UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE PURSUIT OF A PHD AS A VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DRAMATURGY OF ONE COHORT'S EXPERIENCE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

LANCE MASON FORD
Norman, Oklahoma
2009

THE PURSUIT OF A PHD AS A VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DRAMATURGY OF ONE COHORT'S EXPERIENCE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

_____
Dr. Mary John O'Hair, Co-Chair

_____
Dr. Courtney Vaughn, Co-Chair

_____
Dr. Greg Garn

_____
Dr. Deniz Eseryel

_____
Dr. Scott Wilson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This process has truly been an incredible journey. When I moved back to rural America, I could not have imagined it possible to pursue a PhD in educational administration from a major educational research institution via synchronous videoconferencing technology. I would like to say thank you to Dr. Mary John O'Hair for allowing our cohort to realize her vision of this process. Her leadership throughout this program has been transformational. She has piloted a fledgling organization into a nationally recognized leader in educational research. It was her willingness to take a chance on me as a graduate assistant that made this degree a reality in my life.

Next, I would like to thank Dr. Courtney Vaughn for her untiring patience in reshaping a music teacher into a researching scholar. Many times, it was her guidance that pushed my academic quest beyond the limits of my understanding and stretched me mentally beyond my wildest imagination. Her passion for reaching students and devotion to developing full-rounded scholars is truly inspiring.

Third, my fellow cohort members have been an incredible source of encouragement for me throughout this process. Each of them has been willing to break distance barriers, share amazing insights, and cheer each other on throughout this pilgrimage. There have been many

after class counseling sessions via video and phone where the “you can do its” propelled me to completion.

My employers have also been very understanding of my pursuit throughout this process. The leadership of Howe Public Schools allowed me to use technological resources that were central to our entire cohort’s interactions. My newest employer, TANDBERG, has given me a venue to apply my research in working with new and existing customers. And my church family was crucial in offering up the much-needed prayers that sustained me during this endeavor.

Finally, my wife, Carol Ann, and children, Julianne and Nicholas, have put up with me through thick and thin. From the late night research to the all-weekend marathons, you have been incredibly supportive. The missing of ballgames, absenteeism from videogames, and skipping of family outings is finally at an end. Above all, my incredible wife has held us all together with God’s help and guidance. She has been my main encourager, proofreader, and co-researcher. It was her stalwart presence that kept me grounded amid the craziness of these four years. I could not have done any of this without her support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Education can be a lonely business. Teachers and administrators are often separated from other adult professionals in isolated classrooms, offices, and administration buildings. Geographic remoteness only exacerbates personal seclusion, preventing collaboration concerning how to foster student learning and wellbeing. Bringing a disparate group of potentially isolated educational leaders together, in 2005 the Educational Administration Department (EAD) at Central University in the United States created a local/distance (mixed) PhD cohort. Pathways, a special unit embedded within EAD, spearheaded the plan; infused the curriculum with collaborative community literature; intended to enhance student administrative expertise; and, if desired, prepared students for the college professorate. I was a cohort member, and my co-author taught four research courses scattered throughout the program. Classes are over now, and 13 out of 14 original members are defending prospecti and dissertations.

For the most part Pathways realized its expectations, and the group became a professional learning community (PLC). This study produced three thematic lenses through which to see the cohort's evolution: job-related challenges, technology struggles, and interpersonal relationships. This methodology centers on a phenomenological

dramaturgy. Cooley (1922) and Mead (1934/1967) guided our view of the phenomenon as the cohort's historical group development toward each individual's evolving professional- and self-perceptions within a community context. We present the findings in a four-act play (Goffman,1959). Our special attention to students speaks to future virtual and local doctoral cohort developers and those who theorize about successful doctoral education. Being a good educator means paying attention to details--in this case, the ever-changing social self-constructions that can make or break a student's experience.

CHAPTER ONE

COMING TOGETHER

At first glance it would seem that educators are highly social beings. They choose to enter a field that academically and socially squires students into the adult world, capable of making informed decisions and participating in an active democracy. But whether by design or default, educators (—from teachers, building administrators, and central office leaders—) are isolated and sometimes lonely (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006; Howard, 2002). They often practice their profession in small pockets, such as classrooms, offices, and freestanding central office buildings. In addition, rural teachers and administrators face exaggerated physical isolation from communities outside the small ones they serve (Bjork and Kowalski 2005, Heider, 2005, Drago-Severson and Pinto 2006, Lamkin 2006, O'Hair, Williams, Wilson & Applegate, 2009). With this in mind, in 2005, the Educational Administration Department (EAD) at Central University, a mid-western research institution, orchestrated a local/distance (mixed) PhD cohort doctoral program comprised of fourteen educational leaders from two states. I was one of these students.

A special unit embedded in EAD, called Pathways, spearheaded the plan. One goal was to help educational leaders overcome isolation,

resulting from both geographic and professional boundaries, by constructing an emerging learning community—an organization "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire" (Senge, 2006, p. 3). Through the cohort's coursework and the research process, three foundational pillars for this study emerged: professional learning community (PLC) research, the curricular linchpin; socialization factors to encourage cultural belongingness; and leadership theory. Each of these was viewed particularly as they related to technology as a facilitator. Pathways administrators hoped that these adult students would willingly participate and then go home and engender the same type of learning community in their "other" academic lives. To evaluate the EAD Pathway cohort success this study asks, "How do the educational leaders participating in the doctoral cohort through the EAD's Pathways program at Central University describe their individual and collaborative experiences of a mixed virtual PLC?"

Background of the Study

As is often the case, this research project began with my own experiences. In 2001, a rural school system and its leadership attempted something unique in its area. It was the first time this small district had employed a technology director. Although the school was small and isolated and the position I desired was completely new, I

applied anyway. With no prior knowledge of expectations, no specific directives, and no qualifying background skills, I got the job. The following years were incredibly rewarding and challenging. Teachers began authentically incorporating various technologies into their curriculum. Students became excited about school, resulting in reduced absenteeism. Enrollment increased, as did student achievement as measured by state mandated exams.

Yet, for me, something was missing. I felt isolated by geographic remoteness and relative competitiveness of persons with similar jobs at regional districts. Conferences, meetings, and professional associations were mostly situated three to four hours from my location. At the events I was able to attend, I was classified as a presenter or even worse, an expert. I wanted to be a fellow learner. Reeling from this, I asked myself, “How could I as a rural, administrative-level educator continue to look forward, gain vision, and access meaningful discourse concerning my school? Where would I have an opportunity to share ideas and plan with others striving for excellence in their own educational environments?” My ideas needed to be tempered through the crucible of others’ experiences (O'Hair, McLaughlin & Reitzug, 2000). I needed to become an active participant in a networked learning community.

It did not take much investigation to realize that I was not alone in this relative seclusion. It is ironic that in an era of increased reform mandates for accountability through collective efforts, barriers still exist between faculty members, building-level principals and district-level administrators. Traditionally, instructors in the classroom are the final authority for the planning, creation and execution of the educational endeavors of their students. As such, they become the sole proprietor of the process within the four walls. Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) point to a preponderance of evidence suggesting that school contexts must be re-shaped "in order to mitigate isolation (and) to enhance teacher learning" (p. 131). This isolation is particularly acute in rural school settings (O'Hair et al. 2009). "Although social justice is often discussed in terms of race, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientations, it may also be an issue of location—in this case, being located in a rural area" (Applegate, 2008, O'Hair & Reitzug, 2006 as cited in O'Hair, et al., 2009, p.2).

At the building level, the principal is at the tip of the spear in the decision-making process. Howard (2002) explains that although principals express a deep passion for the job, in her study the majority "reported experiences that had resulted in severe levels of isolation and loneliness" (p. ix). Lamkin (2006) points out that despite their higher

education, “rural principals and superintendents feel ill-prepared for the challenges that face them” (as cited in O’Hair, et al., 2009).

For the superintendent, at the highest level of district-wide leadership, political pockets of educator colleagues and various community interest groups can cause superintendents to shy away from school and community interventions that encourage all educational stakeholders to face each other and reason through their differences. In effect, denial fuels this “run-and-hide” attitude and is an ever-present cultural construct threaded through state and national culture (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). The result is personal isolation for the superintendent and collective isolation for the various interest groups that view everyone else as the enemy. Regardless of geographic location, cultural climate, or faculty/administrative leadership position, this situation has the potential to become an epidemic, adversely affecting school reform and growth.

Academics often believe they offer solutions through doctoral programs that theoretically and practically provide administrators ideas to ameliorate their professional problems. Sadly, these opportunities are often in vain. Several scholars note that only about half of the nation’s doctoral students actually graduate (Garland & Martin, 2004; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Moreover, there is much confusion over educational

leadership's appropriate doctoral focus. For instance, what is the difference between an EdD and PhD and whom should each one serve (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel & Garabedian, 2009)?

Addressing these problems through the Pathways Program, Central University's EAD provided selected administrators in two states, including me, the opportunity to escape isolation, take academically coordinated coursework, and be mentored to completion. In all these respects we were challenged to become co-leaders and doctoral students in a potential PLC. Pathways technology tools gave all cohort members an opportunity to communicate digitally, regardless of their location, while administrators and professors strove to deliver high-quality content in a non-traditional format (Ford, Branch, & Moore, 2008).

A school/university partnership model had been Pathway's mantra for 12 years. With both internal and external funding, Pathways promoted school reform through school-university relationships. Through those connections, 30 to 40 state administrators heard about and applied for the doctoral cohort program. The EAD faculty chose fourteen of us to participate in an experiment that broke new ground in delivery modalities (Ford, et.al., 2008). One of the original fourteen members had to drop out of the cohort for a period of time due solely to personal reasons. The

other members duly noted this absence from the group and it had quite an impact on some as reflected in chapter four. However, as a result of the protracted absence, I have chosen to use the other thirteen members as the source of data for this study.

Maximum flexibility was a major component for the individuals selected to participate in the venture, and this was achieved by allowing participants to be involved individually and simultaneously from a myriad of locations across two states. Theoretically and conceptually, Pathways tailored the cohort from its own *IDEALS* framework. This acronym represents Inquiry, Discourse, Equity, Authenticity, Leadership, and Service as key democratic principals toward the development of a school learning community (O'Hair, et al., 2009). From this perspective Pathway leaders fashioned a strategic plan for assisting schools in developing these six principles. Currently, it includes four phases to promote technology-enriched learning communities within public school partners. Phase One of this systemic model targets school leadership at both the principal and superintendent level through an initial two-day seminar introducing the precepts of the IDEALS framework followed by regional cluster meetings targeted at putting this framework into practice. Phase Two provides these leaders an opportunity to pursue grant funding in order to bring the *IDEALS* scaffold home to the local school

site to develop democratic leadership communities that also receive authentic technology enriched processes. Phase Three focuses on individual teachers, their instructional practices and delivery modalities. In Phase Four, schools foster individual student engagement through digital game-based learning.

All the cohort members have participated in multiple facets of the Pathways four-phased program. For the majority, the choice to become involved in the PhD opportunity grew directly from involvement with Phase One. Candidates for the cohort were recruited during annual gatherings of Pathways school leaders. As a result, each was familiar with the IDEALS' foundations. This would become foundational to course content and organizational practices utilized throughout their educational endeavors. At the time of this writing, several of the educational leaders' schools are still active participants in one or more of the four phases (Ford, et. al., 2008).

Many of the cohort students were administrators in some of the IDEALS' schools. But all were educational leaders in various public school sites. The cohort curriculum addressed many of the challenges and successes that they faced in their professional positions. Related to the IDEALS agenda, PLC, community socialization, and leadership literature filled the class offerings (Ford, et.al., 2008).

Need for the Study

Despite Pathway's best intentions, communally preparing educational leaders can be quite challenging. Although some research suggests that both virtual and local graduate cohorts can promote learning communities, they point to roadblocks, as well (Barnett, 2001; Maher, 2005; Chernish, Dooley & Linder, 2003). Interpersonal student interactions are a particular concern (Scribner & Donaldson, 2001). Another is the absence of individual student voice. Arduengo (2005) bemoans this oversight, writing that student perceptions are core to understanding learning. From their perspectives, how does working in intimate groups, either as a whole or broken into smaller ones, pressure some students into compliance just to get an assignment done? When this happens critique and analytic does not bloom, and communities of practice do not emerge (Maher, 2005; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001). It is crucial for researchers, administrators, professors, and students to appreciate the intricacies of interpersonal relationships in cohorts, and whether physical distance will exacerbate or prevent possible relational barriers to learning. Related to these issues are the extent to which program coordinators and professors realize that adult professional cohorts will create pockets of close ties that, over time, will insist on more democratic authority (Brookfield, 2003; Colin III & Heaney, 2001;

Goldring & Schuermann, 2009). Additionally, these adult students need to develop professorial and instructional efficacy to further their own conceptual and theoretical leadership as collaborative partners in the learning process (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2004; Knowles, 1980; Maher, 2005).

Augmenting the needed theoretical, practical, and interpersonal inquiries into cohort metamorphoses, to date research on distance learning courses offered via interactive, video conferencing is limited. It centers primarily on classrooms of students tied together via technology. No longer is this mandatory. Students can participate through interactive videoconferencing from scattered locations. In the next ten years, student preferences and the utilization of various information technologies will set the pace of learning (Sherman & Beaty, 2007; Slack, 2006). The resulting options will provide numerous avenues for student interactions. These avenues must be understood in light of the possibilities for community development within course delivery. In fact, neglecting relational knowledge or the lack thereof:

> Omits a crucial component in understanding student learning, especially important in learning communities, which often embrace complex, interdisciplinary curriculum and collaborative methodology. We know that learning communities 'work';

> understanding the qualitative differences among student perceptions will help us better understand how and why. (Tennant, cited in Arduengo, 2005, p. 30)

Possibly, this challenge explains why Sherman and Beaty's (2007) University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) survey reports no doctoral programs using full distance technology. Thus, as we look at opportunities to research a quality distance-learning environment, it should be considered technologically mediated learning. There must be a shift from the focus on teaching to one on life-long, student-centered learning. Of this research, the most useful needs to discover "how to facilitate learning with technology and the Internet" (Petrides, 2002, p. 69). Sherman and Beaty (2007) elaborate:

> As we consider factors that affirm the use of distance technology in leadership preparation, we will hopefully find ourselves engaged in discussions of social justice and how distance technology can and should be used as one type of leveling factor for our students. If we as promoters of future educational leaders wish for transformation, then we must concern ourselves with the issue of quality and how distance technology can support such a task…. what we must do as a field is decide how these opportunities can be seized to transform leadership preparation

and, in turn, be linked to student achievement in the k-12 environment. (p. 616)

It is crucial to examine exemplary or inadequate uses of distance technology in leadership preparation (Sherman & Beaty, 2007). In so doing, we researchers will challenge higher educators to rethink the more traditional avenues for educational leadership and content delivery.

Significance of the Study

While the Pathways cohort was only a mixed local and distance program, all participants had the option to participate via distance for all classes. By choice or necessity, each individual's location varied. Some students were in the same physical room as the instructor. Others chose to join independently at remote sites. A few volleyed between both. This was not a doctoral program organized for a single course, an academic semester (Miller, 2007), or several semesters. Unlike many communities of learners, this cohort has remained intact from the outset of the first methods course throughout the general examination and prospectus hurdles. Considering its longevity, theorists, instructors, and course designers preparing community distance class environments will find unique insight about the community development process from this study (Lovik-Powers, 2003). As Pathways looks to the future, this study will allow its leaders to gain perceptions of what worked, what didn't work,

and how to improve the experience. In order to prepare effectively for the next cohort group and a replicable model, a study is needed in the area of student satisfaction with distance education as it relates to this cohorts' academic and social base (McLaughlin, 1999).

Procedures

In response to theoretical and pragmatic demands, for most of the data collection and analysis this study employs phenomenology to explore cohort members' lived community experience and dramaturgy to present the creative synthesis. Exactingly, I explain my reasoning in Chapter Three (Aho, 1998; Heidegger, 1962; Moustakas, 1994; Osborne, 1994). In short, opening the door to address many of the above issues, this study centers on the participants' individual and collective perceptions that evolve within mixed virtual social interactions, the blueprint of educational leadership preparation in a distance environment. But as a cohort student and researcher, phenomenology also provided me with an excellent methodology. When conducting such a study, "the puzzlement is autobiographical, making memory and history essential dimensions of discovery, in the present and extensions into the future" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). This gives my experience voice. Moreover, not only mine is heard but also those of my classmates, as evidenced in the dramaturgical presentation.

The cohort academic curriculum provides three theoretical lenses for my data collection and analysis: the professional learning community; involvement in community through social interaction; and educational leadership built in a distance environment, all evolved over a given period of time. Open-ended discourse and the unfettered sharing of the lived experience characterized the interview process, and when analyzing the data I first looked for each participant's background with a PLC model. In addition, my queries probed questions such as, "How do cohort members understand membership in a PLC regardless of the environment in which it exists? Do these cohort members have any preconceived ideas based on other involvement in a PLC?"

Next, involvement in community requires social interaction. "When the [community] member learners are willing to serve as experts, mentors, information sharers, even critics or devil's advocates, it indicates that the community is something people value and want to be part of" (Cothrel & Williams, 1999, p. 59). As I investigated cohort participant relationships in the distance relationships that exist within the group, I explored their relationships by asking, "Do they consider this cohort as a mixed virtual PLC of educational leadership professionals? If they believe they are involved as a community, what specific components of the framework do cohort members experience in the

mixed (distance and local) environment? If they do not believe the cohort exists as a community, what might be some reasons for this non-existence? Are there differences in perception of the cohort members who are primarily distance attendees and those who are primarily local attendees? If there are differences between the two, in what aspects of a PLC do these differences exist?"

The relationships within this group are between educational leadership professionals and were built in a distance environment that has evolved throughout its existence. The third area of exploration involves these educational leaders' ever-changing roles and responsibilities in light of their connections with each other. "Have these educational leadership cohort members' perceptions of the organization structure evolved over time? Were there specific classes or instances in this process when member interactions have more closely resembled those of a PLC? Are the concepts and frameworks taught through the course content applied by these educational leaders at their locales?"

Summary

Despite decades of reform efforts that advocate learning in community to empower students, teachers, administrators, and the larger school environment, many educators, especially those in rural areas, feel alone. Doctoral virtual cohorts promise to give these educators a place

to belong and to learn how to create successful cultures within their own schools. To address this problem, in 2005, Central University's EAD and the Pathways Program created a mixed virtual PhD cohort. However there is little research that examines the success of efforts such as these, particularly in virtual settings marked by student choice in locale of participation. Additionally, student voice is relatively absent in the few studies that do exist. By answering the question, "How do the educational leaders participating in the doctoral cohort through the EAD's Pathways program at Central University describe their individual and collaborative experiences of a mixed virtual PLC?" I hope to augment theory and practice in digitally facilitated doctoral cohorts. The phenomenological methodology offered the best opportunity to answer this question from those students for whom success or failure were crucial constructs.

Educational leadership is a central component to any PLC. The EAD Pathways group had this in mind when it launched the cohort, following the edicts of its own mission "to promote critical inquiry that addresses important issues relating to teaching, learning, and leadership in order that service and collaboration among colleagues and the professional communities may be enhanced" (EAD, 2008). At the micro level, Pathways selected educational leaders in their own right.

Pathways faculty assumed that prospective students were isolated in their own professional setting and would relish the opportunity to be collaborate within the cohort (Dussault, 1996; Fullan, 2008; Howard, 2002). But it would take sensitive professors to instill community by curbing the inbred competiveness most middle class professionals have (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001).

CHAPTER TWO

THE COHORT CURRICULUM AS THEORETICAL LENSES FOR THE STUDY

Professional Learning Community

From the beginning, the concept of a PLC dominated our course work. We read many studies that called for this important innovation to drive systemic school change (Atkinson, 2005; DuFour, 2004; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008; Hord & Rutherford, 1998; Huffman, & Hipp, 2003; Lambert, 2003; Morrissey, 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Schmoker, 2006; Williams, 2006). I was relieved to find in these and other works the means to operationalize PLCs. DuFour (2004) breaks down the procedures into what he calls three “big ideas”: ensuring that students learn requires a shift of educational focus from teaching to learning; creating a collaborative culture addresses teacher isolation and the process of implementing communicative collaboration in a networked learning environment; focusing on results is also crucial to the cycle of learning innovative teaching methods and sharing them with colleagues. This cycle creates a loop of continually monitoring progress and refocusing instruction accordingly. Dufour’s (2004) simple, yet profound

steps became the primary lens through which I viewed my study on the Pathways cohort experience.

DuFour's (2004) goals have evolved from noble but initially intuition-centered ideas. They began with the Jeffersonian ideal intended to "preserve the democracy and inculcate democratic values" (Christensen, Johnson, & Horn, 2008, p. 52). The 19th century Common School Movement and Horace Mann introduced the possibility of formalizing education beyond the one-room school's focus on primary grades (Christensen, et.al., 2008). A short time later, Christensen (2008) posits, the educational mission changed to "provide something for every student" (p. 53). In response to immigration and Germanic industrialization, school districts began retooling for secondary education. Although some white boys and girls learned to find their separate place among the elite, working-class white students studied for vocational work.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, key educators attempted to shift education's intention from preparing students to fit into society to making education relevant for each child, reflecting the first of DuFour's "big ideas." John Dewey (1859-1952) is a notable early 20th century progressive example. He stressed the importance of experiential learning as the only way to make curricular sense to students. The Great

Depression and conservatism after World War II shriveled progressive education. Although well intended, this movement disintegrated into efficient schooling (Thorndike, 1910). However, when global developments in the 1960s caused massive “disruption” within the business sector, industrialists blamed the educational system for students’ lack of preparation for the market place. The mission became “keep America competitive” (Christensen, et. al., 2008, p. 58). In 1966, a federally sponsored *Coleman Report* (1966) concluded that student achievement was not powerfully or centrally influenced by schools (cited in Hanushek, 1998). It touched off an ongoing analysis of student performance, teacher adequacy, school funding resources, educational effectiveness, and student achievement/learning and was the centerpiece of the Lawrence Lezotte’s Effective Schools (Dufour, et al., 2005).

It was in this spirit that the public began to rate its schools as generally performing lower than in the past. Through Secretary of Education T.H. Bell, the United States government created the National Commission on Excellence in Education to produce a holistic evaluation of the nation’s educational system, publishing *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. It painted a grim portrait of the American educational process, highlighting a continued decline in student expectations, achievement, and

knowledge and refocusing attention to what progressive educators had insisted on, that the individual learner be the focal point for excellence in the educational experience. “At the level of the individual learner,…[excellence] means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace” (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983, p. 12). This document even made concrete suggestions as to what each student should learn including: multiple years of English, mathematics, science, social studies; one-half year of computer science; and multiple years of foreign language for college bound students. Beyond the course list, this document also provided specifics as to the content that should be covered in each of the areas.

Despite these prescriptive measures, many believed that the status quo continued to reign, so in 2001, politicians enacted No Child Left Behind (USDE, 2001). It was a tall order. Education was to eliminate poverty and ensure that all children “learn.” Accomplishing this called for a framework for what students should know, timetables for achievement, and clear schedules for assessment. Accordingly, reading and mathematics became the essential subjects. No longer could public schools simply raise the *average* test scores in their schools; instead, “*every* child in *every* demographic” had to improve “his or her test

scores" (Christensen, et. al., 2008, p. 62). While political and educational pundits have since argued the validity and viability of this act, the title itself without the legislatively attached strings epitomizes the spirit of DuFour's request. Yet paradoxically, most school responses have paid attention to teaching rather than learning except to test, test, test, instead of exploring authentic, student centered ways to learn.

As I familiarized myself with this history and listened to class lectures and discussions, I recalled that in the school where I worked, the response was prioritizing reading and mathematics superseding all other subjects. At the earliest grade levels, science, social studies, history, geography, and the arts are simply non-existent. "Putting Reading First" (USDE, 2001) in our local district translates into students repetitively reading the weekly story from the required research based curriculum until they can answer the prescribed questions on the state approved test. Critical thinking skills in the highlighted studies, not to mention many of the humanities, are becoming a thing of the past—so much for fostering good citizenship by producing an informed populace.

I came to believe that to date, in many sectors throughout the United States, we have primarily produced lip service to and a lack of progress in genuine education. I decided that DuFour's (2004) first "big idea," focusing on learning instead of teaching, was the missing link for

most school reform agendas, from the subjects that should be taught to the suggested number of required credits for each. And what separates learning communities from traditional schools is in the PLC model where the staff develops a systematic, timely and directive intervention to meet individual student needs regardless of who the teacher is. In sum, the response to a student's learning difficulty requires group ownership (DuFour, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1994, Shields, 2003).

It became clear to me that this was what the cohort founders intended to engender, by including leaders from a variety of settings. The possibility of cross-pollination between sites rich in their diversity and individuality has the potential to create a combination of viewpoints unlike traditional educational settings. I began to see that was exactly what I wanted to do with regard to the cohort itself—use the theory we were learning to understand our cohort's evolution (Ford, et. al., 2008). If we were combining our expertise to focus on our own and our schools' student learning, then were we creating our own learning community as well?

Excited about the prospect of developing my study while we delved further into the course material, I learned that addressing the second "big idea," DuFour (2004) expands the idea of an occasional or intermittent, casual alliance by defining it as a "culture" of collaboration.

"Culture" can be defined as a "particular set of attitudes that characterizes a group of people" (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsley, 2005, p. 166). Culture and bonding are considered two primary attributes of a learning community (Etzioni & Etizoni, 1999). Collaboration for a PLC marks the difference between traditional and learning community environments. Indeed,

> "team learning is vital, because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. This is where the 'rubber meets the road;' unless teams learn, the organization cannot learn. When small pairings are truly learning, they produce extraordinary results, and the individual members grow more rapidly than could have occurred otherwise" (Senge, 1990, p. 10).

Growth, therefore, is not simple proportional addition; rather, it is exponential.

Site-based PLC models tap the expertise of their staffs through communicative collaboration. Riley and Stoll (2004) suggest that the "super glue" that holds this professional collaborative body together is simply "trust" (p. 38). Trust does not appear overnight. In any interpersonal relationship, it must be earned. Effective leaders who value their faculty members as "decision makers" and "empower them to act" nurture and develop this trust (Dufour, 1999, p. 14). A circular pattern of

information, knowledge, understanding, and mutuality gives birth to mutual reliance, which provides an avenue for the exchange of information, and then the process begins anew (Riley & Stoll, 2004). Likewise, resulting from work on virtual teaming, Jude-York, Davis and Wise (2000) consider interdependence as the major foundation for teamwork. They provide a list of “trust builders” (p.14) and “trust busters” (p.15). The former include sharing, exposing vulnerabilities, loyalty, involving others, communicating, and respecting diverse viewpoints. Conversely, the latter hurts the group because members withhold information, push hidden agendas, engage in public criticism, or are given vague instructions. Once trust is present, communication can be transparent.

The final of DuFour’s (2004) three “big ideas” closes the growth cycle by providing a “focus on results” that in many current settings dissolves into a sole emphasis on test results. From this framework state and federal government officials dictate acceptable outcomes measures, usually a battery of exams and the results are published, sometimes erroneously, by local newspapers. I came to see that the uniformity and rigidity of a state approved, prescribed curriculum can hold back collaborative and cultural development in schools because teachers and administrators can develop tunnel vision, ignoring all of the contextual

nuances in individual and group student learning. Even so, Wilhelm (2006) does not view a dogged focus on test scores as the death knell to PLC development. Speaking primarily about the California schools in her study, she contends that the fear of not complying with mandated minimum scores can force teachers to work together to share successful strategies. These could result in “discussions [that] reach a tipping point” for improved student learning (p. 33). It appears, then, that there are multiple opinions on the needs that drive the successful launching of a PLC.

The PLC systemic change model expresses one. Multiple researchers have used this model and produce sustained results. Schussler (2003) unpacks the concept of a PLC in terms of cognitive, ideological, and affective dimensions. The first of these, the cognitive dimension, places a “high value on students’ intellectual development” (Schussler, 2003, p. 506). The value on intellectual development ensures that there is a focus on student learning. Unlike other models, this systemic change model pinpoints each student’s needs. However, the academic rigor realized in this dimension is not simply concerned with outcome. Priority is also given to the process of learning. With this idea I found specificity for my cohort study—the process of individual learning,

the organization of that learning, and the outcome of the learning through local implementation.

Schussler's (2003) ideological PLC dimension provides common ground for any PLC. The focus on results is a direct outgrowth of the ideologies that are foundational to community members. Clear vision and shared purpose maintain group and individual focus. "It is the vision that points to the outcome and the purpose that maps the process of attainment or the path to the results" (Schussler, 2003, p. 519). Because the core values of our cohort community are rooted in the foundational principals of the IDEALS framework and foundationally laid through each participant's involvement in the Pathways four-phase program, I had an excellent opportunity once again to test the systemic change model. Would we lack vision, shared purpose, and core values or would we foster community by developing relationships?

Rapport is the core of Schussler's (2003) affective dimensions. The learning community model differs from a traditional school environment in its emphasis on caring. The current educational organization from common through higher education does not conform to these vital elements. Within this cohort of students, additional constraints of geographic distance are added to the factors that could hinder bonding. Neglecting this possibility can have a negative impact on the

learning processes and outcomes of the cognitive dimension. In PLCs, these relationships are not only between faculty members, but also between faculty and students. When caring and personalization are absent, “students loose initiative and creativity” (Schussler, 2003, p. 511).

The development and realization of the ideological dimension is also contingent upon a sense of fitting in. Therefore, I reasoned, the depth of this cohort’s community development as both learners and educational leaders should spring from the affective dimension, the internal socialization among students and externally with professors. While traditional studies on professional learning communities center on local face-to-face interactions where all members are physically in one room, this study expands those confines to examine the interactions of both local and remote participants in the professional learning community. These interactions provide the second framework for my study. And I was in an ideal position to carry it out, because as Husserl (1975) writes, **“**I cannot live, experience, think, value, and act in any world which is not in some sense in me, and derives its truth and meaning from me” (p. 8). Rather than the cohort evolution as an amorphous whole, the personal and academic links within the cohort became the heartbeat of my study. But to understand what was going

on, I needed to know more. I found another theoretical framework or lens in socialization research that asks, how does one becomes a part of something bigger than her/himself?

Socialization

While DuFour's (2004) three "big ideas" helped me focus on the cohorts' academic growth, as applied to practice learning, the personal and social interactions between cohort members, I decided, would be what connected or allowed us to remain disconnected from each other. Either way, it was an area I eagerly investigated in class assignments and on my own time. "Could complete strangers, separated by hundreds of miles, with various backgrounds and responsibilities, become a community?" I wondered. Wilson & Ryder (1996) explain, "groups become communities when they interact with each other and stay together long enough to form a set of habits and conventions, and when they come to depend upon each other for the accomplishment of certain ends" (p. 6). Our daily school routines were independent, but we were interdependent in the pursuit of our degrees and were becoming a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger (1998) defines a community of practice along three dimensions. The first, joint enterprise, serves to define what the community is about. It is the common goal, or vision, around which

members rally in their communal endeavors. Next, the dimension of mutual engagement defines how a community of practice functions. While individuals are still able to maintain their identities, it is the relationships that emerge through both harmonious and non-harmonious exchanges that provide impetus for growth. The resulting shared repertoire is the third dimension of a community of practice. These collective artifacts are the resultant output of group interactions. Wenger's dimensions provide direction, process and results for the interconnected members of the community.

However, understanding a community's interconnectedness in a mixed environment also required a review of the interaction between sites within the community. Rovai (2002) identifies seven positive correlates to a sense of community: transactional distance, social presence, social equality, small group activities, group facilitation teaching style and learning stage, and community size. Of these seven, I determined that transactional distance theory provided a sub-foundation of socialization to examine the interactions between faculty and students in the distance environment (Moore & Kearsley, 2005).

The concept of transactional distance is in reference to a disconnection or "…a psychological and communications space to be crossed, a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of

instructor and those of the learner" (Moore, 1993, p. 22). I applied this notion to the observation of cohort members' communication. The factors shaping these relations structure the delivery, the interface between teachers and students, and the learner's intrinsic involvement in the process. The extent of transactional distance rests in qualitative variables of dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy (Murphy & Rodriquez-Manzanares, 2008), focal points of my study.

Dialogue refers to "purposeful and constructive positive interactions that are "valued by each party" and involve "active listeners" as well as "contributors." In the community learning environment, the learner has the possibility to "broaden his or her understanding of an experience beyond where it might go in isolation" (Rodgers, 2002). Structure refers to "the extent to which an education program can accommodate or be responsive to each learner's individual needs" (Moore, 1993, pp. 24, 26). Learner autonomy or self-direction is the extent to which the learner and not the teacher determines the goals, experiences, and evaluation decisions.

These three definitions intersect with DuFour's (2004) "big ideas." Ensuring students learn requires instructors to structure engaging opportunities, especially in the distance environment, individualizing the learning process (Moore, 1993). In order for cohort members to succeed

in our mixed environment, responsiveness to each learner is the essential element. Ideally the process, while scripted at a macro-level of course offerings, is continually re-worked at the micro-level to address all learners. In our situation, these adult students are engaged in topics of specific interest from their respective environments. This specificity fosters group engagement. For example, Kelly (2004) finds that high levels of individual interpersonal interaction results in optimal motivation, achievement, positive attitudes concerning learning, satisfaction with instruction, personal confidence, expanded critical thinking and problem solving, and cognitive processing of content.

The second of DuFour's (2004) "big ideas," a culture of collaboration, is synonymous to the transactional distance theory component of "dialogue" (Moore, 1993). Collaboration requires two-way communication for implementation. Each party involved must be an active contributor to the process. Communication "spawns interaction, engagement and alignment among members of the community…When communication ends or never really begins in [a] virtual," or any other group, it is not a community (Schwier, 2001, pp. 8-9). For the Pathways cohort, the intersection of opportunity to collaborate was in class sessions and in any other distance or actual meetings participants voluntarily arranged.

Autonomy (Moore, 1993) in the focus on results (DuFour, 2004) provided us an opportunity for unique application of content at our local sites. Each member brought a unique perspective and individual background to the potentially collaborative discourse. As I took more and more classes I discovered what was for me new ways to analyze our experiences. I found myself eagerly awaiting each research class we took and applying more information to my individual circumstance. The courses afforded me the opportunity to conceptualize and re-conceptualize my study and put my ideas on paper. In these classes I learned that I must acquaint myself with the potential for communication despite the obstacle of distance. “Was I the only inspired person?” I pondered. Only time would tell.

Socialization in the distance environment

In order to overcome the transactional distance between my classmates and me, I first had to address the issue of proximal presence. To achieve social presence (Rovai, 2002), “participants in a community [must be able] to project themselves socially and emotionally, as ‘real’ people through the medium of communication being used” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, p. 94). ”Social presence in cyberspace takes on more of a complexion of reciprocal awareness by others of an individual and the individual's awareness of others... to create a mutual

sense of interaction that is essential to the feeling that others are there" (Cutler, 1995, cited in Rovai, 2002, p. 8). Social presence is, therefore, a strong predictor of learner satisfaction in a virtual environment (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). “Both interaction and feedback…[are]…the most important parameters to experience presence” (Jelfs & Whitelock, 2000, p. 150). As I read these authors’ work I made a mental note: my own research interviews must look for communication and feedback in synchronous and asynchronous environments.

To be sure, there were some apparent impediments. In particular, the absence of face-to-face interaction in a fully or even mixed online environment excludes visual cues necessary to develop a socially interactive environment. The potential for trust can be retarded, and some students, I speculated, might never seem able to connect emotionally or intellectually (Carey & Dorn, 1998; Dreyfus, 2001). But our cohort did employ videoconferencing. This tool has the potential to provide authentic learning opportunities through skills practice and immediate feedback (Baab, 2004; Moore & Kearsley, 2005; November, 2001).

Even so, familiarity with the face-to-face format of a traditional classroom environment can breed many misconceptions about using

two-way videoconferencing. The first of these is that faculty members can simply walk into the studio/classroom and teach as usual (Wilcox, 2000). Assuming that there is no preparation or practice needed to teach using the technology is another misconception (Motamedi, 2001). In any virtual classroom faculty members must be acquainted with distance learning theory and have assistance implementing their teaching techniques into this environment (November, 2001).

While foundational, social presence cannot be considered the beginning and end of generating a virtual community of learners. Each member must have an equal chance to express him/herself if democratization is to occur (Lally & Barrett, 1999). Weisenberg and Willment (2001) found that, like PLCs, this "strong sense of mutual trust and respect among all members of [the] online community was instrumental in promoting …continued professional learning." (p. 6) Only when each member achieves equality can respectful deliberations emerge. The resultant communities of learners are more likely to listen with the intent to respond in a timely manner, share responsibility for learning, and display commitment to the group (Ellison & Hayes, 2006).

Researchers insist that the instructor encourage public communication within the virtual community to foster social inclusion (Rovai, 2002). In so doing, professors "must be mindful of two kinds of

functions: “related to the group task,” and “to building and maintaining the group” (Rovai, 2002, p 9). Simply, the first step in the formation of an online community of learners is to make friends (Brown, 2001). An instructor or any other class member can initiate an informal getting-to-know-you exercise (Rovai, 2002). Through this type of interaction, learners can “develop a personal ‘identity’ and share rapport with one another online” (Weisenberg & Willment, 2001, p. 5). Asynchronous exchanges provide students a forum for later interchanges on their own time that lessen social pressures. These online learning opportunities can be a leveling “factor” in light of different communication styles (Carr-Chellman & Duchastel, 2002; McAllister & Ting, 2001). Emergent conversations can be academic or informal. When investigating a distance delivered EdD program through the Open University in the United Kingdom, Butcher and Sieminski (2006) note that such conditions lead to a connected voice, an increased individual level of confidence in knowledge application, and an expanded influence on their professional colleges. In so doing, students report increased levels of self-esteem.

Small group activities can also provide the building blocks for cross-pollination of ideas within the virtual community environments. These cooperative learning interactions allow smaller groups of participants to explore, uncover, exchange, and scaffold knowledge

(Lally & Barrett, 1998). Rovai (2002) suggests that “the fundamental idea underlying small group work is that students become meaningfully engaged in a variety of learning activities such as student or teacher-led discussion groups, debates, projects, and collaborative learning groups” (p. 9). These small group activities for adult learners can be preferential if they are participative, interactive learning opportunities (Kaupins, 2002). Sawyer (2004) found that many times learners felt more comfortable when teamed into small rather than large groups. This, in turn, leads them to share personal issues. Communicative technologies in the virtual learning community environment help generate the same types of reactions (Carey & Dorn, 1998). After reading these authors’ work, I observed groups working in the cohort and eagerly awaited interviewing them to see if they were experiencing what I then believed was possible.

Other researchers note that there are three major types of interactions. The first of these is learner-content relations. As each learner constructs his/her own knowledge, s/he must be able to scaffold the new information with the existing knowledge base. The facilitator must organize the content so that it guides this learning. The second type of interaction, usually regarded as essential by most learners, is the learner-instructor interface. From the earliest phases of generating student excitement about learning through the encouragement and

nurturing process, instructors are key facilitators in a student's learning process. However, in a community-learning environment, there is also the interaction from learner-to-learner. This could be as group-to-group communication or individual-to-individual dialogue. Both are important catalysts to community development (Moore & Kearsley, 2002). Because the cohort is comprised of school leaders in challenging times, the Pathways founders reasoned that they would be prime candidates to encourage group learning as they strove for increased personal academic expertise.

Historical Background of Educational Leadership

Of course, without leadership optimal learning can be hindered. But, "true leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to. If people follow you because they have no choice, then you are not leading" (Collins, 2005). History is full of "leadership" stories, but scholars continue to debate precise definitions of the term. They are as varied as the environments in which "leaders" find themselves, but authors initially centered on politicians. Until the 1970s, researchers identified two orientations—leaders who are born or made (Christensen-Feldner, 2003). The underlying motivation for both, however, is what Burns (1978) would later call "transactional," that the valued thing provided in exchange for service will motivate the subordinate to action

(Sergiovanni, 1990). The leader achieves a particular end through rewards and punishments. Elaborating on “transforming” leadership, Burns (1978) explains that the leader and his/her charge move to “higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20). Contrasting the two types, Burns (1978) states that transactional leaders merely negotiate and renegotiate the status quo while transforming ones move their organizations to more creative levels. Transforming leaders are visionary. They can imagine what their community of learners can be; are willing to share responsibility; and are able to keep their egos in check by encouraging their fellow professionals to grow and even to develop expertise beyond them (Epitropaki, 2002).

Attending primarily to business leaders, Bass (1985) uses empirical methods to conclude that successful managers are both traditionally transactional and also transformative. He introduced the term “transformational” into the leadership lexicon. Researchers such as Bass (1985) believe that these two styles are not divergent trails, but rather parallel paths to success, meeting individual needs while moving the organization forward toward its negotiated goals. In summation, Burns (2003) writes, “A leader not only speaks to the immediate wants, but elevates people by vesting in them a sense of possibility, a belief that changes can be made and that they can make them” (p. 239). In this

way, bureaucrats can be rescued from the mind and soul numbing process of just being a cog in someone else's wheel (Whyte, 1956/2002).

Wheatley (1999) seems to concur. Relying on burgeoning ideas from quantum physics, math, and biology she argues that traditional organizational theory is antiquated. It assumes decision-making is linear and that one decision will undoubtedly lead to another, which will eventuate in the organization's (its managers') desired goals. Effective change lies in the everyday lives and the relationships between and among people. They comprise a living, breathing institution. Collaboration can be messy and seemingly chaotic, but eventually hiring good employees and facilitating teamwork keeps a system alive from the ground up. One does not build a house by hammering together the frame, but by laying the foundation.

Educational leadership and the evolution of styles

The external disruptive changes brought on through societal demands mandate internal changes to the organizational structure of education. Many educational administrators maintain that it is the combination of meeting the short-term staffing needs combined with the long-term goal of bettering student performance that propels a successful organization. Certainly, in the historical transition from a rural

to an industrial educational structure, transactional leadership played a major role. The enormity of building an entirely new educational system required an inordinate amount of top down decision-making, lasting for decades. As the focus moved from structural changes to highlight student learning, as earlier noted, transformational leadership became increasingly important (Christensen, et. al., 2008).

Even so, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) as well as Avolio and Bass (2002) see a necessity for both transformational and transactional leaders. Like Bass, they point to the perfunctory operations in education that require transactional leadership interactions. The more traditional "managerial" skills round out the effective transformational leader and include staffing processes, providing instructional support mechanisms, monitoring school activity and interactions; and buffering faculty from unnecessary and excessive distractions that could detract from educational endeavors.

However, the majority of late 20th and early 21st century educational literature focuses on the importance of shared, transformational leadership (Lambert, 2002). Good leaders are a school's focal point, but their crucial role is to influence (Gardner, 1990) rather than dictate. This is no easy task, because nothing stays the same, resulting in a constant state of flux for organizations. Success in a

dynamic climate requires fluidity in addition to a litany of characteristics such as the ability to: create a shared vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1995; Fullan, 1993; Kouzes, & Posner, 1987; Kouzes, & Posner, 2002); “identify the core values and unifying purposes" (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998, p. 17); radiate charisma (Jewell, 1998); set goals (Fullan, 1993; Jewell, 1998; Kouzes &Posner, 1987/2002); provide intellectual stimulation (Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 1987, 2002); supply individual support (Bennis & Nanus, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 1987, 2002); model effective practice (Kouzes & Posner, 1987, 2002); meet high expectations; develop a positive culture (Bennis & Nanus, 1995); create structures that support active involvement in decision making (Leithwood & Duke, 1999); provide direction (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005); value each member and his/her own personal goals and aspirations (Northhouse, 1997); and align all participants, providing safety nets for failure (Furman, 1998). An excellent way to reconcile these latter two challenges is to foment a shared vision that reflects both group and individual intents. This is a collective organizational ability that supersedes the sum of its individual members (Fullan, 2008; Senge, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2001; Silins & Mulford, 2002).

Educational leadership and the evolution of purpose

As society continues to reinvent the metric that judges schools, effective leaders continue to refit their staffs to meet these demands. Interestingly, Christensen (2008) points out that most businesses, when faced with similar flash points of disruption, simply fold as new alternate models are realized. I smiled when I read this, because ethically and morally, educators do not have that luxury, and most committed public school personnel would reject such a notion out of hand. But what are we to do? It is helpful, I learned, to consider systems theory, "a discipline for seeing wholes" (Senge, 1990/2006). Senge applies systems theory as the "fifth discipline" of the learning organization. The other four include: personal mastery, the development of a personal vision as a source of motivation for accomplishment; mental models, the process through which the individual looks at the assumptions that shape their actions; building shared vision, the grouping of personal goals into a collective guide for the leadership and individuals of the learning organization; and team learning, the process of interaction and discussion that transforms the organization.

Change and learning are interwoven. If the educational system is going to respond effectively to changing mandates, it must be innovative. "Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual

learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it, no organizational learning occurs" (Senge, 2006, p. 129) Within this systems theory there is a continuum of learning that gives direction and order to the learning process and helps guide the transformational educational leader through the earlier reviewed ever-changing set of educational mandates. "System design has a significant effect on performance. The improvement of student learning, therefore, has required a system that has been designed to initiate and maintain significant change in teaching and leadership" (Sparks, 2002, p. 4).

As leaders deal with this ongoing large-scale change, Fullan (1993) gives several guidelines to assist them in management. First, this internal change cannot be forced or mandated. The square peg of traditionalism will not be crammed into the round hole of educational reform. Since change is not linear and therefore not completely predictable, problems will arise along the way. But education must welcome them as an opportunity for the transformative leader to learn. Considerable and enduring results are realized through the implementation of change at critical leverage points. After locating them, a leader must analyze the current state of performance, decide on a determined outcome, create structures and strategies to achieve the

outcome, and then implement the plan (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Senge, 1990/2006).

While vision provides a source of great strength, premature individualized vision minus collective input can blind leaders. Site principals, like mid-level management, must strategize decisions and the development of future direction by reconciling higher authority with those holding less formalized organizational power. Here again, the watchword is “influence.” Transformative leaders must also mediate change by introducing and monitoring communication between external and internal change partners. Listening to the expertise outside the organization and tempering it with the internal knowledge base can provide transition through change.

Educational leadership and the evolution of means

Along with managing and utilizing external expertise and mandates by using them to assist rather than impede student learning, explosive technological advances continually influence education. This innovation offers, for some, an arsenal of tools that enable teachers to move from traditional, didactic modalities of instruction toward more engaging constructivist possibilities (Creighton, 2002; Culp, Honey, & Mandinach, 2005; Flanagan & Jacobsen, 2003; Protheroe, 2005). The possibilities exist, but successful implementation has yet to be

determined fully. At question is the integration of these tools. Will the technology remain a sustaining innovation to the existing educational model? Or, will this infusion become disruptive (Christensen, et. al., 2008)? Means, Blando, Olson, Middleton, Morocco, Remz (1993) point to effective technology integration as a strong change agent at all levels of local education including the classroom, the school, and the district.

Schools continue to have more and more access to these innovative possibilities. The student-to-computer ratio dropped from nine-to-one in 1997 (Forum, 1997) to just over four-to-one in 2002 (Skinner, 2002). However, in many instances high-tech devices have become the worksheets of the 21st century. McKenzie (1998) points to an "observable failure of schools to actually use their…computers to any meaningful extent" (p. 6). Of the six factors that contribute to the ineffective integration of technology into the curriculum, an absence of leadership is the foremost. How can technology leaders be effective in guiding their faculties toward "meaningful," engaging utilization of these incredible tools (Barnett, 2001)?

It is at this point that useful technology leadership and educational leadership are one and the same (Creighton, 2002): transformative. As I reviewed the numerous studies that discuss the dual leadership functions, I found they mirrored much of the transformational literature I

had already encountered (Demetriadis, Barbas, Molohides, Palaigeorgiou, Psillos, & Vlahavas, 2003; Holland, 2001; & Kozma; 2005). I was not surprised that leadership vision of effectual technology use provides the major direction necessary for effective educational integration. To reiterate, vision development is a collaborative process in which a culture of community is fostered (Calhoun, 2004), and school leaders communicate through words and actions (Flanagan & Jacobsen, 2003). Effective educational technology leaders are visionaries, role models, and promoters of innovation as well as facilitators of teamwork. These are leaders who use technology themselves and make it come about for others, rather than let it occur (Hall & Hord, 2001; Schiller, 2002). “It can truly be said that nothing happens until there is vision” (Senge, 2006, p. 138).

Once again, a community of collaboration from all stakeholders is necessary to generate and sustain vision, as educators move beyond their comfort zone and take reasonable risks to challenge the status quo (Calhoun, 2004; Tong & Trinidad, 2005). A helpful way to foster collaboration and to nurture technological innovation is to build and enable teacher leadership (Gibson, 2001; Hughes & Zachariah, 2001; King, 2002; Kouzes, & Posner, 1987; Yee, 2000). To do this a school leader must be proactive (International Society for Technology in

Education, 2007). Stegall's (1998) survey of elementary principals reveals that the highest technology-using schools were led by strong, enthusiastic principal technology leadership and sustainment. Faculty members must know they are supported as they implement these new skill sets (Creighton, 2002). Educational technology leaders "walk the walk" by participating in professional development activities related to technology (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997; Stegall, 1998; Wilmore & Betz, 2000). Once trained, these effective leaders are very much involved in using the technology themselves (Schiller, 2002), continually developing their own skills, modeling technology use, promoting it through encouragement, and developing building-level technology leaders (Anderson & Dexter, 2005; Flanagan & Jacobsen, 2003; Rudnesky, 2006). The community then protracts itself by continually focusing on teaching and learning (CEO Forum on Education & Technology, 2001; Flanagan & Jacobsen, 2003).

This happens when two major forces are in play—teacher collaboration and continuous monitoring of students. Teachers must have time to develop curriculum integration ideas with other faculty members (Blase & Blase, 2000; Gibson, 2001; Quinn, 2002). In fact, one-on-one peer mentoring/tutoring is one of the most effective forms of

professional development (Rudnesky, 2006). Such activities easily become part of the larger PLC development (Blase & Blase, 2000; King, 2002). Together faculty members stay in touch with what is and isn't working with students. Embedded monitoring helps keep technology integration moving forward at an optimal level. In exploring which factors contribute to the success of change implementation in education, Heller and Firestone (1995) found that this monitoring must take into consideration the effectiveness of technology for learning and should include the applications used as they increase student achievement (ISTE, 2007; North Central Regional Education Laboratory, 2005). However, student standardized test scores should not be the only measurement (Ritchie, 1996). For example, an analysis of lesson plans, surveys, observations, and student work can be used to gain a clearer picture what is happening in schools (Rudnesky, 2006). These continual assessments of student achievement and teachers' instructional technology practice yield constructive feedback to aid the improvement of practice (McKenzie, 2002).

Earle (2002) offers an excellent summary of the traits that especially site-level transformative technological leaders share with each other and with transformative leaders in general. These leaders have "respect for students as individual learners" and engender change

"through a fluid communication network," considering collective and individual "staff input …when developing school schedules or organizing school activities" (Davis, 2008, pp. 19-20). This requires an "adventurous" nature, exploring experimental investigations with staff and students and "patience" when inviting unanticipated student, teacher, and parent questions (Yee, 2002, p. 291). Of course, the leader must also devote "resources needed to replicate successful programs" and make sure that continuing professional development teaches educators to work with their equipment in innovative ways, such as to individualize instruction (Davis, 2008, pp. 19-20). In so doing, they are often "entrepreneurial," cultivating "relationships and/or partnerships to advance the visions for technology and student learning" (Yee, 2000, p. 291). Such a leader generates "partnerships between school and universities and corporations to stimulate the use of technology" (Davis, 2008, pp. 19-20) all the while making sure that technological use conforms to the school's shared vision (Yee, 2000, p. 291).

Unfortunately, what I knew to be in practice, I found true in theory—that many educational leaders are not prepared to be effective technology leaders (Flanagan & Jacobsen, 2003). Although many administrators understand the importance of technology implementation in their schools, their own professional development is often neglected

(Ertmer, Bai, Dong, Khalil, Park, & Wang, 2002). Almost two decades ago, Bozeman and Spuck (1991) labeled this training need as "crucial," and it must extend far beyond the "basics," into whatever areas make important student-centered curricular advances (Creighton, 2002). But this hasn't seemed to happen universally.

Educational leadership and evolution of a position

As 21st century technologies continue to expand in role and importance, another technology educational leader has emerged. These educator/technicians bear a variety of names: Technology Coordinator, Technical Director, Instructional Technology Specialist, Chief Technology Officer, and the list goes on and on (Davis, 2008). I will use my former title, Technology Director, to reference this position for discussion purposes. "The school CTO (Chief Technology Officer) must be a skilled manager, a knowledgeable educator, an effective communicator, and a technologically-savvy individual who can work with all district staff at all levels within the organization" (Davis, 2008, p 24). Again, many of the same skill sets quantified in the previous discussions apply to this individual; however, this position is overlaid with some additional skill sets not always required by traditional educational leadership roles.

McLeod (2003) was one of the first to study the district-level technology support leader position, finding the technology director is

essential for support in school districts. This job cannot simply be an add-on to existing leadership positions; rather, it is a stand-alone role. In reference to the principal serving in this capacity McLeod (2003) writes, “In this increasingly technologically-dependent society, school districts can ill afford to continue such technology staffing practices if they are to meet the needs of 21st century students and communities” (p. 16).

Many times, technology directors must also fill the gap by bridging classroom practice with emerging tools. “The role integrates leadership and instruction” (Wolosoff, 2007, p. 31). This can be difficult if s/he has no classroom experience to relate to teachers in their native environment. They must be able to develop their own skills, model technology use and promote its use through encouraging others (Kozloski, 2006). In a qualitative study of educational technologists in four middle schools, Davidson, Nail, Ferguson, Lehman, & Hare (2001) report that successful technology leadership is filled by specialists who were former educators.

As the technology director career continues to emerge, CoSN (Consortium for School Networking, 2006) has set forth nine skill sets. Over half are duplicates of the leadership skills already addressed at least twice in this chapter. These include: vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1995); planning and budgeting; team building and staffing; education and

training; and ethically overseeing policies. Specific to this position and undergirding the list are abilities to manage communication and information systems and provide business leadership.

To qualify these skills, Hurley (2002) puts them into two categories—“soft” and “hard.” He characterizes the former as those previously associated with transformational leaders. The latter are necessary to execute the operational side of the technology. In summary, schools that are successful technology implementing organizations have directors who offer “visionary solutions, a passion for the educational mission, the ability to implement short and long term solutions that address the goals of the organization while pushing the envelope, and the ability to gain the support of significant educational stakeholders” (Hurley, 2002, p. 2).

Codifying this particular skill set, perhaps for evaluation purposes, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) developed a set of administrator competencies, referenced as the National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators (or NETS-A). Originally published in 2001 as the TSSA (Technology Standards for School Administrators), these standards are broken down into six sections: leadership and vision; learning and teaching; productivity and

professional practice; support, management and operations; assessment and evaluation; and social, legal and ethical issues.

Because ISTE is a substantial leader in the TSSA Collaborative, its NETS-A standards are identical in terms of performance indicators (Brooks-Young, 2002). The goal for the NETS project is the creation of national standards of technology use to facilitate school improvement in the United States (Twomey, Shamburg, & Zieger, 2006). The NETS-A norms are only a portion of the NETS Project, which contains a total of four educational technology standards: National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS-S); National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS-T); National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators (NETS-A); and Technology Leader Standards (TL). These consensual models are foundational for local as well as state-level educational technology programming.

Unfortunately, far too often technology support departments are understaffed, and salaries are lower in the educational setting than the equivalent positions in business and industry. Depending on the setting, expectations for the technology director may be as varied as his many possible titles. This contributes to employee dissatisfaction and stress (McLeod, 2003). The skillful support of transformational, entrepreneurial leaders can ameliorate these situations. Without them, many schools are

left out of the progress loop, and their students, who do not have incremental lives, miss opportunities that they may never have again.

Summary

The adage, “it’s lonely at the top” is certainly true in educational leadership. Site and district-level administrators face a daunting undertaking. Emerging tools used by educational leaders create new tasks as well as new leadership positions within the environment. In an era of high-stakes standards and accountability, it is imperative that leaders at all levels, regardless of their physical site, have the opportunity to be involved in a collaborative community with a focus on learning and an unrelenting commitment to results.

This community cannot simply communicate about learning. It must interact in a culture of collaboration and experientially share the learning process. A family of interactive educational leaders learns from one another through a dynamic exchange of prior knowledge, current experience, and future vision. Vital to success is the ongoing socialization fostered within various venues of individual, small group, and large group settings. In order to experience this culture, there must be trust among members, common ground for discussion, and a willingness to contribute (Boyer, Maher, & Kirkman, 2006). Once again, I

speculated, the Pathways cohort could be a nexus, where all of these issues intersect.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology and Dramaturgy

With great anticipation, I continued the project that became this dissertation. It expands the confines of the original article referenced in Chapter One that I co-authored in 2006 with Branch and Moore (Ford, et al., 2008). Central University's Institutional Review Board approved this study, and I have augmented and updated it each year. (See Appendix A.) The first investigation includes six student and three professor participants offering, respectively, "emic" (insider) and "etic" (outsider) views of the experience (Pelto & Pelto, 1978, p. 54). The students provided rich personal and academic perceptions, while the professors added ancillary data, offering insights into the cohort development. The themes that bubbled up and explained the overall cohort experience thus far were: community; relationships; and communication. These are the foundation for my expanded theoretical lenses of professional learning communities, socialization in local and virtual environments, and an integrative look at educational leadership.

In this investigation all of the cohort members were solicited for participation and all thirteen members agreed to be interviewed. The

current study also covers twice the time, as well as informal and formal sessions that members spent inside and outside class. Because reductionism is the bane of any researcher's existence—we can never see the phenomenon, only behavioral manifestations of it—each step away from what we want to know requires validation. We must always ask and answer the question, "Do these choices promise to produce data that reflect the phenomenon in a way that we can almost see it or at least understand it?" Because of my direct involvement, I had to consider deeply the concept of bias. My roles in the environment were interestingly situated. They promised to give me great insight, but for trustworthiness, displacing them in my subjective mind would be crucial. Let me explain: As a student, I was involved in every class meeting of the cohort's tenure with the exception of one elective in the spring of 2008. Due to my geographic distance from the Central University campus, I attended almost every session via synchronous videoconferencing, many times appearing to local students on a huge projected image. Next, as a graduate assistant working through Pathways, I wore multiple hats in the course delivery process. My primary responsibility was the technical aspect of verifying that all sites could connect and stay connected throughout class. Additionally, in this role I was responsible for archiving the course as necessary for later

retrieval by students unable to attend or for those in need of further review of the content. The graduate assistant role sometimes included assisting instructors with the logistics of course delivery or organizing small group activities. On occasion, I remotely operated the instructional equipment in the classroom and facilitated communications between the instructor(s) and student cohort members. As in the first study, this role alone provided me with emic and etic perspectives (Pelto & Pelto, 1978). I was not a director, but I was the producer, cameraman, lighting expert, and prop man.

My committee and I believed that the most appropriate methodology for the exploration of these important individual and collective perceptions was phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). In a heavily social scientific field such as mine, suspending the emic perspective and choosing Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological research methodology is the preferred choice. Husserl, the philosophy's early 20th century prominent founder, believed it important to bracket out the world surrounding the phenomenon (see: Husserl, 1963). Consequently, Moustakas explains,

> Through phenomenology a significant methodology is developed for investigating human experience and for deriving knowledge from a state of pure consciousness. One learns to see

> naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience, to respect the evidence of one's senses, and to move toward an inner subjective knowing of things, people, and everyday experiences. (p. 101)

To accommodate my field, but also initially to hear my fellow cohort members' voices and not my own, I strove to listen only with my consciousness. However, I could not help being perplexed to some extent by Heidegger's (1962) notion that it was impossible to separate consciousness completely from subjectivity. The very nature of my study, examining how my classmates and I constructed community, seemed to support Heidegger's assertion that we know ourselves as we interact with others. Ultimately, through much of the data collection and analysis, I followed the transcendental path. If I had not, this study might have evolved into an autobiographical rendering.

Following this decision, I endeavored to suspend my natural judgments about perceptions of the cohort evolution (Becker, 1992; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). This required a concerted effort on my part to remove personal presumptions that could bias the study. I "set aside" my "everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33); revisited the data after I analyzed them; moved "back to the unprejudiced source of the experience" (Moran,

2000, p. 136); and embraced Epoche, a new way of looking at things. It required me first to see, then distinguish and finally describe what stood before my eyes (Moustakas, 1994).

In the interests of trustworthiness, I expanded my earlier outline and formulated a brief history of my role in the program as well as my educational background. These narratives are interwoven through Chapters One, Two, Three, and Four. Next, I asked my co-chair, Courtney Vaughn, to interview me. This catharsis was a venue for personal expression of my thoughts as an interviewee. Simultaneously, I learned how to conduct an effective interview. By employing these two techniques, I became aware of and expressed my personal relationship to the phenomenon under investigation. Because Dr. Vaughn was a four-time cohort instructor and was considered a quasi-member of the group, I, in turn, was a bias check for her. Numerous times throughout the study, my queries encouraged her to focus on what a participant was saying rather than what she wanted to hear. She was vaulable as a co-researcher because she, like I, uniquely held both insider and outsider perspectives.

After the initial bracketing process, I began to develop the research question mentioned in Chapter One. It serves as the cornerstone for the investigation, and as such, it is structured with the

utmost care and in concrete terms. It was the guiding light for the development of every other aspect of the study. Without it, background research could not begin, participants could not be selected, and interview guides could not be developed. The position of each key word determines what is primary in pursuing the topic and what data will result. It also reveals the essences and meanings of human experience, uncovers the qualitative rather than quantitative factors in behavior and experience, engages the total self of the research participant, and sustains personal and passionate involvement. This query should not seek to predict or determine causal relationships, but rather illuminate through careful, comprehensive descriptions, vivid and accurate renderings of the experience, rather than measurements, ratings, or scores (Moustakas, 1994).

In my prospectus meeting, the entire committee and I put finishing touches on the question, exemplifying the collaboration so necessary to trustworthiness. Each member worked carefully to re-craft the positioning of every word. As stated in Chapter One, the final product is, “How do the educational leaders participating in the doctoral cohort through the EAD’s Pathways program at Central University describe their individual and collaborative experiences of a mixed virtual PLC?”

With the question in place, I conducted “a comprehensive review of the professional and research literature” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103) that produced my study’s interpretive framework.

Participant co-researchers

The cohort members are uniquely qualified to address the literature base outlined in Chapter Two as its terminology saturated the coursework. And they are highly qualified to comment on their mixed virtual interactions in relationship to a traditional PLC, because this concept was also foundational to the majority of the course content. Readings, discussion threads, and professional dialogue developed the PLC concept, as we labored toward the PhD. Additionally, directed readings through various courses availed each one of us a cache of knowledge. The projected application of lessons learned by each co-researcher (Orbe, 1996) at his/her school was another spoken and unspoken objective of the curriculum.

Together our original cohort creates a mildly diverse group of thirteen members from two states with six Euro-American men, four Euro-American women and three Native-American women. The socioeconomic expanse is vast and includes upper-middle, middle, and working class. Additionally, the school positions range from superintendent to teacher. In sum, we consist of a purposeful yet varied

sample. Their interview responses will become the voices of three primary and three ancillary characters in chapter four. At the outset, there were fourteen members. One person left the cohort for a period of time due to personal issues unrelated to and outside the scope of college coursework. Since this individual was not with the cohort for the sustained duration of the program, he/she was not a part of this study.

Each of the thirteen remaining members participated in the cohort for more than three years. Courses spanned summer, fall, and spring throughout the group's tenure. The course track for co-researchers, with one exception, kept everyone together throughout this PhD endeavor. In cases where Pathways leaders provided electives, multiple cohort members participated in smaller sub-groupings. At the time of this study, they are all engaged in the more individualistic efforts of completing general examinations, presenting individual prospecti, and preparing for the dissertation defense. Enough time has elapsed since a whole-group cohort meeting that members have engaged in a reflective process, examining themselves and their involvement with the community. I was delighted that they all agreed to be part of the study.

To share fully the mixed virtual cohort experience with others, each member had a role and a voice, producing a data pool that takes "readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know

what it was like to have been there. They capture and communicate someone else's experience of the work in his or her own words" (Patton, 2002, p. 47). This study needed to be my cohort members' words; my experience, their experience; and thus, our undertaking. It is the exploration of these voices that supplied the essential information needed to create an understanding of the phenomenon (Halling, 2002). The emergent biographical results are, by definition, phenomenological (Creswell, 1998).

Interviewing

Dr. Vaughn and I collected data through a semi-structured, informal, interactive interview process. This study's precursor, (Ford, et. al., 2008), combined with the supporting frameworks provide a foundation of thematic elements that serve as a springboard. The questions were honed in extensive conversations with Dr. Vaughn that developed direction for the study and further addressed trustworthiness concerns by providing direct instructor input. Throughout the interview question development we decided to probe whenever necessary to create "lengthy person-to-person interview[s] that focus[ed] on a bracketed topic and question" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103-104). This was critical to the study's success. See Appendix B for a list of springboard questions. Having experienced the phenomena themselves, each of

these co-researchers was “interested in understanding the [it]…, willing to participate [and] grant… the researcher permission to tape record…the interview and publish the data in a dissertation” (p. 107).

We set up the prospective conversations at a time and location that was convenient for the cohort members. The objective was to create a relaxed atmosphere with plenty of time and space for in-depth reflection. These educational leaders were willing to provide their candid opinions and able to bring back to life the lived phenomenon (van Manen, 1990, p. 65). The primary purpose for interview interactions was to reconstruct the experience as it happened. Schwandt (2001) believes that less formal questions can liberate the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. More than just the facts (class scenarios), co-researchers elaborated on their feelings, memories, meanings, and thoughts about these occurrences (Becker, 1992; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Moustakas suggests that interview questions should permit the co-researchers to describe the effects of the experience, and/or the changes associated with the experience.

However, encouraging co-researchers to explore with flexibility can derail the purpose of the interview, so it was “methodologically important to keep the fundamental research question foremost in mind” (van Manen, 1990, p. 166). Moustakas (1994) recommends that an

interview guide be employed “when the participant’s story has not tapped into the experience qualitatively and with sufficient meaning and depth” (p. 116), and van Manen (1990) guides the researcher to keep the conversation focused on the concrete experience and not theoretical deliberation about the phenomenon.

Thus, collecting good data was a delicate balancing act. While attempting to maintain focus on the primary phenomenon, we could not afford to tune out the co-researcher’s responses because each experience was unique (deMarrais, 2004, p. 53). Therefore, we asked follow-up questions (more specific interview session probes) either during or after the initial encounter. These answers produced “uninterrupted descriptions of an experience” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 58) and provided even deeper responses. I was grateful that the participants developed an ongoing commitment to the research and provided the justification for their label as co-researchers (Becker, 1992; Moustakas, 1994, van Manen, 1990).

Initial transcendental phenomenological analysis

With the interviews completed, the first analysis step was transcription. During this process, I made and examined reflective notes about the respondent’s vocal tone, delivery, and emphasis as they retold accounts of the phenomenon. Next, I sent the transcriptions back to co-

researchers for member checking, and they inserted any additions or provided corrections. To further ensure trustworthiness both within and among the sample, Dr. Vaughn and I both assessed the final revised transcriptions.

At this juncture, the process of phenomenological reduction ensued. The initial stages required multiple reviews and reflections on the words as well as the meanings each of the co-researchers expressed. This entailed horizonalization, considering each statement with equal weight to then tease out the significant statements and organization of invariant constituents into meaning units and then themes (Moustakas, 1994). Again, for trustworthiness, my co-chair and I compared our emerging themes. Throughout the data collection and thematic process, it was imperative to have continuing co-researcher input. After all, it is their voice that drives the findings of the research. It must be presented unmarred in the results. The goal for this comprehensive process was to supply the consumers of this study with a clear, indelible portrait of the phenomenon, its unique qualities, and the peculiarities of the environment in which it was experienced.

Thematic understandings of the cohort evolution

Three themes surfaced—job challenges, technology struggles, and interpersonal relationships. Many co-researchers moved within or

between school sites, accepted positions with Pathways, or became employed outside k-12 education. Some currently aspire to professorial positions. A few leaders and instructors also left the organization. Moreover, the entire division moved into a new building, the design for which resulted partially from democratic cohort input.

Technology utilization was also central to the cohort's existence. Distance participants had to have a moderately high level of expertise. At first, there were strong opinions, both positive and negative, about the role technology played in student-to-teacher, teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions. Regardless of prior experience, eventually each cohort member attempted to integrate technology into the curriculum. This was crucial, because as I suggested previously, it facilitated communication between distance and local sites, which in turn affected cross-regional relationships.

These interpersonal interactions were threaded throughout the years. The interplay of various personalities created the contextual tapestry wrapped around each person's personal and professional transformations. In most cases in the beginning, members felt there were a couple of isolates but also subgroups within the cohort: onsite versus distance; men versus women; technologists versus non-technologists; dedicated or "called" leaders versus those who were just getting by;

academic individuals versus group thinkers; and in some cases, onsite versus distance associates. This concept may be best summed up by one co-researcher's unintentional reference to "us" and "them." Many recognized that individual and group ambiance varied from course to course. Yet, as the months wore on, regardless of location, most agreed that support from others was critical to staying "hooked in."

The knowledge gleaned from cohort colleagues and course content is now manifesting itself at each of the co-researcher's professional locations. These changes affected individual teacher and student lives at a multitude of sites. While some are reluctant to term their sites PLCs, many are striving to organize their staffs as such. Whether the leaders find themselves at a building or district level or applying for professorial positions, all are committed to encouraging collective group voices in most decision-making processes (Surowiecki, 2005).

Dramaturgical development

Next came a reconstruction of themes through individual textural (noe-matic) and structural (noetic) descriptions of the phenomenon; composite textural and structural descriptions; and a "synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences," respectively the what and how of the experience. Yet pondering a creative synthesis, the

culmination of a phenomenological analysis, brought me back to Heidegger's admonition that consciousness and subjectivity are inextricably bound. I had strived valiantly to keep myself bracketed from the study thus far, but because I was part of the cohort, I began to project myself into the final stage. Consciousness and subjectivity were, as Heidegger notes, almost impossible at this point for me to separate completely. My project had culminated my quasi fusion with the co-researchers' life experiences. After all, I too, had those expereinces. I had observed from the outside and lived from the inside a dynamic human process, resulting in a skein, bound together by each of us as a single piece of yarn. Although social phenomenology (Aho, 1998) may have paved a road to this same destination, I was satisfied that my methodological journey was an honest and authentic effort that evolved logically and produced powerful and meaningful results.

Several theorists gave me an interpretive or methodological lens for our individual self-constructions within an ever-changing community environment. Cooley (1922) was the first. He launched my effort to discover a way to use both sets of the textural and structural descriptions to present the creative synthesis. Influenced by philosopher William James, and not wholly unlike Heidegger, Cooley rejects the Cartesian notion that self is separate from object. Instead people see themselves

as in this simple prose, "Each to each, a looking-glass reflects the other that doth pass" (p. 184.). As we found in some interviews, Cooley (1922) notes that pride and shame are two important reflective emotions deriving from such encounters. This is dialogue that each individual can choose to gaze into or turn away from anyone else's looking glass. Related to Cooley's concept, but without focusing much on the affective domain, Mead and Dewey saw the "social situation [as] an organic whole in which both the individual and society are functional distinctions or two abstract phases of the same process" (Odin, 1996, p. 194).

Mead's concept of the "I" and "me" is particularly relevant. "The "I" reacts to the self which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others toward me. When reflecting on this "me" we react to it as an "I" (Mead, 1934/1967 p. 175). The interplay between the two make up a continuous process of assessing and reassessing where one stands with others and responding (with some degree of individual choice) according to how he believes others view him.

The interviews only unearth the co-researchers' reflections on their past construction of "I," because by the time Dr. Vaughn and I initiated these dialogues, the students already held socially constructed self-definitions ("me's"). The "I" can never be understood in the present,

only in the aftermath of social interaction. One therefore can only discuss her “I” if she had already experienced many “I”/“me” transformations.

Goffman’s (1959) classic work *The Presentation of Self in Every Day Life* and its dramaturgical portrayal of the human social stage is also connected to Cooley and Mead’s groundbreaking ideas. My intent is not, however, to debate with some scholars who believe that Goffman’s dramaturgic view of self and community ignores any deeply rooted sense of being that precedes or is held apart from social interactions or that it presents a cynical view of relationships and those who manipulate or are manipulated (Brissett & Edgley, 1990). Simply, “dramaturgy is…the study of how human beings accomplish meaning in their lives” through acting out every day encounters (Brissett & Edgley, p. 2). Therefore, the cohort members’ individual social evolutions within a group collective are most eloquently shared through a staged production that illustrates my and the other cohort co-researchers’ created and recreated “me’s,” our “looking glass selves” (Cooley 1922, p. 184).

We had not conducted dramaturgical interviews because they are too focused, “based upon the metaphor of the stage” (Berg, 1989, cited in Osborne, 1994, p.16). Our original intent was to obtain more generic emergent perceptions of the cohort experience. But I did rely on several authors, some in educational administration fields, to produce a

dramaturgical four-act play. Relying on other phenomenological dramaturgies for structural guidance (Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Mienczakowski, 1997; Leichtentritt and Rettig, 2001; Saldaña, 2003; Alexander, 2005; Pendery, 2008; Meyer, 2009), I then searched the data for an actable idea or a foundational plot for the drama's development (Leichtentritt & Rettig, 2002). The plot answers the research question by explaining the co-researchers', now actors', growing sense of self and community.

The cohort drama takes place on one mixed virtual stage with multiple vantage points—off stage, back stage, in the wings on stage left and right, and downstage toward the orchestra pit (Filmer, 2008). Each person continually re-conceptualizes herself as she interacts with others, contributing to class discussions, working in groups, or communicating digitally. In various off stage encounters, having lunch or attending parties, more reciprocal self and social impressions are established that promote or hobble community development.

The first stage element of a mixed virtual community, mediated through various synchronous and asynchronous technologies, paints a rich background providing multiple venues for connectivity and interaction of the players. Next, the stage element of evolving collegiate departments of educational leadership shines a light on the challenges

faced in preparing tomorrow's educational leaders. These two elements are developed in the final section of this chapter.

In order to give life to the production, I selected the actors' fully developed parts. To protect the co-researchers' privacy, the performers are compound characters developed from the textural and structural descriptions. They are D. Distance, L. Local and B. Blended (Elliott, 2005). Each represents the composite responses of individuals from their choice of geographic location for participation. D. Distance primarily symbolizes the interview responses from cohort members participating from distance sites. L. Local's lines grow from the interview feedback of cohort members who chose to mostly participate by physically going to the campus. B. Blended's voice is developed by a combination of words from the interviews of cohort members who chose to be local for some courses or portions of courses and distant for others. These are the primary characters of our drama. However, we developed ancillary characters for each of the locales to provide voice to individuals whose responses were not in the majority of co-researcher's responses. Traditionally, these might be seen as outliers, but in this phenomenon it is imperative that each voice is heard. To that end, R. Remote, the ancillary distance character, O. Onsite, the secondary local character, and finally M. Mixed, represent the co-researchers spending time at both

local and distance sites. Again, their thoughts and individual lines are gleaned from the interviews of co-researchers representing each locale of participation.

The next step in creating dramaturgical representation of the study's findings is the actual acting out of the idea. The narrative of this drama is presented in four acts or frames in order to move the reader logically through the cohort evolution. Act/Frame One, "Settling In," situates each of the actors as they prepare themselves for involvement in the cohort experience. Composite characters provide background information so that the reader may experience who they are. Act/Frame Two, "Negotiating and Renegotiating Roles," provides an initial look at the interpersonal perceptions of each actor and how he is developed through interactive socialization. In Act/Frame Three "Making Sense," the actors speak to the social and academic exchanges that occurred as they settled into the environment. It is in this frame that I explore the concept of a mixed virtual PLC. To close the drama, Act/Frame Four, "Saying Goodbye," summarizes the almost four-year saga. Here I explain how the characters did or did not put the PLC academic content into practice in their professional positions. Presented as a series of soliloquies and interactions, these dramatic narratives invite the reader on to the stage and into the minds and hearts of every student.

With the actable idea, the research question in place, the fully developed and rehearsed interview deconstruction and analysis, and the actors' lines it is now time to place the background and dramatic lighting. These two components are the mixed virtual community and collegiate EAD.

Stage backdrop—Virtual communities

Overcoming isolation, resulting from both geographic and professional boundaries, requires the construction of mixed virtual community. "In the virtual context, 'community' is a construction place based on activity that is achieved entirely through the technologies of remote locations" (Goodfellow, 2005, p. 114). Ideally, in the case of our cohort, the community members' behavior and relationships are not restricted to their physical locations. A review of virtual learning communities can help the reader understand the backdrop of the dramaturgical narrative.

Virtual learning communities take many forms (Jonassen, 1999). Luppicini (2003) defines them as "computer-mediated by interconnected computers. Communication characteristics of these learning communities include: asynchronous and synchronous communication, high interactivity, and multi-way communication" (p. 410). This definition of and research on "computer mediated" interactions typically deal solely

with online environments. The technologically mediated environment for this cohort included multiple modalities of synchronous videoconferencing. H.323 Internet protocol-based room systems are used from at least five sites on a regular basis to connect cohort members to the classes being delivered. Additionally, during course interactions students avail themselves of local, remote, and home-based computer videoconferencing, chat, and shared whiteboards through the tool Marratech. Occasionally, other tools such as Skype, Second Life, and traditional phone connectivity are available. To maintain community in an asynchronous environment, several instructors use WebCT and Desire2Learn for content delivery. The majority of the class sessions are recorded either via the Codian IPVCR or the TANDBERG (my current employer) Content Server made available for later on-demand viewing via the Internet. Indeed, teaching in the virtual environment requires "skilled facilitation, well-thought-out social contracts, social mechanisms, and multimedia materials" (Rheingold, 2000, p. 341).

Many times, mixed virtual community members display the most essential elements of community— "mutual interdependence…, sense of belonging, connectedness, spirit, trust, interactivity, common expectations, shared values and goals, and overlapping histories" (Rovai, 2002, p. 4). With these in place, the community construction

process begins. Formation of an active community is a planned process (Moller, 1998; Rovai & Lucking, 2003). Kim (2000) proposes nine design strategies for virtual community building:… a defined community purpose;… flexible gathering places for community members online; …meaningful and evolving member profiles, which can help provide the community with history and context; …a range of member roles, from newbie's to old hands; a strong leadership program to develop future community leaders; …appropriate interpersonal etiquette; … cyclic community events; …rituals of community life[,] celebrations, holidays, seasonal and social transitions; …[and] member-run subgroups (p. xiii). These strategies give the virtual participants a personal sense of presence and a rallying point for continued participation. Palloff and Pratt (2003) suggest that "the greater the interactivity in an online course and the more attention paid to a sense of community, the more likely students will stick with the course until its completion" (p. 117).

Stage lighting—Departments of educational leadership

As stated in Chapter One and Two, the EAD attempt to develop learning communities (such as this one) is at a critical juncture. The following research addresses researchers' admonitions for current virtual programs and the students who have participated in them. Hess and Kelly (2005) find "school leaders [believe] traditional programs have not

trained administrators to operate in an environment of outcome-based accountability, evolving technology, and heightened expectations. [This] has resulted in wide-ranging debate about how to reform recruitment and preparation" (p. 156). These crucibles of preparation must consider the evolving role of educational leaders and create opportunities for experiential, constructivist learning via community in their preparatory process.

Educational leadership programs can adopt distance-learning modalities with full assurance of their effectiveness (Batte, Forster, & Larson, 2003; Machtmes, 1998; Shachar & Neumann, 2003; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2006). Allen, Mabry, Mattrey, Bourhis, Titsworth, & Burrnell (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative literature on the effectiveness of educational content delivered in a distance environment. Their findings conclude that distance education students slightly outperformed their local counterparts on both exams and grades. Additionally, there was no decline in educational effectiveness as a result of the use of distance technologies.

The dissemination of both synchronous and asynchronous tools continues to expand with the growth of Web 2.0 technologies. Departments of educational leadership must be willing to adopt these tools and partner with entities to deliver diverse learning opportunities

through emerging technologies. Broadband usage and camera and computer quality continue to improve, while prices for all continue to drop (Simonson et al., 2006). The quality and cost-effectiveness of videoconferencing will further enable experts and guest speakers to join classes via video regardless of their location.

Virtual cohort learning communities of adult learners should have freedom to shift in purpose throughout their existence. This change has the possibility to create a multi-faceted organization of educational leaders. “The role of educational institutions in shaping the conditions, either physical or virtual, of their learning communities is complex, and cannot be deconstructed or ignored simply because the place-based social context is online” (Goodfellow, 2005, p. 115).

There must be flexibility within departments of educational leadership to address learner needs in a 21st century effectively. Significant reconstruction of these departments may be necessary to create communal learning environments (Marsh & Richards, 2001). Each person must have an opportunity to contribute significantly to the community. “Learning is a very human activity. The more people feel they are being treated as human beings—that their human needs are being taken into account—the more likely they are to learn and learn to learn” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1980, p. 129). The future success

of distance education will depend on the ability of educational institutions to personalize the teaching and learning process. Individualization and differentiation are the keys to this evolving medium.

One element that the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) focuses on is the continually evolving needs of post-graduate students pursuing doctoral studies. The CPED suggests that emergent delivery options must be explored. “Distance learning is an increasingly important aspect of higher education because it meets the needs of an expanding pool of nontraditional students who find education necessary for jobs in today’s information age” (Brown, 2001, p. 18). Educational leadership department faculty must “think about effective uses of distance technology, envision what successful technology courses look like, and understand how it might transform the preparation and practice of educational leaders at home and abroad” (Sherman, 2007, p. 609). Faculty members must be willing to discover new ways to use emerging technologies in order to effectively engage the learner and keep him or her active in the learning process (Celsi & Wolfinbarger, 2002; Cyrs, 1997; Kosak, Manning, Dobson, Rogerson, Cotman, & Colaric, 2004). Through frustration, mastery, and everything else in between the following saga takes the reader through real life efforts to make the grade.

Summary

This cohort study calls for a phenomenological analysis and dramaturgical staging of student's evolving self within the cohort community. Due to my role within the phenomenon, I give particular attention to trustworthiness at each step in the investigative process. Partnering with co-chair Courtney Vaughn provided me with the direction needed to maintain focus during research question formation, objectively review in-depth interview queries and probes, and synthesize content through phenomenological reduction. The interviews and their resultant textural and structural descriptions grew into a dramaturgical presentation acted out by three main characters. Prior to acting out the dialogue, the stage was fully set and constructed with two elements. A mixed virtual learning community provides the backdrop while stage illumination comes through an understanding of collegiate department of educational leadership. Chapter Four provides composite responses of the co-researchers based on their choice of location for participation in class and fulfill the co-researchers' identities. Now, after a brief personal explanation of its author, the four-act drama begins.

CHAPTER FOUR

THIS IS WHO WE ARE

My Background—Prelude to the Drama

Before I began authoring the creative synthesis I was drawn to Schutz's (1967) words:

> Everything I know about your conscious life is really based on my knowledge of my own lived experiences. My lived experiences of you are constituted in simultaneity or quasi-simultaneity with your lived experiences, to which they are intentionally related. It is only because of this that, when I look backward, I am able to synchronize my past experiences of you with your past experiences. (p. 106)

I will begin with mine. My DNA is replete with educational influence. Both of my parents were educators. My father was a public school teacher who later became an elementary principal, and my mother is a community college music instructor. Through multiple generations, my aunts and uncles were public school educators as well. Even my grandmother served as the head of food services in a large city's public school system. Growing up seeing the ugly side of education (poor

salaries, limited autonomy, and isolation), I vowed never to become a teacher.

As a principal, my dad had to deal with kids' discipline issues, parents' threats based on the belief that their child was being treated unfairly, the teachers' arguments about who got what, and of course, the politics of small town school boards and an interesting administration. It was a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week, 365-day-a-year job. It was small town public education.

He then moved on to teach in a vocational education setting at a prison. The educational process was not bad, but the environment was rough. In this setting, it was the adults proclaiming their own innocence instead of their children's. After several years as a classroom instructor, he once again became a school administrator. The politics this time were on a much larger scale, and the process wore him thin. Approximately seven years later, he left our home, divorced my mom, remarried, retired, moved to a different state, and died suddenly of massive heart failure. I knew this was not the path for me.

I was a gifted musician and singer, so in college I majored in music. Yet, all of my advisors suggested I complete a degree in music education as something to "fall back on." I am ashamed to say it now, but I had been tainted by the public education system and was sure that

teaching would be a last resort, something that I would never need to "fall back on." Notwithstanding, I *eventually* took their advice.

Upon graduation I pursued a master's degree in choral conducting at a major research institution. While there, I was a graduate assistant teaching music theory to freshman music majors. "There is hope," I thought. I could see myself teaching music at the college level. "Would this be the answer?" There was a resounding NO when hope quickly dimmed after graduation. I had been working part-time at a church to put myself through school, and there was no college teaching job forthcoming. I ended up taking a full-time church job with part-time pay and moving home. Soon thereafter, I found myself falling in love with a young lady who happened to be an English teacher at the local school. We got married and were in desperate need of a decent income. It was time to "fall back" on that music education degree. I was offered a job as high school show choir teacher and assistant band director. Today, after 15 years in common education, I call education my professional home.

During that time I progressed from a full-time instructor to a full-time administrator. For the first four years, I served in various combinations of high school show choir instructor, general music teacher, and assistant band director. Due to my love of technology, I became the "go to" guy for troubleshooting printers, computers, and

other rudimentary technologies. I was then hired at a neighboring district as part-time high school show choir director, general music teacher, and part-time technology assistant. In the four years that I occupied those positions, my technology skills became more developed in the areas of network and Internet connectivity as well as videoconferencing. It was during this time that I taught my first class “via distance”--AP Music Theory. Seven years ago, as I mentioned in Chapter One, I began my tenure as full-time technology coordinator for a rural public school system. I developed a video production program, and during a portion of this time, I team-taught the course in the distance environment with a great friend and mentor from another city.

My instruction of students turned into instruction of teachers as I became a Title IID Telementor for the Oklahoma State Department of Education and a House Bill 1815 Master Technology Trainer. These experiences were foundational for my development as a conference speaker and workshop leader. The training presentation opportunities culminated in the foundation of the TANDBERG T4 Program. This program, national in scope, enabled me to train teachers from Maine to Alaska and from the southern portion of Canada to south Texas in the use of videoconferencing in the classroom. As with so many other jobs in my career, this part-time job became full-time on July 1, 2008.

These years of teaching, along with my father's, my mother's and my wife's experiences, have revealed to me something I would never have seen from the outside of education looking in: teaching can be lonely. The painstaking hours of preparation, the thankless job of delivering instruction, and now the arduous task of ongoing assessments, have been my sole responsibility. I wanted colleagues. I wanted a PhD.

I gained a fresh perspective through the EAD Pathways program. From my first course, the idea of community learning and the impact of professional discourse were evident. These concepts, while not completely new to me, had never been so eloquently encapsulated. I longed to experience what Richard DuFour (2004) describes as a focus on learning (not teaching), work collaboratively (not alone), and then be self-accountable (instead of dismissing student achievement based on other factors). Could my involvement in this PhD cohort with other educational leaders meet this need? Would this experience be my opportunity to engage in a PLC? For me and many other cohort members, the answer, to varying degrees, is yes. I invite you to experience this answer.

The Dramaturgy

Frame/Act One—Settling In—Getting to know you—What an amazing opportunity

As the lights come up on our stage, there is a room with 16 people. This looks like an informal classroom setting with tables arranged in a communal fashion. There is a large darkened projection screen at one end of the room and a projector mounted to the ceiling. A couple of cameras are randomly placed in the room, and an instructor area with a podium containing lots of electronics is located off to one side. The seats are clearly arranged so that there is no head of the class, but rather all the participants appear to share an equal position seated in somewhat of an oval. This organization of the room reveals the intent of a shared style of discourse and communication. It is clear from the beginning that conversation and community learning will be hallmarks of this cohort's existence.

The unfamiliar observer, without prior knowledge of the people in the room, would not be able to discern between the teachers and the students. The sounds heard are a cacophony of computers booting up and people introducing themselves to each other. It seems as if everyone at least recognizes someone, but no one seems to know everyone.

One participant, L. Local, stands and moves toward stage right as all the other characters freeze into position. Lights on the classroom dim and only silhouettes are now visible as the stage right spotlight illuminates an area for L. Local to enter. She is in her late 50s, has slightly graying hair and a firm presence. Her demeanor is very pleasant but purposeful. L. Local is obviously a tenured public school administrator, because she is dressed in business casual including tailored pants, a nice blouse and an informal blazer.

L. Local begins: I have always wanted to pursue a doctorate in the field of education but was beginning to wonder if I might be too late in my career. Look around. Most of the other faces here are at least a decade younger than mine. (*She smiles.*) Ah well,…no matter. I am driven as a life-long learner and have tried to begin my doctoral studies on several occasions. I knew that I would need company along my journey. So I tried to convince several colleagues from my school to travel with me in order to pursue their degrees as well, but no one ever stepped up. Since I heard about this opportunity from the Pathways program leaders, I have been excited about this day. I've been involved with Pathways since they began. My site has completed Phases One, Two and Three of their leadership programs (*discussed in Chapter One),* and we are currently

involved in Phase Four. The Pathways program fingerprint is imprinted throughout my school.

I consider myself a hard worker and am very focused. After all, as a woman it can be difficult to advance to the top of the career ladder. Even at home, I occasionally catch a little flack about overdoing it. As my husband and I talked about this degree, I assured him that family would still be the priority of my life. However, a PhD in Educational Leadership doesn't come along everyday, and it is certainly the pinnacle of my vocation.

I'm so glad that all of us are going to be experiencing this program together as a part of a cohort. Learning with others in community is something I've worked on with my faculty for several years and we are really making progress. Now, I will be pursuing this degree with my own community of like-minded professionals who want to make a difference in students' lives.

As I look beyond the degree, I recognize that this experience, while applicable to my current job, could also become the catalyst to a different career in the future. There is no telling what the next phase of my life holds; what an amazing opportunity.

L. Local freezes and the spotlight dims on her position. Simultaneously, another figure rises and moves toward stage left. A

spotlight now illuminates a space soon to be occupied by our next character, D. Distance. He is a male in his late 30s or early 40s. His swagger suggests that he is calmly confident about his role in this group. He carries himself as if he too is involved in leadership. However, once he steps into the light his appearance is non-traditional. He is dressed in jeans, a polo shirt and boots.

D. Distance speaks: A PhD with an emphasis in technology integration. Perfect. When I was told about this opportunity at our Pathways winter gathering, I jumped at it. I consider myself an opportunist and this one was too big to pass up. During the interview, I couldn't believe my ears. The Pathways program was going to offer the entire degree program with an option to attend either locally, onsite or via distance through live interactive videoconferencing. I had the opportunity to pursue my master's degree using similar technology almost ten years ago, but the process was different back then. We were gathered at one of two sites and the instructor came to us every other week. So much has changed. I'm going to be "hooking up" from my office at school this time around.

I come from a family of educators. When Dad began teaching, there was no way he could have imagined this day. From chalkboards to virtual whiteboards and from LP's to live interactive video, what a change

education has experienced. I'm really excited because tonight we're getting web cams and installing the collaborative Marratech and Skype software on our computers. It looks like everyone in our cohort has a computer so we will all be able to communicate with each other via interactive video and audio regardless of where we are. I know this degree will really give me an opportunity to push the envelope through technology integration.

I'm glad that I came on site for the first gathering, but to be honest, this is last time I plan on being here at campus for quite a while. In my situation, it is nearly impossible to pursue advanced doctoral studies without distance opportunities. Between my kids' ball games, my cattle, my administrative position, and small town community involvement, life can be crazy. Couple those with a three hour journey one-way to campus and this is really the only way that I could have this doctoral experience. When a degree comes to you, how can you say no? This is an amazing opportunity.

D. Distance freezes and the spotlight dims on his position. Once again, a figure arises from the group. She moves toward the audience downstage center. As the spotlight highlights her location, B. Blended moves in with determination. She is in her mid to late 30s, sports a big

smile and an obviously positive spirit. However, she seems a little less than self-confident.

B. Blended seems a bit hesitant but eventually explains: After only a few of years in administration, I'm going to get to pursue a doctorate degree. To be honest, I know that I don't have as much experience as everyone else. They all seem so confident and I'm a little intimidated. I really want to do this right. I have always loved learning, and I learned so much last summer working with other administrators as a part of the Pathways leadership program. It really helped me focus on applying great leadership techniques as a principal to my local school site.

The experience of working with such a small, intimate group of educational leaders toward my PhD is something I really am excited about. With the group's varied experiences, I know that I will have the opportunity to be a listener and a learner instead of a leader. That will be a nice switch.

Recently, some of the tenured teachers at my school and I have butted heads on various issues. I am confident that these courses, coupled with the experiences of others, will equip me with the how-to aspects of implementing effective leadership principles. And the flexibility of being able to participate both onsite and via distance will allow me to accomplish this as I want to and need to. I have an amazing opportunity.

B Blended freezes and her spotlight dims to 50%. Simultaneously, the spotlights on L. Local, D Distance, and B. Blended rise to 50%.

A narrator's voice from offstage then foretells: This frozen image of our three main characters is a positioning into what will soon become their choice of location for participation. L. Local is on the "right," D. Distance is on the "left," and B. Blended is in the "middle." The casual viewer may see this placement as simply two separate entities bridged by a third participant. But this placement will soon grow to represent the much more complex issues of community interaction.

There will be members who are "right" in line with more traditional expectations of a doctoral program. Some people could consider their geographic positioning more "right" or acceptable as they have committed to travel to the college's campus for onsite participation. And in many instances, they will be "right" in line concerning their agreement with instructors surrounding the course materials presented.

Some members, including D. Distance will be out in "left" field with their emerging ideas of how technology could be used to reach students. After this night, they will have "left" campus and will only return when absolutely necessary. In our next scene, we will see that many feel "left" out of the conversation and the loop or worse, "left" out of touch.

B. Blended will become the bridge in the “middle” of our drama. She and others like her, will remain flexible. She wants to be in the “middle” of developing relationships for professional growth. At the same time, she is looking forward to blending into the “middle” of the other personalities and taking a break from the daily pressures of school leadership. She will move between the distance and local venues and serve as the glue between the “right” and the “left.” Little did she know that she would be both a lightning rod and a saving grace for many.

After a moment, the spotlight on all three characters fades. The stage lights once again illuminate the informal classroom and L Local, D. Distance, and B. Blended all make their way back to the scene with the others. One of the other participants on our stage casually leans back as if to gather everyone’s attention.

He states: My name is Dr. N. and this is Dr. W. Tonight we will be looking at the degree requirements, the course schedules, and getting our computers ready for class. Dr. W. and I will be teaching your courses several times throughout this cohort’s tenure. As you know, this cohort is the first of its kind through the Pathways program and we are all looking forward to its progression. This is for you, Dr. W., and me an amazing opportunity. Dr. W. is going to lead us through some discussions in order that we might get to know each other. Dr. W.?”

The lights fade as Dr. W. begins to speak and students begin to follow her prompts by getting up and moving to different locations of intentional groupings within the class. This exercise is meant as a mixer for students to learn more about each other. It is obvious that some are comfortable with the group mixer and others are not, but they all willingly participate.

Slowly but surely a misdirected collection of voices begin to swell: How many students are at your school? I was just tired of doing it all as a middle school teacher so I got into administration. Do you think teaching is too much of a "feel good" profession? My master's classes were very independent. I never felt like part of a group. Are you teaching classes and serving as high school principal? I have this one teacher who…

Voices fade to silence.

Frame/Act Two—Negotiating Roles—The hard reality—Cohorts within the cohort

As the lights come up, we are once again in the informal classroom setting. The table positioning still resembles that of an oval with democratic positioning of all the seating. However, this time the projection screen is anything but darkened. There are multiple, larger than life images projected on its surface. The image is divided into six areas. Four of them display only one person; the fifth contains two

individuals. The sixth area portrays a small image of a local classroom. While all the sites can be seen, the remote cohort member who last spoke occupies the position of the largest image on the screen. This means that the site that speaks gets the most real estate on the screen and probably the most attention.

As the instructor takes his position, he chooses not to work from the instructor's podium area. This position is the optimal location for viewing the screens and being viewed via the cameras. Instead, his back is both to the projected image and the camera that is showing the local classroom to the remote sites. It is obvious that a couple of courses have come and gone since we first met our characters and the excitement about the amazing opportunity has waned.

On this, the last day of a weekend class meeting, Dr. H. is talking, and the majority of the cohort members are taking notes. Noticeably, most of them in the local room are taking notes with traditional pen and paper, and their laptop computers are either closed or completely put away. The distant students are all either taking notes on their computers or using them for something else. It is hard to say. But one of the faces on the screen is holding up and frantically waving a pink piece of paper in an apparent effort to gain the instructor's attention.

B. Blended, tonight a local participant, sees the waving of the paper and after five minutes, can't ignore what is going on any longer. She interjects: Dr. H., it looks like D. Distance has a question.

Dr H. looks around the room for D. Distance, but then realizes he is on the screen behind him: Sorry, D. I didn't see you. Did you have a question?

D. Distance responds: Yes, but I think R. Remote answered it already. Never mind.

The action once again freezes and the lights dim on the group as only silhouettes are seen.

D. Distance steps from behind the screen to stage left into his spotlight and asks: What happened? It's like the people in the room don't want us there anymore. I know that we had some connection problems in those early classes, but now everything seems to be working well, except the local cohort members. Some of them don't even turn on their computers. I've tried to setup several meeting points on the web in order to exchange content, but O. Onsite told us last night that they just don't have the time to mess with it.

Several of the instructors we started out with have moved on to other jobs. They understood how important it was for us to use the online discussion threads as well as Skype and Marratech for communication

and really made everyone get “hooked up” during class, but now they’re gone. If those instructors were so committed to the PLC concept, why did they leave? We were too timid to ask, but no one ever told us either.

There is no one locally to help when problems arise and some of the instructors are falling back into lecture mode. When they do, it makes it easy for me to multi-task, and I disengage from what is going on. Here’s the plan I’ve devised. I am really attentive and answer some questions in the first hour or so of each class. Then I can tune out and use my computer to accomplish something more meaningful the rest of the time, my assignments.

D. Distance cups his hand to the side as if to whisper: Or at least check cattle prices on e-bay.

Fortunately, all of us at a distance are still logged into Marratech or Skype so we can communicate and stay in touch. Although our conversations are not always on topic, it keeps me from being completely disconnected and disengaged. These tools help us move beyond the instructors. They have really changed the student-to-student interactions from my days as a master’s distance student in the mid 90s. It’s like we can virtually pass notes.

He smiles and continues: R Remote and I were just text chatting about his son the other day, and the struggles he’s having with drugs.

Then M. Mixed popped off with a comment how this class might go down better with some drugs. I told them that based on some of the crazy assignments she gives, I sometimes wonder if Dr. Q. is on drugs when she comes to class. I know it's not on topic, but it gives us a common watering hole—not to mention a good occasional laugh.

M. Mixed and I were chatting the other day about one of our more difficult classes. Neither of us are very good writers. He suggested that I join him onsite this summer. With my 12-month contract, there's no way I can afford to take my vacation to move for three months. I told him that there's no doubt that this class will be difficult for me. Based on last summer's introductory course, he's afraid that he won't get it if he doesn't make the move. I realize for some, participating via distance is just a convenience, but for me it is really the only way I can pursue this degree.

The spotlight dims on D. Distance as he turns to face stage right. L. Local steps to stage right towards her spotlight.

She picks up where D. Distance left off: I'm so glad I'm a local participant. I tried beaming in once and hated it. The connection made it really hard to understand what was going on. I chose to be local so I could be connected to the cohort. I finally just turned off my computer here in class because all the chat in Marratech and Skype is so distracting. There are lots of times when the conversations are off topic

and that is so unprofessional. It usually starts off in the right direction, but veers off course pretty quickly. Just night before last, during our Friday class, D. Distance and R. Remote were talking about their families and then their kids. Before I knew it they were talking about taking drugs. Even worse, one of them suggested that Dr. Q might be on drugs. It's just crazy and so disrespectful. I guess that I am old school like that. A teacher is a teacher. You respect them, you listen, and you learn.

I really wish that the instructors would monitor what is going on in those rooms. When I talked to O. Onsite the other night at dinner, she had no idea what was happening. Although she and I sit right next to each other in class, she's not really into the Marratech or Skype thing, so I explained to her about the chat. She admitted that she had some serious concerns about the distance people's work ethic. In fact, she wondered just how much they were helping each other with some of the supposedly independent tasks like tests. I had wondered that too. Sometimes, I'm not sure that I trust them.

I really enjoy our local students' times at dinner or lunch when we all have the opportunity to just talk about what is going on at our schools. The camaraderie and informal group learning have brought us together. The other night when conversation turned to family, I learned so much about everyone. Last month a small group of us went out after class and

had a real bonding time. We had the opportunity to talk about how much we miss one of our members who is going through a tough family time and seems to have dropped out. We talked about how four of five of us had already called her and encouraged her to return. O. Onsite shared with me that she kind of felt like an outsider for a while, because she started the program a little after the rest of us. But after dinner that night, when she talked about her struggles, she became so much more at ease.

Without those times together, this would be just another degree, like when I got my master's degree. But the informal coupled with the formal classroom discussions are really rallying us into a community. As we take more classes our conversations focus more and more on student achievement, looking at the data, and how each of us is dealing with student and teacher struggles. We are quickly becoming a professional learning community of educational administrators.

L. Local freezes. This time the lights stay up on her, but the light now comes up on D. Distance.

D. Distance interjects: Lunch and dinner conversations? That's the only time I get to see my family. From my rural location it would take several hours beyond class time to travel onsite for the privilege of sharing a meal. Out here, we have to assert ourselves in order to be

heard from. Communicating like this is definitely a learned process. If R. Remote hadn't come up with the idea of holding up that pink piece of paper, I might never have seen what Dr. H. looked like. At least he finally turned around. (*He smiles.*)

In our last course, Dr. Q sat in a chair with her back to us the entire time. I really felt like a fly on the wall during her class. Then when I had to go onsite for some paperwork this summer a lady came up and talked to me as if I'd known her before. She mentioned how great it was to see me again, but I couldn't figure out where it was that I had met her. It wasn't until she turned to walk away and I saw the back of her head that I realized it was Dr. Q.

Since the instructors stopped intentionally grouping us with local cohort members, the divide between the two sub-groups continues to grow.

D. Distance looks stage right as L. Local sums up her experience: It was so difficult to hear when we were working on projects with the distance people. Because of the way that things appear on the big screen, sometimes I don't even know if certain people are out there. Dr. Q. finally asked D. Distance to just take care of the remote sites when we disconnect for group work. There has not been a lot of cross talk between the sites since the first semester.

To be honest, I felt sorry for Dr. Q. in our last course. She obviously had very minimal training in how to operate the technology, much less how to adapt her materials for them *(the distance people).* One night, she decided to play a board game that required us to make some group decisions. Our responses would move us around the game board either forward to one reward square or backward, one deficit square. I knew playing the game would be difficult for remote members, because the game board was too big to fit on the document camera. Once again, they *(the distance people)* got frustrated. But for those of us onsite it was a great learning experience. At first, I didn't like being segregated in groups automatically, local versus remote, like most of our professors have chosen to do. But now I feel so bonded to the local students as a result of the teacher's neglect, that I like it. All of us agree that it is just easier this way.

L. Local looks stage left as D. Distance responds, Is she talking about the board game? Difficult is not the half of it. It seemed as if no preparation had been made for us *(the distance people).* I felt like it was a complete waste of time. Here's the bottom line. If you took some of the people from the distance master's classes I took 10 years ago, froze them, and transported them into the future to some of our cohort classes, they would see no difference in the instructional process at all. It's so

disappointing. We have so many tools at our disposal and some of the instructors aren't able to use them. The distance members have moved beyond the instructors. We are using the tools to build student-to-student relationships. That's a big difference from my distance master's classes. But when it comes to communicating with the local members, some nights I just finally have to shut down. I was really surprised that R. Remote thought the technology could have been more accommodating, BUT STILL ENJOYED the challenge of overcoming the logistics! I'm just too tired for that.

D. Distance looks stage right to L. Local. Then she looks to the audience: It is so much easier to bond with the local people than those distance people.

L. Local looks to stage left. Then D. Distance gazes into the audience: It is just so much easier to bond with the distance people than those local people.

L. Local joins D. Distance who both direct their comments to the audience.

D. Distance and L. Local say in unison: It's like there are two groups. We each have our own cohort within the cohort.

Both characters freeze facing to the outside with arms folded as if they were back to back and their lights dim. The spotlight then comes up stage center and B. Blended makes her way into the light.

More assertive now than in the beginning, she elucidates: I have become the one tie between the local and distant cohort members. Each group has such tremendous complementary strengths. Although I am here onsite today, I will have to join from school next month because I have to sponsor a high school dance right after class.

There is no doubt that for me, relationships blossom when I am locally onsite with the majority of the cohort members. We share more down time and get to explore each other's private lives more. However, the connection that I feel with the distance cohort members is nearly as strong. I've worked closely with D. Distance on several projects even though I can count on one hand the total number of times we have worked in the same room together. For me, having the face-to-face video where I can look others in the eye is crucial. If we couldn't connect face-to-face, then there would be no relationship at all.

There was one class, where I was in Montana at an administrator's conference. I talked to D. Distance about what we could do to work together. We were able to get me connected from the hotel for class. Wow! Now that was an amazing experience! No matter where I

am, I can still stay connected. Also, several of us were mixed with some members from outside the cohort and took a completely online class last summer where we never saw each other. Although I completed some group projects, I could not tell you to this day who all was in the class.

I know it is hard on L. Local when the distance people get rolling in the chat room. I'm afraid that some of the local people will never connect to the distance people. They may never truly know them. But I get the other side too. When I'm offsite and everyone here in the room is talking, it's impossible to hear the instructor, much less understand what is going on. I know that R. Remote gets frustrated.

Debates between the sites sometimes get really heated. Since most of the local cohort participants are women and most of the remote ones are men, when tensions flare there can be some uncomfortable moments. Last month during class, D. Distance made a comment about women in educational leadership roles. L. Local jumped right in when D. took a breath and I don't think he ever got to finish his idea. Then the rest of the women onsite had a field day bantering his comment around the room. While the videoconferencing is in real time, there are some adjustments that have to be made so that the remote sites can get in a word edgewise. D's inability to fully complete his comment and thought process really sparked some tension between the sites.

However, I really like D. Distance. He has worked to figure out ways to overcome the divide. He has taken some classes and even taught some in the distance environment. D. Distance has specific ideas on how things could be changed to make a difference for all of us. One of his biggest concerns is the way that the local room is setup. He believes that it is certainly not optimized for interactive distance instruction. His perception is that the local people should not disconnect their computers. Maybe, if we negotiated this, the offsite people could cut down on the chatter. D. Distance doesn't blame the professors. He believes that some of them just don't realize how hard this is.

But I have also noticed something else. When I'm onsite, sometimes it appears that the local cohort members are further divided into two separate groups. In one of those tough summer courses, the two local groups kind of became competitive in their pursuit of the content. It looked to me more like a competition than a community. I tried not to be in any local group, and I definitely try to blend into both distant and local groups of students. To tell you the truth, I'm definitely more comfortable with some people than with others.

There's no doubt that Dr. Q., Dr H., Dr. N., and Dr. W. could use training on creating an environment of co-presence between local and distance sites by effectively integrating technology use. They obviously

do not feel comfortable with the technology, and I believe that causes them not to proactively partner distance people and local people for group projects as we did early on. I remember when M. Mixed came on-site for one of Dr. Q.'s follow-up classes. She didn't even recognize him at first. I think she called him Grizzly Adams. (*Shaking her head, she laughs.*)

However, any training for our professors would need to be real world and hands-on. In a one-hour session, they probably still wouldn't feel comfortable in this mixed environment. The kind of training they need would require extended time and probably compensation. There's always room for my improvement, too, but I have learned that in this mixed environment, I really have to stay connected with all the tools: videoconferencing, Marratech, Skype, chat rooms, discussion threads, white boards, Second Life, web streaming, and the WebCT or Desire2Learn portal. I am determined that if we can stay connected, this cohort can grow together and will make a difference.

Lights dim on B. Blended and rise on the class. B. Blended walks over to L Local, stage right and takes her by the hand. B. Blended leads L. Local to stage left toward D. Distance. Next, B. Blended places L. Local's left hand in D. Distance's right hand signifying the crossover between the two groups. She then places herself in the center behind L.

Local and D. Distance with her arms over both of their shoulders and ushers them back to the others.

With L. Local and B. Blended back at their seats and D. Distance back on the larger than life projected screen, Dr. H. once again addresses the class: I'm sorry, D. Distance, that I didn't see you earlier. Go ahead and tell us the question. And R. Remote, if you don't mind, would you share your answer? I'm going to pull this chair over here where I see you guys better. I hope you all forgive me. This process is so new.

D. Distance smiles half-heartedly as if he is willing to give the professors, at least this one, another chance and the stage fades to black.

Frame/Act Three—Making Sense—Working it through—Living with change

As the lights come up on Act/Frame Three, the stage is noticeably different. The facility in which the cohort meets is markedly new. The scent of fresh carpet fills the air. There is now almost twice as much space in the classroom as there was before. The ceiling, the lights, even some of the technology let the observer know that this place is contemporary. However, there is still a similar situation in the arrangement of the tables, chairs, projection screen, and cameras. The

distance students are still in several quadrants of the screen, but there appear to be fewer people out there. A casual glance about the room reveals that a couple of the faces that were on screen in Act Two are now in the new chairs locally in the room.

A second glimpse reveals that some of the faces in the room appear unfamiliar from the first two acts. Of the 15 people locally, only 9 are cohort members. There is a different group dynamic in the local classroom. The cohort members seem a bit put off by the presence of extra people. They did not realize that the college's administration insisted that the professors allow other students to enroll, even Master's candidates. D. Distance, R. Remote, B. Blended and a couple of others are now the only off-site participants.

Amid the changes, two faces remain constant. Drs. N. and W. have now become friends to the cohort members. They are in their familiar locations preparing for another weekend of intense instruction and intimate interchanges with the cohort family.

As Dr. W. clears her throat, she announces: Okay guys, let's get down to business. The philosophical house for tonight's discussion will include the symbolic interactionists. Cooley *(1922)* encourages us to see that we reform as we look in other peoples' looking glasses. Then Mead *(1934/1967)* elaborates that as we look at our definition of self, we

realize that the “I” you are today will undergo several metamorphoses as it interacts with all of the “me’s” in that class community, for example. The “I’” and “me” never stay the same….

We move on into another topic, phenomenology, and Dr. W. tries to transition.

She continues: Not totally unrelated, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology would make a valiant attempt to bracket consciousness from subjectivity, (slightly akin to Mead’s “I” and “me”), while Heidegger would probably encourage us, as researchers, to recognize both but realize they will continually interact in any human encounter and shape our understanding of it. Don’t you agree Dr. N.?

Dr. N. rocks back in his chair. He then folds his left arm under his right and places his right index finger on his chin. After a moment of visual calculation, accentuated by a slight squinting of the eyes, he simply nods in agreement.

This discourse immediately invokes a look of bewilderment on the faces of the non-cohort people. They have just been thrown into a different language seemingly like Chinese. However, the original cohort members all just smile.

Sensing the tension, Dr. W. continues: This reminds me of the time I interviewed a crack-cocaine addict on death row…

The newbies are not amused. Clueless, they grin with a half-hearted, sickened smile. They realize that the roller coaster ride of their personal professional research just descended the initial slope and was propelled through an inverted loop by the previous professorial proclamation.

However, magically most of the cohort members understand what Dr. W. just said, but noticing the new students, they flash back to their first introductory summer course when they felt thrown into all the terminology associated with research methodology. In retrospect, many of them wished that more emphasis had been placed on the importance of their foundational understanding of these terms. Several have experienced tremendous frustration in realizing more than a superficial application of the philosophical underpinnings to their own paper presentations, articles and dissertations.

The lights dim slightly as B. Blended steps from behind the projected image. This time, she brings D. Distance with her. They stop in the classroom just long enough to encourage L. Local to join them down stage. After a brief embrace, all three continue to move toward the audience.

The lights on the classroom now fade to near black so that only the silhouettes of the students and instructors are visible. As the

threesome approaches the lighted area, they find a sofa and oversized chair available for their seating pleasure. This time there is no rhyme or reason to the order in which the three plop down. Instead of talking to the audience, they are now talking to each other, signifying a change in the way they are interacting. No longer is it through the technology. Instead it is as if they are used to being in one room. This may be the biggest change yet.

Once they take their seats, B. Blended begins: Did you see those new people?

D. Distance: Yeah, that one girl turned completely white when Dr. W. started talking. I heard her say, 'What in the world is Dr. W. talking about?' The new guy next her said, 'I have no idea.' Man, do I remember those days*. (They all laugh*.)

L. Local: I remember feeling that way, and sometimes I still do. In that first class, we were all forced into groups with people we didn't know and told to prepare an article for submission to UCEA (*University Council for Educational Administration).*

B. Blended: I wish all our professors had emphasized the importance of the various methodologies and research philosophies from the beginning. I still am uncertain about some of my research and writing processes.

L. Local: Me, too. I think there are several of us struggling with the writing process. But those new people sure have a lot to learn. Who are they anyway?

B. Blended: Dr. N told me that we would have some other people in this class. But to be honest, I'm a little protective of our group. We've built such a great rapport.

D. Distance: Yeah, me, too. In fact, I'm more than protective, I'm jealous of our time together as a group. We've become more like a family than I ever imagined. It's almost like a group therapy session every time we get together.

L. Local: Frankly, I'm a little concerned. Some of these folks were in one of our other classes and honestly, they don't have nearly the real-world experience most of us do. And a few of their academic work ethics did not measure up to the standards that Dr. N. and Dr. W. set for us from day one.

B. Blended: I was assigned to partner with a couple of master's students in Dr. H.'s summer course. Since they wouldn't get off high center on their parts, I told them to just stay out of the way. After redoing what little they had produced, I ended up basically doing the entire group project. I took the lead in our group presentation so I don't think our instructor ever knew the difference.

D. Distance: Maybe that's why Dr. W. started with her discourse tonight. She needed to jolt them into research reality. If we'd been in an emergency room with the paddles, I would have yelled, "CLEAR!" (*They all chuckle.*).

B. Blended: We've just all been through so much together. Some have gotten married and others have gotten divorced. A couple of our cohort members have changed their last names and I can think of one that wants to have a baby.

L. Local: Some of us have had grandkids. (*She smiles*.)

B. Blended continues: I know, isn't it incredible? Even our original instructors have undergone changes.

D. Distance: Yeah, I couldn't believe that Drs. A. and M. moved to different jobs. They were so great and I was sorry to see them go. I am also a bit worried about the raised level of stress.

L. Local: Dr. H. as well as Dr. Q have both gotten promotions.

B. Blended: Don't forget about Dr. T. and Dr. L. They both finished their degrees and are now teaching some of our classes.

L. Local: Even our own group has changed. Of the first 14, I can count at least 10 that have moved to different jobs since we first began.

D. Distance: Well R. Remote doesn't really count. He changes jobs at least every other year whether he needs to or not. (*They all*

laugh.) But seriously guys, the most visual change for me is this facility. It is beautiful. Did you see the double glass doors with “Pathways” etched in the surface?

L. Local: And how about the lounge area with all the bistro tables and chairs? Then there’s the mini kitchen off to one side. It’s like we’re in our own personal Starbucks.

B. Blended: All we need is an espresso machine. It is so much more “comfortable” and inviting than the old building. And to think we had a hand in designing it. Remember that first fall when our assignment was to dream up a new center for the Pathways program?

D. Distance: Yeah, we all got in our groups and had the opportunity to dream about what it should look like, what technology should be in it and how the flow should feel between the rooms. Our drawing was so crazy. I think R. Remote had a couple of gaming stations and a virtual reality meeting room.

L. Local: Remember? How could I forget? I’m the one that put these couches in the design, and am I glad that I did. Our group was really focused on creating spaces where formal and informal conversations could take place and foster community growth between the individuals that would pass through this center.

B. Blended: We can all take pride in our contribution to this amazing place. This is the first group to experience a PhD cohort through the Pathways program and we will forever have our mark here.

L. Local: We've left our mark here and on each other. I was just talking to some folks the other day about the early morning that several of us shared over at O. Onsite's office last semester. She was really struggling with a project and we just kept encouraging her. There were plenty of tears shed but it was almost like a cheerleading section. Sometimes I think we border on co-dependent.

D. Distance: There have been plenty of times when I called R. Remote and said, Okay. This is it. I'm done. And in his calming way he talked me down with a couple of "come on now, don't quits" and "you can do its".

B. Blended: Yeah, even Dr. N. and Dr. W. have encouraged me on more than one occasion to stick with it when I was ready to pack it up. I just love them. It's like she and Dr. N are a part of our cohort family.

L. Local to D. Distance: I know that always having to be offsite must have made this difficult to do.

D. Distance: Yeah. It's been a challenge. In fact, I was talking to M. Mixed just the other day about his move from distance to local participant. He shared with me that he wished he had gone in sooner. He

believes that he really missed getting to know some of the people. From his vantage point, there was a clear difference in the way he felt he was treated when he was at a distance versus when he was in the room. And he perceived that there was less pressure when he was on site. Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like to be there.

L. Local: I am finally starting to connect with you all out there. By this point, I feel like you are here when we have class. I think that while everyone on site may be closer to others in the room, the life-long bonds we share transcend distance.

D. Distance: Thanks. But M. Mixed told me about the Harrigan's experience *(a bar where fun was had by all).*

L. Local: Okay, so you're not completely there. Some things you do miss at a distance.

B. Blended: With all these changes, some of the most sweeping are the ones we are now empowered to enact at our local schools. D. Distance, I've already taken some of the extra hall space in the middle school and turned it into a computer lab. That was a great idea.

D. Distance: Thanks, B. And L., some of the ideas you've been sharing about empowering student voice have really forced me to change the way I work with both students and teachers. I'm striving to really hear from others and attempting to lay aside my personal agenda.

L. Local: Thanks, D. I've got to admit that watching you and B. step out and change jobs has underscored my own ability to do likewise. The encouragement that we get from our community is absolutely energizing.

D. Distance: As many times as we've read Fullan *(2008)*, DuFour *(2004),* and Leithwood, *(2005)* I feel like I should say PLC every time we get together. (*All laugh.*) I really feel that we have made tremendous strides toward becoming a virtual PLC. The group project I did with L. really helped me build a sense of community. But I was talking to R. Remote the other day and based on our conversation, I know that he would not agree with me. He's still upset about the connectivity woes he experienced from home on Marratech.

B. Blended: For me it's the relationships and professional discourse concerning our practice that makes us a professional learning community. Being able to learn from others with much more experience who have been in trenches helps me face every day.

L. Local: The PLC that we exist in certainly didn't happen overnight, and there have been many barriers to its development. But I'm beginning to realize that the Pathways Leadership team attempted to organize it this way from the beginning. The socialization of the weekend

format was difficult on the professors, but it forced socialization and bonding.

They all embrace as the audience hears the following informal interactions between all three characters as they move back towards the class. *As they walk away the audience can hear fading banter such as*: Thanks for your help with that project. Did you know that she was changing jobs, too? You've really been an encouragement to me. What did you do when that kid cussed you out the other day? Have you lost weight?

The comments continue as they head back upstage toward the rest of the class. L. Local then pulls out a chair and encourages D. Distance to spend the rest of that evening's class onsite. He smiles and sits down in the room with the other onsite people. B. Blended then disappears behind the projector screen as lights on the classroom come fully up and motion resumes.

D. Distance's on-screen face is absent from the projected image, as Dr. W. turns to address the distance people on the screen.

As she is turning, Dr. W. begins: You guys all know that D. Distance is researching the phenomenon of the shared cohort lived experience. D, why don't you tell the class a little about your project?

As she fully faces the screen, her tone changes: D. Distance, where are you? R. Remote, did D. leave? Have you seen him?

R. Remote: No ma'am, I don't think he left, but I haven't seen him.

Dr. W. addresses the screen again: B. Blended, have you seen D. Distance?

B. Blended smiles and says: I think he's still with us.

D. Distance leans toward L. Local and whispers: I know this is unprofessional, but let's see how long it takes her to figure out which "house" I'm in tonight. *(They both snicker.)*

L. Local responds: I'm timing it. Oh, and by the way, everyone is headed to Harrigan's afterwards for dinner. Do you want to come?

D. Distance: "You know it."

The stage fades to black as both smile.

Frame/Act Four – Saying Goodbye – Applying the lessons learned - Bringing it home.

This is our final scene and things are dramatically sparser than they were in any of the other three frames. Instead of a classroom with tables, cameras and a projector, and lots of people, there are simply three stools. No one is on the stage as the lights come up to about 25%. The spotlight comes up on the center downstage stool and surprisingly D. Distance is seated.

D. Distance begins: I know you didn't expect to see me here, but somehow I've become the center of this phenomenon as "I" have evolved into the central "me" of this drama. In the beginning, I came into the process as a martyr just to get a degree. But the interactions with other members have changed me. I really do care about what other members think of me in this group. There was no way that I could have imagined how the interactions I've experienced with other cohort members would reshape me. Looking back through the experience, I am not the same person that began this quest.

A couple of weeks ago, Dr. W. sent me an email and I replied with one of my typical pithy comments. Her note back to me was very abrupt. After reading it, I worried that I might have hurt her feelings. Amazingly, I was really upset and found myself apologizing. I never thought this process would impact me so dramatically.

D. Distance freezes and the lights dim. Next, the spotlight comes up stage right where B. Blended is seated.

B. Blended looks toward the audience and begins: Real world application has become a reality for me. My teachers are experiencing a revival of Pathways fires that were present several years prior to my arrival.

Since I moved to my new school, we've utilized several of the techniques that I experienced in our courses. We've done some jigsawing of articles and faculty-wide book studies. These discussions have resulted in a new focus on learning and results.

I see that we are making progress, but the development of a PLC in a rural area is difficult. Developing real trust in a town where everyone knows each other creates some difficult hurdles to surmount. Many of my teachers are tenured and have been here longer than I've been in education.

When we deal with the tough issues, people take it personally. Some of them seem so self-conscious or soft-shelled. After talking it over with everyone in the cohort, O. Onsite suggested that I model the process by opening myself up to a democratic, internal, anonymous teacher evaluation of my practice. This really fostered community building at my site. Unlike my master's degree, I feel that everything I've learned has been applicable.

B. Blended freezes and the lights dim. Finally, the spotlight comes up on stage left and L. Local. Unlike the first scene, she is now in blue jeans and a polo-style shirt.

L. Local begins: From the beginning, I knew the relationships with our community would be powerful. But the application of those

relationships and the process of democratic decision making now present in my local professional learning community has propelled my school to another level for both teachers and students. R. Remote always reminds us of his version of Carl Glickman's quote, "The primary purpose for education in its onset was to provide an educated citizenry that could participate in a discussion and debate around democracy and protect those who couldn't." This is coming to fruition for us.

I've learned so much from D. Distance about technology integration. Even though I've had to push my local techies occasionally, my teachers are now empowered to use tools like Google docs, SMART Boards and Skype. We've equipped each one with laptops and cameras. They are creating some incredible content. Just last week, the second graders and their teacher implemented an amazing web quest about our nation's president. When I walk down the hall and see Johnny, even with his struggles, fully engaged, I know that we are making a difference in student's lives.

Lights dim on B. Blended and everyone stands and picks up their individual stools.

All three characters approach the front edge of the stage where they place themselves on their stools all within an arm's reach of each other.

It appears to be an emotional gathering of these three students.

D. Distance begins: I was talking to some folks at the State Department of Education the other day about our group. We've been discussing the prospects of a virtual school and the lessons I've learned here about the importance of professional discourse and community building. We all agreed that focusing on individual student learning, objectively looking at the data, and creatively addressing student's needs when they struggle will definitely be central to any virtual group from the beginning.

B. Blended: It seems that our group is becoming more virtual all the time. In the last year, it is obvious that the Pathways leadership has been intentionally severing our cohort in preparation for our general exams and dissertation work.

L. Local: I know. That has been the hardest part for me. However, I am now bringing some of my teachers on site to Pathways events just so that they can experience the incredible research-based resources that are available. I'm even getting to work with some other educational leadership professionals from around the state through Pathways "Power-Up" program.

D. Distance: I'm glad we're here together for this final class meeting, because now that we're in the dissertation phase, I really don't

feel as much a part of the group. Sometimes it's like I'm totally out of the loop.

B. Blended: Me too. And my research topic has taken me a completely different direction than professional learning communities. We spent so much time on that topic of educational leadership that I'm worried I may not know as much about other topics as I need to. If there was anything I could change, I wish we had spent a little more time on opposing viewpoints.

L. Local: Even though I'm here, I still need a variety of tools to help with my research. A little more feedback on the writing process paired with an earlier emphasis on the importance of all that we've worked so hard on would have moved me more quickly through these final phases.

D. Distance: In talking to R. Remote the other night, he shared that his hopes for a degree with an emphasis in technology leadership were not completely realized. He really struggled toward the end with the challenges of overcoming the "distance." He suggested that if someone had been in the local classroom to assist the instructor and facilitate the students, classes might have gone more smoothly. In his mind, this is not the way he would recommend others pursue their degree.

But for me it was different. I was involved in a distance community of professionals. It was great that I had to have a laptop just to join in our lively discussions. Due to my geographical constraints, joining the courses via distance was truly the only way I could have ever been a part of your lives. I was more than willing to forgive instructional and technical issues just to be able to be a part of the process with all of you.

L. Local: The technology was intimidating at times, but I'm glad you all were there. Having the support, both in the room and virtually was the only way I could ever imagine going through this.

B. Blended: In my case, the support was amazing and the technology was cool, but the thing that built my sense of family was the small size of our group. Living the changes that we've all shared has not only grown our group closer, but it has also empowered me professionally.

Education is growth and growth is change. These changes, rooted in healthy relationships are the ideals that I'm bringing home to my faculty and staff.

She stands and gives a parting hug to L. Local and D. Distance. After a brief moment of silence, she gathers the stool upon which she has been seated and exits upstage through the darkness.

L. Local: Application into practice growing from cohort interactions proved to me that you can teach an old dog new tricks. *(They both smile.)* And my faculty loves the fresh ideas and fire that I'm bringing home. Who knows? After I retire, I may became a political activist for educational leaders.

D. Distance: Better yet, with your experience, you'd make a great addition to the Pathways leadership team.

L. Local: Thanks D. I'll miss you.

She stands, they embrace. L. Local now picks up her stool and exits stage right into the darkness.

D. Distance: You know whether this community was planned or unintentional; whether it was assumed to exist or prodded along by instructors; even if our professional learning community had no specific leader who held it all together: we all agree that our experience was special.

We came into this group from different educational backgrounds. We were former science teachers, math teachers, English teachers, elementary teachers, vocational technology teachers, music teachers and art teachers.

As we began, our passion for educational leadership and making a difference in student's lives were our common ground. But through our

pursuit, we realized something larger than any of us could have accomplished on our own.

We became a family, an imperfect, ever-evolving community of learners. Although there was plenty of ribbing between folks like R. Remote and O. Onsite, our community of learners was very focused on professional discourse. That has changed the face of education where we live. We became bonded through professional dialogue even though our geographic dispersion was great.

Even though M. Mixed is not really keen on using titles to describe his faculty's working relationship, he agreed that we achieved a virtual professional learning community. And as the old song says, "Breaking up is hard to do."

The transformed "me" that is seated before you at this moment as "I" is forever changed.

D. Distance sits silently for a moment as if he is soaking up the last of the experience and re-living it in his mind. As the downstage spotlight begins to fade, he quietly stands, picks up his stool and heads off into the darkness stage left.

Stage Notes/Summary

The evolution of self is evident in all co-researchers' lives regardless of their location. Through this script's development, from the

first day, each member arrived with a background in educational leadership and a predetermined idea of what the cohort process would entail. For some, technology integration expectations fell far short. For others, personal growth in technology use grew exponentially. The experience of individual interaction and the resultant growth of interpersonal relationships were dynamic for some and stultifying for others. The diverse instructors provided a kaleidoscope of instructional styles and varying levels of foci on cohesive community development. Scholarly research expectations became the academic rigor that challenged some to grow beyond their wildest imaginations, while for others this process created insurmountable angst. Regardless of each member's opinion about the process, all agree that at some level, personal change resulted more often than not for the better. And each is using the degree and the course material to become professors and better administrators in at least two states. These thirteen individuals will make exponential educational changes.

CHAPTER FIVE

ON BECOMING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Where Do We Go From Here?

In order to protect our co-researchers' privacy we could only "suggest" individual self-constructions through D. Distance's, L. Local's, and B. Blended's accounts. Yet their recounting, along with some of the side conversations, was illustrative. In fact, their spoken lines are derived from direct quotes provided by the co-researchers during the interview process. Their portrayal of the cohort society reflects some of the literature on virtual and local learning cohorts that suggests the potential roadblocks to learning community development (Brown, 2001; Schott, Chernish, Dooley, & Linder, 2003; Davies & Quick, 2001; Kim, 2000; Lally & Barrett, 1999; Lewis, 2005; Lock, 2004; Lovik-Powers 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Petrides, 2002; Rovai, 2002; Saltiel & Russo, 2001; Schwier, 2001, Scribner & Donaldson, 2001; Weisenberg & Willment, 2001).

The evolution of support and care had to mature between D. Distance, L. Local and B. Blended throughout the play. I tried to make this process apparent not only through their dialogue, but also in the way their characters are staged during the presentation. Act One begins with

what each feels is an amazing opportunity. But in Act Two, great divides surface between distance and local groups. B. Blended and Dr. H. try to reach out to D. Distance at the end of the act. This becomes a great change agent that initiates a mending of fences in Act Three when new careers, new facilities, past experiences, and outsiders draw the group together as they combine to give each other support. Despite some of the inconsistencies, many appreciated Pathways support as they move toward the culmination of the degree through individual general exams, their prospecti, and dissertation research/defense.

Relationships, technology, personal and professional change

Although our story has a relatively happy ending, things did get worse before they got better. Cross chatter was one bone of contention. L. Local saw D. Distance's groups' bantering chatter as unprofessional and refused to follow suit. As an educator/student, L. Local did not want to see herself as disruptive, so she reaffirmed her "good" educator image by associating with her perceived professors' needs for respect. When L. Local just turned off her computer, one member of the D. Distance collective perceived "me" as unappreciated and chose to ignore what appeared to be an affront. However, as evidenced by L. Local's feedback, there are various measures of acceptable and non-acceptable interactions.

For R. Remote and D. Distance, the socialization experienced through the chat jocularity was crucial to the development of relationships. Not all of these sidebar conversations were fluff. D. Distance recounted how an online side conversation with R. Remote had sparked an idea that he adapted and implemented locally. Later, he publicly gave credit for the idea to R. Remote in front of the entire cohort. In some instances, these exchanges allowed remote and local co-researchers to dive deeper into issues and make specific application to their circumstances. B. Blended pointed out that a lot of time gets wasted in the local classroom. And the ability to participate remotely provided an avenue to stay connected with the class and still maximize valuable time resources by not having to travel.

In the interviews, some co-researchers mentioned that choice of location by cohort members was somewhat gender specific. Each of the characters in the drama was compiled from responses of cohort members based on their primary locale for participation. The composite character of D. Distance represented responses from three men and one woman, all of whom classified themselves as remote or distance co-researchers. I derived L. Local's comments from interviews with four women who were self-described local students. B. Blended's play lines reflected the ideas of two men and three women. Some of these five

cohort members moved from remote to local during the cohort's evolution. Others moved from local to remote during the group's tenure. There was at least one who was truly blended throughout the degree. Collectively, L. Local and D. Distance grappled with the issue of gender equity in the educational leadership arena. Future studies should investigate the role that geographic placement has on such issues. Also, given choices concerning the modality of participation, on site, remote or mixed, is there a gender bias or need that drives the decision on the location of participation? And, did that setup create a sub-community gender bias either on the part of members or professors?

Irrespective of gender, I did observe that reacting to each other's trials and tribulations helped create an emergent PLC. For example, when L. Local, a principal, had school-based challenges or D. Distance experienced a demanding job change, most students' "I's" saw a need to respond empathetically (Mead, 1934/1967). Referring to a cynical reading of Goffman (1959), it may be that *nurturing* educators attended to others' personal needs, because they could not view themselves as calloused; but they may have reacted out of altruism. This process helped develop the affective domain of the PLC (Schulsser, 2003). In any case I believe their actions were intended to be positive and were well received. At the local level certain individuals' need for belonging

encouraged them to exchange personal information at social gatherings. L. Local recalled at least one local student who joined the cohort after the initial course and was grateful to be included. I observed most group members becoming invested in a community or at least a sub community of local or distance students.

Thus, community did evolve from conflict when communication stayed alive through chat supplemented with the live “face-to-face” video component. Studies on traditionally situated cohorts (Reynolds & Hebert, 1995; Twale & Kochan, 2000; Wesson, Holman, Holman & Cox, 1996) point to cohesive camaraderie developed through informal as well as formal conversations shared in the process. In this virtual professional learning community, “every member, every person must be an ‘educator’, available at a moment’s notice to share knowledge, wisdom, skills and perceptions with those in need” (Rose, 2004, p. 3).

These interactions shatter the walls of isolation and give strength to the development of shared purpose and vision as the process unfolds. The process creates a ground swell of energy empowering the collective voice of the cohort body. Rettie (2005) focuses specifically on the centrality of visual cues in providing a presentation of self to remote participants. In order to achieve project social presence and address transactional distance issues in a distance environment, facial

expression, posture and other non-verbal cues must be visible (Moore, 1993). The combination of written, verbal and visual interactions is the manner in which we create impressions in others (Goffman, 1959). The ensuing co-presence from all parties involved in the interaction serves to redefine “I” for each participant.

Yet I found that the onus for community advancement in virtual communities is greater than it is for students in a local setting. When certain distance students did not feel socially present, they just gave up (Brown, 2001). As one scholar explains, “Networked communities capable of supporting and nurturing successful learning collaborations do not just arise spontaneously within the electronic webs and circuits linking their members” (Kaye, 1991 as cited in Gabriel & MacDonald, 2002, p. 3). Unfortunately, in the cohort group, where community construction was not realized, some voices were silenced in the communicative process. This occurred when members disengaged in dialogue exchanges with remote colleagues. However, only one of the cohort co-researchers completed the process without recommending it to other potential students.

Interestingly, co-researchers representing all three cast members, D. Distance, B. Blended and L. Local, made reference to my involvement as a student facilitator throughout this process. They all pointed, at

some level, to the success of the process due to my interactions. One member of the D. Distance collective felt that my assistance should have been augmented by Pathways personnel situated onsite in the classroom. His suggestion was that this person be responsible for facilitating the process as it unfolded to provide a more interactive experience for remote co-researchers. Further study needs to examine whether this cohort's membership created the perfect storm of personality mix in order to achieve the virtual professional learning community or whether this flexible model could be replicated in other situations. There is no doubt that team learning between pairs of individuals, small groups and the group as a whole were central to the virtual professional learning community's development (Senge, 1990). However, the question remains: what is the ideal mix of technology, student choice, instructor modality and curriculum focus that could more effectively build a model community?

Faculty leadership and teaching styles

Cohort members did have several comments about the faculty's teaching style. For example, one instructor never showed her face to the distance camera. In one class when D. Distance had to hold up a card to be recognized, B. Blended brought it to the instructor's attention, even though by that time D. Distance had moved on to a different train of

thought. Much of the tension evidenced a lack of social presence, usually referring to technology issues (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Jelfs & Whitelock, 2000, Jolivette-Jones, 2007). Rettie's (2005) research is particularly helpful when understanding the importance and complexity of social presence as presentation of self. Using Goffman (1959) as a springboard she explains that, particularly in distance social situations, even visual presence is not enough to promote "the subjective, phenomenological experience of being present socially" (n.p.). As B. Blended recognized, synchronous video is a powerful addition to the virtual environment, but its availability alone does not assure community development. If left to chance, community will not develop. Most of the professors seemed unaware of this void (Jun, 2005; Kelly, 2004; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001).

Students were keenly aware of various levels of commitment the instructors had to the mixed setting and also to the PLC concept. D. Distance and B. Blended had several conversations about the need to have a standardized process for implementing scientifically based research in educational product implementation and training for teachers in how to implement emerging tools. B. Blended expressed frustration surrounding some local faculty members' unwillingness to become active members of their school's PLC. D. Distance suggested that instructors

could have done simple things to bolster cohort development such as adjusting the physical classroom setup and planning sequential course programming objectives that span multiple course offerings (Reynolds & Hebert, 1995). These cross-course objectives showcase group-centered topics based in the ideological dimensions in order to solicit “deeper responses” to issues (Schussler, 2003; Teitel, 1997, p. 79). This sequential process was evident when Pathways leadership professors were delivering content. But many times, other professors deferred to convenience and taught the content as they had so many times before.

Ironically, even when instructional situations were less than ideal, banding together to insist on some curricular alterations caused students to turn discomfort into a bonding experience, reshaping their “I” in terms of a collective “me.” For example Dr. W. listened to complaints about short due dates for assignments and adjusted them accordingly. She realized that adult cohorts create at least pockets of close ties that will insist on more and more democratic authority (Arduengo, 2005; Brookfield, 2003; Colin III & Heaney, 2001; Goldring & Schuermann, 2009; Maher, 2005; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001; Teitel, 1997). Cohort members appreciated other professors who realized the importance of their position and fostered stability, longevity and commonality among cohort members even through their personal struggles. This was most

evident in professors who taught multiple courses and was reflected in cohort members comments about how much they “loved” certain instructors. A couple even recognized them as surrogate cohort members (particularly in student-to-student interactions), and with some faculty members (in teacher-to-student interactions) the PLC affective dimension was realized (Schussler, 2003).

The most memorable instructional moments brought to light by the members reflected these collaborative learning opportunities. D. Distance vividly recalled the challenges of engaging between the sites to interact in the board game. R. Remote recounted an exploratory experience “in world” inside Second Life. Although it wasn’t all he/she had hoped for, it was a significant step away from the traditional didactic instruction that is commonplace in education. If facilitators of this mixed learning community, the EAD and Pathways, had been able to scaffold their delivery in a united front, utilizing constructivist techniques to promote both individual learner and community development, it might have made student collaboration an easier task. After all, “Learning in a community is about communicating, sharing and discovering through participation” (Collins, Mulholland, & Watt, 2001, p. 2). Where this happened, students constructed knowledge at a deeper level through collaborative team learning in this virtual environment (Palloff & Pratt,

2003; Senge, 1990/2006). This had to be fostered by “a social and cultural context within which members were participants in active learning environments” (Lock, 2004, p. 23).

The Big Picture

Despite the room for improvement, our members were generally willing to accept personal responsibility for pooling knowledge and goals for cohort co-researchers’ success as students and professionals, a key aspect of virtual and local PLCs. In this way, the cohort’s collective “I” reflected the Pathways “me,” the IDEALS framework (Schussler, 2003). The communications from remote and local co-researchers concerning these shared goals were central to this group and its development or lack of development toward a virtual professional learning community. In a variety of roles, many of the remote site co-researchers had been involved in distance environments before the cohort as student, technical assistant, presenter, trainer, facilitator or teacher. This helped them be more assertive in their involvement than they might have otherwise been. When opportunities presented themselves, such as the possibility for D. Distance and B. Blended to collaborate on a project, Dufour’s (2004) second “big idea” was realized in developing a collaborative culture that helped most members overcome geographic and social isolation. At

least L. Local and B. Blended perceived this focused dialogue as Pathways inspired.

Those students who did reconstruct themselves through others' looking glasses concurred with Brown's (2001) study that contends voluntary interactions beyond class requirements that promoted feelings of community and long-term associations. L. Local and B. Blended recounted numerous conversations that took place over dinner, after hours or at a member's school. These informal opportunities were not as readily available for remote co-researchers. However, they too benefitted from the side conversations that resulted in their own sub-community development. And at least two discussed phone conversations or meetings in other venues that fostered group cohesiveness. The changes of life reflected experientially between cohort members dramatically reshaped many individuals' "I's" to the resultant "me's" for most local, blended and remote co-researchers. For instance, tears welled in R. Remote's eyes when recalling an extended absence by a local member due to family problems.

Real world applicability

The process of conversing about local implementation of strategies assured all that the outcomes of this process were results oriented (DuFour, 2004). To that end, local implementation of these

concepts and the realization of transformational leadership became points of continued discussion throughout the cohort's existence. Some of the most engaging and in-depth discussions grew out of the collision between the ideological dimensions of implementing the IDEALS framework with the affective dimension of local personnel issues (Schussler, 2003).

Most members were able to point to specific strategies and ideas they incorporated in their local district environments as a direct result of a concept or an idea worked through in class. In many instances, Brown (2001) found that levels of community experienced were closely linked to levels of engagement in the course. This interplay reflected and benefited from the varied backgrounds that fostered tremendous growth in the cognitive dimension of our virtual PLC. All co-researchers recounted flash points of personal discourse in our environment that ushered them through the "I" to "me" transformation. Whether co-researchers commented negatively or positively on the dialogue that occurred or the instructional techniques that were used, they all agreed that the instructors did a good job facilitating classes in a challenging environment.

These experiences authentically engaged co-researchers in the learning processes. Harrell (2002), Huang (2002), and Jun (2005)

recommend leaders organize their distance-education around application for maximum effectiveness. There must be a “synergy between the social context and the professional context” (Collison, Elbaum, Haavind, & Tinker, 2000, pp. 6-7). For cohort members this became evident in much of the course work and conversations that directly changed their local practice. Ensuring that these doctoral students learned (DuFour, 2004), required authentic opportunities for application of concepts.

Implications for Appropriate Educational Leadership Doctoral Programs

Additionally, the cohort drama also addressed a very controversial educational administration issue. What is the appropriate practitioner oriented doctoral program: an EdD that sometimes requires alternative forms of a culminating project (not a dissertation) or a PhD advocating a traditionally oriented set of courses? There has been a “growing disjunction between the traditional purpose of the degree-training for research--and the actual use made of the doctorate” (Altbach, 2007, p. 68). While the dissertation is central to most doctoral programs, some institutions have decided to take a “revised” approach to the process. The Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations at the Peabody College of Vanderbilt University has restructured its doctoral program with a capstone project designed for students to engage “clients” in the development of an extensive action plan in response to a “Request for

Assistance" (Smrekar & McGraner, 2009). The educational leadership department at Saint Louis University has instituted a "team" approach to the completion of doctoral studies through the implementation of group-guided, problem-solving, researched-based school improvement projects (Everson, 2009). On the other end of the spectrum are universities dedicated to "reversing the downward spiral in educational leadership programs" offering EdD degrees (Guthrie & Marsh, 2009, p. 100). Suggested solutions include developing an "elite compact" between programs that provide exclusivity in the admissions process or implementing a "National Academy of Educational Leadership" that would become the de facto standard in preparing educational leadership professionals (Guthrie & Marsh, 2009, p. 104).

The PhD process has traditionally been considered the "quintessential research degree, aimed at preparing students for a career in academic, or in some fields, applied research" (Altbach, 2007, p. 68). At issue with this degree is a standards accrediting process that provides quality control at a national level. Some argue that tailored, cohort-based, weekend-structured programs fall short of traditional PhD expectations. However, these programs, with their student-centered focus, may address more relevant issues and may provide more flexibility in career path for non-traditional doctoral candidates. Many

times PhD degrees are so specialized that degree holders are finding employment outside academia very difficult (Altbach, 2007). The bottom line is that many are advocating some form of pedagogical training for these future professors as a part of the degree earning process.

Our group was comprised of seasoned educators who have functioned in roles ranging from classroom teacher to district level leader. Each has the pedagogical background necessary to organize and deliver content effectively while possessing the skills to transform educational environments. However, one member of the combined L. Local character commented that she might have never picked up a research journal or read the authors central to the IDEALS framework had it not been for this process. On the evening of her interview, she had just unloaded multiple boxes of books and journals that are now an active part of her library and practice. Like her, all of the cohort members are now professional research practitioners implementing research-based strategies in their daily practice and producing feedback to that implementation through both formal and informal research studies. This seems to be the perfect combination of real-world research. However, the EAD Pathways leadership, its institution and other research universities will have to examine its current “I” in light of where it envisions its future “me” in this process. The EAD will have to decide

whether or not this path of community construction in both a local and virtual environment is the most beneficial to them and the future authentic development of educational leadership professionals regardless of their geographic location.

What if educational administration departments spanning multiple universities could come together to marshal the summative power of their collective knowledge base? Beyond just a conference or a presentation gathering, what if they really begin the cross-pollination of these groups as a foundational learning community? These same technologies could be used to that end. An expansion of the current model under investigation should be explored. Bringing educational leadership departments from a variety of schools together in this virtual learning community environment is one avenue to grow the community exponentially. Trans-regional dialogue between school leadership representing rural and urban, wealthy and impoverished, or diverse and homogenous groups of students could create an opportunity for discourse and thought processes that might be absent otherwise (Borsa, Koltz, & Uzat, 1998). Emerging interactive technologies that can assist isolated professionals in projecting social presence and in forming virtual communities of professional learners must be exploited by universities preparing tomorrow's educational leaders.

Our cohort benefitted from the best of both the virtual and local researcher and practitioner worlds, evidenced in the reconstructed "me's." Members came to believe that they could not only be PLC change agents within their various professional contexts, but also in the college professorate (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Maher, 2005; Mead, 1934/1967). At Pathways insistence, conducting and presenting their research exposed several members to practitioner and professorial images ("me's") that they then used to view themselves as scholars or researcher practitioners. This process continues as cohort members are still actively engaged in the formal presentations of their research findings while at least one is currently pursuing a professoriate.

Summary

This study is positioned between the work of Moore (1994) in the 1990s and the tools that provide next generation synchronous opportunities. Studies from that era are typically done with two groups of individuals: one at a send site and one at a receive site much like the prior experience of D. Distance. While effective at delivering a traditional education model, it did little to foster individual community building interactions. The tools utilized in this cohort's tenure provided students an opportunity to participate live in class from onsite, to local school sites, to homes. Maximizing this technology helped each member,

regardless of location, to overcome isolation. The learning experience had the opportunity to change into an individual-centric communal environment.

This investigation bridges the gap between traditional site-based professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and virtual communities (Jonassen, 1999; Luppicini, 2003) . This group was not confined to one geographic location and consequently did not have a complete knowledge of all the intricacies of each environment. However, many of the isolating issues dealt with by these educational leaders are cross-cultural. The teacher and student names varied from site to site, but the problems were, in many instances, the same. In wrestling with issues, the one most commonly experienced of DuFour's (2004) big ideas was is the collaborative culture. Many of the discussions were focused on local student results, strategies for overcoming these issues and ideas for adaptation and adoption by other cohort members. These discussions helped us develop toward a community of practice.

As a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), the joint enterprise of degree pursuit honed by Pathway's IDEALS was realized most effectively in classes where students were able to experience mutual engagement between themselves and the instructors. These classes

were democratic, discussion-centered and discourse laden. Again, various technologies facilitated this, but synchronous video was central to all. The resulting shared repertoire provided a common ground for sharing when the community moved to an entirely asynchronous space.

As a virtual community the more engaging discussion threads, email exchanges and experiences in Second Life grew from the relationship foundations laid during more traditionally delivered coursework. This study confirms that community building can be experienced in a mixed environment between local and remote participants. However, these environments do not simply happen--they are the result of planning and nurture. The struggles experienced in Act Two of the drama as smaller sub-groupings of cohort members developed due to a lack of communication clearly illustrate this point. However, when optional delivery modalities are provided, students are willing to meet the process, work together, and are able to overcome isolation.

Educational leadership groups such as Pathways that are prepared to adopt a structure of community in their own practice and provide flexibility in its implementation can realize this structure replicated among their students and modeled within the schools that those students serve. In this study, by student convenience or necessity,

technology drove that interaction. Fortunately, Pathways seized the opportunity to meet the needs of educational leaders. However, this zeal is not currently widespread.

A recent study by Richardson and McLeod (2009) points to an "appalling" trend in studies centered on educational technology leadership (p. 22). "Given the disparity between the societal impact of digital technologies, their increased presence in P-12 schools, and the meager literature base that exists, it is hard to conclude anything other than that faculty are strikingly behind the general population when it comes to understanding the importance of digital technologies" (p. 23). Educational leadership faculties must move to bridge this gap, not only with research but also with practice. The individuals of this cohort were privileged to work with such a group. They are now rich in their experiences with the technology and, as cited in Act Four, diverse in their own local application of technology integration. Each has grown in his/her capacity and capability of technology integration.

At the individual level, with a few exceptions, this group changed for the better. Hopefully, this narrative encourages those administrators who may form a cohort such as ours to learn from the instructors' inadequacies when dealing with the hidden curriculum (Kosak, Manning, Dobson, Rogerson, Cotman, & Colaric, 2004; McLaughlin, 1999). Only

then can they attend to the *students'* technology and socialization concerns. This entails keeping up with the events in students' lives both within and without class settings that over the span of years impact their performance and feelings of inclusion or seclusion.

Despite these challenges, most of our cohort members addressed many of the communication problems themselves and forged collegial relationships that helped shape their maturing professional, scholarly, and sometimes personal lives. Thus, to a substantial degree, my study confirms that most cohort members were able to work through conflicts and reconstruct their "I's" in terms of each other's positive reflections of "me" (Mead, 1934/1967). Although the co-researchers' perpetual self-cycling did birth anxiety and conflict (Miller & Irby, 1999), most were able to calm down and persevere, more together than alone.

The togetherness presented in the dramaturgical phenomenon begs for the opportunity of an actual performance. Would your experience as a reader be further enhanced by a viewable production of this play either live or as a supplemental recording? I wrote Chapter One to punctuate the cry for help from the educators who face isolation in their professional lives. It became the marquee for my theatre or the playbill cover that was used to grab your attention and invite you on the cohort journey. I set the supporting framework for the stage by providing

Chapter Two's lengthy discussion surrounding professional learning communities, socialization, and educational leadership. This discussion's purpose was to nail the wood of the theoretical framework and construct a presentable surface on which to perform. These truths were foundational to the understandings we students gleaned, the interactions we experienced and the commonalities we shared in our individual and collective transformations from "I" to "me" or "we" to "us."

Chapter Three provided the orchestral overture outlining the individual transformative power of the phenomenological process. During this overture, I lowered the backdrop of virtual communities into place and illuminated the ellipsoidal lights of departments of educational leadership in order to finish setting the stage for the voices of Chapter Four. The struggles and successes of other virtual communities situated primarily in computer-based mediation provided the canvas for our "mixed" environment. But the illuminative power of the internal challenges currently realized by departments of educational leadership truly provided a narrow beam within which our play could be seen.

Given resources, Chapter Four could have existed on stage or on screen. As an audience member you would have been momentarily removed from your world and immersed into ours. Or, you could have become a participant in our drama. Possibilities now exist through

interactive portals such as Second Life that could provide the recipient of this research flexibility in the perspective through which s/he experiences the story. You could have walked into our classroom, sat in our seats, and shared our experience. In either instance, at a play or “in world,” you too could have heard the expression in B. Blended’s voice, seen the body language of L. Local’s disgust, and felt the passion of D. Distance’s pleas to gain attention. Our goal in this entire presentation is to be a change agent for your, the reader’s, lived experience. As we have emerged into a different “me,” this too, is our hope for you.

REFERENCES

Aho, J.A. (1998). *The things of the world: A social phenomenology.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Alexander, B.K. (2005). Performance ethnography: The reenacting and inciting of culture. In N.K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 411-441). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Allen, M., Mabry, E., Mattrey, M., Bourhis, J., Titsworth, S., & Burrell, N. (2004). Evaluating the effectiveness of distance learning: A comparison using meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication, 54*(3)*,* 402-420. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02636.x

Altbach, P.G. (2007). Doctoral education: Present realities and future trends. In J.J.F. Forest & P.G. Altbach (Eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education,* (pp. 65-81). New York: Springer.

Anderson, R., & Dexter, S. (2005). School technology leadership: An empirical investigation of prevalence and effect. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41*(1), 49-82. doi: 10.1177/0013161X04269517

Applegate, P.J., (2008). *The qualities that differentiate high-achieving and low-achieving high-poverty rural high schools: A transformative mixed methods study.* (Doctoral dissertation,

University of Oklahoma, 2008). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3304447)

Arduengo, N. (2005). *Learning together: Understanding the cohort experience of an online graduate degree program*. (Doctoral dissertation, Fielding Graduate University, 2005). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3184794)

Atkinson, L. (2005). *Schools as learning organizations: Relationships between professional learning communities and technology-enriched learning environments*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2005). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3163444)

Avolio, B., & Bass, B. (Eds.). (2002). *Developing potential across a full range of leadership: Cases on transactional and transformational leadership.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baab, L. (2004, August). *Investigating the value of live video and audio in online learning.* Paper presented at the 20th annual conference on Distance Teaching and Learning, Madison, WI.

Baldwin, J., Faulkner, S., Hecht, M., & Lindsley, S. (2005). *Redefining culture: Perspectives across disciplines.* New York: Routledge.

Barnett, B.G., Basom, M.R., Yerkes, D.M., & Norris, C.J. (2004). Cohorts in educational leadership programs: Benefits, difficulties, and the

potential for developing school leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 36*(2), 255-282.

Barnett, H. (2001). *Successful K-12 technology planning: Ten essential elements.* Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology. (ERIC No. ED457858). Access: http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS26291

Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations.* New York: Free Press.

Bass, B., & Steidlmeier, P. (1998). *Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership*. Retrieved from https://www.vanguard.edu/uploadedFiles/Faculty/RHeuser/ETHICS,%20MORAL%20CHARACTER%20AND%20AUTHENTIC%20TRANSFORMATIONAL%20LEADERSHIP.pdf

Batte, M., Forster, D., & Larson, D. (2003). An assessment of student acceptance and performance in distance education with two-way interactive compressed video. *Review of Agricultural Economics, 25*(2), 524-539. doi: 10.1111/1467-9353.00153

Becker, C. (1992). *Living and relating: An introduction to phenomenology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1995). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Fitzhenry & Whitside.

Berge, Z.L., & Collins, M.P. (Eds.). (1995). Computer-mediated communication and the online classroom in distance learning. *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine, 2*(4), 6. Retrieved from http://www.ibiblio.org/cmc/mag/1995/apr/berge.html

Björk, L., & Kowalski, T. (2005). *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Blase J., & Blase, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 130-141.

Board of Regents, University of Oklahoma. (2007). *Educational Administration, Curriculum and Supervision*. Retrieved December 18, 2008, from http://education.ou.edu/departments_1/eacs/

Borsa, J., Koltz, J., & Uzat, R. (1998, November). *Utilizing distance learning and the case study method to enhance instruction between two universities*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Boyer, N., Maher, P., & Kirkman, S. (2006). Transformative learning in online settings: The use of self-direction, meta-cognition, and

collaborative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education, 4*(4), 335-361. doi: 10.1177/1541344606295318

Bozeman, W., & Spuck, D. (1991). Technological competence: Training educational leaders. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education, 23*(4),16.

Brissett, D., & Edgley, C. (1990). *Life as theater: A dramaturgical sourcebook* (2nd ed.). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Brookfield, S.D. (2003). A critical theory perspective on accelerated learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 97*, 73-82.

Brooks-Young, S. (2002). *Making technology standards work for you: A guide for school administrators*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

Brown, R. (2001). The process of community-building in distance learning classes. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning, 5*(2), 18-35. Retrieved from http://sloan-c.org/publications/jaln/v5n2/pdf/v5n2_brown.pdf

Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership.* New York: Harper & Row.

Burns, J.M. (2003). *Transforming leadership.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Butcher, J., & Sieminski, S. (2006). The challenge of a distance learning professional doctorate in education. *Open Learning, 21*(1), 59-69. doi: 10.1080/02680510500472239

Calhoun, K. J. (2004). *Superintendent change leadership strategies associated with successful technology integration in public school districts*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of La Verne, 2004). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3150303)

Carey, K., & Dorn, S. (1998). Overcoming obstacles through use: A case study. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 76,* 67-78. doi: 10.1002/tl.7605

Carr-Chellman, A., & Duchastel, P. (2000). The ideal online course. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 31*(3), 229-241. doi: 10.1111/1467-8535.00154

Celsi, R.L., & Wolfinbarger, M. (2002). Discontinuous classroom innovation: Waves of change for marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education, 24*(1), 64-72. doi: 10.1177/0273475302241008

The CEO Forum on Education and Technology, Year One. (1997). *School technology and readiness report: From pillars to progress.* Washington, DC: Author. (ERIC No. ED416819). Access: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDet

ails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED416819&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED416819

Chemers, M., & Ayman, R. (Eds.). (1993). *Leadership theory and research: Perspectives and directions.* San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Christensen, C., Johnson, C.W., & Horn, M.B. (2008). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Christensen-Feldner, L.M. (2003). *The role of the school administrators in supporting teachers in the integration of educational technology into K-12 classrooms.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Dakota, 2003). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3103734)

Coleman, J.S., Campbell, E.Q., Hobson, C.J., McPartland, J., Mood, A.M., Weinfeld, F.D., et al. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity.* Washington, DC: US Department of Health, Education & Welfare, Office of Education.

Colin, S.A.J., III, & Heaney, T.W. (2001). Negotiating the democratic classroom. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 91,* 29-37.

Collins, J.C. (2005). *Good to great and the social sectors: A monograph to accompany Good to Great.* New York: HarperCollins.

Collins, T., Mulholland, P., & Watt, S. (2001). *Using genre to support active participation in learning communities*. The Proceedings of the European Conference on Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (Euro CSCL'2001), Maastricht, Holland, pp. 156-164.

Collison, G., Elbaum, B., Haavind, S., & Tinker, R. (2000). *Facilitating online learning: Effective strategies for moderators.* Madison, WI: Atwood.

Cooley, C.H. (1922). *Human nature and the social order.* New York: Scribner.

Costa, A., & Garmston, R. (2002). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools* (2nd ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Cothrel, J., & Williams, R. (1999). On-line communities: Helping them form and grow. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 3*(1), 54-60. doi: 10.1108/13673279910259394

Creighton, T.B. (2002). *The principal as technology leader.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Culp, K., Honey, M., & Mandinach, E. (2005). A retrospective on twenty years of education technology policy. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 32*(3), 279-307.

Cyrs, T. (Ed.). (1997). *Teaching and learning at a distance: What it takes to effectively design, deliver, and evaluate programs.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Davidson, S., Nail, M., Ferguson, B., Lehman, M., & Hare, R. (2001, February). *Investigating the significance of the role of the educational technologist in middle school environments: A qualitative study.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Davies, T., & Quick, D. (2001). Reducing distance through distance learning: The community college leadership program at Colorado State University. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 25,* 607-620. doi: 10.1080/106689201316880786

Davis, G. (2008). *The development and field test of the Education Technology Leadership Assessment survey*. (Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University, 2008). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3307045)

deMarrais, K. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. In K. deMarrais & S. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for*

research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences (pp. 51-68). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Demetriadis, S., Barbas, A., Molohides, A., Palaigeorgiou, G., Psillos, D., Vlahavas, I., et al. (2003). "Cultures in negotiation": Teachers' acceptance/resistance attitudes considering the infusion of technology into schools. *Computers & Education, 41*(1), 19-37. doi: 10.1016/S0360-1315(03)00012-5

Donmoyer, R., & Yennie-Donmoyer, J. (1995). Data as drama: Reflections on the use of readers theater as a mode of qualitative data display. *Qualitative Inquiry, 1*(4)*,* 402-428.

Drago-Severson, E., & Pinto, K. (2006). School leadership for reducing teacher isolation: Drawing from the well of human resources. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 9*(2), 129-155. doi: 10.1080/13603120500508080

Dreyfus, H. (2001). *On the Internet.* New York: Routledge.

Dufour, R. (1999). Help wanted: Principals who can lead professional learning communities. *NASSP Bulletin, 83*(604), 12-17. doi: 10.1177/019263659908360403

Dufour, R. (2004). What is a "Professional Learning Community"? *Educational Leadership, 61*(8), 6-11.

DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (Eds.). (2005). *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Dussault, M., & Barnett, B.G. (1996). Peer-assisted leadership: Reducing educational managers' professional isolation. *Journal of Educational Administration, 34*(3), 5-14. doi: 10.1108/09578239610118848

Eaker, R., Dufour, R., & Dufour, R.B. (2002). *Getting started: Reculturing schools to become professional learning communities.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Earle, R. (2002). The integration of instructional technology into public education: Promises and challenges. *Educational Technology, 42*(1), 5-13.

Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* London: Sage.

Ellison, J., & Hayes, C. (2006). *Effective school leadership: Developing principals through cognitive coaching*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Epitropaki, O. (2002). What is transformational leadership? [Electronic Version]. Retrieved October 17, 2008, from

http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/11/56/transformational.pdf

Ertmer, P.A., Bai, H., Dong, C., Khalil, M., Park, S.H., & Wang, L. (2002). Online professional development : Building administrators' capacity for technology leadership. *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education, 19*(1), 5-11. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED475930

Etzioni, A., & Etzioni, O. (1999). Face-to-face and computer-mediated communities: A comparative analysis. *The Information Society, 15*(4), 241-248.

Everson, S.T. (2009). A professional doctorate in educational leadership: Saint Louis University's Ed.D. program. *Peabody Journal of Education, 84*, 86-99. doi: 10.1080/01619560802679740

Filmer, A. (2008). Minding the gap: The performer in the wings. *New Theatre Quarterly, 24*, 158-169.

Flanagan, L., & Jacobsen, M. (2003). Technology leadership for the twenty-first century principal. *Journal of Educational Administration, 41*(2), 124-142. doi: 10.1108/09578230310464648

Ford, L., Branch, G., & Moore, G. (2008). Formation of a virtual professional learning community in a combined local and distance

doctoral cohort. *Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education, 16*(2), 161-185.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2003). *Change forces with a vengeance.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Fullan, M. (2008). *What's worth fighting for in the principalship?* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Franks, D.D., & Gecas, V. (1992). Autonomy and conformity in Cooley's self-theory: The looking-glass self and beyond. *Symbolic Interaction, 15*(1), 49-68.

Furman, G.C. (1998). Postmodernism and community in schools: Unraveling the paradox. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 34*(3), 298-328. doi: 10.1177/0013161X98034003003

Gabriel, M.A., & MacDonald, C.J. (2002). Working together: The context of teams in an online MBA. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, 28*(2). Retrieved from http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/73/69

Gardner, J.W. (1990). *On leadership.* New York: Free Press.

Garland, D., & Martin, B.N. (2004, November). *Cohorts, learning styles, online courses: Are they important when designing leadership programs?* Roundtable presentation at the 2004 Annual Conference UCEA, Kansas City, MO.

Garrison, D., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2/3), 87-105. doi: 10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6

Garrison, W.A. (2003). Democracy, experience, and education: Promoting a continued capacity for growth. *Phi Delta Kappan, 84*(7), 525-529.

Gibson, I. (2001). The role of school administrators in the process of effectively integrating educational technology into school learning environments: New research from the Mid-West. In C. Crawford et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference 2001* (pp. 502-506). Chesapeake, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.

Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 28*(2), 235-261.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* New York: Doubleday.

Goldring, E., & Schuermann, P. (2009). The changing context of K-12 education administration: Consequences for Ed.D. program design and delivery. *Peabody Journal of Education, 84*(1), 9-43. doi: 10.1080/01619560802679583

Goodfellow, R. (2005). Virtuality and the shaping of educational communities. *Education, Communication & Information, 5*(2), 113-129. doi: 10.1080/14636310500185802

Grossman, P., Wineburg, S., & Woolworth, S. (2001). Toward a theory of teacher community. *Teachers College Record, 103*(6), 942-1012.

Gunwardena, C., & Zittle, F. (1997). Social presence as a predictor of satisfaction within a computer-mediated conferencing environment. *The American Journal of Distance Education, 11*(3), 8-25.

Guthrie, J.W., & Marsh, D.D. (2009). Strategies for elevating the public and professional regard of the Ed.D. *Peabody Journal of Education, 84*(1), 100-106. doi: 10.1080/01619560802679773

Hall, G., & Hord, S. (2001). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Halling, S. (2002). Making phenomenology accessible to a wider audience. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 33*(1), 19-38. doi: 10.1163/156916202320900400

Hanushek, E. (1998). Conclusions and controversies about the effectiveness of school resources. *Federal Reserve Bank of New York Economic Policy Review, 4*(1), 11-28.

Harrell, K. (2002). Reducing high anxiety: Responsive library services to off-campus nontraditional students. *Journal of Library Administration, 37*(3/4), 355-365.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927)

Heider, K.L. (2005, June 23). Teacher isolation: How mentoring programs can help. *Current Issues in Education, 8*(14). Retrieved from http://cie.ed.asu.edu/volume8/number14

Heller, M., & Firestone, W. (1995). Who's in charge here? Sources of leadership for change in eight schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 96*(1), 65-86.

Hess, F., & Kelly, A. (2005). An innovative look, a recalcitrant reality: The politics of principal preparation reform. *Educational Policy, 19*(1), 155-180. doi: 10.1177/0895904804270776

Hipp, K.K., Huffman, J.B., Pankake, A.M., & Olivier, D.F. (2008). Sustaining professional learning communities: Case studies. *Journal of Educational Change, 9*(2), 173-195. doi: 10.1007/s10833-007-9060-8

Holland, P. (2001). Professional development in technology: Catalyst for school reform. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 9*(2), 245-267.

Hord, S., & Rutherford, W. L. (1998). Creating a professional learning community: Cottonwood Creek School. *Issues…about Change, 6*(2), 1-8.

Howard, M.P. (2002). *Perceptions of isolation among Georgia high school principals.* (Doctoral dissertation, Georgia Southern University, 2002). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3068618)

Huang, H. (2002). Toward constructivism for adult learners in online learning environments. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 33*(1), 27-37. doi: 10.1111/1467-8535.00236

Huffman, J.B., & Hipp, K.K. (2003). *Reculturing schools as professional learning communities.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.

Huffman, J.B., & Jacobson, A.L. (2003). Perceptions of professional learning communities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 6*(3), 239-250.

Hughes, M., & Zachariah, S. (2001). An investigation into the relationship between effective administrative leadership styles and the use of technology. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning, 5*(5).

Husserl, E. (1963). *Ideas: A general introduction to pure phenomenology* (W.R.B. Gibson, Trans.). New York: Collier Books. (Original work published 1913).

Husserl, E. (1965). *Phenomenology and the crisis of philosophy* (Q. Lauer, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1910-1911).

Husserl, E. (1975). *The Paris lectures* (P. Koestenbaum, Trans., 2nd ed.). The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1950).

International Society for Technology in Education. (2007). *NETS for Students 2007*. Retrieved October 4, 2008, from http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NETS/ForStudents/2007Standards/NETS_for_Students_2007.htm

Jelfs, A., & Whitelock, D. (2000). The notion of presence in virtual learning environments: What makes the environment “real”? *British Journal of Educational Technology, 31*(2), 145-152. doi: 10.1111/1467-8535.00145

Jewell, M.J. (1998). The art and craft of technology leadership. *Learning and Leading withTechnology, 26*(4), 46-47.

Jolivette-Jones, B. (2007). Emerging research questions: Social presence and its relevancy to cognitive and affective learning in an asynchronous distance-learning environment. In T. Bastiaens & S. Carliner (Eds.)., *Proceedings of World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education 2007* (pp. 1602-1609). Chesapeake, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.

Jonassen, D., Peck, K., & Wilson, B. (1999). *Learning with technology: A constructivist perspective.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jude-York, D., Davis, L., & Wise, S. (2000). *Virtual teaming: Breaking the boundaries of time and place.* Menlo Park, CA: Crispin.

Jun, J. (2005). Understanding e-dropout? *International Journal on E-Learning, 4*(2), 229-240.

K20 Center. (2008). *Vision and purpose.* Retrieved July 13, 2008, from http://k20network.ou.edu/about/vision

Kaupins, G. (2002). Trainer opinions of selected computer-based training methods. *Journal of Education for Business, 77*(6), 319-324.

Kelly, H. (2004). Enhancing interpersonal interaction in online courses. *Educational Technology, 44*(1), 53-6.

Kim, A. (2000). *Community-building on the Web: Secret strategies for successful online communities.* Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.

King, D. (2002). The changing shape of leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 61-63.

Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to androgogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge Books.

Knowles, M., Holton, E., & Swanson, R. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (5th ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing.

Kosak, L., Manning, D., Dobson, E., Rogerson, L., Cotman, S., Colaric, S., et al. (2004). Prepared to teach online? Perspectives of faculty in the University of North Carolina system. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 7*(3), 1-13.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2002). *The leadership challenge* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kozloski, K. (2006). *Principal leadership for technology integration: A study of principal technology leadership.* (Doctoral dissertation,

Drexel University, 2006). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3209799)

Kozma, R. (2005). National policies that connect ICT-based education reform to economic and social development. *Human Technology, 1*(2), 117-156.

Lally, V., & Barrett, E. (1999). Building a learning community on-line: Toward socio-academic interaction. *Research Papers in Education: Policy and Practice, 14*(2),147-163.

Lambert, L. (2002). Beyond instructional leadership: A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 37-40.

Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lamkin, M.L. (2006). Challenges and changes faced by rural superintendents. *Rural Educator, 28*(1), 17-24.

Leichtentritt, R.D., & Rettig, K.D. (2001). The construction of the good death: A dramaturgy approach. *The Journal of Aging Studies, 15*(1), 85-103.

Leithwood, K. (2005). *Educational leadership* (Rev. ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, Laboratory for Student Success.

Leithwood, K., & Duke, D. (1999). A century's quest to understand school leadership. In J.L. Murphy, & K.S. Louis (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2005). A review of transformational school leadership research: 1996 to 2005. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 4*(3), 177-200.

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003, April). *What do we already know about successful school leadership?* Paper prepared for the AERA Division A Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership and presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Lewis, M. (2005). *Transformative learning communities at a distance: A single-site qualitative case study.* (Doctoral dissertation, Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center, 2005). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3174542)

Lock, J. (2004). *Building and sustaining virtual communities.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Calgary, 2004). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT NQ93484)

Lovik-Powers, M. (2003). *Student satisfaction with an online graduate program.* (Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University,

2003). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3114863)

Lovitts, B.E., & Nelson, C. (2000). The hidden crisis in graduate education: Attrition from Ph.D. programs. *Academe, 86*(6), 44-50.

Luppicini, R. (2003). Categories of virtual learning communities for educational design. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 4*(4), 409-416.

Machtmes, K. (1998). *A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of telecourses in adult education.* (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, 1998). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 9921107)

Maher, M.A. (2004). What really happens in cohorts. *About Campus, 9*(3), 18-23.

Maher, M.A. (2005). The evolving meaning and influence of cohort membership. *Innovative Higher Education, 30*(3), 195-211. doi: 10.1007/s10755-005-6304-5

Marsh, C., & Richards, K. (2001). Social inclusion and professional development: Communities of learners—raising some questions. *Journal of In-service Education, 27*(3), 447-463.

McAllister, C., & Ting, E. (2001, April). *Analysis of discussion items by males and females in online college courses.* Paper presented at

the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.

McKenzie, J. (1998). Technology's webs. *School Administrator, 55*(4), 6-10.

McKenzie, J. (2002). Leading by example: The high touch high tech principal. *From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal, 11*(10). Retrieved from http://www.fno.org/sum02/principal.html

McLaughlin, E. (1999). *The perceived importance of instruction/instructor, technology, course management and coordination characteristics for student satisfaction in telecourse videoconferenced classrooms.* (Doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1999). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 9940907)

McLeod, S. (2003). *National district technology coordinators study: Technical report 1: Personal and professional characteristics.* Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, United States Department of Education.

Mead, G.H. (1934). The "I" and the "me." In C.W. Morris (Ed.), *Mind, self and society, from the standpoint of a social behaviorist* (pp. 173-178). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Means, B., Blando, J., Olson, K., Middleton, T., Morocco, C. C., Remz, A. R., et al. (1993). *Using technology to support education reform*. Washington, DC: Office of Research, U.S. Department of Education. (ERIC No. ED364220)

Meyer, M.J. (2008). Transcendence: The journey from hard data into artistic depiction—Theatre as representation. In S.G. Kouritzin, N.A.C. Piquemal, & R. Norman (Eds.), *Qualitative research: Challenging the orthodoxies in standard academic discourse(s)* (pp. 83-102). New York: Routledge.

Mienczakowski, J. (1997). Theatre of change. *Research in Drama Education, 2*(2),159-172.

Miller, R. (2007). *Communities of practice: The utility of web-based communication tools in assisting new, adult, online learners' transition to formal distance education.* (Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2007). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3296477)

Miller, W.D., & Irby, B.J. (1999). An inquiry into the exigency of a beginning doctoral cohort in educational leadership. *College Student Journal, 33*(3), 358-363.

Moller, L. (1998). Designing communities of learners for asynchronous distance education. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 46*(4), 115-122.

Moore, M.G. (1993). Theory of transactional distance. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education.* London: Routledge.

Moore, M.G., & Kearsley, G. (2005). *Distance education: A systems view* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Moran, D. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology.* London: Routledge.

Morrissey, M.S. (2000). *Professional learning communities: An ongoing exploration.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Motamedi, V. (2001). A critical look at the use of videoconferencing in United States distance education. *Education, 122*(2), 386-394.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Murphy, E., & Rodriquez, M. (2008). Revisiting transactional distance theory in a context of web-based high-school distance education. *Journal of Distance Education, 22*(2),1-14.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform.* Retrieved

September 6, 2008, from http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/title.html

Newmann, F., & Wehlage, G. (1995). *Successful school restructuring: A report to the public and educators.* Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. (2005). *Critical issue: Using technology to improve student achievement.* Napierville, IL: Learning Point Associates. (ERIC No. ED489521)

Northhouse, P.G. (1997). *Leadership: Theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

November, A. (2001). *Empowering students with technology.* Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development.

Odin, S. (1996). *The social self in Zen and American pragmatism.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

O'Hair, M.J., McLaughlin, H.J., & Reitzug, U.C. (2000). *Foundations of democratic education.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

O'Hair, M.J., Williams, L., Wilson, S., & Applegate, P. (2009). The K20 model for systemic educational change and sustainability: Addressing social justice in rural schools and implications for educators in all contexts. In P.A. Woods and G.J. Woods (Eds.), *Alternative education for the 21st Century: Philosophies,*

Approaches, Visions (pp. 15-30). Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Orbe, M. (1996). Laying the foundation for co-cultural communication theory: an inductive approach to studying "non-dominant" communication strategies and the factors that influence them. *Communication Studies, 47*(3), 157-176.

Osborne, J.W. (1994). Some similarities and differences among phenomenological and other methods of psychological qualitative research. *Canadian Psychology, 35*(2),167-189.

Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in cyberspace.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (2003). *The virtual student: A profile and guide to working with online learners.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluative methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pelto, P.J., & Pelto, G.H. (1978). *Anthropological research: The structure of inquiry.* Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Pendery, D. (2008). The first and second attentions of dramaturgy: A phenomenological analysis. *National Central University Journal of Humanities, 33*, 187-216.

Petrides, L. (2002). Web-based technologies for distributed (or distance) learning: Creating learning-centered educational experience in the higher education classroom. *International Journal of Instructional Media, 29*(1), 69-77.

Protheroe, N. (2005). Technology and student achievement. *Principal, 85*(2), 46-48.

Quinn, D. (2002). The impact of principal leadership behaviors on instructional practice and student engagement. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(4/5), 447-467.

Rettie, R. (2005, September). *Social presence as presentation of self*. Paper presented at the 8th Annual International Workshop on Presence, London, England.

Reynolds, K.C. and Hebert, F. T. (1995). Cohort formats and intensive schedules: Added involvement and interaction. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 43*(3), 34-41.

Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Richardson, J., & McLeod, S. (2008). Are we there yet?: A study of technology leadership. Paper presented at The Annual Conference of the University Council for Educational Administration, Orlando, FL.

Riley, K., & Stoll, L. (2004). Inside-out and outside-in: Why schools need to think about communities in new ways. *Education Review, 18*(1), 34-41.

Ritchie, D. (1996). The administrative role in the integration of technology. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 80*(582), 42-52.

Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking. *Teachers College Record, 104*(4), 842-866.

Rose, J. (2004). *Learning communities, teaching communities*. Retrieved October 12, 2008, from http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/book/roots/rose.htm

Rovai, A. (2002). Building sense of community at a distance. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 3*(1),16.

Rovai, A., & Lucking, R. (2003). Sense of community in a higher education television-based distance education program. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 51*(2), 5-16.

Rudnesky, F. (2006). Raise the bar for everyone with technology integration. *Principal Leadership, 6*(6), 34-38.

Rust, B., & Hurley, D. (2002). *The yin and yang of technology leadership in education.* Stamford, CT: Gartner.

Saldaña, J. (2003). Dramatizing data: A primer. *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(2), 218-236.

Saltiel, I.M., & Russo, C.S. (2001). *Cohort programming and learning: Improving educational experiences for adult learners.* Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Sandholtz, J., Ringstaff, C., & Dwyer, D. (1997). *Teaching with technology: Creating student-centered classrooms.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Sawyer, L. (2004). *Project demonstrating excellence: Seeing and sustaining transformative learning, development and spiritual growth in higher education: A case study.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Union Institute and University, Cincinnati, OH.

Schiller, J. (2002). Interventions by school leaders in effective implementation of information and communications technology: Perceptions of Australian principals. *Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education, 11*(3), 289-302.

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schott, M., Chernish, W., Dooley, K.E., & Linder, J.R. (2003). Innovations in distance learning program development and

delivery. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 6*(2). Retrieved from http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer62/schott62.html

Schussler, D.L. (2003). Schools as learning communities: Unpacking the concept. *Journal of School Leadership, 13*(5), 498-528.

Schutz, A. (1967). *The phenomenology of the social world.* (G.L. Walsh & F. Lehnert, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Schwandt, T. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schwier, R.A. (2001). Catalysts, emphases and elements of virtual learning communities: Implications for research and practice. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 2*(1), 5-18.

Scribner, J.P., & Donaldson, J.F. (2001). The dynamics of group learning in a cohort: From non-learning to transformative learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly,37*(5), 605-636. doi: 10.1177/00131610121969442

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday.

Senge, P. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (Rev. ed.). New York: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. (1990). Adding value to leadership gets extraordinary results. *Educational Leadership, 47*(8), 23-27.

Sergiovanni, T. (1994). Organizations or communities? Changing the metaphor changes the theory. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 30*(2), 214-226.

Sergiovanni, T. (2001). *Leadership: What's in it for schools?* London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Shachar, M., & Neumann, Y. (2003). Differences between traditional and distance education academic performances: A meta-analytic approach. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 4*(2).

Sherman, W., & Beaty, D. (2007). The use of distance technology in educational leadership preparation programs. *Journal of Educational Administration, 45*(5), 605-620.

Shields, C.M. (2003). *Good intentions are not enough: Transformative leadership for communities of difference.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Shulman, L.S., Golde, C.M., Bueschel, A.C., & Garabedian, K.J. (2006). Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal. *Educational Researcher, 35*(3), 25-31. doi: 10.3102/0013189X035003025

Silins, H., & Mulford, W. (2002). Leadership and school results. In K. Leithwood & P. Hallinger (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration* (pp. 561-612). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Press.

Simonson, M., Smaldino, S., Albright, M., & Zvacek, S. (2006). *Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Skinner, R. (2002). Tracking tech trends. *Education Week, 21*(35), 53-56.

Slack, V. (2006). *Technical difficulty and its effect on distance education students during two-way videoconferencing courses.* (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, 2006). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3251697)

Smrekar, C., & McGraner, K. (2009). From curricular alignment to the culminating project: The Peabody College Ed.D. capstone. *Peabody Journal of Education, 84*, 48-60. doi: 10.1080/01619560802679641

Sparks, D. (2002). *Designing powerful professional development for teachers and principals.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

Stegall, P. (1998, April). *The principal--key to technology implementation*. Paper presented at the 95th annual meeting of the National Catholic Education Association, Los Angeles, CA.

Surowiecki, J. (2005). *The wisdom of crowds.* New York: Anchor Books.

Teitel, L. (1997). Understanding and harnessing the power of the cohort model in preparing educational leaders. *Peabody Journal of Education, 72*(2), 66-86.

Thorndike, E.L. (1910). The contribution of psychology to education. *The Journal of Psychology in Education, 1*, 5-12. Retrieved from http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Thorndike/education.htm

Tong, K., & Trinidad, S. (2005). Conditions and constraints of sustainable innovative pedagogical practices using technology. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning, 9*(3), 1-28.

Twale, D., & Kochan, F. (2000). Assessment of an alternative cohort model for part-time students in an educational leadership program. *Journal of School Leadership, 10*, 188-208.

Twomey, C., Shamburg, C., & Zieger, L. (2006). *Teachers as technology leaders: Technology facilitator accreditation guide.* Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Education. (2001). *No child left behind.* Retrieved September 6, 2008, from http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* London, Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press.

Wallace, R. (2003). Online learning in higher education: A review of research on interactions among teachers and students. *Education, Communication & Information, 3*(2), 241-280.

Weisenberg, F., & Willment, J. (2001). Creating continuing professional online learning communities. *Adult learning, 12*(2), 5-6.

Wenger, E. (1998, June/July). Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System. *The Systems Thinker, 9,* 7.

Wesson, L.H., Holman, S.O., Holman, D., & Cox, D. (1996, April). *Cohesion or collusion: Impact of a cohort structure on educational leadership doctoral students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Wheatley, M. (1996). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Whyte, W.H., Jr. (2002). *The organization man.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Wilcox, J. (2000). *Videoconferencing: The whole picture* (3rd ed.). New York: Telecom Books.

Wilhelm, T. (2006). Professional learning communities for schools in sanctions. *Leadership, 36*(1), 28-33.

Williams, L. (2006). *The influence of technology integration on high school collaboration through the development of a professional learning community: A mixed methods study.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2006). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3214722)

Wilmore, D., & Betz, M. (2000). Information technology and schools: The principal's role. *Educational Technology & Society, 3*(4), 12-19.

Wilson, B., & Ryder, M. (1996). Dynamic learning communities: An alternative to designed instruction. In M. Simonson (Ed.), *Proceedings of selected research and development presentations* (pp. 800-809). Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology.

Wolosoff, R. (2007). *Leading difference: Multiple case studies of leaders of technologically innovative schools.* (Doctoral dissertation,

Hofstra University, 2007). Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3299436)

Yee, D. (2000). Images of school principals' information and communications technology leadership. *Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education, 9*(3), 287-302.

APPENDIX A

The University of Oklahoma

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 11334
Category: 1, 2
Approval Date: June 20, 2006

June 21, 2006

Lance Ford
PO Box 651
Heavener, OK 74937

Dear Mr. Ford:

RE: Building a Virtual Networked Professional Learning Community

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research project and determined that it meets the criteria in 45 CFR 46, as amended, for exemption from IRB review. You may proceed with the research as proposed. Please note that any changes in the protocol will need to be submitted to the IRB for review as changes could affect this determination of exempt status. Also note that you should notify the IRB office when this project is completed, so we can remove it from our files.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

E. Laurette Taylor, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Ltr_Prot_Fappv_X

660 Parrington Oval, Suite 316, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-3085 PHONE: (405) 325-8110 FAX: (405) 325-2373

APPENDIX B

The Interview Questions – Categories

- Why did you get involved? – *Background*
- Did you have any prior acquaintances? – *PLC Foundations*
- What was your feeling about participant's being involved in this from various locations? - *Socialization*
- How did this change over time with specific people or the group as a whole? - *PLC and Socialization*
- Did the relationships fostered within the group move beyond the confines of class interaction? – *Educational Leadership*
- How have the relationships developed, impacted your professional career in both a positive or negative way? *Educational Leadership, PLC and Socialization*
- In looking back on the experience, what have I omitted that has impacted your cohort experience? – *Follow-up*