and as far as the unit things, it'll all fit together eventually.**

At this moment, Barry was demonstrating emotional maturity and exercising patience, further evidence of secure based strategies in action that could emanate from a secure attachment history. Barry's sense of conviction about the proper way to respond to the situation also compelled him to take a momentary lead and provide guidance to others.

Speech teacher

We're not talking behind his back.

Barry

... **So right now, why don't we go ahead and just relax about it and wait till next week? Because George will come back--**

Speech teacher

That's what's making her tense.

Barry

But the reason I say that, the reason I say that, Gerry, is because right now, George is under so much stress, ... – we still have time.

Speech teacher

We do.

Barry

We can't start together today, but next week, I think that if you relax a little bit, next week I think you'll see a change in George. A lot of his tension will come settling down with him. **And I think we'll be able to settle – I think Regina's suggestion, we can start writing up on that tomorrow and Friday and George will be ... – and I think next week, you'll see a big change. I think that a lot of things will start to relax and be easier. So I think they'll be okay.**

Gerry

Well, you see, I wanted to have a really dynamic team. And I see Team VI, what they've done is so wonderful, but the bottom line is somebody took charge and did that. And that's what happens. **And I can't take charge of this, because I don't know enough about what we're doing.**

Barry

We need to not worry about being like Team VI, either.

Gerry

I'm talking the organization. I'm not talking the unit itself. That's very exciting. I'd be scared to death ... because I know nothing. And the stuff she's [another math teacher] doing is scaring me to death. I'm not saying I wouldn't like to learn it ... I'm not ready for it.

This dialogue illustrates Gerry's anxiety, yet, she is also exhibiting a certain amount of trust in her colleagues by her willingness to admit her fears about not measuring up to the performance of a teacher in another team . Rather than lash out in emotional anger, sarcasm, or denial, Gerry is showing progress in her ability to talk about the weaknesses in her work as a math teacher. This is an indicator of a growing sense of security, based in part, on having achieved an attachment to her team.

Regina

Well, I think we're there now. I think now you have a good focus.

Barry

Yeah, we'll get that written down. It'll come together.

Gerry

Please understand it ... I'm mad at me, too. I'm upset with myself and the way I feel about this, because I don't want it to be negative, I want it to be positive.

Gerry's profound sense of guilt is driven in part by her perception that she has failed to become a good team facilitator, and her sense of responsibility to the team. At the same time, Gerry was comparing herself to a teacher on Team VI who had become the leader of his team and who was driving the curricular decisions of his team. What Gerry failed to consider was that the dynamics of her team were totally different than the dynamics of the other team thus making the comparison irrelevant. Gerry's hypervigilant need to be a competitive winner was

influencing her self-cognitions and judgment. Had Gerry succeeded in outperforming Team VI, she might have experienced a euphoric boost that could have temporarily suspended her fears and anxieties. Because Gerry's striving for perfection is driven by an underlying pattern of insecurity, Gerry tended to hold herself to unreasonably high standards. The danger in this, however, was that she would suffer emotional stress should she fail to meet her own expectations.

If Gerry was to examine herself in relationship with the team, she might discover that her performance as a facilitator has yielded exceptional outcomes. It was during her role as facilitator during the month of February that the group's failure to plan effectively came to light. Simultaneously, an authentic discussion was able to surface. It was also during her role as facilitator that Regina finally accepted the challenge to provide the coaching that the team needed. And finally, both Gerry and Karla had developed attachments to their students and their own colleagues, which made it very difficult for them to avoid being accountable to themselves and to others.

Barry also rose to the occasion. He reminded the group of the need to consider George's stress and emotional issues. He also maintained his normal level of optimism and helped the group return to the belief that they could still accomplish their goals and become a great team. Barry's secure-based strategies were important in helping the group to stay optimistic and in helping Gerry to manage her emotional stress in a more productive manner.

And finally, the non Project SIS speech teacher raised the bar on accountability with her insistence that the Team Five teachers reach a standard of excellence as a group that she would normally achieve if she was operating independently.

The Team Five teachers had invited the speech teacher [a non-Project SIS teacher] to become a temporary member of their group. The speech teacher had been able to identify gaps in the team's functioning and she insisted that they operate in a more effective manner so that they could meet her personal standards of teaching. As the outsider who had been invited in to the team, the speech teacher was able to interrupt the community of practice and raise their level of awareness about their actual practice so that it could be examined more carefully. Her voice, as a minority member, had the power to provoke dissonance and influence the schemas that were influencing the team up to that point in time. At the same time, the speech teacher was able to persuade Team Five to look at their own actions because the team was now ready to hear constructive criticism and handle the information from an outsider in a productive manner. Team Five was able to work with criticism and revise their team cognitions because they were now secure enough as a team to face their own weaknesses.

Episode 11 – February 10th, Transcript

Bottom-up Questions: What do attachment systems look like in different teachers? What examples demonstrate secure, ambivalent, or avoidant responses among teachers? How do attachment systems within teachers get “loosened up” by the actions of others? When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice?

Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Accountability Discussions, Discussions of Instruction, Discussions of Non-Instructional Procedures, Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reactions

The next transcript reveals how Karla began to make an extraordinary effort to break out of a shell that no longer fit her growing sense of self as a teacher.

Transcript: 2-10-97

Karla

In my head, [I] have a lot of ideas. **And one of them I wanted to share with George, because it seems like its more appropriate for him.**

Speaking very tentatively, Karla talks about a project she created two years ago, that she feels has the potential to be used in the Survival unit Team Five is developing. Speaking specifically to George, she tries to interest him in her work without appearing to impose any idea or even any agenda other than he might find the work useful in his own academic content area, Geography. Karla is also trying to interest her other colleagues on the team as a way of broadening their approach to the Survival unit. Up to this point in time, they had been approaching it on a very parochial level, limited by their own narrow band of expertise.

Karla

Two years ago, ... I [made]a little square out of four or five different landscapes...I gave them [the students] a huge piece of poster board, and I said, Put this little square anywhere you want on this poster board. And then I gave them questions like -- Well, they'd have to fill in the rest of the landscape and draw a picture of what kind of person would be there. ... **I think it fits you.** (spoken to George) ... -- **I'd have to show it to you. They had a good time with it, and they made a presentation.**

I was just brainstorming... And they got into it. I didn't agree with everything they -- they weren't thinking as clearly as I would have wanted them to... It's something I would like to do next year, sooner. I think this year will be kind of bumpy. **But that's kind of how I see it from my understanding.**

Gerry: I know that you're not -- I don't care if ... **Could I just have a copy of that so I can see kind of a general outline?**

Karla: I've got it saved on my computer.

Gerry: You can save off a copy, and then I can see what you're doing and start fitting mine. Because I'm going to have to get started on mine pretty quick. There's so many things I have to do.

Karla: Is it possible for you to have them make a skyline using geometric shapes, and then use nature using geometric shapes? Like, you know, you make a quilt. Is it possible for them to make something like that?

Gerry: Well, let me think about it and see what I come up with.

Karla: Skyline, I don't think in math terms like I wish I could. I was going to suggest to Barry that he do genetics with kids somewhere in there. That could help me ... I was trying to think of how it would fit.

Donna: Any resources that you guys need to try to figure out what you might be doing? ... lesson plans? Let me know so that I can plan.

Gerry: I'm going to need maybe half a day to go out. I need some mirrors.

Clearly, Karla is making an effort to accommodate to the needs of her team mates, while also stepping out of her usual deactivated pattern of avoidance. While Karla is attempting to engage her colleagues and “activate” her position with them, her colleagues are unable to make a complete connection with her. It is at this point that Gerry jumps into the conversation to discuss how she would like to use mirrors as an orienteering task during the Survival trip. When Gerry discusses her need for this tool, she sounds very confident and sure of what she wants to do, even though it still doesn't connect to what anyone else is doing on an interdisciplinary level. When Karla has an opportunity to jump in again with her proposal, she does so. However, she reverts to her tentative voice: wanting to push her proposal forward, but clearly holding herself back in case others reject what she has to offer. Her lack of confidence in winning other people over becomes very obvious in the dialogue.

Karla: ... **I was going, I would like some poster board. If this, what I'm doing, is okay -- I mean, I hope I'm going in the right direction.** ...

I'm going to put the conference on poster board. I'm going to use my old classroom pictures. I'm going to take a classroom picture of each of the ... and put them in the center, and call them the survivors [after more dialogue about the project] **I don't know.** It may all ... **Now, George, is that going in the right direction?**

George: It's good.

Karla: Okay.

From this point forward, Karla releases her idea to George. When George picks up on it, her goal, in a sense, has been accomplished. George picks up on the idea by adding his idea based on his memory of a former colleague's work. This person did a similar project to Karla's, but with the use of Geography – George's specialty area. At this point, George becomes excited about Karla's idea, but he also dismisses Karla from any possible interaction where the two of them could develop the idea together. With Donna's encouragement he decides to call the teacher at the other school, and "will make it fit" on his own. Karla's behavior shows evidence of being a fearful avoidant while George's behavior shows evidence of being a dismissive avoidant. The result is a loss of opportunity for each of them to work together to strengthen Karla's original idea, to blend two different academic content areas (English and Geography) successfully, and to create a more interesting challenge for their students. As a fearful avoidant, Karla fully participates in this process, but not without experiencing some dissonance.

George: She's the gal, and she's a really good friend of mine. But she has this really cool activity, where they do something similar to that. But it's, she has them cut out wheat fields and soybean fields and farms and homes and farms, and all this cool stuff.

And then they get a piece of poster board with like a line on it or two lines on it. And you know it's water. But the idea is to position your pieces.

There's a town, and there's a city. There's a power plant. There's several farms. There's mountains. There's all sorts of things. It's a landscape, but it has to do with placing things where they're at.

But everybody gets it separate. You don't put it together until you're all done, and But that's, the idea behind it is, it's also -- it's geography, but it's also a placement thing. The idea is for the kids to screw it up. That's the idea.

Karla: You should do that.

George: The idea is to screw it up, and then when you put it together and then go, Well, wait a minute. That doesn't make sense now. And then they have to figure out process.

Why did we do it like this? What can we do different next time? Where would we put this stuff? If survival is the issue, then why did we do that?

Karla: You should do that. That was something I dreamed about. (*coding: indicates dissonance with giving project to George*), **I have all the notes, but I'm saying you should do something like that, because I don't know if --**

I enjoyed it. (*coding: indicates dissonance again.*) **I don't know where it fits right now. I mean, it would fit. But it seems to make sense for you to do something with that.**

George: I'll make it fit.

Karla: Rather than me.

Clearly, George is taking ownership of the idea that Karla bestowed upon him. But the fact that he has to “make it fit,” means that the process won’t necessarily be a smooth one for him. If there was more willingness on the part of George and Karla to collaborate together, instead of working independently, George would probably not have to “make it fit” on his own. As the tape continues, Karla reveals that she clearly has more creativity up her sleeve. Karla is obviously feeling more secure with the group. She is now starting break out of the shell she normally wraps around herself when dealing with her colleagues as she starts sharing more of who she is, and the creativity that she is taking tentative steps to develop.

Donna: So you're starting?

Karla: I'm going to start... Taking pictures.

I just -- does this sound weird? I collect antique -- I don't know if they're antiques -- I collect old classroom pictures, those old schoolhouse pictures.

And those people survived in different times. I thought I'd bring one in and talk a little bit about that, just for a minute. And then take their classroom picture and just put it dead center in this conflict and little brainstorm can come of this. ...

Donna: It'll come together.

Karla: I think it'll come together if I keep -- I have major questions for each section so far. I guess "how does our imagination sustain us?" That's what I -- that's the question I use.

George: I have some questions for you guys, on some kids. Larry Houston appears on my roll as "absence and excused." Has he been enrolled and how come?

From this point on, George deflects the conversation to a procedural discussion about students and some of their behavioral issues. He talks about the need to focus on suspension as a method of control, something which he never emphasized before in the other transcripts I reviewed. This conversation is so divergent from the stance that George normally takes in reaction to his students, that I am really surprised by it. It seems like George has temporarily lost his mind and become Gerry! What happened?

When I used the lens of attachment theory and applied deactivating strategies to this scenario, I realized that George was using the topic of student behavior to avoid any more discussion about the Survival unit and interdisciplinary planning. I assumed that George must have been feeling out of his league when Karla continued to come up with more creative ideas after already "giving him" one of her favorites. His dismissal of Karla did not stop her flow of ideas. At the same time George may have been feeling depleted. He was out on family leave because of a medical emergency, and he had just recently returned. The team had obviously been moving ahead without him, which may have created an uncomfortable position for him. The only way for him to restore his comfort level in the group was to deflect the group, including Karla, away from an area he was feeling uncomfortable with. Knowing how easily the team could fall into a discussion about student behavior, he maneuvered them into that space and kept them there until the end of the meeting.

Episode 12 – February 25th, Transcript

Top Down Questions: What is the role of leadership in the sustenance of a community of practice? How are teachers' beliefs and learning fostered by the schools' leadership and organizational context?

Codes: Accountability, Discussions of Instruction, Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reactions

With all of the personality dynamics swirling within the team, the central challenge facing the teachers was to construct a logical purpose for their Survival unit and a reliable way of assessing students on what they had learned. In addition, the teachers needed to communicate with each other and work together to connect all academic areas into a cohesive unit. By February 25th, it was clear that these tasks had not been satisfactorily performed and the teachers were beginning recognize their own culpability for this outcome provoking dissonance for the team. With some teachers admitting their need to change, the coach may have experienced some dissonance as well provoking her to assert her own authority as an instructional leader in order to help the teachers take greater responsibility.

Transcript: 2-25-97

Regina

I think what really should have happened in the planning stages was ... everybody should have ... talked about it. They should have figured out how, this is our theme, how can each one of the subject areas--? And once you start brainstorming, a lot of times, everybody together can come up with a lot of stuff.

Gerry

That's what we should have done.

Regina

That's what should have happened.

Karla

Our diverse teaching style in this room caused a conflict as to how this should be designed. And, still.

Regina

The next time. Because if you don't look at it that way, you can get frustrated. The heck with this, I don't want to do this anymore and --

Karla

I think because I'm enjoying the direction I'm going with it right now, I can get ... I didn't know what he was going to do, so that—(*Code: Indicates frustration leading to dissonance provocation*)

Regina

Well, **George really – he really hasn't said what he's going to do.** That's why I – he really hasn't. (*Code: resistance/tension*) I mean, he came up with the idea of what to do, but he really – and I understand he's had a lot of distractions.

Karla

He wings it a lot.

This dialogue indicates that Regina is now willing to engage in hindsight analysis with Gerry and Karla. It also indicates that Regina is also feeling some tension about the situation with George, but in the interest of maintaining professionalism, she is reluctant to place blame on him directly, and she stops herself from doing so. However, Karla will no longer let George off the hook so easily. Her growing sense of frustration with George, coupled with her desire to be heard, motivates her to express her true opinion about George's disposition. It is not flattering.

Episode 13 – March 12th Transcript

Top Down Question: What is the role of leadership in the sustenance of a community of practice?

Bottom Up Question: When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice?

Codes: Accountability Discussions, Discussions of Behavior, Discussions of Instruction, Dissonance Provocation, Dissonance Reactions Team Awareness

On March 12th, Team Five met again and began discussing the interdisciplinary unit. During this meeting, Regina took a strong stand with the teachers in response to their comments that some of the students were showing reluctance and disinterest in the upcoming trip. With the exception of Barry, who was not present, the teachers began to make disparaging comments about the students. Gerry even suggested that they even encourage some students to stay home that day. This must have angered their coach to some degree because she responded forcefully, as the following transcript demonstrates.

Transcript: 3-12-97

Regina

I have a question. Now, this is supposed to be a [unit], right? Have you guys come up with those questions that we were talking about before, that each one of you needs to have in your classroom? Some people call them essential questions, ... that all relate to what this unit is about. It's supposed to be about survival. That's supposed to be the theme. **You're supposed to have four or five questions – four questions that the kids can answer once this is over with. And this is supposed to be talked about, discussed, displayed, within your classrooms, so that they will know that if you don't do very much with this and then just go out to the lake, it's not going to have very much meaning at all. And that might be part of the reasons why, if you are seeing some resistance, why the resistance is there.** Because there has not been a step by step process ...

Karla

You see, I've been talking about it and asking them questions, but I don't know if they ... I'm trying, I'm trying, because I have had questions like once a week about survival and how this is related to survival, and they might see it right now as just what's happening with what they're reading and what they're doing. And I was going to take it out there, but when I heard what was going to happen I didn't know how to ... that I can make a connection afterwards once I see ...

Regina

...but the point ... the main idea of an interdisciplinary unit is to ..., so that they can see that, okay, this is connected with English, and Social Studies, and Science, and Math - so that they can see the connection between those subject areas. So if only you do it, and mention it in class, it's not going to carry as much weight, **it's not going to stick as much as if everybody is doing something.**

George

So, let me clarify this then. We need four or five questions that ... not from each of us, but total ... key things that kids would answer concerning survival. Okay. So we could say ...

Regina

That can be posted in each one of your classrooms ...

George

Okay. Let's see. That might need to take priority here, folks.

Speech teacher

I agree. I already wrote all mine.

Gerry

The kids are all asking about it and what we're doing.

[Talkover]

Team Five teachers, including George who has engaged in major avoidance, and Karla whose avoidance was based on fear, have finally responded to Regina's call to action. Perhaps they were aware that they only had one more day to meet before the school shut down for a week for the Spring Break holiday. Upon their return, they would only have two additional days to prepare for the trip, which was scheduled for March 26th. Another public failure for this team of teachers would have been too humiliating for them. The fear of failure alone may have provoked dissonance for them as well as their coach. In addition, Regina's anger may have finally pushed her into a stronger leadership role so that she could be clear about the specific requirements that the teachers needed to complete their preparation. Gerry was concerned, as she had been in the past, because of her connection to certain students and her need to become more responsive to them. This is a significant point, because it demonstrates that Gerry's connection to at least some of her students, and her sense of accountability to them, was continuing to influence her and was helping her to override the hypervigilant defenses that she had constructed to protect herself. For the remainder of the team meeting that day, the team made great progress and finally created a set of essential questions for their interdisciplinary unit. Because this portion of

the transcript is strictly focused on instruction, and is four pages long, I have moved it into an appendix (Appendix 1 – Transcript of March 12, 1997).

Episode 14 – March 27th Transcript

Top Down Questions:

What is the role of cooperation and conflict in the formation of the teachers' community of practice?

How are teacher beliefs influenced by cooperation and conflict, and how do teachers learn and grow as a result?

Bottom Up Questions (slightly modified):

What is causing teachers to experience emotional stress, and how do their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior change in response to emotional stress?

When does cognitive dissonance occur, and what affect does it have on the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors?

How is attachment among teachers influencing their reactions to each other?"

How do attachment systems within teachers get "loosened up" by the actions of students or colleagues?

When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on practice?

Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self , Accountability Discussions, Dissonance Provocation, Resistance/Tension, Dissonance Reaction - Teacher Leadership, Team exploration/cooperation, Team Awareness, and Positive Dissonance and Teacher Attachment

On March 26th, the Survival unit field trip took place. The transcript on March 27 gave the team an opportunity to discuss what went well and what needed improvement. Karla used this opportunity to bring up the need for more dialogue and communication within the team:

Transcript: 3-27-97

Karla

And I wanted to say, I want more build up for the field trip in the classroom. I didn't have a clue what you guys were doing in the classroom, or if you did anything before we got there. I felt totally isolated with what I was doing. I don't [really] relate to anything you guys are doing in the classroom, so I just felt like ... what is she doing? (Code: Accountability, Dissonance Reaction – teacher leadership)

George

I relayed everything. (Code: resistance/tension)

Karla

I didn't know what you were relaying to them [the students]. I need to know that. I mean, perhaps we could have tied it together. I didn't know. I thought, "I don't know if I'm doing too much." (*Code: Dissonance Provocation, Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

In the dialogue above, Karla confronted George directly about his avoidance of communication. In the dialogue that follows, Barry tried to defend George, but he was intercepted by Gerry who decided to shine the light on the entire team's inability to communicate, stay focused, and organize themselves. Gerry goes on to brilliantly identify their personality differences as one of the main causes of their problems as a team. Karla backs her up by offering her own critique. While Barry continues to resist, George eventually capitulates and admits that his style can throw a monkey-wrench into the group's process.

Gerry

We need to, as teachers, all of us, we need to outline what we're actually doing on paper instead of just saying it off the top of our heads. (*Code: Accountability*)

Karla

And I wanted, you know I really wanted those questions two months ago, and I remember asking, and I just think it came too late. ...

Barry

[That's unique for] your English class to ...

Karla

I bet I could have had though. (*Code: Teacher Cognitions of Self*)

Some of the stories that I was reading had things about Science or Nature that I couldn't ...

Gerry

The problem is, we each know what we're doing, but we're not relating that to each other, and it comes from being normal teachers that we tend to work off the cuff a certain amount, all of us do. Not that we don't have a general plan, but when we're working with other people you can't do that. You have to have it written down in front of each other, because we don't know what each other ... you might think, everybody knows what I'm thinking, but you have no idea. (*Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership*)

Barry

And I agree there completely, because ... I agree. I'm really thinking too that if I write something down, I'm thinking [how am I] going to do it like that? And I think if you write it down you still have the ability to change it.

Gerry

As long as you stay within the theme. **But say you were never writing the theme, then we can't figure out what you're doing.** You see, I think you're afraid you're going to get tied down. We're not tying you down, you come in here and change it, you can tell us you're changing it. **But you need to put it down. It's the same reason he [the principal] wants us to write lesson plans each week. It's the same idea. As much as I hate writing them, and you know I said I hate it, but it ties me down to really thinking about what I'm doing and letting other people know what I'm doing. It also ties you down a little bit to maybe making yourself follow what you should do instead of kind of going 'ah, I don't want to' and not doing it, when you know it would really be the [proper] thing to do.** (*Codes: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership, Teacher Cognitions of Self, Accountability*)

Karla

I know from reading things, something about History or something ... more than you might realize.

George

Yes. I would agree. **I always agree completely.**

Gerry

So you have that down, that **we need to organize better and [help each other]? I think the thing we do in here, we tend to talk about something and we never make a decision. We table it, we table it, we table it, and pretty soon three weeks have passed and the table disappears. We do that. We really do. That's one of our faults.** (*Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Accountability*)

George

...And if it's me, I have to make a decision ...].

Once Gerry scored this victory, she went on to blaze new trails. Gerry's once negative hypervigilance was now morphing into a very powerful force. Her ability to see beyond her own faults and to observe other people was now helping her to think of ways to confront the problem and offer a solution in a positive manner. Gerry would go on to consider the role of the team's paraprofessionals in the Survival unit. She also would also consider how students with leadership potential could play a more important role in the Survival unit as well. In short, Gerry was now confident enough about herself and her position within the team to offer ways of

improving participation for everyone in the small learning community. She was no longer simply focused on her own internal anger and stress.

Gerry

I think we need to define roles. For example, Barbara [a teacher's aide] and others..., I think we need to define their roles out there a little more, because I think they were [unsure] of what they were doing. They were just kind of there, and they had not been given specific instructions of who to be with or where to go. [If they're going to monitor], we need to give them actual duties. *(Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership)*

[Talkover]

Gerry

Also, along with defining the [aides] like Barbara, we need ... the young people that helped us, we need to train them ahead of time in the areas they're working, and keep them with one group instead of moving around. Somehow we need to train them, because some of them were very willing to help me but did not know how ... so it was not appropriate. *(Code: Dissonance Reaction – Teacher Leadership)*

Up to this point, Gerry is discussing leadership development and potential in both the paraprofessionals and students. She is demonstrating more creativity in her thinking as she devises ways of expanding the decision-making and administrative capacities of others. Gerry's own leadership ability has become more apparent in this process. Furthermore, it is evident that Gerry's leadership ability is the direct result of her new ability to relinquish control and to trust others with leadership responsibilities.

Gerry

You know what's interesting, on the way home on the bus, that [freshman] [Maria], ... **she said, can we go next year as your helper? So, some of our freshmen that really are good kids...***(Code: Positive dissonance and Attachment)*

During these moments of connection with her students, Gerry is revealing her movement away from hyper-vigilant defensiveness as her sense of attachment to students (and colleagues) grows more secure.

Episode 15 – April 8th Transcript

Bottom Up Question: When does exploratory behavior among teachers occur? How does this lead to a focus on instructional practice?

Top Down Questions: What is the role of cooperation and conflict in the formation of the teachers' community of practice? What is the role of leadership in the sustenance of a community of practice?"

Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Accountability Discussions, Discussions of Instruction, Dissonance Reactions - Teacher Leadership, - Team exploration/cooperation

When the Project SIS teams were told to begin planning for their Summer Institute, which was to take place that June, Team Five began to think about their concerns and their own process. They had learned from their interdisciplinary planning experience that they needed to be more disciplined about time management and more focused on specific goals that related directly to instruction when they worked together as a group. The transcript from April 8th illustrates these points as the team began to plan how they could use their upcoming summer institute in a more productive manner.

Transcript: 4-8-97

Gerry

Well, either one way or another, have one full day in which we are left alone from any kind of meetings, ... **So that we actually have some time ... you know, we can sit and talk for ever. We need some kind of time ... we need some kind of little restraints on us, like the bells ringing, to keep us going, or we can get [bogged] down, so we have some time goals.**

...(Codes: Teacher Cognitions of Self, Accountability)

I think if we had at least one full day at the institute to literally lesson plan and brainstorm, to integrate our courses. And we bring our basic outlines of what we do throughout the year and we go over those basic outlines. That still leaves us [a lot of room for] change and

experimentation and all that ... you see, that way ... I can't change my curriculum because it has to be sequential, but if you know what time I'm going through what, you could switch your units around and whatever to fit. (*Codes: Instruction, Team exploration/cooperation*)

George

I think that's a good idea, and I'd like to see that too. I'd like to see more [than] half an hour [on the] inter-disciplinary unit. **So, I'd like to have a day [to plan] not just an inter-disciplinary unit, but our whole year [as a group].** I think we all agree that we want a whole year ...inter-disciplinary unit, and that's ...(*Codes: Instruction, Team exploration/cooperation*)

Karla

I would like to take another look at homework and what ...(*Code: Instruction*)

Gerry

Write that down Barry ["homework"] ... just general topics. We're going to take this little book with us, ...

As the dialogue demonstrates, Team Five was now able to plan their own process and articulate a set of goals that were important to them. They were partly driven by the responsibility of preparing for an upcoming faculty retreat, and their administrative leaders had wisely chosen to allow the teachers to identify what they needed to do to as a team to make the summer institute as productive as possible. Yet groups can sometimes be given a directive to perform and still fall short of achieving a positive outcome. By this point in the school year, Team Five had made great progress in their ability to take collective responsibility for their professional work as teachers. Team Five had been able to achieve this level of participation in their own activity because they were able to communicate with each other on the basis of mutual respect, trust, tolerance, and understanding. At the same time, they were assisted greatly when their coach finally accepted the team's challenge to become a more effective leader. Once Regina saw that the team was ready to get serious, she stepped into their process to give them extra guidance and encouragement.

Regina

Let me ask you this. Do you think ... **Do you think part of that could be appropriate use of time, curriculum mapping in the very beginning. In other words, write down exactly, month by month, what you cover in each one of your classes, and then kind of lay that out, and then each one of you look at the other's and see maybe where there can be some correlation or some alignment of your curriculum that way.** And that can take quite a bit of time to do, because I have done it. (*Modified Code: Leadership, Instruction*)

George

We're advocates for that. That's a good one. (*Modified Code: Team cooperation*)

Gerry

... curriculum mapping?

Regina

...But the first time that we did it, we used index cards. We had, like, September on the index card, and we just wrote down general things, topics, or skills that we worked on in the month of September. Then October, then November, December, all the way for the rest of the year. Then we laid it out on a table, all of us, and then we would go around and look at each other's to see what September looked like, and was there anything in September that I had that maybe the Social Studies teacher could integrate. And that's why we put month by month and did that. And then, we took a sheet, a [curricular map] sheet, and we did it over again on this sheet so that everybody could have a copy of it. (*Modified Code: Leadership, Instruction*)

Gerry

If you have the cards we can switch them. If you put it on the cards, then you just switch the cards? I like that. (*Codes: Team Exploration/cooperation, Instruction*)

Karla

[Any] brainstorming beforehand?

Regina

Yes, we talked. We did some talking beforehand. Just kind of doing our things that we thought were important and not important in our curriculum. There are some things that I've found in the curriculum that we teach the kids, that we really don't need to teach them.

George

Okay. I was just trying [to draw together] just for my own [unintelligible]. It sounds like we're all in agreement that we want summer institute time to benefit us as a team. We want time to work as a team, and not just an hour here and an hour this afternoon and a half hour over there. We need blocks of time so that we can work and get something done. (*Modified Code: Team Exploration/Cooperation*)

The Team's collective responsibility was now supported by the leadership that their coach was providing in a more consistent manner. Teachers work in intensive environments that

have the ability to bring out all of their anxieties and insecurities. But they can overcome them when they are given the supports that they need and the environments which can serve as stepping stones to growth.

Episode 16 – April 9th Transcript

Gerry explained her own process very well in a transcript dated 4-9-97, when Team Five members were discussing a feedback memo that they had received from me that detailed the difficulties that some of their colleagues on another team were having. Gerry's compassion surfaced when she heard about the difficulty of other team teachers. When this happened, she could really identify with their struggles and was motivated to help them in the way that she had been helped by her colleagues in Team Five.

Transcript: 4-9-97

Gerry

... but I'm telling you, though, that maybe we, ... maybe we're having more success and maybe it's because we're a better [team] ... maybe we can help them somehow, if there's a way to address that. **Because there was [a time] earlier in the year when I was just devastated with my 5th and 6th hours and I needed help, and I cried out to you guys for help, literally, and I got help. And now I don't feel that way.** [Its] not that I don't have rough days, and not that I feel like I've impacted enough kids in that 5th hour – there's too many Fs, there's too many repeats next year. But at the same time, I cried out for help and I got help.

And maybe there's a quiet, shy person, as I was years ago... didn't want to let anybody know I was having trouble because I didn't want anybody to think bad. **I didn't want anybody to think I was a failure, and I hid it, and I just suffered it alone because I didn't want anybody to see it. Now I'm to the age that, heck, I know I've succeeded and I've failed, and if I show my failure to you all it isn't going to devastate me, it's going to only help me.** But there was a time in my life when I didn't do that. Okay, there was a time in my life ... when I first came to ... I suffered the same way with classes, and I sat in that window in back and bawled, a whole planning period, and never told anybody because I was afraid I'd lose my job. And I needed the job. And I hated everything I was going through. Do you see how different I am now? **And it's a security thing, maybe with having tenure and all that kind of stuff too. But I think that if there are teachers out there, especially these young teachers, that are feeling that way, if we can somehow help them ...** and it may have to be very confidential, but I still think we have an obligation as a team to help them, even if they're not our Team...

In her own words, Gerry Robbins summarizes her own growth and captures the theme of this study. Gerry admits that her insecurities as a teacher have affected her from the very beginning of her long teaching career. Through the environment of the small learning community, Gerry was able to face her fears and anxieties about teaching and ultimately become a better teacher. Her participation in a supportive team, coupled with the growing sense of attachment to her educational community of students, parents, other teachers, her administrators and coach, enabled her to achieve a level of security that she had never felt before during her 20 years of teaching. Gerry's acceptance by others had softened her hyper-vigilant behavior and allowed her to redirect that very angry and defensive energy into a new set of activities that allowed her to engage with her environment in a more positive manner. Ultimately, she felt compassion for other staff members of Project SIS who had been experiencing difficulty, and she was ready to offer assistance and support to them.

Summary of Findings

Data that demonstrate a causal pathway leading teachers to focus on improving instruction

The perception of problems in the environment of small learning community, including student misbehavior at the beginning of the school year, increased teacher stress and activated their individual personality defenses. Defenses based upon the insecure attachment patterns of ambivalent or avoidant people became salient for 3 of the 4 teachers on Team Five, and influenced their decision-making process as a team.

From very early in the school year, the teachers became focused on the control of students utilizing punitive measures including detentions, suspensions, and expulsions. This decision-making process may have been influenced by the culture of the school and the historical patterns of behavior and ideas that individual teachers had developed over the years as educators.

However, the fact that the team of teachers was held in check by administrators who demanded a paper trail before they would allow the teachers to suspend students indicates that the team was ready to utilize extreme measures as a result of stressors in their environment. Their defensiveness exposed a set of secondary strategies that had been activated, and these secondary strategies were consonant with particular attachment patterns as described earlier.

The teachers of Team Five complied with administrative demands by arranging regularly scheduled team conferences with both parents and students to create the documents that the school would need to suspend students. The team meeting of September 17 was a pivotal event in the causal pathway because the team had come to the decision to schedule one day every week for Team Meeting Conferences with parents and their children. This meant that approximately 20% of their team meeting time would be reserved for this activity throughout the school year. As Team Five became more adept at the process of creating documentation, the administrators would gradually support their efforts to suspend or transfer students to alternative schools. However, an unintended consequence of the team's activity was the increase in contacts with parents and students on an intense level. These contacts would also create opportunities for more intense interactions with parents and students, and some of these interactions would provoke additional defensiveness among certain teachers.

The social environment of team conferences produced an unexpected pressure for teachers. It became difficult for the team of teachers to pursue a strategy of suspension or expulsion when parents were clearly interested in their child's education. Furthermore, parents expected their children to remain in school. The surprising cooperation of parents created the first episode of "Positive dissonance" and began to loosen old schemas that teachers may have held about parents who lived in high poverty areas. The positive dissonance that parental

attitudes and behaviors created among teachers strengthened teachers' connection to parents while raising teachers' accountability to the parents.

The September 20th team meeting with Larry Houston and his mother was extraordinary for a number of reasons. It demonstrated how a group of teachers set the stage for a promising relationship with a problematic student during the first 30 days of school. It showed the powerful effect that a parent can have upon teachers when the parent creates a space that forces teachers to shift their stereotypes about low-income urban parents. For example, when the parent demonstrated that she expected her child to cooperate fully with his teachers and learn in school, she interfered with the cycle of low teacher expectations and turned potential adversaries into advocates for her son. The September 20th conference also showed that teachers can progress beyond the practice of social control by punishment once they have been held to higher standards of behavior by their administrators, and once that standard has been reinforced by the actions of the parent. The conference demonstrated that the actions of the parent are vitally important because a positive response by the parent may enable teachers to feel more secure. Once teachers feel more secure they can become advocates for the student. The September 20th conference also established an opportunity for a problematic student to open up to his teachers, which positioned himself to receive more support from them despite his previous transgressions. The contrast between the student's past indiscretions and future potential for improvement created cognitive dissonance among his teachers, and created a space where they could view him in a new light. In that dissonant moment, the student allowed his teachers to become intrigued by the possibility that he could be saved, and this new possibility gave them the energy they needed to support his cause.

In the November 4th transcript, an unexpected positive action by Larry Houston served to challenge the negative beliefs that his teachers held about him. His actions provoked positive dissonance in the teachers and stimulated both their sense of attachment and accountability to him. The teachers demonstrated a reluctance to suspend Larry Houston without an opportunity to re-connect with him on the basis of a new set of understandings.

The dissonance that Larry Houston's positive behavior created when he rescued his teacher from potential harm caused them to question their own assumptions and ponder whether they had examined all possible explanations about his behavior. This dissonant moment, provoked by a positive student action, motivated his teachers to think about their responsibility as educators and to develop a more compassionate and altruistic response. In effect, Larry's behavior loosened their cognitive working models about problematic students creating a cognitive space that could enable his teachers to develop a new approach to working with students in the small learning community.

The teachers' experience with Larry Houston was important in another way as well. The Team Five teachers began to realize that it was important for them to reach out to students who were having academic difficulty, and not wait for students to approach them. In particular, Karla and George began to realize that some students did not know how to ask for help, and some students who needed help didn't even know that they should seek it. This was an important lesson for teachers, such as Karla and George, who tended to have avoidant tendencies that could widen the gap in their relationships with students.

Later on, the team five teachers experienced collective dissonance over their failures to meet certain professional demands as educators. One failure concerned accountability to parents. Another failure concerned their inability to plan and execute a coherent interdisciplinary activity.

In response to the dissonance these failures provoked, teachers in Team Five began to exhibit annoyance with each other and began to voice frustration with the lack of leadership exhibited by their coach. However, the level of discomfort experienced by the group provoked some of them to examine their own behavior more carefully, and to question their own degree of accountability to others.

During Episode 5, which took place on November 25th, the high level of dissonance experienced by Team Five, due to their very public collective failures, challenged their typical cognitive working models about students and parents. Even Gerry's reliance on hyper-activating strategies, which normally served as a diversion for she and the group, was now becoming a major annoyance to team members. Gerry's focus on trivial student mis-behavior may have become inappropriate to her teammates after so many parents had demonstrated their commitment to their children's education. The only way that the team could restore their collective efficacy as educators, and maintain any sense of integrity as professionals, was to focus on their practice as educators. Focusing on their practice was restorative to their collective self-esteem because it was a visible pathway that could divert their attention from group failure back to group success.

During the remainder of that team meeting on November 25th, the teachers concentrated on instructional planning. It was the first time they had been able to devote so much energy and focus to that topic. This was an important development in the evolutionary growth of team members. Due to the dissonance arising from stereotypical beliefs that were challenged by the positive actions of students and parents, teachers were motivated to reduce their dissonance by coming to new realizations about their own thinking and behavior. When Team Five teachers experienced dissonance as a result of their own perceived failures as a collective, they were able

to recognize the need to focus on their own learning needs as a group. This meant coming to terms with their individual differences as teachers so that they could begin to develop shared educational practices. Focusing on instructional planning was a way of restoring both their individual and collective self-esteem after the discomfort of public group failure. Support was important to this undertaking because the group provided the collective support that individual members needed to venture forward with instructional planning. With collective support, a secure base was provided to each individual enabling each individual to overcome their own individual insecurities

With the December 2nd transcript, I examined Gerry's inflexibility and rage with students by utilizing attachment theory. Gerry's dialogue in team meetings demonstrated an anxious attachment style, particularly when her fragile identity as a competent math teacher was threatened. Gerry would often employ hyperactivating strategies in response to the insecurity she experienced in her classrooms. The unfortunate part of this behavioral pattern was that Gerry really hungered for connection. However, her cognitive working strategies could only allow her to connect with her students on a dimension of anger. By instigating anger in her students, she could connect with them through the anger inside of herself.

By February 4th, the teachers of Team Five were shifting their focus to develop new schemas about themselves and their students. The environment of the small learning community was providing the necessary bridge that they could cross to develop these new schemas. Moreover, the bridge was built on episodes of positive dissonance, i.e., moments that challenged the veracity of insecure attachment schemas. These episodes of positive dissonance would loosen the old schemas so that a set of reactions could form on the basis of new information. When positive dissonance occurred, new opportunities for healthy attachments could develop

among teachers and students, and a stronger sense of security could emerge in the person experiencing attachment.

During Episode 7 on February 13th, humor combined with self-disclosure during the discussion among team members indicating that a level of trust had been established within the group. This level of trust enabled them to focus on problem-solving without being absorbed by the emotional weight of the problem itself. Perhaps humor combined with self-disclosure, is a mildly dissonant provoking cognitive event. At the same time, this event creates a pathway that enables one to engage in a reflective look at oneself. Perhaps laughter blocks the negative emotional pathways leading to feelings of shame and the terror of failure. Conversely, perhaps laughter and good feelings provoke greater group harmony and acceptance among members so that more secure attachments can evolve among them. With attachment established on a more secure level, teachers are free to engage in exploratory behavior, including self-examination and reflection as a group. As Gerry's dialogue demonstrates, new avenues of action and new self-realizations as an educator were possible once she felt safe enough within the group.

However, even as trust increases and revelations occur among the group, external pressures continue to challenge the group, interfering with their overall progress. Recognizing how far they have come, yet how much further they may need to go, some team members confronted others in the group who were not fully cooperating in the team effort. Certain teachers also confronted the coach about her lukewarm leadership. These confrontations were evidence of a growing sense of security among team members. They were no longer hiding behind avoidant or ambivalent defenses because these defenses could have interfered with a clear focus on problem solving. Instead, a growing sense of security enabled problem solving to occur and led teachers and their coach to engage in exploratory behavior. Exploratory behavior

allowed teachers to think creatively about their own educational practice and to produce more ideas that could help them evolve as teachers and as teammates.

During Episode 8 on February 3rd, the need to create a common focus for students had not yet been identified because Barry, Gerry, and Karla were still having difficulty reaching consensus on this issue. Although the teachers had begun to make some progress addressing student behavioral and classroom management issues, there was a gap in their ability to reach the same level of cooperation and coordination when it came to academic/instructional issues. The development of new academic/instructional approaches was a more complex cognitive task that required sustained effort and focus. However, this focus and attention was often compromised by the deep-seated secondary attachment strategies that surfaced among some teachers in their communications with each other.

During Episode 9 on February 5, the tenuous balance that maintained relationships among team members was destabilized. At first, this instability was provoked by a breakdown in communication and a series of mishaps, which the team chose to blame on George. The momentum of instability was carried by Gerry when she chose to confront Regina about the need for greater leadership. Thrown off balance, Regina tried to retreat from her leadership role. She defended herself from Gerry by injecting race into the discussion – something that she knew would cause Gerry to retreat from her confrontational stance. Whether Regina responded with this strategy consciously or not is impossible to discern from the discussion. Importantly, when Regina chose to step back into her leadership role and provide guidance to Team Five based on her observations of another team's approach, she created a space for truth to emerge. "Truth" defined in this sense is the avoidance of pretensions, defenses, or power-plays. Truth results from an honest assessment of facts and an analysis of problems without blame. As the transcript

demonstrated, instability among the teachers provoked the emergence of truth. This occurred when certain teachers' defensive strategies became moot and thus lost their ability, at least temporarily, to interfere with the public nature of problem-solving within the team. In that moment of crisis, the person who is most disturbed by the temporary loss of self-protective defenses may finally speak up about the problems that are really affecting them.

Another important point bears on the emergence of truth. Distributed leadership permitted everyone on the team to exercise leadership at some point. At the same time, a dominant leader was not in place to either promote the growth of the team, or prevent the evolutionary growth of the team. Leadership is often a two-way street, and if the leader is insecure or frightened by an overarching social environment, that leader can cause even more damage to the growth of her followers than a leader who makes mistakes in the pursuit of an authentic quest for progress. For the most part, the teachers of Team Five were ready to change and to grow, therefore, they were ready for authentic leadership. When the opportunity came to demand leadership from their coach, they took full advantage of the moment. In return, they received the important guidance that they needed to hear, resolving at least part of their conflict within the team, and enabling them to make progress in developing their pedagogical approach to interdisciplinary practice.

In Episode 14, there is powerful evidence that change has occurred in the team. On March 27th Karla shows incredible growth in her ability to break out of her shell and confront another team mate. Her avoidant tendencies have now been replaced by a level of self-confidence that she did not demonstrate during the first half of the school year. Karla had become fascinated with the task of creating an interdisciplinary unit on Survival, but she was also frustrated by the lack of progress due to the actions of her teammates, particularly George's.

Once George was confronted by the honesty that was emerging in the team, he could no longer play the role of the dismissive avoidant. Earlier in the month of March, George had demonstrated that he was capable of cooperating with other members of the team when he took the lead on facilitating the interdisciplinary unit questions. However, George was not able to sustain this responsibility, and his failure to communicate with team members put them all at a certain level of risk. Once these failures surfaced, George could no longer run for cover. Once open and honest communication had emerged in the team, George finally admitted that his own tendency to withhold communication could be detrimental to the group's growth as a team.

Gerry's potential to become a great self-reflective teacher also emerged in this transcript. Not only did Gerry examine her own actions, but she also pushed her team mates to admit to their faults and to become self-reflective as well. During the first half of the school year, Gerry might have resorted to tears and anger, projecting herself as both misunderstood victim and intolerant perpetrator. But that pattern of behavior was no longer in evidence by March 27th. Gerry had grown through her interactions with others in the small learning community. The bottom line revealed in this transcript is that all the teachers of Team Five had achieved such a degree of trust in their colleagues that they could now afford to be more open and honest with each other, even to the point of 'leaking' negative information. The insecure tendencies that were carried by individual teachers, based on their attachment histories, had been challenged by the intensity of their interactions with each other, their students, and the broader community that all came to be an important part of the small learning community.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Emotions are motivating forces that have a powerful effect on the processes of thinking within the mind. Negative emotions will often serve as the trigger of negative schemas, and these in turn, create the conditions for actions and decisions that may perpetuate negative belief systems about others. In adults, emotions are triggered by numerous processes, including stressful situations. In this study of behavior change among a team of teachers, the process of attachment and the secondary attachment strategies has emerged as a compelling explanation for the change that took place among individual teachers. Perhaps in large anonymous settings, where relationships among students and faculty are not as intense as in small intimate settings, attachment would not play such a prominent role in the growth and development of individual teachers. But in a small learning community, attachment processes became a critical factor in the ability of the teacher to connect in a powerful way with others, and most importantly, to develop the ability to reflect upon their own process and progress as a teacher within themselves.

As this study reveals, intense social situations such as those found in small learning communities can instigate deeply held attachment patterns when individuals must interact with others under stressful conditions or situations. In the small learning community of an urban high school undergoing the first phase of reform, one possible explanation of the intense emotional response is teachers' fear of losing control. Because the educational enterprise evaluates teachers on their ability to manage their classrooms and keep behavior under control, teachers are threatened by students who challenge their authority (Glasser, 2002). Another possible explanation for the intense emotional response is the closer proximity and effect of students who can no longer be avoided when a small learning community is created. Whereas in previous

years when teachers could address students' behavioral problems with a dismissive response (i.e., sending them out of the room), in the context of a small community, this is no longer tenable. Team Five teachers now felt pressure to solve problems that they could no longer dismiss because they were interacting with students on a much more intensive level. In addition, the teachers experienced a great deal of disappointment over student misbehavior. Knowing that the one of the key propositions of the Project SIS theory was not operating as planned, they returned to traditional methods of social control and punishment as a way of dealing with student immaturity and misbehavior. The emphasis on traditional methods of social control would begin dominating the evolving community of practice, effectively preventing a rational examination of alternative methods and strategies that could have been developed for the new small learning community. In response to the pressures on the evolving community of practice, the team quickly regressed back into a reliance on the familiar patterns of teacher behavior that were already known to them as individuals.

The personalities of teachers in Team Five also began to exert influence on the evolving community of practice. Given the close proximity of students and the frustration that some of them evoked, teachers such as Gerry reacted by developing a reliance on the team to shoulder some of their burdens with students. Gerry's hypervigilance may have played a starring role in the situations that were discussed by the team, but her prominent role was also supported by other team members who revealed their own frustrations through different types of personal reactions. As outlined in the results sections, these reactions could be analyzed through the lens of attachment theory, specifically through the secondary attachment strategies that triggered avoidant or ambivalent tendencies. These insecure behavior strategies would support an over-reliance on social control methods and would also lead to the development of an in-group/out-

group categorization among teachers, with the team members becoming the in-group and the students becoming the out-group. In particular, Gerry would become highly influential in the categorization of students as an out-group based on the fears and anxieties that she projected onto her students. By providing empathic support to Gerry, the teachers of Team Five may have inadvertently given fuel to their own fears and anxieties, strengthening their cohesiveness as group based and their sense of allegiance to each other. Team Five teachers were not simply reacting to the stress of uncooperative students; they were also reacting to the stress of being monitored by the intervention itself. The team was under the surveillance of the Project SIS intervention at several levels: the coach and other school-based administrators, the evaluators and funders of the intervention, and the school district itself. Teachers knew that students' performance data would be collected and analyzed at the end of the year by an outside agency and that they would be judged based on student performance. They also knew that their lives would be exposed in ways that none of them had ever experienced before, increasing their overall level of anxiety and sense of insecurity. Increasingly, the team meetings became "ground zero," the place where issues were brought to light and expounded upon, but often without the satisfaction of coming to a complete resolution. In a 45 minute session shared among four teachers, there was little time for resolution, but there was always the sense of pressure, urging the team to take some kind of action. Increasingly the action was based on the categorization of students as an out-group and the need for teachers to exert social control over the out-group so that teachers could begin to feel secure again.

The theory of the small learning community was that teachers would work with students to help them sort through problems so that the student outcomes such as attendance, number of credits completed, and engagement with school could improve. The theory of Project SIS was

that teachers would become empowered by their team membership and their ability to solve problems collectively. However, with the level of anxiety experienced by team members and the focus on social control, team members were not able to carve out a community of practice that had the intellectual energy to focus on creative pedagogy. The team's past experience as individual teachers in a large traditional high school had not prepared them for this task, nor had the professional development that they had received prior to the start of the intervention, despite its mandate to create an interdisciplinary curriculum. As the team rallied around the purpose of social control, they lost sight of the mandate to create an interdisciplinary project that would engage their students in learning. Insecurity among team members was threatening to damage their sense of efficacy as individuals. In order to reduce their own inner tensions and restore their sense of individual efficacy, the teachers relied on the power of their group to affirm themselves and justify their professional self esteem as teachers. By focusing on student behavior and neglecting other areas that posed too much of a challenge, they effectively protected their collective self-esteem and gave their community of practice a chance to develop its own identity, common bonds, and allegiances. Allowing an insecure teacher, such as Gerry, to dominate the group with hypervigilant defensiveness provided cover to the avoidant teachers, such as Karla and George, who wanted to keep their own insecurities and weaknesses as teachers hidden from others. As such, all of the teachers in Team Five began to cooperate with each other on elevating student behavior to an issue of prominent importance. Social impact theory (Latane, 1981) explains how cooperation can arise within a group to protect the group's identity and reduce the potential for conflicts to disrupt the group. The immediacy of the group (meeting daily for 45 minutes), the number of people in the group (four members), and the importance of the group (high) enabled the group to develop strong cohesiveness thus leading to strong

conformity. The group recognized that they were important to each other and their survival as a group depended on their ability to avoid any potentially embarrassing exposure of their individual weaknesses as teachers. As such, teacher team cooperation became a method of avoidance and a reification of the status quo for the evolving community of practice, at least in the first part of the school year.

It was only through conflict that authentic change could emerge. The first phase of disruption occurred through positive dissonance. As the school year progressed, there were a number of dissonant moments that caused the teachers of team five to question themselves and examine their assumptions about students, parents, and the larger community. The first episode of positive dissonance occurred when a troubled student acted heroically and came to the rescue of a teacher. Parents who showed interest and concern in their children's education also evoked positive dissonance among teachers who expected less based on pre-existing stereotypes about poor or minority parents. A person affected by dissonance is experiencing a state of tension that occurs when two or more conflicting schemas or cognitions surface in their conscious mind. The person is left in the uncomfortable position of having to choose one schema over the other, or revise their existing schemas to accommodate the new information, or justify their previous actions by ignoring the evidence that puts them in a state of conflict, or by changing their behavior to adjust to the conflicting information at hand. Team Five teachers, who generally thought of themselves as good, moral, and righteous people, were unable to ignore the good actions that they observed among some students and parents. But by facing the reality of these good actions, they were confronted by their own sense of shame and guilt for having embraced stereotypes about their students, and furthermore, for acting on them in ways that could have hurt the future outcomes of some of their students. This created a great deal of dissonance for Team

Five teachers, thus motivating them to seek new solutions based on the new realities that they were experiencing in their interactions with students and parents. Because the actions that instigated this process of change among teachers were positive, I have chosen to label the ensuing discomfort and inner conflict within teachers as “positive dissonance.”

Positive dissonance was only one instigator of the process of change within teachers. Additional pressure to adjust to the new social reality of a small learning community would result from the experience of negative dissonance experienced by teachers who felt the sting of their own failure. The humiliation of mistakes that could not be hidden from view provoked a large degree of discomfort precisely because the teachers were beginning to feel a sense of responsibility and accountability to students and parents who had provoked positive dissonance by their actions. A strong sense of accountability did not emerge from any fear tactics imposed by administrators or external district policies. Instead, accountability was developed through intrinsic means that emerged from the successful birthing of a new parent/teacher alliance. This alliance was an outgrowth of the team’s own effort to reach out to parents. When the parents responded beyond all expectations, the teachers of Team Five were buoyed by their success and motivated to maintain this new relationship with the parents. Thus, teacher accountability evolved from the development of communal relationships with parents, a relationship that would prove to be rewarding to the teachers as the year progressed. In the context of attachment theory, the addition of parents to the teachers’ community of practice created a layer of support that had been absent in the work of Team Five teachers before the Project SIS intervention. This new layer of support added stability and security to the work of teachers, and enabled teachers to begin the work of overcoming their own patterns of defensiveness, whether they stemmed from anxious or avoidant tendencies. The context of relationships can provide fertile ground for

people to learn new responses and to adopt new behavioral patterns when the situational context supports the adoption of a new perspective (Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, & Koh-Kangarajoo, 1996). Feeney & Noller's (1996) research on the attachment styles of their participants also showed that up to 30% of their participants changed to a different attachment style after several months or years. Within this study, one participant with a deeply entrenched pattern of ambivalent attachment and the concomitant hypervigilance that accompanied this style of attachment demonstrated a tremendous shift toward the end of the school year. Likewise, one participant demonstrated a life-altering shift in her ability to break out of avoidant tendencies and develop a confident ability to explore new avenues of creativity and leadership in her work.

As shown in the previous section, administrators were ready to exercise caution and prevent the team from depending on more extreme measures of social control. They demanded that teachers show evidence of exhausting all avenues before relying on control mechanisms based on suspension of students or similar removal practices. Yet the person who was supposed to provide the most supportive layer of leadership, the coach, was virtually absent from the scene during the first half of the school year. The coach did not become as active a member as she could have been and she neglected to provide the level of leadership that was needed when the team floundered or lost sight of their goals. The transcripts revealed that she was actually pulled into classroom teaching duties, most likely to alleviate the crowding that occurred at the beginning of the school year. This fact was kept hidden from the evaluators, who would have searched for a way to restore the original design as planned, had they been given the opportunity to do so. The leadership role of the coach was considered to be a crucial piece that was important for the optional functioning of each team. The assistant principal was able to step in and guide the team when she was available, but as the school year progressed and other crises

arose, she was pulled away to fulfill other administrative duties. This left Team Five teachers with a leadership vacuum, and thus their anxieties and defensive tendencies were magnified by the lack of support they experienced from leaders who were pulled elsewhere. Team Five teachers had to depend on themselves and their own sense of independent professionalism to pull themselves through the problems they were experiencing in their small learning community.

As described above, positive dissonance from students and families, and the negative dissonance which threatened the team's collective sense of efficacy, provoked inner conflicts for the team members. More specifically, the clash between teachers with avoidant tendencies and anxious/ambivalent tendencies threatened to collapse the community of practice, which had been established to protect the self-esteem of individual members and the collective identity of the community of practice. When members realized that the protection of individuals threatened the effectiveness of their community of practice, they were no longer able to abide with a system that was dysfunctional to achieving its larger purpose. The accountability that was provoked by connection with the students and parents, and their own need to rise above their own public failures motivated them to re-create their community of practice so that it could achieve the goal of inventing a new pedagogy based on interdisciplinary instruction. Yet, the team may not have been able to successfully navigate this crisis moment if their coach had not been manipulated into providing the leadership that was needed at the eleventh hour. When Gerry confronted Regina during a team meeting, Regina finally gave the explicit guidance that was needed by Team Five members so that they could make substantial progress with their interdisciplinary project. In addition, the members of the team had established a level of trust with each other that enabled them to discuss their own individual weaknesses and the effect of their personal weaknesses on the performance of the team. Their ability to communicate with each other on a

more authentic level was critical for the development of an open dialogue that enabled them to work in support of each other's creativity. This allowed the group to develop exploratory patterns of behavior, which allowed them to accomplish their final instructional goals.

As the emotional expression of team members stabilized and as insecure secondary attachment strategies evolved into more secure-based patterns, the group was able to make tremendous progress in the quality of their relationships with each other and in the quality of their work. Security and trust provided the context for these changing relationships. Yet, if more was understood about the barriers to developing trust in professional relationships, particularly in contexts that require interpersonal sensitivity, then perhaps interventions could be designed to take into account the supports that professionals require to reach these milestones in their relationships with each other. Successful cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution require a great deal of cognitive and emotional energy from individuals. If those individuals are embedded in stressful contexts that disrupt their regular coping mechanisms, then insecure secondary attachment strategies culminating in defensive patterns of coping may emerge. The results of this study reveals that attachment patterns, established early in life and embedded in the personality of each person can influence the attitudes, decisions, and behavior of individuals through emotional pathways that influence cognitive thought. The appraisal of threats in the environment, instigated through stressful situations can activate emotional responses that are based on the person's history of relationships with others. Secure-based attachment patterns result in secure-based responses to stressful situations. Insecure-based attachment patterns, whether anxious/ambivalent or avoidant, result in insecure-based responses to stressful situations. Although these responses are acquired early in life, they can be adjusted

in adulthood through new experiences and relationships instill new skills and coping mechanisms within the individual (Feeney & Noller, 1996).

The results of this study reveal that teachers who work in high intensity situations with their colleagues, such as interdisciplinary teams, can be subject to the same type of relational stresses that would normally be found in close romantic relationships. The activities of daily communication, decision-making, accountability, and the shared responsibility for the care and success of children, are all issues that teachers working in teams can share with parents or guardians who are raising children in the home. With the additional pressures of school reform interventions and change policies utilizing the concept of the small learning community, teachers can experience additional stress to which they must adapt to. The results of this study reveal that it may be necessary for school systems and those who design reforms or interventions for schools to seriously consider how well their interventions take into account the preparation that teachers are given to deal with the emotional stress that these change processes can instigate. Rather than accept the high rate of attrition from the teaching profession that currently plagues urban school systems across the country, perhaps a closer examination of the ways that teachers can be supported both cognitively and emotionally should be considered in order to stem the losses that the profession currently experiences.

While the research on adult attachment systems is a relative newcomer to the field of social-personality psychology, it has a close cousin in psychology when one examines the literature on emotion regulation and emotional intelligence. The study of emotional intelligence may hold the answer to the dilemma of how to help teachers learn better coping mechanisms so that they can become better prepared to deal with the stress of teaching in challenging environments, particularly the environments of small learning communities that generate intense

social connections among the people within them. Notwithstanding the popularization of the term “emotional intelligence” by Dan Goleman (1995) in the popular press, there is strong empirical and theoretical evidence that the intelligence that emanates from emotions serves the cognitive activity of humans in ways that facilitate their successful navigation of stressful environments (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). This new conceptualization about intelligence emerged from the work of researchers in the 1980s (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985) who expanded the definition of intelligence beyond the traditional verbal, mathematical, logical abilities that were defined by the early pioneers of this work (Binet, 1904; Terman, 1921; Spearman, 1927; and Wechsler, 1950). Salovey & Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence more explicitly and began the work of measuring it more precisely. This culminated in a four-branch ability model of emotional intelligence consisting of: (a) the ability to perceive emotions, (b) the use of emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understanding emotions and (d) the management of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Mayer, Salovey & Caruso have placed this conceptualization of emotional intelligence into a larger framework of psychological subsystems that work to guide the overall personality of the individual. In addition, Mayer et al (1999) invented the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to measure each of these functional branches within the individual. Interestingly, the sub-system framework of personality incorporates the attachment system of an individual into one of its divisions, and helps to explain how attachment patterns inform the level of emotional intelligence that a person incorporates into their personality structure (Mayer, 2001). The third division, which Mayer calls the “social actor” is a functional group of characteristics within an individual defined by the individual’s preferred style of expression, social skills, social role knowledge, and attachment patterns. The “social actor” eventually works with the “conscious executive,” the fourth division

of a personality subsystem that drives the overall personality system. According to Mayer, the “conscious executive” “involves the capacity to self-reflect and self-govern...those portions of personality to which the individual has access.” Thus, this conscious executive has the ability to develop self-awareness and pay attention to its own explanations in order to regulate personality attributes and behavior (Mayer, 2003).

Mayer’s system’s framework of personality is useful because it incorporates sub-conscious processes such as a person’s attachment system, and explains how the personality integrates this information with preferred of conscious expression and behavior. Similar conceptualizations such as Bar-On’s model of emotional-social intelligence (Bar-on, 2005), endeavor to explain how social competencies are driven by emotional processes that work together to determine how well individuals understand themselves and others, express themselves and relate to others, and cope with the daily demands of living (Bar-on, 2005). The promising work of these researchers is establishing a foundation from which the findings of this study can be better understood.

The findings of this study support the contention that adult attachment systems inform relationships with significant others, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of the individual as they cope with stressful situations. Teachers in newly established small learning communities who are experiencing the stress of a school reform change process may emit behavior that is driven by secondary attachment strategies as they interact with others in the school environment. However, this study illuminates how these attachments strategies can undergo a major shift, and how the small learning community, while initially stressful, may ultimately provide the context that stimulates individuals to change and grow beyond the limitations of previously learned attachment patterns. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that supportive systems in the social

environment of the school, such as students, parents, colleagues, administrators, or professional development trainers, are critical to the process of learning. In this study, these critical social actors challenged the teachers of Team Five and placed them in situations that encouraged them to become self-reflective learners. Individuals from within the community also instigated group cohesiveness among the teachers of Team Five enabling them to develop trust in each other and to rely on each other for support as they engaged in the exploratory processes. This trust and support provided the foundation that allowed them to develop a relentless focus on improving their instructional practice as educators. Developing this level of trust and group cohesiveness was not an easy process for the teachers of Team Five as there were a lot of attacks on their self-concepts that they had to confront. Teachers in reforming school may not have the same level of motivation and persistence to deal with attacks on their self-concepts and their preferred styles of coping under conditions of stress. For that reason, it is important for the teaching profession to consider how appropriately teachers are being prepared for the stress of working in schools, particularly schools where the ability to develop positive working relationships with others is considered a pre-requisite for success in that school. Administrators in schools that are being restructured into small learning communities need to become especially aware of the toll that this intense intervention can take on teachers over time, and search for ways to alleviate these stresses and support teachers as they adapt to new roles and expected behaviors.

The work of researchers in the field of emotional intelligence holds great promise for developing interventions and strategies that can be developed for school faculties. Ultimately, educational systems can benefit by reducing the turnover of new teachers in schools and be training a cadre of teachers who are better prepared to teach our children.

Appendix I

Table 1

Dissertation Analysis – Final Theoretical Codes

1. Teacher Cognitions of Self (TCOGSELF)
TCOGSELF as a teacher

2. Early Teacher Attachment Styles (ATTACH-PRE)
ATTACH-PRE Secure
ATTACH-PRE Insecure-Avoidant
ATTACH-PRE Insecure-Anxious

3. Teacher Attributions of Students (TATTSTUDENTS)
TATTSTUDENTS Positive Reactions
TATTSTUDENTS Negative Reactions
TATTSTUDENTS Mixed Reactions

4. Teacher Attributions of Parents (TATTPARENTS)

5. Accountability Discussions (ACCOUNT)
ACCOUNT To Administrators
ACCOUNT To Other Teachers
ACCOUNT To Parents
ACCOUNT For Students

6. Discussions of Behavior (BEHAVIOR)
BEHAVIOR Self
BEHAVIOR Students
BEHAVIOR Parents

7. Discussions of Instruction (INSTRUCT)
INSTRUCT Individual Practices
INSTRUCT Team Planning
INSTRUCT Team Conflict
INSTRUCT Team Innovation

8. Discussions of Non-Instructional Procedures (NON-INSTRUCT)

9. Dissonance Provocation (DISSPROVOKE)
DISSPROVOKE By Situation
DISSPROVOKE By Students
DISSPROVOKE By Parents
DISSPROVOKE By Team member

10. Dissonance Reaction (DISSREACT)

DISSREACT Teacher Accountability:

For Instruction
To Team members
To Parents
To Students

DISSREACT Teacher Attachment
DISSREACT Teacher Exploration
DISSREACT Teacher Leadership
DISSREACT Team exploration/cooperation
DISSREACT Team Awareness

11. Resistance/Tension (RESISTANCE)

12. Altruism:

Compassion
Caring
Loyalty

13. Positive Dissonance and Teacher Attachment (ATTACH-POS-DISS)

ATTACH-POS-DISS Secure Individual
ATTACH-POS-DISS Secure Group
ATTACH-POS-DISS Insecure Individual
ATTACH-POS-DISS Insecure Group

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