

Balancing the Scales:
A Habermasian look at one school's communicative practices

by

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B. A., Trinity Western University, 1992
B. Ed., University of British Columbia, 1993
M. Ed., University of Victoria, 2001

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports on the findings of a single, embedded, interpretive case study centered on nine teachers, support staff and administrators in a small, fledgling, faith-based, independent school in a major city in Canada. Communication practices in schools are significantly impacted by the highly rational society in which they are situated as well as by the expectations often associated with traditional hierarchal roles. Independent schools, as a feature of their ‘independence,’ have certain freedoms to create new norms of leadership and emancipation but also meet with greater pressures because of their increased dependency for sustainability on donations and tuition fees. They tend to be easily drawn into the competitive ideologies that exemplify a highly rationalized, free market capitalist society. A large body of literature describes the impact of excessive rationality on communicative practices. The work of Jürgen Habermas serves as foundational to the phenomena of communication practices in this dissertation. The researcher used qualitative methods to explore participants’ perspectives on the communicative practices of their school organization. The findings show participants to be vulnerable to the cultural hegemony of rationality, but unaware of that hegemonic power. However, the findings also show a desire to foster ethical and inclusive communicative practices. They also reveal a significant interplay between participants’ individual theologies and their beliefs about communicative practices. The suggestions for educational change are to more readily educate both teachers and administrators regarding ethical discourse and the essential components of Ideal Speech, and for each school organization to conduct an audit of communicative practices to ensure an ongoing creation and critique of communicative norms.

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Dedication

To my parents, Doreen and Henry, who modeled integrity, consistency and care, and the ethic of hard work I needed to complete this dissertation.

To Lisa, whose support and patience went above and beyond expectations.

To Chloe and Olivia, who are my greatest inspiration and who fill my heart. It is my hope that they will experience a world where the lifeworld resists the colonization of the system and they are enabled to thrive.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The general question with which Habermas's account of communicative rationality begins might be constructed as the question of how language has the ability to coordinate action in a consensual or cooperative way as opposed to a forced or manipulated one.
(Georgia Warnke, 1995, p. 120)

The start of my journey

My journey toward engaging in this research topic started during my Master's studies. In the very first course I took, *Organizational Theory*, led by Dr. Carol Harris, I was given the assignment of creating an introductory presentation on the work of Max Weber. While admittedly spending some time lost in his writings at the start, I did eventually emerge from the readings with new understandings, as well as with new interest and excitement in what the world of organizational theory had to offer. For me, Weber's (1930) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* read like an explanation of the reality of society and economics in North America.

I was raised by a German Mennonite father for whom the value, or maybe virtue, of hard work was on equal footing with concepts such as love, respect and trust. He spent most of his childhood as a displaced person in what was formerly known as the Russian Ukraine, and then later in a refugee camp in Germany. He came to Canada in his late teens with nothing and, once married and with a family, ensured his wife and children were not going to experience that same poverty. He ensured this with hard work. As children we spent Saturdays working. And when there wasn't any wood to chop or yard to maintain, my father would create work for us (such as having us pull nails from wood only to burn it the same day). His dream for his sons was that everyone who knew us would describe us as hard workers.

My mother was of Scottish descent and grew up on the prairies during the depression, and we were reminded of this fact fairly consistently. Both parents were from staunchly conservative Protestant backgrounds. It was a marriage of collaborative value systems.

As an adult my first place of employment as a teacher was in a Christian School founded by, and rooted in, the Reformed theological tradition of which John Calvin was one of the forefathers. It was while serving as a teacher in this school that I initiated my Master's degree. This made the reading of Weber's (1930) interpretation of the work of John Calvin and its effect on the economic and labor practices of reformed Protestants exceptionally poignant. It explained for me the strongly entrenched hegemonic connection between work and 'blessing.' It also gave greater clarity to the 21st century manifestation of the protestant work ethic so prevalent in the United States, the 'Gospel of Prosperity,' wherein God becomes the deity whose sole desire is to facilitate the wealth of those who worship him.

Weber's (1930) explanation of the connection between the idea of working to be the 'elect,' and the resultant rationalization of industry, was like a light switch turned on in my mind. The other 'big idea' that Weber enlightened me with was his explanation of "the iron cage of bureaucracy," and the limitations this deeply rooted rationalization of society places on human freedom and expression.

Near the end of that first course our class was introduced to some of the basic ideas of Jürgen Habermas. I began to make the connection between Weber's work on the rationalization of society and Habermas' idea that this rationalization does not have to simply be left to run its course. It was in reading Habermas more closely that I began to understand his passion for resisting unbridled rationalization. For Habermas (1984), "the iron cage" is not unbreakable and the unfolding of functionalist reason need not go unchecked. However, his thinking takes a

unique turn in that he does not abandon all rationality. Instead Habermas sees the opportunity to turn rationality in upon itself as constant critique that has emancipatory potential to not only reduce rationality's limitations on human social development, but also to create spaces for human social development to take place. This, Habermas believes, can only occur through communicative communities. For Habermas, democracy is only a step in the process as

Democratic legitimacy...is measured not just in terms of law being enacted by a majority, but also in terms of the discursive quality of the full processes of deliberation leading up to such a result. Discursively healthy processes, from the most diffuse and informal to the most structured and formal, are what maintain a sense of validity and solidarity among a "constitutional community" (*Rechtsgemeinschaft*). (White, 1995, p. 12)

While slowly gaining an understanding of what ethical discourse and an authentically communicative community really looks like, I began to reflect on my practice as an administrator and on the practice of administrators around me (the latter being much easier on the ego). I then completed my Master's project by comparing the leadership of a principal colleague to some of the basic concepts of Habermas. I quickly saw the benefits of a more communicative approach to leadership from the perspective of teachers who had a stronger sense of being able to shape their own practice and have a voice on issues affecting them. However, I also discovered the perception from those in the community that this form of leadership was not sufficiently "efficient," not "business-like" enough, or not "strong" enough. My Master's research project only served to pique my interest in understanding the work of Jürgen Habermas and how his ideas could shape my leadership as a principal, but also how it could shape leadership and community in schools in general.

Preparing to engage in PhD studies

In the four years between the completion of my Masters and the initiation of my PhD studies, this interest only grew as I began to see greater and more subtle evidence of the unquestioned influence of rationalization on society, and specifically schools. I heard principal-colleagues talk of getting staff to “buy into” an idea and ensuring teachers had the “perception of input.” To me there were clear examples of instrumental reason infecting communicative practices. I have read, heard of, and felt, increasing pressure on school administrators to become more like C.E.O.’s. In fact one highly regarded independent school presenter boldly stated, “Either we make the school principal more like a C.E.O. or we hire a C.E.O. and make them a principal!” In the independent school sector, where our survival is affected by donations and fee structures, I have seen exponential growth in focus on business practices, economic development and the perception of students and families as ‘clients.’ I have experienced the change in the expectations of my role as school principal away from exclusively an educational leader to an equal parts blend of educational leader, business manager, development director (fundraiser) and public relations officer. I have observed and experienced the rise to prominence in the minds of parents of the view of school board members as successful capitalist entrepreneurs, and the concurrent minimizing in value of school board members well versed in social processes and educational understanding.

The most concrete and dramatic experience of this came in a school board-led restructuring of the school in which I served. Three key components of this experience stood out to me. One was the decision to restructure into a business model itself, another was the process that led to that decision and the third was the language used in the process. This small faith-based school was led by a collaborative model of three principals and one Director of Operations who

worked together, with equal authority, to make administrative decisions. However, the board, without the involvement of the educational leaders, embarked on a restructuring of that model to a more traditional, hierarchal model. The result was the creation of a new position at the top of the hierarchy, the Executive Director, a non-educator with a strong business background.

The decision by itself sent a clear message of moving away from a collaborative approach centered on dialogue and process, to an authoritative model touted as stronger and more efficient. However, what stood out was the process of the decision. The board solicited the input of the community, yet, even though the number one criterion resultant from that collaborative input was the hiring of an experienced educational leader, the board met ‘in camera’ (without any staff present and without minutes being taken) and went in a completely different direction. It felt as though the process was carried out in order to achieve the ‘perception of input,’ while the final decision was predetermined. And finally, the language used in explaining the decision spoke often of achieving “organizational efficiencies” in both financial management and decision-making. Moreover, because this school was faith-based, there were times when that language was wrapped in the language of faith, which gave it significant coercive power in the community. This was my direct, personal experience with a decision I felt was overly instrumental in its rationality. My response was rather visceral. I was saddened, frustrated and angry, and I left.

It was through this experience that I began to reflect more deeply on how the decision-making process and the language used to reach decisions in a school affects teachers’ sense of their membership in a school community (socialization), and their sense of themselves (sociation). It was the combination of these and other personal experiences together with my continued reading of Habermas, that led me to this dissertation project.

During my PhD studies

I have now been studying towards my PhD for six years and my experience of, and concern for, the increased rationalization of schools has not abated. School leaders speak openly about the need for third-party corporate partnerships. The BC Ministry of Education (2006) continues with its curriculum goal of creating graduates who become “productive citizens” and independent school boards seem increasingly focused on ensuring the competitive advantages and economic success of their schools. The metaphor of principal-as-C.E.O. gets bantered about more frequently as an ideal and I meet more and more principals who have either accepted that they are less educational leaders and more business managers, or feel a sense of inadequacy and defeat in their inability to fulfill the role of business manager and maintain a sense of who they are and what they believe about education.

However, I have met examples of teachers and educational leaders who have refused to submit to the hegemony of system rationalization. Like Habermas, I see evidence of the resistance to the ‘iron cage’ in those involved in social movements, especially those who are concerned not only with the “problem of distribution, but [with] questions of *the grammar of forms of life*” (Habermas, 1984, p. 576), that is those who not only seek equity in resource allocation and access but who also work towards inclusivity and justice in the language used to engage in dialogue regarding access to those resources, be they material or social-emotional. In schools I see this resistance in those involved in the ecological movement who seek to redefine what it means to exist in a place. I see hope in teachers who refuse to submit to language that marginalizes women, ethnic minorities, the poor, or the gay and lesbian population. I see resistance to the rationalization of schooling in teachers and support staff who advocate for the immeasurably profound contributions of those with special needs. And, in my own very personal

experience, I see evidence of those who refuse to let the words of Jesus Christ be used to create systems and structures of oppression and coercion rather than inclusion and tolerance.

In all of these signifiers of hope, language is central. It is powerful as it has the ability to raise to prominence certain issues and minimize others. It has the ability to marginalize or empower people.

The question:

I began this introduction with a quote from Georgia Warnke (1995) regarding Jürgen Habermas' question of the potential for language to create coordination of action that is "consensual or cooperative" rather than "forced or manipulated." It is my question also and it is what has driven this research project from its very inception six years ago. This desire to understand how language has the potential to shape inclusive and just communicative communities has shaped not only the direction of my research but the methods used to conduct that research. I have attempted to be true to my inquiry by conducting research that is itself dialogic in nature, and in its very process carries the potential to facilitate consensual, coordinated action.

The specific question that guided my research was: "How do the communication practices that take place between administrators and teachers in a school hinder or help a school community to become more ethically inclusive?"

The Research Methodology:

The specific methodology I choose in order to answer the research question was a combination of interpretive and critical inquiry. I choose to incorporate components of interpretive inquiry because of its focus on understanding (*Verstehen*). I felt this focus would assist in enabling me to understand the communicative practices and ethics impacting teacher-

administrator relationships. I also believe, regardless of one's stated research paradigm of choice, that all research involves interpretation. Interpretive inquiry not only admits to that reality, it raises to prominence the importance of such qualitative understanding.

I also choose to incorporate components of critical inquiry because I feel that it complements interpretive inquiry, as well as brings a purpose beyond understanding that data to that of an understanding that leads to emancipation. Critical research is also rooted in the critique of language and therefore is an ideal fit for implementation in a Habermasian study of the communicative practices of a school.

I choose the specific research method of a single, embedded, interpretive case study. A single case study applies to research that attempts to confirm, challenge or extend an existent theory (such as Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action), or to uncover a prevalent phenomenon. An embedded case study involves one unit of study, in this case Heritage Christian School. An interpretive case study is most useful for seeking understanding, in this case understanding the phenomenon of communicative action. And finally, while my study does not follow the format of narrative inquiry, it is narrative in nature as it emphasizes the importance of the participants' stories being told as means to giving those participants a voice and power.

The Christian school

I specifically chose to conduct my research in a protestant, faith-based school. I did this because it was Max Weber's exposition on the influence the protestant reformation has had on the rationalization of society that stimulated my interest in the first place. I also choose to situate my research in this context because of Habermas' (1984) contention that the realm of the moral, religious and traditional is constantly under attack from the realm of instrumental rationality, but that it also has the potential to become oppressive itself when it becomes highly rationalized. The

interplay between personal and communal faith and the rationalization of society intrigues me. One of the great themes the Christian School movement in BC has focused on in the last two decades was the importance of building community. This has been influenced by the many books of Thomas Sergiovanni and the province-wide leadership of Dr. Lee Hollaar. However, in reading Habermas, I question whether this emphasis on ‘community’ has also become a coercive force requiring individuals to submit to the community. In our global society and the increasingly ethnically diverse culture that is British Columbia’s Lower Mainland, the traditionally homogenous Christian School must redefine what it means to be a member of a ‘community.’ For Habermas, this question of one’s individuality placed within the context of ‘others’ is central to understanding communicative action and the creation of just societies,

What, then, does universalism mean? That one relativizes one’s own form of existence in relation to the legitimate claims of other forms of life, that one attribute the same rights to the strangers and the others, along with all their idiosyncrasies and incomprehensibilities, that one not insist on the generalization of one’s own identity, that the realm of tolerance must become endlessly larger than it is today: all this is what moral universalism means today. (Habermas, 1988, p. 436)

And finally, I have worked as an administrator for 14 years in faith-based schools and seek to mesh my theory with my practice. I simply want to take what I learn from my research and apply it to my vocation.

Specifically Peter and Heritage Christian School

I met Peter (see chapter 4) at a principals’ conference a few years ago and was intrigued with him from the start. He stands out as unique in sea of school leaders busily checking their blackberries while adjusting their ties. Not only does he not have a blackberry, I don’t think he

has a tie! While some administrators organize golf functions, he organizes tours of micro-breweries. Amongst faith-based schools, he is even more of an exception. Politically and theologically, he is decidedly left-of-center. He is exceptionally relational in his professional life and he holds deep convictions about student-centered schools. His Master's Degree was in Special Education and not Administration but it greatly informs his practice as a principal. I was simply curious how the convictions he espoused publically played out in his school leadership and in the context of Habermas' (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action*.

I was drawn to Heritage Christian School as it is unique. It is only six years old and therefore is still in the process of creating its own norms. I was curious to observe how the cultural hegemony within which Heritage exists has shaped the norms of communication to this point. I was also curious as to how communicative action theory played out in a school that so closely reflects the ethnic diversity of a major city in Canada.

My time at Heritage Christian consisted of ten days in total over a span of two months. My activities during these ten days included my initial introduction of the research project during one of their staff meetings, scheduled one-on-one interviews, observations of several staff meetings, informal conversations with staff members in the hallways and staff room, multiple conversations with Peter and a final half day spent with all teaching participants in a focus group discussion.

Organization of the research report

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters including this first introductory chapter. Chapter 2 is the introduction to the literature regarding communicative theory. In this chapter I attempt to explain the general competing views of communication as well as Habermas'

understanding of communicative action and the potential he sees for that action to enable just human social development.

In chapter 3 I explain my chosen methodology for conducting this research project. I compare two predominant theories of research methodology and explain the rationale for the method I choose to use.

Chapter 4 introduces the participants. I have given a brief biography of each participant in an effort to provide some context for their comments. While I recognize it is limited in its scope, my hope in giving these brief narratives is to allow the reader a more insightful understanding into the comments made and the language chosen by each participant.

In my Findings chapters (chapters 5 and 6), I have woven together the data I collected in my research with the literature reviewed in chapter 2. I have chosen specific themes that rose to prominence in the research process and, while unable to include every comment made by each participant, have strived to be true to sentiments and perspectives of each participant.

In chapter 7 (conclusion), I have included recommendations for teachers, administrators, and faculties of Education. My desire in conducting this research was to have the findings shape my own practice and my hope is that those same findings would shape the practice of those listed above as well.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter I provide the theoretical framework which shapes my study. I will present two opposite conceptual approaches to the study of communication practices. The first conceptual approach is structuralism, which is built upon an extremely empirical/rational perspective. The second conceptual approach is post-structuralism and it is built upon a strongly postmodern perspective of reality. Both of these conceptual approaches are important in understanding communicative actions as humans live in the constant tension between the desire for rational objectivity and the reality of personal subjectivity. In my research I saw evidence of this tension in both the language and actions of the participants I interviewed.

I will then present Habermas' critical theory of communicative action as drawing on the strengths of both of the above while attempting to avoid their weaknesses. It will be shown that Habermas' theory will be the most effective for the study of administration and teacher relations in schools.

Structuralism and Communication

Structuralism finds historical and theoretical roots in modernity, that skein of thought that seeks to develop an overarching, educating reason upon which all humanity can base their plans for creating more productive and happier citizens (Peters, 1996). The desire to view reality in the context of a universal rationality that simply needs to be discovered is consistent with Lyotard's (1979) description of modernity:

Any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse...making explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of the spirit, the hermeneutics of

meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth (p. xxiii).

Modernity has as its foundation a scientific worldview which believes that the only genuine form of knowledge in both the natural and social sciences is that of the hypothetical-deductive model. This positivist knowledge is deemed to be objective and value neutral as morality and politics are seen as disciplines that fall outside the scope of rational discussion. According to Habermas (1988), positivists have adopted the idea that value-neutral empirical knowledge is the great unifier of all sciences. Anything that focuses on understanding (hermeneutics) is labeled “pre-scientific” by the modernist (Habermas, 1988, p. 2).

This need for a grand, overarching, metanarrative or supersystem of thought is central to understanding structuralism. The belief is that the structure or system is pre-existent and waits our discovering it. As a manifestation of positivism/modernism, structuralism finds its more specific historical roots in both the sociology of Emile Durkheim (1972), who saw “religion as the matrix of social sociology,” (p. 1) so that all societies could be studied only in the context of the system of religion, as well as in European formalism (Peters, 2007; Roulet, 1983) presented by thinkers Levi-Strauss (anthropology), Althusser (Marxism), Lacan (psychoanalysis), Barthes (literature) and de Saussure (linguistics) (Hjörland & Nicolaisen, 2007; Peters, 2007). Structuralism soon became the paradigm of choice for all the social sciences as they jumped on the bandwagon of seeking to understand rational, objective systems and patterns under which all knowledge could be placed. Any text or idea was then judged on the degree of harmony that could be found within it. A part of a text was judged on the degree of relevance it had with the overall structure or theme of the material.

This sense of relevance only within the context of the whole is a direct result of de Saussure's (Appignanesi & Garrat, 2003) work. DeSaussure developed structuralism in the study of language with a model based on signs. Simply stated, the signifier is the concept carrying the meaning while the concept being referred to is the signified. All signifiers (concepts) simply point in some way to the universal, or to the system/structure. The model of signs then became applied to anthropology, hence the arena of structural anthropology wherein human behavior is interpreted only within the context of its consistency/inconsistency with the rational pre-existing system of understanding. Therefore what an individual says or does is less important on its own and really only gains significance as it relates to the actions/statements of others and the expectations of the system (what an individual can say/do and what an individual cannot say/do). For example, 'I' can only say 'I' because I live within a system/structure that contains the personal pronoun 'I'. Therefore who I am is really only a product of a particular linguistic system in which I exist (Klages, 2007). A specific culture, then, can simply be analyzed by analyzing the signs of that culture's language.

Derrida (1978) further elaborated on this concept of signs and system by explaining that under structuralism all systems are constituted through a pair of binary oppositions, one of which is always more valued over the other. He proposed that everything only has meaning in relation to its opposite. Examples include good/evil, male/female, right/left, etc. Thus a self-contained and concrete system of understanding reality based on relationships of binary opposites is established that Derrida labels "hyperrationalization." The individual human, her motivations or reasons for enacting a specific sign or signs, is not seen as important enough to be studied to gain any significant new understanding. Instead people are simply studied in the context of the pre-existing social/collective dimension or structure. In essence, this allows for a totalizing,

foundationalist and essentialist (Lye, 1996) approach to understanding and affirming cultures. Totalizing in that all phenomena fall under one explanatory concept, foundationalist in that it is assumed that signifying systems are unproblematic and stable representations of reality and essentialist in that there is an assumed reality existent independent of, beneath or beyond both language and ideology. In this context, divergent opinions are not accepted as they are seen only as the negative voice to the otherwise collective positive. Ideological examples of structuralist's essentialism include: the mind, humanity, God, truth, etc. Voices of the minority get lost in the collective 'vision' of the majority, thus manifesting the totalizing effect of structuralism.

A structuralist perspective is also an a-historical perspective (Lye, 1996) as the lessons of history are lost to the all pervasive and constantly perpetuated lessons of the system. The events of past times and cultures are simply interchanged within the all consuming harmony and unity of the universal system/structure. The system is basically applied to the situation regardless of the historical context or the individual voices. Durkheim and Marx are both clear examples of this approach to history. Durkheim viewed all cultures through the lens of religion as foundational and Marx viewed cultures through the lens of the productive citizen as the totalizing reality. For both Durkheim and Marx, the system of understanding history was far more important than the details of history.

Lost along with specific histories in structuralism are also the author and the reader of the story as their individual subjectivity becomes subjugated to the objective creation, analysis and implementation of the system. The values, thoughts and reasons of the individual are not seen as impacting the system, rather it is the intrinsic meaning that the grand system has for us to discover and the pursuit of the internal harmony and rationality of the structure of the story that we are to continually discover (Lye 1996). The individual and her story are not as important as

the system as they are merely a function of the system anyway. In fact, a branch of structuralism claims that all narratives can simply be charted as variations on certain basic, universal, narrative patterns (Klages, 2007). Essentially, the story has no origin as the individual is just a product of the existing system that is what enables her to make any sense of the story in the first place. In essence, structuralism places ‘langue’ (the structure or the system) above ‘parole’ (the actual story itself) (Klages, 2007).

While most would not enlist structuralism as an influencing force in their thought processes, it is clear that, as a specific manifestation of a highly rationalist/modern worldview its influences, whether conscious or unconscious, are fairly prevalent in how we construct meaning and interpret reality. The need to understand and apply an over-arching or ‘deep structure’ (Appignanesi and Garrat, 2003) to our sense of meaning and how we communicate is tempting in its simplicity and appeal to a comfortable rationality. It is for just this reason that its prevalence should be understood, for in the randomness of life and the conflicting ideologies and worldviews in our global society, a structuralist approach to understanding and manufacturing communication provides at least some sense of consistency and an anchor that will provide the security of stability.

Poststructuralism and communication

Poststructuralism finds its roots first and foremost as a reaction to, or more specifically, a critique of structuralism (Peters, 2007; Rajan, 2002; Sturrock, 1986) and secondarily in the anti-systematic Nihilism of Nietzsche, and Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche (Peters, 2007). However it really came to the fore in the late 60’s via the work of Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, Deleuze and Baudrillard, who all articulated a strong critique of the Enlightenment idea of pure reason as the sole objective means to understand reality (McManus, 1998; Peters, 1996; Peters,

2007). Poststructuralism “blames this impulse toward systematic closure and social homogeneity on the rational demand for unity, purity, objectivity, universality, and ultimacy” (Ingram, 1987, pp. 77-78). Derrida (1982a), one of the central proponents of structuralism and then later poststructuralism as well sees it as essentially a continuation of the project of structuralism.

Since we take nourishment from the fecundity of structuralism, it is too soon to dispel our dream. We must muse upon what it might signify from within. In the future it will be interpreted, perhaps, as a relaxation, if not a lapse, of the attention given to force, which is the tension of force itself. Form fascinates when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself. That is, to create. (p. 12).

Before going any further it is important to note that producing one central agreed upon definition of poststructuralism is impossible as central to its ideology is the avoidance of overarching statements of the essential and a constant bringing into question anything that is known. The simplest way of understanding is to view poststructuralism as more a movement of thought or “complex skein of thinking’ rather than “a single methodology based upon a number of steps” (Peters, 1996, p. xiv). According to Peters (2007) Poststructuralism shares several tenets with Structuralism:

- A shared suspicion of phenomenology’s and existentialisms intense focus on humans as autonomous and the basis for historical interpretation and understanding
- A general understanding of language and culture that is tied to linguistics systems where the connecting links between parts of those systems are seen as at least equally important as the parts in complete isolation

- A general understanding that there are hidden structures that play a large constraining or liberating role in our behavior
- Shared roots in the intellectual movements of formalism, linguistics poetics, art, science and literature

One of the most important departures from structuralism is the emphasis on the individual reader or listener. For no one stands outside of a story and objectively views it, rather, in the viewing or listening one creates their own meaning, regardless of the intentions of the storyteller. Similar to interpretivism, to observe is to interact and to listen is to create. The positivism of Structuralism aims for a detached observation that pursues universal truths/structures based on reason. In his work, *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972) develops this basic tenet of poststructuralism that rejects the idea of grand narratives and the need to find the essential in history. He proposed that instead of the pursuit of the discovery of grand truths we are to recognize our role as the observed and therefore we are to look behind (historical) and beyond what is already known. The subjectivity of both the observer/listener and the storyteller was also highlighted by Derrida (1982b) when he put forward the question “how do we depict what there is?” to replace structuralism’s questions “what is there?” The point being to understand what we are depicting in our listening/observing. Are we simply recreating exclusive signs and hierarchies that only serve to marginalize those who do not fit within the homogeneous system, or are we differentially depicting what we observe so as to stay as true as possible to the authenticity of the event?

Poststructuralism also proposes that all knowledge and behavior, like language, are constructed (McManus, 1998), that humanity is constantly creating and recreating language, culture and norms. Whereas structuralism seeks the discovering or unveiling of one grand

transcendental idea or story, one final vocabulary synthesized as a master discourse that transcends space and time, Derrida (1997) states the opposite, “there is nothing outside the text (*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*)” meaning there is no superstructure to which a text or story refers, even if we imagine some great truth or reality (metaphysical or historical) to be discovered there is always differentiation and relationality. Everything happens within language and with its own meaning. “There is no metalinguistic neutrality or privilege” (Peters, 2007, p. 6) that we seek or that some have greater access to than others. Instead people are culturally and discursively created (Lye, 1996) and they live and interact with symbolic beings as they act, and in doing so, create meaning, language and culture in those interactions.

The idea that culture and reality are discursively created points to a far more dialogic process of understanding meaning. It avoids the temptation for hierarchies to hold a ‘great knowledge’ that is then disseminated to the masses. Rather, a constructivist approach celebrates uniqueness, individuality and divergent thinking and invites the questioning of long-accepted norms. All of this then leads to a breakdown of traditional hegemonies of power based on roles, patriarchy and hierarchal structures. Instead, power is invested in the individuals who are enabled to define reality, develop norms and guide their own use of the symbols of language. Communication moves away from authoritarian (be it perceived, structured or ‘role; authority) dispensation of *the* knowledge, norms and reality towards facilitating for the creation of *a* knowledge, norms and reality that develops out of the engagement of diverse individuals. These new norms and language fully recognize the differentiation that creates and recreates them and avoid the temptation to seek approval from external, pre-existing meaning.

As meaning and value are derived from peoples’ social interactions and the language (symbols) inherent in those interactions, language, in fact reality is seen as an open field of

forces that is constantly being constructed and reconstructed. Reality is then fragmented, differential and tenuous by definition. Communication in this paradigm rejects the ‘concrete’ stability of technology and structure as their *modus operandi* and instead enters into a “postmodern world of depthless surfaces” to be explored and re-explored (Rajan, 2002, p. xii). In this context individuals are welcome to create meaning and constantly reshape the culture and direction of their communities as new realities come to the surface. Places of dialogic relations are created that reflect the uniqueness of both the community as well the individuals that make up that community. Specific histories receive greater attention as they are integral to the use and construction of the symbols used to create the unique and ever-changing reality.

Poststructuralism also celebrates the concept of the “play of ‘difference’” that Deleuze (1983) first put forward in his understanding of Nietzsche’s writings. ‘Difference’ celebrates variety over unity and the idea of the different over the idea of the same. It does away with the structuralist dream of finding patterns and instead identifies the multitude of unique, valued and varying parts all of which have meaning in and of themselves and all of which stand outside hierarchies in containing that meaning. Lyotard (Peters, 1996; Rajan, 2002) echoes this concept in his use of the word ‘*differend*’ to signify the irresolvable conflict between parties within poststructuralism’s lack of any unifying theme or standard under which resolution can take place. He then strengthens the ideas of the *differend* by introducing the concept of ‘decentering’ to signify the place of humans as no longer at the center of history, reality or meaning. Lyotard contends that humans have no core identity, instead they simply inhabit various subject positions that are created by language and discourse (McManus, 1998).

Derrida (1982a) ties all of these concepts together more succinctly in his development of what he called ‘*differance*’ the meaning of which is borrowed from the verb ‘differer.’ The term

differance contains a double meaning in that it implies the idea of the different while at the same time highlighting the importance of the deferring effect that the symbols of language have as meaning is deferred from one interpretation to another. When Ernst Mach (1959) wrote about the “death of the author” it was just this idea that he was referring to, the idea that the reader or observer is now in the position of the author as the maker of meaning(s) as opposed to the structuralist position of finding the inherent meaning. This focus on difference, *differend*, decentering, and ‘*differance*’ all serves to remove any concept of a universal and replaces it with the idea that the symbols of meaning and reality are dynamic and constantly created and recreated.

Implications of this lack of a universal meaning or reality and the inter-subjectivity of constructed meanings include the continued theme of breaking down hegemonic, hierarchal structures, both within language as well as within society, that were meant to imply stability and even meaning by their very existence. They also include an opening of doors to individual and independent voices and ideas as individuals are to enrich each other with the meaning they find. Instead of seeking a ‘sameness’ the different is not only acknowledged but celebrated. Norms are always open to change and reconstruction as individuals no longer seek to discover pre-existing norms, but play out their roles of meaning-makers by engaging in a process of ongoing norm creation, and this activity occurs through the medium of the symbols of language.

A final concept that is one of the central tenets of poststructuralism is Derrida’s (1997) now popularized ‘deconstruction,’ which, according to Derrida, has its origins in Heidegger’s ‘*Destruktion*.’ While the term has come to mean a method or process of dissecting a text, Derrida’s original intent wasn’t so. “Deconstruction is not a method or some tool that you apply to something from the outside... Deconstruction is something which happens and which happens

inside.” (Derrida, 1997, 9-10). It looks to the text for what is and what isn't there by analyzing the coherence of statements and ideas forwarded in order to find out what has been elevated to importance as well as what has been devalued in importance. The goal is to uncover any incoherence, illusion or hidden possibilities not acknowledged in the text so as to expose the weaknesses of an idea and present its functionability alongside its dysfunctionability. Important to Derrida's deconstruction is the ability to unveil any instabilities or hierarchies in our language (Deutscher, 1988). This is done by looking at what is there and not there according to the author's intentions as well as what is there and not there despite the author's intentions. It brings to light suppressed conflicts and language that implicitly subordinate, degrade and marginalize. Counter to the positivist structuralism, deconstruction presents a reality that is never unitary but full of conflicting ideas and meanings that may even run counter to the intent of the author. Structuralism's logocentrism, the idea that some ultimate, grand signifier exists outside of our daily play of language that will act as the center and foundation of all thought, language and experience (McManus, 1998), is challenged to the core. No longer can one know some grand, perfectly rational language and therefore understand reality. For logocentrism only exists at the expense of repressed uncertainties and the exclusion of the tenuous.

Ernst Mach' (1959) *Analysis of Sensations* and Michel Foucault's (1972) *Archeology of Knowledge* both suggest that the ability to know some grand reality is an illusion. For Mach, we simply need to uncover the traces of a culture and not attempt to reconstruct a complete meaning from those traces, but simply observe and study the traces themselves. The traces are what we can garner from our sensations in observation. And while the traces point us in a general direction, it is important not to become consumed with the direction and lose site of the importance of the trace itself. In other words, we highlight the total discontinuity of the traces so

that just the trace itself remains. For Foucault, the positivist/structuralist idea of a total history, a unified 'face' of a time period is another part of the illusion. Rather, a general history is all that is available, a history that opens up the divisions, limits, differences and possibilities. This general history, according to Foucault, challenges us to remain within discourse, to recognize that we both shape language as we construct meaning and that we are shaped by that language. Through the vehicle of discourse we reveal more of the hidden, more of the situational, the different and the marginalized. We unleash reality from the confines of logocentrism, that desire to place all into some grand concept of God, The Idea, or Self that rams everything into an oversimplified binary opposition such as male/female, good/evil, or beauty/ugly. In so doing we uncover hidden layers of meaning rather than one final meaning.

Habermas, rationality, modernity and communication

Core to the work of Habermas is his desire to pull good from the rationality of modernity, to not give up completely on the dream of the Enlightenment, and to combine a sense of reason with the critique of hierarchies that postmodernity's poststructuralism highlights. While Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Nietzsche and Heidegger all propose a complete break with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Habermas seeks to maintain the emancipatory ideals that are part of that rationalist worldview.

Habermas' understanding of modernity takes place in the context of his deep rootedness in critical theory and it is the reason he is concerned with the drastic effects unbridled modernity has had on communication. Habermas turns to Western Marxism and Weber in order to gain a better understanding of this concern (McCarthy, 1984) and finds that both trace modernity's inhumane influence to capitalism. In this context Habermas (in White, 1988) sees socialism as

the possibility of overcoming the capitalistic simplification of the processes of rationalization (to use Weber's terminology). Simplification, that is, in the sense of the rise to dominance of cognitive-instrumental aspects, through which everything else is driven into the realm of apparent irrationality. (p. 25)

Marx's (1867) hope that the increasing rationalization of society and the co-concurrent increasing influence of science on culture and labour would bring about increased freedoms for individuals has not born itself out. Instead, as Weber (1930) noted in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the increased rationalization of society only served to facilitate subtle forms of domination. Habermas distinguishes himself from Marx by identifying the repressive powers of modernity not within alienated labour but as situated within language instead. Habermas distinguishes himself from Weber in that he refuses to give up on the future of a rationalized society as nothing more than an "iron cage," rather he simply sees rationality as worthy of and needing reformation. Similar to Foucault (1980), he sees the solution as centered within language.

For Habermas and Marcuse (in Habermas, 1970) the danger of rational modernity's influence on communication lies in its increasing dependence on technological control which has the greatest ability to dominate a society, "not only the application of technology but technology itself is domination (of nature and men) – methodical, scientific, calculated, calculating control (p. 82). Eventually the repression brought about by a technologically rational society becomes rationalized itself as the structure becomes believed to be central to the success of the society's and individuals' goals. Individuals are then willing to submit to the system in order to achieve success. This built in self-protection of the domination of a technologically rational culture becomes what Marcuse calls, "a rationally totalitarian society" (in Habermas, 1970, p. 85).

It is just this idea of a rationalized domination that opens the door to cultural hegemony. While all culture, according to Gramsci (in Blake, 1993) is hegemonic in that it controls people by shaping their thoughts, behavior and worldviews, the hegemonic culture of the western industrialized world has the significantly powerful tools of empirical evidence, objective analysis and numerically measurable realities to shape peoples' lives. These tools are so pervasive that they have inculcated our language to the point of making communication in danger of simply becoming another tool for exercising technological control. According to Habermas (1970) and Weber (1930), individuals are so caught in the cult of personal 'needs' fulfillment that the technologically rational society promises that questions such as 'what is the good life?' or 'How should one live in a just society?' are no longer part of societal dialogue.

Despite the rather despairing outlook that "the domination of meaningless mechanisms" (Taylor, 1991, p. 29) of modernity portrays, Habermas remains hopeful by moving towards a redefinition of rationality for the purposes of justice. No longer can a completely instrumental understanding of rationality be deemed adequate. For Habermas (1984) modernity is less about the maintenance of one overarching general answer to reality provided via philosophy or ethics, instead modernity is more about the abundance and diversity of beliefs, values and worldviews. This diversity is modernity's reality and therefore "...no participant has a monopoly on correct interpretation" (Habermas, 1984, p. 100).

In order to redeem rationality for justice Habermas turns towards interpretivism and the tradition of hermeneutics in hopes that a combination of the rationality of the symbols of language with interpretive practices will create a "scientific consciousness" (McCarthy, 1990, p. vii). In other words, Habermas is striving for the development of a systematic and rational science of interpretation. Instead of completely doing away with the concept of the universal as

poststructuralism does, Habermas centers the universal, or rationality, within communication as a component ‘universal’ to all cultures, a necessary social function of humanity. The hope is to develop a moral paradigm within which competing normative claims (claims to validity) are rationally assessed and critiqued. Thomas McCarthy (1990) characterized Habermas “as someone trying to live in modernity without value-imbued cosmologies and with the disintegration of sacred canopies” (p. vii).

Habermas’ System and Lifeworld

To further understand modernity, Habermas (1984) looks to Weber and identifies three essential elements of human experience: 1) the realm of the scientific and technical – or the realm of cognitive growth and skill development for individuals and the realm of instrumental reasoning for culture. It is the activities we participate in to control and manipulate nature and humanity; 2) the realm of the moral and practical – or the realm of morality, politics, ethics and moral reasoning. It is the activities we participate in to coordinate ourselves with others reasonably and peacefully; and 3) the realm of the aesthetic and expressive – or the realm of the arts, self-expression, aesthetic sensibility and identity politics. It is the activities we participate in to separate ourselves, either consciously or unconsciously, from any form of domination.

For Habermas (1984) unbridled modernity risks leading to the disunity of these three spheres as a result of the specialization of a highly technologically rational society. This specialization leads to the fragmentation or alienation of society. Individuals are no longer involved in a wide range of spheres of action as the sphere of instrumental rationality (the realm of the scientific and technical) receives a single-minded focus. This fragmentation then affects our communication as it too becomes increasingly dominated for instrumentally rational

language and individuals within specialties develop a privileged language, a linguistic competence that is inaccessible to individuals outside that specialty.

According to Habermas (1987), industrial advanced civilizations put great emphasis on the realm of the scientific and technical and therefore privilege instrumental reason over moral or aesthetic reasoning. Habermas labels this the realm of system wherein society is conceptualized as a self-regulating system in which actions are coordinated through the interconnections they have with their consequences. Technical rules and strategies based on empirical and analytic knowledge govern the system in the pursuit of specifically defined goals within specifically controlled conditions. Any claims for validity within the system must be justified according to norms of instrumental reasoning as opposed to ethical/moral or aesthetic/expressive reasoning. Action within the realm of system can be defined as the purposive-rational achievement of sought after ends. Habermas' realm of system is similar in kind to Huxley's (in Habermas, 1970) world of sciences, and Marx's (1867) realm of necessity.

Habermas (1987) then takes the two remaining realms – the moral/practical and the aesthetic/expressive – and combines them to conceptualize the realm of the lifeworld. This is the arena governed by consensus and norm-guided expectations of interpersonal behavior. It is the arena of what Habermas calls 'communicative action; within which claims to validity are substantiated based on mutual understanding which in turn creates linguistic norms and traditions. It is these norms and traditions that are the transmitter of the lifeworld from one generation to the next.

In Weberian terms, the system would be similar to the realm of *Zweckrational* action – action that is clearly calculable in nature with the end result being paramount. The lifeworld

would be similar to the realm of *Wertrational* action – action that is value-oriented in that the actor believes in the value of the action in and of itself without regard to the ends or consequences (Brubaker, 1984).

The lifeworld is made up of three components: 1) understanding, which entails social integration, socialization and transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge, 2) coordination, which, along with social integration, involves the establishment of a group identity and solidarity, and 3) sociation, which involves the personal formation of identity (Habermas, 1987, p. 208). Taken collectively, all three components point toward action in the lifeworld that is oriented to harmony, collaboration and communication rather than simply goal or means-to-an-end oriented as with system. Issues within the system are resolved via appeals to quantitative and ‘objective’ data while issues within the lifeworld are resolved via appeals to rightness and morality. Habermas’ realm of the lifeworld is similar in kind to Marx’s (1867) realm of freedom and Huxley’s (in Habermas, 1970) world of literature.

Habermas’ comparison of system and lifeworld has parallels in Buber’s (1958) classic work *I and Thou* wherein he compares relationships in an industrial society that are *I-It* with those that are *I-Thou*. *I-It* relationships are those in which the other (be that humanity or nature) is merely treated as an object, a means to an end, as though they are existing in the world to be used. *I-Thou* relationships are those in which there is a meeting of more than one mind/soul and individuals enter into the possibility of understanding one another at the core of their being. Like Habermas, Buber eschews the oversimplification of compartmentalizing *I-It* and *I-Thou* relationships as those of the sciences vs. those of the poets and calls for an understanding of the reality that humanity exists within both the realm of the world to be used and the world to be valued. He simply challenges humanity to enter more deeply into *I-Thou* relationships and

therefore into a greater understanding of the mystery of what it means to be a human, for both the I and the Thou become more alive as we orient our language towards a greater valuing of humanity.

For Habermas (1984; 1987) it is not a matter of how to negotiate the tension of two opposing realms, or two realms that lie parallel to each other, instead he sees them as interconnected and overlapping and fundamental to human social functioning. A strong dialogic society recognizes the mutual dependence (although analytical independence) of the lifeworld and system and focuses specifically on how they relate to each other within that society. System, or the area of the economy and applied sciences, and the lifeworld, or the area of the civil society and citizenship, both play central roles in any society.

The concern then is the interplay between the two, and as Habermas (1987) points out, the dilemma exists in the tendency for the system to “colonize the lifeworld” (p. 186) which in turn causes communicative failures in the lifeworld as social integration and cultural reproduction are inhibited, causing a breakdown in general social cohesion. The increased attention to validity claims as justified via quantitative and objective data minimizes the effectiveness of cultural institutions whose essence stems out of the moral and ethical purposes. The very legitimacy of these institutions begins to be called into question as their meaning and relevance becomes increasingly pushed to the margins. This colonization causes what Habermas (1984; 1987) labels ‘alienation,’ as social relationships, self understandings and cultural values come to be determined by means-to-an-end and goal-oriented actions as opposed to collaborative and harmonizing actions. Communication that functions within the realm of rewards and punishments dominates over communication that functions within the realm of consensus, thus

greatly limiting the ability of individuals to engage in meaningful social discourse. A general sense of the devaluing of, and irresponsibility for, the lifeworld ensues:

In the end, systematic mechanisms suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where a consensus dependent co-ordination of action cannot be replaced, that is, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake. In these areas, the mediatization of the lifeworld assumes the form of colonization. (Habermas, 1987, p. 196)

Habermas (1987) identifies four requirements for the occurrence of the colonization of the lifeworld: 1) traditional forms of life become dismantled, 2) social roles become differentiated, 3) significant rewards of money and leisure are provided for alienated labour of the system, and 4) individuals frame their hopes and dreams around highly individualized values (p. 356). However, he does not despair that this colonization cannot be reversed. Instead Habermas (1984) proposes a relationship wherein the system supports the lifeworld's functioning. This would see the empirical sciences and instrumental rationality providing information for the furthering of the social goals and values of the lifeworld. This submission of the capacity for control to the capacity for life and action would be accomplished through the vehicle of rational discussion.

...the irrationality of domination, which today has become a collective peril to life, could be mastered only by the development of a political decision-making process tied to the principle of general discussion free from domination. Our only hope for the rationalization of the power structure lies in conditions that favour political power for thought developing through dialogue. The redeeming power of reflection cannot be

supplanted by the extension of technically exploitable knowledge. (Habermas, 1984, p. 80)

Social, or speech action, is any human activity to which those involved ascribe meaning (Habermas, 1984; 1987). Habermas (1984) distinguishes four types of social action which “can be distinguished according to whether the participants adopt either a success-oriented attitude or one oriented to reaching understanding” (p. 286). These social actions include: 1) teleological action – those actions oriented toward success and a means-to-an-end rationality, 2) norm-guided actions – those actions oriented toward developing interactions that are legitimate to all involved, 3) dramatalurgical actions (originally conceived by Erving Goffman in his 1959 work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*) – those actions that primarily reveal something about the character and his subjective world to others, and 4) communicative action – those actions solely oriented towards reaching understanding (Habermas, 1984). This fourth type of social action is what Habermas gives his attention to as containing the potential to submit system values to those of the lifeworld. His hope is to show that communicative action can be used as “a medium of unhindered understanding” (p. 47). This kind of understanding can only be reached by “a cooperative process of interpretation aimed at attaining intersubjectively recognized definitions of situations” (White, 1988, p. 40). Communicative action is dialogic, interpretive, and consensual and centered directly within the lifeworld and can resist the colonization of the system because it is also rational.

Instead of structuralism’s rationality that is solely based on a presupposed structure or abstract philosophical worldview, communicative action is based on a rationality that combines the concreteness of the empirical sciences with the randomness of interpretation via the medium of communication. Habermas’ theory then becomes both ontologically and historically testable.

For Habermas (1984; 1987) language is inherently rational thereby removing rationality from the universal, from the god(s), from the individual and placing it directly within the social. Coming to an understanding through discussion of reasons for and against in a reasoned argument is the prime example of this inherent rationality. This coming to an understanding is communicative rationality, “oriented to achieving, sustaining and reviewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims” (1984, p. 17).

Locating rationality within communication places it within the moral-practical dimension of the lifeworld while at the same time equipping it to reveal the fallacies of instrumental rationalization. Norms created via such rational discourse is how Habermas (1984) seeks to find emancipatory action thus making communicative action a form of cultural rationalization – the practice of people communicating in order to reach understanding and them making consensual decisions about social actions (Milley, 2004, p. 84).

To clarify, Habermas (1984) doesn't see the Lifeworld as a utopia as he fully recognizes its ability to constrain human freedom through the reinforcement of norms and traditions that are oppressive in nature. However, he also believes that, as noted above, placing ‘the universal’ within language enables communicative action to become a form of cultural rationalization thus allowing those norms and traditions to submit to the questioning and refining of rational discourse.

For Habermas (1984, 1987) the right ordering of the system and the lifeworld also enables individual sociation, which for Habermas entails moving, via communicative rationality, from a pre-conventional, or premodern stage of moral development through the conventional stage to a post-conventional stage of moral development. The pre-conventional stage involves ordering one's behaviour, attitudes and beliefs around “Magical ethics” and revealed in Holy

Laws and Oral traditions. At the postconventional stage individuals are able to make socio-cognitive decisions that are principled based on ethics of conviction and responsibility rather than on preconventional or conventional expectations. However, with the lifeworld tradition is valued. Therefore the lifeworld contains within itself the potential for conflict between a traditional, premodern understanding of socio-cognitive concepts and ethics on the one hand, and the movement towards a postconventional understanding of socio-cognitive concepts. Habermas contends that individuals authentically engaged in the process of socialization through the 'universal' of communicative rationality will move toward developing postconventional understandings of ethics and laws based on principles (see table: Stages in the development of law on page 109).

The Ideal Speech Situation

In order to facilitate the achievement of cultural rationalization, Habermas proposes conditions for the ideal speech situation that rest on the participants' belief that they can achieve consensus through rational arguments only as long as the strategies of force, coercion, role authority and manipulation are removed. The specific conditions for an ideal speech situation are 1) Access to discussion that is open to all involved or affected by the outcome; 2) Every actor engaged in the process seeks consensus regardless of pre-existing strategic objectives and personal inhibitions; 3) The norms of honesty and sincerity are followed by all involved in the dialogue; and 4) Role privileges are not involved in any way (Milley, 2004, p. 76).

Additional to the ideal speech situation, Habermas also recognized that those involved must have a basic linguistic competence (*Sprachkompetenz*), a basic cognitive competence to understand the rules of formal logical argumentation, and interactive or social competence (White, 1988, p. 29). In other words they are able to speak intelligibly, give statements

comprehensible based on the content, be sincere and fit their comments within the context of the appropriate social norms (Heslep, 2001, p. 2).

Communication theory and the study of principal/teacher relations

While both structuralism and poststructuralism offer insight into the study of communication they also contain significant limitations in the study of communication for emancipatory reasons. Structuralism's rigid allegiance to the structure, to ensuring all signs are observed in the context of compliance or noncompliance to the super-system, greatly limits the ability to understand what *is* as opposed to what *should be*. Not only does the intense rationality of structuralism lead to the "disenchantment of the world" (Giddens, 1971), it also serves to marginalize all those with divergent views/stories, thus ensuring the norms of an organization are not fully those of its members and never will be. The diversity, tenuousness, and plurality of humanity goes disregarded for the efficiency of the stable, set structure of the system. In short, structuralism serves to perpetuate injustice, to maintain the status quo and to reinforce cultural hegemonies.

Poststructuralism, on the other hand provides a significant step forward in that it greatly values the critique of hierarchies, structures and the status quo. Just how that critique occurs is where Poststructuralism contains its greatest weakness. Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Hietzsche and Heidegger all wish for a complete break with the Enlightenment's reliance on rationalism. Even the use of rationalism as a tool of critique is abolished therefore leaving poststructuralism unequipped to substantiate its own critique. All that remains are the traces. However, in order to move forward as a culture there does need to be some connecting points, some way of providing basic cohesion, some process of arriving at understanding (*Verstehen*), essentially some way to identify, adjudicate and reform norms, otherwise all that remains are the individuals. Eventually

even the norms of communication begin to break down. This despair is noted more vaguely by Wright (1999):

A fundamental cultural shift is under way: a move away from the idea of a common culture with a generic religious content, an idea at the historical root of the (U.S.) public schools – and toward an understanding of our national culture as a collective of particularities held together by...actually, *educators are not quite sure by what*. (p. 17) (*emphasis added*)

Habermas's plan to maintain rationality as a tool to critique even rationality itself not only allows for a way forward in creating a just society, it also limits the ability of rationality to colonize humanity. His ideal speech situation strikes a balance between reason and difference, between the hierarchies of language and the complete deconstruction of communication. It allows the micronarratives an equal place in the dialogue without submitting them to some grand macronarrative. The poststructuralist critique of Habermas' communicative action theory questions whether or not it is simply a naïve dream for innocent discourse (McGowan, 1991). However, in response it seems obvious that in order to create the 'just society' (a suspect concept for the poststructuralists as it implies an overarching truth or structure) a foundation must be identified and then constantly critiqued in the process of creating meaning. As Hausheer (1996) noted in his study of Scheiermacher, "understanding is an infinite and inexhaustible task" (p. 59) that "must be repeated ever anew wherever we encounter the world of others, wherever we run up against what is new and unfamiliar to us, wherever we seek for understanding, insight, assimilation of what is alien and strange to us" (p. 60).

Communicative action harnesses the intensive deconstruction of the poststructuralists in order to expose the abuses of a technologically rational society and emancipate those marginalized by the colonization of the lifeworld. It strives for building of cultures on interrelatedness of the stories of all individuals. Its strength lies in its ability to take social communication and have it function as social development (Kruger, 1991). In fact, this cultural rationality is the purpose of communicative action. In other words, Habermas (1984) is challenging societies to control the reproduction of their cultures:

The idea [of universal discourse] actually contains two utopian projections... Imagine individuals being socialized as members of such an ideal community; they would be acquiring identities with two complementary aspects: the universal and particular. On the one hand... they would learn to orient themselves within a universalistic framework, that is, to act autonomously (in Kant's sense); on the other hand, they would learn to use this autonomy – which makes them equal to every other morally acting subject – in order to develop themselves in their subjectivity and uniqueness... Membership in such an ideal community is, in Hegel's terms, constitutive for both the I-as-universal and the I-as-individual. (p. 148)

As a guide for studying the communicative relationships between administrators and teachers in the cultural institution of the school, Habermas's theory provides both a rationality upon which to ground questions and hypotheses as well as a capacity to allow those on the margins of the traditional hierarchies of schooling a voice. The only pure test of Habermas' theory will come from societies, organizations and communities who actually implement it. However, because we all live in communication between and betwixt the lifeworld and system, traces of communicative action already exist. It is just those traces I seek to identify and then to

place in the context of the creation of a more just community, in this case that of a school community.

CHAPTER 3: Design and Methods

Introduction

My goal in conducting research is to gain a deeper understanding as to what enables or limits communication in a school, especially as it pertains to teachers and administrators. In order to achieve that goal, I sought an appropriate methodology that enabled me to do just that. In the search for a process to allow me to explore answers to my research question, I looked at different theories of research before settling on the method I deemed most appropriate. In this chapter I will take you on much of that journey and then describe in some detail how I actually conducted my research in the field.

The Question:

In conducting research I was seeking to trace the ways communication occurs in a school setting, specifically amongst teachers and administrators. Language is a tool used by humans and therefore it can be used to create coordination of action that is “consensual or cooperative” but it can also be used to create coordination of action that is “forced or manipulated” (Warnke, 1995, p. 120). In this research process I hope to gain greater understanding into the role language plays in school communities. The specific question guiding my search for greater understanding is: “How do the communication practices that take place between administrators and teachers in a school hinder or help a school community to become more ethically inclusive?”

Research Paradigms

Broadly stated there are four research approaches in the realm of the Social Sciences that compete with each other for supremacy of importance (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The more traditional of these approaches is the positivist approach, with its emphasis on the verification of hypotheses with the support of *a priori* facts. Postpositivism strays slightly from positivism as it

emphasizes the falsification of hypotheses through the support of *a priori* facts. Both positivism and postpositivism have formal rationality at their root and claim objective truth through the use of the scientific method. They also boldly claim to be value free and therefore more reliable than value laden approaches. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) note, positivism and postpositivism see the researcher as “standing behind a one-way mirror, viewing natural phenomena as they happen and recording them objectively” (p. 107).

The third research approach is Critical Theory which sees the transformation of historical insights through the use of dialectic interaction. The goal of critical theory is the revelation of new knowledge that will lead to greater emancipation. It has at its roots a strong connection to the critique of language.

The fourth approach to research in the Social Sciences is the constructivist paradigm, within which fits Interpretive Inquiry. This approach perceives reality as made up of relative consensus while at the same time allowing for the coexistence of competing, multiple ‘knowledges.’ For both Critical and Interpretive Inquiry, “values have pride of place” over scientific knowledge(Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

With Guba and Lincoln (1994), I have developed a “growing dissatisfaction with the patent overemphasis on quantitative methods” of inquiry (p. 105). I believe the inability to admit subjectivity on behalf of the inquirer as well as the misguided notion that values can be avoided in the reporting of findings greatly limits the applicability of quantitative research to my area of interest. My desire is that my research affects my participants and I feel strongly that values must be front and center in my research. Therefore the paradigms of critical inquiry and interpretive inquiry are a more applicable approach to that research. I also attempt to apply Habermas’

Theory of Communicative Action, which derives from the qualitative school of Critical Theory, and therefore a qualitative approach is doubly appropriate.

Research approach #1: Interpretive inquiry

I was first drawn to Interpretive inquiry because of its strong focus on understanding (*Verstehen*) a phenomenon and of seeking the meaning to that phenomenon in contrast to research conducted under the umbrella of empirical inquiry, which focuses on explanation (*Erklaren*) of an ‘objectively’ observed phenomenon (Schwandt, 2000; Taylor, 1982; Weber, 1968). Interpretive research deals with the realm of hermeneutics, that is the realm of understanding in the context of language and consciousness (Meyers, 1997) and human interaction (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982a; Milley, 2004). As my objective was to understand communication ethics, or communication in action, this twofold focus (language and consciousness and human interaction) seemed ideal. It would serve to help me focus on interpreting data in context (Greenfield, 1993) with the belief that there can be more than one reading of a single text. Interpretive inquiry agrees with poststructuralism’s central tenet that the readers bring subjectivity to the text in their desire to gain understanding (Packer, 2007). In other words,

All researchers interpret the world through some sort of conceptual lens framed by their beliefs, previous experiences, existing knowledge, assumptions about the world and theories about knowledge and how it is accrued. The researcher’s conceptual lens acts as a filter: the importance placed on the huge range of observations made in the field (choosing to record or note some observations and not others, for example) is partly determined by this filter. (Carroll & Swatman, 2000, pp. 118-119)

I felt this reality strongly as I was keenly aware that my own assumptions about schooling, leadership, communication and even what it means to be human were not components of my selfhood that I could simply ‘shelve’ for the duration of the research. In fact, at times I found myself struggling when presented with the differing understandings of others’ reality, with the very tension of my preconceived understandings. This experience of tension emphasized for me the interpretive reality of the research process.

A hermeneutic approach takes into account the linguistic reality that our understanding of people, places and events is inseparable from the language we use to study, record and discuss those same people, places and events. The goal is to take data, text or information and seek to interpret and bring clarity to the meaning of that data, text or information. Charles Taylor (1982) states,

Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory – in one way or another unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense. (p. 153)

This idea of hermeneutics, then, is simply what we do on a daily basis as we interpret and define reality in our own terms; when we seek to understand, we are interpreting. It is, as Gadamer (1975) notes, “a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something as something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation” (p. 87). To conduct hermeneutic research is to be honest about one’s humanity and inherent subjectivity. The full recognition and disclosure of my humanity and subjectivity allows me to submit myself

to the research with a sense of integrity and the full assumption that my findings will not present an ‘objective’ reality, but simply the reality that I observed through my own lens, the reality that I interpreted through who I am, and the reality that presents with words chosen as a product of who I am and how I ‘see.’ There is no attempt to ‘table’ my biases and seek some unrealistic objectivity; instead, the identified biases must be engaged, and prejudices examined in the context of my own socio-historical context. It is within this acknowledgment of subjectivity that the interpretation takes place (Garrison, 1996). Gadamer (1989) calls this “the fusion of horizons” whereby the horizon of the text is fused with that of the interpreter (pp. 298).

The fundamentally hermeneutic approach to interpretive research does, however, raise the problem of a never ending cycle of interpretation. For the person reading the text and attempting to interpret must, at least to some degree, agree with and follow my reading and expressions of the text in order to accept the interpretation. Acknowledging this reality and working within it is called the hermeneutic cycle (circle), that is while we strive to validate the integrity of subjective interpretive understanding, we must, at some point, appeal to some form of common understanding (Taylor, 1982). Interpretation then both shapes culture and tradition and is shaped by culture and tradition, hence the cycle. Understanding in the context of the hermeneutic cycle must therefore be dialogic in nature as I (the researcher), the research questions and the ‘issues’ that arise out of the research are in a constant state of change.

Another central component of interpretive research is the researcher’s desire to avoid making grand generalizations and overarching statements but to move to the specifics and to seek to understand the actions of individuals. In this dissertation, when collective terms are used (like staff, school community or organization), they are done so with the full realization that the collective is only the result of specific acts of specific individuals (Weber, in Giddens, 1971). In

conducting interpretive research, I looked at the specific action or event and then sought to understand that action or event in the context within which it occurred (Greenfield, 1993, pp. 75-89).

In this seeking to understand actions or events in context there are three levels within interpretive inquiry that can be identified (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982a; Taylor, 1982; Milley, 2004). The first level is that of the social actors themselves (the participants) understanding what they have in fact experienced. The second level of understanding is mine (the researcher) as I observe, interpret and then represent that understanding in specifically chosen language. Finally, there are the readers who bring their interpretations, their subjectivity, to the table and therefore their own understandings.

Within all three levels of understanding there are also levels of meaning. It is important to note that meaning is a fundamentally social phenomenon (Mottier, 2005) in that the human meaning of an event or action always takes place within some context and is identified and understood via language (itself a social phenomenon). We observe something and come to understand it in the context of conversations with others about that something. Bredo and Feinberg (1982a) identify three levels of this meaning, the first of which inheres in institutional facts. Institutional facts are the literal happenings, the actual observable norms and activities of those being researched. Meanings at this level do not go beyond the literal but still involve interpretation, for when I (the researcher) enter the process, I am able to choose to categorize behaviours and then to either ignore them or present them to the reader.

The second level of meaning involves manner or style. Bredo and Feinberg (1982a) note that this level requires a degree of understanding beyond what was literally said, to 'how' it was

said. This entails attentiveness to the tone of voice, body language, role position and cultural context of the speaker as well as the role position of the listener. Taylor (1982) asserts that misunderstandings at this level create the most heated disagreements while understandings here have the potential to form the basis of authentic community. In the interview process, I found this level of meaning required me to be fully present and to avoid distractions. Anything less held the potential for me to miss important clues such as those mentioned above.

Bredo and Feinberg's (1982a) final level of meaning is intersubjective, whereby meanings derived from social institutions can only be learned and understood in the context of the social relationships where "the particular pattern that is learned then becomes constitutive of social reality for the individual" (p. 121). Intersubjective meanings can either be constitutive (those that create a new form of behavior or norm) or regulative (those that enforce an existing norm or behavior). This final level of meaning is significant to interpretive research as it most clearly lies outside the realm of empirical methods of research and requires one to spend time in the 'social institution.' My research took place in this reality, just listening and observing the norms unique to the social institution of a school. The ten days I spent immersed in the research site obviously limited my ability to grasp deep intersubjective meanings but it did provide for a modicum of this level of understanding.

One final component of interpretive research that bears explaining is just that, the explanation of the research. While there are interpretive researchers who believe that their findings are completely subjective and may at times overlap (Bredo & Feinberg 1982a) and those who feel their findings point to common overarching truths (Denzin, 1998), the bulk of interpretive researchers, including me, find themselves somewhere in the middle of these two positions, holding an intersubjective stance. Such a stance recognizes the fallibility of one's own

rationality to apply to all others (Weber, 1968) as well as the hyper-egocentricism of the subjectivist stance that ignores the commonalities we have with others. It focuses on the importance of culture and community as central to understanding and the importance of language in creating and understanding shared meanings (Habermas, 1987). The intersubjective stance reveals the truth that, while I am always shaped by culture, I am also, at the same time, shaping culture regardless of my own observation of that reality.

Research approach #2: Critical inquiry

While the interpretive approach to research appealed to my belief in the subjectivity and humanity of the research process, critical research, with its mixed aspects of positivism and interpretivism, appealed to my need for stronger rational understanding. With other critical researchers, I see the pursuit of understanding as only the beginning (Habermas, 1971; Bredo and Feinberg, 1982b) of a process that can lead to meaningful and ethical action. Habermas (in White, 1988) holds that there is a universalistic sense of rationality and that sense of rationality also applies to the arena of the moral-practical. In so doing, this universalistic sense of rationality has the potential to expose the limits of a highly technological rational society as well as to allow for a more complete understanding of “reason encapsulated in the very forms of social reproduction” (Habermas, in White, 1988, pp. 27-28). In other words, the rationality of critical research can be used to turn in upon itself and critique the over-dependence on rationality within organizations.

Rooted in the theory of Hegel and Marx and most specifically, the Frankfurt Institute (including theorists Adorno, Horkheimer, Lukacs and Marcuse), Critical Theory moves its focus to ideological and cultural aspects of society (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982b). It sees knowledge in the context of human social evolution, and the continuing evolution of emancipation. Critical

Theory observes that knowledge can be either repressive or emancipatory depending on how it is used and who has access to it. The goal of critical research is to expose this reality by bringing to consciousness (as in Freudian psychoanalysis) all actions and their connections to the historical-developmental context in which they occur (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982b). The idea is that this revelation will allow participants the ability to understand their organizational reality, how it shapes them and how they shape it, in order to enable them to avoid repressive organizational norms. This component of critical research not only empowers individuals to understand, but also to use that understanding to move toward emancipation, enabling research to become somewhat transformative. Critical researchers recognize both the ability of actors to shape knowledge and reality in an organization as well as the constraint that limits their success in doing so. The goal is to expose the dominant forces and their contradictions in order to bring about an alternative ordering of phenomena.

The concept of hegemony is core to the realization of emancipation. The legitimizations of “certain practices as naturally ‘superior’ to others” (Bourdieu in Johnson, 1993, p. 4) creates a hegemony of thought and behavior that is embodied in our language, beliefs and symbols (Blake, 1993). A hegemonic culture can be explicitly enforced through codes and laws (and punishments) as well as implicitly enforced via social/moral pressures. As Durkheim contends, “Individuals accept the legitimacy of the obligation, and thus do not consciously feel its constraining character” (in Giddens, 1971, p. 88). Critical research attempts to expose the fallacies of ‘value free’ forms of knowledge and present the agendas and hegemony that is being served by language, actions and thoughts. Bourdieu (1982) labels these forms of hegemony the “structural inequalities” that critical research seeks to unearth (p. 400). In the context of my research in a school that is only six years old, the idea of its hegemony is critical as the school is

really just developing its practices, languages, beliefs and symbols. Therefore, the ability to understand, critique and transform organizational assumptions has the potential to empower participants to create greater structural equalities in their work place.

The fact that communication is central to critical research only strengthens its appropriateness as a research method for my quest to understand its patterns. Critical research attempts to uncover hidden hegemonies that are created and reinforced through language. Bringing communicative rationality to bear on the concept of ‘coming to understanding’ allows critical research to analyze language for the purpose of clarifying understanding. According to Habermas (1984), the connection between rationalism and the moral-practical dimension lies within linguistic interaction as speech acts conform to a rational set of rules and deal with moral-practical issues. This rational set of rules forms the foundation for communicative rationality. Each speech act must comply with the three claims to validity (or rationality) and therefore involve both the speaker and the listener in an act of communicative rationality. The first validity claim is truth – what has been vocalized is true. The second claim is legitimacy – the speaker has the right to adopt her role. For example, one speaking from the perspective and with the authority of an expert in a field is, in reality, an expert in that field. The third validity claim is veracity or truthfulness – the speech acts are genuine and not deceptive. This differs from the first validity claim in that it focuses on the truthfulness of the intent whereas the first validity claim focuses on the truthfulness of the claim itself. If all three claims are met the speech act is rational and others can enter into intelligible dialogue and pursue a “rationally motivated agreement” (*Einverständnis* or consensus) (Habermas, 1987, p. 30). A claim as to whether or not the speech act is intelligible or comprehensible (as opposed to gibberish) can also be added but it is generally assumed that most speech acts are intelligible. If one of the aforementioned validity

claims is questioned then what Habermas (1987) calls, a “second order speech situation” takes place, in which the participants focus their dialogue on their words in order to create a rationally acceptable speech situation (p. 58). In other words, participants need to talk through and decide the norms of how their dialogue will take place, or, they must decide how they will decide. This must take place before communication is able to move toward dealing with a moral-practical issue.

A final necessary component of the rational speech situation is that it avoids coercion (be that conscious or unconscious) whether that be physical force, role authority or cultural hegemony (Habermas, 1987). The latter may be less readily observed or understood by the participants and therefore may require a great investment of time and communication to expose and remove or minimize.

The goal of critical research is to unearth the ways language is manipulated and distorted in order to reinforce existing hegemonies. Again, in a school that is only six years old, the importance of enabling participants to become critically aware of existent and developing hegemonies seems paramount to empowering them to create a school culture with minimal coercion and maximum transparency regarding its inherent assumptions. Critical research, then, is carried out in order to empower people to break through the false universalities in communication. This enables participants to be free from the pressures of domination. The field of linguistic interaction (communication) is the central method of both understanding and reforming culture to allow marginalized peoples the opportunity to free themselves from dominating cultures. For Habermas (1984) the goal of communicative rationality is “aimed at achieving a valid agreement” and it is both the process of and product of this agreement that removes the coercive power of hidden hegemonies (p. 392). This turn toward communicative

action in Critical Theory more aptly enables it to fulfill its emancipatory ideals as the forms of language hold the key to understanding a culture and how its social order, and even its individual's identities, are formed (Giddens, 1971).

In Habermas' (1984) ideal speech situation, the boundaries between public and private are permeable, therefore removing the limiting power of the cultural norms of what is acceptable discourse in the public realm. Traditional symbols and tools of discourse are openly questioned, authentic equal opportunity to speak is essential and the language of violence is nonexistent. All validity claims are freely questioned in the hope of developing a communicative rationality that will serve all its members equally. Forms of language that dominate are replaced by equitable linguistic interactions. While Habermas (1987) is clear that the ideal speech situation is not set out as a Utopian dream, he does believe the pursuit of such an ideal speech situation contains an opportunity for actors (participants) to become agents of emancipation, in this case within their own school.

According to Milley (2004), critical research holds to four key assumptions. First, social reality is socially constructed and therefore what we accept as 'normal' is actually a completely contingent social relationship rather than an objective natural state. Second, accepted norms hide a culture's social privileges and therefore any norm must always be suspect and critiqued. Third, forms of language are central to understanding culture and forming a social order and even to the formation of identity (Giddens, 1971). Therefore linguistic action within an organization must be central to the research process. And fourth, human experiences, including access to symbolic resources, are conditioned by the cultural logic of capitalism. In other words, the symbols we use to create social structures are directly related to the social structures we occupy, in this case the social structure of capitalism.

In summarizing this section, I incorporate critical research because I wish to create knowledge that emancipates individuals and organizations from the contradiction between technical interests (knowledge that seeks to predict and control) and cognitive interests (knowledge that seeks to reach understanding) by bridging a gap between positivist interests and knowledge types, and interpretive interests and knowledge types. This emancipatory interest served by critical research propels it to a higher plane that looks down critically upon both positivist and interpretive research (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982b).

Critical research holds to a view of knowledge that is universal by stating that all knowledge is interest laden, and then working to expose those interests so that the knowledge can become more universally applicable (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982b). This is how critical research seeks to create a knowledge that positively affects socio-cultural conditions.

My approach: a combination of the above

For the purposes of my research, I chose to implement a combination of critical and interpretive research. Critical research served as the primary tool because of its emancipatory ideals and its deep rootedness in the critique of language, both of which make it ideal for use in a Habermasian critique of a school culture. However, elements of interpretive inquiry were also included. While not necessarily intentionally emancipatory, interpretation still provides significant movement in the area of questioning the hegemony of a school culture. I believe this is achieved by simply telling the narratives of the participants and therefore allowing for an increased understanding that can lead, albeit indirectly, toward emancipatory action.

Specific Methodology: Single, embedded, interpretive case study

The specific method I used can best be described as a single, embedded, interpretive case study. **Case studies** are the preferred method for answering 'how' or 'why' questions when the

researcher has little control over the events and when the focus is on contemporary, or real-life events in their actual indeterminate context (Tellis, 1997a; Varma, 1997; Yin, 1994). In this ‘case,’ I wanted the story of real-life events to speak in their context. The case study approach also allowed me to use multiple sources (staff meeting minutes, principal’s reports, school evaluations, etc.). I used these sources to gain an understanding of the specific school context. Therefore, direct reference to these secondary sources does not appear in the findings. Case studies also allow multiple voices (teacher, educational assistant and administration participants) (Varma, 1997) to allow an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon as seen from many viewpoints, including those who are normally powerless and voiceless in a given culture (Tellis, 1997b). The approach also avoids conducting research from the viewpoint of an élite social group (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991) and, therefore, provides a method by which actions of emancipation can begin. Case studies, moreover, separate themselves from empirical quantitative studies by allowing researchers the opportunity to tell individual stories regardless of their complexity and varying perspectives. According to Yin (1994), this component is the most important application of case study research, to bring to light ideas and happenings from “real-life... that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (p. 15). I believe this real-life context also serves to make the case study approach applicable to a wider variety of readers’ everyday experiences and, therefore, enable a greater understanding of otherwise complex real-life situations.

According to Varma (1997) and Tellis (1997b), critics of the case study approach center their concerns around the following three issues: 1) Too small a number of cases weakens the reliability or generalizability; 2) Intense exposure to the subject of the case study biases the findings; and 3) Case studies are useful only as an explanatory tool. I believe that the first

concern is simply a hyper-positivist view of research in that it dismisses the importance of the voices of the minority, for even the voice of one can reveal necessary changes for a culture. As I spent time with my participants, it became even clearer to me that the importance of their individual voices far outweighs the need to justify the research via reliability and generalizability in the positivistic sense. The rich descriptions I was able to construct by allowing the voices of the actors involved in the case resonate, I believe, more significantly with readers than the statistically-rich reports of empirical studies. The second concern also shows positivist leanings as it implies that I would be more objective were I to have less exposure to the subjects of my study, when in truth to be human, makes me subjective, no matter how cleverly I attempt to hide that subjectivity behind scientific/empirical language. By my second visit it was clear to me that conducting some form of neutral, objective research was impossible. My sheer presence at staff meetings had an impact on how people spoke and even who spoke, and how I conducted each interview was rife with subjective decisions. In fact, the goal of critical/interpretive research is to go beyond simply describing the events to interpreting them, thus accepting the subjectivity of the process and allowing it to inform the results. The final concern implies that explanatory tools do not have import in and of themselves. This goes back to the first concern in that again, a case study can reveal hidden truths and injustices that need to be exposed and/or extend and add strength to what is already known and therefore justifies its worth. Sometimes the stories just speak loudly for themselves.

The case study approach also appealed to me because it fits so well with a critical interpretive theory of research as its fundamental characteristic is its striving for a complete understanding of cultural systems of action “or sets of interrelated activities that actors engage in within a social context” (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). This inherent, hermeneutic nature of

the case study approach is ideal in that it provides for holistic, in-depth investigation that exposes the details from - as much as possible given the subjectivity of the researcher - the viewpoint of the participants being studied (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991; Tellis, 1997a). Again, it allows the participants to tell their stories. It is important to note however, that in seeking understanding the case study is less specifically focused on the subject(s) being studied as it is on the system of action, the issue or phenomenon as raised in the research questions. It is this more specific focus that allows case study research to clarify the deeper cause behind a given problem and its consequences rather than simply commenting on the symptoms and how often and when they occur. In the end, cases contribute “uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomenon” (Yin, 1994, p. 2).

Yin (1994) and Tellis (1997a) state that single case studies are ideally used when one desires to confirm, challenge or extend a well-formulated theory and uncover a prevalent phenomenon. As my goal is to confirm and extend Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action and to uncover how communication either enables or disables ethical relationships between staff member and administration and among staff members, a single case study served ideally.

According to Tellis, (1997a; 1997b) and Yin (1994) an embedded case study is one that involves more than one unit or subunit of analysis of the same phenomenon. My research was embedded in a single school structure, a single socioeconomic context and the current cultural milieu. It also consisted of the various subunits of study of the organization (school) itself, the individual interviewees and the various groups represented within the school.

While this study does not fit the definition of narrative inquiry, or narrative research, it is somewhat narrative in that it allows for the fundamental aspect of narrative studies, the ability to empower the research participants by allowing them to tell *their* experiences in *their* own words. My interest is “in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (Chase, 2005; p. 651). By enabling participants to speak in their own words, those who are marginalized may find the opportunity to find an equal voice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Applebaum, 2003) in the interpretation of events. According to Chase (2005), “a central tenet of the narrative turn is that speakers construct events through narrative rather than simply refer to events” (p. 656). This emphasis on the speakers and their stories raises to prominence the importance of the individual in the research rather than simply the patterns or ‘norms’ discovered. However, as pure as my intentions were in letting the participants’ stories speak for themselves, I need to acknowledge that each of their stories is filtered through my particular human lens as the writer. I have made specific ethical and editorial choices as a person in a position of social power by excluding some material and by including and even emphasizing other material. It is impossible to present a completely objective retelling of the participants’ events and stories (Cherryholmes, 1993).

The ‘case’ of Heritage Christian School

Heritage Christian School is a grade eight to twelve school that has been in existence for six years. It was created by two Christian Elementary Schools within the same major city in Canada. There are approximately 300 students at Heritage and it is currently situated on a school site rented from the local school district. The fact that Heritage Christian school is situated a multi-ethnic community and is only six years old drew my interest. I am curious as to what hegemonies have developed and how they have developed in such a short time. I am also interested in the interplay between diverse ethnic cultures and the Institution of Christianity. And

above all, I want to know more about how communicative practices are affected by these factors as well as the role those practices play in either reinforcing the hidden hegemonies or empowering counter-hegemonies (Carroll, 2007).

I collected the data for this study from March to June of 2010. My first step was to seek approval from the school's board of directors by sending them a letter outlining the scope of my intended research (see appendix A). Once that approval had been received I scheduled a meeting with the school principal, Peter, to outline the steps in my research and the access to sources of evidence I would like to have. At that meeting we scheduled a time during the March staff meeting that would allow me to introduce the study to his staff (see Appendix B). After my presentation to the staff I left behind a letter of invitation (see Appendix C) for those who wished to participate. With only a few interviews scheduled I began my on-site data collection. This included what turned out, over time, to be nine one-to-one interviews, each of which started with the participant reading over and signing a participant consent form (see Appendix E). I then used a set of pre-determined questions (see Appendix F) to guide each interview while still allowing the dialogue to follow a course of its own, dependent upon comments made and the interests of participants. While conducting the interviews over the ten days, I also conducted informal observations of staff meetings, staff conversations, and personal conversations with various non-participating teachers and employees. I then transcribed audio-taped versions of all the participants interviews and allowed each participant an opportunity to make corrections and changes to ensure the accuracy of their comments and perspectives. My time at Heritage Christian School ended with a focus group discussion that dealt with the themes raised in the interviews as well as the anomalies and exceptions individuals brought to my attention.

During my time at Heritage Christian School I was also given access to staff and department meeting minutes as well as the reports to the board of directors from the principal. These documents served to give me a broader context and allowed me to understand some of the comments participants made as they referred directly to staff meeting experiences.

Sources of Evidence

In order to strengthen my exploration, I utilized information from the six sources of evidence suggested by Stake (1995) and Yin (1994). The first source was documentation that includes minutes of staff meetings, principal's reports as well as the school website and school newsletters. While this source of evidence did not provide significant data due to the limited content recorded in the minutes and reports, it did serve to give a basic context over a broader span of time than the ten days I was on site. The second source was archival, including records from documents that speak to the historical context of a situation. As the school within which I conducted my research was only six years old, I relied only marginally on archival records for information. I also used one-on-one open-ended interviews (see Appendix F) that focused directly on the case study topic and allowed for a variety of perceptions of the phenomenon. These interviews were dialogic in nature which more aptly allowed us (researcher and participants), I believe, to "critique the status quo and move towards building a more just society" (Lather, 1986; p. 258). According to Lather (1986), "Dialogic research design allows us both to grasp the necessary conditions for people to engage in ideology critique and social interaction." (p. 64). Each of these actual interview formats was unique as the participants and I followed different paths in the dialogue depending on the participant's answers and my responses to those answers. I purposely choose this interview format as I wanted to allow the participants' voices to emerge in the data and to allow themes and exceptions to arise regardless

of my preconceived expectations. Once all interviews were complete, I conducted a focus group discussion that allowed participants to engage more specifically in themes and exceptions to those themes that arose during the one-on-one interviews. The fourth source of evidence was direct observation. I spent ten different days in the school setting, observing events and communication practices in real time. Participant observations also served as a source of evidence as I was allowed to participate in a staff meeting and sit in on others. During my times of observation I had opportunities to engage in conversations not germane to my study. However, I believe these conversations led to an increased ease with my presence and a growing sense of trust in my objectives. They also gave me a greater sense of who the people of Heritage Christian are. Harris (2007) notes this reality by stating, "In the talk about everyday realities, researchers come to know what is important in the lives of others... If authentic, talk both informs and reinforces all parties engaged in the conversation" (p. 809). Finally I used available physical artifacts that were available to give a context to the data I collected from the interviews. These artifacts included student art work, posters and displays as well as staff room and office displays and information. In taking notes on the physical artifacts available, I looked for evidence that would corroborate participants' perspectives in their interviews. I also used observation of these artifacts to stimulate conversations regarding the school's stated goals in comparison to the lived reality of students and teachers at Heritage Christian School. A table of these sources of evidence taken from Yin (1994) summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of each:

Six Sources of Evidence: Strengths and Weaknesses

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -stable-can be reviewed repeatedly -unobtrusive-not created as a result of the case study -exact-contains exact names, references, and details of an event -broad coverage-long span of time, many events, and many settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -retrievability-can be low -biased selectivity, if collection is incomplete -reporting bias-reflects (unknown) bias of author -access-may be deliberately blocked
Archival records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -(<i>Same as above for documentation</i>) -precise and quantitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -(<i>Same as above for documentation</i>) -accessibility due to privacy reasons
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -targeted-focuses directly on case study topic -insightful-provides perceived causal references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -bias due to poorly constructed questions -response bias -inaccuracies due to poor recall -reflexivity-interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear
Direct observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reality-covers events in real time -contextual-covers context of event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -time consuming -selectivity-unless broad coverage -reflexivity-event may proceed differently because it is being observed -cost-hours needed by human observers
Participant observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -(<i>Same as above for direct observations</i>) -insightful into interpersonal behavior and motives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -(<i>Same as above for direct observations</i>) -bias due to investigator's manipulation of events
Physical artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -insightful into cultural features -insightful into technical operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -selectivity -availability

(P. 80)

These sources of evidence allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the research site than the interviews alone provided. In addition I created a database of the research process that would allow another potential researcher to analyze information in a similar style. While completely accepting, in fact celebrating, the subjectivity of my research, I felt it was important to provide a degree of reliability should my research process serve to inspire another to follow in my footsteps. This also allowed me to adjust the interview questions as patterns and anomalies

arose in the field during the data collection process, thus providing for greater reliability in the study (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991; Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997a).

Analysis of Data

Once I had gathered all the relevant evidence, I analyzed it in several ways. First, as suggested by Yin (1994), I compared the data to the theoretical propositions as presented in the literature review. In this case, Habermas' theory of communication formed the basis for that comparison. As I read and reread the transcribed interviews and focus group meeting I looked for common themes to emerge that related specifically to the points raised in the review of the literature (i.e. Chapter 2). I started by looking for evidence of the following broad categories: Evidence of Modernity's influence, System vs. Lifeworld issues, evidence leading toward and away from an Ideal Speech Situation, the idea of hegemony, and evidence of structuralism. However, I also allowed the data to speak for itself in a non-theoretical way and, therefore, several themes arose on their own. For example, the theme of the limiting influence of Evangelical Christianity on communicative practices became very strong very early in my analysis. This theme required a deeper look into Habermas' described tension between premodern worldviews that ascribe to a 'revealed law' and communicative rationalities' move towards a post-conventional worldview that depends on an individual sociation empowering principled and reflective action. A second example was the dominate theme of the coercive forces that limit ethical discourse. While Habermas (1987) addresses this directly in the context of ideal speech situations, this theme of coercion appeared in my data across a broad spectrum of issues and therefore rises to prominence in a number of subsections.

Second, I looked for pattern-matching (Campbell, 1975; Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997b; Yin, 1994) to compare the found data with the predicted data and to compare the various sub-units of

data with another. This means that I looked for patterns in the data that would coincide with Habermas' predictions as to both the limiting and enabling factors affecting communication. One example of this is Habermas' point that an Ideal Speech Situation will not arise where coercion based on hierarchal roles is evident. I took this point and looked for a pattern to match it in the data. A danger in pattern-matching is that of omitting non-conforming information that doesn't fit an established pattern. Therefore I applied what Eisner and Peshkin (1990) call direct interpretation; I raised to prominence both the patterns that arose as well as the significant exceptions to those patterns, as both serve to give a more holistic understanding of the phenomena. An example of an exception to the patterns raised in the data was Elizabeth's lone concern over ageism. Raising exceptions not only ensure the truthfulness of the study but also empowers each participant's voice. Linkages were sought between the emerging evidence and the original questions posed during the interview process (see Appendix F); conflicts were probed more deeply in order to gain an understanding of the original source of the conflict (Varma, 1997). The importance of the exceptions lies in their potential ability to expose hegemonies and hierarchies that otherwise might go unnoticed in the observation of general patterns. Attention to exceptions gives those on the margins a voice in the research and is therefore the beginning of emancipatory research (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 69). In summary, I used strategies of analysis to compare Habermas' communication theory with real-life phenomena as a way of appraising its applicability to school cultures in attempting to answer the 'how' of my initial research question.

Validity (truthfulness)

When conducting qualitative research the understanding of how validity is arrived at changes dramatically from empirical, positivist research. Under the latter, one's research was

deemed 'valid' if it measured what it proposed to measure, or as Sapsford and Evans (1984) stated, "validity is the extent to which an indicator is a measure of what the researcher wishes to measure" (p. 259). In the context of critical interpretive research, validity takes on a different meaning. The idea that any one measurement could be objectively taken is disregarded for, "the reality of social systems and phenomena is not physically determined alone; it is also socially constructed. As such, it is difficult to present a realistic representation of any social phenomenon by believing in one truth" (Tandon, 2008, p. 5). Therefore, the desire to prove the validity of research using the universal of 'the rational' is replaced by the appeal to the more realistic concept of vouching for the 'trustworthiness' of the critical interpretation. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (1998),

Where traditional verifiability rests on a rational proof built upon literal intended meaning, a critical qualitative perspective always involves a less certain approach characterized by participant reaction and emotional involvement... Trustworthiness... is a more appropriate word to use in the context of critical research. (p. 287)

In fact, Tandon (2008) not only acknowledges the involvement of emotion on behalf of both the participants and the researcher, he furthers the discussion by emphasizing the importance of "feeling as a mode of knowing" and the value of 'tacit knowledge' that leads to "explicit knowledge" (p. 6). While a positivist approach would seek to remove emotion from fact, my critical-interpretivist approach celebrates emotive ways of knowing as one of the many multiple 'knowledges' that can coexist and are therefore no less truthful than other modes of knowing.

Arriving at truthfulness then requires researchers to expose their own subjectivity in the process, as I have done in this chapter. It also requires the research to move beyond the general idea of admitting to subjectivity and on to exposing one's own biases. Garrison (1996) speaks to this in developing his idea of "hermeneutic listening" in which the listener explains his or her biases before listening so as create a more authentic opportunity for communication. As a researcher is primarily (but not wholly) a listener, this step is critical. In my introduction, I attempted to paint an honest picture of my worldview and the motivations that drove me in my research. I would encourage readers to bring their own biases to the forefront of their thinking as they read and construct meaning(s).

A final component of truthfulness is the accuracy with which "the researcher portrays the phenomenon it is supposed to portray" (Brock-Utne, 1996; p. 615). In desiring to fulfill this component of truthfulness I have attempted to accurately record the interviews and focus group discussion and have tried to represent each participant, and Heritage Christian School, according to how I experienced each of them. According to Myrdal (1979), "Research is always and by logical necessity based on moral and political valuations, and the researcher should be obliged to account for them explicitly" (p. 74). Therefore, my recording of events and experiences in my research is accurate in the context of who I am and my inherent biases and in the understanding that what is personal is political.

Generalizability

Again, the term generalizable derives from empirical research wherein studies were deemed more 'valid' if their results could be applied "to the wider population" (Bush, 2005, p. 67). In other words, the greater the variety of people, places and procedures the study applies to,

the more generalizable (Varma, 1997). Even within the context of qualitative research there is pressure to ensure findings apply to a broad range of contexts thus making the single case study suspect (Flyvberg 2004). However, as Flyvberg (2004) notes, “much of the conventional wisdom of case study research, which, if not directly wrong, is so oversimplified as to be grossly misleading” (p. 420). And much of that conventional wisdom maintains that knowledge that cannot be formerly generalized is of less use than knowledge that can. However, in critical interpretative research, the individual story has importance regardless of whether or not it applies to other populations. Therefore, the ‘generalizability’ of this case study applies to two criteria. The first is how much readers can draw from the findings and ‘generalize’ to their own story as they interpret the research and create their own meaning in the process. In this view, a single case study’s generalizability is in proportion to “the force of the example” it presents (Flyvberg, 2004, p. 425). Secondly, as I have attempted to test key components of Habermas’ (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action*, this case study is somewhat generalizable to his theories in considering how great or how little they apply to the specific context of these participants at this time in history. In this view it is the consistency or inconsistency with Habermas’ theory that makes this single case study generalizable.

Regarding the generalizability of the single case study, Kemmis (1980) makes the point that its true value “lies in its connection to the real world, its ability to describe actions in their social and historical context, and its ability to rationally critique these descriptions” (p.99). In applying a critical interpretive research method I have attempted to ensure the real-world voices of the participants as situated in their social and historical context are honestly evident in the findings. I have also attempted to apply Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action as a tool to

rationally critique the stories and examples found in the data. It is fulfilling these steps that the findings of this study become generalizable to the reader.

The Interview Questions

Before listing the interview questions (see appendix A and B), I think it is important to explain the intention of the interviews. The object of my research is to observe and begin to understand communication that either leads to or detracts from a more just school culture. Therefore, as Varma (1997) suggests, I shaped the questions to specifically target the communication that occurs in the context of the interrelatedness of school events, people, and programs. Therefore, the questions are open-ended in nature, generally starting with ‘how’ or ‘why.’ The questions are semi-structured and therefore also serve as a guide to the interview but not the script for, as patterns, exceptions and conflicts arose they were pursued for clarification and understanding. This format seemed ideal as it allowed “respondents to express themselves at length,” (Wragg, 2005; p. 149), but also allowed for a structure to guide the process, especially as the interviews served to prepare participants for the focus group discussion. I also strove to be attentive to cues in the interviews that would signify deeper thought. Examples of these cues included hesitation to answer questions, physical discomfort, and the acknowledged need for renewed affirmation of confidentiality. The literature review for this study, based on the work of Jürgen Habermas, guided the formulation of the questions and direction of the interview and served to set the stage for analysis of data (see Appendix F).

My final meeting with participants took place in a focus group meeting held after all participants had reviewed transcripts of their individual interviews. My goals in the focus group discussion were twofold: First and simply, the focus group allows participants and me to bring clarity to the issues at hand, and the details shaping them. More importantly however, the focus

group allows all participants to both give voice and to be heard. Outside of the publication of my findings and any follow-up meetings I may have with the staff at Heritage, this part of the research provides the greatest opportunity to shape collective action; that is, offer the potential “to change existing systems into ones that provide participants equal access to power and other resources” (Gormley, 2001, p. 44) in the area of communicative action. While I fully agree with Tandon (2008) that “the process of research does have impact on field setting” (p. 5), I believe that the focus group has the greatest potential for that impact. Participants not only gained a more public voice during the focus group, but more importantly, all participants were enabled to listen and respond to their colleagues differing understandings on issues in their school. Several times the comment, “I never thought of it that way,” was voiced by a participant, giving me hope that shared understandings were begin to develop. As I communicated with participants in both the interviews and in the focus group, I not only listened to their answers but also probed participants to reflect more deeply on some of Habermas’ ideas. This was done intentionally in order to increase participants’ understandings in the area of communicative action and that “knowledge as a part of the process of reform and reconstruction” (Tandon, 2008; p. ix) can begin to be realized.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting research with open-ended interviews there is an inherent risk that participants will make comments that identify colleagues who have not consented to participate in the study. In order to protect the identities of those working at Heritage Christian School, I have used pseudonyms for all names, including the name of the school. I have also chosen to be purposely vague in situating Heritage Christian School in a major city in Canada. However, I fully realize that these attempts do not provide complete protection for those involved. This is the

nature of dialogic research which allows a space for difficult and conflicted points to be raised. I am therefore greatly indebted to the participants and the risks they took on in joining this study. My commitment to them, beyond this study's completion, is to ensure their anonymity is protected as much as possible.

Chapter 4: The participants

Introduction

When I first approached Peter¹ over a breakfast meeting about the idea of conducting my research in his school he was very open to the idea. In fact, in short order he began to share about how interesting his staff is and how important it would be for me to ensure certain of them choose to participate. He felt they would have a lot to say and would share thoughtful insight into the “goings on of Heritage.” Having received Peter’s agreement to participate, my next step was to present the opportunity for participation at a staff meeting. Out of this meeting I received one immediate response from Herman who humbly submitted his name with the disclaimer that he was “something of an anomaly on staff at Heritage” due to being older than the average and only having been in Canada for less than two years. My second response came a few days later from Jonathon who introduced himself by stating in his email “I am but a lowly S.E.A. (Special Needs Assistant) but would like to participate nonetheless. Let me know if you still need people.” A week after presenting, my participants included Peter, Herman and Jonathon. I was starting to worry as to whether or not I was going to get enough data to work with. Then Melissa emailed that she would be “happy to participate” and I started booking interview times. Once I spent a couple of days on campus Herman and Elizabeth both approached me to offer their participation. A couple of days later and Patti offered to join in the study as did Dan, after being encouraged by one of the participants. The final participant to join the study was Lorna, who agreed to do so after I approached her personally. Being a small school, Peter was fairly aware of who was participating as staff members talked openly about their involvement in the staff room. Peter was

¹ In order to maintain the anonymity of all participants their names and the name of the school have been substituted with pseudonyms.

excited for the participants that joined as he felt confident they would readily engage in the issues and reflect deeply on its meaning in both their own practice but also in the culture of Heritage Christian.

As you read through this chapter you will notice the ethnic diversity of the participants. Most of them share a common bond of having recent immigration as part of their heritage, whether that is from the Netherlands, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Germany or South Africa. They also represent a very broad range of life stages, including recent college graduates, young parents, single, or parenting adulating children.

The goal of this chapter is to introduce these participants and to give a small sense of who they are, not only professionally but also personally. I believe this is important as it gives a context to their comments and thoughts as they arise in Chapters 5 and 6 (Findings). It gives a sense of their stories and the lives they lead that shape the comments and insights they offered. While my findings are structured to compare Herman Habermas' theory of Communicative Action to the 'data' derived from the interviews, observations and lived experiences of the participants, their stories are integral as I believe, with Disch (1994) that "Under certain conditions, a story can be a more powerful critical force than a theoretical analysis" (p. 106). Therefore, I hope that the stories of these participants combined with their thoughts and reflections will serve to speak clearly to their realities in this dissertation. I hope that they will feel who they are was honored at least as much as what they said.

In this chapter I have attempted to provide a thick description of the participants. I believe this will better enable the reader to understand the comments these participants make in Chapters 5 and 6 as it provide a social and historical context for those comments. I also believe it

allows the traces of beliefs and values evident in the findings to be given a personal and human context. As I read and reread the data, these thick descriptions allowed me to understand participants' comments and how those comments connected to the participants' worldviews and therefore to the comments of their colleagues. Holloway (1997) notes that providing detailed description "helps the reader of a research study to develop an active role in the research... the reader can follow the pathway of the researcher and the two share the construction of reality coming to similar conclusions in the analysis of research (p. 9).

Before introducing the participants I need to make the obvious disclaimer regarding the subjectivity that permeates this writing. With Rhodes (2000) I recognize as the writer that I am "in a position of social power through being able to produce written (re)presentations" (p. 523) Therefore I acknowledge that I have made choices to both include and exclude material and recognize the limitations this puts on the text.

Peter

I find it fascinating to hear the varying pathways administrators have taken into their role. Many embark on a vocational journey with no intention of becoming school administrators, only to find themselves seemingly well-oriented to such a position, Peter is no exception to that phenomenon. He is also somewhat unique in his role as he strays so far from the stereotypical, type 'A,' pressed suit, hyper-detail oriented administrator. Peter could probably be more aptly described as a bit of a renaissance man. His reading interests vary from educational theorists Thomas Sergiovanni to novelists David Baldacci and Steig Larsson and while appreciating quality craft brewed beer (he has led tours of microbreweries in Washington State) he has a strong affinity for aged, single-malt Scotch (Balvenie, Glenfiddich and Laphroaig specifically).

He likes to tinker with cars and maintains a runabout boat that his family uses for beach camping around the North Shore and accompanying islands. Peter is interested in music, and his interests are eclectic and range from composers Handel and Holst to Dylan and Waits. He is keen to maintain a sense of himself rather than be defined by the roles he feels he is expected to play, and therefore he intentionally dresses the same for a board meeting as he would for a beer on the beach with friends. Peter's identifying himself as someone not defined by his role greatly shapes how he views his leadership as well as how he views both his staff and students.

Peter was born and raised in Ontario in a staunchly Christian Reformed family where church attendance, Sunday observance and support for Christian Education were non-negotiable. He was married soon after graduating high school but after a year of marriage his first wife was killed tragically in a car accident. As they were planning to spend a semester in Spain together Peter fulfilled that goal and in so doing met his second wife. Together they came back to the U.S. (his second wife is an American born in Germany) to continue their university education. Peter graduated with a bachelor of Science and a bachelor of Education, both from Calvin College in Michigan. He then decided to continue his education and received a Master's degree in Special Education. While his wife taught her whole career in Christian elementary schools, Peter started out the first 10 years of his educational career in a residential school for Juvenile delinquents in Detroit Michigan. He describes this as "a fabulous experience." This experience has also shaped his view of students and he readily admits that he is "drawn to the problem kids." He finds them "interesting, challenging and loaded with potential." I also think this has affected his view of staff as he doesn't need to surround himself with compliance and often hires and respects outspoken, strong personalities.

There is an irony to Peter's vocation that is not lost on him as his dad was a professional educator as well and Peter swore he wouldn't follow in his father's footsteps. Peter views his entrance in education as a result of "God having another plan for me." In fact, he describes it as more of an accident. Peter struggled throughout his practicum with classroom management and felt a lack of confidence in his success as an educator. So when the opportunity to get paid while completing a Master's degree in Special Education came up, he thought this would be an ideal way to "work with real tough kids in the classroom and learn a lot of skills in terms of classroom management." In conversations with Peter it is clear that this experience deeply shaped his view of learners and his view of staff to student relationships, so much so that members of his staff feel he was shaped by his work with a challenging population. Peter seems to exude a belief in the potential of those around him, a potential for personal growth and development and a potential for good.

The transition into the 'regular' education system came out of his desire to do something new more than anything else. In the same year he applied to teach Spanish in Korea and Math and Science in a major Canadian city at an independent school that was just adding grades 9 and 10. After an interview over the phone he accepted the position and headed to Canada. In his new role, Peter taught full time and was responsible to set up the grade 9 and 10 program as well as coordinate the schools information technology department. This experience lasted for ten years before leading him into a Vice Principal position in the same school. During his time as Vice Principal, the school went into a phase of envisioning the development of a completely separate high school in partnership with another independent Christian elementary school. Out of this process Heritage Christian High School was birthed in 2005 and Peter was appointed the inaugural principal.

Peter describes his hiring as the principal of Heritage Christian School as simply a byproduct of his personhood:

I was hired because of who and what I am, which is a very relational person. And I will work myself to any lengths and I can take on a lot. I can multi-task. I can do lots and lots of different things. My core strengths however, are relational. I think identifying skilled leadership in staff and enabling them to run with their competences, I am good at that. I think I am good at working with the parent community.

That relational aspect to his character shapes even his daily habits as an administrator. Peter spends little time in his office and maximum time in classrooms and hallways connecting with students and staff members,

I rue the email process for many, many obvious reasons but it also takes me away from the ability to wander the halls and communicate. So I like to go into every classroom all the time. Not daily anymore but I like the conversations that happen in the halls and with the ones that just come into my office unannounced.

He also describes his areas of weakness in relation to those same personal characteristics:

I err on the side of relationship and community. So when it comes to releasing a staff I feel like I go to long lengths to ensure due process and diligence, and maybe to a fault. So I am perceived, and I wouldn't disagree, that I am not tough enough on staff. To be tougher on staff I would fear that I might risk the benefits and values of who I am.

And again,

Sometimes I am probably faulted for being or offering a little too much Lorna in discipline and employee issues, and it comes from a background in working with delinquent kids. You build on strengths. You don't focus on weaknesses.

The tension between who he is and who he is expected to be as a 'strong leader' is in the forefront of his mind as he continues to shape his practice, "...I am committed to taking that on and put that coat on and playing with it a bit and see if I can keep my core being but be a stronger and more consistent person in terms of my managing staffing..." This is a powerful statement that speaks to Peter's desire to maintain his integrity and his beliefs but also fulfill the expectations put on him by his board of directors. This tension also arises in the data as participants note his strong relational skills but question whether those same relational strengths at times limit his leadership effectiveness. Yet, he is unwavering in his resolve to maintain that personal integrity of being who he really is at the core of his self rather than just playing a role. Of his work at Heritage he says,

I can very much be myself. I am determined to be. It's not so much determined, it's a given that I will be myself and that's why I dress the way I dress [casual] and I get challenged often about that pretty significantly. So being who I am, my style of communication is transparent, it's all important to me.

In his hiring as principal of Heritage, Peter basically built the school on an exceptionally slim budget. He personally rented a truck the first summer and went from office sale to garage sale purchasing, loading and unloading furniture in order to have a furnished school ready for the school's opening in September 2005. This was all done on top of single-handedly hiring all teachers and support staff, structuring curriculum, building the schedule, and even teaching part

time. He is now in a significant transition. Heritage is up and running and the expectations of him have changed from building a school to leading and managing a school towards goals and objectives set by a parent board of directors, “my job really, my role in the past two years has been to shift, to really back away from all of that and delegate all of that and really flatten and broaden leadership...” In the view of the board, Peter needs to focus more of his intention on more authoritatively managing his teachers and staff. He talks of their perception that maybe he isn’t “managing tightly enough (his) own staff” and that he doesn’t really enjoy “paperwork... and building protocols and policies.”

In reflecting on why he enjoys what he does at Heritage, Peter immediately connects that enjoyment to his faith life, his role in starting the school and the relational side of his personality,

Well, I love the spirit-filled growth that I experience because I am in this environment. I really love that. I love the obscenely phenomenal opportunity of having been a part of starting this school and in my role as principal so that’s exciting. I love the kids. I like my relationships with the staff and the parents.

Moving forward Peter looks forward to a time when he can serve in administration in a school that is already established while the possibility of pursuing a second Master’s degree also catches his attention as he deeply enjoys being a life-long learner

Herman

In meeting Herman I was quickly impressed with his thoughtful command of the English language, which coupled with his South African accent presents an articulate and eloquent sounding professional. Herman, the son of German immigrants was born and raised in South Africa and spoke German until he went to school where he learned both English and Afrikaans

and maintains his trilingual ability to communicate. Herman's path to Heritage from the south of South Africa includes time in England where they originally emigrated to in 2008. Herman's family was originally reluctant to end up in Canada due to its distance from relatives in South Africa. They had previously stayed in Canada when Herman was a student at Regent College (a graduate Theological school at the University of British Columbia).

Consistently through my interaction with Herman, I was impressed with his logical analysis of situations and his direct, pointed and honest feedback. Outside of talking about his faith, Herman presents as a highly rational person. However, it is clear that his belief system is very much a part of his identity. This presents a bit of paradox in light of Herman's command of logic and his presentation as a highly rational person.

Herman ties his 'conversion' to following the path of becoming a teacher directly to his conversion experience in becoming an Evangelical Christian. In fact, he had vowed never to become a teacher and instead was planning on pursuing a career in archeology or geology. Then, at the end of his grade 12 year he was required to serve a compulsory year of military service in the South African Armed Forces. Upon being newly converted to Christianity (after being a self-proclaimed agnostic) he discovered a newfound desire "to work with people because that really matters." He found this desire combined with his strong ability in languages and in the sciences led him to the teaching profession, which he studied at the University of Cape Town. In deciding his major, again his faith was a key factor,

Which one? I like the sciences better because a lot of kids think Science and God don't go together so I want to show them that does work. So I leaned toward the sciences and prayed and think I got an answer, and so enrolled at university and did my training and

have stuck with it, and still think this is what God has called me to. There have been times that were depressing or discouraging and I have wondered about this call, but I'm still here over 25 years later. And in a sense it's the irony and humor of God saying "you don't want to do that one, that's the one I am going to have you do."

With this strong vocational sense of calling connected to his faith it is somewhat surprising that most of Herman's 27 year career has been spent in public school systems as this is only his second year at Heritage. Currently Herman teaches mostly Sciences (Biology, Physics, Chemistry and some junior Math) and has been involved in organizing some of the parent-evenings around Faith-based themes of Christmas and Easter. In the past Herman has served as head of Science in a very large public school and now works intimately with a team of four Science teachers in this much smaller school setting.

And while Herman serves exceptionally well in his official role as a Science and Math teacher, it takes very little time to realize that he fulfills a very important unofficial role on staff as someone who speaks with wisdom, directness and honesty. In fact, many staff members have felt strongly that Herman represents their interests to administration. Herman is aware this perception has grown since he joined Heritage,

I think in every school I've ended up being, and self-aggrandizement is tempting and to be shunned here, I've often ended up speaking to administration about issues that other teachers have felt afraid to voice, and in that sense I have been a lightning rod, the lightning conductor for staff, usually for frustrations. I have been willing to voice them, foolishly or otherwise. So I think I am beginning to play that role here.

Herman's rational forms of expression combined with his ability to clearly articulate his ideas have served to propel him into the role of staff advocate. This role has also come with its challenges as Herman works through the cultural expectations of Canadians in contrast to his German-South African roots,

So in my first year, I am in Canada, it's a very different set up, different norms apply. So I just said to myself, "you keep your mouth shut, ears open and learn what you can and figure out the dynamics as far as possible." I think I've understood something. And I am more willing to speak out now and say, "Yes, but have we considered these issues because I think they are important?" or, "I don't think we're doing the right thing here." I am way more willing to say that. I've written to Peter and to Lorna and said, "If I come across as critical, I'm sorry. This is where I come from. I'm a much more direct person, unCanadian."

Herman's culturally inculcated beliefs about the importance of "being direct" stand in direct opposition to some of his colleagues. However, he is highly respected by all of his colleagues nonetheless. In being asked what he enjoys about Heritage, Herman's first response is the newness of the school and the stage of development it is in as a culture that is "still moldable and malleable enough to make changes." And that is tied to how he views Peter as someone who is open to changes. Herman deeply appreciates Peter's willingness to put any topic on the table for discussion, even though he wishes at times that Peter would be more assertive in controlling those discussions.

Melissa

Melissa is in her 4th year of teaching at Heritage and is married with an infant daughter. While raised in Vancouver for all of her K-12 years, Melissa was born in Hamilton, Ontario. Her father immigrated from Jamaica and her mother is French-Canadian from New Brunswick. However, they weren't together "very long as they were literally as opposite as black and white." She returned to Ontario where she received her Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Philosophy from McMaster before transferring to Simon Fraser University for her Bachelor of Education and Professional Development Program year. Prior to teaching at Heritage, Melissa taught ESL for several years and then moved into working as a Teacher on Call for both public and private schools.

Melissa is true to her teaching area in her love of literature as it ranges from a deep appreciation of the classics to more contemporary favorite authors like Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood. This love of literature goes back to her time as a high school student, especially as a grade 12 student in her English Lit 12 class where she "just loved what (we) were talking about, going through the history of language and the literature that came out of the language." It is this love of literature that led Melissa down the path to becoming a teacher, in large part due to her own English Lit 12 teacher who,

was just so charismatic. I didn't feel like we were learning. It felt like we were just sitting around talking about great poems, some great authors, and some great ideas through those time periods, and I was sitting in that class going, "I want to get paid to do this, to sit around with a bunch of kids and just talk about great stories." And from then I just knew that I had a talent in English and didn't know what else to do with it so I just made the steps to being a teacher, hoping that one day I would teach English Lit.

And teach English Lit is what she does, albeit mixed with some Social Studies 11 and the role of Department Head of English.

While Melissa doesn't get to use her Philosophy background directly she feels strongly that it has shaped her as a teacher and as a thinker,

I didn't do anything with it except that it's always kind of there as I discuss.... I think it helped me be more, not direct, but questioning. To be more questioning and clarifying about what people are saying and making sure that we are really saying what we mean...just more analytical I think.

This ability to interact critically with her colleagues and the school administration has garnered her a reputation of standing up against injustice; in fact, Peter affectionately calls her "one who stands with fist" an allusion to the independent and strong-willed character portrayed in the movie *Dances with Wolves*. In reflecting on this nickname Melissa clearly connects it to her honesty and directness with her colleagues and the school administration:

...I understand what he is getting at. He is saying I am one who always speaks her mind and I know what I am going to say. I do toe the line but I want the reasons why we are doing something. I will not go placidly with something that I disagree with. So I think on staff, people know me as that.... "the one who stands with fist," in my hearing it from him I think he says it with respect.... I think he thinks it's appropriate and challenges the assumptions of why we should just ride through stuff.

This respect that Melissa feels from Peter regarding her passion for speaking out against injustice connects to earlier comments I made regarding Peter's view of staff, that he appreciates strong-willed and outspoken personalities as opposed to seeking compliance. Melissa is a great

example of a staff member who speaks her mind, will disagree with the administration, and yet has Peter's full respect. All of that said, Melissa is also aware of the need to moderate her desire to speak out and speak up and to ensure that "one of these days" she isn't "going to stand too tall" and cause more damage than good. She also worries somewhat that her ability to speak her mind can come across as simply complaining, "which can negatively affect others" while at the same time realizing that her questioning "might perhaps invite others to do the same." This ability in her colleagues is also something Melissa greatly values. For example, she respectfully describes Herman, who also openly, respectfully and thoughtfully questions school-wide decisions as someone who is "like the senate of Canada providing sober, second thought before bills are passed."

Melissa presents as a very self-aware and thoughtful person who consciously strives to be true to who she is both professionally as a teacher and personally at home as "the mother" and with friends as "the girlfriend. But at the essence I am always me. You're never going to be surprised if I walk through the door and say something completely out of character.... I am myself because I can only ever be myself." This strength of character and self-awareness translate into her being perceived by her colleagues as a strong, independent, rational and intelligent colleague. Melissa presents as a bit of a paradox in that she holds to a more traditional view of definitions of 'male' and 'female,' even though she clearly represents a less traditional model in how she lives amongst her students and colleagues.

In the future Melissa sees herself studying for her Master's degree and connects this to an ability to take her teaching to an even deeper level:

I want my teaching, I want my students to walk out with a sense of, a sense of what they are learning in the classroom is not just the, is not just the textbook curriculum. It's applicable to life.... I want that to be always with them. For them to come back later and say, you know we talked about that and I made that connection in the outside world. That is one of the goals I have for my teaching practices.

And in the context of Heritage Christian School Melissa feels strongly that she is in the right place to foster those practices and really appreciates the uniqueness of teaching in a school that is only 6 years old as "we can learn as we go, we can make mistakes and try new things and say, that didn't work well and we're going to do this next year, and we just have lots of vision, we just have lots of desire for how we want this school to be unique and different." She also deeply appreciates working in a community with people of similar faith backgrounds and uses words like, 'open', 'camaraderie' and 'enjoyable' to describe the culture of Heritage. Melissa feels she has been given room to develop professionally at Heritage. She also feels she has an opportunity to help shape the "culture" of the school.

Jonathon

Jonathon is in his second year as a Special Education Assistant (S.E.A.) at Heritage and therefore he holds a unique position amongst staff. Not only is he the only S.E.A. on staff working with the only Learning Assistance Teacher, but he also has the opportunity to spend significant time in most of the teacher's classroom as the majority of his support work with students occurs in the classroom rather than in a pullout setting. He describes his role of supporting students as that of a "mediator. I mediate the content to the students."

Jonathon arrived at Heritage just after graduating from Simon Fraser University with an Honour's degree in English and was offered the job by the Special Education Coordinator who is both his wife's aunt and someone he used to live next door to. As he describes his hiring, "She said, do you need a job? I was like, sure. So she said, come on over. Start September. And then I did."

He was born in Surrey, British Columbia and mostly raised in neighbouring Langley. Jonathon's mother is a member of the Tsimshian Nation and his father is "a straight white guy from Ontario." While he finds satisfaction in his current role Jonathon does desire to become a teacher and has therefore "applied for the professional linking program at Simon Fraser University, which will get me my teaching certificate. It's the Professional Development Program but you can do it part time. It's for people in my position. It's part time, evenings and weekends." His goal upon completion is to teach mostly English and maybe some Bible as well.

The community atmosphere of Heritage is seen as a big plus for Jonathon as "being such a small school everyone is kind of, I shouldn't say everyone, but by and large mostly they are pretty friendly and pretty humorous." The down side of that small school feeling for Jonathon is the fact that "everyone knows everyone's business. There's really no privacy."

Jonathon also struggles with his role on staff and voicing his thoughts honestly to others. "I think I can be myself, well you can never be yourself but I feel most comfortable with, shall we say, only a few people. I wouldn't say that I can spout off about things with other people. So there is a little... yeah I have to censure myself." This is due in part to his more liberal worldview and his strong belief in being culturally literate:

It's also the things I enjoy doing. Like, I like Terentino movies, I enjoy Scorsese movies. People will say, "How can you stand all that violence?" But whatever, I find cultural ignorance in a Christian School.... They are like, "Oh, it's rated NC or R or 18+ so I can't watch it." But I think this is the best forum for it [for understanding culture], to face it head on without diving your head into the sand. Yes, let's watch Kill Bill, let's watch the Sopranos and engage it.... And I have also talked to students who have the Sunday School answers to every question that comes across in English. "Oh, what does the Bible say about the Great Gatsby" Give me a break! It's frustrating.

Jonathon also finds this desire to have students engage with culture sorely lacking in the parent community as well, "I haven't met any parent who cares about engaging culture." However he does feel that the administration of the school does care about how students think about their world but feels that they are "caught in the middle between wanting to make people on the board happy and people in the staff happy. And the two are mutually exclusive."

Jonathon's role on staff is a bit of a challenge to him as he really desires to engage in conversations about culture and faith but feels at times that he can be somewhat "belligerent" and "opinionated." In that context he deeply appreciates Peter's ability to be consistently open to dialogue without expecting staff members to agree or even to engage when he dictates they should engage, but Jonathon also struggles with the reality that many of the staff are too young to have any significant life experience and therefore "I think it would be hard for them to engage in the teachable moment about homosexuality or other significant issues."

Patti

Learning Assistance and Special Education Coordinator Patti was born and raised in Vancouver and has spent much of her career working with the special needs population in a variety of settings. As she describes it, she “fell into working with mentally handicapped adults as a day programmer and basically (her) whole working background has either been with geriatrics or with people with mental disabilities and learning challenges.” She took thirteen and a half years to be at home with her kids

and literally fell into a job as an Educational Assistant with John Calvin [a feeder Christian School to Heritage Christian] and then through that fell into this job with Heritage.... So I have essentially fallen into my last two jobs and it’s great. It’s a challenge. The learning curve is steep because I went from just being an Educational Assistant and now I am in administration, the administrative duties with funding applications, and all the nitty gritty, and Individual Education Plans, and meetings with parents.

Patti feels confident that she is stronger in her role because of life experience as a parent of two kids “makes a difference in your ability to relate to parents.” Patti has also been intentional in not having her kids attend a Christian School but feels an unspoken pressure to enroll them, “my kids are in public school and I say that tentatively....there are a few of us [teachers at Heritage] who choose to have our kids in public schools rather than a Christian School.” In this context she has also been highly involved in her children’s education by serving eleven years on the Parent Advisory Council. While she appreciates the positive and safe atmosphere at Heritage, she does have concerns that it might shelter students too much from reality. Therefore, she observes Heritage from a somewhat more critical perspective. This

includes noting the limitations on dialogue that come with an organization founded on traditional Christian beliefs.

When not focusing on her career or her family, including “two big dogs,” Patti describes herself as an avid reader who loves the outdoors. Favorite authors range from her favorite genre of writing situated in India (*The Kite Runner*, *Thousand Splendid Suns*, etc.) to classic Canadian writers such as Carol Shields all the way to current popular fiction authors like Steag Larsson (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* series).

Coming to Heritage Christian School was a direct byproduct of a long standing friendship with the principal of one of the feeder schools. As Patti describes her hiring,

I have known her for about 25 years and we were at my niece’s wedding reception and I just jokingly said, “Hey, do you want to hire or do you need any Educational Assistants?” and she literally said, “well as a matter of fact...” and in no time I had gone from being home with my kids to a five days-a-week job. Had to get another vehicle, so from the frying pan into the... had to buy clothes, yes good grief.

She is now in her third year at Heritage and describes her role as “Jack of all trades, master of none” as she supports such a variety students with such a variety of needs.

It’s a really interesting thing because it sort of has to be all things to all students in that sense. I also spend a lot of time on the phone with parents. In some ways it’s almost a therapeutic, a counseling role. Parents lamenting that their kids are where they are at or that they don’t understand it, and the room, it’s kind of a drop-in place for a lot of the students in the school, and some of them just come in to touch base and say, “hi” and

some of them come in with personal problems to talk about.... So I am all over the place. Like physically and in all sorts of ways. It's an interesting job.

This gives Patti a unique perspective on the school as she often works with students who struggle the most and may feel marginalized academically and socially. In her role Patti also works closely with teachers and describes those relationships very positively, "I love my coworkers. They are an awesome group of people so I spend time with them talking about students." She also feels a deep affinity for the administration of the school and describes both Peter and Lorna as "phenomenal... just really fine people. Very easy to talk to, approach. They are very supportive. I have a lot of respect for them."

Patti also has very positive feelings towards the school in general, describing the students as "a very lovely group of kids" and the school as a whole as a "nice place" with "lot's of growing pains" but "it's a really nice feel."

Describing herself, Patti sees herself as someone who is "a little old school" and someone who

speaks my mind. Perhaps when things don't really matter I am free with my opinion.

Other times I tend to be a little reserved but I feel quite comfortable... I tend to keep things inside, whether it's good or bad. But I tend to be quite verbal and make a lot of comments. We have a really light-hearted staff, and you know who Peter is and I tend to be that way as well so. Yeah I am full of a lot of banter....

Patti is confident in speaking out amongst staff while at the same time feeling deep respect for her colleagues. As for future aspirations, Patti sees herself constantly improving at her

job as she “would like to do more professional development courses” and to be “more organized” as she finds that it is “really challenging to keep tabs on all these students.”

Lorna

When Lorna is asked the opened ended question: “Tell me a bit about yourself,” her first response is “second generation Asian” and after spending time with her it becomes clear that Lorna is proud of her Asian heritage and has sought to deepen her understanding of what that means for her as a person and as a professional. Lorna’s parents are unique in the Canadian Asian community as they came over “very young to have a better life” and her mother became the first ethnic woman to be an ordained minister in all of North America. Lorna is very proud of her parents and, because her mother did not fill the traditional role of an Asian female, Lorna has felt confidence and freedom to be a strong, female leader in her career. She is respected as exactly that by her colleagues. Her father is a professional engineer, which meant that between her parents’ careers, the family spent significant time moving and resettling all across Canada. In fact, Lorna describes herself as someone who, while born in Montreal, “grew up in Canada, simply all across Canada.” The longest place they settled was Vancouver but Lorna feels a deeper sense of childhood identity with Edmonton where the family lived for six years. While this has given Lorna a unique sense of her identity as a Canadian, it also limited her ability to develop life-long childhood friends. Her one childhood friend is an immigrant from Hong Kong who joined Lorna in Edmonton and therefore become the second Asian in her school.

Reflecting on working at Heritage, Lorna notes the profound difference this setting represents for her students in comparison to her own experience. The vast majority of students at Heritage are of Asian descent in contrast to Lorna being one of only two Asian students in her

school. Lorna has read and thought deeply and spiritually about growing up as a “third culture kid” and sees herself as an advocate for her students in enabling them to understand their ethnic-community identity. She has counseled scores of students and has led workshops for staff “about the blessings and curses of being a third culture child.” Lorna sees her own experience and her ability to reflect on what that experience means as something that “has really helped my practice.”

Another example of Lorna’s authentic integration of her identity with her profession is her experience teaching in Hong Kong where both her parents are from. After graduating from SFU’s international education module where she completed her practicum in Hong Kong, Lorna’s first teaching position was with the Richmond school district in British Columbia. She spent two years there before accepting a position in Hong Kong. This enabled Lorna to experience her cultural heritage directly and to practice her second and third languages: Cantonese from one set of grandparents and Mandarin from the other.

Lorna’s path to teaching was a little indirect as she “was supposed to be a doctor” and therefore had a very strong focus on the sciences in university. Her parents held education as a very high value and their expectations of their daughter’s success in it as an even higher value. However, her educational experiences inspired her in a different direction. When asked if the plan to be a doctor was her own, Lorna is very clear that it was her parents’ design,

It was almost as if growing up there was no other choice. It was like, “you are going to be a doctor,” which is interesting because I think I would have enjoyed being a lawyer more. But I studied... everything about school was always geared toward being a doctor; all the volunteering, all the experiences. And then I reached an age where I started to rebel. This

was a late rebellion. This was not until grade 12 and first year university. I had an opportunity to go to a United Nations conference in Thailand. And through that experience I really wanted to do more humanitarian work and work with people.

This led to long conversations with her parents combined with the revelation that her grades for her minor in education “were more reflective of myself than the senior science college courses.” This led Lorna to apply and be accepted into the International Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and to graduate with her teacher’s certificate.

One of the core principles of Lorna’s identity is her spirituality and it was at a conference on how to authentically integrate faith into the workplace that Lorna became really inspired to see teaching as “my calling, I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to be a Christian teacher.”

In going to Hong Kong, Lorna was excited to combine the chance to learn about her roots with the opportunity to work in a Christian School setting and to integrate her faith with her profession. However, the school she started out at “was horrible, just in terms of some of the practices... that year there particularly really turned my worldview upside down...” This first year experience led Lorna to transfer to a different school in Hong Kong where she had the opposite experience, which she describes as “the peak of my teaching career.” Here she was in a school which highly valued professional development and allowed its staff members to travel the world learning how to improve themselves as professionals. These two radically different experiences with school administration led her to be inspired to be an administrator, to do things right.

When she came back to Vancouver Lorna applied back into the Richmond school district but the inspiration of her teaching experience in a very well run Christian School led her to complete her Master's at the University of British Columbia and to begin to research starting a Christian School in a downtown area. It was through this research that she discovered the fledgling Heritage Christian School.

Lorna taught at Heritage for a few years before being officially moved into a Vice Principal position. Her job is still in development as each year Heritage grows and adds new programs. She currently teaches only one course and works in her administrative role 80% in total, allowing her to spend some time with her infant son.

Her passion for Heritage is directly connected to the students. She names them as her favorite part of working at Heritage. In fact, she has decided not to pursue her doctorate in order to complete a Master's of Counseling and acquire her counseling license. Increasingly her time is taken up with supporting and enabling students and their families and Lorna sees deepening her counseling skills as a better way to serve the Heritage community.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was born in Hong Kong but her family moved to Vancouver when she was in grade four just before the handover of Hong Kong to China. This was due to her parents' fear about what that handover would look like. While Elizabeth enjoyed Vancouver and was learning English, her parents struggled with adapting. Her mother, a teacher in Hong Kong, couldn't find work here even with her Early Childhood Certificate and so, after four years of living in Canada her parents decided to head back home. Due to the poor timing of their move (it was the middle of August) combined with Elizabeth's lack of proficiency in Chinese (she studied in a French

Immersion school) her parents had difficulty finding a school for her. This led them to the Christian International School in Hong Kong as it taught subjects in English according to the Saskatchewan curriculum. As Elizabeth describes it, “they were just in their infancy and they basically took anyone who interviewed.” It was while studying there that Elizabeth converted to Protestant Christianity even though one of her parents and her brother are Catholic. However, Elizabeth would describe them more as humanist and materialist, a reflection of the prevailing culture of Hong Kong. Graduating with a Saskatchewan certificate allowed Elizabeth the opportunity to apply to Canadian universities. She ended up studying at the University of British Columbia as a Math student and then transferred to SFU’s International Professional Development Program. This allowed her the opportunity to complete her practicum in Wahaca, Mexico.

It was while Elizabeth studied in Hong Kong as a grade 10 student that she met Lorna who was teaching there at the time. In her next year Dave, the current English teacher at Heritage, was her English 11 teacher. So when Elizabeth was ready to begin her career as a teacher, she deeply desired to work with some of her own high school teachers and therefore it was Lorna at Heritage that she contacted, and eventually she was hired as Math and Band teacher. She is currently in her first year and works 75% teaching mostly Music and, according to her, working at Heritage “really felt like it was back in my school. The scenario is the same and the make-up is different and I have kind of similar teachers.”

Elizabeth really enjoys being involved at Heritage. The size of the school and its ability to be a welcoming community are key strengths of Heritage that drew her to it as a professional. She appreciates that it is a small school:

I really enjoy small school because I grew up in a similar environment and because my practicum was in a public school I can really see the staff members tend to divide on its own as departments, and when issues arise I can sense a lot of hostile voices and stuff. And the discussion in a Christian environment I can also see from my Christian teachers back then I can also have faith and maintain that positive relationship. So it has been so far, even though there has been some heated discussion here and there, but I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

While Elizabeth is very confident in her communication, it does become evident at times that English is not her first language. Elizabeth is also aware that, as the youngest on staff, she needs to stand up for herself and to present as a professional. When she is off campus she feels she can be more “silly” then when she is on campus and needs “to tone it down.”

Dave

Dave’s first response to the question, “tell me about yourself” was to explain that he was born and raised in Saskatchewan and lived there until he was twenty five. His ethnic background is Mennonite (a conservative, Anabaptist-Christian group connected to a Dutch-German heritage). After high school he attended Bible College for one year and then completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Saskatchewan. He originally started out to study Sociology and was interested in policing. He then switched to English Literature with a mind to becoming a teacher after wrestling with the question, “why work on societal issues after they have already been a problem, why not work on them on the other end [before they have become a problem]?” It was then he decided that he wanted “to work with young people and school is the best place. That was kind of my first motive.”

The 'normal' path to teaching after receiving a degree would be to enter the teacher's program, but that was not Dave's journey. He "missed the cut off by three percent." He wasn't convinced that he should take another year of upgrading without the guarantee of making enough of a difference to guarantee a spot in the program. So he called up a family friend and former principal who was now a principal in a school in Hong Kong and asked,

"Do you hire people without their Bachelor's of Education and with just a Bachelor of Arts?" And he said, "Well that's not our preference but if we need to we do, and right now I need an English teacher." And that's where it started. So I was hired at the end of July.

This was the same school in Hong Kong that taught the Saskatchewan curriculum, that Lorna taught in for one year (however, Dave and Lorna never taught in the same year at that school, instead they met through attendance at the same church) and that Elizabeth attended from grade eight to grade twelve. He spent four years there and by the time he came back to Canada he was married and had a child. All of this made the idea of entering a professional teacher program challenging so Dave taught ESL at another independent school for two years as a "road back into teaching here." He then applied for and received an independent school certificate that qualified him to teach in his area of expertise in independent schools. When a job opened up at Heritage, Dave applied and was successful.

However, realizing the limitations of not having a professional certificate, Dave quickly enrolled in a program at SFU which allows full time educators and educational assistants to work towards completing their professional year over a sixteen month period. Because of his significant experience he was able to accelerate the program and should complete it over a

twelve month period. He has been taking four night classes at a time and is looking forward to “getting that monkey off my back. It’s almost done and I will be through SFU.”

This is Dave’s second year at Heritage. His chance to work here came when he was able to fill the maternity leave position for Melissa and then was able to stay on in another position when she returned. Like Elizabeth, Lorna was his connection to employment. Dave was attending a Christian Schools conference when he bumped into her and she asked,

“Are you happy where you are?” “Well, I would like to get back into the classroom and out of the ESL thing and pick up some classroom work or something like that.” And she told me to apply and check it out and that is kind of how it was. So I applied and started off, and a maternity leave position came up for my background in English and that’s where I got hired and I was able to keep on for this year. And that’s great because when I was looking into it, Heritage was where I wanted to be as I was investigating the school. And because I spent the four years in Hong Kong where we had a large Filipino population there and it just feels close to what I had when I was over there.

Dave is a very involved teacher at Heritage. He teaches mostly English along with Law 12, Geography 12 and a Bible course. He also coordinates all the chapels for the school and coaches Hockey and Track and Field. He sees himself as busy, “especially with taking classes and having three kids. It’s been a busy year.”

As for what he loves about Heritage, Dave quickly points out its “cultural diversity” and “the fact that it’s the size that it is” because of the “family atmosphere” that size fosters amongst staff and students. He feels like the administrators at Heritage are very intentional in making time for staff and students to get to know each other through retreats together and through special

events. This small size also allows the school to give every student “an opportunity to serve...grade 11’s, everybody goes on a missions trip, like *everybody*, and I think that’s important.... I think it’s important for them to have opportunities to lead... so I am happy with what they [administrators] are doing.”

The flip side of the small, cozy school size is the amount of involvement required of each staff member just to make things work, “you feel like you are pretty stretched because you are doing this meeting, you are doing that meeting, you are doing this meeting. Whereas in a bigger school it’s your English department meeting and that is all that you do.”

Thinking long term is a little difficult for Dave right now because he is so intensely immersed in completing his Professional Development Program year and the demands that that, combined with teaching 80% and spending time with his family, put on him. At this point he is just “really thankful that they [SFU] have it [Professional Program for already employed educators] and that they allowed me to accelerate it.” Once course work is done he looks forward to choosing what he wants to read about in education that is specific to his content areas and to the students he works with, and then “just allowing a bit of time to process all that I have got and just allowing time to focus on the courses that I teach.”

Dan

When asked a bit about himself Dan identifies himself as a “born in Grand Rapids, Michigan... American.” He grew up in what he describes as a “conservative background.” He was raised in a conservative, Dutch Christian Reformed community where church attendance was an assumption. Dan’s path to teaching is very far from normal and includes a stop in the military right after high school, “did my duty, all that kind of stuff. During that time I met a

certain young lady who is now my wife and we dated for four and half years. I did a bunch of odd jobs and then we moved out here. That was about 6 months before we got married.” At that point Dan “worked in the collections business for about 8 years” where his military background and his stature enabled success. During this time he was also attending university and working toward acquiring his teaching certificate. He started his teaching career as a Teacher on Call and received his first long term position at Heritage when he filled in for a teacher on medical leave. It was just last year that he was hired on with a continuing contract.

Like most teachers at Heritage, Dan is very involved in the life of the school. His teaching load includes Social Studies, Drama and History and he runs the student council, is the teacher-sponsor for a number of clubs and sits on the school’s governing council as the teacher representative. Off the clock Dan likes to

spend time with my family and I also like to read and I am in the process of writing a fantasy novel. And then I am also in the process of living out a desire of mine for a while which is taking a look at the Bible from the perspective of the Jewish culture. Trying to understand the Jewish culture and then to see the Bible from their point of view.

At first Dan wasn’t even thinking of working in an independent Christian school until a discussion with a colleague changed his focus.

I was applying for Teacher On Call work in the public sector and getting nowhere fast and then a friend of mine from church, who is actually at teacher over at another Christian School, he and I were talking and I was sharing how disappointed I was that I wasn’t getting anywhere, and how disillusioned I was becoming because I always felt that this is what I was supposed to do. God gave me the skills that I have so I could be a

teacher. And yet it wasn't happening. I said to my wife, "is this some big joke of God that He's....?" I've gone through everything and now it's not going to happen. And my friend asked me if I had thought about applying at Christian Schools. So I did.

As is evident above, Dan very much feels a sense of calling to his role as an educator and furthermore feels like he was meant to be at Heritage to fulfill this calling.

In his former role as a Cryptologic Technical Operator with the United States Military Dan was involved in "top secret work with minimum clearance and all that high security stuff." This work involved watching for important messages that might have national military ramifications. Dan had to

be able to type really fast and memorize really quickly because the policy was that if something came across the screen and it was something that was very important then you actually had to memorize it. You had to print it up, memorize it and then destroy it. So you had your memory was the only thing going. You know it's pretty cool to say we have a direct line to the pentagon in our little cubicle, that kind of thing.

When asked about what he like about working at Heritage Dan responds enthusiastically, "I love teaching," and highlights working with the students, "the interacting with students, that part could apply to almost any school, " as well as the freedom to be open about his faith:

The thing I really love about Heritage is I can teach and not be concerned about my faith. I did my practicum in the public school system and a couple of my supervisors who were very much aware I was a Christian said, "you have to be very careful when you say things because if you say the wrong thing people are going to get that you're a Christian and in some cases that can alter their perception of you negatively." So, in its own way

it's stressful because you are always trying to figure out what did I say and who did I say that to.... Here I can say, "God did this, or God did that." In fact I am encouraged to do that. It's fantastic.

For Dan, the downsides of Heritage include the reality that not all teachers are as heavily involved in making the school a success and he feels that administration should be more direct in making this a reality. Dan sees putting in time in extra-curricular activities as central to the teaching profession. "This is part of being a teacher. If you don't like it, don't be a teacher. Sometimes I feel administration could be a little more firm on this." It is clear that a large part of Dan's view of the teaching profession is the duty to be involved in extra-curricular responsibilities. In fact, those less involved receive much less respect from Dan.

A second downside for Dan are the facilities. He simply wishes the teachers had "some of the niceties" of teaching: "those dream things that I think every teacher wants, a projector in every room, all that kind of stuff." Even in the midst of expressing this he maintains his sense of what he appreciates about Heritage, "here I am not able to have those nice flashing lights and gadgets and all this kind of stuff but I can be me. And I will not trade that. We have our struggles here. We have our trials. But I guess the only thing I can say is, as far as I am concerned, this is a great place to work. It's a great place to teach."

Conclusion

The participants of this study come from different ethnic backgrounds and even countries of birth. One was born in Germany, two were born in the United States, once was born in Hong Kong and six were born in Canada. However of the six born in Canada, three had parents who had recently immigrated to Canada before having their children. They ranged in age from their

early twenties to their fifties and in their experience from this being their first teaching position to having served in many schools. Of the nine participants, five were male and four were female. Teaching areas of specialty included Music, Math, Science, English, Learning Assistance and Special Education, Social Studies and administration. While there is significant diversity amongst the participants, they all share a sense of belonging to Heritage Christian School and a commitment to its success. My hope is that their stories will give you a sense of who they are as presented in the findings and therefore enrich the meaning of those findings.

Chapter 5: The influence of modernity on communicative practices

Introduction

Our stories are all stories of searching. We search for a good self to be and for good work to do. We search for love and to be loved. And in a world where it is often hard to believe in much of anything, we search to believe in something holy and beautiful and life transcending.... (Frederick Buechner, 1996)

Virtue is the attempt to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is. (Iris Murdoch, 1970, p. 82)

The 20th century German theologian, Frederick Buechner, speaks to the faith-based person's longing to place his or her own story, actions and selfhood within the context of belief. In my time at Heritage I very much found this to be true of the participants. They spoke of their shared religious beliefs and the appreciation they have for working in a school based on those beliefs, both of which were cited as reasons Heritage Christian School is such a positive and inclusive community for students and staff members. They strove to be "good" people to their students and colleagues and they strove to 'do' good work and to be involved with others doing good work. They desired to foster a "community of Grace" (their school slogan for the year) and to encourage students "to believe in something holy and beautiful and life transcending." They are a group of people who feel they have found, to varying degrees, a place for their stories within the story of Heritage Christian School.

However, as I continued on the journey of my research, I was also surprised by many of the participants as they openly questioned the limitations such a system of belief can have on their ability to communicate, which in turn limits their ability to move forward and participate corporately in effective and "good work." I must admit, I had expected participants to take a much less critical approach to their belief systems. As they shared their stories with me, it became clear that each participant eagerly desired to be a positive influence on the

communicative practices at Heritage. And they coupled that with a hope that their communal belief in the Christian faith also held the potential to enable growth and positive change.

In approaching my research from a Habermasian perspective, I critically engaged with the participants and asked them to reflect honestly on their communication with each other, and on the factors that shaped that communication. In this process I was deeply impressed with the high level of honesty I felt participants displayed. They were openly reflective about their various roles in the communicative dynamics of the school and willing to share the areas in which they felt Heritage needed to improve. Some even shared their perspective on personal areas, several of which they felt needed changing. While none of us ever loses our subjective understanding of reality, I believe the participants in this study entered into the interviews and focus group discussions in a spirit of discovery, hoping to learn more about themselves and about their communicative practices as a staff. They appeared willing to have an outsider hold a mirror up to their practices. There was an honest attempt to “pierce the veil of selfish consciousness” (Murdoch, 1970, p. 82). This selfish consciousness is different from subjective understanding of reality. It is the inability to open oneself to new understandings that then shape that reality. Once the veil is pierced, we may truly engage in the process of discovering and “joining the world as it really is” (Murdoch, 1970, p. 82) or more appropriately, ‘the worlds as they are,’ as opposed to holding forth on our long-held and unquestioned assumptions. I found this engagement especially inspiring to my research and I feel a deep sense of gratitude to the participants for their willingness to take risks and be vulnerable in submitting to the research process. This process has required a significant level of self-reflection on how I have perceived the world as it really is. I am therefore thankful for the participants’ willingness to join me in that journey as

they have encouraged both my professional research and my personal journey toward improved practice.

In holding the research data up against the mirror of a Habermasian perspective on communicative action, I have tried in this chapter to be true to the spirit of my participants' comments and perspectives on each issue. I fully realize the power I wield as the writer "in a position of social power through being able to produce written (re)presentations" (Rhodes, 2000; p. 523). I have made choices on the content included and excluded as well as the themes emphasized in an attempt to accurately represent the communicative actions of Heritage Christian School.

This chapter integrates the review of the literature (chapter 2) with the data found by my research process as outlined in my methodology (chapter 3), in order to assess the relevancy of Habermas' (1984) Theory of Communicative Action to this school at this time. As you will see, I found a considerable application of Habermasian ideas, including the limitations and the factors that enable the creation of ethical communicative action and the ideal speech situation. Before examining the data I outlined several themes from the literature review. I was specifically looking for influences of structuralism on communication, the limitations the norms of civility place on dialogue, the repressive forces of formal rationality, factors enabling or disabling ideal speech situations, general evidence of coercion, system and lifeworld implications, and evidence of hidden hegemonies. While I found evidence in the data that spoke to these key themes, I also discovered variations on those themes as well as completely new themes that emerged from the data. An example of variation on a theme is the section on dialogue and cultural norms in Chapter 5. While looking for the impact that social norms has on communicative practices, the issue of the diverse social norms existent in a multi-ethnic community stood out dramatically.

And example of a theme that arose from the data without being anticipated is this very next subsection regarding theology. In reviewing the interview questions (see Appendix F), it is clear that none of my initial questions pertained to theology. However, with each of the participants, this theme quickly rose to prominence and therefore required my attention in the data collection process, as well as in how I applied a Habermasian perspective to that data. It required a rereading of how Habermas addresses this particular component of the lifeworld and communicative action.

All quotes from participants stem from their one-on-one interviews unless they are specifically referred to as being derived from the focus group meeting. I have also inserted explanations for phrases that are unique to Heritage Christian School and need clarification for the readers' understanding.

Theology as a constraining force

For Habermas (1987), there are several necessary components to enable an ideal speech situation. One of those is that participants must be free of coercion and able to speak openly and honestly without fear of retribution. One example of that coercion includes the pressure to submit to hierarchal roles. During my data analysis, I specifically looked for evidence of coercive force affecting communication at Heritage Christian School. While Habermas does not directly address theology specifically as a constraining force, it clearly arose as a coercive force at Heritage and therefore required my attention as well as a Habermasian analysis of the issue.

In Habermas's (1984) discussion of the system and lifeworld (pages 25-31 of this dissertation), he critiques modernity for its potential to allow disunity amongst the three spheres essential to human existence (i.e., the scientific/technical, the moral/practical and the aesthetic/expressive). Habermas sees this disunity as a byproduct of the specialization of a highly

technologically rational society which leads to its fragmentation. According to Habermas, one of the alternatives to this disunity is the proper ‘ordering’ of the system (the realm of the technical/rational) and the lifeworld (a combination of the realm of the moral/practical and the aesthetic/expressive). For Habermas, the ideal society is one in which the system serves the lifeworld so that technical/rational knowledge allows for the flourishing of the more human realms of existence, the moral/practical and the aesthetic/expressive. However, he is clear that the lifeworld, which holds within it human expressions of values, norms and traditions, may also become repressive if those norms and traditions limit expression and moral development. At Heritage, a school founded on Christian Reformed theological roots, this issue quickly rose to the surface.

First year teacher Elizabeth noted that, in the context of working with the parent community, communication “can be tricky because Heritage parents come from a multi-denominational background” with diverse theological underpinnings. Jonathon, an Education Assistant with keen interests in literature and the arts who considers himself to be a more ‘liberal’ Christian,² saw the same issue when it came to the community avoidance of controversial topics:

I think it’s because the thing that bonds the school together is the religion and it’s like the underlying foundation. When there are so many disparate backgrounds and beliefs and interpretations, it’s kind of hard to find a common ground with someone. It (conversation) either goes the way of fluff or the way of an in-depth discussion.

² The term ‘liberal’ Christian in this context generally applies to those Christians who: a) do not interpret the Christian Bible literally according to a prescribed dogma, b) tend to be politically left of center, c) avoid applying pietistic statements to the broader culture and d) hold to an undogmatic understanding of God and apply contemporary hermeneutic practices to the interpretation of the Christian Bible.

When Vice Principal Lorna was asked about the diversity of denominational backgrounds at Heritage and the impact that diversity has, she responded:

I agree that it poses a challenge. I think people who are more liberal... I come from a more liberal background, as well, and if it wasn't for my position I would find it more difficult to talk about things. Our church is going through the Same-Gender-Attraction policy [this is the title the Society of Christian Schools of this province has given to a policy guiding Christian Schools on how to work with homosexual students in their schools. It will be referred to several times throughout this chapter], as is our school, as is the Society of Christian Schools of [province] and I personally have a view but we also have to comply with whatever we decide as a school to condone. It's a very interesting topic. How our faith actually comes to play with these issues.

For Learning Assistance teacher Patti the challenge of the theological diversity also comes to a head in the discussion over 'Same Gender Attraction' as she believes the staff is quite divided on the issue. There are some very strong opinions one way and some very strong opinions the other way.... I don't know if it's something we can't talk about but I think the feelings are so strong that we get sidetracked or we can't really focus on talking about... I mean it's a huge can of worms. You can't talk about it all in one or even in three or four meetings.

When pressed on the issue and why people won't talk about it, Patti responded by saying that "It's just easier. Life is way easier if you just put it in the box. Because that makes life black and white when it's not talked about." During the focus group discussion Patti spoke again to

this point and clarified that addressing such controversial issues also puts one at risk in relationships with others:

I think it's hard to talk about things because there might be times where some of us walk the line 'is homosexuality wrong unequivocally' and some of those really 'hot-button' issues like you were saying Dave, to bring those up, I personally feel it's risky, because there is the whole, "good Christians don't... they only think a certain way." And so personally I find that I try, except with Jonathon who I know really well [Jonathon and Patti are neighbours, related through marriage and work out of the same student resource room], I do tend to stay away from those kind of issues because I think they can be divides amongst a staff and I don't think that's what anybody wants.

I found these last statements profound. They clearly signify the fear individuals struggle with in believing in something that runs contrary to the norms or traditions of their belief 'system.' In this case, the belief centers on how Christians should respond to gay and lesbian students in a Christian School. In this instance the institution of Christianity has taken on the organizational logic of the system. The hegemony of control Christian beliefs exert on individuals constrains their ability to honestly participate in discourse. This is an example of Habermas's (1984) notion that components of the realm of the lifeworld have the potential to colonize the lifeworld and serve as a constraining force when they adopt system logic and become institutionalized norms that coerce individuals into submission. It also speaks to a fear of being labeled as a 'liberal' Christian and therefore potentially losing respect amongst those more conservative theologically. This is also an example of structuralism impacting the lifeworld in that there develops a perceived need to either include a concept or person within the structure or exclude that concept or person depending on the perceived 'fit' within the predefined structure.

Patti also raised an interesting point in believing that teachers feel a strong compulsion to be highly involved beyond their official roles due to their Christian faith, “that’s the Christian, that’s the guilt thing, you know, you’re a Christian, you want to do all this stuff [extra-curricular activities, staff committees, etc.]” In other words, she is saying staff members commit to a high level of involvement because they believe that this additional work is an expected norm within their belief system. The identification of this phenomenon within Protestant Christianity is supported in Weber’s (1930) *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Weber identifies this self-imposed expectation as a compulsion directly connected to a theological understanding of what it means to be one of the ‘elect’ in the kingdom God. The ‘elect’ are blessed here on earth and evidence of their blessing can be observed in the success of their labor. Martin Luther and John Calvin brought clarity to this concept by elevating the idea of work to a ‘vocation,’ a calling from God to a specific work.

Jonathon reiterated Patti’s concern over staff members’ unwillingness to participate in controversial dialogue due to disparate theological positions,

Christianity in itself is so non-uniform in that those issues are so differing that we don’t have any common ground, and so I find that the majority of conversations that I have with people are just fluff. It’s just like hockey, bands, and sports.... Other than that, it’s like Patti and Herman are the only two people that I have had meaningful conversations with.

This pressure to not engage in conversation or to over-engage in ‘duties’ are clear examples of the tension Habermas (1984) raises between the emerging lifeworld and recognizing its potential to serve a constraining function. This function occurs when those same norms and traditions are raised above the actual purpose of the lifeworld, which is the realm where moral

and political growth occurs and where aesthetics and human expression are meant to thrive. The majority of participants noted the influence of theological traditions as limiting their ability to engage in authentic dialogue. According to Habermas, the realm of the lifeworld exists to both facilitate our interpersonal coordination reasonably and peacefully as well as to create a space where we can separate ourselves (consciously or unconsciously) from any form of domination. When the traditions and norms of the lifeworld take on a dominating or constraining nature they cease to fulfill their purposes and therefore thwart the forward movement of a better society.

What struck me in this dialogue is that the tension exists so clearly for most participants even though the administration of the school has been identified as supporting open and diverse dialogue. Dave, a Humanities teacher, maintained that it was the principal, Peter, who raised the issue of same-gendered attraction when he explained to his staff that, “We need to really try to determine what we as a school actually believe.” In fact, in Peter’s own words, and unbeknownst to him, he specifically clarified his view on dialogue by echoing Patti’s words, “You know, I am one of those people who doesn’t ever see black or white. I see all the variations and shades. So the intertwining of culture and religion is big; and how do you separate the two?” Thus stated, he agrees with the majority of participants that there are issues within Christianity that are harder to engage with as staff: “So the communication and the tensions of communications have to do with how I am theologically different than you...., Whatever push-button issues like, ‘is there a hell or isn’t there a hell?’...gender roles, etc.”

There are two possible reasons for this hesitancy to engage in controversial dialogue. The first is the assumed norm of Evangelical Christianity in which members are challenged by the Christian Bible to “live at peace with one another.” This can easily be interpreted as requiring one to avoid engagement in any discourse that is contentious. For more conservative Christians,

who adhere to a dogmatic understanding of God and a highly literal understanding of the Bible, the ability to question traditional theological concepts is severely limited. The second possible reason for participants' hesitancy to engage in such controversial discourse pertains to the current dialogue prevalent in North American Christianity surrounding the understanding of the term 'tolerance.' According to Campbell (2002), the commonly held assumption is that Christians are to tolerate those they disagree with. However, he makes the point that tolerance focuses primarily on enduring or allowing a difference and therefore limits potential dialogue. He then makes the point that a more appropriate term would be 'acceptance' which implies not only a recognition of the difference but also an incorporation of that difference into the discourse without simply wanting to change it. It would appear that much of the discourse at Heritage is limited by those who are willing to tolerate divergent theological opinions but who are not willing to accept that divergence as an essential part of their community, a part that might possibly serve to enrich their own understanding.

Specifically regarding the discussions of homosexuality that he has initiated at the school, Peter is uncertain as to where staff fall on the continuum of outright acceptance to outright rejection. On "same-gendered issues... people are open to hearing the discussion but I have not really got a visceral sense of what they are thinking." Again, this connects to individuals' unwillingness to 'show their cards' on such a controversial issue within the Christian church even though it appears the school administrators are working to create an atmosphere in which staff members are safe to voice their opinions. It speaks to the significant power the various Christian churches have over individuals within Heritage, in spite of the best efforts to create an atmosphere of open and honest communication.

While Melissa, an English teacher who identifies herself as “somewhat conservative,” saw the challenge of such a multi-denominational community, she stood apart from the other participants in that she felt that “we’re very open on different interpretations of the Bible and I think that is good, and I think we feel free to say ‘I am not sure about that right now so let’s continue that discussion.’ Or, ‘let’s contact the Bible.’ So I don’t feel it limits us in any way that’s negative.”

As a researcher I am not sure if this speaks to Melissa misreading the situation or simply to her own comfort level with the presence of disparate opinions within the staff community. As she is respected by her colleagues as someone who speaks her mind articulately on a variety of issues and is very willing to voice opposition, I think the latter is more likely.

Premodern expressions of faith and Habermas’ communicative sociation

Important to Habermas’ (1987) theory of communicative action is the belief that “the conditions of communicative sociation” lead individuals and societies out of “the nostalgically loaded, frequently romanticized past of premodern forms of life” (p. 342). This communicative sociation transitions people into a modern society in which pre-conventional moral development is no longer evident. Morality and law are no longer one, as is shown on the table below in that there is no line separating “Magical ethics” and “Revealed law” (ethics or laws revealed mystically to humanity, i.e. the ethics and laws prescribed in a religion’s Holy Book). Instead pre-conventional thinking is replaced by a moral consciousness that is in transitioning between conventional to post-conventional reasoning. This transition is shown as the movement from laws based on norms to laws based on principles. The dotted line between “Ethics of the law” and “Traditional law symbolizes this “process of differentiation that will lead to a separation of law and morality at the postconventional level” (Habermas, 1987, p. 174).

Stages in the development of Law

Stages of Moral Development	Basic Socio-cognitive concepts	Ethics	Types of Law
Preconventional	Particular expectations of behaviour	Magical Ethics	Revealed Law
Conventional	Norm	Ethics of the law	Traditional law
Postconventional	Principle	Ethics of conviction and responsibility	Formal Law

(Habermas, 1987, p. 175)

Habermas (1984) also explains that this emergence of modernity requires development in the realm of personality in which there is much greater integration of cognitive, evaluative and expressive elements of life. This runs counter to pre-conventional reasoning, which he ties to premodern societies in which the cognitive elements (modern natural sciences and scientific enterprises, capitalist economy, etc.) are compartmentalized from evaluative elements (rational natural law, religious associations, the nuclear family, etc.) and expressive elements (autonomous art and artistic enterprise).

At Heritage, there is evident tension between the traditional Christian heritage of the school and the pressure, communicative sociation place on moral development. Traditional institutional Christianity tends to maintain a strong place within preconventional morality in that there are clear expectations of behaviour and those expectations are based upon a “Magical Ethics” as revealed in the law of God, the Christian Bible. Not only is rationalism de-emphasized, it is often seen as suspect. Accord to Noll (1994), this particular expression of preconventional morality is especially prevalent in North American Christianity of the twentieth century.

Peter gives us an excellent example of someone who exists within that tension when he states that he is “one of those people who doesn’t ever see black or white...so the intertwining of

culture and religion is big, and how do you extricate the two?” He also identifies this tension when he connects the communicative practices at Heritage with the theological differences, “the communications. and the tensions of communications have to do with how I am theologically different than you...and then you have your New Age Christian and your post-whatever Christians...” Peter’s statement that “the fact that I have no friends that are Christian would be an issue here certainly” places him directly at a tension point between preconventional expectations of behaviour and postconventional principles of being human. He then uses hyperbole to accentuate the point, “All my friends are ‘pagan’ but great people. I find some of my pagan friends more Christian in their lifestyle than many of my Christian friends. In fact, the three closest friends that I have in my life are like that, Glen Clark, Jim Sinclair and Judy and Alan from Michigan.” Not only does this statement express the tension he lives within regarding expectation vs. rational reality, but it also speaks to Peter’s postconventional ethics of conviction and responsibility. Peter is a left-wing social activist, which is unusual in North American Evangelical Christianity. However, rather than submit to traditional behavioural expectations that have become institutional norms within Christianity, Peter has made choices based on principles.

Elizabeth identified the tension in her teaching. “Parents can be a little tricky because Heritage does come from a multi-denominational background.” She feels nervous holding an open dialogue about potentially contentious issues. Clearly, the expectations she feels as a teacher in this area place a limiting force on the progress of rational discourse. Both Lorna and Jonathon made comments that express the same limitations on discourse. They perceive themselves as “more liberal” and therefore feel there are more topics that are off limits in discussion with colleagues.

Also existent within this tension are highly principled statements that are identified as being inspired by the teachings of Christ while at the same time running opposite to particular expectations of behaviour in Evangelical Christianity. The best example of this comes from Dan's comments that he believes Heritage is working to find ways to include and accept gay and lesbian students because Christ "accepted everybody." There is also evidence of teachers on staff who readily challenge traditionally accepted expectations of their faith-background and provoke post-conventional dialogue. In this way there is evidence of communicative sociation at Heritage.

Another example of the tension between premodern, or pre-conventional morality, exists in the discussion staff members have had regarding the treatment of gay and lesbian students. The rigid adherence to a literal interpretation of the revealed law as manifest in the Christian Bible is in direct conflict to a post-conventional nuanced understanding based on principles of human dignity, inclusion and freedom.

Heritage is somewhat unique philosophically in its position. As can be seen above, there is ample evidence of a pressure to submit to the pre-conventional morality of traditional Christianity. However, there is also evidence of discourse, and lived practices, that challenge staff members to develop principled ethics of responsibility. Examples include their stated purpose for the school year to ensure they are "a community of grace," their printed material, which clearly talks about allowing each member of the community to "discover, grow and use their unique gifts." Probably the strongest example is the way Peter has worked with his staff to develop policies and practices that foster a community that is compassionate and inclusive (e.g. the creation of a 'Same gender attraction policy'). As Heritage moves forward it is critical that, at the very basic level, this tension is at least exposed, and that its members are free to engage in a

rational dialogue about its existence and how they might, as teacher-leaders, begin to walk themselves and their community through a process of communicative sociation.

In my study, the ideological structure that serves an essentialist function is the meta-discourse of Christianity, God and Truth. In wrestling with what Heritage's stance should be regarding homosexuality, members of the Christian church have readily labeled it 'wrong' and not 'right' and therefore not a part of the deep structure that is Christianity. The individual stories are simply not up for discussion as they have been subsumed under the umbrella of the pre-determined explanation of reality. They are not minimized; they are discarded. For some of my participants, this simple response is not acceptable and does not fit with their personal experiences. And, while unwilling to place the 'issue' of homosexuality within the structure of binary opposites of good and bad, there still seems to be an inability, at least publically, to resolve the tension that exists between the 'truth' of the overarching structure of Christianity and the 'truth' of the individual stories, the micro-narratives, of gay and lesbian students. Again, this speaks to our lived out tension as people who are being shaped by norms of rationality, but to varying degrees are also aware of the need for a more humanizing way of knowing and understanding that values the individual human experience.

The influence of structuralism

I found the influence of modernity evident in implied references to belief in 'structure' as an answer to the felt needs in the school. Habermas (1970) notes that under the influence of rationalism the structure is believed to be central to the success of a society, or in this case, an organization. With increased rationalization, individuals will be increasingly likely to submit to the system in order to achieve success, thus leading to Marcuse's "rationally totalitarian society" (in Habermas, 1970, p. 85).

Dan, who teaches Drama and Social Studies while also leading student council, expresses this desire for structure clearly when he articulates the need for concrete guidelines for responding to student behaviour: “If I were running the school I would want in place a policy for what happens if there are drugs and a policy for what happens if there is a teen pregnancy. If you have a policy in place for this stuff then it is much easier.” It is clear from this that Dan sees the clarity of a policy as creating a structure within which the ‘messiness’ of student misbehavior can be much more easily managed. In fact, the need for structure comes up as an answer to many questions. When Jonathon was queried about the effectiveness of dialogue in staff meetings, his first response was to call for a clear format and schedule within which everyone would participate:

For me, an ideal staff meeting should be dictated more than open discussion. That sounds horrible but it’s a bunch of teachers so they are all going to have an opinion on what’s being offered, right? So right now we allow them a forum to voice their opinions willy-nilly. That’s just a waste of time. I think if you want to have a say you should have a say. I am not saying that, but it should be ordered. It shouldn’t be like, “what do you think about this?” and discuss about it for three hours. It’s ridiculous.

This need for someone to control the dialogue in the staff room seems at odds with Jonathon’s strong opinion that everyone needs to have a voice in the school community. This follows from his view of a school board that is “never here” and never engages the staff in dialogue: “I don’t even know who is on the board but they seem to rule with an iron fist.” It appears that Jonathon is frustrated with the quality of communication amongst his colleagues and his immediate answer is to provide an authoritarian structure. However, his criticism of the board is essentially due to the authoritative way in which they communicate and operate. This is a great

example, within one person, of the tension between modernity and postmodernity. We have been conditioned to appeal to structures and systems for solutions (in this case, Jonathon's view that open discourse is dysfunctional) but when we as individuals experience them (in this case Jonathon's experience with the work of the board), we long for something more humane, something that allows for our voice to be heard.

The disconnect between the board's understanding and involvement in dialogue, on the one hand, and their power to give "strict instructions" on the other hand, was also identified by Lorna in commenting on their role in dealing with staffing issues: "Everybody who has been dismissed has been pushed by the board for the past five years. We have dismissed five teachers now and they have all been board mandated." Again, it is clear Lorna feels powerless in these decisions, especially considering her role as Vice Principal involved in evaluating teachers. According to the traditional hierarchal structure, the board of directors has the power to mandate such decisions. Exercising that power authoritatively, however, has served to minimize the voice of staff members and to disempower them as individuals. This example of system logic is opposite to Peter's beliefs in relationships and "a healthy process" and serves to constrain his ability to facilitate open and inclusive discourse, to move towards the creation of an ideal speech situation. As Peter and Lorna seek to work with their teachers in a context of healthy and trusting relationships that empower teacher agency, the board of directors' actions are consistently undermining their roles and spreading distrust and fear.

One of the central components of the ideal speech situation is access to dialogue that is free of coercion. Habermas (1987) specifically references this in the context of noting foundational factors to the creation of ideal speech situations. Clearly, given the fact that five teachers have been fired from Heritage at the directive of the board, teachers are unable to speak

honestly for fear of losing their employment. I can only imagine the constraining force these firings have had on Peter and his ability to speak honestly with the board of directors. Therefore, the actions of the board are limiting the creation of an ideal speech situation on both the level of their own board discussions, as well as the level of teachers and administrators' discussion.

One of the influences of structuralism on modern organizations is the need to fit individuals into clearly defined roles within the structure of the organization. Clearly defined hierarchies are the best example of this reality as organizations can only 'make sense' or have meaning when they have an overarching structure within which individuals fit. However, the randomness of individuality often does not fit perfectly, if at all, within those structures and this creates tension. This tension is identified by the Vice Principal in discussing two teachers who have no leadership role within the present administrative structure:

I have examples of two teachers who should be on the inside because they totally understand the vision of the school. They have a mature view of what should go on but they are on the outside so they pose a lot of questions to administration during meetings. They do this when, in turn, we should actually be on the same team. That is kind of weird - why are we posing questions back to them?

The two teachers, identified by the administration as positive leaders within the school, are limited in their ability to lead simply because of their official roles within the hierarchy. Instead of having these teachers work with the administration to lead the school they are forced, due to not being given an official leadership role within the structure, to exercise their leadership in opposition to administration. Lorna also noted that the development of the current leadership structure, that came about as the school grew, actually created the tension, as prior to the current

structure, Peter was the Principal. There were no official Vice Principal roles and, therefore, Peter simply worked with a number of teacher-leaders,

So the model actually disappointed me when there had to be a Vice Principal. That was the board's mandate.... What would have been more ideal would have been to bring two Vice Principal positions up and split it. That would have made sense. So she [teacher-leader] has a very unofficial role. We have team leaders as department heads, and that hasn't worked because there hasn't been financial support or time given to fulfill the roles.

This is an example of Anderson and Dixon's (1993) critique of Site-Based Management practices in which work and responsibility are off-loaded to 'teams' (in this case department teams) but the budgetary resources are not implemented. Moreover, the parameters within which those decisions are to be made are so constrictive that teams are unable to make decisions that bring about real change. Instead, it quickly becomes an off-loading of responsibility and a false notion of empowerment. McGregor (2008) points out the need for a new view of teachers as leaders:

The concept of teacher as leader allows us to imagine moving from the more traditional view of teachers' roles in schools as 'followers' of the single school-based leader, with professional development planned by (well-intentioned) others, to one in which a team of teacher leaders lead professionally-focused conversations and investigate deeply their own practices and outcomes for students. (p. 1)

At Heritage there is an obvious tension between teachers who lead without an official role in the hierarchy and those who have been given such a role. A reframing of the view of teachers is essential to relieving this tension and allowing for inclusive discourse.

In talking with Herman, who is a Science teacher and in his second year at Heritage, it becomes clear that the school is still searching for a structure that will allow it to function most effectively. However, in that search, Herman agrees with Elizabeth, Dan and Jonathon that Heritage needs more clearly delineated structures and roles, but he also draws attention to the importance of the current flexibility without that intense structure. For while he feels that staff dialogue needs to be more structured, he sees a need for a “strong chairperson who controls the meetings so that conversations are channeled through one person,” he also appreciates that Heritage is

...not a rigid school in terms of hierarchy and a long tradition. It’s still moldable and malleable enough, if that’s the right word, plastic enough to make changes. Peter in particular, is open to discuss change and there is a lot of freedom here to be and to do things, to suggest “maybe we could do this....” This is a big plus. There is a lot of freedom to do something different.

Again, it is clear that Herman desires a structure to bring greater control to the process of staff dialogue, while at the same time maintaining the current freedom and flexibility existent without that structure. I believe Habermas’ (1984) Ideal Speech Situation makes an attempt to solve this tension by borrowing from both a rationalist and interpretive mindset. The Ideal Speech Situation applies rationality to communication by attempting to create a context within which existing norms are rationally questioned and new norms are communicatively created, critiqued and recreated. Habermas is speaking to the felt need for some form of ‘structure’ within which to foster the freedom of open and safe dialogue that is enjoyed by the participants at Heritage.

Derrida’s (1978) elaboration of structuralism developed the concept of systems and signs. Under structuralism all systems have a pair of binary oppositions and one of those oppositions is

always valued over the other so that everything only has meaning in relation to its opposite. Examples of this influence of modernity came up in participants expressing their concern over engaging in dialogue on complex issues tied to theological beliefs. For many of the participants (e.g., Dave, Patti, Jonathon and Peter) their inability to place the complex issue of homosexuality and the Christian church within a simple binary opposition, in part led them to avoid engaging the topic publically. Placing such complex issues in a binary relationship is, according to Lye (1996) an a-historical “hyperrationalization” which oversimplifies issues into ideological opposites and minimizes individuals, their motivations their histories. Instead of belonging to authentic dialogue that humanizes, individual stories are simply placed into one of two ideological, binary opposites. Lye (1996) sees this as a totalizing, foundationalist, essentialist, and super rational approach that forces individuals into one predetermined explanation, minimizes or avoids the questions and problems of a system, and assumes that the reality of the predetermined explanation exists independently of the stories that are consumed by it. Instead of being able to engage in dialogue about an individual’s experience, the individual is minimized and forced to submit to an overarching, or ‘deep structure’ (Appignanesi and Garrat, 2003).

Dialogue and cultural norms

Early in my research at Heritage it became clear to me that there were different understandings of the norms of dialogue within Canadian society. Heritage’s unique, multi-ethnic staffing influences the discursive patterns of communication. While statements like Dave’s, “I like the cultural diversity,” or Herman’s “a plus for me is that it (Heritage) is multicultural” were common, there was evidence of differing understandings, based on each person’s unique cultural-ethnic background, of how effective communication occurs. It soon

became evident that individual cultural norms were one of what Peters (2007) identifies as poststructuralism's hidden structures that play a largely constraining role in the behaviour of participants. As we are shaped by the cultural norms within which we exist, we both express and understand reality within the context of those norms, and therefore play a shaping role in culture as well. The greater the variety of cultural backgrounds, the greater the variety of understandings and expectations regarding ideal communication practices. In engaging participants in dialogue I hoped to uncover just how specific histories shape communication practices and then how comfortable participants were with seeing communication as an open field of forces that they construct and reconstruct.

Herman, who immigrated from South African only two years ago readily and quickly connected his cultural background to his frequent frustrations with communication norms in Canada:

So in my first year, I'm in Canada, it's a very different set up, you know, different norms apply. So I just said to myself, "Keep your mouth shut, ears open, and learn what you can and figure out the dynamics as far as possible." I think I've understood something. And I am more willing to speak out now and say, "Yes, but have we considered these issues because I think they are important?" or, "I don't think we're doing the right thing here." I am way more willing to say that. I've written to Peter and Lorna and said, "If I come across as critical, I'm sorry. This is where I come from. I am much more direct person, unCanadian." I'm German, and it's "If it's wrong, say it." Why mince words? Deal with the issue.

The value of directness in communication is also one that Melissa holds dear. And remember, Melissa is affectionately referred to at Heritage "one who stands with fist raised," a

reference to the strong, female character in the movie, *Dances with Wolves*. In being asked about her minor in philosophy, she states, “I think it helped me be more...questioning. To be more questioning and clarifying about what people are saying and making sure that we really say what we mean.” In fact, Melissa notes that Herman and she both “are often in agreement and we often speak out about things that are unsatisfactory to us.” While Herman ties his directness to his ethnic and cultural heritage, Melissa attributes it more to her education in Philosophy. Melissa then continues to reflect on whether or not her questioning enables effective communication:

I think that if I just give an honest reflection I think that sometimes I am a complainer, which can negatively affect others. Although I don't know if it does because I haven't seen it, but I can imagine as one on the outside looking in...thinking that my questioning might be a negative. I don't sabotage conversations but if I see something that I don't think is [correct] then I will question it because, well, that might perhaps invite others to do the same.

While she clearly values the importance of directness, Melissa is also sensitive to how that directness is being perceived by her colleagues. She raises an interesting point in that while it may be necessary to create a formal process for dialogue to take place, one of the greatest key ingredients necessary to authentic discourse is the invitation to participate. Melissa's leadership, in speaking honestly and directly, plays a part in creating that invitation for others to do the same. She is modeling open and honest dialogue and taking a leadership role in making it safe for others to engage in that dialogue.

In commenting on the communication styles of both Peter and Lorna, Herman remembered that when he first arrived at Heritage, he referred to them in light of their Canadian and Asian backgrounds, “Yeah, he [Peter] will never criticize. He will never make a negative

comment. Lorna won't either, well almost never. And again, it's the Canadian or Asian approach. And that for me created confusion." Herman goes a step further and reflects that he finds it much easier to communicate with a colleague with a similar cultural-ethnic history, "With one other person on staff I have that relationship (direct communication). He's got a Dutch background and it's straight, blunt and it's easy. We know where we stand and we get along great. We disagree on some issues but we know where we stand." He then contrasts his perception of both the Canadian norms of communication and the Asian:

So I think there are two things. I think there is the Canadian dynamic which is "don't be direct, never insult, always praise, even when you are actually critical," which I really struggle with. And I think, and again it's not what you know it's what you don't know you don't know that's the problem. I think there's also an Asian dynamic here of never losing face...If they [Asian staff members] have grown up here it's a little easier. If they haven't – and most staff members have but not entirely - it's more complicated.

In the follow-up to the focus groups, both Herman and Dan continued to lament the lack of direct dialogue due to cultural norms: "I do struggle with what I perceive as the Canadian culture of not saying anything directly," Herman maintained, "I really struggle with that." Dan concurred: "I know that Herman and I were both having that feeling, 'let's just get it out there' and for me that is the Dutch part of me. If I hurt your feelings, I am sorry. I don't mean to, but if it's out there then at least we can deal with it." It is clear from these comments that both Herman and Dan feel strongly that the norms of communication that are linked to their cultural heritage make communication for them easier. I think they also feel that those norms would make communication easier for all involved.

One of the limitations Habermas (1984) noted in effective communicative action concerns the pressure the norms of civility place upon our discourse. In the examples noted above there is clear frustration with what is perceived to be Canadian norms of civil society, those being an assumption that indirectness is deemed more appropriate in communication. While this may be so, I think it is important to note that regardless of which civil society's norms we adhere to, there is a coercive force applied by those norms to value certain forms of speech over others, and this clearly limits effective communicative practices in a community with a variety of understandings.

In further discussing the role 'directness' has in dialogue, Herman explained that he sees his tendency to be blunt and direct due to his heritage as, at times, beneficial to issues of justice. "I would speak up because of my South African background and because of it, for example, issues of racism or students calling each other racist or some other name like 'gay'...I am sensitive to things like that and will speak up directly." He felt strongly that issues like racism and bullying require a very direct approach. However, he is also able to reflect on how his communicative approach is received. He hopes to be someone who enables communication, even though he realizes that not all staff members would interpret his expressions the way he intends them: "I sometimes intimidate people. And that may hinder them from voicing their opinions in staff meetings for example...I would certainly want to help people, enable them, but I probably end up articulating for others, rather than necessarily letting them voice their own opinions freely." In this statement, Herman has identified that, while his ability and willingness to speak up on behalf of others - and he has had staff members thank him for doing so - ensures issues get placed in the communal dialogue, the more ideal process would be for those people to "voice their own opinions freely."

Elizabeth, who was raised in both Canada and Hong Kong, expresses a different perspective on the discursive norms amongst staff members. Her desire seems much more focused on congeniality than directness and bluntness. In fact she spoke quite strongly when commenting on how colleague Jonathon conducts himself in the staff room, “He is usually positive but he is more one of the persons, who whatever is on his mind, he blurts it out. He doesn’t care what you think of him and he doesn’t care what he thinks of you. For some people it can be annoying ...but he usually diffuses it right away.” Elizabeth’s comment reveals her desire to maintain a positive tone. While she is clearly ‘annoyed’ by his ‘blurting,’ she quickly qualifies her frustration by stating that “he usually diffuses it right away.” She also felt intimidated by a recent staff room conversation in which the discussion became very heated and one of the “more direct personalities” actually walked out on the argument. She noted that “some teachers were mad about that, and some other teachers were scared, literally out loud.” She comments that she won’t voice anything in a discussion that becomes that heated. It appears that this is both because of her own level of discomfort with the intensity of the conversation but also to a lack of confidence in her ability to help the conversation,

because we definitely have more opinionated teachers who don’t mind voicing out, but some of us just want to have a happy crowd. So, in that sense, some staff would tend not to speak anything; however most of us are more willing to share, but I don’t have a strong pull any one way so it’s better for me to sit and listen versus voicing out and making it more confusing. I feel safer or more encouraged when it is not just me trying to solve the issue and there is an active part of the higher ups or administrators willing to lend a helping hand.

It is clear from Elizabeth's comments that she has a different sense of what ideal communication looks and feels like than Herman, Melissa or Dan. For Elizabeth, throwing opinions out is not ideal as her preference is for a congenial staff atmosphere (i.e., "a happy crowd").

During our focus group discussion, Elizabeth explained that she also feels that her upbringing didn't foster an ability to engage in intense theological or argumentative discussions. "I don't think I have been given opportunities, well opportunities when I was young, to exercise that as a regular habit so because of my family background I have never practiced [direct, opinionated dialogue], I have never... so it's suddenly hard for me to go, 'What I think is....'" While Elizabeth noted that her perspective on communication is shaped significantly by her family, it is important to note that those family values were shaped in Hong Kong and in Canada for a short time and, therefore, reflect the norms of a more traditional Asian culture.

As a person of Asian descent, Lorna fully accepted the Asian stereotype of the need to couch communication in the social norms of removing all hints of shame or disrespect. However, she then lamented that Peter is not more direct and should be for the sake of enabling effective administrative communication.

If we [Asians] have something we are unhappy about, we have to protect face and shaming someone is bad. I would agree that we do slow the process down, even in not looking at it from a multicultural perspective; just looking at it as something that needs to be done. Yeah, the process is slowed quite a bit just because of norms. I think it comes from the top. Peter is like that, a very nice guy. Even with me, Peter is over nice.... There is no confrontation.

Lorna has actually led workshops for teachers at Heritage on how to communicate with Asian parents for whom “saving face” is of utmost importance as she felt strongly that the stereotypical norms of civility really limited teachers’ ability to communicate effectively with parents regarding students’ performance. However, while recognizing the value of ‘saving face’ in dialogue as a fairly accurate stereotype of Asian culture, Lorna stands outside that stereotype herself as an Asian women who is perceived by her colleagues as quite direct. This may be in part a result of her parents’ influence as they did not fit the traditional Asian stereotype themselves (see chapter 4).

Jonathon believes that intercultural realities influence communication practices at Heritage and he gave the example of one of his colleagues who is a very recent immigrant from Hong Kong. He speculates that this colleague participates minimally in staff dialogue for two reasons: One, “he’s ESL [does not speak English well]. That might be one thing.” And two, his background culture makes him “a top-down kind of guy who feels like, ‘we have a boss and we should listen to that boss. And whatever happens I am going to tow the line.’” When asked about the same colleague Dan took the opposing viewpoint; he stated that he believed this colleague is in no way limited by his cultural background: “I have never noticed...I have never looked for it but I have never noticed that he is the odd man out.” Later on in the focus group discussion, however, Dan (who is ethnic Dutch) ended up concurring with the idea that ethnicity impacts communication at Heritage and actually identified himself as being the person on the outside because of his cultural background.

I have to admit there was a time here where I very much felt like, if I didn’t look a certain way, or come from a certain part of the world, than I wasn’t being considered [in conversations]. And I actually had to really struggle with that. I still have that feeling [of

not being Asian]. And for a while there I actually wondered if I fit? I didn't grow up in all this, so I am not 'in,' I don't go to the churches people go to. I have been here three years and I still feel kind of like an outsider.

The last few comments identify the tension raised by a structuralist assumption that there is one structure, or way of knowing, being and therefore communicating. Instead of identifying and seeking understanding of the differences, there is a desire to have the differences fit 'in.' A poststructuralist perspective looks to identify the reality of specific histories that are differentiated, rather than one history that is unifying (Foucault, 1972; Ingram, 1987) within which one either fits their story or becomes the exclusion to 'the' norm.

There is hope. Lorna feels strongly that staff members are starting to feel the need for change in their dialogic practices. "People are starting to say, 'this is stupid, this is a Christian School. Why would I have to say, be all nice about it? Just say it!' That [hesitation] is hindering communication." Dan concurred with this sentiment in reflecting on a conversation with a group of colleagues "about our frustration about some things not being accomplished and not being said in meetings." This identified tension has the potential to allow critical dialogue regarding how communication takes place. It brings a sense of hope that staff members may be able to move from the assumptions they have about one true reality and one way of communicating and begin to take the risk to engage in the discursive and cultural creation. Lye (1996) identifies this risk as a poststructuralist understanding of reality formed from new meanings unique to a particular context. Honest, sincere and rational dialogue will need to become a new norm at Heritage, however, for progress to be made toward a Habermasian Ideal Speech Situation.

When asked to comment on the impact of culture on the discursive norms of his staff, Peter was quick to identify the interplay between each person's cultural and theological

background as well as their individual personality, “the intertwining of culture and religion is big and how do you extricate the two? Then you add on how they interplay with each other, which one is dominant...and then there is the third part of the puzzle and that’s personality.” This comment comes in the context of Peter’s very poststructural statement that he doesn’t “ever see black and white. I see all the variations and shades.” In essence he is stating that he sees the value of seeing the differences. This view of people has the potential to allow them to, as Mach (1959) states, understand their role as meaning-makers rather than meaning-finders.

The tug of rationality

Habermas (1984), who desires to maintain the best aspects of Enlightenment rationality as he sees it as having emancipatory potential, rues the Weberian “iron cage” (McCarthy, 1984) that accompanies formal rationality’s potential to dominate. In fact, for Habermas, rationality’s need for a ‘universal’ is important if that universal is placed within communication itself. He also notes the dangerous potential for language, when placed within capitalist goals, to perform a dominating and oppressive function on behalf of rationality. Actually, locating one truth as a universal greatly limits our ability to truly understand a situation as it is, for reality is socially constructed and, therefore, made up of many and diverse competing ‘truths.’ While engaging participants in discussions about the communicative actions within Heritage, a theme arose regarding the perceived importance of rationality and tensions surrounding its value and influence.

Peter was one of the first to identify rationality in talking about the strong influence Herman exerts in staff meetings. This, he felt, was due to his “demeanor” as someone who “is a staid, wise, logical and rational person” and not seen to be very emotive or at least “expressive” of emotions. In agreeing that Herman’s words carry significant weight, Jonathon stated, “I think

because he is measured and... when he does (venture an opinion) it is...logical and rational. Not really emotional.” Patti, as well, describes the importance of Herman’s words as due to his being “just a really wise person [with a] delivery that is calm.” Interestingly, Melissa likened Herman to the role of the Canadian Senate that is “providing sober second thought before bills are passed.” For Dan, Herman’s rationality was tied to his confidence and his role on staff, “it’s...yeah he speaks confidently when he is in a meeting. He comes off as being quite confident. And I know, for me, one of the things is he is a science teacher. He has brains.” Dan contrasted Herman with Joseph who speaks quite emotively, “too emotional, quite often he gets really worked up really fast and really often. He has really strong opinions.” He explained that if Joseph and Herman were in disagreement, he “would go with Herman over Joseph.”

One of the strongest tenets of modernity is the importance of rationality in language. This emphasis has the potential to minimize other forms of expression, as illustrated in Dan’s comments where he values Herman’s words in part simply because he is not “too emotional” and that he must be intelligent if he is a science teacher. I would argue that this is evidence of a widely held assumption within a technologically rational society that points to the influence of cognitive, instrumental valuation present in our communicative practices. While Herman’s arguments may have validity in and of themselves (and I would argue, from my observations, that that is the case) they seem to carry much more weight due to the fact they are enfolded in rational language and in a delivery that is minimally emotive. This strong emphasis on logical, rational ways of knowing and understanding is, according to Habermas, a byproduct of a technologically rational society. In contrast with this negative view of emotion, Tandon (2008) emphasizes “feeling as a mode of knowing” for both the person expressing herself and for the listener. Such emotion leads to a greater understanding as it integral to how we come to know

and understand. Educational theorist, Samier (2009) highlighting the ever-present and all-important role of emotions, recently proposed that they:

Emotions are foundational to ethics, governance, policy, management and power issues, gender, ethnic and race relations, affecting organizational climate and culture, and the quality of interpersonal relations that form micropolitics. (p. 2)

An interesting contrast regarding rational vs. emotive communication arose during the focus group discussion over the frustration many participants feel towards the behaviour of Joseph and Sophia who are at times considered “abrasive” and whose comments are also often considered “too emotionally charged.” Joseph and Sophia’s names came up later in the same meeting and in a more positive context, when the question was asked regarding who is willing to speak directly to sensitive issues. Dave noted that it is often Joseph and Sophia, and especially Joseph, who has a record of advocating to administrators for issues of justice. Patti stated that Joseph “brings up a few of those things that we might never have” and therefore she agrees that Joseph and Sophia’s manner and their understanding of social norms, might allow them to be more effective at times in their communication as they feel comfortable speaking with passion and emotion. This passionate and emotionally charged rhetoric, then, has the power to potentially convince colleagues to agree with Joseph and Sophia’s viewpoint. This phenomenon is consistent with Domagalski’s (1999) proposal that

Those who are able to visibly express emotions have the potential to achieve much more influence over others in their emotional states – for good or for evil – effective in creating a more humane and conducive environment or in establishing power. (pp. 842-3.

This tension between who speaks “directly or indirectly” on a topic, and how emotively they engage that topic publically, again highlights one of the barriers Habermas (1987) identified

in enabling an ideal speech situation, that is, the limitations of the norms of civility. For an ideal speech situation to take place one of the preliminary steps must be the identification of which of the current norms of civility are acting as limiting factors. It is only with this identification that colleagues are able to engage in the ongoing creation, critique and re-creation of new norms “oriented to achieving, sustaining and reviewing consensus – and indeed a consensus that rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims” (p. 17). This refers back to Habermas’ (1984) goal of placing the rationality of a universal within language to enable that rationality to turn back on itself as a means of empowering ongoing, rational and emancipatory critique of language norms.

The tension felt amongst the participants regarding the two colleagues who were too ‘direct’ at times was also identified regarding a tendency amongst some colleagues and administrators on the opposite end of the continuum in that they were “too indirect.” This was perceived to be a result of having a leader whose strength is being “relational” and therefore being sensitive to causing an affront with his words. Jonathon, who raised this concern when asked how peoples’ theology affects their communication, coupled it again with the pressure certain people feel to submit to ‘appropriate’ social norms. From his perspective, most people engage in conversations that “are just fluff.” He sees them as avoiding the risk one takes in potentially acting outside of a social convention by being too direct and/or by articulating a topic deemed controversial. Dan concurred, and then gave an example of a time this past year when he and Herman were required to engage in an intense conversation regarding homosexuality and curriculum as part of their job “so he and I had to have conversations about that.” He saw that conversation as a positive engagement on a significant ‘issue’ facing the school, and that they were freed and empowered to participate as a result of their professional roles. It was successful

and even took place in part because the pressures of the social norms of civility were lessened under the umbrella of the conversation being deemed ‘curriculum-oriented’ and professionally necessary.

This example points to the reality and opportunity for creating spaces of discourse within professional dialogues. Individuals will feel a higher level of freedom to engage in a challenging topic if it is deemed an ‘appropriate’ norm, in this case due to the norms of professional discourse. There is a field of opportunity in which organizations may begin to create norms of communication through engagement in professional dialogue around issues affecting students and teachers. The secondary potential is for these created norms to apply to all discourse within the school organization and therefore minimize the powerful limits traditional norms of civility have on communication.

An unspoken issue: the colonization of the lifeworld

Central to Habermas’ (1987) discussion of the system and lifeworld is his concern over the system’s tendency to colonize the lifeworld (see Chapter 2). As has been noted several times in this chapter (especially in: the influence of structuralism and the tug of rationality), and will be noted in the following chapter, there is clear evidence of formal rationality exerting pressure on Heritage Christian. This has the potential to allow the system, where communicative actions become instrumentally rational, to overtake the lifeworld. However, although this reality seems self-evident at Heritage, participants did not raise it to prominence as a concern in their school. This silence points to assumptions that these pressures are ‘normal’ and therefore go unquestioned as part of culture of the school. In essence, they have become part of the hegemony of working within the school setting in the lower mainland of Vancouver.

Chapter 6: Factors enabling and limiting an Ideal Speech Situation

The Ideal Speech Situation

According to Habermas (1984), one's speech competence (*sprachkompetenz*) is connected to an individual's ability to engage in meaningful dialogue, to be rationally critical. Herman was identified by all of the participants as someone who engaged in rational dialogue very competently and confidently. They noted this "also gives him credibility which helps his opinion carry weight." Peter likened Herman to the character *Charles Wallace* in the novel, *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle (1962), "when he said something people listened, whatever it was he said. When he did talk, it was significant." In contrast to Herman, a number of the participants identified Thomas as someone who does not engage often in staff-room dialogue. They also clarified that he is highly intelligent: "He won Math competitions in China but he never says anything at meetings." Thomas is a recent immigrant to Canada and English is not his first language. Herman said that "he tends to be a quiet person but part of it is also his command of English. He does at times, I think, find it difficult to articulate his thoughts entirely correctly so that may be another reason he holds back." However, Herman wondered if the tendency might be connected more to "personality difference" than language confidence.

Peter identified an issue pertaining to speech competence that is a unique situation in which one of the staff members, for whom English is a second language, is very opinionated and confident in her ability to articulate her thoughts, when in reality those around her find it challenging at times to understand the main points she is trying to make. He compared this with another staff member who is very abrupt and opinionated when communicating his ideas and therefore "he doesn't always respect for his comments." Both staff members, according to Peter,

are not highly competent in their ability to rationally articulate a strong argument although neither lacks confidence in his or her ability.

Speech competence is one of the critical foundations upon which Habermas' (1984) theory of the Ideal Speech Situation is built. Ideal communication, for Habermas, occurs free of coercion and role influences, is not limited by the norms of civility and allows all participants influenced by a decision equal access to dialogue based on the sheer force of rational argument. His desire for equity in dialogue may be severely limited in practice, inequity in peoples' ability to clearly articulate their stance (the force of their rational argument) thus favoring highly competent communicators and handicapping those less competent. This is especially true given the context of a social grouping like the staff at Heritage Christian School. At Heritage, most of the students and staff are first or second generation immigrants from a variety of countries and therefore have widely varying competencies in speaking and understanding English. They also have a broad range of understandings of the norms of civility surrounding their speech competence. While I am not confident this critical issue can ever be completely overcome, I do think its potential to negatively impact the truthfulness and effectiveness of the dialogue can be minimized by first acknowledging its existence, and secondly by striving to create norms in which there is heightened sensitivity to unequal language skills. It will be necessary for the whole staff to be involved in the creation of new norms of civility that include the willingness and ability for members to adapt to varying degrees of language competency on the part of both listeners and speakers.

Another important condition for Habermas's (1984) Ideal Speech Situation is open access to discussion for all involved (as cited in Milley, 2004). For this to take place, participants need to feel safe to express their ideas honestly, to be true to what they think and believe, in other

words, to be true to themselves in their dialogue. In attempting to ascertain where participants stood on their sense of freedom to engage in dialogue, I was struck by their very personal responses. Dan noted that what he most loved about Heritage was that, even though it was not as well resourced as other schools, he felt he could be true to himself: "...here I am not able to have those nice flashing lights and gadgets [referring to projectors and SMART boards], but I can be me. And I will not trade that." Elizabeth used a similar phrase when talking of her relationship with Peter and Lorna, "with administrators, yeah I can be myself." Dan went on to explain that he believes "everybody feels comfortable enough where if they feel they have to say something I think they can." Dan concurred with this sentiment: "people can share what they are thinking." These comments consistently speak to an understanding on behalf of the participants that they are free to express themselves honestly and openly.

Further to this sense of open access to dialogue, Dan stated he felt "everybody has the same amount of weight" in the eyes of the administrators. For Dan, this pertains to the school's connection to the Biblical story of Jesus Christ, "He accepted everybody" and the idea that because the school purports to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who Dan sees as a model of acceptance, there is therefore an acceptance of staff and a concurrent openness to be involved in dialogue. In fact, Dan tied this sense of acceptance to the example of homosexuality, "...at this point in time the policy is if they [gay or lesbian students] come here it's OK, maybe they are homosexual or same-gender attracted, whatever the proper term is, we accept them.... That is one area where we are really trying to make a guideline or a policy but not something that is exclusive, that shuts people out." In the context of our earlier discussion regarding the potentially repressive force individual theologies may have on one's ability and/or willingness to engage in controversial dialogue, this is an excellent example of the tradition and morality of religion,

situated within the realm of the lifeworld, having the potential to serve an enabling influence on human social development. In this case, it may foster movement towards the creation of an Ideal Speech Situation.

When asked to comment on fellow staff members' access to dialogue, Jonathon actually felt that it erred on the side of being too open, especially in light of the fact they are "teachers so they are all going to have an opinion on what's being offered right? So we allow them a form to voice their opinions willy-nilly. That's just a waste of time. You should have a say. I am not saying that you shouldn't, but it should be more ordered." That said Jonathon is also one of the participants who clearly articulated he would "want open dialogue. I want people to engage in some sort of discourse." In fact, Jonathon would like more intense dialogue including discussion that is issue and debate-oriented so more new understandings could be discovered and created. However he is also, in a very Habermasian way, aware there are limits to the effectiveness of such discussions and notes that by stating,

...that while a contrarian staff may be good in certain instances, it is frustrating in others.

Like if someone takes umbrage with your affinity for dried ginger. ...that type of discourse [argumentative] is valuable if it actually influences policy and brings about a rational solution, but arguing about trivial matters only makes people upset.

Jonathon's comments point to the very real desire for consensus-based communication that is oriented toward, as he stated, "a rational solution," coupled with a need for the creation of clearer norms that would serve to guide dialogue and protect it from becoming simply "contrarian" or the voicing of opinions "willy-nilly."

Patti felt the openness and inclusiveness of the staff dynamics at Heritage were directly tied to the leadership of Peter and Lorna: "Peter and Lorna are phenomenal. They are just really

fine people. Very easy to talk to, approach. They are very supportive.” However, as with Jonathon, Patti was concerned that the openness could be abused negatively. Staff, at times, are:

...just a little too comfortable in how they speak to each other here. But that is something I think we have also fostered a little bit, that it’s very much a family sense.... On the one hand, there is a casual air here that makes it really nice but on the other hand, I think it’s also a little detrimental at times because it’s too familiar. It’s walking that fine line.

Again, there is an expression of gratitude for the ability of staff members to speak openly that is “really nice” coupled with a sense of frustration over that openness being abused at times with staff being “too familiar” in their dialogue. In this comment Patti is expressing her own discomfort with what she perceives as the near or potential breach of a social norm in communication. It is clear that dialogue regarding communication norms would serve to bring greater clarity for all involved and move them toward enhanced communication.

Later in her interview, Patti, like Dan, expressed that she was also very appreciative of the freedom of individuality wherein she can be herself and “speak [her] mind.” She felt “most of the staff is quite open” and approach communication honestly. A sentiment Elizabeth also agreed with as she stated simply: “People seem pretty open” when they talk to each other. I found the fact that every participant made comments like Melissa’s, “I feel that I can be myself... I don’t know how else to say it. I am just me” remarkable as it is indicative of an organization in which its members experience little to no coercion. The feeling that staff are “very much a family” speaks to a culture in which power connected to specific hierarchal roles is treated cautiously and used to serve the good of the members of the community. In the desire to create an ideal speech situation, it is an excellent starting point as two of the greatest limitations - coercion and role privileging - are almost nonexistent.

Another already present factor that will facilitate ethical dialogue is the point that staff members at Heritage, as Melissa notes, “have a lot of opportunities to [communicate].” She gave examples of fundraising activities and after school events, in addition to formal and informal staff meetings, as opportunities to build an open and inclusive environment where “anybody is welcome to talk, to join the circle. We talk about everything.” When pressed on this point, Melissa chose three key words to describe the staff atmosphere, “open, camaraderie, and enjoyable.” From the comments above it is evident the communication at Melissa falls within the realm of lifeworld action. The three components that make up the lifeworld are understanding, coordination and sociation (Habermas, 1987). An organization in which members are free to express themselves will inherently result in greater levels of understanding of each other and therefore facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge. Coordination involves the establishment of group identity which can be seen in the comments that identify Heritage as “a family,” and sociation is the ability for individuals to form their personal identity. It is clear from the multiple comments participants made about “being myself” that there is space for identity formation to take place.

When talking further about the positive invitations to dialogue at Heritage, Melissa tied those invitations to the school’s faith background, “because...we strive to be Christ-like there is no back-biting or in-fighting among the staff...and I am so glad we don’t have that problem.” While, based on the data I gathered, I would agree that there is little to no in-fighting amongst the staff at Heritage Christian School, I believe this is in part due to certain staff members unwillingness to speak honestly and openly so as to avoid controversial dialogue.

Both Dan and Melissa’s comments regarding the impact of the Christian faith on the openness of communication point to what Habermas (1984) noted in his writing on system and

lifeworld, that is the dual reality that a faith community lives under in having its faith serve to be potentially repressive and potentially empowering. When the pressure to conform to traditional theological norms and structures limits one's ability to engage in dialogue those faith commitments act as a repressive force in the community. In fact, those theological norms develop such power as to become a structure within which individuals must find their place, and that faith then begins to take on the function of the system. However, when the same faith commitment challenges individuals to be open and accepting of others, and to invite them into dialogue, it works as a progressive force in the community, further enabling the possibility of achieving 'Ideal' Speech. In the context of discussing how the school's faith background impacts its communication, Dave supported the potential for the latter by stating: "It feels less like I have to be politically correct at this school than I did during my practicum." This speaks to his perception that Heritage's faith background allows it to stand somewhat outside the norms of civility of the typical public school and invite more open dialogue on certain issues.

In Peter's interview it became clear to me that he has taken practical steps to foster a more open place for dialogue. For example, a regular practice for staff meetings is to have each teacher take a turn chairing the meeting. This simple step not only demonstrates Peter's lack of dependence on role privilege for personal power, it also helps minimize the staff's fear of being coerced into a decision based on role hierarchies. Secondly, to increase the collective access to dialogue at staff meetings, Peter regularly sends out an email days prior to a meeting inviting agenda items to be submitted by any staff member. Once the agenda is prepared, it is sent to all staff well in advance of the meeting. These last two practices go far in meeting one of Habermas's criteria for an Ideal Speech Situation: Access to discussion (in this case the meeting agenda) is open to all involved and affected by the outcome. It also clearly places Peter's running

of staff meetings in the realm of the lifeworld, as he places high value on the process of the meeting to enable access to dialogue and minimize role authority. In Weberian (in Brubaker, 1984) terms, Peter's staff meetings fall closer to *wert*rational action as they are value-oriented and display his belief in the action itself. A staff meeting more closely aligned with the system would reflect *zweck*rational action, that is action that is clearly calculable and focused predominately on achieving preset ends. A 'system' staff meeting would be highly efficient and only involve those in dialogue who would better help others meet the predetermined end result.

Character and the weight of words

An area that received significant attention in the interviews, but especially during the focus group discussion, was the idea that a person's words have weight proportional to their character, or in other words, those who were deemed insincere, inconsistent or unable to follow through on strongly worded comments, received less respect from their colleagues, therefore, as a result their arguments were much less privileged. During the focus group, most of the participants weighed in on this issue. Dan was the first to raise this point in reference to colleagues who will introduce issues but do not seem to be too interested in finding a solution, and even less interested in being involved in a solution: "There are some people on staff who you go, OK, here they go again." Herman concurred that there are times when staff members simply "speak off the top of their head," and that minimizes his ability to take their words too seriously. In fact, for Sophia, Dave even gave an example of when a parent walked out of a school event, simply so he didn't have to listen to Sophia speak. According to Dave, it frustrated him, even though he could understand the parent's motivation, because on that night his colleague had done a really fine job of articulating herself and all of that was missed for the parent because of his past frustrations with Sophia's speaking habits. Patti contrasted this with Herman's manner in

dialogue and felt his words carried more weight because of his character and life experience, “Well whatever you say Herman, I give you, partly because I have heard nuggets of what you have been through in life.” For Patti, there has to be “action with words” whereas with Joseph, about whom every participant raised similar concerns, there is “a lot of frustration and complaint but refusal to participate in any element of...school life.” Because of this, Patti stated pointedly that Joseph loses authority to speak. On the topic of Herman, Dan highlighted “his ability to speak honestly” as a significant reason his colleagues listened to him so well. Jonathon concurred with this sentiment and compared Herman with Joseph: “I don’t respect Joseph as much as I respect Herman, and it just comes down to actions. I don’t see Joseph exemplifying what it means to be a Christian at a Christian High School. I don’t see it. Now I can only go by what I see and I don’t know what he is like in his personal life, but the 40% that I see here....” Elizabeth had a similar understanding and tied her ability to listen to a colleague directly to her “personal interactions with him” that “make up this perception that we each hold.” Dan agreed with this idea and gave the example that he commutes with Peter and therefore has a deeper understanding of who Peter is, his high level of integrity and commitment to the school, and therefore, Dan trusts his sincerity all the more.

According to Milley (2004, p. 76), Habermas identified the norms of honesty and sincerity being followed by all involved in dialogue as foundational to building an Ideal Speech Situation. As can be seen in the comments above, when a person’s integrity comes into question, the force of their argument is significantly weakened, if not completely dismissed. Habermas (1984) also identified the goals of each member of the discourse as essential elements in authentic communicative action. Each actor in the dialogue must be oriented toward seeking consensus regardless of personal inhibitions and agendas or pre-existing strategic objectives. If

one of the participants has as her goal simply voicing a complaint without a desire for solutions that will be accepted by all, the speech situation breaks down. This can be clearly noted in the examples cited above where participants simply disregarded the comments of Joseph due to his well-established pattern of voicing concerns without engaging in consensus building or solution-making.

Looking for evidence of Coercion

One of the greatest blocks to the creation and sustenance of an Ideal Speech Situation is the presence of coercion (Habermas, 1984; Milley, 2004). When participants feel pressured, from fear or promise of job, potential social isolation or financial incentive, they are less likely to follow the norms of honesty and sincerity and less able to engage in the communicative process with the communal goal of seeking consensus. It is important to note coercion as separate from the implicit hegemonic pressures participants noted above. Coercion is explicit, direct pressure or force to act in a certain way. As I queried participants regarding whether or not they experienced any pressures from administrators to hold certain opinions, to speak out strongly for certain issues, or to withhold comments at specific times, I consistently received a strong response: “No.” There have been times when participants felt a colleague has attempted coercion, however they were adamant that the administrators have never been involved in coercive action. As I read over the focus group and interview transcripts, it becomes evident to me that Peter’s leadership has facilitated this reality. He deeply values his staff as individuals rather than as means to an end.

While at first this appears exceptionally positive I am concerned that there may be self-imposed limitations on speech due to the hegemony inherent in Evangelical Christianity. Referring back to Habermas’ view of sociation through communicative rationality (see table 2:

Stages in the development of law), which seeks to move individuals from premodern normativity to a postconventional normativity, I speculate that participants at times submit to the norms of their Christian tradition as revealed in the Christian Bible, "...as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." In this way, an avoidance of entering into conflict can potentially be misinterpreted as absence of coercion.

All of that said, when I asked Peter whether or not coercion existed at Heritage, I received a much different response. However it was not in relation to his work with his staff, of whom he consistently speaks very highly. Peter's experience of coercion pertained to his working with the volunteer board of directors. Peter was dealing with a highly sensitive staffing issue, and in keeping with his belief about the value of due process and each individual's dignity, was walking this staff member through steps towards either professional improvement or the need to find alternative employment. Peter states, "the board never viewed me as really addressing it, as avoiding it more than addressing it.... So at one point the board called up and said, 'You need to let him go. That is a directive from the board.'" While Peter was frustrated with this turn of events, he submitted to the board's directive and now feels that was a huge mistake as

it became viewed as "I'm gutless and they are powerful." The board set aside my values on how important I think people are and how important I think a good healthy process is. I am just going to let him go and I did. And it was easier, much easier than following the other path [due process]. But I got all kinds of shit because of it...

This discussion struck me as highly ironic given the significant amount of trust the participants place in Peter's honest and open communication as their principal. For some reason, there was a sense the decision had to be made quicker and more abruptly. It is also a decision that lies well

outside the realm of the school board as it is clearly an operational decision. Without interviewing board members I can only speculate on their motivation, whether it was political, personal, or public relations-oriented, given they were not privy to the formative and summative evaluation process and ongoing dialogue that was occurring between Peter and this staff member. When commenting on the need for coercion to be removed from authentic dialogue, Habermas (1984) emphasizes the crippling effect manipulation has on a speech situation. In this instance it seemed to me Peter was ‘used’ or manipulated to achieve an end desired by the board, and in turn felt forced to treat the staff member less as an individual worthy of receiving a fair process, and more as a means to a desired end of those in the system. I can only speculate how this will affect the quality of the communication between board members and Peter in the ensuing months.

Age and Elizabeth

During the interviews I conducted, I attempted to ask clarifying questions when participants either raised or hinted at new issues. In discussing the variety of factors affecting communication at Heritage, the idea of ‘age’ was mentioned lightly by a couple of participants in connection to the idea of ‘wisdom.’ For example, Elizabeth stated that Herman is much older than she and “full of wisdom and when he talks people listen to him.” Patti concurred with that sentiment: “There is wisdom in years and experience.” While Dan agreed with this sentiment regarding Herman’s “life experience,” he also stated he didn’t feel there was “an age thing because one of the people I would listen to is Elizabeth, because several times she has proven to me, by what she has said, that she has really thought things through before she has said them.”

When I attempted to probe deeper I didn’t discover any strong opinions on this topic, with the exception of Elizabeth. Elizabeth is in her first year of teaching and is the youngest

member of the Heritage staff. When asked if she felt she could be herself at Heritage she replied, “Well, yeah, most of the time. I do feel sometimes, because I am the youngest one in terms of seniority, there are times when, if it’s alone with certain individuals, that I do get pushed around.” I questioned her more on this topic and she clarified that at times she feels she is expected to submit to playing the role of a ‘rookie.’ However, she was quick to state this was not the case with the administrators and “with administrators, yeah, I can be myself.” However, later in the interview she gave an example of a conflict with another staff member over a date for which both of them had booked student activities. The resolution to the conflict involved the administrators and ended up requiring her to change her date while the other colleague maintained his original position,

So I personally felt, and I said it afterwards, I personally felt that I was pushed, and I am just this first year teacher and so am told, “Deal with it,” and so I changed all the dates.

Later on I talked with Peter and Lorna about it and I just thought that I could have received a lot more guidance in the room where administrators were present.

While I could not find any explicit commentary from Habermas (1984) on the impact that ageism has on dialogue, he identifies role privileges as another factor limiting the ideal speech situation. I would argue that forcing individuals into pre-determined roles according to their age, limits their ability to participate openly and honestly without inhibitions. It also serves to privilege some and minimize others and, therefore, prohibits a voice from being measured solely on the force of rational argument. Elizabeth’s feeling that there is an unspoken expectation placed upon her to submit to the role of being the ‘rookie’ on staff, and her experience with feeling that because of that status she is required to “deal with it” when it comes to conflict, speaks to a role privilege other staff members have over her.

Elizabeth's experience also speaks to the dynamics of power at Heritage Christian School. In the hierarchal structure of the school, power has been institutionalized into various roles and receives legitimation as a result of this hierarchy (Habermas, 1987). However, in Elizabeth's case, there is evidence of normatively constructed power that is not a part of the explicit hierarchy but instead is a function of the hidden hierarchy, the hegemony of power relations based on age and years of experience at Heritage. This is contrary to Habermas' view of communicative power which is mediated through a complex network of discourses aimed at reaching understanding.

Gender and communication

The question of whether or not gender played a role in communication amongst staff members at Heritage drew an interestingly mixed response. It is important to note that amongst teachers at Heritage there is almost an equal ratio of females to males. When questioned as to the impact gender plays in staff dialogue, Dave pointedly said, "I don't think so," and Elizabeth agreed with that sentiment, while Dan simply said, "Nope. Nope." Although Elizabeth did wonder if some staff felt their words had more weight because they were male she was quick to clarify that staff would be smart enough to see through that. For both Dan and Dave, a reason gender is not a factor was the strength of personality and presence both Lorna and Melissa have on staff. In Dave's words: "They are strong in their opinion and what they are feeling and I think Lorna is pretty strong in the vision [as a Vice Principal] that she wants to see happen." Melissa concurred with this sentiment, "I don't feel that gender dictates relevance or importance of staff comments. I can think of strong female voices that have influence in the staff room." Patti also noted the strength of Melissa in her argument that gender is not an issue at Heritage,

Well, we have some strong female personalities on staff who are also very smart, like Melissa. So we have some very strong female personalities, bright women and I think there is a very high degree of respect for females because of that. I don't see that we are a very misogynist school or staff.

Ironically, Lorna, who is identified by most participants as a strong female voice, a leader in the school, and therefore an example of why gender *does not* play a role in communication at Heritage, sees things differently. She clearly noted on two occasions that being "male, white, and older" gave Herman more credibility in his comments; she then contrasted that to Elizabeth who has come to her "in tears because she has tried to speak and nobody has listened. She actually brought up a good comment about what uniforms should be like in the staff room and it was shot down. I saw that, and she is young, female and Chinese." When this example was raised in the focus groups, Melissa disagreed and felt that it had more to do with Elizabeth's inability to be concise and to the point in her comments which caused them to lose weight in the eyes of her colleagues. In other words, Melissa felt it was more an issue of speech competence than gender.

Habermasian scholar Nancy Love (1995) raises the concern that Habermas does not deal specifically with the issue of gender or race in his theory of communicative action: "The ideal speech situation analogously recognizes no communication differences. Indeed, there are no sides, such as classes, genders, races, to be transcended here, except perhaps the separation of individuals from society" (p. 58). While Habermas (1990) does speak to the "other" of justice in general terms, Honneth (1995) notes that his discourse ethics do little to respond to recent feminist literature regarding the standard of 'care' in discourse.

When asked where he stood on this issue of gender and communication at Heritage, Herman readily admitted that being a male "gives me an advantage" as he cited several

occasions where female teachers approached him and thanked him for saying something in a staff meeting. He felt this was less so at Heritage as it was less traditional than the private school he had formerly taught at in South Africa. He noted that the women on staff didn't seem to follow a really traditional model, "certainly not in the work context, maybe at church or in the home, but not here. So they're willing to speak their minds." He also noted the strength of Lorna and her role in leadership as a Vice Principal where "she certainly is vocal and articulate in expressing herself" as a factor that minimizes the influence of gender on the communicative actions at Heritage.

Jonathon stood outside of all the participants in tying his analysis of gender roles at Heritage directly to the repressive force of traditional values based on a conservative interpretation of the Bible,

I run against it more and more. I think. Just in casual conversations about the gender thing, there are definite roles taken from the Bible. It stems from the Bible that I find most trouble with. And it's further reinforced by the staff when they reinforce it with the students because the students automatically accept stereotypes. Stereotypes are all they have. They have no nuances in their world view. Everything is black and white, guy or girl. If you are a girl you do this and if you are a guy you do that. And it's really reinforced by the casual throw away comments that teachers make. It bugs me.

He went on to give an example of a class that was looking at the way women were treated in sections of the New Testament. The teacher completely reinforced gender stereotypes with the statement defending the writers of the New Testament, "they're not sexist, it's just gender roles." This was both a surprise and a frustration for Jonathon as the teacher is one of those females on staff considered a strong voice who doesn't fit the traditional roles she was in fact reinforcing.

His second example was a school-wide competition for *Mr. Heritage*. When the question was raised as to why there is no *Miss. Heritage* competition, Jonathon stated that the answer given by one of the female teachers identified as a strong voice was,

...because girls are too catty and because they would gouge each other's eyes out and everything. And then the conversation broke down to the argument: girls are more emotional, guys are more rational. And you take it or mean it tongue-in-cheek but you are talking about teenagers who have a limited grasp of irony. So this will reinforce the stereotypes they already have.

Ironically Jonathon even notes that he "was probably more upset about the *Miss Heritage* thing than (the female teacher) was." When challenged, Peter readily admits to the inconsistency of this issue but has yet to address it with a change.

The above comments speak to the cultural hegemony prevalent at Heritage as there doesn't seem to be any direct, explicit agenda to minimize the role of females within the school. In fact, many of the females on staff declared that gender was not an issue. Instead, the issues raised by Jonathon speak more to assumed norms that go unquestioned and are lived out in the daily interactions the teachers have with each other and with the students. Not only are the norms not questioned, they are reinforced with comments such as, "it's just gender roles" which implies, "it's just the way it is."

During the focus group discussion Patti was more forthright in her comments regarding gender,

I think there is a little bit of a gender divide. That it would seem that male opinion carries more weight or that the floor, that everyone is quiet when a male speaks, or that there is a lot of peanut gallery talk when women on the staff speak, as if what we have to say is

maybe, maybe on the borderline, not being mocked out-right, but the feeling is, “hey, it’s just one of the chicks talking.”

Elizabeth then agreed and noted the fact men’s words are supposed to carry more weight stem from times when there are “males in the staff room.” Herman responded to these comments by wondering if it was more a function of who chaired the staff meeting as opposed to who spoke, while Dan simply stated that, for him, “gender is not an issue” but rather that people who he is more familiar with “are listened to better than those who are not.” He then went on to express how he feels like people joke around when he speaks, as well as admitting that he jokes around when others’ speak. It was fascinating for me to note in the discussion that even though it was mostly the female participants identifying gender as an issue, it was most of the male participants who readily dismissed it, almost as though they were enacting the issue by example.

Jonathon, who raised it very specifically and passionately in his interview, believed that two things were at play. The first involved some of the females’ personalities which he felt “lend themselves to a little bit more of the ridicule I guess...” but he then qualified that statement with the addition, “but it is definitely a gender thing... there is a gender discrepancy.”

As an observer I felt uncomfortable with the reality that each of the females in the room identified gender as an issue in dialogue while only one of the males agreed. Again, it felt like a case in point. In fact, at one point in the focus group discussion on gender, Elizabeth was in the middle of explaining her frustration over not being listened to in a staff meeting, when one of the male participants actually interrupted her mid-sentence to explain the reason she wasn’t listened to was because during the meeting it was the wrong time to address something on the agenda! I was totally shocked, and to my further surprise, Elizabeth then agreed! So while discussing whether or not traditional views of gender affect dialogue, those norms simply took over. It was

clear to me that, at least in that dialogue with those specific staff members, the risk Habermas (1984) identifies as the interference of role privileges was definitely at play. At one point later in the focus group, one of the male participants made light of the question of gender by stating, “I don’t see the gender thing. But maybe I am just blind or too distracted by the Doritos or something.” At least in this case, even though in jest, the participant identified the issue himself, that of being blind to the cultural assumptions of gender roles that shape our thoughts, behaviours and world view and in which we operate either consciously or, as in this case, subconsciously on a daily basis (Gramsci in Blake 1993).

During the focus group discussion Patti also tried to tap into the presumption that women are labeled as more emotive and therefore less listened to in staff meetings. This is consistent with McGregor’s (2004) postulation that there is a “lack of attention to the emotive responses of individuals engaged in dialogue” (p. 91). Harris (2002) notes that “in becoming aware of our feelings - be they sentient, emotional, or a combination of the two – we engage in thought” (p. 72). Clearly there is devaluing or simply ignoring of the whole realm of emotion as knowledge.

As the focus group discussion continued, Dan quickly disagreed with Patti’s assertion and stated that he tends “to listen to the women who are speaking more than the guys, because my experience has been that we [males] are prone to being a little more goofy during the meeting, whereas a large portion of the female population seems to be a little more focused.” While this sentiment is kind to the females on staff, it really is just another generalization substituted into the gender role game. It gives the females on staff a positive stereotype and the males a negative stereotype, neither of which serves to enable understanding of the unique histories present on the staff. Generalizations like this serve to remove power from individuals to express their uniqueness, think divergently and question long-accepted norms (Deleuze, 1983).

In this case, the long accepted norms of what Derrida (1978) identified as structuralism's concept of binary opposites: male/female, black/white, good/evil, etc. This need for "social homogeneity" exemplifies rationality's demand "for unity, purity, objectivity, universality, and ultimacy" (Ingram, 1987, pp. 77-78) and serves to diminish individuals' ability to take part in the communicative process of creating meaning, language and culture through their interactions (Lye, 1996).

For Herman, personally, the whole discussion regarding gender was specific to the staff members speaking. He felt there were both males and females on staff that he listened to more because of the sheer force of their argument and those he listened to less due to any one or a combination of the following: the irrationality of their argument, the perceived insincerity of their comments, and the lack of intent to build consensus in expressing their comments. He then gave several examples of the significant level of leadership and change that Heritage has experienced due to both Lorna and Melissa articulately and rationally questioning ideas, or presenting new ideas to the whole staff. And again, as he had done several times throughout the focus group, Herman stated he felt that if the meetings are chaired well then the time given to individuals can be structured to be equitable and "set a different tone to listening to everybody..." In consistently raising the issue of how meetings are chaired Herman is speaking to the need to formalize a process for the sake of both the individuals involved and the quality of the solutions generated in those meetings. Not only does Herman see the need for a process (how a meeting is chaired and discussion is facilitated) to ensure the coordination of dialogue, he also sees this process as having potential to limit the role privilege of gender stereotypes.

The idea of Hegemony

As Gramsci (in Blake, 1993) notes, all culture is hegemonic, therefore the culture of Heritage Christian must also have a hidden hegemony, the assumed thoughts, behaviours and worldview that are shaped by simply participating in that culture. In a technologically rational society the cultural hegemony is one of submission to norms that have been inculcated in our language to the point that we are completely unaware of them. One example from the section above would be the accidentally self-reflective comment from the participant who questioned whether or not he was “blind” to “the gender thing.” The patterns have become so ingrained as to not be noticed, much less questioned. Another example comes from Jonathon’s noting “the little throw-away comments” that teachers make that reinforce overly simplistic and false dichotomies of ‘black and white,’ or ‘male and female.’ These comments are not planned to reinforce stereotypes and inequalities, they are just the byproduct of uncritically lived practices shaped by the culture within which they exist and they give evidence to how those cultural norms become inculcated in our communicative actions.

Habermas (1984) hopes to take the power of rationality and turn it in on itself so that it can become a tool for emancipation from its own potential as a dominating and repressive force. In order for this to happen at a place like Heritage, those hegemonic forces need to first be identified and labeled as such so that the coercive pressure they exert on individuals can be exposed. This is a necessary step in Habermas’ rationalization of language. Without the exposure of hegemonic forces, new norms of communication that remove role privileges and allow equitable access to discussion for all involved or affected by the outcome can never be created.

In the context of resisting the scourge of neo-liberal capitalism, Carroll (2010) proposes a “counter-hegemony” that brings “the new into existence, against the sedimented practices and

relations” of the current hegemony (p. 169). The idea of counter-hegemony is the shaping of elements that are already in existence in such a way as to transform them. At Heritage, an example of this opportunity exists in the potential to preserve the “extant reality” of its ethnic diversity and yet to transform itself by incorporating that ethnic diversity in new ways as an alternative to its traditional practices (Carroll, 2010, p. 170).

System and Lifeworld: “Balancing the scales”

While every single participant highlighted the belief that they felt Heritage is a great school and a great place for students primarily because of its inclusive focus on being a “community of Grace,” Peter raised the issue of the importance of empirical evidence and objective analysis as measuring tools for the school. While valuing the individuals he works with and striving to build a relational school, he noted the tension between the pressure to measure the quality of his school in quantifiable terms, on the one hand and, maintaining the reality that much of what he is most proud of at Heritage can only be observed qualitatively. He accepts that education needs “some quantification.... Performing well on provincial exams is part of being academically excellent.” However he believes that the Wings program (an enrichment program for high-achieving students) and the work Heritage does with special needs students “is an academic excellence hard to measure.” He went on to discuss the tension he feels in striving to enable a school culture that is “inclusive” of students and meets their various needs, while at the same time being answerable to the measuring tools of empirical evidence and ‘objective’ analysis provided by the Fraser Institute in the form of Government exam results and public rankings. When reflecting on what his board would value, he was quick to answer, “They would look first at the benchmarks (of the Fraser Institute).” Lorna also noted this same tension but felt

that, at Heritage, teachers “are given a lot of freedom to do what they need to do from the community and from the administrators.”

The power of the technologically rational world is manifest in its scientific language and the ‘tools’ of measurement used to reinforce that language of ‘objectivity.’ This pressure on the school to perform according to a positivist framework is only the beginning of the influence of technological rationality on the school culture. For Habermas (1987), this increasing domination is endemic in industrialized countries where emphasis is placed on the realm of the scientific and technical, or the realm of ‘system,’ therefore giving greater privilege to instrumental reasoning over aesthetic or moral reasoning, the realm of the lifeworld. The significant emphasis the Fraser Institute, and many parents at Heritage, especially those on the school board, place on quantitative data, is a straightforward example of the tendency in modernity for the realm of system to colonize the realm of the lifeworld. Peter has worked hard to ensure students and staff members are valued for their individuality and have the freedom to express who they are. In short, he has clearly striven to ensure Heritage operates, as much as possible, within the realm of the lifeworld. However, as his school exists in the context of a technologically rational society, it will consistently face system pressures to become measured by, and submissive to, the realm of the scientific and technical, which will foster a community in which actions are carried out in order to control one’s surroundings to achieve preset ends. Right now, the organization puts greater emphasis on the values of both the realm of moral practical, where individuals coordinate themselves with others reasonably and peacefully, and the realm of the aesthetic and expressive, where individuals are free to separate themselves from forms of domination. For Habermas (1987), an organization functions ideally for those involved when the realm of the scientific and

technical (system) exists to ensure the realms of the moral practical and the aesthetic and expressive (lifeworld) thrive.

Peter also identifies with this tension in his leadership role as he has been challenged by his board “to become a different person than I am...to be more authoritative” and to follow a model more closely associated with that of “the expectation of a C.E.O. where I am expected to be wise in finances, understand the whole area of development [fundraising], and be able to manage staff.” However, in resisting the pressure to play what he considers an abstract role and lose his personhood, his values and his sense of self, Peter is adamant that he doesn’t “have to become a different person to be more authoritative in very specific areas.” When asked for clarification on this issue Peter gave the example of a staffing issue and the board’s push for a more business-like approach in the process: “The board set aside my values on how important I think people are and how important I think a good healthy process is.” He further elaborated that the board sees his relational strengths as,

...a perceived weakness...the idea that maybe you’re not managing tightly enough your own staff. I err on the side of relationship and community. So when it comes to releasing a staff I feel like I go to long lengths to ensure due process and diligence, and maybe to a fault. So I am perceived, and I wouldn’t disagree, that I am not tough enough on staff. To be tougher on staff I would fear that I might risk the benefits and values of who I am.

It is interesting to note the colonization of the lifeworld in the area of education where instrumental terminology such as, ‘benchmarks’ and ‘C.E.O.’ begins to transfer from the business world into the realm education, arguably a realm where the lifeworld has historically flourished. Peter’s comment, “I would fear that I might risk the benefits and values of who I am”

is a very poignant example of the quashing of the realm of the lifeworld when systemic values becoming overpowering.

When we carry out our work relations dominated by the realm of Habermas' system, we simply treat people as means to an end as opposed to ends in themselves. This is elaborated on by Buber (1958) in his classic work *I-Thou*, in which he differentiates a humane approach against modernity's approach to dealing with individuals. Modernity pressures us to treat others as simply a step towards one's own personal gain, to function in an 'I-It' relationship while a humane approach encourages us to treat others as individuals who are being and becoming human, to function in an 'I-Thou' relationship.

There was a consistent respect for Peter's valuing of each of his staff as individuals. Dave noted it by stating, "I have worked for three administrators and I am happier here than in those other two places because I feel like [Peter] actually cares about me and my family, and that matters to me because I am not just punching a clock." He also went on to describe the feeling at Heritage as "closer to the family side of things, for sure." When questioned on the extent of this sentiment, participants were unanimous in agreement. Patti specifically identified this "strength" as attributed in part to Peter's influence and his being "a relational leader." One of the specific strategies Peter has used to foster a feeling of inclusiveness and acceptance, to develop a sense of community where each individual is valued, is by holding a year-long focus on having the staff work through defining Heritage as "a community of Grace." This effort was lauded by staff as helping them build and value relationships as central to their work as educators. Patti, who works with kids with learning needs, highlighted it as a reason students who struggle receive so much support and feel successful at Heritage, "it's always brought to our attention that we are about relationships and ultimately caring for and nurturing these kids along the way." She felt the

whole area of nurturing and supporting “probably takes precedence over, you know, just focusing on writing those exams and passing. I think Heritage is trying to balance the scales. I would like to think that’s the way it’s headed.”

“Balance the scales,” or in other words, working to place Heritage as a school that values the realm of the lifeworld in a culture dominated by system values. Heritage Christian School is a complex set of unique histories constantly shaping and being shaped. It is situated in a society rooted in the rationality of modernity with glimpses of a postmodernity understanding. Heritage is greatly influenced by the Christian, religious norms it stakes its identity on. Much of this context severely limits the achievement of ethical discourse at Heritage. However, the individuals who allow for the reality of *differance* (Derrida, 1982a), the variety and uniqueness of each other, who, both consciously and subconsciously, are creating and recreating it as an organization that allows for communication to be a tool for positive human social development. And it is these individuals, led by a principal who values them as individuals, who enable Heritage Christian School to have the potential to be an organization in which the lifeworld thrives which, in turn, allows those within the organization to thrive as well.

The leadership factor

Peter believes passionately that Heritage Christian School should be a safe place for all students and all staff. However, his desire to foster growth in this direction is at times in conflict with the values of others involved in the school. One example of this reality is Peter’s fear over losing who he is in submitting to the board’s pressure for him to become more like a C.E.O. Peter is consistent with other principals (Theoharis, 2007) who feel “a great personal toll” (p. 242) when they advocate for “a warm welcoming school climate” and work to “build relationships with the students and the staff” (p. 236) when there is greater pressure to measure

the school's success by other standards. The resistance they meet includes, "the demands of the principalship, the momentum of status quo, obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs, and insular and privileged parent expectations" (p. 238). From my observations, Peter is experiencing these exact phenomena and is putting himself at risk to pursue the development of an ethically inclusive school climate.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As outlined in chapter 1, my interest in this study topic started when I was a Master's student and Vice Principal in a faith-based school. It was within these sites that I began to notice the transitional quality of professional language. With new programs of curriculum, new language appeared, and with different leadership personalities, students, families and teachers were defined and categorized differently. For example, with one principal, teachers were defined as 'teacher-leaders' or 'lead-learners' and students were described as learners, their parents as members of the community. Whereas, with another principal, these same teachers received the label: 'employees,' and the students and their families became 'clients.' At first I simply saw this as two ways of labeling the same thing, but over time I began to see the power in these words and how they shaped the treatment of people. Viewing someone as a client or as an employee creates room for the treatment of people as a means to an end, whereas I favour Kant's (1873) third formulation which postulates that, as humans, we have a special place in the universe and are to treat all other humans as ends in themselves. Noticing this tension in language, and how it affected how one works with others in an educational setting, spurred me on to learn about the way in which language is shaped by its surrounding culture, as well as how language, at the same time, shapes that culture.

It was a reading of Habermas (1984) that highlighted what have become two significant understandings for me. First, the rationalization of society has a persuasive and pervasive influence on all realms of human existence, including language and communication. And secondly, that it is within the shared human experience of language and communication that an opportunity for ensuring the 'right' ordering of the realms of human existence presents itself.

Answering the question

I started this study by posing the question, “How do the communication practices that take place between administrators and teachers in a school hinder or help the professional community to become more ethical and inclusive?” The answer to this question, I realize, is varied and completely dependent on the context in which it is asked. For Heritage Christian School, there was clear evidence of communication practices that fostered an ethical and inclusive professional community. The tone of this communication seemed to stem from the example set by the current principal, Peter. It was clear throughout my time in the school, the interviews with participants and the focus group discussions, that he encourages open and honest communication; in his self-description, he will not “set aside my values on how important I think people are and how important I think a good healthy process is.” He holds fast to this position out of a fear of risking “the benefits and values of who [he] is.” Peter’s consistent practice of modeling and encouraging open and honest discussion has clearly played a part in creating a professional community in which such dialogue is a common occurrence.

There was also a sense that the foundational faith perspective upon which the school was built played a potentially positive role in fostering open and honest communication. Several participants identified their common faith as bringing them together and allowing them the kind of relationships that allowed for inclusive dialogue. Some referenced the teachings of Christ as challenging them to include and accept others. This sense of inclusiveness was specifically noted by participants who felt strongly that they were allowed to “be themselves” which therefore enabled them to be authentic in their communicative practices. There was unanimous consensus amongst participants regarding a complete lack of coercive pressure from administration.

As the researcher, I also feel that the ‘quality’ of the participants played a significant role in the findings. I readily admit this to be a subjective comment to make but speculate that teachers drawn to participate in a study about ‘the ethical and inclusive nature of staff dialogue’ are generally a reflective and engaged group of professionals. On the other hand, I believe those reluctant to participate, in general, might be less interested in reflecting on their professional practice; therefore, the data ‘non-participants’ would have provided might have significantly changed the findings. Research on the communicative practices of teachers reflectively engaged in their practices as opposed to those less engaged would shed further light on this question.

There were, as well, significant barriers present at Heritage that limited the formation of ethical and inclusive dialogue as a social norm. As noted in the findings, these limitations are ones noted by Habermas as the influence of formal rationality on speech situations. The specific school-based hegemony plays out in communication, especially as that particular hegemony is shaped by the broader culture within which it exists, in this case an urban and multi-ethnic part of the lower mainland of Vancouver.

The issue of language competency, or as Habermas (1984) identifies it, “speech competence,” was quickly raised to prominence. Several of the teaching staff members at Heritage are English Language Learners (E.L.L.) and their inability to engage equitably in dialogue based on the sheer force of their argument was noted as a limiting factor in whole staff dialogue. As much of Habermas’ (1984) Theory of Communicative Action rests on all participants having a basic level of speech competence, this factor alone created a significant limitation in the creation of ideal speech situations.

I also found evidence of formal rationality’s influence on how individuals perceive the world, how they value certain comments, and how they value certain knowledge-bases over

others. One example included the Judeo Christian perspective that there is one truth within which all knowledge/ideas either fit or do not fit. There was a clear tension between this traditional faith concept and the reality of Heritage's competing worldviews as influenced by gender, ethnicity, age and sexuality. Another example of the influence of rationality was that for some participants, comments made from a 'rational' perspective with supportive empirical arguments, weighed much more heavily than emotive comments tied to personal narratives. Running concurrently with this weighting of 'rational' dialogue were the tensions of traditional views of gender. For example, several participants commented that females tended to be more emotive in conflict and therefore their arguments were less rational and less valued. This was said even though these same participants noted that some of the most rationally articulate staff members at Heritage are female. There was also evidence of some general confusion over how to value emotive and passionately expressed ideas in general.

Further evidence of the influence of rationalism on communicative practices at Heritage was the tension between, on the one hand, a need and appreciation for individuals to expressive themselves freely and for dialogue to be open and unstructured, and on the other hand, a desire for all dialogue to be structured and controlled, and individual voices limited and organized. For example, several participants cited a need for greater clarity regarding the hierarchal roles of administrators and teachers and for staff members to stay within their roles. There was also a desire for more structured staff meetings within which both staff members and their ideas could be placed. At the same time one of the participants identified the limitations the current roles already placed on teachers who had influence on the staff culture even though they weren't part of the hierarchal structure. There was also inconsistency between Peter's complete unwillingness in fulfilling his role to rely on hierarchal power while, in comparison, the board of directors

relied completely on their hierarchal power to coerce Peter into carrying out actions that contravened his principles.

Another factor limiting Heritage's ability to approach an ideal speech situation resulted from the significant ethnic diversity present amongst the staff. While a number of participants noted this diversity as a factor that drew them to teach at Heritage, the varying social norms represented by different cultures proved to limit full participation in staff dialogue. These norm differences ranged from the varying understandings of civility, to inherent beliefs about one's appropriate behaviour within hierarchal structures and assumptions regarding gender and age roles.

One of the findings that surprised me was the implication participants' theological understandings had on their understanding and beliefs about dialogue. This included the limitations placed on topics that were available for discussion. For example, there were staff members who clearly felt that it was not a social norm at Heritage to engage in an authentic, 'rational' questioning of the existence of hell, or the 'question' of how Heritage should respond to gay and lesbian students. This feeling was evident amongst many participants even though the principal, Peter, clearly feels comfortable with open and inclusive dialogue on these topics. However, each person's own theological upbringing and understanding played a significant role in either enabling them to comfortably engage in such discourse, or inhibiting them from even entering the discourse.

Theological implications were not all-constraining forces however, as a number of participants talked about their desire to include gay and lesbian students in the community because of their belief that that was what the teachings of Christ challenged them to do. Again, Peter showed leadership in this area by initiating discussion about how a Christian School should

support gay and lesbian students. He attempted to create a space in which teachers and administrators are able to safely engage in dialogue and create policy and improve practice.

It is clear that there are different cultural norms at play in Heritage's communication, but it is also clear that there are very different perceptions as to what those norms are and how they affect communication. A new way of understanding culture and communication is necessary. For Heritage, this could entail creating norms of dialogue that might draw from the richness of the varying cultural backgrounds of the staff. This would begin to break down the binary opposites of 'black' and 'white,' 'true' and 'untrue' or in this case, 'fit/insider' vs. 'outsider' and open the door to meaning that is discursively shaped by subjectivity (Derrida, 1982b). It would however, require a growing comfort with the ongoing project of constructing social norms (McManus, 1998). For Heritage, this growing comfort will only be realized as colleagues develop an appreciation for their differences and see them as strengths to be celebrated.

While the stage is set for a change in how the staff at Heritage engage in communication, more work is required in the area of formally 'deconstructing' (Derrida 1997) the current norms. Comments noted by participants above indicate a desire to move past what has been historically elevated to importance or devalued in importance. The fact that the staff is made up of a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds has the potential to enable this process. Each person, rather than only one or two minority groups, is forced to question long-held assumptions of the interplay of language in light of the differing perspectives and practices they encounter daily. They will need to practice what Deutscher (1988) identifies as the ability to unveil instabilities and hierarchies in their language and then to live in a reality that is never unitary but full of conflicting ideas and meanings.

Heritage Christian School clearly exists within a tension between the lifeworld and system. As noted above, there are elements of the school (inclusive dialogue, the eschewing of role privilege due to hierarchy, the celebration of students' individuality, the valuing of varying ethnicities, and so on.) that foster the school as existing within the realm of the lifeworld. However, these attempts to 'balance the scales' are clearly contested as system pressures exert themselves on Heritage. Examples of the pressures of formal rationality include the felt need for hierarchal structures as well as parent and board's significant emphasis on standardized testing as a measurement of success. Also at play impacting communicative practices at Heritage is the double-edged sword of being part of a faith community. When that faith community fosters freedom, compassion, principled action, self-reflection and expression, and grace, it moves towards post-conventional normativity and strengthens the place of the lifeworld within the school. However, when that same faith community fosters submission to exclusive definitions of reality, confinement to hierarchal roles and limitations of speech content, it maintains a premodern position in fostering pre-conventional normativity. It is clear from my observations that staff members at Heritage are in various stages in the transition from a pre-conventional, to conventional and on to a post-conventional understanding of reality (see Table 2: Stages in the development of law). They are therefore in various stages in their ability to move the community away from limiting human social development to empowering it. A tool for resistance in this battle is authentic engagement in "practices of communicative discourse" (Harris, 2002, p. 65). Heritage is in an unusual place, significantly influenced by the pressures of system but still not identified by it. It has the potential to stand apart as an organization that refuses to allow its lifeworld values be colonized by the system.

Informing educational practice (recommendations)

Other than completing this dissertation as a step towards receiving a PhD, I had two other personal goals in mind in conducting my research. As a critical, interpretive researcher, I believe that those involved in the research process are inevitably affected by the process. One of my goals, therefore, was that in conducting my research, by engaging participants in some critical discourse regarding their communicative practices, steps towards transforming those practices would take place. I hoped the issues raised would spur further discussion amongst teachers and administrators regarding the creation of ethical and inclusive discourse. I believe this happened at Heritage as participants reported to me, early in the data collection process, that teachers voiced comments during staff meetings to the effect that, “I wish Dave Loewen was here for this discussion. This is right in the area of his research project and it has to do with how we communicate.” This was clear evidence of the impact of the research process on the participants’ and their colleagues and frankly, was very exciting to hear about and observe.

From my research I also hoped to gain some insight into how school organizations can more readily facilitate ethical and inclusive communication. I believe I achieved that goal as well and have therefore developed some recommendations as a result of insights gained in the research and writing process.

Recommendations for teachers

As teachers function completely within the realm of communication with students, families, colleagues, and administrators, I suggest they first understand the seriousness of the role they play, explicitly or implicitly (e.g. as in the point Jonathan raised about the “throw away comments by teachers”), knowingly or unknowingly, in creating and reinforcing communicative norms. Teachers need to reflect deeply on the hegemonies within which they function and

critique and own how they are both shaped by, and shape, those hegemonies. Through language, teachers have the power to marginalize or empower others. While there are a plethora of social justice issues available for teachers to engage in with their students, all of these issues have at their center the power of language to create, sustain or dissolve certain realities for those they dialogue with, especially their children. I recommend teachers engage their students, colleagues and communities in practices of critically evaluating the language, as well as the processes of communication. As Lecky (2009) states, “of all the professionals in the educational system, teachers are the best placed to communicate social values” (p. 132). Therefore, they bear the greatest responsibility to treat their communicative practices with care and ongoing critique.

Recommendations for school administrators

At Heritage Christian School, Peter demonstrated the administrator’s ability to invite teachers into dialogue and create a setting that is, as much as possible given the hegemonic implications of the broader social context, devoid of coercion. Administrators are in a unique position to affect the communicative practices in their particular school context. I therefore recommend they:

- 1) Incorporate time into their yearly planning for whole-staff reflection, critique and dialogue regarding the norms of communication used in their school (e.g. conduct a communicative practices ‘audit’ annually);
- 2) Receive and provide professional instruction in the area of discourse ethics and inclusive communicative practice for teachers and students;
- 3) Make bold and clear statements regarding the value and safety of honest and ethical communication practices before students, teachers and members of the parent community;

- 4) Respond to exclusive, marginalizing and coercive comments with statements affirming the opposite; and
- 5) Encourage teachers to incorporate issues surrounding communicative practices into their curriculum. Currently teachers are more readily addressing issues of social justice, however, the reality of the power of language and the limitations of access to ideal speech situations need to be seen as foundational to all other issues of social justice.

Recommendations for faculty of university education departments

In my study, Heritage Christian School was clearly situated as a contested space between the lifeworld and the system. If, as Habermas (1984) would suggest, schools can be places where the realm of the lifeworld is fostered and the realm of the system is placed within the context of enabling the lifeworld to flourish, then schools are central to the creation to the creation of improved speech habits. Unfortunately, I believe such formal discussions are rare, if so, both beginning teachers and beginning administrators initiate their careers unaware of the part they play, through their communicative practices, in either enabling or disabling ethical and inclusive communication. Therefore, I recommend Schools of Education include curriculum designed to address issues of discourse ethics and communicative practices specific to the field of education.

Directions for further research

One of the questions that this project raised to prominence for me involves individuals' religious belief systems and the impact those beliefs have on communicative practices. Even within the commonality afforded by a Protestant Christian school, there proved to be significant divergent thinking regarding topics deemed acceptable for discussion, as well as the manner of

that discourse. Habermas' (1984) points out that religion, a component of the lifeworld, has the potential to become system-oriented when it serves a constraining force limiting personal, human expression and requiring submission to a hegemonic rule. This proved true even in the context of a belief system focused on being 'a community of Grace.' I believe the paradox this presents is only a hint of the potential paradoxes present in individual faith communities and their particular theologies. To enable readers to find their own way through these paradoxes, more stories are needed and research required illuminating those theologies that enable ideal communicative practices to take place, as well as those that limit communicative practices.

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Appendix A: Letter to School Board

M _____

Secretary to the Board of Directors of _____ School Society

Dear _____,

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Victoria, I am conducting a research project that focuses on just communication practices amongst teachers and administrators in a school setting. Specifically, I am studying how the pressure of a bureaucratic organization with its hierarchal roles and structures, impacts the ability of individuals to live fully as humans both individually and in community. To this end I would like your permission to use _____ school from March 2009 until June 2009 for my research.

I am writing to ask permission to conduct interviews with 6-8 of your staff members and both of your administrators. All participation will be voluntary and individual responses will be kept confidential. Each participant will be given a written transcript of their interview so that necessary changes may be made to accurately reflect opinions and points of view. I will start by presenting some general concepts regarding communication ethics in organizations to all staff. After the interviews are complete I will then conduct a follow up focus group meeting to address the points raised in the data and talk through some steps to move forward in practicing ethical communication. I would also like access to any staff and board meeting agendas and minutes from the past 12 months. Prior to my undertaking the collection of interview data, my research proposal will have passed the University of Victoria's ethical review requirements.

If further information about my project is required I can be contacted at _____. My PhD supervisor is Dr. Carol Harris who can be contacted via email at harrisce@uvic.ca or via phone at 902-542-3400. Thank you for considering my request and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely yours,

David Loewen

Appendix B: Script for introduction to, and for recruitment for, the study

Staff meeting script:

Good afternoon, my name is Dave Loewen and I am a PhD student at the University of Victoria. I am conducting research towards my dissertation in the area of communication in schools with a particular focus on teacher and administrator communication. My goal is to find out how much the bureaucracy of a typical school influences the ethics of communication amongst teachers and administrators. I am hoping to have 6-8 teachers and 2 or 3 administrators participate in this study. For all participants it would involve attending a 45-60 minute interview and a 60 minute follow up focus group. Participants would also be asked to read a transcription of their interview to confirm its accuracy. The time periods would be scheduled for after school and I hope to have conducted the interviews and the focus group meeting between March 30 and June 30. If you are interested in participating, please take one of the handouts I will leave with you.

Let me tell you about it about the theoretical background to my research and the question I hope to answer.

**Appendix C: Written invitation to participate in the Study
(to be left behind at a staff meeting)**

If you have taken this letter you have some interest in participating in this research project. The following is a brief summary of what your involvement would be and how to initiate participation:

- 1) Each participant will be interviewed by me for 45-60 minutes. Questions will focus on the communication practices of teachers and administrators in Heritage Christian School. This interview will be audio recorded and you will be given a transcription to review for accuracy. I will also be taking notes during the interview.
- 2) Once all of the individual interviews have taken place all participants will join for a focus group. The purpose of this focus group will be to discuss themes and anomalies that have arisen from the individual interviews.
- 3) Each participant will be required to sign a waiver outlining the expectations and risks involved in participation.
- 4) Your participation will be kept confidential except within the focus group context. Within that context there is an expectation of confidentiality amongst participants.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please contact me at either dloewen@wrca.bc.ca or 604-616-5848.

Yours, David Loewen PhD (cand.)

Appendix D Information package for those expressing interest in participation.

Teacher-Administrator relationships: communication practices and justice

Research Question:

How do the pressures of the rational bureaucracy (system) affect the communication of individuals within one school setting as they attempt to live fully as humans both individually and in community (lifeworld)?

Purposes of research

- 1) Describe and interpret the lived experiences of select members of specific school community
- 2) Explore how these participants live and communicate within the tension of working within a bureaucracy but also paying attention to their own and others social needs OR describe how these participants live and communicate within the tension of working within both the system and lifeworld as they are played out in a school community.
- 3) Understand how varying roles (teacher, administrator, senior teacher, etc.) affects participants ability to be in authentic and communication with other role players
- 4) Explore how participants understand these various roles and the impacts on communication
- 5) Compare these understandings and experiences to the literature with specific attention to the work of Jurgen Habermas
- 6) Generalize these findings, when appropriate, to inform policy and practice in schools

Research design

This research project is a qualitative, interpretive, narrative inquiry that covers a 4 month period. There are between 8 and 10 participants randomly selected from the staff members at _____ School. Essential elements of this research are as follows:

- 1) One whole staff presentation on ethical communication in the context or organizations. Included in this will be a brief explanation of Habermas' System vs. Lifeworld theory.
- 2) One in-depth interview with each participant
- 3) Informal conversations over a two week period with respect to the issues and ideas the research process raises.
- 4) Review of past and current staff meeting agendas and minutes

- 5) One focus group meeting with all teacher candidates to discuss results of above-gathered data
- 6) Participants reviewing of transcripts from interview and focus groups

Key dates and activities

March 1-8	Whole staff presentation on communication ethics and system/lifeworld dynamic
March 1-June 30	Informal observations of communication practices
March 10-30	First round of interviews
April 1-15	Informal conversations
April 30	Teaching staff focus group meeting
May 30- June 15	participants' review of transcripts (returned by June 15)

Appendix E:***Participant Consent Form***

Teacher-Administrator relationships: Communication practices and justice

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Teacher-Administrator relationships: Communication practice and justice that I, David Loewen, am conducting.

I am a graduate student in the department of Educational Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have further questions [604-616-5848 or dloewen@wrca.bc.ca].

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Educational Leadership (PhD). It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Carol Harris. You may contact my supervisor at 902-542-3400.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of my research project is to bring new understandings regarding the affect of rational bureaucratic pressures on communication. In a school setting teachers and administrators live in the world of a hierarchal organizational structure with roles and norms while at the same time striving to live fully as humans individually and in community. My research project strives to answer the following question: How do the pressures of the rational bureaucracy affect the communication of individuals within one school setting as they attempt to live fully as humans both individually and in community? A specific focus on the work of Jurgen Habermas and ethical communication will be applied to the data collection and findings.

Importance of this Research

The goal of this research will be to provide insight into the communication practices that occur in a typical school setting, and to assist educators as they attempt to ensure ever more just and ethical practice. The findings will directly benefit school administrators seeking to lead schools that will allow individuals to live fully as humans in their profession and to participate fully in humane and ethical school organizations. The research will also empower and equip teachers to create a school culture for students that reflects more ethical communication practices.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher/administrator in this school. Participants are randomly selected to represent a fair sampling of the members of this organization.

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in a one-on-one interview (45-60 minutes) and participating in a follow up focus group (60 minutes) where the themes that have arisen from the collected interviews will be discussed. Audio-tapes of the interview will be transcribed into written form and participants will read their transcribed interview to verify its accuracy. Written notes during the interview and during informal observations of staff meetings and informal conversations will also be made during the research process.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause minimal inconvenience to you, including your time commitment to be interviewed, to read the transcription of that interview and to participate in a focus group meeting.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include your own increased knowledge of basic organizational theory and communication ethics and a better understanding of how to participate in shaping a school community that empowers all its members. You will also bring benefit to the broader understanding of how communities can be places of justice and harmony that more readily enable all individuals to live fully as humans both individually and in community.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will continue to be used anonymously in the analysis of all of the data and in comparison with the current literature on ethical communication. **THOSE OF YOU WHO DO NOT WISH ANY OF YOUR OWN INFORMAL COMMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE DATA COLLECTION MAY BE EXCLUDED SIMPLY BY CONTACTING ME AT MY EMAIL ADDRESS NOTED ABOVE.**

On-going Consent

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will ask for a second signature of consent prior to initiating the focus group discussion.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity your name will not be used at any point in the final reporting of the research and all participants will be asked to keep the content of the focus group confidential to the members of the group. IN ADDITION, TO PROTECT YOUR ANONYMITY, BOTH FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS AND ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WILL BE HELD OFF SITE IF SO DESIRED BY THE PARTICIPANT. However, within the focus groups discussion with other participants there will be no anonymity. PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT WHILE EVERY EFFORT TO PROTECT YOUR ANONYMITY WILL BE TAKEN THERE IS STILL NO GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL REMAIN COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by using pseudonyms in the final publication and by storing all hard copy research data in a locked filing cabinet and all electronic data in password protected files.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: Each member of the research process will receive an executive summary, a published article may be written and a final dissertation will also contain the results of this study.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in the following ways: all audio tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation. Hard copy data will be kept in locked filing cabinet and electronic data will be kept in password protected files for future potential use.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include: the research supervisor, Dr. Carol Harris of UVic (see contact information above)

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix F: Interview Questions

Following a brief personal introduction and description of my research purpose (i.e. an in-depth study of patterns and forms of communication within this public school), these questions (or a portion of these questions) will be asked of each interviewee:

- 1) Tell me a bit about yourself (family, background, interests, what got you into teaching)
- 2) Describe your role in the school, please
- 3) What brought you to X school?
- 4) What do you like about working at X? What don't you like?
- 5) Do you feel that you can be 'yourself' here?
- 6) What are some of your goals as an educator?
- 7) Describe the ideal staff meeting.
- 8) Compare that with your usual staff meetings here.
- 9) Do you feel you have the opportunity to talk freely with colleagues? Parents? Students during official meetings?
- 10) How do you feel about communication and dialogue in your school?
- 11) What are some of the key phrases unique to this school?
- 12) Can you tell me about your understanding of communication amongst staff and between staff and administration?
- 13) How does it compare with what you would like to see?
- 14) What would need to change?
- 15) Do you feel the communicative practices allow you to thrive personally and professionally? Why or why not?
- 16) What role do you feel you play in hindering or helping open communication practices?
- 17) What are some of the 'sacred cows,' the untouchable issues/ideas at X school (is there anything you feel you cannot talk about?)?
- 18) Do you see any conflict between your personal life and professional life?
- 19) Can you think of a situation in the last 12 months that displayed ideal communication?
- 20) What about one where communication failed?
- 21) How would you describe your working relationships with your colleagues? Your social life with them apart from work?
- 22) How would you describe the 'politics' at X school?
- 23) How involved are you in the decision-making process at X school – Who is involved more/less and why?
- 24) What are some of the most important official and unofficial roles people play at X school?
- 25) Anything else you would like to add?

Appendix G: Reflections on research method

Once I decided the area of my research I began the process of attempting to gain access to schools in which to conduct that research. I found that experience very frustrating. It seems most principals are less than keen to invite someone into their school who describes himself as a critical, interpretive researcher and who wishes to raise questions regarding the ethics of the communicative practices evident in their school. After several failed attempts at a variety of schools I contacted Peter and asked whether or not he would be willing to allow me access to his staff for my research. Not only was he open to the idea but he even expressed interest and stated he “looked forward to the feedback.”

Recruitment of participants

My next step was to recruit participants (I already had Peter’s stated willingness to be interviewed). Those stages of recruitment were as follows:

- 1) I was given a 20 minute period of time at a Heritage staff meeting to introduce the background to my research, explain its purpose and the necessary participation I needed. I also explained the extent of the potential participants’ involvement. I then left a stack of letters of invitation (see appendix C) with the staff and waited for a response.
- 2) Within 48 hours I received affirmative responses from 3 participants. I then scheduled interviews with each of these participants and mentioned to them my need for more participants.
- 3) Upon arriving for my first day of on-site research and interviewing, two more participants, who had heard I was still looking for more participants, offered to join the project.

- 4) Over the period of my first three days on site, this number grew to eight due to the word of mouth advertising of those already committed to participating.
- 5) I then formally met with Lorna and requested her participation, which she readily assented to.

A word about ‘selection’

As I was able to include all those who volunteered to participate I avoided having to decide who would participate. This created a rather random sampling of the staff with the only commonality being that each participant turned out to be an educator engaged in their profession at a high level of care and with a deep commitment to the success of Heritage. I would have possibly garnered more divergent data, were there participants who were not as supportive of the success of Heritage or who were less engaged in their profession. However, the unpredicted side benefit of interviewing the colleagues who did participate was the level inspiration they provided me in the process. Therefore, I reflect on my participants involvement with deep gratitude for their willingness to support my research and for the stories, convictions and questions they shared with me.

Interview methods

I conducted my research over ten days at Heritage. I was able to complete all of my one-on-one interviews and have participants receive, and give feedback on, their transcriptions, before returning to conduct the final focus group discussion. While I followed the same outline of questions (see appendix F) for each interview, the pathways followed during our dialogue differed greatly, thus leading to new questions and topics for each participant dependent on their responses to the original interview questions. For most of the interviews I met with the participants in their own classrooms or offices. However, two candidates preferred to be

interviewed in the staffroom regardless of the potential for interruptions and the lack of confidentiality.

Follow up with participants and Heritage Christian School

I have had zero formal follow up with the participants at Heritage since completing my on-site research. However, I have met with Peter several times to discuss the ramifications of my research in his school. I was extremely pleased when he explained the staff had spent time together at the start of the next school year (my research concluded at the middle of June) discussing the questions my research raised and the communicative norms they would like to pursue as a professional community. I have also been invited to return to a staff meeting and formally present my findings and recommendations for improved communicative practices.