

**DEMOCRATIC STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL:
A CASE STUDY OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL**

by

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ABSTRACT

Historically, democratic education has seen fluctuating interest throughout this century, and current low levels of social responsibility and democratic participation at the socio-political level have been connected to a lack of emphasis on social responsibility and democratic participation in schools. This is paralleled by the relative absence of studies concerning democratic student involvement at the elementary school level, and of studies seeking student perspectives. In this case study of an elementary school Student Council, student, teacher and principal perspectives were sought regarding how democratic student involvement at the school level was implemented and how it developed over the course of two school years. The principal initiated a Student Council based on her belief that students should have a strong voice and are capable of planning and implementing many school-level responsibilities. Through on-going collaborative processes involving teachers and students, a highly inclusive model developed, providing numerous services and activities for the school through student committees. Both student and adult involvement increased, in the Student Council itself and in democratic practices at the classroom level. The principal was highly involved in this process; however, as more responsibility was taken by others, and democratic student involvement became more embedded in the school culture, one of her goals became its continuation after she left the school. Relationships played a key role in democratic student involvement. Students viewed their relationships with each other as being enhanced, believing they listened to and respected each other's ideas better, and older students felt more responsibility towards younger students. Adult-student relationships involved a shift in power, and this presented some tensions. When student and adult ideas differed, a main strategy used by adults was negotiating with students. Principal-teacher relationships also needed to embody democratic values, for example, collaboration and power-sharing, and these experiences helped teachers learn strategies to collaborate with students. While teachers had varying levels of support for democratic education, as a staff they sought more knowledge and skills to help them relate to children in ways consistent with democratic values.

For Chuck, Blake, Marisha and Cyrus

"Schools that turn out students who always conform and comply are preparing them to participate in a totalitarian rather than a democratic society." Esbensen, 1995, p. 282)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The broad purpose of this thesis is to develop understanding of how students can be prepared at the elementary school level to participate in a democratic society. This purpose is rooted in questions that have been part of my professional thinking and have intrigued me for a number of years: If we purport to be a democratic society, what are some reasons that schooling, paradoxically, often stresses conformity and compliance to authority and resists democratic participation? In implementing a more democratic approach to education, what are some of the difficulties and what are effective practices? What effects might democratic practices have on students, teachers and administrators? These questions are the impetus behind my research. While my actual research questions are more specific, and will be elucidated shortly, the results of my research did help to answer these questions, the second and third especially.

The broad purpose of this thesis stems also from the latest Mission Statement from the British Columbia Ministry of Education which states that "the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society" (Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia, 1994, p. 20). This prompts further questions: While it would be difficult to say that such a purpose is not good, not moral, what does it really mean? How is development of individual potential balanced with acquiring what is needed to contribute to a democratic society? Perhaps the lofty purposes of this Mission Statement are not really understood by many educators, for what we actually see stressed in many schools and classrooms today, rather than individual potential or democratic skills and attitudes, is conformity. I am thus exploring the taking of this Mission Statement seriously, seeking to understand what this could look like in practice.

My research looks specifically at the development of an elementary

school Student Council over two years. The main purpose of this research is to further understanding of how an administrator can initiate and develop an elementary Student Council, involving students democratically in school-level decision-making and implementation. My main research questions are: What is the form and function of this Student Council? How does it change over time? What are the effects of democratic student involvement on students and on the school as whole, from the various perspectives of students, teachers and principal? How might democratic involvement at the classroom level complement the school level?

A definition of democratic student involvement needs to be clarified at this point. I view it, for the purposes of this thesis, as the participation of students in the making and implementation of decisions which will affect them. This is democratic in the sense that the students have rights, responsibilities and opportunities by virtue of their being "citizens" of a classroom or school. I must also make clear that two other practices often associated with a democracy, elections and majoritarianism, are not necessary components of this definition.

Background and Rationale

Personal Experience Background

My own interest in democratic student involvement began from a teacher perspective in my own classroom. I became particularly intrigued with how students responded to what I term "democratic classroom management." When students are collectively involved in the problem-solving and decision-making processes for what is of real concern to them, I have seen them become much more responsible, respectful, thoughtful, creative and hard-working individuals. The classroom becomes a place that is "theirs," and as such is a place they value and for which they take responsibility. Decisions made together are more viable because many perspectives have been incorporated, and the students have a stake in implementing their decisions effectively and in refining initial decisions to make them work even better.

A frustration, which both myself and my students have shared, is when the democratic community created in the classroom has not extended to the school level. Concerns that students might raise about school issues are not able to be dealt with without a mechanism or forum for them to voice their ideas. I kept wondering: What if student voice was really honoured and respected by a principal? What if a principal actively encouraged students to be highly involved in school-level decision-making, planning and implementation? How might a principal go about implementing such student involvement? It is my contention that if school administrators are not involving students in decision-making, we are missing out on a valuable opportunity to help students become responsible citizens and wasting a valuable resource for helping to make good, viable decisions for a school.

I ask, as Michael Fullan (1991) asks, "What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in schools?" (p. 170). Fullan sees students as indispensable participants both in effective educational change and in effective education, and sees these as overlapping:

Involving students in a consideration of the meaning and purpose of specific changes and in new forms of day-to-day learning directly addresses the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for all students to become engaged in their own learning. (p. 190)

I believe that if we want schools to provide effective education we need to engage and motivate students. To do this we need to consult with students about their opinions, feelings and needs, and to collaborate on making and implementing decisions.

What I have sought to learn through this study, then, is how an administrator might create a school-level forum where student voice is honoured, and what some of the effects of this might be. My greatest concern is the feasibility of democratic student involvement at the school level. Democratic schooling has been idealized and sporadically practiced throughout history, and yet authoritarian schools have remained predominant.

Historical Background Regarding Democratic Schooling

The idea of democratic schooling is certainly not new. How does this idea fit in a historical context? What has happened with attempts to implement it in the past? This section is not intended as a full historical accounting, nor as a continual progression of how democratic schooling has been implemented and thwarted. Presented here are snapshots, looking at the work of a few people who considered themselves proponents of democratic education, from the early part of the century through the 1970s. These snapshots are intended to give a flavour of the historical background, as a full accounting is beyond the scope of this thesis.

John Dewey and the Influences Shaping his Ideas

In this century, John Dewey has undoubtedly been the "granddaddy" of democratic schooling, with his now classic volume *Democracy and Education* (1916). Dewey recommended that schools should be democratic communities, developing students' power to interact effectively in social life. Through students being involved in what they saw as socially important, they would have interest in continually adjusting and improving their decisions, thus learning to make them more workable. He maintained that

a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience . . . of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his [sic]¹ own actions to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own. (p. 101)

Dewey identified three major historic philosophies of education influencing his ideas: (a) the Platonic ideal of education which equates individual realization with social stability; (b) 18th Century individualism, with its ideal of a harmonious society through individuals freely following their natural inclinations; and (c) 19th Century institutional idealism which subordinated individuals to the superior interests of the national state

¹ I realize one should use inclusive language; however, as it would be distracting to use [sic] for every instance of non-inclusive language within quotations, I will do so only this once.

(Dewey, 1916). I shall elaborate briefly on these philosophies, as Dewey viewed them, to help put his ideas in historical perspective.

Plato clearly recognized the social import of education, as rational decision-making was required to realize his ideal of an organized, stable society: "No one could better express than did, [Plato] the fact that a society is stably organized when each individual is doing that for which he has aptitude by nature in such a way as to be useful to others" (Dewey, 1916, p. 102). Dewey pointed out, however, that a limitation of Plato was in not recognizing the infinite diversity and uniqueness of individuals. He saw "individual" aptitudes as falling into a small number of classes: (a) labourers-traders, who had strong "appetites" and could supply human wants; (b) citizen-subjects, who were assertive and courageous and could defend the state; and (c) legislators, who had superior reasoning abilities and could make "universal" laws. Thus, while not intending to subordinate individuality, Plato in effect subordinated individuals to their class. The aim of education, therefore, was to discover which class individuals were suited to by "nature," and then by each doing his or her part, social order and unity would be maintained.

In contrast, Rousseau and other Individualistic Idealists of the 18th Century championed the need for free development of natural inclinations without coercive external restrictions. Faith in Natural Law was so strong as to trust that a harmonious society would necessarily result from liberated individual development, just as "the Newtonian solar system, which expressed the reign of natural law, was a scene of wonderful harmony" (Dewey, 1916, p. 107). This envisioned harmonious society, however, in leaving everything to nature and circumstance, lacked any social or state agency for securing its development.

The Institutional Idealists of the early 19th Century addressed this lack of organization and administrative agency: "The movement for the democratic idea inevitably became a movement for publicly conducted and administered schools" (Dewey, 1916, p. 108). In Europe, especially in Germany, with struggles for national independence after the Napoleonic conquests, there was a shift towards education as a civic function, to realize the ideal of the national state. Individualistic theory faded, and social efficiency, with

subordination of individuals to the state, saw a rise in prominence. These two theories were somewhat reconciled in the idea that an individual is nothing in isolation, and only through being part of an organized institution does one completely realize one's personality. At the same time, philosopher Immanuel Kant conceptualized the aim of education not as conserving the existing order but of improving humanity: "The full development of private personality is identified with the aims of humanity as a whole and with the idea of progress" (p. 111). There was, however, concern with who could be entrusted to decide what these aims of humanity would be: "Rulers are simply interested in such training as will make their subjects better tools for their own intentions" (p. 111). One of Kant's successors, Hegel, elaborated the idea that the chief function of the state is educational, as "the private individual is of necessity an egoistic, irrational being, enslaved to his appetites and to the circumstances unless he submits voluntarily to the educative discipline of state institutions and laws" (p. 112). In this sense, state-regulated education was the intermediary between the realization of private personality on one side, and humanity on the other. This idea, then, of the importance of education for human welfare and progress, was captured by national interests whose social interests were narrow and exclusive, with each European nation then living "in a state of suppressed hostility and incipient war with its neighbors" (p. 113).

Dewey asked the very important question: "Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted?" (1916, p. 113). The democratic social ideal which he envisioned "must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (p. 115).

Dewey criticized what he saw as numerous separations which schools perpetuated, for example, the separation of learning from activity, of school from the outside world, of personal interest and duty. He believed that these separations would be overcome in an educational scheme where "learning is the accompaniment of continuous activities or occupations which have a

social aim and utilize the materials of typical social situations" (Dewey, 1916, p. 418). Through these conditions, school would become a social life, a democratic community itself, in close interaction with the larger sphere outside of school. Education which developed students' power to interact effectively in social life would form good moral character. He believed that if students were able to do what they saw as socially important, they would also have interest in making continual adjustments and improvements to their decisions, thus ensuring their workability.

Dewey stressed the importance of active social engagement in learning: There is no obvious social motive for the acquirement of mere learning, there is no clear social gain in success thereat. Indeed, almost the only measure for success is a competitive one, in the bad sense of that term--a comparison of results in the recitation or in the examination to see which child has succeeded in getting ahead of others in storing up, in accumulating, the maximum of information. (1915, p. 15)

Helping each other in this competitive atmosphere was then a school crime, "a clandestine effort to relieve one's neighbour of his proper duties" (p. 16).

With active social engagement,

helping others, instead of being a form of charity which impoverishes the recipient, is simply an aid in setting free the powers and furthering the impulse of the one helped. A spirit of free communication, of interchange of ideas, suggestions, results, both successes and failures of previous experiences, becomes the dominating note. (p. 16)

Dewey's goal was a citizenry prepared for democratic social responsibility:

When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious. (1915, p. 29)

What, then, might be reasons authoritarianism and competition have remained hegemonic in schooling throughout this century? What kind of influence has Dewey really had? What happened when his ideas were

implemented?

A Curriculum for Democratic Education in the 1940s

In 1942 Charles C. Peters' *Curriculum of Democratic Education* was published as a college text for teachers, advocating a break from the conventional curriculum and pedagogy. His main tenets were that teachers maximize respect for students and stress activities which related to real life situations. While similar to Dewey in many respects, Peters criticized Dewey for being too present- and child-centered, that his ideas about education were not focused enough on preparing students for later adult life. He maintained that "the process of education consists in the practice of doing, which makes future doings of the same type more competent because effective responses have been 'prepracticed' for them" (p. 14). He thus sought to combine two formerly opposing points of view: the child-centered or democratic, and systematic, scientific, social-need-centered. An example he gives in this regard is that

just by playing together, by planning and cooperatively executing, children learn very much of the techniques of social living. They learn more rapidly if there are occasions not merely to act but also to have their attention go to the acts which make for success, and the characteristics of those acts. (p. 25)

This may be accomplished by discussing with students these experiences, directing their attention to what it was about their behaviours that made for the success they were seeking, and what hampered their success.

Peters (1942) viewed the ideal democratic class as a place where teachers and students were coworkers, planning together what the group would do rather than necessarily following a prescribed curriculum. He maintained that schools should educate "the whole child" (p. 48) and ideally would offer a breadth of experience as wide as life is wide. He suggested 12 "curricular" areas in which students needed experiences: (a) understanding the community and helping in it; (b) getting acquainted with people who live far away; (c) how some people lived who lived long ago; (d) understanding and

controlling the physical world; (e) doing what one likes to do; (f) learning to do things beautifully and to enjoy beauty; (g) mastering the tools needed for effective activity (e.g., silent and oral reading, spelling, computational arithmetic); (h) getting acquainted with the wide field of human interests and activities; (i) getting along with one another; (j) understanding and managing oneself; (k) making a living; and (l) just doing nothing.

Peters (1942) bemoaned the meager democracy actually existing in countries priding themselves on being democratic. Politically, he saw minimal democracy in voting for professional politicians, with citizens often ignorant of the actual issues. Legally he saw inequality in Negroes being jailed more readily than whites, and members of certain religions barred from office in many communities. In the workplace he saw tremendous inequality in both the lack of respect afforded many workers by their managers, and in the huge disparity between the incomes of the rich and poor. Nor socially was there democracy, with prejudices based on race, economic status and occupation. Democracy, he thought, might even be quite an unnatural state of society, as it seemed "instinctive on the part of common people to look up to leaders and to crave authoritative direction" (p. 126), and for the strong to exploit the weak. Democracy, then, needed constant watchful defense, and would forever be an uphill struggle. His broad aim was to help create a more truly democratic society, exemplifying the goals of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. This, he believed, could be realized through habits formed through education:

Through participation in self-government, through taking part in the planning of the lessons, through presiding over groups and speaking to groups, through assuming and discharging responsibility, through practicing and experiencing the mutual respect that is a part of social democracy, the pupils grow in democratic abilities. It is a function of the school to maximize opportunities for such participation. Also the good school encourages service activities of many kinds in the community. (p. 129)

I find profound sadness and poignant hope in Peter's (1942) work, written at a time when much of the world was at war. As the editor, in his

Introduction, writes: "The present book deals with matters of greater moment than guns" (p. ix). Democracy, Peters emphasized, moves slowly and must be constantly striven for. The conception of democratic education which he envisioned he hoped might be implemented 10-15 percent in a decade, 50 percent in a century. Over 50 years later, what he was advocating is still being advocated by those he identified even in the 1940s as "progressive" educators, and yet has been minimally implemented.

Education For Democracy in the 1960s

In the early 1960s the American education system was under attack due to the shock of Russian technological advances. Critics advocated more scholastic emphasis, more mathematics and science, than social emphasis in schools. In reaction to this, Cox and Mercer (1961) upheld the ideals of Dewey, considering him one of the great historical defenders of democracy. They maintained that education in a democracy must "find its social foundations, not in a firmly entrenched body of customs, beliefs, skills, and accommodations, but in their tentative adaptations to a constantly changing civilization" (p. x). Cox and Mercer viewed democracy as an experiment, and in the patriotic fervor of the times, as an American experiment to be defended. Educators, they stressed, must be

committed to one supreme purpose--to help our society make its great experiment in democracy work successfully. . . . We do not *know* for certain, but we seek to find out, if a government of, by, and for the people can provide the things that justify its endurance--tranquility, justice, and common welfare. . . . If our adventure fails, failure must not be justly attributable, even in small part, to negligence on the part of professional educators. (p. 27)

They saw a dilemma, however: How can schools instill values consistent with democratic goals and not, by virtue of such control, deny the democratic right to dissent? Again, as did Dewey, they saw that the means and the end must be consistent. Democracy cannot be a far-off utopia sought "through generations of authoritarian discipline. It is a way of living here and now" (p.

27). It was the very looseness of organization in a democratic society that stimulated social intelligence, they saw; rapid societal changes compelled judgments and the defense of opinions, which were the responsibility of citizens in democracy. Disorder was to be expected: "Abstract as the consensus is, however, it has so far met the pragmatic test; the inevitable disorder has been, and promises to be, tolerable" (p.458).

It can be gleaned from Cox and Mercer's (1961) writing that they assumed democratic education was the norm in schools and was to be patriotically defended. It is difficult to ascertain, however, how much of what they viewed as democratic education was in accordance with the ideals expressed by Dewey, or how prevalent this was in actuality. Their writing is rife with propagandist double-talk and a euphoric glossing over of cracks in the American dream. For example, the public educator, they maintained, had an elite role:

His necessary optimism focuses his attention on phenomena that exemplify man's affection for his fellows, the tolerance of differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors and in pigmentation, and the willingness and ability to collaborate in the achievement of worthwhile purposes, a process that calls for bargaining, compromise, acceptance of alternating leadership, and for some degree of empathy and brotherhood with associates. . . . His own awareness regarding the impending possibility of human self-destruction in a world of almost inexhaustible energy and power presents a crucial test for his optimism. . . . The school may fail. Family, church, the state, and the super-state may fail. But fear of failure is no excuse for not trying. (pp. 540-542)

As Goodlad (1984) says of this period, however, in his historical perspective of American education, "the euphoria surrounding the governmental role and, in particular, the power of schools to effect or contribute significantly to renewal gradually began to be displaced by doubt, growing stronger in the 1970s" (pp. 4-5).

A Democratic School in the 1970s

Ralph Mosher, who was involved in implementing and researching an alternative democratic high school in Brookline, Massachusetts in the 1970s, also saw Dewey as a major inspiration. By this time it seems that democratic education was far from the norm, if in fact it ever had been, and perhaps was just a long-lost dream. In his article "Funny Things Happen on the Way to School Democracy," Mosher wrote:

I think . . . that we now have enough experience to say some considered, tempered things about democracy in school: for example, like every constructive, substantial school reform, democratic governance is hard to vitalize and sustain; and translating powerful political, educational, and psychological theory about democracy into human or institutional behavior and commitments is hard, often frustrating work. (1980, p. 83).

Some of the points Mosher made are illuminating, both as reasons to not despair as to the difficulties democratic schooling presents, and as warnings regarding the problems of implementation: "If we are serious about educating for democracy, we will have to begin to democratize classroom management, school governance, and the relations among administrators, teachers, and students--a task whose complexity may be exceeded only by its enduring significance" (1980, p. 88).

Mosher (1980) drew on Dewey's argument that democracy, unlike the wheel, must be continually rediscovered and reinvented through each group of people trying to be democratic. It cannot be understood or learned about in undemocratic institutions; it must be a lived experience. He also drew on Dewey's idea that two articles of faith were necessary for democratic education: (a) faith in capacities of human nature and intelligence and the power of pooled, cooperative experience, and that if given a chance these will grow and be able to progressively generate the knowledge and wisdom needed to guide collective action; and (b) belief in equality of human beings; that they are legally, constitutionally and morally equal, and have equal rights.

Mosher (1980) found that while students can learn to govern themselves, and that those who participate in school democracy learn important parliamentary skills and make gains in their moral reasoning, there are some major constraints operating on democratic schooling. He found that students will understand and be democratic in qualitatively different ways depending on their stage of development. The school he studied had a participatory, as opposed to representative, model. He found that about 1/4 - 1/3 gave continuous commitment and leadership to various school committees; approximately the same number were reasonably dutiful, attending meetings but speaking infrequently; and nearly 1/2 were marginal or non-participants. Another major constraint was that many teachers were uncomfortable with school democracy or had differing conceptions of it. A significant core of teachers' thinking had to do with authority, rule maintenance, discipline and order. Mosher also believed the large number of students in a participatory democracy made things difficult to manage.

Mosher contended that school democracy should not be simply students participating in governance. He believed that a truly democratic school should be a "community providing the governance, social and educative conditions supportive of the full development of every student" (1980, p. 104). He also saw limitations in focusing too exclusively on efforts to democratize the school, paying insufficient attention to opportunities for learning about democracy in other institutions in the community, that is, learning from other social contexts.

Mosher concluded that it was his "intuition . . . that the classroom is the most likely and practical place to promote democracy in the school" (1980, p. 107). It is of a manageable size for individual participation and genuine common purpose, and is the basic organizational unit of the school. Implementation at the classroom level was also easier "because much of what happens in classrooms goes on behind closed doors and so is protected from management" (p. 107).

Essentially, Mosher (1980) was advocating a retreat, urging educators to focus on the classroom level; democracy at the school level is too difficult. I agree with Mosher to the extent that a democratic classroom is a very practical

and relatively easy place to implement democracy. However, pitting classroom teachers against "management," closeting democracy away, effectively ensures that students' voices will have limited power.

An Assessment of Schools in the 1980s

The above "snapshots" do not give us a sense of how prevalent democratic education actually became. John Goodlad's (1984) ambitious assessment of American schools in the early 1980s was an attempt to discover both the reasons for widespread criticism of education and what was actually happening in schools. His work gives us an idea of the state of democratic education at that time. He found that many people charged the schools with neglecting "the basics" and abandoning traditional ways of teaching; however, the data suggested quite the opposite, that

the traditional procedures of telling, questioning, reading textbooks, performing workbook exercises, and taking quizzes were infrequently interrupted by so-called progressive methods of teaching and learning. If a predominance of rote learning, memorization, and paper-and-pencil activity is what people have in mind in getting the school back to the basics, they probably should rest assured that this is where most classrooms are and always have been. (p. 358)

Goodlad found that the broad democratic goals and ideals for education espoused by government and endorsed by large segments of the population went far beyond what was demonstrated in classrooms, and large inequities were found between and within schools regarding students' opportunities for access to knowledge. One of his conclusions was that "there is much to be done in humanizing knowledge through curriculum development and creative teaching so that more and more students will make it their own" (p. 358).

The Canadian Context

My emphasis thus far has been on American literature because of its

preponderance. Where does democratic schooling fit in Canadian educational-political ideology and trends? Ronald Manzer (1994) views it ideologically as straddling what he terms ethical liberalism and radical communitarianism. He defines participatory democracy within radical communitarian ideology, which starts from the premise that humans are social beings: "For radical thinkers on the left the political community is an egalitarian order in which individuals are equal, governed by cooperation and consensus based on relationships of democratic participation" (p. 15). For ethical liberals the ultimate purpose of education is individual development, yet according to Manzer ethical liberal learning theory emphasizes that people learn in dialogue, through interaction with other people, and "in schools this requires a democratization of relationships in the classroom between teachers and learners . . . as learners work with each others and their teachers in the cause of their individual educations" (p. 263). Thus both communities and individuals would be enhanced through democratic participation.

Education in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s saw a rise in interest in the theory of participatory democracy, with a trend towards local autonomy. According to Manzer this had an important impact on ~~person-~~regarding educational policy and administration, with substantial decentralization from provincial authorities to local boards, school staffs, parent associations and classroom teachers. He writes that "for ethical liberals the most important decisions about education are made by young people in school with the advice and guidance of adults " (1994, p. 264). The main reason Manzer gives for the decline of this "ethical liberal education project" was that it "failed miserably on the crucial tests of educational and economic effectiveness and efficiency" (p. 271). With decreased funding to education, efficiency has become an important issue today, and will be further discussed below.

What we can see from these few snapshots of democratic education at various times throughout this century, then, is a long struggle for its inception, a rather ambiguous blossoming, a relegation to the closet, and a demise. So is democratic education dead? For many educators the struggle to

keep it alive continues. As has been indicated numerous times above, it seems that it must be continually struggled for and reinvented.

Modern Educational Issues Regarding Democratic Student Involvement

I have considered the preceding section, looking at snapshots of democratic educational practices in this century through to the 1980s, as historical background. The foregoing section now looks at more modern times, which I am considering post-1980, with a focus more on theory than practice. The purpose of this section is to highlight what I see as important issues regarding democratic student involvement today, and to introduce the work of key theoreticians and researchers in this field. These issues will be expanded upon in subsequent chapters, with further references to the literature.

Efficiency

How problematic is it, as Manzer (1994) indicated, that involving students in decision-making takes too much time and is thus inefficient? Manley-Casimir (1980) has argued that preoccupation with efficiency is not acceptable in client-serving organizations like schools. If the school's purpose is educational, not commercial, "the preoccupation of the school should flow from its educational task, not from misplaced concerns with routine and efficiency" (p. 80).

I would agree that a *preoccupation* with efficiency is misplaced in schools, but would contend that efficiency is nonetheless an important consideration. Unwieldy systems which waste time are not sustainable. More important, however, is if long-term social benefits off-set perceived short-term inefficiency.

Socio-Political and Moral Purpose of Democratic Schooling

What might these long-term social benefits be? There is a strong sense

of political and moral purpose in educating children to participate in a democratic society. Part of this stems from not simply wanting to develop in children capacities to fit into a democratic society, or from wanting to develop abilities to be critical within democratic processes, but from a political ideology of desiring to increase democratic participation in our society.

This political ideology is stressed by Amy Gutmann (1987), who builds on Dewey's theories. One of her main concerns is the lack of democratic participation in society:

The low levels of political participation in our society and the high levels of autocracy within most schools point to the conclusion that the cultivation of participatory virtues should become more prominent among the purposes of primary schooling, especially as children . . . become more capable of engaging in free and equal discussions with teachers and their peers." (p. 92)

Gutmann contends that

If primary schooling leaves students with a capacity for political criticism but no capacity for political participation or sense of social commitment, either because it fails to cultivate their sense of political efficacy or because it succeeds in teaching them deference to authority, then it will have neglected to cultivate a virtue essential to democracy. (p. 92)

In striving for a principled theory of education, Gutmann (1987) stresses that we need to have a more principled understanding of our educational purposes. With controversy currently raging regarding purposes of education, she contends that:

The most distinctive feature of a democratic theory of education is that it makes a democratic virtue out of our inevitable disagreement over educational problems. . . . The primary aim of a democratic theory of education is not to offer solutions to all the problems plaguing our educational institutions, but to consider ways of resolving those problems that are compatible with a commitment to democratic values. (p. 11)

This addresses the aforementioned problem regarding inefficiency. If such a

problem exists, Gutmann is arguing that this problem, and any other, can be approached through democratic process.

Gutmann's (1987) major emphasis seems to be on the preparation of students to participate in a democratic society, seeing the democratic ideal of education as that of "conscious social reproduction" (p. 14) or "citizens sharing in deliberatively determining the future shape of their society" (p. 289). As a priority, this seems too future-oriented in my opinion and verges on being disrespectful of children as still children, not just as adults-to-be. There also seems to be a disregard for individuals in favour of socio-political values. While I believe this future-orientation and socio-political agenda is not to be diminished, if there is not immediate virtue in democratic education, not immediate benefit for individual children and the school as a whole, then it is not as ethical as it might be, and unlikely to even be viable.

Critical theorist Henry Giroux (1981, 1988, 1992, 1996) also uses Dewey's theories as a basis for connecting political ideology to education. He sees most schools presently as antidemocratic institutions where the dominant culture defines and legitimizes a particular construction of reality, negating the experiences of many students in subordinate cultures, and thus perpetuating a fractured, hierarchical society. The concept of hegemony is important for Giroux, and he sees it as functioning largely in a concealed manner that imposes dominant meanings and values upon relatively passive students and teachers:

That hegemony functions, for example, through the significations embedded in school texts, films, and 'official' teacher discourse is clear enough. What is less obvious is that it also functions in those practical experiences that need no discourse, the message of which lingers beneath a structured silence. (1981, pp. 23-24)

He claims that in schools hegemonic ideologies are legitimized through a number of practices, for example, "the claim by dominant classes that their interests represent the entire interests of the community . . . [and] the presentation of specific forms of consciousness, beliefs, attitudes, values and practices as natural, universal, or even eternal" (p. 24). He stresses, however, that hegemony is never a cohesive force, "it is riddled with contradictions

and tensions that open up the possibility for counter-hegemonic struggle" (p. 24). The importance of the concept of hegemonic ideology in educational theory and practice is that it stresses the political nature of schooling, and points to possibilities for alternative pedagogies. Giroux claims that a politicized concept of culture is also necessary for revealing how power functions in society to structure socio-economic classes, institutions and social practices. He contends that it is appropriate to view culture as actually a number of dominant and subordinate cultures: "as a number of divergent instances in which power is used unequally to produce different meanings and practices, which in the final analysis reproduces a particular kind of society that functions in the interest of a dominant class" (p. 27). Thus there is a dynamic, antagonistic relationship among these cultures. Because "schools are sites characterized by an unequal interchange between competing class cultures" (p. 28), Giroux suggests, in accordance with Dewey, that pedagogical practices should

use the lived experiences of the students themselves as a starting point for developing classroom experiences in which students discover how they give meaning to the world and how such meaning can be used reflectively to discover its own sources and limits. (p. 29)

In this sense, pedagogy is an emancipatory activity. Giroux also maintains, as did Dewey, that schools should not uncritically reproduce society, but should "challenge the social order to develop and advance its democratic imperatives" (1992, p. 18).

Giroux points towards curriculum and pedagogy by which to accomplish this, but remains theoretical and vague, for example:

schools should become places that provide the opportunity for literate occasions, that is, that provide opportunities for students to share their experiences, to work in social relations that emphasize care and concern for others, and to be introduced to forms of knowledge that provide them with the conviction and opportunity to fight for a quality of life in which all human beings benefit. (1988, p. 214)

I view Giroux as the foremost democratic educational theorist today, playing a similar role at the end of the 20th Century as did Dewey at the

beginning of it. In Chapter 6 I will look further at his work in terms of Critical Theory. The main limitation for educators which I see in Giroux's work is that, like Gutmann, with a political focus of shaping future society we are not offered a clear picture of what this might look like in a school today. In particular, when a purpose is socio-political and future-oriented, I am concerned with what this means for individual children who have a relatively ego-centric and present-oriented view of the world.

Individualism, Conformity and Social Responsibility

There seems to be an inherent tension between individualism and social responsibility, and elementary school children are at an age when this tension is very apparent. They enter school with an ego-centric perspective, but must spend their days living with dozens of other children. The trend in schools for most of this century has been for children to conform to the norms of social living. Alternatives to this have for the most part stressed individualism.

The most illuminating research in the field of elementary democratic schooling, in my estimation, has been done by Jesse Goodman (1992). His case study of an independent alternative school in Indiana is illustrative of this tension between individualism and social responsibility. J. Goodman set out to explore the possibilities and constraints for developing a democratic pedagogy based on the theories of Giroux and other Critical Theorists. Harmony School was chosen for this study because it was overtly committed to fostering "the skills necessary for active and constructive participation in our country's democratic process" (1992, p. 52). It contains both an elementary and high school, but the elementary school was the focus of this study. Along with two research assistants, J. Goodman spent a year observing and interviewing faculty and students, both formally and informally, with each team member logging between fifteen and twenty hours a week. I have found no other research in the field of democratic education which approaches this intensity, or which interviewed students to any extent. When Harmony School was founded in the 1970s, the stress was on students working at their

own pace, with teachers tailoring methodology to fit individual learning styles. Over the years a more democratic ethos has evolved, and an interwoven balance between individualism and social responsibility has ensued:

Balancing the interests of the individual against those of the school as a community and determining what actions are in the best interests of individual students and students as part of a collective group were common underlying issues that emerged. (p. 54)

Students, for instance, worked on both collaborative and individual projects, and often negotiated and modified teacher-directed assignments.

The situation predominant in most schools portrays very different conditions. While individualism is supported in many of the pedagogical structures, for example, students sitting in individual desks, working separately on their assignments, and taking tests individually, the paradox is that individualism and social conformity co-exist in this same structure. As J. Goodman (1992) points out, in most schools, "although isolated in their work, all children actually do the same type of work, study the same content, and are expected to learn in a similar fashion" (p. 24). Current school reforms are changing this to a certain extent, and many individual teachers use very different practices; however the above still appears to be the norm.

At Harmony School J. Goodman found a strong emphasis on the social bonds among the students and between students and teachers and administrators. This was fostered through such means as "establishing a collective identity among the children, teaching students the value of collective responsibility, and consciously reducing the stratification between teachers and students" (1992, p. 95). Specifically, this included such practices as keeping class sizes small, camping trips and excursions, school fairs, and several kinds of regularly scheduled meetings, for example, all-campus, peer group and multi-age group. The purposes of these meetings included giving students a voice in policy making, establishing school rules, and working through inter-personal problems. J. Goodman found that "the primary focus of the collective deliberation that we witnessed at Harmony was to help students understand the relationship between freedom, the exercise of power,

and social responsibility" (p. 198).

J. Goodman proposes, then, a *connectionist* perspective that emphasizes social responsibility, or social bonding, rather than social conformity or individual liberty:

The radical reforming of schools needs to be centered on helping children understand the ways in which life on this planet is interconnected and interdependent, and that in caring for others we are caring for ourselves. It is highly unlikely that a focus on personal freedom and liberating children from adult authority, as currently reflected in many radical school reforms, would adequately instruct children towards this connectionist perspective. (1992, p. 28)

J. Goodman has added valuable grounded theory through his observations at Harmony School. He did not, he says, enter this case study with a predetermined definition of education for critical democracy, but was interested in observing a school that expressed the desire to educate children for living in a democratic society: "Our own understanding of critical democracy and the importance that the values of community and individuality played in establishing the democratic ideal emerged from our working with Harmony's teachers and students" (1992, p. 29). Throughout the rest of this thesis, and especially in Chapter 4, J. Goodman's findings are discussed further. It must be remembered, however, that Harmony was an independent alternative school, with class sizes of approximately 11 students, and with teachers committed to a common school ethos. It is questionable how generalizable J. Goodman's findings are to public schools.

Public schools necessarily have wider diversity, among both staff and students, and the social bonding J. Goodman (1992) witnessed at Harmony might not be so easy to accomplish. One of the forces towards conformity in public schools may be the striving to manage this diversity. Looking at this issue, Engle and Ochoa (1988) contend that the challenge to democratic education is to reach a reasonable accommodation between the socialization of youth and the development of their critical capacities, and it is not easy for schools to allow or encourage questioning of the assumptions of society: "Conformity is a comfortable state even when it glosses over gross inequities.

and disfunctions" (p. 15). Similar to Gutmann (1987), Engle and Ochoa believe that inherent in democracy is disharmony, and yet that democracy is nonetheless the best vehicle for solving these problems. They go so far as to say that

education which ignores these problems is not only unreal and without credibility with students or citizens, but hypocritical and immoral as well. The only sensible solution is to take an approach that recognizes our problems for what they are and treats them with reason and compassion as the key elements in democratic development. (p. 15)

With the inherent tensions then between individualism, conformity, and social responsibility, what might this mean regarding the relationship between adults, who traditionally have had an authoritarian role, and students, who are becoming more powerful in a democratic school? As we move from an idealistic, future-oriented, socio-political perspective down to a more concrete, human, daily-life perspective, the issue of shifting power in relationships is, I believe, at the crux.

A Shift in Perspective of Relationships

Adult authority and student empowerment. The issue of power is critical in democratic student involvement. The unwillingness to let go of decision-making power, especially to children who are in the initial stages of developing their abilities to make wise and workable decisions, seems a major reason authoritarianism has remained hegemonic in schools. Involving students in school decision-making necessitates a change in our conception of power, and a move towards sharing power has some strong implications for relationships. Instead of focusing on how to control children, or how to maintain power *over* them, the focus becomes how to work together, or how to have power *with* children. Exploring the dynamics of power relationships will increase understanding of resistance or reluctance towards democratic schooling, and help identify key ingredients for making democratic schools work. The question can be asked: Is it human nature that

those who have power will use it to keep power? However, the more important question is: Are there compelling advantages for everyone involved to share power?

Seth Kreisberg (1992), who has identified Dewey and Giroux as major influences on his work, has done invaluable research in this area. Through interviews with six democratically inclined teachers in the Boston area in 1985 and 1986, he has examined the role of power in education, and offers a shift in its conception to enable democratic schooling. Relationships of domination exist throughout political institutions, whether the form of political power is totalitarian, authoritarian or democratic. Sometimes this domination is more overt and sometimes more disguised. Kreisberg postulates that the pervasiveness of domination relationships suggests that it is a two-way street, maintained not just by the exercise of brute force, but by the ability of those who dominate "to gain the consent of the oppressed without the awareness of the oppressed that they are participating in their own oppression" (p. 14). This pattern of relationship, reinforcing and replicating itself, is highly resistant to change. Kreisberg argues, however, that it is not an inevitable outgrowth of human nature but a social phenomenon that can be transformed. Echoing Giroux (1981), he claims that while relationships of domination are hegemonic, they are not all-encompassing, and are characterized by contradictions and conflict: "The dominated rarely consent fully to their own domination" (p. 17). Schools are one of the key places in which there is an on-going struggle for control. Student resistance to authority ranges from passive refusal to do schoolwork to aggressive vandalism and violence. Kreisberg contends that schools are thus a place ripe with potential to contribute to social transformation.

The term *empowerment* has emerged in the last decade or so in direct response to the perpetuation of relationships of domination, and is a term increasingly used in educational contexts. While often used rhetorically and wielded imprecisely, Kreisberg (1992) offers a definition which I will adopt here: "Empowerment is a process through which people and/or communities increase their control or mastery of their own lives and the decisions that effect their lives" (p. 19). An important point here is that individual and

community development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Empowerment involves individuals who have traditionally been powerless gaining skills and competencies necessary to effectively participate in wider social and political contexts. But it also involves those who have traditionally held power recognizing advantages in no longer retaining total control. In empowering others, one gains, Kreisberg contends, *power with*.

A major advantage in relinquishing *power over* and developing *power with*, Kreisberg (1992) argues, is an actual increase in personal power. When one engages in mutually respectful relationships, boundaries between self and other are broken down. This interpersonal connectedness creates a dynamic power that goes beyond the individual yet is available to each individual. When one can draw on the resources and creative energy of many minds working together, personal limitations are diminished. This is a key concept which will be developed extensively in this thesis.

Another point Kreisberg (1992) makes is that when the powerful make decisions for the powerless, they remain separate from the powerless, and do not come to understand their feelings, ideas and experiences: "the *power over* relationship cuts off human communication and creates barriers to human empathy and understanding . . . [and] creates the space in which domination is exerted and thrives" (p. 47). Might it then be unintentional that those who have power seek to maintain it? Could it be simply by oversight that those who lack power are adversely affected by the powerful? If the powerless don't realize they're being oppressed, and the powerful don't realize they're being oppressive, there certainly isn't much impetus to change. Although many people certainly do realize they are being oppressed, perhaps the mechanism of ignorance can account at least in part for why democratic schooling remains a low priority for many, and not often practiced. This could be a key understanding for an administrator wishing to implement democratic student involvement at the school level, and wishing to gain staff support. How does one build recognition that by empowering students we also empower ourselves?

Kreisberg (1992) also makes strong links between empowerment and feminist theory. While power relationships are certainly not gender-specific,

in our traditionally patriarchal society women and children have been more powerless than men. Traditionally, school administrators have been predominantly male and elementary teachers predominantly female, and thus a patriarchal system has been perpetuated in elementary schools, with men generally being higher in the hierarchy and thus having domination over women and children. There is currently a trend towards equalization of male and female administrators at the elementary level. How might this affect power relationships? Might women, who have traditionally been more powerless, have more empathy for children in powerless positions?

Empowering students, and sharing power, is not to say, however, that adults have no authoritative role whatsoever. Kreisberg (1992) concedes that realistically, within the present environment of education, one can only move along the continuum from *power over* towards *power with*. Teachers have responsibility to ensure a safe environment, to assign grades, and to help students who have traditionally been more powerless to learn how to gradually assume more power.

My main concerns with Kreisberg's work are: (a) that it was all conducted at the high school level or in private or alternative elementary schools, but again not in public elementary schools, and (b) he interviewed teachers only, not students, who could have very different perspectives of these relationships. Still, his work gives us invaluable conceptions of how teachers view the sharing of power with students.

Thus far I have looked at relationships mainly from the perspective of power-sharing, which still can be construed as political. Relationships also operate on a more emotional level.

Caring. Nel Noddings (1984, 1992) approaches democratic schooling from a feminist, ethical perspective, stressing emotional needs. She makes a strong case for the importance of caring in schools, contending that "the primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring" (1992, p. 172). She maintains that "to receive and to be received, to care and be cared-for: these are the basic realities of human being and its basic aims" (p. 173). Again not

abandoning the importance of adult authority, Noddings stresses that children need to be helped from ego-centricism to an ethic of caring for each other. She identifies many democratic practices as ways to enhance caring, for example, dialogue and sharing in decision-making. This reinforces, I believe, the need to view democratic education as a caring, moral way of being together. Aside from any political agenda, on a personal level, caring and being cared about are emotionally satisfying. Such present-centered satisfaction is important if democratic education is to be viable.

The Role of Administrator in Change Initiation

With my general purpose in this thesis being the exploration of how an administrator can initiate and develop democratic student involvement at the school level, a major issue is how this can be accomplished. How might an administrator actually implement such a change, especially in accordance with democratic values? Common wisdom maintains that the danger of principal-initiated change is teacher resistance. Even though students will be the recipients of this change, and major players in it, teachers are still long-term key players, having the main responsibility for successful continuation. If teachers resist, a democratic school community is not very likely.

Democratic student involvement is a change in school culture, a serious reform as opposed to a minor innovation. Fullan (1991) and Rosenholtz (1989) have maintained that transforming a school culture necessitates strong leadership by a principal, working in a collaborative manner with teachers. The work of George McGregor Burns (1978) is of much importance in understanding how a leader and followers work together to effect authentic change, which needs to be consistent with commonly held values. Burn's theory of transformational leadership maintains that in effecting real change "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20).

The role of principal, and the manner in which he or she implements democratic student involvement, are crucial elements then. Principals need to involve teachers democratically, or collaboratively, and teachers need to

see value in student voice and in sharing power with children.

Lack of Student Voice at the School Level and in Research

Certainly, if one was to go by the amount of current research on democratic education, one would think it truly dead and buried. One of the key points that needs to be stressed is that not only is student voice largely ignored at the school level, it is also largely ignored by researchers. While theoretical literature abounds, I have found scanty documentation of democratic student involvement in practice. Finding studies looking at democratic elementary schools has been particularly difficult, as has research in which student perspectives have been sought. J. Goodman's (1992) study of Harmony School stands out as the only one meeting both these criteria, and this was an independent, not public, school.

Collaborative decision-making among adult educators is becoming more and more common. As Kreisberg says, however, "a distressing development in education is that many educators are talking about the empowerment of teachers without a corresponding commitment to empowering students" (1992, p. 194). This theme is evident in much of the recent literature. For instance, *The Collaborative School* by Smith and Scott (1990) sounds promising in this regard; however, the collaboration being promoted is solely among adults: teachers and administrators. Students have no place in their proposed model whatsoever. The focus is on "collaboration as a strategy to improve the instructional effectiveness of a school's faculty" (p. 5). Zeichner (1991), writing about the democratization of schools, focuses again on the empowerment of adults: teachers and parents. He writes that "we should be aiming for the realization of the school as a democratic community that recognizes the legitimate rights of all parties to have substantive input into decision-making about significant school issues. At the secondary level, this would include students" (p. 371). Zeichner offers absolutely no elaboration as to how secondary students might be involved, and elementary students are left totally out of the picture.

When elementary students are recognized as having an important

voice, it generally remains at the classroom level. Recommended curriculum and pedagogy for democratic education are not nonexistent, and I devote considerable attention to them in this thesis as I believe there need to be complementary practices at the school and classroom level. Recommended school level practices are, however, rare. Morse (1993) acknowledges the school level in this regard, but goes no further than acknowledging it. She stresses that students learn about democratic citizenship through practice, and that the

process of observation, doing, and reflection allows students to define their view of citizenship and the role that they will perform in our shared democratic life. This latter point is crucial as we think about how to design ways for students actually to participate in the civic life of their community, be it the school or the neighbourhood. (p. 164)

She acknowledges that "there is an opportunity within a school or classroom to build cooperative relationships between equals, not necessarily in terms of position or knowledge but with respect for each others' role and ideas" (p. 165). In giving practical ideas for implementing participatory democratic decision-making, however, none of them extend beyond the classroom level to the school level.

Berman and La Farge (1993) have edited a book containing numerous documentations of democratic classroom practices, from kindergarten to high school. Included are two short descriptions of school level practices (Sawyer, 1993). One describes a representative Student Council in Massachusetts, where students from Grades 1-4 elect two students from each classroom, who meet once a week before school. The agenda is generated from students' comments left in suggestion boxes in each classroom. A classroom teacher sponsors this Student Council, and

in addition, the principal's occasional attendance at Student Council meetings, at the representatives' request, develops the children's confidence that "adults come when asked." Because she brings her notebook and takes notes while the children talk, the children see that "what they say is important enough to be written down." (p. 96)

Establishing credibility with other teachers and administrators took time;

however, the teacher sponsor claims that the Student Council has improved the morale of students and staff. The teacher sponsor is quoted as saying that "students see it's a two-way street. They see that the school really wants to work with them to protect their safety, health and education, but also, that students have a responsibility, too" (p. 97). Some of the issues the students addressed were: cutting in line for the school bus, a campaign to eliminate playground litter, donating books to local homeless shelters, and a role in the school's anti-drug program. This Student Council is rather briefly described in three pages, and only the teacher sponsor was interviewed. It is difficult to determine how much a part of the school culture has been affected by it; however, it appears that the principal plays a minor role in it. What concerns me is that the principal writing notes of what the children say is seen as an indication of taking them seriously. I am left wondering how far beyond note-taking the principal's involvement went. Was there dialogue with her? What is promising about this account, however, is that it shows how even one teacher committed to democratic student involvement at the school level can make a difference.

The other school level practice described by Sawyer (1993) is one implemented by a principal, new to an elementary school in Massachusetts, who was desiring an alternative to elected representation. Her concern with representative Student Councils stemmed from previous experiences at the high school level where she observed that the small proportion of the school's students who were elected

came from families that had "encouraged and expected" their children to speak up about what was on their minds. Students without this kind of background were at a distinct disadvantage: not only were they less likely to be elected as representatives, but if they were elected, they were less likely to speak up than more articulate students. (p. 98)

Seeking to empower students to express themselves, to think about problems and solve them, she instituted weekly open meetings during school time that could be attended by all students within several grade levels at a time, along with their teachers. One group was Grades 1-3, and one was Grades 4-5. She further encouraged student participation by making decisions through

consensus rather than voting. The agenda was generated by student comments put in an envelope on the principal's door; however, only if enough students thought the issue important was it discussed. Issues these students addressed included: washroom soap dispensers, cutting in line, and raising money for a dinner for the homeless. This practice indicates a more substantial shift in the traditional pattern of communication between students and an administrator. Sawyer said that this principal reported

increased excitement, growth, and learning from helping children have more of a say in their lives in school. With children involved in resolving problems and conflicts, adults are no longer left with the sole responsibility for solving them, since more heads are brought together to work out solutions. (p. 102)

Again, however, my concern with this account is that it is from the perspective of the principal only. In neither of Sawyer's accounts do we hear the students' perspectives.

What research has been done regarding democratic education that has sought student perspectives (besides J. Goodman's)? A number of educators have voiced concern regarding the lack of such research. Fullan (1991) contends that adults tend to think of students as beneficiaries of educational change, not as participants in this process. He has wondered what might happen if we treated students as people whose opinions mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in schools. To find even a partial answer he looked back at a research project in which he was involved during the early 1970s. Questionnaires were given to a random sample of nearly 4,000 Ontario students in Grades 5 to 13. It was found that 41% of the elementary students thought that teachers understood their point of view and 19% reported that teachers asked for their opinions. This study is now out of date, however, and most of it focused on high school students, as does nearly all of the minuscule amount of research regarding student participation that Fullan further cited. I do not believe that results from the high school level are generalizable to the elementary level, on which I am focusing, thus I have chosen not to include further results of that research here, but mention it to illustrate Fullan's concern regarding the lack of research in this area.

More recently, Corbett and Wilson (1995) are still echoing this same concern about lack of student voice in education and educational change, and the paucity of research that addresses this concern. They identify student participation as "a critical linchpin between adult reform behavior and student success, and that failing to acknowledge and accept this connection is a potentially fatal flaw in promoting our understanding of reform and in creating effective change initiatives" (p. 12). They justify the need for involving students in a number of ways: (a) philosophically, that such an approach is consistent with societal norms of democratic action; (b) from a humanitarian perspective, that it is simply decent to involve those expected to change in the planning and implementation of that change; and (c) practically, that since many educational reforms are asking students to be active constructors of their knowledge rather than passive recipients, it is a contradictory message to not involve them actively in change processes.

Corbett and Wilson (1995) found that students were rarely mentioned in the literature on the process of educational reform, and they make a plea for researchers to seek student perspectives. They identify a number of issues that might be addressed: (a) types of students responses to change attempts, e.g., taking real ownership vs. surface appearance of such; (b) differential patterns of role change among students, e.g., involving previously disenfranchised students vs. traditionally successful students; (c) process issues, e.g., different ways students can be involved in change; and (d) adult-student relational issues, e.g., threats to adults status and shifting perspectives of student and adult roles. These are all issues which are addressed in my research, thus I trust my research will be useful in helping to fill this void.

With respect to methodology, Corbett and Wilson (1995) suggest qualitative approaches, "talking to students directly" (p. 16). I have used a qualitative approach; however, I have spent very little of my time with students talking to them. I find theirs a curious use of words, perhaps used inadvertently, but nonetheless belying how ingrained it is in adults to want to *talk to* rather than *listen to* students.

Nieto (1994) is one oft-cited researcher who has sought, through case study interviews, student perspectives regarding a number of school policies

and practices. While her focus was mainly on the effects of racism and other forms of discrimination in high school, issues only tangentially related to my study, Nieto's plea is the same as Fullan's (1991) and Corbett and Wilson's (1995), to listen to student voices:

But listening alone is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by profound changes in what we expect our students to accomplish in school. Even more important than simply *listening* is *assisting* students to become agents of their own learning and to use what they learn in productive and critical ways. (Nieto, 1994, p. 421)

What I have attempted to show in this section is how my case study fills a void. There appears to be no other research focusing on democratic student involvement at the school level, in an elementary public school, from the multiple perspectives of students, teachers, and principal.

How might such a study be useful? Practically, it should prove useful for both administrators and teachers interested in increasing student leadership or democratic student involvement. It presents one model for a participatory Student Council or Leadership Program, yet what is stressed is not that this is a model to follow, but that each group of people attempting to form a democratic community will, through democratic processes, develop their own model that meets their particular needs. As the principal in this study was implementing this as a change in her first year at a school, it should also prove useful for administrators interested in change initiation. While the focus of this study is democratic student involvement at the school level, classroom level curriculum and pedagogy is also looked at extensively.

On a theoretical level, this study has value for anyone socially or politically concerned with the paradox of living in a democratic country with low levels of democratic schooling. What happens when a school starts to change this?

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

In the first section of this chapter I discuss my research style and justify my methodological choices in general, based on the work and recommendations of qualitative researchers. In the second section I give specifics regarding the methodology of my research, and the final section is a guide to the rest of the thesis.

Definition and Justification of Research Style

In the first phase of my research, the first interviews with two students, a teacher and the principal, I relied primarily on my intuition and curiosity to guide my choice of strategies. I was basically asking questions of people involved in my areas of interest. I was quite ignorant of various research traditions, beyond knowing I was doing a case study because I was studying a single site, and doing qualitative as opposed to quantitative research because I was not reducing anything to numbers. Because I was interested in the meaning that participants made of their local reality, I also knew I was doing interpretive as opposed to positivist research (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). I now realize that while my research style is not confined to any qualitative tradition in particular, it does include methods of phenomenological, cultural studies, and, to a lesser extent, ethnographic research. Wolcott (1992) affirms that in idea-driven (as opposed to procedure-driven) research one's intuition is a useful guide, and he suggests researchers make methodological choices in terms of the immediate concerns that drive the research rather than adhering to investigative traditions. It is important, he claims, that "researchers new to qualitative inquiry become effective strategists rather than affected poseurs" (p. 4). I believe I am thus justified in attaching various aspects of several research traditions to my emergent style, rather than attempting to be a researcher in any particular tradition.

Case Study Research

Case study research is not consistently defined in any clear, specific manner; however, it is a commonly used term, and a number of research experts offer their definitions. Gall et al. (1996) define case study research as "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (p. 545). One of the foremost experts on case study research, Robert Stake (1995), defines it as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). The purpose of my research is to shed light on a particular phenomenon, i.e., democratic student involvement; I have chosen a particular, natural instance of this phenomenon, i.e., a school implementing a participatory Student Council; and I am studying the perspectives of participants involved, i.e., students, principal and teachers. I am also researching the Student Council during important circumstances, i.e., its development initiated by a principal new to the school. According to these definitions, then, terming my research a case study is justified.

What are other important characteristics of a case study? Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have stressed the process-oriented nature of case study research. The design and procedures may be continually modified throughout the study, and the focus narrows or becomes modified as more is learned about the setting, subjects and themes. In a case study of an organization such as a school, they stress that the researcher needs to account for the relationship of the focused aspect to the whole organization, but out of necessity needs to narrow the subject matter. Wolcott (1992) has argued that case study be viewed as an end-product rather than a method or strategy of research. He claims that virtually any type of study can be reported as a case study, whose defining characteristic is that "the case itself is regarded as a bounded system" (p. 30). These different stresses on process and end-product are not necessarily contradictory, as case study is obviously broadly defined, not implicating any particular approach but able to encompass many. Stake (1995) defines typical methodology associated with case studies as being drawn from "naturalistic,

holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods" (p. xi).

The roles of a case study researcher may be varied, and one to which I am aspiring in my research is defined by Stake (1995) as that of *interpreter*. In this role the researcher not only makes new connections and finds ways to make them comprehensible to others, but also, in a more artistic rather than scientific manner, inspires the reader to exceed what the researcher writes. As Stake puts it, "The researcher helps extend the elegant intricacy of understanding but meticulous readers find the infinite void still lying just beyond" (p. 99). Another one of the roles Stake defines is that of *advocate*. Although phenomena need accurate descriptions, the interpretations of these are shaped by the mood, experiences and intentions of the researcher, at least to some extent. Rather than pretending to be value-free, Stake asserts that it may "be better to leave on the wrappings of advocacy that remind the reader: Beware" (p. 95).

Making explicit the researcher's intentions, feelings, experiences, etc., termed *reflexivity*, is emphasized by other researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Delamont, 1992; Ely, 1991; Moustakas, 1994). Delamont stresses that reflexivity needs to be employed at all stages of research, from the initial design to the final writing, and that if the researcher is constantly self-conscious about his/her role and interactions, making all processes explicit, the issues of validity and reliability are served. This is balanced with Ely's contention that while it is unavoidable to have biases, researchers must make sure their vision is not *too* skewed by their own subjectivities. Because of my strong values regarding democratic student involvement, I see the need for my being reflexive, and have attempted to incorporate reflexivity throughout my research and writing, but certainly hope this did not degenerate into disassociated introspection.

Rudduck (1993) has identified other problems and challenges regarding case study research in schools. There is a tension or challenge to be true to individual perspectives, and at the same time build a composite picture, which individuals and the school as a whole can recognize. There is a danger of the researcher becoming involved in the issues, events and situations

under study, thus perhaps affecting them, and also a danger in the readers' being unable to distinguish actual data from the researcher's interpretation of data. Of special concern to schools is the confidentiality of data, and the need to preserve the anonymity of participants. The school I am researching is not one with which I am involved in any other way, except for previously supervising student teachers there. Since throughout my research I was working elsewhere full-time, I had great time restrictions on my ability to visit the school, and do not think there was much danger of being too involved or affecting the situation. To distinguish what is actual data and what is my interpretation I make extensive use of quotes, and in telling in narrative what a participant said I make that clear. To preserve anonymity all names have been changed, including that of the school.

A general case study format is seen as being supported by various specialized qualitative research traditions (Gall et al., 1996; Wolcott, 1992), and I now turn to the main traditions incorporated in my research.

Phenomenological Research

What are the defining characteristics and important aspects of phenomenological research, and how do they relate to my style? According to Moustakas (1994), who was much influenced by the work of Edmund Husserl, a major focus is on first-person subjective reports of those experiencing the particular phenomenon being investigated. There is a concern for wholeness, achieved by examining the phenomenon from many angles and perspectives, including an individual's images, theories, ideas, values and attitudes (Holstein & Gubrum, 1992). These key aspects are consistent with my seeking of various perspectives of those involved in the Student Council I am studying.

Moustakas (1994) also emphasizes the phenomenological research tradition which calls for the researcher to make systematic efforts to set aside biases and beliefs regarding the phenomenon being studied (known as the Epoche process), thus listening to the participants with as open a mind as possible. I have made concentrated efforts to do this, shelving my

preconceptions and values while interviewing, as my interest is in the authentic perspectives of the participants, and I am cognizant of the danger of subtly influencing what they say. At the same time, however, as Moustakas says, "the researcher has a personal interest in whatever she or he seeks to know; the researcher is intimately connected with the phenomenon" (p. 59). I recognize that it is my intense interest in my topic, with attending beliefs and attitudes, that makes the setting aside of biases so important. I also bring to my research knowledge about the topic, and anticipate certain themes. Stake (1995) ties these two aspects together: "In qualitative studies, research questions typically orient to cases or phenomena, seeking patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships" (p. 41).

My research style is partially consistent with another phenomenological tradition, that of blurring the division between researcher and participant. Moustakas (1994) suggests that participants approach being co-researchers with the primary researcher, with a similar interest in understanding the nature and meanings of the phenomenon being studied. This is true for the principal in my case study, who has said she wants to reach a better understanding of how the Student Council is working through the reflective thinking in which she engages during interviews. While interviews with students and teachers may result in further understanding for them, this was not a primary or explicit purpose.

One of the most important tenets of phenomenology is subjective meaning, maintaining that "there is no absolute or final reality in experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 55), and that the meaning individuals ascribe to phenomena are a result of intentions, perceptions, memories, judgments, feelings, thoughts, etc. The value of intersubjective validity, however, is not precluded. Moustakas stresses that "a continuing alteration of validity occurs as people articulate and describe their experiences. Reciprocal correcting of reality takes place in social conversations and dialogues" (p. 57). Still, he claims the starting point must be individual perception. In my own research I am stressing individual perception with the principal and teachers, interviewing them individually; however, social perceptions are stressed with the students, interviewing them in a focus group.

One of my personal delights with Moustakas (1994) regards his integration of researcher and researched, or subject and object. When he says such things as “knowledge does not end with moments of connectedness, understanding, and meaning. Such journeys open vistas to new journeys for uncovering meaning, truth, and essence--journeys within journeys, within journeys” (p. 65), it affirms my constant state of process and wonderment in my research, with no firm conclusions anticipated, but new avenues of inspiration always opening.

Cultural Studies Research

Cultural studies research, a branch of critical theory, maintains a politicized view of schooling. It involves the investigation of power relationships, and seeks to make research and education transformative and democratic (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Giroux, 1992, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). As Giroux writes:

Comprehending schooling as a mechanism of culture and politics is at odds with the largely depoliticized view of schooling embraced by dominant educational models. Contrary to this view, cultural studies focuses on the critical relationship among culture, knowledge, and power; therefore it is not surprising that mainstream educators often dismiss the field as being too ideological, or simply ignore its theoretical implications for addressing how education generates a privileged narrative space for some social groups and a space of inequality and subordination for others. (1996, p. 17)

One of the main purposes of my research is to bring more student voice into education, with a more equitable sharing of power between adults and children. The long-term vision is to develop citizens who are able to effectively participate in a vital, equitable democratic society. This vision goes beyond merely voting in elections, and seeks to embed democratic ideals and values throughout all institutions and aspects of life. These purposes are supported by the cultural studies tradition. Kincheloe and McLaren define a cultural studies researcher as one who is attempting to use his or her work as

a form of social or cultural criticism, seeking to provide insight to guide people towards greater autonomy. A key concept here is that of *voice*. Groups of people being either silenced, empowered, or privileged to speak is a major way power is maintained or contested (Fine, 1989; Giroux, 1992, 1996).

Cultural studies research is generally resistant to a unified, formal methodology, and instead draws from a wide range of other traditions. Carspecken and Apple (1992), however, have defined five stages of critical ethnographic research: (a) collection of observation data, (b) construction of a preliminary analysis of this data, (c) generation of another set of data based on interviews with participants, (d) description of system relationships (e) explanation of system relationships, relating them to society as a whole. While my research lacks a strong ethnographic component, having no long-term observations, the other stages are present. Perhaps the method most distinguishing of cultural studies is that of critique--of all aspects of one's methods, perspectives, values, and the phenomenon being studied. I attempt to do this in regards to myself as researcher; however, I do not feel comfortable in judgementally critiquing the phenomenon I am studying, the Student Council of a particular school. I feel in a privileged position having permission to study it, and am unwilling to jeopardize that, or to bring any possibility of embarrassment to that school. I will critically analyze but not critically judge that situation.

Cultural studies and phenomenological research differ in respect to validity or trustworthiness of data. Critical theory asserts that in relationships with different levels of power, as exist in schools, those who are powerless often do not recognize, or accept without question, power differentials. Thus, "the researcher may see the effects of oppression . . . that those researched may not see" ((Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 151). In contrast, phenomenological research calls for the shelving of a researcher's values and interpretations that are not validated by the participants. It is my opinion that if one values *voice*, it is most consistent to accept what participants say, rather than insist on researcher interpretation as more valid.

Another of the criticisms of cultural studies researchers is that while they "purport to be phenomenologically oriented" little of their work on

student attitudes, beliefs, and behavior is grounded in actual empirical research with young people" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1992, p. 852). Many of their conclusions are based on inferences using data from adults and other researchers to support their agenda. This is a tendency I have tried to guard against, making sure that what students tell me is not subsumed by or trivialized in comparison to what the adults say.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research relies heavily on long-term observation, for six weeks to six months or longer (Delamont, 1992; Ely, 1991). I was not able to devote this amount of time to observation as I teach full-time; however, I have incorporated short-term observations into my research. I have observed one Student Council meeting, and in my focus-group interviews with students I have made field-notes of their behaviours and interactions. According to Delamont, such short-term ethnographic observation is justifiable when the data is used to illustrate and make more vivid the data gathered by interviews. Thus I am not considering my research ethnographic; however, it has a small ethnographic component.

A Case Study Researcher's Methodology Influencing My Own

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, J. Goodman (1992) studied an independent school in Indiana that was overtly committed to democratic ideals. I found this to be the most illuminating research on the subject, and I will identify here how his research methods influenced, or sometimes validated, my own. Because I first read J. Goodman after a few months of beginning my study, it is sometimes difficult to tell which was influence and which was validation.

Rather than following any one tradition, J. Goodman's (1992) methods were a synthesis of several frameworks, including interpretive, ethnographic, cultural studies and phenomenological. His stated goal was

not to simply report "what's out there," but to analyze this reality in

ways that empower us, as human beings, to work against those social, economic, cultural, and psychological constraints and ideologies (class, gender, race) that keep us from creating a more just and caring reality. (p. 38)

This stance is similar to my own synthesis of basically the same methodological frameworks, and validates my idealistic goal of seeking to understand how to empower educators and students to create a more equitable and caring society.

Having this ideological stance, J. Goodman (1992) also recognized how crucial it was for him to be reflexive, "to guard against imposing meaning on phenomena rather than constructing meaning through negotiation with those being observed" (p. 39). Like J. Goodman, interviewing students and faculty members was the main method I used to collect data, and also like him I used group interviews with students to cross-check findings from previous interviews. I was also convinced, because of J. Goodman's extensive observations, and some contradictions discovered between what he saw and what participants said, of the need to incorporate at least some observation into my data collection. Like J. Goodman I analyzed data throughout data collection, coded information into emerging categories, and asked interviewees to respond to this ongoing analysis. As a result of this methodology, the concepts which resulted from J. Goodman's study he considers to be grounded in the subjective lives of those participating in democratic schooling, and this was what I wanted to result from my study.

Specific Methodology Used

Methodology consisted of a single case study, from the interpretive or qualitative perspective, drawing mainly from phenomenological and cultural studies traditions of research. Data were collected mainly by interviews with participants over two school years, and also through short-term observation.

Site Selection

At Hilltop Elementary School (a pseudonym), in a suburb of

Vancouver, British Columbia, a Student Council has been formed as a means of involving students in making and implementing decisions at the school level. While I have come into contact with a few elementary schools with Student Councils, I chose this site to study for a number of reasons.

The primary reason is that the principal, Mary Green (a pseudonym), is knowledgeable and experienced regarding democratic student involvement. At the beginning of the study she was in her first year of principalship at Hilltop, and was instrumental in developing the present Student Council. Although a Student Council existed in previous years, it was not very active in practice. I was interested in discovering how a principal, new to a school, implemented change regarding increasing the level of democratic student involvement at the school level. As this is the second school in which she has instituted a Student Council, her comparisons of these experiences also support a grander analysis than does experience in a single school. The two Student Councils were also of different formats, the first being representative, or elected, and the second being participatory, or open to a large number of students. When first approached about using this school for a case study the principal expressed an eagerness to take part, saying that it would be beneficial for her to reflect on her experiences. I had a previous professional relationship with Mary, having supervised student teachers both at her former school, in the Spring of 1995, and at Hilltop in the Spring of 1996. I was thus somewhat familiar with her leadership style and the tone she had established at these two schools, and through other discussions with her felt that we had an ease of communication.

In its present form, the Student Council had been in operation at Hilltop for about six months when my study began. This was advantageous as I was interested in the implementation and development of a Student Council, and was thus able to study one in its early, although not beginning, stages.

There are many other advantages associated with the chosen site. It is a typical public elementary school in many regards. It is middle-sized, with approximately 450 students. It is located in a suburban neighbourhood, yet because of substantial poverty in the catchment area is designated an "inner

city" school. There is a range of socio-economic conditions, many ethnic groups are represented, and there is a fairly large number of Asian students, both of Chinese and Indian origin. Thus there should be no major reasons why the effectiveness of this Student Council should be dependent upon unique features of the school population, and what might be learned from studying it might be generalizable to many other school situations.

Ely (1991) maintains that detachment is necessary and that too much familiarity with a situation makes it difficult to maintain objectivity. My professional involvement with this principal and her two schools was relatively brief, with weekly visits to student teachers over a period of three months at each school, so I do not believe I was too familiar. I believe these visits alerted me to the possibility of using Hilltop as a site, but otherwise play no part in data collection or analysis. In fact, all of the data was collected after I had ceased to supervise student teachers there, and thus I had ceased professional involvement with the school. Since Hilltop is not in the school district in which I am presently employed as a teacher, I also believe I have no personal or professional constraints nor conflict of interest, and this further adds to my ability to be objective.

Participants

Data were collected through interviews with the principal, 2 teachers, the school counsellor, and 14 students. Participants were selected through various *purposeful* strategies (Patton, 1990), detailed below, in order to find interviewees likely to be information-rich with respect to the purposes of this study.

My justification for including the principal as a participant is based on her knowledge and experience regarding democratic student involvement at the school level. She is what Marshall and Rossman (1995) have termed an *elite* interviewee, being considered the most influential and prominent person in both the school and the Student Council and most able to provide an overall view. I would also consider her, and her implementation of the Student Council at this school, an *extreme* or *deviant case* (Patton, 1990). Few

elementary schools have Student Councils, and those that do generally have a representative format. A participatory format, such as at Hilltop, is exceptional.

Students chosen were interviewed as focus groups in three phases. For the Phase I interview, which I considered a pilot interview, 2 Grade 7 boys on the Student Council were chosen by the principal because of their active involvement in the Student Council and their ability to be articulate. I would consider their selection as *intensity sampling* (Patton, 1990) as they manifested intense interest in the phenomenon being studied, and, while not typical in their ability to be articulate, are not extreme cases. For the Phase II and III interviews 12 Student Council members were chosen by *systematic sampling* in an effort to ensure that the sample was not biased (Gall et al., 1996, p. 225). There were approximately 70 Grade 7s² and I wanted a focus group of 8 or 9 students, so decided to select 12 in the event that some declined or were unavailable. Using class lists, every fifth student was first identified. The principal reviewed these names. Two students were rejected because they were not then participating in the Student Council,³ and one was rejected as she had recently been badly injured in a car accident. The names immediately below these students on the class lists were then chosen. There were close to an equal number of boys and girls. Consent forms were sent home with an attached letter from the principal expressing her support of this study. I anticipated having some students decline to participate and to end up with a focus group of 8 or 9; however, the principal misunderstood this intention, and if students declined she then sent a consent form home with another student. This resulted in 12 students consenting, 4 boys and 8 girls. On the day of the Phase II interview a number of boys were absent from school due to their participation in a sports event. The resulting group consisted of 8 girls and only 1 boy. For the Phase III interview all students were present except one girl, so this group had a gender balance of 4 boys and 7 girls. This was a disappointingly skewed gender balance, with girls' perspectives possibly being different than boys'; however, in Phase I two boys

² At the time of selection, November, 1996, only Grade 7s were participating in Student Council; Grade 6s did not join until later in the year.

³ Not all Grade 7s were participating at this time, but by December, 1996 they all were.

were interviewed, bringing the total gender balance to a more equitable 6 boys and 8 girls.

Two teachers were selected because of their involvement with the Student Council. Peter⁴ was selected as he was teaching Grade 7 and had numerous students on the Student Council, and because prior to Mary coming to the school as principal he had sponsored the Student Council. The second teacher, Rick, was selected because he was teaching Grades 6/7 and, along with the principal and another Grade 7 teacher, was a sponsor of the Student Council in its second year. The selection of Peter and Rick would be considered intensity sampling. They both were able to provide rich insight into the phenomenon being studied, but I would not consider them as extreme cases as the principal.

The school counsellor, David, was selected at the suggestion of the principal, as he had been at Hilltop School for numerous years and had an overall, long-term perspective we both felt would be valuable in looking at effects of the Student Council on the culture of the school. David's inclusion would be considered *snowball or chain* sampling (Patton, 1990), as he was recommended as a rich source of information.

I would also consider both Rick and David as *confirming or disconfirming* participants (Patton, 1990). By the time they were interviewed I had already interviewed numerous people, and the data I collected from them indicated a pattern, all with very similar, very positive views about the Student Council. As Rick was the newest sponsor teacher of the Student Council, and David was not involved in the Student Council but had a broad perspective of the school as a whole over time, I thought they could be tests to confirm or disconfirm this pattern I saw emerging.

Procedure

Phases of Data Collection

Time sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) has been an important aspect in this case study, as the Student Council develops and changes over each

⁴ All names of participants are pseudonyms.

year, and from year to year, and the effects of it also emerge over time. The interviews in Phase I were conducted towards the end of the 1996 school year, with the principal and 2 students being interviewed in May, and the teacher, Peter, in June. The interviews in Phase II were planned to be conducted in November, 1996; however I was only able to interview the focus group of 9 students at that time. The principal was not available to be interviewed until January, 1997, and the teacher, Rick, in February, 1997. In Phase III, in April, 1997 I interviewed the same focus group of students, now increased to 11, and the counsellor, David. In July, 1997 the principal was interviewed for the third time, and I am considering this also to be Phase III. To summarize: data were collected over two school years; the principal was interviewed three times, each teacher and the counsellor once, the group of 2 students once, and the larger focus-group of students twice (although 4 of those 12 were only available once).

Interviews and Observations

Interviews have been my central data-gathering method. As Ely (1991) has written, "Interviews are at the heart of doing ethnography because they seek the words of the people we are studying . . . so that we can understand their situation with increasing clarity" (p. 58). Observation has been used to a lesser extent, to supplement the interviews (Delamont, 1992). I made field-note observations of the interviews with the groups of students, focusing on their interactions with each other and their general behaviour. As Ely (1991) has suggested, when researchers are interviewing they are engaging in *participant observation*, which may include attending to how participants relate to each other, how they show acceptance of other's points of view, and how they disagree. I observed one Student Council meeting, in April, 1997. I sat near the back of the meeting, remaining unobtrusive in my note-taking, although I was introduced to the group.

The interviews I conducted have all been formal, in that they have been planned and conducted away from the action. For Phase I the principal was interviewed late in the day in her office when we were assured of no

interruptions, for approximately 45 minutes; for Phase II she was interviewed on two consecutive Sundays over the telephone for a total of approximately 1 hour; and for Phase III also over the telephone, for approximately 1 hour. The telephone interviews were easier to schedule than after work, and afforded her the opportunity to relax, think, and have the time she needed to respond. The last interview, in July, in particular afforded her the opportunity to reflect back over the year. The two students interviewed in Phase I were interviewed in a small conference room after school, for approximately 45 minutes. The group of nine students in Phase II were interviewed during noon-hour, in the principal's office, for approximately 45 minutes. This office is a very child-oriented, student-friendly place, and I do not believe had a restricting effect on the students as some principal's offices might. For Phase III the students were interviewed in the same place, for approximately 30 minutes during the latter part of the Leadership meeting time, while the rest of the students were working on group projects. The teachers in both phases were interviewed late in the afternoon after school, Peter in his classroom for approximately 45 minutes, and Rick in a small student services room for approximately 30 minutes. The counsellor, David, was interviewed in his office at lunch time for approximately 40 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded, with a small, unobtrusive recorder, except for the telephone interviews which were recorded with an answering machine system.

The interviewing style was semi-structured (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Ely, 1991). A list of questions was used because I had certain areas that I wished to explore with all participants in order to compare their perspectives. These questions provided focus; however, I tried also to remain sensitive to clues being given by the participants and to follow their lead if they were indicating a rich area. My responses to answers were generally a simple acknowledgment of listening, but often I reflected back a summary of what I had heard to make sure I was understanding, and to give them a chance to deny (Spradley, 1979). I often asked participants to say more about something or to give an example. Occasionally I entered into conversation with the interviewees, for example, sharing my experiences in a similar situation, although I left this until towards the end of the interview so as not to bias

what the participants would say. Ely and Bogdan and Biklen maintain there is no harm in this, and indeed some good in letting interviewees know you have been in a similar situation, which helps to build trust and the basis for richer interviews. Ely stresses, however, that such comments must be to support and facilitate the interview, not to manipulate it. I tried to be very vigilant and in control of what I said during an interview to ensure I was not manipulating it, and as I have been trained in this type of communication and am experienced at it, I believe I was successful.

The interviews followed a planned rhythm or flow (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Ely, 1991). First I tried to put the participants at ease by informal chit-chat or a bit of humour, and expressed gratitude for their time. I explained my reasons for doing the study, that I wished to learn how to implement an elementary Student Council. I explained further to the students, to help put them at ease and be freer with information, that I wished them to teach me about the Student Council. I assured participants that what they said would be treated confidentially, with their names changed. I drew attention briefly to the tape recorder, and explained it was easier for me to really listen to them if I was not having to take notes. (In the letter accompanying the consent forms it was indicated that interviews would be recorded.) The questions were all open-ended, designed to have the participants speak at length and to offer their individual perspectives. I asked them if they wanted me to read all the questions first so they would have no surprises. Rick declined this offer, and also Mary for the second and third interviews. Another reason for reading all the questions first was so participants could speak to these issues in any order they wished, but I also repeated each question one at a time throughout the interview, even if it seemed to have been previously answered, in case the participants wished to add more.

The first questions were *grand tour* questions (Spradley, 1979), trying to determine the participants' general philosophical orientation to the Student Council. The adults were asked what were their philosophical beliefs regarding democratic student involvement, and students were asked the reasons they wanted to be on the Student Council. I wanted to establish that it was their personal perspectives in which I was interested. I asked many

questions which Spradley would term *structural*, exploring how the participants organized their knowledge, for instance, what they viewed as important Student Council functions, their main satisfactions with the Student Council and improvements they would suggest. My intentions here were to explore how they categorized their views attitudinally, to find out what they deemed important, positive and negative. Their answers, however, gave much description of how the Student Council was organized.

Interspersed throughout these structural questions were what Spradley terms *descriptive* questions, of various types he has identified: *Grand-tour* questions looked at the school in general, for example, effects they saw the Student Council having on students' attitudes towards school, or how it was affecting the school as a whole. *Mini-tour* questions explored smaller units of their experience, for example, how students were selected for the Student Council and recent developments in its structure. *Experience* questions looked at, for example, how a student's participation in the Student Council affected them personally, how teachers saw their classroom practices being affected by the Student Council, and how the principal saw it affecting her job. *Example* questions were often woven in, whenever a statement seemed vague without a concrete example.

My decision to do a group interview with the students was mainly for practical reasons, wishing to hear many student perspectives and not being able to schedule time to interview them individually. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have pointed out, a group interview is also useful in helping to bring the researcher into the world of the participants. Since a main focus of my study is on students learning to work together as a democratic community, having a group interview afforded me the opportunity to observe how they related to each other. There are other advantages and disadvantages to group interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Patton, 1990). They are a legitimate means of triangulation used in conjunction with other techniques. It is fairly easy to assess the extent to which there is a relatively consistent, shared view among participants. They are stimulating to the participants in that they can consider their own views in the context of the views of others and thus agree or disagree with each other. Group interviews are also helpful in recalling

events, cumulative, elaborative and data rich. There are potential dangers, however, that the group might interfere with individual expression and that some individuals might dominate.

Interviewing groups of 9 and 11 students thus required considerable attention to logistics and management. We sat in a circle so we could all see each other and make eye contact; however, the room was very crowded, with some sitting on chairs and some on the floor. At the beginning of the Phase III interview a couple of students grumbled a little about being there, wanting instead to be working on their committees, but there were no such problems with the Phase II students. I expressed my appreciation for their agreeing to give their time. For the Phase III interview I explained that my main purposes for this interview were to check that I was understanding correctly what previous students had said, to check if my hypotheses for reasons behind what they had said were valid, and to give the students who were not present at the Phase II interview to have a chance to give their ideas. I asked the students to raise their hands to indicate they wished to speak so that only one at a time spoke, and to please say their name each time before they spoke so that when I listened to the tape recording I was certain of who was speaking. This perhaps added an unnatural stiffness to the interview; however, I knew I would not be able to identify so many people just by voice. For each question, after it seemed all who wished to speak had spoken, I always asked if anyone else wished to respond to that question. Because there were a few students who tended to speak a lot, this final invitation was necessary to encourage the quiet students, who often did speak after this encouragement.

Subsequent interviews were discussed at the end of the interviews with the students and principal. I asked participants to suggest questions I should ask next time, and to think of other questions in the interim. This was done to help ensure that I was not missing any areas they thought were important, and to empower them as responsible participants in the research process (Ely, 1991).

The Phase II and III interviews with the principal had some special features. I wrote four term papers for courses based on each phase of

interviews, and she read these papers and had that information and interpretation to take into account. I believe this also increased her trust, as she knew how I was interpreting the data on an ongoing basis. I felt it was important that she was integrally involved in every step of the process, and that this research was enabling her to gain knowledge and insight, as she indicated she desired. As Ely (1991) maintains, it is the social responsibility of researchers to build "researcher-participant collaboration" (p. 230). Some of the questions I asked in the second and third interviews were for clarification and elaboration of issues previously discussed, with either her or other participants. Marshall and Rossman (1995) have suggested that elite interviewees respond best to open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination. For the most part, I felt that my questions were mere stimulations for Mary to explore her thinking about the Student Council, and I found that I abandoned some of my planned questions as she lead the interview down pathways more pertinent to the actual situation. By the end, however, I felt that my agenda had also been covered.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In Phases I and II of this study I transcribed six interviews as narratives, interspersed with numerous direct quotes, containing nearly all of what the interviewees said. These transcribed interviews were based on the tape-recorded data from the group of two students, the focus group of nine students, the two teachers, and the first two interviews with the principal. Summarizing was kept minimal, attempting to maintain each interviewee's voice and give an accurate accounting. These transcriptions fully reflected the data, but did so in a more readable form than verbatim transcripts. These transcriptions served two purposes. Firstly, they were written for the purposes of term papers as "interview findings." Rudduck (1993) maintains that a challenge in case studies is to keep trust with individual perspectives and at the same time build a composite picture. Huberman and Miles (1994) also maintain that valid analysis is aided by displaying data in one location. Secondly, then, these narrative transcriptions aided in on-going data analysis

and interpretation.

For Phase I broad categories and themes emerged from these narrative transcriptions. My initial analysis of the data compared the perspectives of two students, a teacher (Peter) and the principal according to these various categories and themes, and made connections to the theoretical and research literature. Huberman and Miles (1994) suggest that the design of qualitative studies is in itself analytic in such choices as the conceptual framework and the research questions. Data collection and analysis are on-going, they claim, and thus one can "focus much of the data collection on emergent themes or constructs" (p. 431). I felt my initial conceptual framework and my interview questions provided an analytical basis for some of the categories and themes that emerged from the data, but others that emerged seemed wholly from the data itself. In subsequent interviews I was also able to check with participants about my analysis and interpretations.

For Phase II I sought a more systematic approach for coding the narrative transcripts to ensure I was fully reflecting the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Ely, 1991; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1979; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Patton stresses that the steps and procedures for analyzing qualitative data are not mechanical and rigid. The inductive search for patterns, he claims, is guided by the questions identified at the beginning of the study, and that "uncovering patterns, themes and categories is a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgments about what is really significant and meaningful in the data" (p. 406). Marshall and Rossman also stress a creative approach to the generation of categories, themes and patterns. This is achieved, they claim, by looking for salient, grounded categories of meaning that are held by the participants, and crossing these with categories already created by other research.

Delamont (1992) maintains that categories and themes need not only be extracted from interviews, but can also come from relevant literature. She contends that the researcher may extract from the interview data what he or she is interested in "relevant to the foreshadowed problems, the developing hypotheses, and the social science agenda in the researcher's head" (p. 155).

Because I read a great deal of relevant theoretical literature prior to and throughout my own research I realize I have likely been influenced by themes and patterns from these readings even though I also view them as emerging from the data. This would suggest that my research is what Delamont refers to as testing, illustrating or working "down" from a grand theory that already exists, as opposed to developing grounded theory that works "up" from the data. While I am not emphasizing theory development in this case study, what I still hope results is a combination of these two methods: that existing theory can be enhanced by the data I collected. Strauss and Corbin (1994) support this as a possibility, maintaining that grounded theory may be generated initially from the data or if existing theories seem appropriate to the area of investigation, these may be elaborated and modified as more data is matched against them. I am certainly on the alert for data which does not fit with previously generated categories and themes, as it may be important in the development of theory. As Huberman and Miles (1994) emphasize, good theory has categories that fit the data, is relevant, can be used to explain, predict and interpret what is going on, and is modifiable.

The method I thus chose for analyzing the data for Phase II was to construct a large matrix allowing me to compare the data from the focus group of nine students, the teacher (Rick), the principal and the literature. I first read through the narrative transcription of the interview with the students and listed the themes or categories I saw emerging, making reference to the page number where this was indicated and summarizing on the matrix what the students said. I then read through the narrative transcription of the interview with the principal and added to the matrix summaries of what she had said pertaining to these themes and categories. New themes emerged from this data as well, and were added to the matrix. I did the same with the data from the interview with the teacher. Throughout this process themes and categories were occasionally split or combined, and numerous pieces of data overlapped and were thus included in more than one category or theme.

Lastly, I went back through the literature I had reviewed and added to the matrix what related to the themes and categories already generated. I did not add any new ones that were apparent only in the literature, for the

purposes of data analysis. In most of the themes there were perspectives of all three participant groups and the literature. A number of themes had perspectives only from the teacher and principal, none had only one participant's perspective, but a number had either a scanty or major amount from one perspective.

For Phase III complete transcripts of the interviews were not written. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have said that short cuts may be necessary, and suggest transcribing some of the first interviews more or less completely, and then narrowing transcriptions in later interviews when one has a better idea about the focus of the study and can be "more sensitively selective" (p. 96). Data from these interviews were incorporated as described below.

A large three-part matrix was constructed, one part each for student, teacher and principal perspectives. Each part contained basically the same categories and themes as for the matrix developed for Phase II, although there was some further splitting and combining depending on the varying amounts of data from the various perspectives. Each theme on this larger matrix was given a code, and a corresponding section for the three data chapters for this thesis, one each for student, teacher and principal perspectives. I had previously written term papers containing the actual data transcriptions, my analyses and interpretations, and literature reviews. I first went back through these papers, coded them according to the matrix section they pertained to, then cut and pasted them into the appropriate sections of the data chapters. This resulted in all the actual data from Phases I and II being organized according to the themes. I then listened to the taped-recorded interviews of the Phase III interviews and selectively added data directly into the appropriate section, either as narrative or direct quotes. No additional themes or categories emerged from this data, thus the thematic coding fully reflects all the data.

Further Credibility Issues

I believe I have addressed many credibility issues throughout this Methods section and will not repeat all of them; however, some need further

explanation and stress. The term "credibility" is used here to include both reliability and validity. A qualitative researcher's credibility may be viewed as "a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 44).

There are a number of specific ways in which I am strengthening the credibility of this case study. One is prolonged engagement in the field (Ely, 1991; Gall et al., 1996), which I have addressed by conducting my interviews over the course of two school years. This enables distinguishing between perceptions coloured by a specific situation and more consistent trends. Another method is member-checking (Ely, 1991; Gall et al., 1996; Spradley, 1979), which I have done in a number of ways: (a) The principal read my term papers on an on-going basis and was able to respond to my interpretations; (b) I asked participants to suggest questions for subsequent interviews, so I was not missing what they viewed as important areas to discuss; and (c) I told participants my interpretations based on previous interviews, either with them or other participants, and sought their verification that my interpretations were valid.

One of the most important methods of increasing credibility is triangulation (Delamont, 1992; Ely, 1991; Gall et al., 1996; Patton, 1990; Stake, 1994). Stake defines triangulation as

a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. But, acknowledging that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen. (p. 241)

This is at the very essence of my study as one of my express purposes is to compare the perspectives of various people involved in the Student Council. By using multiple data sources I am eliminating bias that might result from relying exclusively on one informant, or one type of informant, for example, adults only. When data has not produced convergence I have sought to reconcile the inconsistencies in subsequent interviews by asking for participant's perspectives regarding these inconsistencies. I have also done some short-term observation such that I am not relying exclusively on one

method of data collection, namely interviewing. One purpose of this observation was to look for negative instances, or inconsistencies between what was being said and what was being done.

Delamont (1992) claims that "as long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability are served" (p. 9). As I am attempting to be explicit about every process throughout this study, I believe I am addressing credibility issues continually.

Guide to the Following Chapters

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 present and interpret the data and connect it with pertinent literature. Chapter 3 presents the students' perspectives, Chapter 4 the teachers' and counsellor's, and Chapter 5 the principal's. The same basic categories and themes are used in each chapter to organize the data, although as stated previously there is some splitting and combining of themes to reflect the varying amounts of data from each perspective. Since perspectives from the various participant groups were very similar I will not continually mention similarities and will, for the most part, discuss only the dissimilarities.

Each section of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 looks at an emergent theme. I lead with a presentation of the data relating to that theme. In some cases the data are presented chronologically as they emerged over the various phases of data collection, and sometimes data are further organized according to sub-themes. Pertinent literature is in some cases interspersed, although connections to the literature are generally left for the end of each section. In some sections there is a substantial literature review pertaining to that particular theme. This is instead of having one chapter devoted entirely to a literature review, for the purpose of connecting the literature more closely to the data.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion, containing a summary and reflections on the data, and a further discussion of literature that goes beyond the data. Further implications are also included in this final chapter.

CHAPTER 3

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I first set the stage by describing the Student Council, and then present data from the students interviewed, interpret it according to emergent themes, and make connections to pertinent literature.

The students were interviewed in three phases. Devin⁵ and Harpreet were interviewed together towards the end of the first year that the Student Council was operating (Phase I). In November of the following year a focus group of 9 students was interviewed: Vicki, Kristen, Rose, Terri, Amit, Jacenta, Suneli, Kaylee and Mai (Phase II). In April this same focus group was interviewed, with some changes: Kristen was not present, and in addition there were Clinton, David and Joey, for a total of 11 (Phase III).

Two very broad categories are apparent in the data: (a) the form and function of the Student Council, and (b) the social-emotional dimension of the Leadership Program, how relationships and attitudes are related to and affected by it. (The terms Student Council and Leadership Program are henceforth used interchangeably as the participants use both terms, meaning the same thing.) While there is certainly overlap between these two broad categories, most of the themes and issues are predominantly in one category or the other.

Form and Function of Democratic Student Involvement at the School Level

In this section I will first describe how the Student Council is organized and how that has changed over time. This descriptive information has been gathered from interviews with all participants, and is thus not only from the students' perspectives. It is presented here to set the stage. I will then investigate how the students view the Student Council's areas of responsibility, how it operates, and how they see it changing and developing.

⁵ All names used are pseudonyms.

Description of the Student Council/Leadership Program

The form of the Student Council is continually evolving, although the function has remained basically the same: to provide activities for the students at the school level. Prior to my study there were both a Sports Council and a Student Council at Hilltop School. Membership on these councils was the result of student applications and teacher selection, with two students from each of Grades 4-7 chosen. A Grade 7 teacher and the teacher-librarian were the sponsors of the Student Council.

The school year in which my study began, and the year in which Mary Green became the principal of Hilltop, these two councils combined into one Student Council. The student-application and teacher-selection process was retained, and 12 Grade 7 students were chosen for a core group. All of the approximately 50 Grade 7 applicants formed an additional *ad hoc* group, but soon these two groups met only as one. The principal was the sole sponsor, and this large group met weekly, during school time. It was project-oriented, with student committees in charge of various activities, for example, sports tournaments, noon-hour games, theme-days, dances, and fund-raising. Part way through the year, a number of Grade 6 students joined.

The following year two teachers joined the principal as sponsors. Initially the application process was retained, but as few Grade 7s did not apply, it was decided after a couple of months to include all Grade 7 students. It became officially known as the Leadership Program, meeting weekly for an hour during school time. The same committee structure was retained, with committees forming and dissolving as necessary. Part way through the year, a number of Grade 6 students also joined.

Student Initiative and School-Level Responsibility

Students have the responsibility for initiating ideas; however, the actual making of decisions and putting these ideas into action is often shared with adults.

Students stressed the importance of giving their ideas for activities at

the school level, and then planning and organizing these activities. They initiated a wide variety of activities, and implementing these activities were the responsibility of student committees. Activities included, for example, dances, intermural games at lunch-hour, theme days, various sports leagues and tournaments, and the Yearbook. When I observed a Leadership Meeting I saw some of this student-initiative in action. During Committee Reports, the Racism Committee reported that they were looking into buying a button-making machine to produce anti-racism buttons, and a group that had decided to form a Garbage-Can Painting Committee, to help beautify the school, came prepared to paint during the activity portion of Leadership that day. While some activities were implemented during the Leadership Program time, most operated outside that time as well, with students on that committee taking turns, for example, operating the School Store or refereeing games.

When I asked students their main satisfactions with the Student Council, many expressed pride in seeing their ideas come to fruition, and in being responsible for this. For example, Devin and Harpreet said they were really happy with the success of organizing a fund-raising campaign for the Heart Foundation, "Jump Rope for Heart," where students skipped during noon hours for pledges they gathered. Mai told about how they organized a Halloween Dance that was very successful. Vicki told of the success of a haunted house they set up "for the whole entire school to be part of for Halloween." Jacenta and Vicki told about the football and hockey leagues: "Kids are the referees and are calling the games very well."

While these project ideas are usually student-initiated, students do not have free rein to make any decision they please. From Devin and Harpreet's perspective, "We leave major decisions to the teachers and the Student Council takes care of kid assignments." Yet even though the teachers may make the major school-level and curricular decisions, at their weekly meetings students are able to discuss these issues and express their opinions. If it is felt an idea is controversial but they want to pursue it, a process is followed: the students write a letter to the teachers outlining their proposal and asking for feedback.

An example of students and teachers effectively sharing in decision-making and implementation is the School Store. When I interviewed a group of students in November of the second year of my study, they said one committee was trying to set up a school store to sell pop and candy, but were running into difficulties. They had written a letter to the teachers and had received feedback that teachers wanted them to sell more nutritious food, and they also had a concern over some students being allergic to peanut products. Vicki expressed excitement about the store and how they had "most of the teachers' votes now," but she was disappointed that "teachers are saying no candy when that is what the kids really want." They needed to find a way the store would be safe, nutritious, and still be satisfying to students. When I visited the school the following April the School Store was functional, and I chatted with the students opening it up for recess. The students on this committee were taking turns, two at a time, operating the store, which ran out of a small room with a window opening onto the hallway near the office. It sold nutritious snacks such as Fruit Roll-ups and fruit drinks, and also pens and pencils. Parent volunteers or a teacher would drive students to Costco to purchase supplies, often during the Leadership Program time. The profits were to go towards a Grade 7 sailing trip planned for June. By April, however, the Grade 7s who had implemented the store were wanting to move on to other committees, and some of the Grade 6s who were going to join the Leadership Program were going to take over the School Store.

Adult input regarding implementation of ideas seemed appreciated by the students. As Harpreet said, "Student Council comes up with the ideas . . . and the teachers straighten it out." An organizational discussion of the Yearbook, which I observed at a Leadership Meeting, is illustrative of this shared organizational process. Organizing a Yearbook is a complex endeavour. Mary, the principal, began with a procedural discussion, wondering if all students needed to stay for this part of the meeting, or just those interested in being on the Yearbook Committee. She expressed her desire to proceed quickly, that the students needed to be more focused as they were showing signs of restlessness. Students expressed uncertainty as to whether they wanted to work on the Yearbook or not, not knowing what it

involved. It was decided that Mary would quickly explain the sub-committees for the Yearbook and then students could sign up. If there were too many on a sub-committee, names would be drawn. She advised them before signing up to ask themselves if this task matched their skill area. She then explained each sub-committee and wrote it on chart paper (cover design, pictures, grad write-up, writing/art submissions, baby and grad pictures, publishing and printing, and order forms/letters to parents) and suggested the number of students needed for each. Students were then invited to sign up on a large chart paper, and Mary explained that if there were too many names and their names weren't drawn they could still help out eventually.

These areas of student responsibility at the school level are basically, but not wholly, extra-curricular. How important are extra-curricular activities? Nieto (1994) is one of the few researchers who has sought student perspectives. Through her discussions with secondary school students regarding strategies they used to solve their educational problems and become more successful, she concluded that extra-curricular activities were crucial. They provided needed outlets for student energy and taught leadership skills. For the most part, however, these were out-of-school activities students needed to pursue on their own. In contrast, the Leadership Program at Hilltop is providing the opportunity for a large number of students to organize and implement extra-curricular activities as part of their regular school day. As Harpreet said, "Everyone is doing something that the Student Council developed. . . . It keeps them a lot more busier." It seems, then, that students are taking a leadership role in providing constructive outlets for their energy.

Within the extra-curricular areas for which students have a higher degree of responsibility, student voice appears strong at Hilltop, but it is also spreading into other realms. Looking at expanding student voice from a political level, Giroux (1992) has stressed the political importance of *possibility* and *hope*, with students engaging in what they "imagine and desire beyond society's existing limitations and practices" (p. 22). In this sense, students initiating and implementing their ideas can be seen as a challenge to "knowledge and social relations structured in dominance" (p. 22). The Racism Committee provides an example of this. Students are not just providing fun

activities for other students, they are asserting their voice in an area that is of political, social and cultural importance to them. As Giroux has said, "Educators need to legitimate schools as democratic public spheres, as places that provide an essential public service in the construction of active citizens" (1988, p. 32). Student voice in this regard

signals a horizon of collective struggle and hope. Such hope is rooted in a democracy to come, a democracy that . . . is constantly struggled over as part of an ongoing attempt to expand the bonds of meaningful citizenship, boundaries of diverse communities, relations of social justice, and the . . . conditions necessary for ensuring that ordinary people live lives of dignity. (Giroux, 1996, p. 134)

This theme of student initiative and school-level responsibilities overlaps with other identified themes: a process of continual learning, student-adult relationships, and service to others. These will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

A Process of Continual Learning

The students valued that they were learning skills to help them plan and organize their ideas. As Harpreet said, "You learn how to plan events, so when you get older you know how to plan events, like a barbecue for the community." Harpreet realized that adults were helping him learn these skills: "Ms. Green tells us how to plan events, so we know how to plan events now, like we give out notices and introduce it to people." As Gavin said, "Ms. Green lets us do those things by ourselves so it's like a personal training."

Students also realized they were learning skills to gain acceptance of and improve on their ideas. Kaylee explained how when an idea seemed questionable they sent out notices to the teachers telling of the plan and asking for feedback:

If the teachers say no, we drop the subject and move on. For instance, last year Student Council wanted a Sugar High Day, and so they sent out notices to teachers. Some teachers agreed but the majority said no and suggested veggies because they didn't want the kids to get hyper, so

the idea was dropped.

The same process of trying to gain acceptance was followed this year regarding the School Store. Amit, who was on the School Store Committee, explained how they sent out a letter to all the teachers and the teachers met to discuss it. There was a lengthy process of negotiating, but an acceptable plan was finally agreed upon and the School Store opened.

There is a connection here with what Dewey (1916) argued, that when students are involved in what they view as socially important they will continue to adjust and improve their decisions because they have a strong stake in their plans working well. My initial interpretation of what the students were saying was that when they worked on something that they had initiated, they worked really hard because they wanted their idea to succeed, and so they kept improving it. In the final interview with the students I checked this interpretation with them and they agreed. Clinton also connected it to changing committees:

Once you've used all your ideas up on one subject, and you've made it really good by improving it and improving it, then someone else comes in with more ideas and they improve it even more, and more people come in and share their thoughts on it, and it keeps getting better and better in the process.

The process of periodically changing groups and gaining new skills also helps keep some students interested. Jacenta said that "once you've started up something and you know it's going fine, you want a change so you don't get bored." Clinton concurred, saying, "Things go along smoothly for maybe a month, and then you get bored. You want to expand your leadership skills." He gave the example of the School Store, with the Grade 6s going to take over that responsibility so the Grade 7s could do something else. Kaylee disagreed, however, saying that "every time we finish an activity we have to switch groups and sometimes we don't want to, but Ms. Green makes us. It makes us mad that we can't get back to that group for a couple of months." It seems, then, that some students want variety, and some want to focus on learning one area well.

Learning skills to participate in a democracy is a key issue in the

literature on democratic schooling. Manley-Casimir (1980) stressed that democratic schooling provides for the development of capacities for rational and creative thought and action. This connects with the students in my study having the opportunity to initiate creative ideas to make school better, and learning skills of rational action to implement these ideas. Mosher (1980) found through his research that students who participated in school democracy learned important parliamentary skills and made gains in their moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is apparent in the students in my study when they show concern and consideration for the opinions and welfare of others.

Kreisberg (1992) stressed the gaining of skills and competencies necessary to effectively participate in wider social and political contexts. Students will necessarily be unskilled and naive at the beginning levels of involvement, thus their early assertions of power may be in regards to issues adults might deem unimportant or unwise. An example of this in my study was Devin saying he wished students could have more say in issues such as chewing gum, "because sometimes you just want something in your mouth," and wearing hats, "because sometimes you want to hide your hair."

Students' early decisions may seem unwise and their implementations fumbling. It is through continual practical involvement, however, that they will gain more and more expertise and responsibility.

Continual Improvements to the Program

The gaining of leadership skills and the problem-solving focus of the Leadership Program also serves to continually improve how it operates. This might seem paradoxical as students expressed a general feeling of great satisfaction with the program. Devin and Harpreet said they saw no negative sides to the Student Council, that it was "perfect--crystal clear," yet they and many others had suggestions for improvement.

Devin and Harpreet thought younger students should also be involved on the Student Council, perhaps in a separate group that provided training for being on the older council in the future. This was implemented to an

extent that year, with Grade 6s joining part way through the year. Some of the Grade 7s in Phase II of my interviews had joined the Student Council when they were in Gr 6, and commented on this development. Vicki said the Student Council was not as organized before, so it took longer to accomplish things, and this year people seemed more committed to it. She thought this was because most of them were on the Student Council last year, at least for a few months, "and we saw what was going on and what was wrong with it, and now we corrected it this year by making it more organized." Clinton also raised this issue in the Phase III interview, saying that a positive change to the program was "beginning Leadership in Grade 6 so by the time we're in Grade 7 we know better how to do things and can provide more activities for the school." Jacenta gave the example that in the first year the Student Council was planning a school store or vending machine but "they didn't get around to doing it because they ran out of time." This year students have taken those same ideas and implemented them further. She saw how important it was to have students join the Leadership Program in Grade 6, "so they could start thinking about their ideas, and then make them happen the next year."

Devin and Harpreet wanted more sports and activities for the older students, as most of what they did in the first year was to provide activities for younger students. It was interesting that the following year there was an emphasis on providing sports activities for the older students, with numerous sports leagues, and the students interviewed in Phase II said that they wanted to start doing more for the younger students again. Jacenta thought they should start noon hour games for younger students again because she thought they were feeling left out. She said this might be happening soon as they were going to be switching groups soon and starting to plan new activities.

Students also wanted more time for meeting in their committees to plan events. Harpreet said he understood teachers' objections, that "taking this out of class time interferes with academics." He suggested time before and after school one day a week designated as a planning time for any committees that needed to meet, and the principal could supervise them by just checking on them every once in a while. This, he said, would save both classroom and

supervision time. Kaylee also wanted more time, which would help them be more organized on their committees. She suggested starting the meetings a little bit earlier: "When Ms. Green and the teachers finish talking to us we only have about 25 minutes left, so starting earlier would help us by giving us more time to organize."

These suggestions for improvement again reflect Dewey's (1916) assertion that democratic schooling makes students interested in making improvements. Regarding concerns about efficiency, as Gutmann (1987) contended, such problems may be solved through democratic processes. Devin and Harpreet had a suggestion which would improve efficiency, with before and after school committee meetings with minimal supervision. What appears to be happening here is that once the students see the positive impact they can have they feel empowered to do even more, and thus desire more time for planning and organizing. They are also gaining the rational skills to suggest how that might be accomplished.

An Inclusive Model

The Student Council did not begin as an inclusive model, in that students originally needed to apply and were selected by a committee of teachers; however, through a process of continual improvement, it has evolved into an inclusive model. Student Councils in other schools are often selected by some form of a voting procedure, and the Student Council at Hilltop is unusual in its inclusiveness. It is more a participatory democracy than a representative democracy, and the students view this very positively.

When I interviewed Devin and Harpreet not all Grade 7s had been included in the Student Council, only those who had applied. Harpreet suggested that those who were not involved "either don't like school and are just waiting to get out, or are interested only in their schoolwork, not in activities." He was adamant, however that "everyone deserves to be on the Student Council; everyone should have ample opportunity." Neither Devin nor Harpreet liked the idea of students voting for people to be on the Student Council, because, as Harpreet said, "Kids might just vote for their friends and

that's totally wrong. Popular students don't always have good ideas." Devin agreed: "Someone could have really good ideas but not very many friends, and someone could be really popular but have so-so ideas."

Students expressed strong views that the Student Council be open to anyone who wished to be on it. Harpreet was insistent that "everyone has a right to be on Student Council." Suneli thought everyone should be included "so no one feels rejected." The students reflect what Dewey (1916), Mosher (1980), and Manley-Casimir (1980) and others have stressed, that in a democracy everyone has equal rights as persons.

The resultant large number of students was seen as an asset, not a problem. The students' attitude seemed to be "the more the merrier," with more students meaning more creative possibilities. The large number, Devin and Harpreet said, allowed for many more events to be planned, and they viewed the small number of students on the Student Council when it was previously split with the Sports Council as a reason why few events were planned. Terri said that lots of people should be involved to give their ideas so the school could have many different ideas.

Mosher (1980) blamed part of the failure of the participatory democracy in the school he researched on the large number of students involved, making it difficult for all to effectively participate in the very large meetings. He found that although all the students had the right to be involved, approximately 50% were not actively involved in the meetings. In the first year of my study at Hilltop, a similar percentage did not choose to apply and were consequently not on the Student Council. I interpreted this at the time as pointing to a limitation of a participatory democracy, with not everyone willing to participate or able to invest the time. I thought this perhaps showed the need to have additional participatory mechanisms, such as occasional votes, which could involve everyone in a smaller, easier manner, or more emphasis on Class Meetings because a higher level of student involvement is easier in the smaller context of the classroom. The next year, however, the number of applicants for the Student Council rose dramatically, with only about half a dozen not applying. What I see as important now is that many formats of democratic schooling might be created, and it is up to each group to

find what works for them at the time. As Dewey (1916) argued, democracy must be continually reinvented through each group of people trying to be democratic and meeting their unique needs.

The form and function of a specific group's democracy can be seen as evolving through a process of social interaction, which continually balances individual and group needs, and it is to this sphere I now turn.

The Social-Emotional Dimension of Democratic Student Involvement: Human Relations and Attitudes

Within this category, the social-emotional dimension, two major but related themes emerge from the data: (a) how students involved in the Leadership Program relate to others, and (b) how involvement in the Leadership Program affects the attitudes of students towards school. Within the broad theme of human relations I have identified three sub-themes: (a) how students relate to their peers within the Student Council, (b) how students relate to other students in the school, and (c) how students relate to adults and view adults relating to them.

Student Relationships within the Student Council

Working together on the Student Council appears to be helping students learn to work cooperatively, and students recognize and appreciate this.

When I asked students their major satisfactions with the Student Council at present, Rose and Amit said that "everyone works as a team." Many students interviewed said a great deal about how well their committees were cooperating, and they could see improvement since last year. They said they felt respectfully listened to in their groups. As Terri said, "It makes me feel glad that people listen to you, because in a group when a person talks they all listen. They watch you and listen to you, so you know that no one is not listening to you." Having had experiences last year of being rejected by the Grade 7s they were consciously trying to be more thoughtful, and they said

people were more accepting of ideas even if they didn't like the person giving them. This was in contrast to last year, they said, when good ideas given by an unpopular person were sometimes rejected. The students put high value on working as a team, for example, this was given as an indicator of success when evaluating the Halloween dance. Relationships beyond the Leadership Program were also affected. As Kaylee said, "It makes me communicate better with Grade 7 friends and helps me work cooperatively with other people in the school."

Kaylee gave her perspective on how the increase in respect for each other came about: "Last year the Grade 7s were being exclusive to the Grade 6s that were on Student Council, so it made us feel pretty down, so this year when we started we just had a lot of energy towards everybody." Kristen gave an example of how the Grade 7s were being exclusive the previous year: "There was a draw for tickets to see a Grizzlies [basketball] game. Some Grade 6s won and the Grade 7s said they shouldn't have been allowed to even enter the contest, and that made the people feel bad." Terri said that last year "the Grade 7s would put down people's ideas even if they were good ideas, because the person giving them wasn't popular." This year she found the Student Council did not put down anybody's ideas: "They really consider it, they don't jump to conclusions . . . even if it's a person they don't like." She thought that "since we know how it felt like to be Grade 6s we don't want to hurt them, so we're trying to be more thoughtful."

My observations of the students for the most part confirmed what they said regarding respectful listening behaviour. Throughout the focus group interview for Phase II, I was struck by how polite the students were to each other. No one interrupted, and no one expressed disagreement. When different opinions were offered they were simply offered as another idea, without explicitly indicating disagreement. The students listened quietly to each other speak, with no background chatting, and they generally looked at the speaker. If someone wished to speak and someone else was speaking, they raised their hand, I acknowledged it with a nod, and they waited their turn. (My request that they say their name before they spoke, to aid in my transcribing of the tape recording, likely had an influence on this polite

taking-turns behaviour.)

They also appeared to work as a team. Agreement with each other was often shown by nodding heads, a chorus of yeses, and sometimes by offering an example to illustrate what another student said. My general impression was that they shared the same basic opinions about the Student Council. Not even facial expressions indicated otherwise, although the silence of some students is difficult to interpret and *could* be a sign of disagreement and not wishing to share that.

Thoughtful, inclusive behaviour was also observed. The students sat in a rough circle, rather squashed into the available space. Amit, the only boy in this Phase II focus group as the other boys were away at a sports event, chose to sit outside the main circle, on a pile of pillows in the corner. When I invited him to come into the circle he refused, seeming shy to be in such close proximity to the girls, but the girls opened the circle so that no one sat in front of him.

Respect for others was also indicated by nobody dominating this Phase II interview. Kaylee and Jacenta spoke most often, and were often the first to want to answer a question. They tended to speak more at length, also. Terri and Vicki spoke almost as often, and also gave some lengthy answers. With four of the nine students sharing the majority of the speaking I felt that no one really dominated and needed to be controlled as such. Some students, however, did not speak often, and for the most part these were the Asian students. Terri, who was Asian, spoke often, however. Kristen, Amit and Suneli spoke a few times each, but Mai and Rose spoke only once each, after I specifically invited them to. Amit was once urged to speak by another student, as he was on the committee being talked about.

In my observations of a Leadership Meeting I also observed students for the most part respectfully listening to each other during Committee Reports time, although as time progressed there was an increase in chatter and the teacher sponsor and principal reminded them a few times of the need to listen.

In the Phase III focus group interview, however, I observed a number of disconfirming instances of thoughtful behaviour towards each other. I

again established the same taking-turns structure, and the students did not interrupt each other, but they did not always listen to each other respectfully. Two boys in particular were fiddling with things and making noise while others spoke, and one of these students, Clinton, also tended to dominate the interview. After the Phase II interview I had been concerned that some students had not spoken very much, and my plan for the Phase III interview was to encourage more equal participation by specifically inviting quieter students to speak. I abandoned this strategy when I was faced with the choice of allowing Clinton to speak a great deal or having him disrupt others with his noisy fiddling and rambunctiousness. Because he had not been available for the first interview and was offering a number of alternative viewpoints in a very articulate manner, I decided to let him speak often. (So go the best laid plans . . .)

Before the Phase III interview I had a very rosy view of student-student relationships. I interpreted the findings from the interviews and observations prior to that time as indicative of a major difference from J. Goodman's (1992) findings in his research at Harmony School. He observed that students at the school in his case study were certainly able to voice their ideas; however, he saw little evidence that they listened to each other. Although it is not possible to make a quantitative comparison with J. Goodman's findings, the lack of listening stood out for him as a problem, and in my findings it does not. Even with the disconfirming instances, I noticed far more respectful listening than not. It is my contention that listening is to a large extent a learned skill, and it is obviously being stressed by the principal and the other teacher sponsors. I believe this points to the importance of active adult guidance, which is a theme explored in previous and subsequent sections.

I also would hypothesize that the inclusionary model's effectiveness is increased by the students' growing respect for other students and their excitement over new ideas, regardless of who offers them. As Kreisberg (1992) concluded from his research, individuals drawing from the pooled energy of many minds working together is a dynamic, exciting, creative process.

There is a strong theme in what the students have said of altruism and empathy for others. The students really wanted the Grade 6s to be involved,

and referred to this many times during the Phase II interview. They said that input from the Grade 6s was important as they would be responsible for the Leadership Program the following year, and suggested that I include them in the next interview and ask them about changes they would desire. A number of times the students expressed concern over others being excluded, as last year they were excluded by the Grade 7s, and they wished to guard against perpetuating this.

A main purpose of democratic student involvement is to help students learn how to work with others to provide opportunities and to solve problems. As Dewey (1916) envisioned democracy, it is more than a form of government, it is a way of living in association with others. Individuals need to learn to consider their actions in terms of the effects on others, and to consider the needs of others to give direction and purpose to their own actions. Noddings (1984, 1992) and J. Goodman (1992) have also stressed that democratic student involvement provides students with practice in caring ethically for each other, creating social bonds and developing social responsibility.

Being Role Models and Providing Service to Others

Being role models and providing service was the first issue that presented itself "loud and clear." In my first interview, the first things that Harpreet and Devin said were that they wanted to be on the Student Council "to lead the younger kids into good things" and "to make a positive statement for the younger kids so they'll do the right thing when they get older." They referred to this a number of times, stressing that they needed to watch what they were doing so the younger students would have a good example to follow. Harpreet said, "We asked some younger students what they thought of Student Council and they said it was really good and they want to be in it when they're older, so Student Council has power and influence." Devin said, "Last year the Student Council wasn't as influencing as it is this year. This year we've been given more power, and there's more kids playing instead of fighting."

The Leadership Program seems to provide an avenue through which students develop their altruistic motives, that is, a general feeling of goodwill towards others. All the reasons students gave for applying to be on the Student Council (before all Grade 7s were on it) can be categorized as desiring to give service to others. In the Phase II interview Kristen said she wanted to be on it "to give the school ideas, so kids could have opportunities to do different stuff." Kaylee wanted "to get involved in helping." Terri wanted "to give ideas to see how the school could improve." Jacenta wanted "to organize activities for both younger and older kids."

This theme of providing services for others came up many times. Devin and Harpreet said an important function of the Student Council was supervising games for younger children "so they don't get bored at noon hour." They wanted the school to be "fun and lively," and they were actively involved in making it so. When telling me about activities, students took special pride in things they had done for others, for example, the haunted house for "the whole entire school at Halloween." They also felt they were helping teachers. Kaylee said, "Teachers really enjoy it because when the kids come back from lunch and recess they're really tired and they're not as rambunctious as they are before the bell at recess and lunch." I asked how she knew teachers felt this way, and she said the teachers told Ms. Green and the other Leadership Program sponsor teachers this. They also received feedback that "all the kids are really liking it, and they talk about how they think we're doing."

Providing activities for younger students became less of a focus in the second year, but some students were very intent on doing this again. By Spring of the second year a committee implemented a Craft Program for the younger students at noon hour.

Service beyond the school, into the community, was also a component of the Leadership Program. Devin and Harpreet emphasized their pride in getting the school involved in "Jump Rope for Heart," donating the money they raised to the Heart Foundation. The following year this was switched from skipping to basketball, which they called "Hoops for Heart."

This is in accord with Noddings' (1984, 1992) emphasis on the ethical

and moral importance of caring, considerate interactions in schools, with such service to others helping to build emotional health in the giver and receiver. Service increases self-esteem with the recognition that one is connected and contributing to the school and larger community. This theme also echoes Dewey's (1916) stress on usefulness to others through pursuing individual aptitudes, and on individual learning and building of good moral character through activities or occupations which have a social aim and use typical social situations. Mosher (1980) contended that democratic schooling needed to go beyond school governance, and focus also on social contexts both within and beyond the school. Thus a key point appears to be that "governance" issues for students need to be focused to a large extent on what they can actually provide for themselves and others. They are not making decisions for others to implement.

Giroux also stresses the link between self-fulfillment and altruism. Empowerment, he says,

has a double reference to the individual and society. The freedom and human capacities of individuals must be developed to their maximum but individual powers must be linked to democracy in the sense that social betterment must be the necessary consequence of individual flourishing. (1992, p. 11)

J. Goodman (1992) found that emphasis at Harmony School had shifted over the years from individual freedom and choice to *connectionism*, as discussed previously in Chapter 1. J. Goodman contends that "critical democracy . . . implies a moral commitment to promote the 'public good' over any individual's right to accumulate privilege and power" (p. 7). Thus a "dialectical tension . . . exists within a critical democracy between the values of individuality and of community" (p. 8). While not de-valuing individualism, he stresses that

Each individual's self-actualization can be fully realized only within a just and caring society. Individual goals must be balanced by deep and sincere attitudes of altruism, compassion, cooperation, and civic responsibility and the social structures that support them. . . . Democracy cannot survive in societies if the dialectical tension

between individuality and community gets out of balance. (p. 9)

Student-Adult Relationships

This theme is a complex one. I gained a rosy impression from the first two interviews with students that they had very high respect and appreciation for the principal and teachers. This was mainly indicated in their references to adults helping them learn skills to plan and organize, and adults making the final decisions, as was discussed in previous sections. Although my views on this relationship changed somewhat over the course of the study, I will first discuss how I gained this highly positive view.

Students interviewed in Phase II showed an especially high acceptance of adult authority. They did not complain, for instance, about teachers vetoing a Sugar High Day or setting limits around what the School Store could sell. They seemed disappointed that the store would not be selling candy as this was what most students wanted; however, when they spoke about this I did not detect resentment in their voices, just minor disappointment. Likewise, when Amit mentioned how the process of writing a letter to teachers and having them come back with a decision took about a month, I detected no resentment in his voice; he simply stated it as a fact. When suggesting improvements for Leadership, the students wanted more time for organizing, feeling that by the time the teacher sponsors were finished talking with them they did not have enough time in their groups. Their solution to this problem was to start earlier, not to have the adults take up less time. I interpreted these instances as indications that the students valued what the adults were saying to them.

The students in Phase II also expressed feeling that other teachers in the school appreciated what they were doing. Some of this information came to them via the teacher sponsors, who took the time to pass on compliments they received from other teachers. A feeling of mutual appreciation between teachers and students was apparent.

My initial hypothesis was that when the students feel positively regarded by adults, they are more apt to listen to and respect them. It may also

have been the case, however, that because the students were being interviewed by an adult, with whom they had not developed a trusting relationship, they may not have felt free to voice criticism of other adults. Also, there was a gender imbalance in this focus group, and I thought it might have been the case that the girls were less apt to voice criticisms of adults than boys might be. Student-adult relationships were, then, a main focus of my questions in the Phase III interview, as I wanted to check my impressions and clarify my understandings. While a high level of respect and appreciation was still evident in this next interview, some tensions also became apparent.

I explained to students my understanding that students in the Leadership Program suggested ideas but teachers had the final say, and I asked how easy or hard it was for them to accept when adults disagreed with their suggestions. Clinton said,

It's kind of both ways. Sometimes they say, "That's a really good idea but it needs some changes." Then you go off and you find an easier solution, but you still get to do what you wanted, though it might not be so soon. So it ends up that the idea turns out better, even if it's not what you originally thought. But sometimes they just say no, and that's frustrating, because then you don't know what your next idea is.

A number of students expressed general agreement with Clinton.

Joey said that adults can have good suggestions and solutions of how to solve a problem, and he trusted adults' ideas would work. Clinton said that he would still rather implement student-initiated ideas:

When parents and teachers make a decision what to do, you might think yeah, that's a good one. But adults usually make more suggestions than kids do. They think kids' suggestions aren't good enough. So kids feel left out that they don't get to make their own decisions. What adults suggest might not be something you want to do, but if you say no they have a bad opinion of you.

A number of students agreed that they would rather implement their own decisions, but no one else expressed the same tension as Clinton, who seemed to feel trapped into agreeing to do what adults suggested or there would be negative consequences for him. Clinton seemed quite resentful of adult

power, that they had more than their share.

How well did students feel teachers listened to them? Joey said that most of the time teachers listened to their ideas, and he felt "there's about a 50-50 chance that our ideas will be accepted." Jacenta said, "Some teachers listen well, but some teachers don't like to hear students' ideas, they like to just give their own." Kaylee said she liked it when her teacher let them "give criticism or compliments, and she listens to our ideas and is really nice about them even if she doesn't like them."

One of the issues concerning the students was how some adults only listened to some students, and they did not think this was fair. Joey said that "Ms. ___ listens to kids and she listens to everyone and tries to make their ideas work." A number of students agreed that Ms. ___ listens "really well." Clinton said that with some teachers it depends on the different kids: There are some kids they know are good and smart and they really listen to them. And some of the kids who get in trouble and goof off, they don't really listen to those kids, they just say "I don't have time for this" and they walk off. But some teachers take time and they listen to you even though you may not be the best and politest student in the whole wide world, but you can still have good ideas.

Joey said that students listen better to teachers who listen to them and respect them, and they in turn give those teachers more respect. Students expressed general agreement with Joey, but Terri said they also listen to teachers who don't listen to them.

One of the issues that had been brought up in interviews with adults was how some students were "pushing the limits" that adults had set, and I wanted student views on this issue. Joey said that he thought it was because "some students don't get that much attention and always get in trouble because they want to get attention and get recognized." Terri said she thought some students "want to test the teachers' patience," to test where the limits really were.

Some students expressed appreciation for having the limits that teachers set, and wanted students who overstepped the boundaries to be thwarted. Jacenta said that students pushing the limits

should be dealt with in a way that will affect them. Like detentions won't affect kids that much because it's doing nothing to them, and same with lines. But a severe detention, like getting kicked out of class for a week or something, depending on how severe the damage they've done, that would hurt them and they'd feel the effect.

Terri basically agreed, but was a little softer, saying, "Students should have a punishment that would affect them, but it shouldn't be too harsh."

I wanted to check how students viewed adult guidance in facilitating cooperative student-student relationships. I explained to students how the adults I had interviewed said they put a lot of time into helping students work together in groups, if there were disagreements or they had a hard time starting something. Jacenta said adults were quite helpful at times: "If we're like on a roll we don't really want help, but when we're stuck with ideas they come and help us and that's helpful." Kaylee said that when they're in a situation where they're disagreeing or fighting the adults will come and help them work it out "so we can get back on track and get moving again." All students expressed agreement when I asked if it was easier when adults came around and helped sometimes. Nobody agreed that it was better to have adults not interfere.

How do the students view the sharing of power in the school? Clinton said he thought the principal had about 50 percent, the teachers 40 percent and the students 10 percent, although he changed his original figures a few times before deciding on these. Kaylee agreed with Clinton's percentages, but said "I think in this school everyone also gets treated equally." Joey disagreed, saying he thought that "not everyone gets treated equally because some kids get treated different by some teachers, like they judge them by the way they act and don't want to listen to them." A number of students specified that the principal treats everyone equally. Mai said that she thought some teachers and some students shared power equally, but "it really depends on the person." There was general agreement, however, that since the Leadership Program began, students have more power than they used to.

From this Phase III interview, then, compared to the Phase II interview, a more complex and less rosy view of student-adult relationships

emerges. While there still appears to be a high level of respect and appreciation for adults, it depends on such factors as individual students, individual adults, and specific situations.

My observations of the Leadership Meeting I attended confirmed this complex picture of student-adult relationships. Mary led the Leadership Meeting. As soon as she called for attention the students were quiet, and she asked for all of them to face her, which they did. As she began discussing general plans regarding the Yearbook she asked students to put their pens down and "listen up" twice, the second time stopping to explain the reasons this was necessary. During Committee Reports, which involved students reporting, one of the teacher sponsors asked a student who was talking out of turn if he needed to leave, and there was subsequent total quiet for a short time. Mary explained the need to stay quiet during this time to get the groups organized, and she told one student who continued talking to move away from the group. Before proceeding with a detailed discussion of the Yearbook, she sought the students' advice regarding whether to remain as a whole group for this discussion or have just those interested remain. A number of students said they did not know enough about the Yearbook to know if they were interested or not, so they thought they should all remain to hear the information. Mary acted on this advice. The picture here, then, is of most students listening respectfully, but a small number not. These few students were responded to in an authoritarian manner, in this large-group situation, by removal or threat of removal from the group. Mary shared power with the group as a whole by seeking their opinions about procedure in the meeting, and heeding their advice. After this there appeared to be no more problems regarding students' listening behaviour, or at least no adults responded to them.

The Leadership Program is a teaching-learning situation, and the relationship between the adults and students involved, I believe, is crucial for it to be successful. It is within the adult-student relationship that power issues will be most apparent, as traditionally this relationship has shared power unequally. Gutmann (1987) has connected the low level of political participation in society to the high levels of autocracy in most schools. She

stresses the importance of free and equal discussions between student and teachers and of resolving problems in ways that are compatible with democratic values. Manley-Casimir (1980) acknowledges that there is an unequal power distribution, and adults need to provide protection for students, yet they must also make sure that their actions do not negate the rights of children as persons.

At Hilltop the students seem to see adults working towards a balance between letting students learn from their own mistakes and making sure a safe environment is maintained. Adults also have much knowledge that will help students make and implement decisions. Adults are thus not abdicating their responsibilities towards children, and letting children "run the show" or do whatever they please, and for the most part students accept this. This is a point that needs to be stressed, as opposition to democratic schooling seems to be in part due to a lack of trust in children and an unwillingness to give power to people not yet proficient in wielding it.

As long as adults have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring a safe, productive learning environment, the student-adult relationship will retain some inequality; however, it can certainly be more equal than it has been traditionally, and this shift is evident at Hilltop School. Kreisberg (1992) stresses the importance of open, mutually respectful relationships in making this shift towards equality. A climate of openness is generally apparent at Hilltop. Even though students may not be able to make all the decisions they would like, they can still discuss these issues. Devin and Harpreet, for instance, respected that there were areas in which adults made the final decisions, but they were pleased that they could at least express their opinions on these issues. I would think that students learn a great deal by discussing complex and sophisticated issues, and this growing understanding may accelerate their readiness for real involvement in these areas. Students see they are learning to take more responsibility by working with adults in areas that are beyond their capabilities to tackle alone.

This key issue of student-adult relationships will be discussed in subsequent chapters from the teachers' and principal's perspectives, with more extensive connections to the literature.

Effects of the Leadership Program on Attitudes

What effects do the students see the Student Council has had on the school as a whole and on them personally?

Students were overwhelmingly positive that the Student Council made school a better place to be. In the Phase I interview, students focused mainly on the changes they saw in the younger students. Devin and Harpreet said that the most important change they felt they had made was providing noon hour activities, so younger students were having more fun and were constructively involved, for example, raising money for the Heart Foundation by jumping rope. They saw that there was more playing and less fighting than in previous years. The fighting, they thought, resulted from boredom. As Harpreet said, "The school looks more happier. Everyone has a job in this, everyone in the school participates in something that the Student Council has developed."

In the Phase II interview, Kaylee said that the changes the Student Council had made were mostly for the intermediate students, with all the sports activities available. She thought the primary students were not affected much and probably felt left out. Jacenta said,

With all the activities to participate in and help organize the students are very happy. Before there were many students who felt disappointed because there were fewer activities to get involved in. Last year they also put on noon hour games for the younger students, and that is probably missed now.

Students think they are having an effect which is helpful for teachers, also. As Kaylee said, teachers have told them they really enjoy having the Student Council because it provides activities for the kids at lunch and recess so when they go back to class they are calmer and easier for the teachers to work with.

Students appreciate the "voice" they now have. Terri said that the Student Council makes school a lot more fun because students have a say in what's going on. With many opportunities to suggest ideas "kids know that maybe their ideas will come up and maybe they'll get to do what they want to

do.”

Being on the Student Council affected the interviewees personally as well. Several said that their attitude towards school has changed this year and they feel more part of the school. Devin said, “I feel more a part of the school because I have more ideas, and the more ideas you have the funner school becomes.” He compared this to formerly just coming to school and doing his work, and being bored at recess and lunch. Jacenta said it made her feel more involved in school activities and able to do things for younger kids, and it made her “feel good being able to help around the school community.”

Seeing themselves as leaders also means being more conscious of how they are behaving. In the Phase I interview this was particularly evident, with Devin and Harpreet stressing that if they were telling the younger students to stay out of trouble, they needed to be good examples. As Harpreet said, “We need to follow our own advice and make a positive statement.”

Attitudes towards self and others have been affected. Kaylee said she felt being in the Leadership Program made her communicate better with her Grade 7 friends and also helped her work cooperatively with other people in the school. It has helped her get to know a lot of other people through working together on various committees. Suneli said it has made her more responsible towards other people, “so like you just feel good about being with other people, helping all sorts of people, even teachers”. Terri said it made her feel glad that people listen to you, “because in a group when a person talks they all listen, they watch you and listen to you, so you know that no one is not listening to you.” She said it made her feel really respected.

It has been my contention that one of the major purposes of democratic student involvement is to effect more positive attitudes towards school. As students become empowered and feel capable of implementing their ideas, they should feel increasingly good about school as a place truly for them. This is borne out in the data. The students stressed that school is more fun now that there are more activities in which to be involved, and said they feel valued seeing their ideas come to fruition. They feel they are truly contributing to the school community.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHER AND COUNSELLOR PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I present the interview data from the two teachers and one counsellor, interpreted according to emergent themes, and make connections to the pertinent literature.

Peter,⁶ a Grade 7 teacher who was a sponsor of the Student Council in the previous year, before Mary Green became principal, was interviewed in June of the first year (Phase I). Rick, a Grade 6/7 teacher and one of the new Leadership Program sponsors in its second year since Mary arrived, was interviewed in February of the second year (Phase II). Both these teachers had many students in their classes participating in the Student Council. David, the school counsellor, was interviewed in April of the second year (Phase III). He was not directly involved with the Student Council, but was involved with many students in it, and because of his long history at the school had a valuable perspective to offer on how it affected the school climate and culture over time.

The data here are discussed within the same two broad categories as in Chapter 3: (a) the form and function of democratic student involvement, and (b) the social-emotional dimension, how relationships and attitudes are related to and affected by it. The themes pertaining to the first broad category are: philosophical beliefs and background regarding democratic student involvement; student responsibilities at the school level; and how the classroom level is affected by and complements the school level. The themes pertaining to the second broad category are: relationships among students; adult-student relationships; teacher-principal relationships; and effects of democratic student involvement on attitudes and school climate. Some of these themes are similar to those in Chapter 3; however, some have been split or combined depending on the amount of data, and some are specific to the teachers/counsellor. In the sections looking at the classroom level and the issue of adult-student relationships, extensive literature reviews are included.

⁶ Names used are pseudonyms.

Form and Function of Democratic Student Involvement

Philosophical Beliefs and Background

Peter, Rick and David all expressed basic philosophical agreement with the concept of democratic student involvement. For Peter this stemmed more from experience than from theoretical knowledge about democratic schooling; Rick had a more political perspective; and David had a more psychological perspective.

Peter said his basic philosophy of teaching was that children need to have real purpose behind their learning, working towards results that have real meaning for them. He gave the example of artwork his students just completed being varnished and displayed on the outside wall of the school, instead of just being an assignment for a grade. He believed that when students enjoy what they're doing, and find it inherently interesting and purposeful, they work harder. Students having choice and initiative were important to him:

Philosophically, the way I run my class, I really like it when students have their own ideas about how things should be done, and I really like making part of my teaching letting them learn how to make their ideas known, and how to have their influence in a way that works.

Because students' approaches were sometimes counter-productive to having their ideas heard, he believed it was important to teach them methods of how change is constructively implemented. He stressed to students that if they have an idea, then to make sure when they talk to adults about it they choose the right time, the right place, the right approach, and have a positive solution to a problem they see. He gave the example:

Rather than someone saying, "There's too much homework!"--I just tune out completely. But if someone comes up to me at the right time and place, and I encourage this all the time: put it in a positive way and you'll see a change happen. So I've seen things like petitions being created a couple of times when they wanted to make something happen.

Although he was not involved with the Student Council that year, he believed that a format like the Student Council was a place where students could learn how to take their ideas from inception right through to a final product, and his classroom philosophy was in accordance with this.

Peter said that actually seeing the Student Council in action, with Mary as sponsor, was the most important influence on his formulation of this philosophy:

This year, watching Mary and how she's really let the students go with their ideas and taking it as far as they can, that's made a difference.

Watching how she's done it, but then also watching how the students have responded, has made me feel like it can really work.

When he was sponsoring the Student Council he thought they made some achievements and organized some good events for the school, but not to the same extent as this year. He saw that the basic difference was that he was too involved in the supervision and leadership. Mary gave the students more responsibility to initiate things, and to run their own committee meetings, and he believed the high level of accomplishment was a result of this.

Peter saw his teaching style as quite democratic but said theoretical readings had not influenced him in this way. Instead, the greater influence was seeing and experiencing democratic student involvement in action. This points, I believe, to the influence that a principal's modeling really can have on teachers. For this teacher the "lived experience" seemed more powerful than the theoretical. This theme will be pursued more in Chapter 5 in *The Role of Administrator*.

In contrast, Rick's philosophy about democratic student involvement stemmed in part from his interest in politics: "I have a passion for politics in general, in terms of forms of how things are run." He talked about how in university he studied politics,

in various forms, not just government, but the politics of relationships, and it came down to issues of power. So the issue of democracy, or democratic student leadership, is just another branch of what I generally believe about society. We live in a democratic society, and if it is a true democracy then kids should have true input, as

opposed to just pretending, just as a token act.

He stressed, however, that while everyone should have an opportunity to have a say, "It doesn't mean they always get to do what they want to do."

In terms of his educational philosophy, Rick supported student voice: Kids are the number one things here. All the programs that happen are for them, so they definitely need to have some input into how things are going to work, and planning and taking responsibilities for them. . .

. It gives kids a sense of ownership of the school. It gives them a chance to see the power they can have in changing things around them and having influence in their education.

Rick, then, had a well-formulated philosophy, making connections between education and socio-political purpose, and saw discrepancies between true democracy and what is sometimes done in its name.

David said that philosophically he was very influenced by Dr. Gordon Neufeld, a child psychologist, who is a proponent of Attachment Theory, stressing that "kids need to be connected." This theory, David explained, holds that this connection has traditionally come from parents and other adults, and in our society now this connection is weakening as these adults are not always available for children. They are forming closer attachments, therefore, to their peers. David said he saw the role of the school now as providing a place for students to belong, and "it's very important that they have adults that they feel accept them . . . and they have to set limits but also are really personally concerned about them."

David viewed what was happening in the school, including the Leadership Program, as showing this personal concern for children and helping them belong.

The School Level

How do teachers view the form and function of the Student Council? What do they see as areas for which students can have responsibility at the school level? How do they view the changes to the Student Council?

Peter had a valuable perspective to offer on how the form and function

of the Student Council had changed from when he was a sponsor. It was previously a much smaller group, with only two students from each intermediate grade. Although the basic function was then the same, organizing school level activities, they organized only a few. He saw a tremendous difference this year, mostly in terms of the increased involvement, the initiative students were taking, and the number of events produced. Last year the younger students couldn't take as much control as the older students were able to take this year, and with such a mixed age group, they didn't have the same kind of leadership as this year, with just Grades 6 and 7. He thought this was also because last year they had a separate Sports Council, and a lot of the high-energy leaders were on that, and this year they were on the Student Council.

Peter and Rick were in agreement that the areas and scope of student responsibility should be open and broad at the school level, but generally extra-curricular. For any kind of social events, Peter said he preferred that students took charge, for example, talent shows, the yearbook, theme days, sports tournaments, noon hour games, the Friday noon hour drop-in for Grade 7s in the library, fund-raising events, and dances.

Rick compared the Leadership Program to other areas of student involvement at the school level, and viewed activities stemming from the Leadership Program as the most democratic. For instance, the basketball program going on after school he said,

has lots of democratic aspects, but it doesn't go as far as Leadership, where the kids have more power and responsibility. In other areas the bottom line is the teacher has to make some choices. In Leadership, once a group gets a topic, they make all the choices for that topic. For instance if they're putting a dance on they have to do everything for the dance from stage one to the end, and then accept the consequences whether positive or negative. Teachers just oversee it to make sure it doesn't run amok.

Peter also saw a place for student voice beyond those areas for which they had specific responsibility:

Regarding school policy, things happening within the school, if they

have legitimate concerns, and they bring them forth in an appropriate way, then that's fine. They have to realize that it is a dialogue, that they might not get what they want, but they will hear a response with reasons. We'll listen to them.

Both teachers drew the line, however, at curriculum. As Rick said, legitimate areas for student involvement "need to be things not directly tied to Ministry curriculum. Neither students nor teachers can change that, without a very lengthy process." Peter also recognized that limitations on him were consequently limitations on students:

There are some things that I just can't change, things that are handed down, for example, what needs to be covered in the curriculum and time allotments. Students can petition all they like for outdoor P.E. for two and a half hours every day, but I can't do that. What I have to teach according to the curriculum students can't interfere with.

Students do not have power to change the curriculum; however, I would argue that the Leadership Program is in many ways fulfilling the British Columbia Ministry of Education Mission Statement that all learners acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a democratic society (Ministry of Education, 1994). McLaren (1994) and Giroux (1992) contend that the problems and needs of the students should be the starting point in curriculum, with students analyzing and problem-solving their own experiences. Viewed this way the learning in the Leadership Program is cross-curricular. For instance, a major part of the Language Arts curriculum is learning how to communicate appropriately and effectively, which the students are doing, for example, by writing letters and negotiating. This also connects with the contentions of Berman and La Farge (1993) that students learn to be democratic citizens through being actively engaged in democratic practices. This theme regarding pedagogy and curriculum will be discussed further in the section on The Classroom Level.

Continual improvements to the Student Council seem very much in response to teacher input and concerns. For instance, Peter found that the format for the first year with Mary as sponsor caused some conflicts with his teaching time. Since most, but not all, of his students were on the Student

Council, when they were gone to meetings only a few students were left in class. He said very often he would not have his whole class present because of their Student Council involvement, having to have extra committee meetings, having to meet deadlines, and it was difficult for him to teach at times with so much coming and going. The following year, this concern was responded to by having all Grade 7s involved in the Leadership Program and considering it regular curriculum, as it basically fulfilled the learning outcomes for the Career and Personal Planning curriculum.

When Rick was interviewed in Phase II his suggestions for improving the Leadership program were mainly in terms of individual students:

In such a large Leadership group there are always a couple of kids who are not focused on the given topic, and seem to struggle with taking responsibility. It's so open that it's easy for them to get distracted and fool around. For the kids that aren't used to responsibility it can be tricky. That's the one area that needs to be kind of shored up.

David saw that part of his role as counsellor, in terms of contributing to democratic involvement, was to help provide students with social and conflict resolution skills. He sponsored a Peer Mediation Program, separate from the Leadership Program but still part of student leadership in general. Over the years he broadened this to be more inclusive, and it now included students who were considered behaviour problems, as well as students who had good mediation skills. As with the Leadership Program, he very much liked the inclusiveness, that these programs were open to anyone who wanted to be part of them: "If someone wants to be involved, get them involved." He thought that part of students feeling "attachment" to the school was through contributing to the school. Previously, when the Student Council was separate from the Sports Council, "the cool boys all wanted to be on the Sports Council," and that was a very narrow focus. He thought there had been a real broadening of areas of involvement now that students considered "cool," and part of the reason they were considered such was that students initiated them. Examples he gave were students making the regular announcements over the p.a. system and putting on a talent show.

The Classroom Level

While the Student Council operates mainly at the school level, students and teachers spend most of their school day in classrooms. How do teachers view the impact of the Student Council on their classroom? How do they see the curriculum and their pedagogy supplementing or complementing the Leadership Program?

The data indicate that as students learned skills in the Leadership Program they were indeed having an impact on classroom practice. Teachers were changing classroom practices to be more in accord with, and more complementary to, democratic practices at the school level. They also gave credit to students for taking a leadership role in this change.

Peter said that he adapted his classroom practices as he saw the Student Council developing some of the skills he previously focused on in the classroom. For instance, he no longer needed to focus on team-building and group skills, as he used to in Social Studies and Science especially, because students were developing these skills now in the Student Council, and he thought he needed "to give them some time to do their own thing."

Although he had previously incorporated group skills into his classroom practices, Peter saw that the way he now dealt with things in class was, overall, more democratic than he used to be. He said that he did not build anything regarding the democratic process into the curriculum exactly; for instance, he did not teach them about government, but he built it into the classroom environment by giving students more power: "Students sense from me that we can have discussion. They're free to let me know what they think. They can propose a change." This connects with the importance that J. Goodman (1992), Noddings (1984, 1992), and Wood (1988) have all put on democratic values needing to be embedded in lived experiences, not learned in isolation.

As discussed previously, teachers saw that the curriculum put some constraints on them, which they in turn put on students, but there was also indication that they were dealing with the curriculum in a more democratic

manner. As an example, Peter began by contrasting the classroom to the Student-Council:

Basically in Student Council they create the ideas they'd like to see, or if something is proposed to them they decide what they want to do with it. I don't think anyone tells them what to do. It's more, "Here's an idea. Would you like to go with it?" In the class I don't say, "Here's an idea for a project. Would you like to do it?" I say, "This is the project." He went on to say, however, that if students had a different idea then they could propose it. An indication that Peter was shifting his practice following the students' lead was an example he gave of students proposing an idea. He was going to have them choose a book for a novel study from a selection of ten novels which he had chosen. He wanted them to choose out of his choices, and then groups would be formed around each of these ten novels. But, he said,

it didn't work out. A few people wanted to do things differently. They didn't find the novels interesting or they had read some of them before, and they came up with the idea: "What if we chose our own novels and you approved them, rather than us doing a novel that you choose?" So we talked about it a bit and then I went with that idea, because I don't want them to be reading something they don't want to read, or that they're starting out with a negative attitude about, because that defeats the purpose of reading and the reading program.

He stressed that "if students can make suggestions in a respectful and thoughtful manner, then I'll go with that."

Rick also indicated that students were taking a leadership role in changing classroom practices. He felt there "should be a natural link between the Leadership Program and classroom, but it does not necessarily always happen." It seemed that even though a teacher might have a basically democratic philosophy, he/she might be unsure of how to implement democratic practices in the classroom. As Rick said: "It's easier for me to give them leadership in the class when I know they can handle it." An example he gave was a Chinese New Year celebration:

Previous years I might organize the whole thing. I might say, "Okay,

I've decided, or the teacher has decided, we're going to have a Chinese New Year celebration," and then I might give jobs out to people. So everyone's part of it, but it isn't really democratic, in the sense that the teacher chose it. So this year, just by chance, a couple kids came up and said, "Can we have a Chinese New Year celebration?" So I asked, "What would it look like?" . . . So we brought it back to the class, and had a discussion . . . and everything was turned over to them . . . and it went really well.

He felt this was completely democratic in the sense that

I gave all the power, all the decision-making over to the kids. . . . It doesn't mean your whole classroom changes into a free-for-all, a democratic free-for-all, with everything you get to vote on, because that's not the reality of how the system works. . . . But the kids have a desire to do things, to take charge, because they have good, strong confidence that they can do the job, and I think a lot of it comes from giving them a chance to do the job . . . and it's good for everyone, from the teacher down to the students. No one loses. Everyone wins.

This connects strongly with Giroux's argument that educators need to allow students voice and lived experiences in areas important to them, that "educators need to approach learning not merely as the acquisition of knowledge but as the production of cultural practices that offer students a sense of identity, place and hope" (1992, p. 170). He stresses that "one of the central concerns of a critical pedagogy is understanding how student identities, cultures and experiences provide the basis for learning" (p. 182). Rick can be seen in this sense as learning "to confirm student experiences and voices so that students are legitimized and supported as people who matter, as people who can participate in the production and acquisition of their own learning" (p. 245).

Peter also expressed a desire for changing his approach towards the curriculum even more than he had already. He said that "the real world and real work situations are far more like Student Council than they are like some of the curriculum, although I aim to make more of the curriculum like that as well."

Literature Review of Democratic Practices at the Classroom Level

I would like to examine this critical issue of democratic practices at the classroom level more fully. It was apparent from the data that teachers do not always know how to implement democratic practices even if they are inclined that way. If students have a voice at one level in the school and not at another, if classroom practices do not support or complement democratic student involvement at the school level, conflicts between teachers and students could result. The classroom might also be the best place to teach about democratic citizenship in a more substantial manner, integrated into much of what students do every day in school. What does the literature say about classroom practices that support democratic schooling? What curriculum content relates to the development of democratic citizens? What methods of teaching and what learning experiences enhance the growth of student voice?

First, I would like to look at some of the Goals and Attributes of the School System in British Columbia's *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan*, which follow the previously mentioned Mission Statement regarding enabling students to "contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society" (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 20). One of the Goals included under Intellectual Development is "to analyze critically, reason and think independently" (p. 20). Under Human and Social Development a goal is "to develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative . . . to develop a sense of social responsibility, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others" (p. 20). Under of the Attributes of the School System a goal is "Relevance: The education system is committed to delivering education that is relevant to students' individual needs and teaching them to be responsible, ethical citizens who contribute to a healthy and productive society" (p. 20). These are a laudable, lofty mandate, but no particulars are given in this document as to how this is accomplished. What might implementing these Goals and Attributes look like in the classroom?

I wish to make clear, first of all, that democratic practices do not necessarily include voting. Wood (1988) makes an important distinction between a representative and participatory democracy, and the effects of each. In a representative democracy, characterized by voting and elections, he argues that people tend to adopt a protectionist attitude, focusing on self-interest. A high degree of apathy ensues, which serves to keep things the way they are, preserving stability, making minimum demands on the system, and not serving minority interests. A participatory democracy, on the other hand, is a way of collective living and of sharing in problem-solving. With decisions made by those directly affected, there is an increased sense of ownership and political efficacy. Individuals and minorities are thus integrated into the social order. Wood stresses, in accordance with what Rick in my study has said, that democratic process in the classroom is not characterized by voting or elections (although these may at times be included), but rather it is a way of increasing active student participation in all facets of classroom life. Giroux (1996) concurs and relates this to adult political life:

If democracy is to be viewed not simply as a voting procedure but as an ongoing struggle to link power and justice, equality and freedom, and individual rights and social obligations, it is essential that youth participate in such a process. . . . The degree to which large segments of youth are excluded from the language, rights, and obligations of democracy indicates the degree to which many adults have abandoned the language, practice, and responsibilities of critical citizenship and civic responsibility. (p. 140).

It is also important to identify practices which are seen as inhibiting the growth of democratic skills and values. Wood (1988) contends that students become cultural and political isolates, with little sense of community or cooperative effort because of numerous common practices, such as centralized control of the curriculum, methods of teaching where students are passive rather than active, rote memorization, and tightly controlled school environments. Some recent school reforms are advocating more of the same: more school hours, more mandated curriculum, more testing,

stronger disciplinary measures. Wood contends that

it is not simply an ignorance of the school's democratic mission that brings about these trends. Rather it is a decidedly antidemocratic spirit that motivates reforms designed to keep the public ignorant and passive as opposed to enlightened and active. (p. 175)

McLaren (1994) claims that this antidemocratic ideology has recently advanced:

In the present rush towards accountability schemes, corporate management pedagogies, and state-mandated curricula, an ominous silence exists regarding the ways in which new attempts to streamline teaching represent both an attack on the democratic possibilities of schooling and the very conditions that make critical teaching possible.

. . . In general, the new efficiency-smart and conservative-minded discourse encourages schools to define themselves essentially as service institutions charged with the task of providing students with the requisite technical expertise to enable them to find a place within the corporate hierarchy. (pp. 5-6)

What curricular and pedagogical choices might, then, encourage democratic empowerment? Dewey (1916) and Peters (1942) emphasized that students learn about democracy by living it. As Wood (1988) also stresses, democratic values "are best taught through lived experiences as opposed to the disembodied accounts in textbooks" (p. 183). Giroux (1992) concurs, arguing it is important to "provide students with the opportunity to work collectively and to develop needs and habits in which the social is felt and experienced as emancipatory rather than alienating . . . in opposition to the traditional competitive and individualist approaches to pedagogy" (p. 224). Berman and La Farge (1993) contend that while most teachers have realized the importance of teaching subjects such as reading, writing and math by students *doing* reading, writing and math, democracy is often taught by presentation of information about government, not by active engagement in democratic practices. They bemoan citizenship education being primarily delegated to high school social studies teachers and are concerned that most students "experience a sense of powerlessness to have any effect on

constructive social or political change" (p. 2). To this end they have edited a volume describing numerous practices of teachers who are committed to the task of preparing young people to be responsible democratic citizens, a few of which are included here. Such practices begin in kindergarten and continue throughout elementary and high school.

Danielson (1993), who is a Kindergarten teacher, emphasizes that communication skills help in the development of self-esteem. Morning meetings have a flexible agenda where students are encouraged to discuss issues of importance to them, including local and global current events. She comments that

any time I ask my kindergarten students an open-ended question I know I am taking a risk, and I know that I have little control of the direction the discussion may take. I realize that children differ in the amount of information they have at their disposal, in their interpretation and in their tolerance for sitting and participating in a group discussion. I use the opportunity of these open discussions to teach tolerance for the process of giving and clarifying information, and to teach acceptance of different points of view. (p. 25)

Cooperative learning is highlighted by Pirtle (1993). While acknowledging this is certainly not new, it is important to emphasize how numerous features of cooperative learning promote democratic citizenship. Pirtle maintains that the conscious structuring and managing of these groups is essential, and stresses the following components: (a) interactive learning in small heterogeneous groups; (b) positive interdependence: individual and group accountability; (c) explicit training in interpersonal skills; and (d) reflection: processing how well the groups are functioning (pp. 52-53). With abundant literature on cooperative learning readily available it is not necessary here to detail such practices further. The link between cooperative learning and democratic citizenship is important, however, to make clear. As Pirtle says,

experiences in cooperative learning are significant because they help young people develop a consciousness of the group. When the focus of the lesson is not only on the achievement of a task but on furthering

mutual regard, cooperative learning aids students in the development of their social self. This development . . . is vital to living productively in the contemporary world and contributing to solving its problems. (p. 64)

Conflict resolution skills are emphasized by S. Goodman and Kreidler (1993). These are taught through resolving students' actual interpersonal conflicts, and through presentation of historical and global conflicts for simulated conflict-resolution. Such skills include appropriate language through which to discuss conflict, appropriate listening behaviour, expression of needs through "I" messages, and three easily memorized problem-solving steps: (a) define the problem, (b) brainstorm possible solutions, and (c) choose a solution. Such skills can be infused by teachers into the standard curriculum, and can be adopted at the school level through school-wide mediation programs with trained student mediators.

Classes writing their own constitutions is looked at by Sawyer (1993). These are class rules or rights and responsibilities which are reached by consensus, sometimes including consequences if one is broken, or how amendments can be made. In an official ceremony each student signs the document. These then become the social code for that particular classroom community for the year.

J. Goodman (1992) found that at Harmony School social values also were stressed, and encouraging children to embrace connectionist values was often spontaneously integrated into the curriculum, for example, directly addressing issues of race, gender and social justice. Global awareness was stressed in social science and the humanities at Harmony School, seeking to counter ethnocentrism. Students frequently engaged in group learning experiences and projects, and seating arrangements consisted of tables where groups could share. Social action and community service projects were encouraged, with the intention of developing sensitivity and compassion for the needs of others, and a sense of social responsibility. Noddings (1984) refers to such service projects, for example, in hospitals, nursing homes, animal shelters, and parks, as "practice in caring" (p. 187) and stresses their importance in developing genuine respect for the multiplicity of human

talents and abilities.

Kreisberg (1992) found with the teachers he interviewed that there was a lessening of the "artificial division between teachers and students, [and] teachers are learning and students are teaching as well" (p. 175). He gave this as a prime example of a lived experience which reduces the hierarchical, authoritarian structure.

Student involvement in decision-making is a crucial aspect of democratic pedagogy. As Wood (1988) says,

Any curriculum with democracy at its heart needs to include expanding spheres of free spaces for decision-making on the part of students . . . [such] that whenever the teacher has the latitude to make a decision, an opportunity is also present for students to enter into the decision-making process themselves. (p. 180)

He suggests that areas for student decision-making might include room decoration, reading materials, curricular decisions, organization of social functions, and behaviour management. Engle and Ochoa (1988) also stress that an important tenet of democracy is the right for individuals to participate in decision-making, and being able to participate equally in a group. Decision-making and action go hand in hand, and it is important that students are given opportunities to act on their decisions. As Kreisberg (1992) found, decision-making entails decision implementation: identifying priorities, planning, doing, and then evaluating the results. He stressed that students need to learn that "decisions do, indeed, have consequences, that with empowerment comes responsibility, and that not all decisions work out as planned" (p. 171).

Kohn (1993) makes a strong case for student involvement in decision-making, linking it to physical and psychological health because of less stress when people have some control over what happens to them. He suggests many areas in which students can be involved in making decisions. In academic areas they can make decisions as to what, how, how well, and why they learn. Regarding social and behavioural issues, he suggests that "in considering what kind of classroom or school each person wants to have, the point is to reach consensus on general guidelines or principles, not to

formulate a list of rules," (p. 14) as this invites legalistic thinking that emphasizes punishment over problem-solving. He also cautions against voting as a means of making decisions, that "what we want to promote are talking and listening, looking for alternatives and trying to reach agreement. . . . Voting, which is an exercise in adversarial majoritarianism, often involves none of these acts" (p. 14). Kohl also addresses the issue of efficiency, and concedes there is not enough time in the day to involve students in all decisions. He makes the point that a democratic approach does not demand that everything is actively chosen or discussed, but that it *can* be. It is only reasonable, he stresses, that teachers will be highly involved in decisions, for example: offering suggestions and negotiating with students; narrowing the number of possibilities from which students choose; providing parameters according to which decisions can be made; alternating teacher-choice and student choice; and sometimes making arbitrary decisions, although when this is done the reasons for it should at least be discussed with the students.

It needs to be made very clear that students cannot make all the decisions, to the disempowerment of teachers. At Harmony school, J. Goodman (1992) found that the curriculum was basically balanced between teacher- and student-centered. Although in the past it was more individualized, with a higher degree of student choice and freedom, the teachers became frustrated with many students choosing to do nothing. When teachers became more actively involved in designing curriculum experiences, students became more stimulated and enthusiastic about learning. Important factors were the provision of a variety of resources and the implementation of experiences through which a topic became meaningful to the students. J. Goodman stresses that teacher-centeredness is necessary for a connectionist perspective, as students are not always naturally interested in learning about and concerned with the well-being of others. Teachers need to "promote students' collective sense of efficacy and control over the educational experiences found in their class" (p. 133). Cognitive growth is a social as well as individual process, enhanced by dialectical transformation, and this was manifested at Harmony in a number of ways. Even though teachers had the final say, teachers and students often

negotiated what was learned and students had many opportunities to make academic decisions. When J. Goodman interviewed students they unanimously mentioned their power to make choices about what and how they learned as one of the things they liked most about Harmony. Noddings (1984) also contends that teachers should not be necessarily permissive, abstaining from leading students towards examinations of subjects. Caring teachers have a hand in selecting projects, and will guide and inform students, "but the objectives themselves must be embraced by the student" (p. 177). She maintains that children want to attain competence in the world of experience but need "the cooperative guidance of a fully caring adult to accomplish this" (p. 178).

The curriculum itself must also be more than a narrow set of established facts. Engle and Ochoa (1988) identify another basic tenet of democracy as the right to be informed, through full access to information. Wood (1988) stresses that curriculum alternatives must exist, that there are multiple sources of knowledge besides textbooks. An expansive knowledge-base was also a factor observed at Harmony School, with students (and teachers) being encouraged to delve into diverse fields of knowledge, not limiting themselves to a narrow prescribed curriculum (J. Goodman, 1992). Giroux takes this even further, in the sense that students become not just consumers but producers or creators of knowledge. A democratic pedagogy, he argues, should open up "the material and discursive basis of particular ways of producing meaning and representing ourselves, our relations to others, and our relation to our environment so as to consider possibilities not yet realized" (1992, p. 202).

Wood (1988) identifies critical literacy skills as an important curricular component, in which "students come to see literacy as a tool for their own empowerment . . . for making our own voices heard" (p. 178). Such skills would include critically evaluating what is read, and writing about what is real and relevant to students. Independently choosing books that interest them is key here, as is choosing what they write about. Beckwith (1993) also looks at various ways literature can be used as pathways to social responsibility, for example, small group discussions of books, using books as

starting points to discuss social issues, and providing numerous novels from which students may choose.

More than just critical literacy skills, contextual integration of critical thinking into all curriculum experiences is important. J. Goodman (1992) found this was a key factor at Harmony School. Critical thinking was not taught as an isolated skill, but as a process for learning, in a complex and substantive manner. For example, research skills were always taught in the context of being used as means for real learning; developing reasons and finding support for one's views was integrated into class discussions and assignments. Gutmann (1987) also stresses that children need to think critically, even about authority, if they are "to live up to the democratic ideal of sharing political sovereignty as citizens" (p. 51). Again, she says these skills need to be embedded in and across the curriculum, for example, logical reasoning in mathematics and science, interpretive skills in literature, and understanding different ways of life in history and literature. Another aspect of critical thinking, as Engle and Ochoa (1988) point out, is taking for granted change and improvement, for example, to suggested curriculum and assignments:

In this respect democracy is to be contrasted with authoritarian systems that allow no variations except those that suit the ruling elite at the top and discourage questioning, depreciate the value of new information, and insist on the strict obedience of the citizen to the governing class.
(p. 10)

Another component of a democratic curriculum is *cultural capital*, or "the use of students' own histories as the focus of historical inquiry" (Wood, 1988, p. 179). For younger children this might be a focus on their own lives, families and surroundings, and for older children a historical perspective of their ancestry, race or gender. Wood contends that such activities give students a sense of personal power and connect "their own concerns with those of ongoing movements for social justice or change in their own communities" (p. 180). Giroux (1992) concurs that students need "skills to locate themselves in history, find their own voices, and provide the convictions and compassion necessary for exercising civic courage, taking

risks, and furthering the habits, customs, and social relations that are essential to democratic public forms" (p. 74).

People in a democracy also need independence from the group. Engle and Ochoa (1988) point out that students need to develop autonomous judgment, thus there needs to be a degree of tolerance for counter-socialization such as criticism and questioning of social norms. They stress that the right to dissent is a basic value of democracy, which shows respect for the dignity of the individual, and an acceptance of differences, feelings and opinions. Asking students for other versions or perspectives of events would be one way of doing this. Giroux also stresses the importance of accepting differences, which a teacher can highlight through the sharing of student narratives in the classroom. When students hear other students' stories, this is in effect "legitimizing difference as a basic condition for understanding the limits of one's own voice" (1992, p. 170).

J. Goodman (1992) identified one of the most highly visible features of Harmony School as being the freedom that students and teachers felt to express themselves. Each person's voice was respected, and both teachers and students repeatedly said that "at Harmony I can be myself" (p. 154). This was characterized, for example, by students engaging in a tremendous quantity of verbal interaction, in being able to integrate personal knowledge and experience into class discussions, and by teachers encouraging students to express disagreement with prevailing sentiments. One of J. Goodman's criticisms about Harmony, however, was that although verbal interaction levels were high, there was not an attendant high degree of students listening to each other. This again points, I would stress, to the need for teacher-led structure, teaching students *how* to listen to each other, if it does not come naturally.

Returning then to the purpose of democratic pedagogy and curriculum being the empowerment of students, the goal of that empowerment can be seen as the development of human relations and attitudes for a caring and just society. As Giroux (1992) has put it, students must be empowered "not only to speak but also to develop the critical capacities and courage to transform the conditions that oppress them and others in the first place" (p:

158). This brings us to the realm of human interactions.

The Social-Emotional Dimension: Human Relations and Attitudes

Relationships Among Students

From the teachers' perspectives, relationships among students were on the whole positively affected by the Student Council. Their perspectives seemed generally in accordance with data from the students, discussed in Chapter 3, but teachers seemed more aware of instances of students showing disrespect for each other.

Peter said that while he saw individuals' self-esteem and self-confidence being positively affected as consequences of being on the Student Council, and while they were learning to work together effectively through being involved in activities, he was still experiencing difficulties with some students not always being respectful of each other.

Rick was highly positive; and said that his major satisfaction with the Student Council was how it had affected the school climate: "It's given the older kids a sense of having to help all the other kids . . . and be leaders . . . and the younger kids get to do what the kids set up, and they appreciate that, and there's a mutual respect that grows."

Rick also stressed how the Student Council had affected some individuals' ability to relate positively with others. He gave the example of a student who previously had a terrible temper, particularly in competitive sports, and had been unable to control his feelings in the heat of the game. Rick said:

This year when he joined the Leadership Program he took on--he was given--the whole responsibility of setting up the whole hockey league, and so he was Commissioner. He quickly had to learn to take a lot of different people's views on things and be able to sift it out.

Rick saw that in working on this hockey committee, a project which this student wanted very much to succeed, he needed to learn to listen to other students. Rick also believed that this student gained an awareness of how he had been sabotaging things previously: "He began to understand that other

people that put other things like that on do a lot of work . . . and I think he learned there's a respect there."

David saw that an effect of the inclusiveness of both the Leadership and Peer Mediation Programs was increased positive role modeling. He saw that students in leadership positions in the school were more aware that they were setting an example, and worked hard to live up to the responsibility they were given. He thought that with the older students having an increased feeling of being part of a group, having a commitment and attachment to the school, they were modeling this to younger students: "It's cool, it's okay, to be a peer leader, to be in student leadership. There are some group dynamics there."

In analyzing the effects of democratic involvement, J. Goodman (1992) and Kreisberg (1992) found similar effects regarding individuals: (a) that students' self-esteem and self-confidence were enhanced, (b) they were better able to develop their ideas and opinions, and (c) they could put their decisions more effectively into action. Kreisberg maintained that students also listened more to other's ideas, whereas J. Goodman saw that this was not always the case, and expressed some concern that students' ability to express their own views was not always accompanied by respectful listening to other students' views. This, I believe, points to an inherent tension between individualism and social awareness, the varying degrees to which these aspects exist in any individual personality, and how they might be further affected by a given situation. This again also illustrates the need for continual teacher involvement in helping children develop skills for relating to each other in a caring manner while maintaining personal integrity.

This balance between autonomy and group values was stressed by Engle and Ochoa (1988). A democracy must respect the rights of individuals to have their own opinions, make their own judgments and dissent from the group. This relates to Peter's realization, as previously discussed, that he needed to create such a balance. In previous years he had put more effort into promoting group activities and teamwork, and this year, with students getting so much of this with the Student Council, he found that in the classroom students needed some time to work more independently and to

have quiet times.

Adult-Student Relationships

The data indicate that adult-student relationships have been substantially impacted by the shift towards more democratic student involvement. The teachers indicated some ambiguity about the effects of student empowerment in this regard. The adult-student relationship was an area of some struggle.

Peter said he felt this group of students had a sense of power without always knowing the responsibilities attending that, and that they did not always know the respectful way to deal with adults or other students. He was not sure whether to attribute these difficulties to this particular group, to just a couple of individuals, to his relative inexperience with a straight Grade 7 class, or to the effects of the Student Council, but sometimes he sensed "they think they're a little bit more mature than they are. They think that they can do more than they're really allowed. They step over the boundaries maybe a little more quickly than other classes I've had."

Peter did not see that he dealt with this difficulty any differently than he would have before. He saw his discipline style with students as "maybe a little looser than some teachers, but not as loose as others, and maybe not always as consistent as I've seen other teachers. I'm somewhere around the middle." He explained the style of discipline for which he strove: "I like to direct and re-direct. I find I negotiate an awful lot. I'm really patient with the kids. I talk to them a lot. We work out problems together. We work out solutions together." He saw his method of discipline fitting with how he dealt with the class regarding other matters:

I tell them what I think and how I feel. I want some feedback from them and to know what they think is the problem, because I'm willing to bend if I don't see it the same way, and then we work from there. He expressed frustration, however, that "sometimes you have to do this over and over again and it doesn't seem to make a big difference." He thought the students sensed the respect he had for their ideas, that he did listen to them,

and he did not "just come down strict being the final authority." He did not feel comfortable with an authoritarian style, but said

I do pay the consequences of it because I guess they sense as well that they're not going to get some strict, sudden punishment for something they do . . . but I'm going to talk to them about it, find out where they're coming from, find out what the solution is together.

His ideal and what he actually did was not always in accordance, Peter admitted. He said that this was his ideal way of disciplining, and "it happens in practice more or less."

Rick explained how some teachers were having difficulty with student empowerment, and one of his roles was to help students communicate with adults. He stressed that the intention of democratic student involvement is "not to hand-over power and have students run everything, it is to empower them," and students were learning how to take more and more responsibility, with adult guidance. As Rick said, "The teachers' role is that of overseer, to make sure it doesn't run amok." He said that while the effects of the Student Council were in his view

ninety-nine percent positive, the only negative thing has been people aren't used to change. It takes some people aback that kids are running things, so to speak. They don't know how to react to it. Because kids are young, they're going to make lots of mistakes, and they might not be as smooth and polished as professionals. . . . Communication is a huge, huge part of it, for the teacher-leaders in Leadership, and the kids. We work continually on how we communicate things to people properly and appropriately.

David saw that mutual respect between adults and students was being developed through the Leadership Program: "It's a combination of showing that you respect what kids say . . . and respect their individual talents, and at the same time, you expect them to demonstrate their respect." He thought there was a major change in the way adults and students were now working through problems together. David's perspective on this will be discussed in more detail below in Effects on Attitude and School Climate.

There are clear connections here to the literature. What Peter, Rick and

David have said reflects what Dewey (1922), Giroux (1981), J. Goodman (1992), Gutmann (1987), Kreisberg (1992), Manley-Casimir (1980), Noddings (1984), and others have all maintained about the role of teacher authority, and that teachers should not abandon this authority. Peter sees himself "in the middle" in terms of student discipline, being neither permissive nor authoritarian. Rick sees that he has a strong role in helping students become responsibly empowered. David stresses the importance of mutual respect. They see the importance of discussing, negotiating and solving problems *with* the students, but also feel students often need to be taught how to voice their ideas and opinions in respectful ways. Noddings and J. Goodman have stressed that teachers and students sharing in decision-making is important, but there are still areas where teachers may have the final say. Besides being immediately practical, as neither students nor adults can do whatever they please, this dialoguing and negotiating is very helpful in developing interpersonal skills that will be useful in later life, for example, articulating opinions, giving supporting data or reasons, and coming to a consensus or compromise.

Gutmann (1987) and Engle and Ochoa (1988) have cautioned that there will inevitably be some disharmony when students gain more power and develop critical thinking capacities, and they will often express criticism of authority. The students in Peter's class were sometimes challenging his authority, and this was a difficult area for Peter, wanting to give students power, but not always comfortable with how students were challenging him personally. As Kreisberg (1992) has said, there is inherent tension between wanting to control one's own life and respecting others' rights to control theirs. As Gutmann further contended, democracy is not a solution to all problems, but it nonetheless offers processes for resolving problems.

Accepting students gaining more power has emerged as perhaps the thorniest issue for teachers, who as adults and professionals are invested with some degree of authority in schools. How much do we *really* want students to question the assumptions of society? How much do we want them challenging *us*? I wish to explore here, with further references to the literature, some of the complexities of this issue of teacher authority and

student power. How much authority should teachers have? What should they have authority about? How might we reconcile the tension between the need for both teachers and students to feel they have power? Are there rewards for teachers who share power with students?

Review of Literature Regarding Adult-Student Relationships

Making clear my use of the terms *authoritative* and *authoritarian* is needed. According to Webster's New World Dictionary (Guralink, 1980) *authoritative* means "based on competent authority; reliable because coming from one who is an expert or properly qualified." This is distinguished from *authoritarian* which "is characterized by unquestioning obedience to authority, as that of a dictator, rather than individual freedom of judgment and action." Teachers have authority and are thus authoritative by the nature of their being trained professionals in the field of education.

Authoritarianism, however, is inherently undemocratic.

In traditionally organized schools certain deeply ingrained structures and values regarding teacher authority and student power make widespread democratic schooling difficult. Scharf (1976) identified a number of these structures and values: (a) Schools often promote competitive achievement values, with school seen as a means to the end of achieving later economic status rather than cooperative or democratic citizenship. Student power is thus gained individually, by achievement within an adult-determined power-structure. (b) A hierarchical model of management generally sees democratic student participation as a threat to administrative hegemony. Teachers are often praised for maintaining authoritarian control and commanding respect from students. This can be a particularly difficult bind to break, with teachers perhaps fearing reprimand themselves if they give students more power. (c) There are limitations to students' knowledge or experience that make involvement in all decisions difficult, and the ideals of democratic society are understood by few children. Scharf concluded, however, that even though schools were woefully unprepared for the obligations of democratic citizenship . . . the

concept of the democratic school, using a valid philosophic and psychological base to guide it . . . is a most promising notion in education. It suggests a means both to alter the school as well as to offer students an opportunity to participate in democratic dialogue and exchange. (p. 33)

What I see standing out as important to pursue here is having a valid philosophic and psychological base. Some of the earlier attempts to give children power while abandoning adult authority were, I believe, in this sense misguided, or at least unrealistic. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a widespread movement, although never hegemonic, away from teacher authority. This was based in part on an assumption that children who were free from autocratic adult dominance would naturally be concerned with the well-being of the world around them. So-called "free schools," such as A. S. Neill's Summerhill, renounced "all discipline, all direction, all suggestion, all moral training" (Neill, 1960, p. 4). Altruism, said Neill, will develop "naturally--*if the child is not taught to be unselfish* [emphasis in original]" (p. 250). The belief was that adults interfered with this natural process, and a child would learn the difference between right and wrong if they were given power to make all their own decisions. Harmony School, which J. Goodman (1992) studied, was initially founded on this ideology. Their beliefs evolved over the years, however, to reflect an ideology in which teachers indeed have an authoritative role. In my opinion Neill had a very reactive position against absolute adult authoritarianism, which led him to the extreme of abandoning adult authority altogether, rather than seeing how a responsible authoritative adult role can be very beneficial for children. J. Goodman points out that children often have difficulty putting the common good ahead of their own immediate desires, and that their true individuality, as opposed to self-indulgence, grows within a community where they interact with others and there are necessarily some restrictions and expectations. Dewey also argued that we need to value both self-interests and common interests. Morals, he said, come from both within and without human beings, that "all conduct is *interaction* between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social . . . and that freedom is found in that kind of interaction which maintains an environment in which human desire and

choice count for something" (1922, p. 11).

The ideological underpinnings of any teacher's actions are crucial to the effectiveness of his/her actions. Without a clear understanding of an authoritative role, rather than authoritarian role, it is easy for a teacher to be in conflict with increasing student power. As J. Goodman (1992) stresses, "If teachers do not understand the way in which they need to use their authority to create a connectionist power structure within schools, then they will have difficulty promoting critical democracy" (p. 106). He contends that schooling for a critical democracy necessitates an authoritative role for teachers to actively construct an educational environment to promote social responsibility: "Teachers need to consciously create rituals and structures and act with reasoned authority in order to nourish a connectionist perspective within children" (p. 103). If teachers do not assume some authority over children, teaching them how to live according to community values, self-indulgence takes precedence. J. Goodman found that the teachers at Harmony School exercised their authority without harshness or insensitivity, and demonstrated how adult authority can be manifest in an atmosphere of caring. This authority was grounded in an affirmation of children's abilities to learn from their mistakes, and was used to help children become aware of their responsibilities to the collective well-being of the group. He stresses that teachers need to actively make students aware of the connection between their actions and their social responsibility. If anti-social actions are confronted within the context of community values, he contends that this is consistent with a connectionist rather than a conformist perspective. This can be achieved by engaging students in dialogue about their actions.

J. Goodman (1992) identifies the main element distinguishing democratic schooling from traditional schooling as a commitment to involving students in substantial decision-making. For students to have a share in the power structure there must be avenues for them to engage in the responsible use of that power. He contends that teachers and students are not equals, but a connectionist power structure necessitates student involvement in power-sharing experiences. At Harmony School he found that there was a conscious effort on the part of teachers to keep teacher-defined,

predetermined rules to a minimum. For example, students must attend class, complete assignments, not play in certain unsafe areas, and not leave school during school hours without permission. Other rules of conduct were decided during classroom discussions, and were usually based on previous experiences and students perceiving a real need for the rule. Thus students were not passive followers of teacher-made rules, but were actively involved in deciding them. Teachers also found they needed to make a conscious effort to teach students that they needed to consider the collective good in making decisions, that they couldn't simply vote themselves power and privileges. When deciding on privileges teachers needed to make sure students considered the attendant responsibilities and restrictions, and these needed to be included in the proposal. If the privilege was abused, it was revoked. Rather than focusing on student freedom and power, J. Goodman contends that the emphasis must be on the social responsibility that comes with that individual freedom and power. This, he says, "is the most distinctive difference between a connectionist power structure and the hierarchical structure found in traditional schools and the libertarian power structure found in most 'free' schools" (p. 110).

Manley-Casimir (1980) regards relationships as a central issue in democratic schools. As an alternative to traditional authoritarian schools, he proposes a model of a school as a "constitutional bureaucracy," which is basically congruent with democratic schooling. He sees this as entailing a fundamental shift in perspective about relationships among persons involved in the governance structure of the school, with a dominant emphasis on mutual respect and fair treatment. This model assumes that all persons involved have attendant rights and duties, interests and obligations. There is explicit recognition of the child as a person with rights--as *developing* adults, not full adults, but nonetheless with rights as persons. Qualitatively different relationships are also implied. He stresses the correlative nature of rights: "What characterizes relationships between persons in a constitutional bureaucracy is recognition and understanding of and respect for the rights and interests of the other participants" (p. 77). He contends that participation in decision-making reflects these characteristics,

with the further purpose that "the educational function of the school must be quintessentially to create learning opportunities for students so that when they leave school, they are capable of dealing critically with, and acting creatively upon, their world" (p. 77). He recognizes that there is inevitably unequal power distribution between children and adults, but this alteration of power distribution in a constitutional bureaucracy would require adults to ensure that their actions would not negate the rights of students. The students would derive some substantive and procedural protections, and have opportunities to develop their capacity for rational thought and action.

Giroux stresses the importance of student voice in creating their own meaning and in working towards what they desire, and that these are areas in which adults need to tread lightly. On the other hand, teachers have a strong role to play in raising student awareness of issues and encouraging them to actively construct meaning:

The democratization and humanization of power in the classroom should not suggest that radical educators retreat from positions of authority. What is suggested is that we should abandon authority roles that deny the subjectivity and power students have to create and generate their own meanings and visions. . . . For instance, students must learn the distinction between authority which dictates meaning and authority which fosters a critical search for meaning. (1981, p. 84)

Giroux also claims that if teachers negate their being in positions of authority this is giving students an unrealistic view of the world and is not helpful for students learning how to deal with authority:

It's naive to deny the existence of authority. . . . We are representations of authority, and to say to students that institutions and practices of power don't exist is actually to be deceptive about the ways those institutions shape our own roles. (1992, pp. 157-158)

Gutmann (1987) emphasizes the need for teacher authority from a different political perspective, of teachers needing to assert themselves in the role of autonomous professionals. Student and teacher equality is unrealistic, she says, and denies teachers professional autonomy in choosing their own approach. She sees that teachers committed to a more participatory approach

appear to be more successful in getting students to work and in increasing commitment to learning than do teachers who take a more disciplinary approach. She says, however, that "we lack enough evidence to say how much internal democracy is necessary to cultivate participatory virtues among students" (p. 92). Taking a cautious approach regarding democratic participation for children, Gutmann stresses that some significant decisions must be left largely to the determination of teachers and administrators. She concludes: "That an ideal democratic school is not as democratic as an ideal democratic society should not disenchant us either with schooling or democracy, since democracies depend on schools to prepare students for citizenship" (p. 94). She concedes, however, that "it would . . . be remarkable if the best way to prepare students for citizenship were to deny them both individual and collective influence in shaping their own education" (p. 94).

Kreisberg's (1992) main contention is that we need to transform our conception of power, from a relationship of *power over* towards a relationship of *power with*. He concedes, however, that with the environment of education not totally supporting *power with*, we can realistically only hope to reduce *power over*. Teachers have the responsibility to assign grades, to keep a safe environment, and to teach children who have traditionally been powerless to gradually assume more power. "The challenge for the teacher is to structure possibilities, to facilitate the movement from domination to empowerment, from silence to voice" (p. 180). There are times when controlling or restricting student actions are necessary, but Kreisberg insists these should be kept to a minimum, for example, protection from violence or verbal abuse. He contends that while teachers have an authoritative role, having different responsibilities and expertise than do students, this does not give teachers license to dominate. With growing mutual respect between teacher and students, both realize that teacher knowledge is a resource worth listening to. Conversely, students also have authority and expertise in various areas. Teachers need to act as initiators or facilitators when students are reluctant to take responsibility or when they need to be challenged or encouraged to do their best. This initiative, however, needs to include finding activities that will help students accept more

responsibility.

If one does not subscribe to a traditional authoritarian role, how might this affect a teacher as a person? What are some personal advantages and disadvantages? Kreisberg (1992), through his interviews with six democratically inclined teachers in the Boston area in 1985 and 1986, found that in teacher-student relationships not characterized by domination, teachers were much more vulnerable. They needed to be willing to admit to their own mistakes, share their own ideas and feelings, and to be honest with students. Realistically, they needed to balance their openness with assertiveness, but this assertiveness did not mean "imposing control, order and submission" (p. 175). Kreisberg found that teachers viewed their coming to terms with this balance as being "on a road of inquiry" (p. 175) along with the students. In working towards *power with* relationships with students they faced numerous challenges. They sometimes suffered self-doubt, not convinced that the risks they were taking would have the desired results. They found the hegemony of domination more powerful than expected, with resistance stemming from the institutions, colleagues, students, and even themselves. Kreisberg also identified a tension "between the desire to control one's own life and valued resources while simultaneously respecting others' rights to do the same" (p. 191). This dual dimension of self-determination without imposing on others is not easy, especially with the hegemonic role of domination in our institutions and the long-term effects of this on our consciousness and experience. What he found, however, is that there is a synergistic effect between teacher and student empowerment. "Teachers who help students to become empowered are experiencing personal empowerment in their classrooms through their relationships with their students" (p. 194).

Thus, while some imbalance of power between teachers and students may be inevitable, I believe it is worthwhile to look at the possibility of a move towards a substantial equalization of power. If teachers and students wish to move further towards an equal sharing of power, what are some of the important features of such a relationship? How might it be accomplished? What might be some of the results?

Noddings (1984) believes that there needs to be a "weakening of professional structures" (p. 186) and stresses the importance of dialogue. This dialogue must be legitimate and must be about what is of interest to students. Students need to be fully listened to, for "the purpose of dialogue is to come into contact with ideas and to understand, to meet the other and to care" (p. 186). This means real dialogue is not coercive or rigged, with an adult decision already made and the purpose of the discussion to gain agreement from the student. The adult needs to be fully willing to hear ideas that are better than his or her own.

J. Goodman (1992) found that open teacher-student interactions were a key factor in equalizing power. Teachers at Harmony School modeled warmth, caring and nurturing towards students. Students approached teachers for help with interpersonal problems, and teachers were willing to involve themselves in students' academic, social and family lives. When conflicts between teachers and students were fully resolved, the result was increased feelings of closeness or bondedness. Teachers reported hoping that if students were allowed to express themselves and to seek help, then they would be more likely to offer assistance to others. There was, however, some ignoring of disruptive or anti-social behaviours on the part of teachers, and J. Goodman saw that "in some instances, the friendship that existed between teachers and students seemed to give students greater license to act in egocentric ways" (p. 101). He concluded that "reducing the stratification between students and teachers is necessary in building a connectionist power structure; however . . . one should not make the mistake of thinking that teachers and students need to be 'equals' in order to promote critical democracy" (p. 101). He insists, however, that "bureaucratic, technical or laissez-faire approaches [to discipline] . . . cannot provide our children with the community values and guidance needed to promote critical democracy" (p. 117). He says that when teachers and administrators create a connectionist dynamic of power between themselves and children, they "cultivate children's self-esteem, help children realize that they are not alone in this world . . . and teach children that caring for others is as important as caring about oneself" (p. 117).

Kreisberg (1992) looked at the effects of democratic empowerment on students, as interpreted by the teachers he interviewed. (Remember, students were not interviewed.) The teachers reported that students felt more energized to speak up about important issues that affected them, and showed more willingness to act on these issues, rather than being passive or manipulated. Students spoke with more self-confidence, being able to clearly communicate key elements, but also listened more openly to others, thus balancing their confidence with humility. They were more willing to take risks when mistakes were accepted and they felt supported by the teacher and the group. Students were more respectful of each other, voicing fewer put-downs, seeming to realize that if they did not want others to put down them or their ideas, then they could not do this to others. Students showed more critical awareness of knowledge, developing their own opinions, inquiring, exploring, and seeking meaning rather than just accumulating facts. In acting on decisions, they also were able to identify priorities and implement planning skills, and through this became more fully contributing members of the group.

Such results, however, cannot be simply contributed to an equalization of power. They illustrate, once again, that there needs to be a curricular and pedagogic structure that supports and extends this empowerment. As Kreisberg (1992) stresses,

the relationships these teachers are trying to create are self-consciously grounded in a commitment to care and connection, to mutuality and vulnerability, and on the authority of expertise rather than on the power of position. Facilitating the transition to these new relationships takes time, skill and patience. (p. 198)

Teacher-Principal Relationships

This theme was discussed only to a small extent by the participants, so will be only briefly touched on in this section. It was not an area I asked questions about directly. It will be discussed more fully, with connections to the literature, in Chapter 5.

Peter expressed a great deal of respect for the principal and saw her as a role model. He said that compared to last year, when he was in charge of student leadership, he saw how Mary "really let students go with their ideas" and the positive difference that made to the school climate. He said he watched how she did this and how the students responded, for example, how they became much more confident, "feeling they really have a place because of the things they've organized, whereas otherwise Grade 7s often feel disconnected to school, with one foot already out the door." While his beliefs about teaching and learning were to a large extent in accordance with those of the principal, he acknowledged that his practice was not always consistent with his beliefs. Seeing how the principal was operating inspired him to be more democratic in his classroom teaching, listening more to students, involving them more in decision-making, and giving them more responsibilities.

Rick said that the Leadership Program was "Mary's ball," meaning that she had initiated it and took most of the responsibility for it, but he indicated she had a lot of support from teachers, and he certainly supported what she was doing.

David indicated that he was working very collaboratively with Mary, that they shared the same basic beliefs about children, and often discussed how to proceed with implementing their beliefs.

Effects on Attitudes and School Climate

As has been indicated a number of times above, Peter, Rick and David have noticed a positive effect on people's attitudes and the school climate. I will look at this theme here in more detail.

Peter considered his major satisfaction regarding the Student Council to be seeing a few students who do quite poorly academically really shine in terms of leadership. . . . They've really shone among their peers as really having a place. You can really see the self confidence . . . even though they struggle to have passing grades. They are key organizers, at a completely different level.

For a few individuals he saw that Student Council "made a huge difference."

Peter felt some students became "over-involved" in the Student Council activities, to the point that they did not do as much work on their classroom projects as they might have; however, he thought all these activities kept students in general more motivated academically:

They really liked what was going on, all the events, so perhaps it caused a more positive environment for the whole Grade 7 class, so school was still something they'd be hooked into. They seem to be coming to school with a lot of contentment, that they've created through the Student Council.

Rick also said that one of his major satisfactions with the Student Council was the effect it had on certain individuals: "There are kids that in other circumstances might be more difficult, but given the opportunity to take something on, they stay focused on it and do some excellent work with it. It's really helped them mature." He gave the example, as discussed previously, of the student who had a problem with anger in sports situations and became commissioner of the hockey league:

It was tough for him at the beginning, but he really matured through that process and he did an excellent job of setting up the program, setting the rules, and he also played and there were very few incidents of the kind that happened last year.

In terms of school climate, Peter viewed school as a much more active and lively place for students:

There is just so much to do in a given week, like, there are tournaments and all kinds of opportunities for them, because everyone is planning stuff for each other. Last year . . . maybe we had one dance, this year they've had three, because they organized three. They've had more tournaments because they've organized more, and a variety of other different opportunities. They've had lots of extra fun time, enjoyable time.

Another of Rick's major satisfactions with the Leadership Program was the influence it has had on the school climate and the school community, in particular with the older students doing so much for the younger students,

and the growing mutual respect. He thought that students had developed a sense of ownership towards the school through seeing the power they had in changing things around them. He was emphatic: "There is no question in my mind that school has been improved."

David had been at the school longer than any other person interviewed, and was able to offer a valuable perspective on how it had changed. As indicated previously, David saw a positive change in the level of commitment and attachment towards the school, and saw the older students as role models for the younger students in this regard. He also saw the inclusive model and wide scope of areas for involvement as key in this increased involvement.

He thought a major change in the culture of the school was that the dynamics between adults and children had changed. He said that previously, if there was a problem, the teacher or principal or counsellor would say, "Here's the consequence." That has changed to working on it together. . . . And that becomes the culture of the school. There are always opportunities to work out problems together . . . not just with adults, but with peer mediators.

David had some concerns, but always tempered them with positive corollaries. He saw that some students "feel an increase in power but don't know how to use it," and that meant adults had to work harder to help them in that regard. He thought that through this, however, he had formed more connections with students: "Kids come to me all the time now. . . . They're coming to work out things all the time." Another concern was that at times "it gets a little chaotic." He qualified this, however: "I think inherently it's a bit messy. And yet I like it; I'll deal with that. . . . You never know what to expect. You always have to keep flexible. . . . It takes dedication."

David clearly felt excited by how the school was changing, and felt he was part of new territory being mapped. He thought there was a clear vision, but no well-travelled roads, no models to follow to get there:

Sometimes Mary and I just sit there and we look at each other, and we don't know where we're going with this, we just *have* to do it. It's an experiment. . . . We really know where we want to go . . . we have our

underlying beliefs . . . but sometimes it's "What do we do now? How do we respond to this?" It really is a challenge. . . . It's always developing. . . . It's always working in a grey area.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter I present data from three interviews with Mary Green, the principal of Hilltop School, interpret it according to emergent themes, and make connections to the pertinent literature. The same broad categories and themes in Chapters 3 and 4 are used here, with a third main category added--The Role of Administrator--which includes an extensive literature review.

Mary was interviewed in three phases. The Phase I interview took place in May of her first year as principal at Hilltop, the Phase II interview in January of the following year, and the Phase III interview in July, after she had been sponsoring the Student Council/Leadership Program for two full years.

Form and Function of Democratic Student Involvement

Philosophical Beliefs and Background

Mary seemed to have a well-formulated philosophy regarding democratic student involvement, based mainly on her own experiences. She said it stemmed from

really strong views on kids, feeling that they can be involved in decision-making processes at the school level, feeling that they can contribute in some really meaningful way, that they have opportunities to provide activities for themselves and for others, . . . an opportunity for kids to have a real voice.

An important component of this was that they learn "a tremendous number of skills through the process." She also saw "a service component, an opportunity to experience what it feels like to help others, and contribute to the school community in a really, really positive way."

Rather than theoretical readings, Mary credited her teen-age son and her experiences as a mother as being most influential in formulating her beliefs. These experiences made her realize

how important it is for kids to have the opportunity to say what's in

their hearts and their heads, and for them to learn the skills of how to say that respectfully, how to have a conversation with people about things like that in a way that doesn't put them off, but at least lets them raise it.

She stressed that trust in children is crucial: "I really trust the fact that when kids are given the opportunity to be involved in experiences, take some risks, make some mistakes, and then have somebody who helps them process that, that they just learn a tremendous amount." As a single mother this was how she related to her son. Seeing him now grown into thoughtful young man made her realize how having the freedom to explore how he thinks and feels about issues, and the guided processing of his thoughts and feelings, have contributed to how thoughtful he is. She has also seen how in parts of his life there are not these opportunities, and "how shut-down he has felt." Because of these experiences as a mother, she wanted to provide these same opportunities to other children.

Mary did not think she was modeling her style on anyone else: "I think it's something that quite naturally I moved into. And I would see it as probably one of my real strengths, the ability to work with kids in that way . . . and to trust it." Through her experiences as principal for four years in her previous school, she also saw some long-term results of a strong leadership program there, with students being able to do things people did not think children very capable of doing. This increased her trust in what she was doing.

Student Initiative and School-Level Responsibility

In terms of legitimate areas for student-involvement, Mary was very open, and saw shared decision-making as the main way of operating. She thought students should have opportunities "to take a stab at almost anything, an opportunity to at least question almost anything." She recognized that "some things are non-negotiable, and I talk to kids about that, but at least they've got an opportunity to raise some questions." She gave the example of students raising the issue about not being able to wear hats in school, and wanting to know why this was not allowed. Mary acknowledged

to them the legitimacy of this question, and said she would take the issue to the staff and discuss it with them. The students told her that if she was the principal she should have the authority to change this rule without discussing it. She explained to them that this was not how she worked, but rather she liked to explore with people the pros and cons of issues, coming to fair decisions together. This was illustrative of how "it's not necessarily drawing the line at what's negotiable and what's not, and what's legitimate and what's not. There should be a spirit or climate of openness, in such a way that kids feel comfortable asking almost any question." She saw a balance with that, however, with children not having the skills or maturity to handle some issues: "They need to see things from the other point of view . . . that there are some things that could be changed and some things that can't be." She needed to explain to the students sometimes that this was not a reason to not discuss an issue, but sometimes it would go no further than talking about it.

Mary saw that areas in which students could take major responsibility were areas that mainly involved students, "anything that doesn't involve the decision-making of others." The Student Council committees organized events and activities, and students had a large degree of responsibility in those areas, for example: organizing a Talent Show; providing noon-hour crafts for primary students; putting on a radio show over the P.A. system for 15 minutes during lunch hours 3 days a week; and organizing a Secret Friend activity for Valentine's Day. Even in these areas students did not, however, have completely free rein. An example she gave was how the Theme Day Committee decided they wanted a Sugar High Day. Mary explained to them that "there would be many people, including myself, that would have some concerns about that for health reasons and sanity reasons." She suggested that if they really wanted feedback, they should write a letter to the teachers asking for their input. The teachers respectfully said "no" to the student proposal, and suggested other ideas for theme days.

This openness she realized was somewhat controversial. Mary stressed that for her there were no clearly delineated divisions between what students can and cannot be involved in, no areas of free rein or restricted admittance--

nearly everything was negotiable, except certain "givens" such as attendance and homework. She thought students could be involved in discipline and school "rules," which she preferred to characterize as "guidelines, expectations and responsibilities," and this area of school rules was one in which she felt some teachers questioned her. She gave the example of an issue that came up:

The Grade 7s started to hang around in little areas, and initially I didn't think that would be a problem. But several staff said it's going to create a problem, and they were right. With 450 kids it did create a problem. But instead of just going to the kids and saying, "No, you can't do it anymore," I went and I said, "Okay, we want to hear your concern for having some space just to hang out."

A compromise was agreed to, where students would not congregate around the entrance ways, and the library would be used as a Grade 7 drop-in every Friday at noon, unsupervised, where they could play cards, read books, or just sit and talk.

In the Student Councils described by Sawyer (1993), discussed previously in Chapter 1, most of the meeting time seemed focused on the discussion of concerns which students brought forth. At Hilltop most of the Student Council time seemed taken up with students working on group projects. When asked specifically about time for discussion of student concerns, in the Phase III interview, Mary said she viewed the bringing forth and addressing of student concerns in a broad context, including the Peer Mediation Program, class monitors, and the Leadership Program. Previously there had been specific time given in the Leadership Program for students to bring forth their concerns, "but in the latter part of the year that kind of got lost, and we got more focused on doing activities. But I think that would be an important element to maintain in a more structured way."

A Process of Continual Learning

Mary felt that inherent in democratic student involvement is a bit of chaos or messiness because students are in the process of learning: "If you're

going to let go, kids aren't going to exactly know what to do." She did not believe they should flounder in this messy state too long, but it was an important initial stage to get things started, to see what the problems were, and set the stage for learning the skills to work through it.

Mary was very cognizant of the students learning numerous important skills through the Leadership Program, for example, how to express opinions respectfully and effectively, how to show consideration and caring for others, and how to plan and organize. Again using the example of the students wanting a Sugar High Day, she told them they could write a letter to the teachers and ask for their input. Then she forewarned the teachers, "afraid they might think that I had lost my marbles," and explained to them how she was trying to teach the students the procedure for when they wanted to do something that might be controversial.

Another example was how initially the Secret Friend idea for Valentine's Day was presented to her as "The Love Express." She felt the impetus behind it was the Grade 7 girls wanting to send valentines to the Grade 7 boys, and she felt that was too narrow a focus for an elementary school. Mary talked with these students, asking if there was a way they could open it up so it could include younger kids as well, and the students then changed it to be more appropriate for the school as a whole.

Mary emphasized that a major skill that needed to be taught when students were given the opportunity to have their voices heard was how to do this respectfully:

I think different people have differing levels of tolerance with students speaking out. But I think as long as it's done respectfully--and that's the real key--and that's what we sometimes have to teach kids, because they just don't have the maturity to do that. They just don't have it, so that's our job, to help them learn it.

Her goal, which was being realized, was to have students independently use the skills they learned. Mary gave the example of students wanting to propose a change to the year-end tradition of the whole school going swimming, desiring that the Grade 6s and 7s instead go roller-skating. Two students came forward to discuss it with her:

I said, "Well, what do you need to do?" And they said, "Well, we've actually already written a letter to the Grade 6/7 teachers, and we'd just like you to read it and tell us what you think of it." . . . and it was such a positive letter, it was "This is what we're thinking about; we'd like your input." When they first started writing the letters to teachers it was more like "Here it is. We're doing it." But this was really asking for their feedback. And I said, "You know you may not get the answer you want here," and they said, "That's okay, we've already got a back-up plan." So I thought these kids really have learned the kind of process they need to go through.

As discussed previously in Chapter 3, the learning of skills to participate in a democracy have been stressed throughout the literature. It is through continual practical involvement that students will gain more and more expertise and responsibility. Students learning to show consideration for others also connects with Noddings' emphasis on caring. Noddings contends that "the primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring" (1984, p. 172). Mary appears to be finding numerous opportunities to raise students' awareness of how they can show caring and consideration for others. Her acceptance of chaos and messiness as necessary ties in with Giroux's (1992) stressing that democracy is a dynamic process, that it is never perfect: "Democratic societies are noisy. They're about traditions that need to be critically reevaluated by each generation" (p. 156).

Continual Improvements to the Program

The history and development of the Student Council at Hilltop has been discussed previously. What role has Mary played in this development? How does she view the changes that have occurred and what would she still like to change? What is the process by which improvements are made?

While Mary has played a key role in the development of the Student Council, she gave much credit to the students and teachers. When she first came to Hilltop the sponsor teachers of the Student Council were concerned

about the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the students involved in it, and they felt some students who were really strong leaders were not involved in it at all. Historically, membership on the Student Council was the result of student applications and teacher selection and Mary had been used in her previous school to a representative Student Council, with students electing members. She began at Hilltop by visiting both Grade 7 classes and discussing her vision of a Student Council, "with real responsibility, not just token responsibility." A committee of students was formed to determine how they would select members. Students decided they wanted to retain the application method, with teachers deciding, because they were concerned that voting was merely "a popularity contest." Mary had some concerns about this: "I wasn't as happy with the teachers making the decisions . . . but I also recognized that if this was what the kids were saying, that's what I was going to do." When the applications were actually looked at, by a committee of five teachers, it was realized that some students had difficulty expressing themselves in writing but the teachers felt they were still good candidates. With one of the main goals being to increase enthusiasm for the Student Council, they decided to not exclude applicants. A core group of 7 students was therefore chosen, with an additional *ad hoc* group of all others who filled out the application: "It wasn't totally open; they had to make that commitment." This became a core group of 20, with an *ad hoc* group of about 50, but in practice Mary always met with them as one large group. This was not her original intent, but because she was so busy this was more efficient.

The process of continual improvement appears to result, then, from a combination of reaction to circumstances, deliberate reevaluation, and collaborative decision-making. Towards the end of the first year Mary said that "in the end it's kind of interesting how it's worked itself out, because I think it's been better." Still, she saw the need for improvement. A Leadership Committee had been formed and would be meeting "to talk about what's happened and how we might do it differently next year." She felt very conscious of "not wanting to step on anyone's toes" in putting forth her ideas for how a Student Council should operate, but that this should be a collaborative effort. Towards the end of the first year she felt that teachers

were happy about what was happening for the students, but frustrated with them being out of class so much to work on their committees. There was also concern, on the part of the teachers and Mary, about those students who were left behind in the classroom, since the majority of Grade 7 students were on the Student Council. She was thinking about having a more representative model, where issues could be discussed with each class as a whole, and then the views of the everyone could be brought forward. In one way or another, Mary wanted to involve more grades. Part way through this first year Grade 6s had joined the Student Council; however, she thought that many Grade 6s felt that the Grade 7s were dominating, not giving them opportunity for real involvement but treating them like apprentices. For the following year Mary was thinking of having the Grade 6s and 7s start at the same time and then later in the year open it up to Grade 4s and 5s. She felt bad that she had not been able to do that this year, but as one person working with such a large group already, she realized her limitations. Another improvement that Mary wanted was to have a teacher sponsor the Student Council with her.

The form that the Leadership Program actually took the following year was not exactly as Mary envisioned, again being a result of circumstances, reevaluation and collaboration. A major change was that more teachers became directly involved, and this greatly increased the collaborative aspect. The Leadership Program also became integrated into the curriculum, with Mary believing that the Leadership Program was very connected to the learning outcomes for Career and Personal Planning, and was thus justifiable as part of the curriculum. Another major change was that all the Grade 7s became directly involved. The Grade 6s did not begin at the same time as the Grade 7s, however; the younger grades did not become formally involved; and there was no representative aspect. How did these changes come about and how well were they working?

At the end of the first year the Leadership Committee met and discussed what was working well and what could be better. Mary expressed a need to have help with assisting students problem-solving conflicts in their groups, that she could not be available for all of them. While they certainly had ownership, more emphasis needed to be put on learning the skills of

group dynamics. She felt it would be better if they could learn those skills at the moment, in the context of the group projects, rather than ahead of time. A teacher, Janice, expressed interest in working with Mary, so they met in the summer and shared ideas. The two of them began the Leadership Program in September. With 64 students, however, once they began working on projects, with about seven committee groups at any one time, they realized they still needed another adult. They invited Rick to join and he agreed, and, as Mary said, "dove in with both feet." The radio show, for instance, was his idea, and he organized the students for that.

The essential form and function of the Student Council, however, remained the same. The Leadership Program still met every Friday for an hour, beginning with a whole-group meeting for about 5 or 10 minutes, sometimes more, with either Mary, Janice or Rick as chairperson, and then moving into students' committee time. Mary felt that the vision Rick and Janice brought was consistent with what she had done with the students the previous year, "which is recognizing we need to let them go a bit, and that sometimes they're going to fall and make mistakes." The three adults brought different strengths, however, and one strength that Mary saw Janice had contributed was her ability to structure and organize the program more effectively. Mary thought the Leadership Program needed this: "I tended to let it be a bit more chaotic." This theme of the collaborative and complementary working relationship among the adult sponsors will be discussed further in Principal-Teacher Relationships.

As a result of having two more sponsors Mary felt adults were able to work alongside the students more, and she felt it was much better for the students because they were receiving more attention. She felt that last year "some kids fumbled too long in the messiness because I couldn't physically get around to help them." This year she thought it was more positive for students, and as a result of more help and teacher-direction for dealing with group dynamics they were learning more about how to work in groups. Instead of a group sometimes falling apart like last year, help with problem-solving meant that they could attend more to the job at hand. As discussed previously in Chapter 3, this was corroborated by the students indicating that

they viewed the adults as indeed helpful in this regard.

Mary felt that democratic student involvement was "mushrooming" in the school and while she thought this excitement and desire to be involved was wonderful, it also posed some logistical dilemmas. Some had been dealt with creatively. Some Grade 5s, for instance, had come to her and were really interested in being part of the Leadership Program. Instead, in collaboration with their teacher, they decided to design their own project for Valentine's Day, which still contributed to the whole school. Mary worked with them on that in their classroom, instead of actually including them in the Leadership Program.

A major problem not yet solved at the time of the Phase II interview, in February, was inclusion of the Grade 6s. They wanted to bring in the Grade 6s after Spring Break, but were not quite sure how that could be managed. The intention was to use the Grade 7s as mentors to train the Grade 6s, but the sheer number of people presented difficulties. Because they had made the Leadership Program such an inclusive model, they already had about 70 Grade 7s. Some possible solutions Mary saw were to bring in some of the teachers who were working with the Grade 6s in Career and Personal Planning, which happened at the same time as the Leadership Program, or to bring in some students from Simon Fraser University who were in a leadership program there. Mary felt she was trying to explore something in the Leadership Program for which she did not have a model: "Generally Student Councils are a fairly finite group of kids, and this is more broadening it to a focus of student leadership, and therefore there are more kids." By the time I observed at the school in April, this problem regarding how to involve the Grade 6s had been solved, using just the present sponsor teachers. Mary would be working with the Grade 6s and some rotating Grade 7 mentors, and Janice and Rick would work with the Grade 7s.

Mary indicated she would also like to involve parents more. She felt there were some parents who "really love what is going on." She felt some parents, however, thought that the students had too much power. For example, she said, "While the student radio show was on I overheard a parent saying, in a very critical tone of voice, 'The kids in this school just

have way too much fun.' " She would like to educate parents about what she is doing, but had not yet come up with a way to do this.

At the time of the Phase III interview, a new improvement had been decided for the following year. A two day retreat would occur early in the school year to "set a tone and a frame" for the year and help the Leadership Program participants learn skills necessary for working together respectfully in the program. This idea was as a result of realizing that some students in particular needed more support in understanding how, when they have more power and freedom, they need to use that in a positive, productive manner. It seems then, that the basic form of the Leadership Program is now working for this group, and they are at the fine-turning stage.

An Inclusive Model

The main change to the format of the Student Council over these two years has been its inclusion of more and more students. One of the changes that Mary had earlier considered was making it more representative, but instead it became more participatory. How did this happen? What were the results?

At the beginning of the second year there were only six Grade 7s who did not fill out an application, opting to not be involved in the Leadership Program. They stayed with the Grade 6s during the Leadership Program meeting times. Because there were two Grade 6/7 classes, the Grade 6s at that time did Career and Personal Planning, part of the required curriculum. In December the Grade 7s not involved in the Leadership Program were given the opportunity to join, and all did. All Grade 7 students, approximately 70, were thus part of the Leadership Program.

As discussed in the previous section, students from other grades were also wanting to become involved. Many small groups of students were approaching Mary and saying, "We've got a plan." Mary viewed this as very exciting, and expressed amazement at the number of student involved at the school level and the variety of projects. She saw that this burgeoning involvement was not, however, without problems. Physically and logistically

the sheer numbers were difficult to manage, and she was seeking alternatives for being able to include more students, such as involving more teachers, bringing in outside adult help, and going into classrooms more to team with teachers.

The move to a more inclusive model was to a large extent unforeseen. It appeared to result from Mary being open to possibilities and from different ideas about student involvement being brought together. First she tried a style of Student Council that was new for her, with student applications rather than voting for representatives as in her previous school. Through collaborative decision-making and reaction to circumstances this grew to a large group, and the students and Mary discovered, somewhat to their surprise, that this large number of students was not too unwieldy. Although it presented some problems, the solution was not to reduce the number of students, but to involve more teachers and even more students.

This trend towards a more inclusive model is in contrast to what Mosher (1980) found. He blamed part of the failure of the participatory democracy in the school he studied on the large number of students involved, making it difficult for all to effectively participate. One major difference between the two formats is that the meetings in the school in Mosher's study were predominantly to discuss issues, while at Hilltop the whole-group meeting time was short, and all the students then worked in small groups actively involved in planning or implementing school activities. In the school Mosher studied, only about 30% of the students were involved in school committees. Part of the success of Hilltop's inclusive model appears to be that committees make it possible for more direct and effective participation. Another major difference is that the school Mosher studied was a high school, and the whole school was involved. The Student Council at Hilltop is only participatory for the highest grades, which in itself makes the numbers more manageable.

Hilltop's inclusive model has also presented other challenges. Mary thought that some of the problems they experienced with individual students may have been the result of including everyone in Grade 7. When students had to go through an application process those who applied generally had

altruistic motives and wanted to serve the school community. She thought perhaps those who later became involved, but did not formally apply, saw it more "as an opportunity to have some power in the school." In hindsight, she saw about three of four students who did not have the maturity to be in the regular Leadership Program, who could have been directed in other ways. Next year, for example, a boy who is Educable Mentally Handicapped loves to work with the custodian, so that will become his leadership development as he could not cope with the regular Leadership Program groups. She felt that once all the students were involved it became harder work, "as there were some kids who we had to nudge along." While she felt there was more of a service orientation the first year, she was unsure as to whether this was result of the application process or the nature of the students that year. She thought perhaps the application process made the Student Council seem more as a privilege, and the service component resulted from that, whereas "when they knew everybody was going to be part of it, it downplayed that somehow." She said this was an area about which she needed to think more.

There were other benefits of this inclusive model, however. There were some students, who Mary felt never would have applied, who blossomed in ways that we couldn't believe. I can think of this one kid, . . . quiet, shy, wouldn't say boo, and he ended up getting one of the Leadership awards at the end of the year.

The Leadership Program at Hilltop has also become more inclusive for teachers. This seems to be a crucial step. Mary said she believed that the more teachers become involved in the program, the more they will accept ownership for it. At her previous school she was the only adult involved with the Leadership Program, and when she left the school the program dissolved. Her hope for this school, for the sake of the students, is that with more teachers involved the program will be able to eventually continue without her. This theme will be discussed in more depth in *The Role of the Administrator*.

The Classroom Level

Mosher (1980) concluded after studying a participatory democracy at the school level that "the classroom is the most likely and practical place to promote democracy in the school" (p. 107). How did Mary view classroom practices as supplementing or complementing what she was implementing at the school level? What effects of democratic involvement was she aware of at the classroom level?

Mary saw different levels of democracy in different classrooms. About eight teachers had class meetings on a regular basis. Some classrooms were predominantly teacher-directed. She thought some of the lower primary teachers "might espouse democratic student leadership, but not really do it in their classrooms." The counsellor's peer-mediation group was regularly going into all classrooms to help students solve problems and that seemed to be encouraging a general problem-solving approach. The one commonality she saw in almost every classroom was that teachers were really trying to listen to students, and this she saw as the first and most important step: "That's at the heart of it all." Some of the teachers she thought would never move into being democratic, and Mary saw her role then was to support democratic student involvement at the school level. Conversely, some teachers who might want to be more democratic were not sure how to do this. Looking at more strategies for how to support teachers regarding democratic involvement in the classroom was something she was interested in, and foresaw getting more involved in this in the future.

There is an important distinction that I believe needs to be made here, between listening to students and having students be democratically involved. Mary said she believed teachers were listening more to students, which was the "heart" of democratic involvement, yet she still wanted to learn more strategies for supporting democracy in the classroom. It seems that teachers listening to students is a crucial step, but does not constitute sufficient democratic involvement. Nieto (1994) also contends that listening is not enough, that teachers need to assist students to become more independent learners, using what they learn in productive and critical ways.

One way Mary was involved at the classroom level was team-teaching Writers' Workshop in about 10 classrooms. (In Writers' Workshop students usually write about what they choose, not teacher-assigned topics.) She saw this as complementary to democratic involvement "because the principle of [Writers' Workshop] is honouring student voice." She felt it was also a way for her to really get to know many students in the school, where she was focusing on listening to them and helping them write their thoughts. The younger students, therefore, were learning to express their voice to the principal. A result of this Mary thought was the number of small groups coming to her and saying, "We've got a plan." By having their voices taken seriously, it appears that students have the confidence to expand the sphere in which they operate at school.

This connects with what Giroux stresses regarding critical democratic pedagogy and how power operates through both curricular choice and teacher-student relationships:

In providing a space for critical dialogue, critical pedagogical practices point to more than the relationship between knowledge and power; they also signal how power operates in meeting the criterion of relevance . . . by taking seriously students' interests, desires, and pleasures. Critical pedagogical practices also allow students to produce and appropriate space for the production of . . . forms of knowledge that often exist outside of the mainstream curriculum or are seen as unworthy of serious attention. (1996, pp. 19-20)

A dilemma regarding the classroom level is that an administrator wishing to affect democratic classroom practice needs to still honour teacher autonomy and teacher voice. This will be a main focus in *The Role of Administrator*. At this point it will suffice to point out that Mary is effecting some change at the classroom level through collaboration and modeling, practices consistent with democratic values.

The Social-Emotional Dimension: Human Relations and Attitudes

Relationships Among Students

One of Mary's purposes behind the Leadership Program was strengthening relationships among students. She believed service to others was a very important component of democratic involvement. In various ways she encouraged altruism, for instance, by urging students to expand the Valentine's Day Secret Friend activity to include younger students, who would not feel comfortable with the more romantic theme the older girls first proposed.

Much of her work with the Leadership Program focused on group dynamics, helping students learn how to work cooperatively, and to do this more effectively was her main reason for wanting to involve more teachers. By the Phase III interview she saw that students had grown considerably in their ability to problem solve in their groups, and depended on adult help much less. Some groups still struggled in this regard, but for the majority this had "developed really strongly."

I wanted to check with Mary the perception that I received from students, that their relationships with each other had been positively affected by the Leadership Program. A number of students said they felt other students listened to them really well, and one student said she felt she had transferred these skills to her other relationships and she was more cooperative. None of the adults I had interviewed had voiced this as their perception, and Peter had expressly been concerned with students showing some disrespect for each other. Mary voiced surprise at that being the students' perspective:

Well, that's *really* interesting, and I think that's why it will be so important for teachers to read this too, to hear that from kids. I would think many teachers would say that they didn't necessarily see that.

What can happen is that you focus on one or two really powerful kids. . . I did see that in their ability. If I pull away from a couple of the kids who I saw struggle with that, I do think that that started to happen.

The counsellor, David, told Mary that he had seen students starting to

intervene on the playground if they saw problems developing, and a couple of fights had been successfully broken up this way. Mary said she thought probably it was happening far more than we acknowledged . . . because we were dealing with the difficulties of it rather than the positives of it, and we didn't see the positives as much. . . . So that's a point of view that I think really needs to be brought forward more, and we need to find opportunities to look at that.

Adult-Student Relationships

As indicated in previous sections, adult-student relationships have on the whole been perceived as mutually appreciative and respectful, but this can be an area of difficulty when students gain more power and adults may perceive their authority threatened. How did Mary view this adult-student dynamic? How did she deal with students as a sponsor of the Student Council and as the principal? How did she encourage democratic teacher-student relationships?

The adult role in democratic student involvement was crucially important in Mary's view. Even though adults "need to let students go," they do so within a structure such that students will not completely fall. Helping with group dynamics was a very important adult role, and she saw that with more adults available the second year the students received more attention and assistance to work through difficulties. Mary said she had strong trust in children's abilities to make and implement decisions, but students will, of course, run into problems and make mistakes. She stressed that when this happened the way an adult responded was key.

Mary spoke often of adults and students engaging in a "negotiating" process. For instance, projects which students proposed were negotiated with adults before they were implemented, and students who were behaving anti-socially were also involved in negotiating before deciding on a solution or consequence. Negotiating appeared to be her preferred method of relating to students. This involved "a sharing of adult and student perspectives before coming to a decision." She stressed that adults must, therefore, really *listen* to

the students, which she felt she, and teachers on the whole, did.

A difference in participants' perspectives that stood out for me after the Phase II interviews was regarding negotiating. The students did not seem to view the process of negotiating as did Mary. From the students' perspective they made proposals but teachers had the final say. This sounds similar to, but has a different emphasis than, coming to a mutually agreeable decision, reached by consensus or compromise. While the students interviewed seemed accepting of adults having the final say, this difference in perspective I thought might account for the students Mary spoke of in Phase II who were "pushing the limits." My hypothesis was that a small number of students felt this discrepancy and wanted, as it were, full bargaining rights. They were not as tolerant as the other students of adults having the final say. In the Phase III interview with students I tried to check this interpretation. The students, as indicated previously, thought that some teachers listened to them well, but some did not, and in particular not to certain individuals who were not as polite as they might be. This did not confirm my hypothesis, but it did indicate that adult-student relationships were a more contentious issue for some students than for others, and involved a complex dynamic dependent on both adult and student attitudes.

Mary also viewed the problems with adult-student relationships as dependent on the attitudes of both parties. She began to see a pattern emerge over the course of a year, with students beginning to push at the limits after they had been involved in the Student Council for some time. In the Phase I interview, which took place near the end of the school year, Mary said that although she felt much support from teachers regarding the implementation of a new kind of Student Council, when students started to "feel their power" difficulties had developed. Some students, for example, told their teachers when they wanted to work outside the classroom on various activities: "Ms. Green says we have to leave the room to take part in this." Mary had to reinforce, with both students and teachers, that "we want the kids to be participating in Student Council activities, but it is the teacher's decision, not the principal's or the students', as to whether they can be excused from class." She felt that when students started to feel their power some had a tendency to

take it too far, and some teachers bristled at this, and that could exacerbate the problem.

In the Phase II interview, in January, Mary said students had recently begun pushing at the limits again. She accepted that when students were given more power they would sometimes want to see how far this might go: "And while this may at times be very frustrating for teachers, I'm really pleased that most teachers seem committed to the process of negotiating through this rather than shutting it down." She thought an authoritarian show of power would make the situation worse, "because once students have had a taste of power they resent having it shut down. The challenge is to continue to negotiate that cocky energy." Mary believed teachers to be supportive of a pro-active style of discipline, and she was pleased that they were sharing the responsibility for dealing with students who were pushing the limits, not always expecting her, as the administrator, to take all the action. Still, sometimes this was a role she had to take. She gave the example of recently being off work because of a car accident and a teacher phoned her about students pushing the limits too far. The teacher had held a class meeting, feeling the situation related to the whole class, but there were four or five boys in particular with whom Mary was asked to speak. At the time of this interview she had still not met with these students, but told of her plans for this meeting:

For me, it will be a conversation with them, talking about what it's feeling like, for some of the teachers, and for me sometimes, when they get like that. It's a feeling of real disrespectfulness, and we're not comfortable with it. So if you want to ask questions and challenge, how do you do that in respectful ways?

When she dealt with problem behaviours as the principal, she was still committed to the process of teaching them how to assert their power in appropriate ways: "They need to know how their actions are negatively affecting others, but I continue to show respect for their right to question and challenge, and will problem-solve with them to find proper ways to do this."

In the Phase III interview Mary viewed this pushing at the edges as more continual, rather than being a stage which subsided after such

negotiating. She saw it as developmental, "and that we have to keep just being really consistent with letting kids know . . . the way in which they can challenge, and continue to remind them and refocus them on the importance of respectful interactions." Some students she saw as certainly growing in this regard, but it remained a concern. I expressed to Mary my perception of students in my interviews seeming very respectful of teachers in general, and respectful of them having the final say when students make suggestions, except for in the final interview, with Clinton obviously questioning authority. When I tried to have Mary suggest a percentage of students who were pushing at the edges, she first of all agreed with my perception that most students were respectful, but then put a different twist on this issue:

I don't think it's as simple as some kids have it and some kids don't. . . . I think it's in how they go about it. It's the how, not the what. It's not having the skills yet. . . . It's the lack of awareness. . . . When they start to feel this sense of power, they're so focused on themselves, so they're not able to have a sense of awareness of the bigger picture sometimes. So our role becomes one of *constantly* saying, "Well, let's look at this in the broader context of things."

She saw the School Store as a success story in this regard, with a compromise finally reached which was acceptable to students, teachers and parents. What Mary is saying, then, is that questioning authority is not the problem, its how to do that respectfully.

She acknowledged there were, however, "various comfort levels with how far teachers will go with student-direction." She believed, for instance, that some chaos is necessary when students are given more freedom, and if there is a bit of chaos it is a validation that students are doing things on their own volition. A problem she saw was that "different people have different tolerance levels for the chaos. And I happen to have a very high tolerance level for it." Mary said she believed it was healthy for the children to see these different tolerance levels, but at times she has felt

anxious. . . . I would feel teachers shutting down a bit, saying, "I can't deal with this any more. The kids are getting too cocky." But I recognize that too is part of the teachers' process. So I have to be in a place where I

can just really respect where they're coming from, and say, "Well, okay, what can we do?" and work through that with them.

During report card time in particular teachers were often exhausted and did not want to take the time and energy to negotiate through problems with students.

The time and energy it takes to build relationships, and continually problem-solve and negotiate with students was an issue the counsellor, David, brought up. Mary also said that while she enjoyed the connectedness she had with over half the students in the school, she did not always have the time and energy it took: "There are times I just have to say to kids, 'Look, I can't do this right now. I don't have the time.'" This relates back to the issue of efficiency, which was raised previously. Manley-Casimir (1980) argued that client-serving organizations like schools should not be preoccupied with efficiency, that the educational task is of prime concern. While I agree with Manley-Casimir, I have contended that if a system is too inefficient it is not sustainable, and that problems with efficiency can be approached, as Gutmann (1987) has argued most problems can be approached, through processes consistent with democratic values.

The data indicate that Mary has tried to democratically solve problems with efficiency. She related how she was problem-solving something with a group students:

I said to this group of young girls, "You know if you'd just come to me a little bit sooner we would have been able to resolve this problem without all--I think it caused some hard feelings." One of the girls said, "I'd like to give you some constructive criticism. . . . You haven't had the time to talk to us about it. We tried a couple of times. . . . We know you're busy, but we did want to talk to you."

Mary and these girls then devised a system whereby students could put a little yellow sticky on her office window (which looks into the main office), to indicate they needed to speak with her as soon as possible. This is also an example of students learning how to question and challenge appropriately, and indicates that some students are comfortable and proficient at initiating the problem-solving process with adults who will listen. Mary said:

It's a continual process of finding ways that meet everyone's needs. . . . There are certain times of year that are tougher, and you just want to shut things down for a bit. It's like living in a much more grey area, and schools tend to not be very grey. We try, but the institution sometimes has too many rules and regulations.

This grey area, to which David also referred, appears to be part of the process when one is committed to social transformation. Mary referred to a conversation with David when he felt he had lost the big picture, and felt "mired in the black and white," looking at children in terms of being "good and bad." Mary felt that if you maintained a big picture, you could understand everything as part of a process. This connects with what McLaren contends, that

pedagogy that links teaching and learning to the goal of educating students to take risks within ongoing relations of power . . . is one that is necessarily partial and incomplete, one that has no final answers. It is always in the making, part of an ongoing struggle for critical understanding, emancipatory forms of solidarity, and the reconstitution of democratic public life. (1995, pp. 56-57)

Giroux (1994) also maintains that schools should challenge the hegemonic social order, not uncritically reproduce it. Mary appears to be very much engaged in this challenge.

An extensive literature review on this theme of adult-student relationships has already been included in Chapter 4, and to a lesser extent in Chapter 3, thus I am incorporating here what pertains mainly to Mary's or an administrator's perspective. There is much overlap between what Mary and Peter, Rick and David have said; however, I have chosen to have the bulk of the literature review on this theme in Chapter 4.

While realizing the need for adult guidance, a strong trust in children's abilities is central to Mary. This is in accordance with Dewey (1916) and Mosher (1980) stressing faith in capacities of human nature and intelligence, and the power of pooled, cooperative experience. While some children may have far-out ideas, when a group must come to agreement more rational ideas tend to prevail. It would seem that an initial trust in children is a

prerequisite for an adult to implement democratic schooling, but perhaps those who do not have such trust could develop it by observing the results over time. As Mary said, some teachers seemed surprised at what the students were actually accomplishing.

A related issue that Mary raised was how it has been her experience as a mother that has most influenced her ideas about democratic student involvement and the adult role in this (discussed above in Philosophical Beliefs and Background). This connects with Kreisberg's (1992) assertion that feminist theory has had a major impact on transforming power relationships. While I would certainly not make any generalizations about women being more able than men to implement democratic schooling, Kreisberg postulates that it may be easier for women to identify with the feelings attendant to being in a relatively powerless position, such as students are. It may be the case that women, in general, find it easier than men to have power *with* rather than power *over* children, which seems to be a very key ingredient for successful democratic schooling.

A climate of openness stands out as an important factor for Mary, although adult guidance is necessary and adults may make some final decisions with which students do not agree. Giroux (1981), J. Goodman (1992), Gutmann (1987), Kreisberg (1992), and Noddings (1984) all have stressed the importance of open, mutually respectful relationships between adults and children while maintaining adult authority. Elementary schools could not function without some kind of discipline or social control. J. Goodman distinguishes between three kinds: (a) bureaucratic control, which emphasizes the need for adult-asserted rules and systematic punishments for non-complying students; (b) technical control, in which students are isolated from one another to reduce interaction and potential discipline problems, e.g., desks in rows or individualized preprogrammed instructional systems; and (c) personal control, in which there is a dialectical relationship between students and teachers, and a willingness on the part of adults to listen to students involved in anti-social activities, e.g., finding out what is making a child angry or frustrated. J. Goodman contends that bureaucratic and technical control are inherently anti-democratic because students have no voice in

making these policies. Personal control is encouraged in a connectionist power structure. At Harmony School, which J. Goodman studied, this led to each person and incident being responded to as a unique case, as each student has special problems and capabilities, and it was felt that uniform, standard rules and punishments were thus not really fair. The purpose of discipline from a connectionist power structure perspective, J. Goodman stresses, is not to ensure compliance, but to seize opportunities to teach children to be responsible for themselves and their fellow human beings. Teachers, seeking to increase awareness of children's social and anti-social behaviour and its impact on others, thus affirmed students for taking responsibility, and pointed out growth in that direction. Students were also able to express themselves regarding discipline matters.

J. Goodman (1992) connects discipline from a connectionist perspective with the ethic of caring of which Noddings (1984) has written. There is concern for disciplining in ways that promote feelings of mutual affection, respect and comfort. Students need to feel affirmed and cared for at the same time that their behaviour is being evaluated and restricted. This is shown by allowing students a voice, a chance to express themselves regarding the matter, but the adult still has great power and responsibility in this situation. Besides engaging the student in dialogue, the teacher also provides a model:

To support her students as ones-caring, she must show them herself as one-caring. Hence she is not content to enforce rules . . . but she continually refers the rules to their ground in caring. . . . What matters is the student . . . and how he will approach ethical problems as a result of his relation to her. Will he refer his ethical decisions to an ethic of caring or to rules and the likelihood of apprehension and punishment? . . . A teacher cannot "talk" this ethic. She must live it, and that implies establishing a relation with the student. (Noddings, 1984, p. 178)

Giroux takes the importance of such dialogue to a broader political level. He contends that when students must look at issues from more than one perspective it helps them learn that reality and truth can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and thus helps them become critical democratic citizens, not

so apt to be oppressed or to oppress others. He argues that dialogue and supportive interaction represent crucial vehicles for the development of a dialectical pedagogy . . . [which] will make it easier for teachers to enable students to understand the meaning of frame of reference. By looking at issues from a variety of perspectives, students can learn something about the interpretive screens that people use in constituting and creating reality . . . [which] tells us that our most basic thought processes and our very image of reality are neither natural, inevitable, or fixed, but merely the product of the particular society in which we live. (1981, p. 124)

One of the results of engagement in open, respectful relationships, Kreisberg (1992) contends, is a mutual, simultaneous increase in power. In this kind of relational context rigid boundaries between self and other are broken down and there is an increasing awareness and knowledge of self and others. Through this interpersonal connectedness a dynamic, creative process develops, with an energy, power and momentum that goes beyond the individual, and yet is available to each individual. Personal limitations are diminished when one can draw on the resources available from many minds working together, especially when the skills of decision-making and problem solving have been developed through experience.

Having the respect of students is a strong desire of most administrators and teachers. Another advantage of entering into the relationship model of *power with*, Kreisberg (1992) maintains, is that when each member is seen as a basic equal with other members of the group, the power of the individual comes not from commanding and coercing, but from making suggestions and from the willingness of others to listen to one's ideas. Thus respect is not simply for one's role as an authority figure, but for one's unique person, and this kind of respect is deeper and more enduring.

Mary expressed some anxiety regarding adults not always responding to student democratically, and some teachers not being interested in democratizing their classrooms, yet on the whole she indicated that teachers were listening to students and she was respectful of teachers' different approaches to education. Kreisberg (1992) cautions that implementation of a

shared decision-making model cannot be compelled, as this is antithetical to the spirit of *power with*. Instead, he contends, through an administrator engaging teachers in decision-making dialogue, mechanisms of human encounter are experienced, activating an openness to fellow humans. Influence between an administrator and teachers is thus reciprocal and circular rather than linearly causal, and through such lived experience *power with* is cultivated and can emerge and grow. Teacher and student empowerment are thus intertwined.

Principal-Teacher Relationships

The principal-teacher relationship can be seen as a model for adult-student and student-student relationships. Mary, indeed, engages teachers in decision-making and endeavors to empower teachers. How has she done this in respect to democratic student involvement? How does she view her relationships with teachers affecting and being affected by student leadership? What does the literature say about principals and teachers sharing power?

As discussed previously, decisions regarding the form and function of the Student Council were collaborative decisions. Peter expressed concern regarding the ineffectiveness of the previous Student Council and his desire to not continue to be involved with it. Mary said teachers seemed quite happy to hand the responsibility of the Student Council over to her. Still, she did not make major changes to its traditional practice of teacher selection of members, showing much respect for teachers in this regard.

While Mary had the full responsibility for the Student Council meetings the first year, teacher involvement in it continued to grow. A principal-teacher committee was formed towards the end of the first year to evaluate it and suggest improvements. It was through this mechanism that Mary expressed her need for help, and as a result more teachers became involved. She seemed very cognizant that the implementation of student involvement would not succeed as a "top down" decision by administration, which would indeed be antithetical to the spirit of democratic schooling. As difficulties emerged, teachers were involved in on-going problem-solving,

such that student rights were not at the expense of teacher rights. As discussed above, Kreisberg (1992) stressed how student and teacher empowerment are intertwined. This also reflects Dewey's (1916) contention that democracy must be continually rediscovered and reinvented through each group of people trying to be democratic, through living the experience of *being* democratic. He maintained that democratic schooling is more than a form of governance, it is a mode of associated living. As Mary realized, imposing her preconceived notions of an elected, representative Student Council would have been counter-productive. It was through shared decision-making that such an exciting form of participatory student leadership developed.

Principal-teacher relationships develop, of course, over time. At the time of the Phase II interview, when she had been at the school a year and a half, Mary expressed deep appreciation of her relationships with teachers. She said that her main satisfaction with the Leadership Program was the collegial relationship she had with Janice and Rick as co-sponsors, and how she felt the staff as a whole really valued what they were doing. She compared that to the previous year:

When kids take over it can become a little chaotic, and I felt more vulnerable, that people would think I couldn't keep control. Now people seem to trust that while things may get a bit chaotic, it is always pulled back in. And then it gets a bit chaotic again and then we pull it in, so they trust that there's a process, that it's not going to get chaotic and all hell's going to break loose.

As an example of her developing relationship with the staff, she told of a Professional Development Day where they were discussing how about 5% of the children had very strong needs, "really pushing us against the wall with some of their behaviours," and no matter what the school did, nothing seemed to work. What Mary really appreciated about that discussion was how the teachers saw it as a shared responsibility to support these students, and did not just look to her, as the administrator, to do something about it. The teachers also expressed at that time their support of the Leadership Program as a really positive influence in the school, that it was a pro-active style of discipline. This made her feel that "people have bought into this really

strongly now." Being a more ambiguous style of dealing with students, however, with no clearly set rules to go by, has meant that communication must really strong, open and honest. Mary credited the Leadership Program as being a catalyst for this.

In the Phase III interview Mary saw that another aspect of her role in this ambiguous style of dealing with students was to help maintain a view of the big picture for teachers. In June she was very busy with staff preparations for following year and had less time to communicate informally. She and the counsellor, David, usually talked a couple of times a day, and this had not happened in quite some time. When they finally had time, Mary related how he told her that

"the last couple of weeks of May and the month of June have been really tough months for me, because I've been starting to get into the negative stuff with a lot of the kids." And he said, "That's because you and I haven't been talking." And he said, "It's really important that you and I are always talking because what it does is keep me in the big picture." He said, "Because if you and I aren't talking then I just get mired into the kids are being good or they're being bad."

This emphasized for Mary how powerful her role was "in keeping people okay with the ambiguity of it all." This was reinforced in her conversation toward the end of the year with another Grade 6/7 teacher who was having difficulty finding "her place" and "her line" when students were presenting difficult behaviours. She told Mary she agreed with her philosophically but was struggling with the implications of it, and needed more time to talk with Mary about this. Mary said, "I hear that all the time from people . . . that my role really is to help keep people in the big picture."

With regard to her collegial relationship with Janice and Rick as co-sponsors, she saw both the similarities and differences in their approaches as causing the Leadership Program to be stronger. Mary felt they "all brought real respect, for each other and for kids, and a real belief in kids doing things on their own, as long as they've got the proper structure to get them there." She felt Janice sometimes would like more of that structure, and she viewed this difference as creating a balance:

Sometimes I need to be more structured in my approach, and sometimes Janice needs to let go a little bit. So between the two of us it works really well, because we really respect each other and really work well together.

Mary and Rick team-taught a lot last year and she felt their styles were quite similar, "both a bit loose." Janice, she felt, was "much more organized, thinking through things in advance," and Mary felt her own organizational style was "more organic and spontaneous." She said she found it much easier this second year, being able to rely on Janice to think of things that she might not.

Having more people's perceptions also helped give balance to her own feelings. She felt she would sometimes focus on the negative, thinking things were not working very well, that the students were pushing too hard, and something needed changing. She was very appreciative of Rick saying things like, "Yeah, so there's 10 percent of the kids that are driving us nuts, and there's 90 percent of the kids who are doing wonderful stuff. Get a grip!" Sometimes such a jolt was necessary to help her see the big picture.

Mary believed that the more people who became involved in the Leadership Program, the more ownership everyone was taking. At her previous school it was nearly always exclusively her doing things with the Student Council: "Other teachers bought in at certain levels, but I was the person who drove it." She felt really good that at this school it had opened up to two other teachers working alongside her, and she foresaw opening it up to even more the following year.

Another facet of the relationship between Mary and the staff was the increased sharing of responsibilities in other areas. Mary team-taught with many teachers and this helped build their relationships. She felt that in turn for her involvement in classrooms, teachers were sharing more responsibility for dealing with students' problem behaviours, and doing so in a manner more consistent with her democratic views of dealing with students. She also felt that she was learning to rely on others more, curbing her tendency to not feel obligated to shoulder all the responsibilities herself. This is consistent with Kreisberg's (1992) view of the influence between an administrator and

teachers being reciprocal rather than linearly causal. It also connects with the findings of Keedy and Finch (1994), that as a principal gives up power to teachers, teachers make more decisions and are therefore willing to be responsible for the consequences. Thus the principal is freed to become more facilitative, and in this role can actually become more influential.

I wish to discuss in more detail here Keedy and Finch's (1994) study of a principal and teachers learning to share power with each other, as this has emerged as a key issue in my study. Keedy and Finch stress the need for rethinking the use of power and contend that this is a pivotal issue for school reform in the 1990s. Theirs was a single case study of a high school, with data collected through interviews with the principal and ten teachers, and from a norms checklist survey which 91% of the staff returned. They examined the process of sharing power through four stages: (a) the initial use of unilateral power legally conferred on principals; (b) the principal's vision for involving teachers in redesigning their workplace, and the initial implementation of teacher involvement, which was a series of meetings and a team-building workshop, that resulted in consensus regarding a structure for shared governance; (c) a chronology of critical incidents which exemplified the institutionalization of shared governance, examining how these incidents were negotiated; and (d) the emergence of instructionally-oriented and teacher-owned task forces, and agreement as to what remained within the principal's administrative province.

My own case study has identified and followed roughly these same processes, although in a combination of both principal-teacher and adult-student relationships: (a) the principal initially deciding to implement and be responsible for the Student Council as this was a reflection of her strengths and values; (b) the involvement of teachers and students in deciding its structure; (c) an examination of critical incidents and how they were negotiated within the shared power structure (e.g., Sugar High Day and the School Store); and (d) the emergence of adult and student committees and agreement as to areas of responsibility. The process of increasing shared decision-making thus appears to follow a similar progression in both adult-adult and adult-student relationships, and the findings from studies focusing

on one can perhaps be helpful in informing the other.

While Keedy and Finch's (1994) findings focused on principal-teacher relationships, I believe they add grounded theory pertinent to democratic schooling in general. A critical incident at the school they studied showed the need for "one person-one vote" for authentic democratic power-sharing, and that if the person relinquishing power does not accept a group decision which he or she votes against, the entire shared governance structure is jeopardized. In certain domains, however, it was agreed that unilateral power was appropriate and expedient. This complements the findings in my case study, with the principal accepting the teachers' and students' desire to not have elected representatives on the Student Council even though this was what she originally wanted. There were also certain decisions the students made which the principal or teachers vetoed and the students accepted this as an appropriate use of adult authority.

A crucial factor identified by Keedy and Finch (1994) was the principal's perspective of himself as dependent on teachers' expertise and influence. Keedy and Finch thus call for the recruitment and training of principals who understand that schools' ultimate instructional improvement depends on sharing power with teachers, who will implement decisions. Still, I believe they stop short of seeing that it is students who, as the beneficiaries of such decisions, need to also be involved for genuinely effective implementation.

Effects on Attitudes and School Climate

Mary set out from the beginning with the Student Council to affect attitudes towards school and the school climate. How did she proceed? How successful does she feel she has been?

Implementing a Student Council was a high priority for her in her first year as principal of Hilltop, she said in the Phase I interview, because her passionate feeling for student involvement

begins to set a tone for the whole school. People come in the school and they hear kids doing the announcements, and they see kids doing the assemblies, and they see kids running activities. It does, I think, start to create a real tone and a real feeling in the school. My office is designed

for kids to come in, and it's very very open, and kids are in and out all the time. It sets a real tone and I think kids feel really good about being here, and they do feel heard . . . and they know they're going to be responded to really fairly and respectfully.

One of the first major satisfactions Mary felt was increased student enthusiasm for the Student Council. Previously, with a Student Council and a Sports Council, she said that "in kids' terms, the cool kids were on the Sports Council and the geeks were on the Student Council." She insisted that this division be eliminated, so the Student Council would be responsible for all activities involving students. Originally, she said, there was some resistance on the part of some students, but Mary told them she wanted to try another way, and that she felt strongly about that.

After six months, Mary said she was impressed with how competent the students were at planning, and thought teachers were becoming increasingly impressed with the skills the students were developing. Although it was difficult to identify the actual causes, she felt the school was encountering few typical problems with Grade 7s. She thought they still felt connected to the school, whereas usually by that time many would already be starting to "leave," on the brink of entering high school. Half way through the second year, again Mary felt that the attitudes of Grade 7s were especially impacted:

There's just marvelous kinds of things that are going on in the school . . . and it really keeps our Grade 7s way more focused, and becomes I think a real opportunity for them to get really involved, and therefore they really feel connected.

After a year and a half Mary considered that the main effect that the Student Council had on people's attitudes in general in the school was that the kids really feel like they will be heard. They really feel that people will take the time to talk things through with them, and therefore I think they feel a lot of ownership for the kinds of things that are going on in the school.

Mary also credited the counsellor, David: "Although he's not directly involved with Leadership he's very involved with many of the kids . . . and

he and I work very closely in supporting the school climate, which is one where we problem-solve things through with kids." The Peer Mediation Program, she thought, was instrumental in establishing this climate. She felt she and David both were "really *teaching* kids when there is a problem, not just reacting to the problem." She realized that a small percentage of children did not respond to this or to any strategy, but what she noticed with the staff was "an openness to really creative options for kids who are struggling." She gave an example of two students who "could not handle the intermediate environment," because of social immaturity, and the solution was to have them do individual study part-time and help out in primary classrooms part-time, which was where they were able to learn social skills in a less threatening environment. She said the parents and teachers of these two students were very supportive. What she saw overall was "an openness in a way that I haven't seen before." She thought the Leadership Program had a strong impact on this "because it isn't just about leadership, it's about listening to kids . . . and coming alongside with kids."

By the end of two years, Mary saw a significant shift in that teachers were wanting more knowledge and skills to deal with children in a more open manner. She said that at a recent Professional Day the importance of developing children's "emotional intelligence" was brought up:

What I loved about what happened is we have really tried to work in the school with being more open and flexible and not as rule driven. When things start to get a bit shaky with that, in the sense that kids start pushing edges a bit, it would be easy to shut it all down, and yet I don't get the sense from anybody that that's what they want to do. I don't hear people saying, "We need to have more rules." I hear people saying, "We need to find ways to help kids learn the skills of more respectful interactions." . . . So as a staff we're going to start looking at the whole area of emotional and social and moral intelligence next year.

By the end of two years Mary also saw a significant shift in student attitudes towards power, that it was not simply something they had gained, but it necessitated a process of sharing it with others. An example of this again

involved the School Store. Some of the Grade 6 students had written a letter to the Student Council complaining that the School Store was not very good because it did not have junk food. A group of students from the Student Council went to that Grade 6 class and Mary said the teacher reported to her that

it was incredible that they started to talk about compromise. They said, "We agreed with you and we came in the same way, but we had to listen to other people's point of view and we came up with a compromise. And so you have to respect that."

The Leadership Program also strongly affected Mary's own attitude towards school, in that it helped her build relationships with many students:

For me, it is what is most nurturing about the job. I think one of the most important things is it's keeping me in the job. If I had to move into a more traditional style of a disciplinarian I would not be in the principal's role.

She said the Leadership Program gave her the opportunity to really make a connection with children, and she felt she had a relationship with well over 200 of the 450 students, many of these through Writers' Workshop, where she could find out what they were thinking about. She felt she was "a very relationship-oriented person. This is the realm I like to work in." For example, in dealing with students displaying "a cocky attitude" she was confident she would be successful because she had a relationship with them and would "not have to move into an adversarial mode."

Mary also realized that being involved in student leadership was very demanding on her, and was causing her to reevaluate how she operated:

Certainly if you talked to people on staff they would say that I do way too much, and that they're worried I'm going to burn out. . . . It's a Catch 22 for me, because if I don't do that I won't stay in the job; that's the nurturing part of the job for me. . . . So I need to do some work on how to not take on the responsibility for all of that myself.

When she was transferred to this school the superintendent expressed worry that she would burn herself out at such as a large school

because he knew how hands-on I was. But at some levels what it's done

is it's forced me--because I love the job, and I don't want to burn myself out. So I recognize it, but every once in a while I need a jolt . . . like the car accident, to say, "Okay, Mary, slow down. You can't do it all." . . . In a smaller school I could do it all; and I didn't want to impose on other people. . . . I did tend to take it all on. This is forcing me not to, to let go a bit, and I think that's really important.

An interesting dynamic that Mary noted was how more adults becoming involved in the Leadership Program was also influencing her role. She began with full responsibility for all the details, and now more and more people were sharing those responsibilities, but were looking to her now to help them maintain a view of the big picture. At her previous school she had remained on her own with the Student Council, but because Hilltop was a much larger school she was compelled to involve more people. She also felt that with more people involved it would have the power to continue, and that democratic student involvement was indeed becoming more embedded in the school culture.

What stands out for me here is how the principal set out originally with the Student Council to have an impact on the school climate. Not only has she accomplished this, but the existing nature of the school and the multi-directionality which democratic involvement has since taken, have also impacted greatly on her. Even though she was open and collaborative, she still tended to take on too much responsibility herself. She was beginning to have a profound change in style. This leads me into taking a closer look at the special role an administrator plays in implementing and maintaining a major change such as democratic involvement.

The Role of Administrator

"For your first year as principal in a school, don't make any changes. Just listen and learn about what is already happening." These words of advice have been said to me by principals a number of times, and I have assumed them to embody wisdom that comes of experience. How great my surprise, therefore, to find that Mary had initiated major changes in her first year at

this school. I wondered: Was this folly? Did she have a magic touch? What special qualities might a principal possess such that change initiatives are successful? What are the pitfalls of principal-initiated change?

In this section I will first look at data relating specifically to this theme, reinforcing the importance of the role of administrator. The emphasis in this section will be to then connect Mary's practices to some of the theory and research regarding effective and extraordinary leadership, specifically how principals can successfully implement change. What I hope will emerge is a deeper understanding of *how* Mary has worked the apparent magic that she has. Basically, I see that she has used two strategies: modeling and collaboration.

Setting a distinctive tone for the school was very important for Mary. She wanted people to know what she stood for, to affect the tone of the school, to reflect values that were important to her. The Student Council was a high priority in her first year, Mary said, because "it was a positive way to focus my energy in a new situation, and helped people get a sense of who I was." Her actual involvement in the Student Council was initiated by her, as she told the teachers she wanted to become involved in their student leadership program. Peter told her they had a Student Council but were not happy with it. Mary said:

If he had said they had a model that they loved, I would have said, "Okay, I'd like to get involved. How can I get involved?" But because he said "We're really not happy with it, and we're kind of looking for some different things . . . but I really don't think I can take it on and give it the time because of my classroom," then I said, "Why don't I take it on to start?"

Mary showed her commitment to democratic involvement through taking on a high level of responsibility for it. She modeled her vision. A very important point, Mary stressed in the Phase I interview, was that "when the principal is involved with the Student Council, it sends a strong message as to its legitimacy." She also felt she had the time to devote to it, as she could pull students out of class. In the Phase II interview she saw that her modeling played a key role: "Leadership has been a real catalyst for people to see the way

in which I work with kids." By the Phase III interview she was very cognizant of her impact,

because my style is fairly different than the traditional mode, in particular in my relationship with kids. That does have just huge impact, on the whole school, when kids all of a sudden see the person who is officially in the position of power being so open. But it also can shake up many teachers, both positively and negatively.

Mary also saw other ways she was empowering student voice, besides the Leadership Program, for example, her involvement in various activities in many classrooms. What stands out as important here is that a Leadership Program or Student Council is certainly not the only way to support and empower student voice. A committed administrator with a vision will do this in many ways and at many levels.

By the time of the Phase III interview I had interpreted previous data from the teachers, and saw a pathway of influence from Mary to the teachers via the students. Both teachers, as discussed in Chapter 4, indicated that the students played a leadership role in bringing more democratic practices to the classroom, that once students had learned some of the necessary skills the teachers were more open to giving them more decision-making power in the classroom. When I asked Mary for her view on this pathway she agreed with my interpretation, and added that it was not without dangers:

I think that my hands-on way of working with kids really influences kids. The dilemma that I realize I have to watch for is I have to be careful not to set up . . . a good-guy/bad-guy [situation]. I know my strength is being very open with kids, and sometimes they could then see the teacher as the bad-guy.

This has necessitated open communication with teachers, and when this tension has become apparent it has been discussed and resolved. Mary also sees that this pathway of influence from her to the students to the teachers happens not just through the Leadership Program, but in a number of other ways, including Writers' Workshop which is "all about kids talking and telling their stories, so in doing that I'm listening to them." She believed, therefore, that "kids start to push the teachers a bit," and she felt sometimes

teachers had difficulty dealing with that and sometimes they were inspired by it. She connected this with the staff focus the next year on emotional intelligence:

Because it's not just the emotional intelligence of kids that we're trying to nurture, it's the emotional development of ourselves. I think that as we become more in touch and in tune with our own feelings and thoughts and interactions, then I think we become more confident, and then can risk the letting go a bit of some of the control.

She stressed that learning how to negotiate was critical in this, "because I think otherwise people assume that the kids just get their way, which isn't the way at all. It's a very negotiated process, but it's *how* to do that." It appears that teachers are now coming forth with their desire to gain more knowledge and skills in this regard.

Having the perspective of being involved with a Student Council in two schools, Mary came to realize how crucial the role of principal was in supporting democratic student involvement at the school level, but also the necessity for not doing it alone. When she left her previous school, the principal who replaced her was not as passionate about student leadership as she had been, "coming from a more kids-should-be-in-their-place position." A few teachers who believed strongly in democratic student involvement continued it in their own classrooms, but it no longer existed at the school level, "because there were enough people who were kind of on the edge with it anyway." She said this was "really tragic" for her, as she felt it was the students who lost. She said she would get phone-calls from children urging her to come back to that school, saying, "We're not listened to anymore." As one of these students told her: "The new principal doesn't listen to kids and all the teachers are falling into line with her." Mary felt that the teachers and parents were adjusting to the change, but "when kids have had somebody in the role of principal who really listens, then it becomes really hard for them to not have that." She believed if it was not supported by the administrator democratic student involvement would continue "only behind closed doors, in classrooms of teachers who believe strongly in empowering student voice. It will disappear in the classrooms of teachers perhaps trying it but not

strongly committed, and it will disappear at the school level."

Ironically, then, an administrator who does not obtain wide-spread support and teacher-involvement could be seen as letting students down when leaving the school. Hilltop is a larger school, and she saw that because of the sheer size of it, I'm having to involve more people. And therefore, I think the more people that are involved at the school level, doing Leadership at the school level, not just in their classrooms, then I think that it will have the power to continue.

One of my own concerns has been that principal-initiated programs do not always receive teacher support, and in my interviews I often asked, in numerous ways, about the degree of teacher support, attempting to find if there was opposition to the Leadership Program. I found minimal. Mary always expressed confidence that democratic student involvement was supported by most teachers, or by all teachers in at least some ways, even if not implemented in their classrooms. The data from the teachers and counsellor whom I interviewed support this view. Rick, for instance, referred to the Leadership Program as "Mary's ball," but said "she gets a great deal of support from the staff." He saw teacher reaction as "99% positive." Peter said he thought Mary had made the Student Council much more effective than when he was sponsor. Seeing the change in action, modeled by the principal, was also influential on his classroom practice, which became more in accordance with what she was modeling and more in accordance with what he really desired. David offered his long-term perspective, from being at the school many years, that the school climate had been very positively affected.

The data also indicate that Mary gained this support through collaborating with the staff from the very beginning. Her focus on the Student Council was a specific change they perceived as worthwhile, and she involved them in deciding how to make the changes. Although she initially took on the main responsibility for implementation herself, through regular staff meetings, and a committee specifically looking at this change, staff were continually kept involved and sharing the responsibility. In the second year two more teachers shared the actual responsibility of the Leadership Program. By the end of the second year it was apparent that teachers were wanting

more knowledge and skills so that they could support democratic student involvement. Mary saw this happening

not with everyone, but with enough of a critical mass. . . . Now I see more and more people getting involved. . . . It's starting to permeate everything we're doing more. That's why I got quite excited by the staff commitment--and it came from them--the ability to really focus on [teaching students to interact more respectfully]. . . . One of the primary teachers said, "We have to be careful about saying we want kids to learn respect, because that has tones of power involved in it. I want the kids to respect me, but respect is a two-way street."

Another way of looking at modeling and collaboration is that through collaborating with staff, Mary is modeling democratic interactions. An example she gave was regarding the up-coming two day retreat. One Grade 7 teacher has many evening commitments and felt she could not participate in an overnight retreat. Mary was highly respectful of her needs, and insisted

we need to find a way where we can accomplish what it is we want to do in a way that meets everyone's needs. So we all came together [the teachers involved], and we just had the most highly respectful discussion about this as a group, and really heard everybody's point of view, and came to the idea that we would go with two days, but we wouldn't go overnight. . . . For me that was a real example of learning the skills, of how to then apply that work with kids. So it's very interwoven.

To summarize this change-implementation process, then, it is apparent that Mary has affected the school climate or culture, and the mechanisms by which she has done this are modeling and collaboration. The main areas I will look to the literature for further understanding, then, are: principal leadership affecting school culture; collaboration; and modeling.

Literature Review of Effective Principal-Initiated Change:
Culture, Collaboration and Modeling

Conceptualizing the Connections Between Culture, Collaboration and Modeling

Before looking at these three components separately I will discuss how they connect. The school culture, first of all, is *what* a principal is wanting to affect, and collaboration and modeling are *how* this change can be brought about. A principal with a vision of what the school's culture could be needs to use effective strategies to actualize this vision. Truly effective strategies, however, need to exemplify the culture envisioned, and thus these components are inextricably intertwined.

Blase (1993) has conceptualized connections between leadership affecting school culture, collaboration and modeling. He bases this on a qualitative study examining the perspectives of 1,200 teachers regarding what they saw as the everyday strategies school principals used to influence them. The data strongly suggest that principals who are seen as open and effective pursue goals and rely primarily on strategies which are consistent with teachers' professional norms and values. For instance, one of the frequently cited goals of principals pertained to *school climate*, which was seen by teachers as congruent with their professional norms and values. Blase has coined the term *normative-instrumental leadership* to capture the overall political orientation of open and effective principals toward teachers, as suggested by the data. In this orientation "control of teachers is central and such control is enacted primarily through a process of exchange" (p. 149). This concept of leadership thus consists of both a control orientation (strategies accounting for 81% of the total data) and an empowerment orientation (19% of the total data). One of the main positive strategies identified with control-orientation was modeling. Although modeling is indirect as opposed to direct control, it was nonetheless considered a strategy for gaining compliance. Empowerment orientation included one major strategy: collaborative involvement in decision-making. Drawing on the work of Burns (1978)

regarding transactional and transformational leadership, Blase states that:

Conceptually, most of the data fall between the idea of transactional leadership, in which exchanges serve the "separate" interests of leaders and followers, and the idea of transformational leadership, in which actions transform teachers into leaders who possess decisional authority and responsibility. (Blase, 1993, pp. 157-158)

Blase (1993) concludes that although recent scholars of educational administration have recognized the limitations of using direct forms of control because of potential resistance, control itself has not been rejected as the hegemonic orientation. Control through more subtle cultural means appears to be increasing in prominence and according to this study is judged favourably by teachers.

What emerges then is the complexity of the interplay between control and empowerment orientations. As Leithwood (1992) writes, "While most schools rely on both top-down and facilitative forms of power, finding the right balance is the problem" (p. 9). Fullan (1991) also writes about principal leadership not being straightforward, but he nonetheless concludes that "the principal is central, especially to changes in the culture of the school" (p. 145). He sees this as involving the articulation of a vision, eliciting shared ownership, and overtly acting to behaviourally demonstrate firmly held values.

The strategies of collaboration and modeling can then be seen as a two-pronged approach to change. Through modeling a principal demonstrates the personal meaning of his or her vision. Through collaboration this is modified and thus becomes the group's culture more than just the principal's vision. I turn now to look at each of these three areas of culture, collaboration and modeling in more depth.

Principal Leadership Affecting School Culture

Definition of culture. I am defining school culture here as a reflection of the shared norms, values, morals, beliefs, and commitments of school members, and considering it synonymous with school climate. I realize there

is some disagreement as to the definition of climate and culture. Sergiovanni (1991) writes that:

What the school stands for and believes about education, organization, and human relationships; what it seeks to accomplish; its essential elements and features; and the image it seeks to project are the deep-rooted defining characteristics shaping the substance of its culture. (p. 218)

Sergiovanni distinguishes climate from culture in that school climate is more interpersonal in tone and substance, and is more indicative of organizational style than content and substance. Coleman and LaRocque (1990) prefer the term *ethos* to culture; however, *ethos* pertains mainly to educators' professional norms and values. Since the principal of the school in my case study was attempting to affect students' norms and commitments as well as teachers', and since the organizational literature to which I am mainly referring uses the term culture, I have chosen to use this as a more inclusive term. Thus I am defining culture here to encompass both *ethos* and climate.

Culture as a legitimate focus for principal initiated change. How is principal leadership important in changes affecting school culture? What have leadership theorists written about the principal's role in initiating change? It appears that not only does the comprehensive nature of school culture mean that principal leadership is necessary to coordinate improvement measures, but that changes that do not successfully affect school culture are only superficial or temporary changes.

In his earlier writing, humanist leadership theorist Thomas Sergiovanni made the basic assumption that bringing about change may be the goal but not the primary task of principals. He maintained that forcing changes endangered the more important goal of improving the human potential of the school, and further, that "forced changes only rarely result in a lasting change in teacher behavior or in the operation of the school" (Sergiovanni & Elliott, 1975, p. 120). He saw the principal's role of one of *change environmentalist* and helper, with this role requiring that "the principal give attention to the development of a school climate that

encourages and supports change and to the development of an interpersonal context which frees, encourages, and helps people to experiment with change" (p. 120). This implied both free choice for teachers and that "the hopes and aspirations of the principal will not always be realized. But, when free choice does result in change, one can be sure that the change is genuine as opposed to a superficial drama" (p. 120). Sergiovanni and Elliott also distinguished between acceptance and internalization of change: "When a change is internalized, it becomes incorporated into a person's attitude and value system as well as into his repertoire of behavior" (p. 128). What I wish to stress here is the emphasis on genuine change, meaning that the change becomes part of the culture. The principal's role in envisioning goals, however, was down-played in these earlier writings, and change seemed each individual teacher's prerogative.

In subsequent work, Sergiovanni (1984) attached more importance to the leadership role, and claimed that:

Leadership acts are expressions of culture. Leadership as cultural expression seeks to build unity and order within an organization by giving attention to purposes, historical and philosophical tradition, and ideals and norms which define the way of life within the organization and which provide the bases for socializing members and obtaining their *compliance* [emphasis added]. Developing and nurturing organizational value patterns and norms represent a response to felt needs of individuals and groups for order, stability, and meaning. (pp. 106-107)

In a pendulum-like swing, the principal's role was now to bring more unity and common purpose to schools, rather than having teachers independently pursuing change if they so chose. There is a basic shift in values here, from individual choice being of prime importance, to valuing what the school as a whole can achieve, even, as indicated by the word "compliance," to the point of forgoing individual choice.

More recently, Fullan (1991) has maintained that culture should be the focus of principal-initiated change, and that in any change in school culture the principal's role is key. He claims that the role of the principal calls for

implementing innovations at the school level rather than providing instructional leadership at the classroom level. He emphasizes that

serious reform . . . is not implementing single innovations. It is changing the culture and structure of the school. Once that is said, it should be self-evident that the principal as head of the organization is crucial. As long as we have schools and principals, if the principal does not lead changes in the culture of the school, or if he or she leaves it to others, it normally will not get done. (p. 169)

The role of the principal here is key; however, the principal as a leader affecting culture necessitates working effectively with others, to avoid resistance. If compliance is being sought, it seems likely that it will be met with at least some resistance. How, then, does a school reach an authentic common purpose?

Rosenholtz (1989) pointed to the centrality of the principal in working with teachers to shape the school as a workplace that reflects shared goals and common ideals:

The now automatic belief in the "great person" theory of leadership as the sole requirement to building a professional culture invites rethinking. Great principals do not pluck their acumen and resourcefulness straight out of the air. In our data, successful schools weren't led by philosopher kings with supreme character and unerring method, but by the steady accumulation of common wisdom and hope distilled from vibrant, shared experience both with teacher leaders in schools and colleagues district wide. (p. 219)

Through working closely with a number of schools on collaborative action research, Sagor (1992) has identified a trend in three schools where teachers and students reported a culture conducive to school success. Principals in these schools varied considerably in their leadership styles, but all, he claimed, had "a *transformational* [emphasis added] effect on the professionals who work within the shadow of their leadership" (p. 18) and the teachers did not feel manipulated into adopting these principals' perspectives. Sagor concludes that the principal plays the major role in creating common understandings of the culture, in part through meetings

and symbolic actions, but "the most significant change in work culture is accomplished in one-to-one interactions" (p. 18).

Transactional and transformational leadership for cultural change. Having made several references to Burns' theory of transformational leadership, a closer look at what is meant by this is necessary. This is important, I believe, in conceptualizing the ways in which the *what* of culture and the *how* of collaboration and modeling are inextricably linked. It appears that transformational leadership is conducive to authentic change in school culture, through using strategies consistent with the vision.

In 1978 George MacGregor Burns proposed a theory of transformational leadership that has been highly influential on the way leadership practice is now understood. Burns first of all defined leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations--the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations--of both leaders and followers [emphasis in original]. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. (1978, p. 19)

He identified two broad kinds of leadership, *transactional* and *transformative*, which exemplify different relationships between leaders and followers. Transactional leadership "occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things" (p. 19). Each party recognizes the power resources and attitudes of the other, and their purposes are related or negotiated within a bargaining process. The relationship is limited, however, as independent short-term objectives are bartered for, with no enduring vision or objective binding them together in a "mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose" (p. 20). In contrast, transformational leadership "occurs when one or more persons *engage* [emphasis in original] with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Although their initial purposes may be separate, they become fused, with leader and follower providing mutual support for each other in pursuit of this higher common purpose. Transformational leadership is thus *moral* in

that it raises the level of human conduct and aspirations of both leader and follower, and has a transforming effect on both. Burns stresses, however, that the leader takes the initiative in making the leader-led connections; it is the leader who creates the links that allow communication and exchange to take place. . . . Leaders continue to take the major part in maintaining and effectuating the relationship with followers and will have the major role in ultimately carrying out the combined purpose of leaders and followers. (p. 20)

Burns sees change generated through transformational leadership as "*real change* [emphasis in original]--that is, a transformation to a marked degree in the attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure our daily lives" (p. 414). Such change has no final stage, in that "real change means the creation of new conditions that will generate their own changes in motivations, new goals, and continuing change" (p. 441). Thus through transformational leadership change embeds itself in the culture.

Burns' concept of transactional and transformational leadership has been highly influential on subsequent leadership theory. Bennis (1984) relates transformative leadership and culture in maintaining that

it is the ability of the leader to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings, and inspires human intent that is the source of power. Within transformative leadership, therefore, it is vision, purposes, beliefs, and other aspects of organizational culture that are of prime importance. (p. 70)

Sergiovanni also incorporated Burns' work into his theories. He distinguished between schools that are culturally loose and tight, and maintained that transactional leadership worked best in schools that are tightly connected managerially but loose culturally: "Cultural connections, being weak, are presumed to be of little consequence. School improvement measures that seek to program what teachers do and how they are to teach are based on these premises" (Sergiovanni, 1989, pp. 217-218). In contrast, "when schools are characterized by loose managerial and tight cultural connectedness it is transformative leadership that is needed" (p. 218). He claimed that for both transactional and transformative leaders there is a

commitment to achieving identifiable goals, and the leader is considered to be central to the success of the enterprise. Transactional leadership, however, is not seen as being "able to move teachers, students, and school much beyond expected performance" (p. 219). Transformational leadership, he claimed, "can tap higher levels of human potential and produce inspired levels of performance that will lead to excellence in schooling" (p. 219).

In his more recent work, Sergiovanni (1991) sees the two concepts of transactional and transformational leadership more closely combined to constitute stages of leadership for school improvement. Transactional leadership, or what he calls *leadership by bartering*, can provide the initial push to get things started, and responds to physical, security, social and ego needs. Once leader and followers are united in higher-level goals common to both there is a shift to transformational leadership, which begins with what he refers to as *leadership by building*. This provides the support to deal with the uncertainty of change, and responds to esteem, achievement, competence, autonomy and self-actualizing needs. Ultimately, transforming leadership becomes *leadership by bonding*, where leader and followers are bound together in shared commitment. Sergiovanni points out that "the key concepts associated with transformative leadership by bonding are cultural and moral leadership" (p. 126). This leads to the fourth stage of *leadership by banking* in which improvement initiatives are encultured or routinized into the everyday life of the school. Energy is thus conserved or banked, such that new initiatives may become the focus. He also distinguishes between what he terms *normative rationality*, or rationality based on what we believe to be morally good, and *technical rationality*, or rationality based on what is effective and efficient. He claims that

as a school's culture is strengthened and its center of values becomes more public and pervasive, normative rationality becomes more legitimate. Everyone knows what the school stands for and why and can articulate these purposes and use them as guidelines for action. (p. 327)

This building of a school's culture, Sergiovanni maintains, necessitates transformational leadership that allows for authentic followership to emerge:

"The true test of leadership . . . is the principal's ability to get others in the school to share in the responsibility for guarding these values" (p. 328).

Research findings. What has research found regarding transformational leadership and changes in school culture? How prevalent are leaders who are viewed as effective or extraordinary, and what do these leaders look like in action? What do leaders do to inspire authentic followership?

In two related studies, one quantitative and one qualitative, Kirby, Paradise and King (1992) investigated leader characteristics and behaviours that educators associated with extraordinary performance, and sought to define these in terms of transactional and transformational leadership. As will be revealed in the following discussion of these studies, this proved to be no easy task. Results of the quantitative study, with a sample of 103 educators using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), indicated that the leadership factors of charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, and contingent reward were significantly related to perceived effectiveness of and satisfaction with the leader. Of these factors, all are considered transformational with the exception of contingent reward, which is considered transactional. The multicollinearity of the subscales used created difficulty in interpreting the unique effects of each factor, however, and the researchers had major criticisms of the MLQ. In the subsequent qualitative study, using a separate sample, 58 educators were asked to think of an extraordinary leader in education and to describe an event in which they had participated that exemplified that person's leadership. Of these 58 educators, only 9 indicated no difficulty in identifying what they considered to be an extraordinary leader, thus only the descriptions of these nine leaders constituted the sample for further analysis. Characteristics ascribed to these leaders varied greatly, but they were generally viewed as: people-oriented, knowledgeable through experience, having a positive outlook, and committed. A leader's ability to inspire extra effort was associated with specific behaviours rather than characteristics, and modeling was viewed as one of the most powerful forms of persuasion. Closely related to modeling

behaviours were communicating expectations and challenging followers to take risks. Involving others in setting and achieving objectives was a strategy employed by all nine leaders. In contrast to the first study, rewards or formal incentives appeared to be deemphasized by these extraordinary leaders, but the data suggest these leaders had a strong belief in the power of intrinsic rewards, for example, sharing feelings of pride in accomplishments. Kirby et al. conclude from both studies that "followers prefer leaders who engage in the transformational behaviors associated with individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and the transactional behavior of contingent reward" (p. 309). Individualized consideration is defined here as "raising followers' needs perspectives and goals through treatment on a one-to-one basis and provision of learning opportunities" (p. 310). In further elaborating on rewards, they conclude that although contingent reward is related to effectiveness, "extraordinary leaders place less emphasis on extrinsic reward and more prominence on raising followers' needs to higher levels" (p. 310).

This rather lengthy discussion of these studies is included here to exemplify the difficulty, or at least the emergent state, of empirically investigating the complexity of transformational and transactional leadership. What I think does emerge from it, however, is a distinction between effective and extraordinary leadership. Extrinsic rewards seem necessary when leadership is transactional, implying that compliance needs to be negotiated. Leaders seen as extraordinary are able to place value on intrinsic rewards, perhaps because the goals being pursued are authentically valued by the followers.

In an earlier study, Blase (1987) also investigated teacher's perspectives of effective school leadership, interviewing 40 teachers who described roughly 30 effective and 95 ineffective principals. One of the factors associated with effective principals was an emphasis on global and comprehensive goals, and seeking teacher input on the implementation of policies and plans related to these goals. Collaborative goal development "seemed to contribute to the creation of common values and norms and to the integration of social and cultural patterns . . . and greater consistency between teacher values and teacher behavior" (p. 600).

Unfortunately, however, it is not this straightforward and simple. In a more recent study with a sample of 836 teachers reporting on strategies used by principals they viewed as open and effective, Blase (1993) found that "effective school principals typically fail to include teachers in decision-making or limit their involvement significantly. Teachers themselves rarely identify their fundamental needs, values, and aspirations" (p. 158). The data suggest that effective principals articulate their own visions, set their own goals, and in the main determine the means to achieve such ends. That teachers identify these principals as effective suggests that "teachers are normatively influenced to 'buy into the principal's agenda'" (p. 158). Blase comments that "the critical process of dynamic, open, and democratic interaction between leaders and others as discussed by Burns (1978) is noticeably absent, and the decisional authority and responsibility of others are limited significantly" (p. 159).

Authentic democratic and transformational leadership thus seems more idealistic and illusive in practice than theorists might have envisioned. Perhaps we should exercise caution in labeling what may on the surface appear to be transformational leadership, and look closely to discover how much true teacher involvement there has been in the formulating of visions and goals, and the responsibility for implementation of decisions. Perhaps Sagor's (1992) reference to the three principals he studied as having a "transformative effect" (p. 18) was made without examining the situation closely enough. As Burns (1978) stressed, "Moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the followers" (p. 4). And as Sergiovanni (1991) has cautioned, "Change is, after all, a form of 'social engineering'; and, as one becomes more skilled at bringing about change, ethical issues are naturally raised. Are we talking about leadership, or are we really talking about manipulation?" (p. 267)

Effective leadership, then, is obviously not synonymous with extraordinary leadership. Perhaps truly transformational leadership is too much to expect from ordinary leaders, even though they may be judged as essentially effective. Perhaps many teachers would rather leave the

formulation of goals and the implementation of change as the responsibility of leaders. Or perhaps what is judged effective is merely a reflection of what is hegemonic. If authentic transformational leadership has not been experienced, one's perception of effectiveness may be limited to more manipulative, control-oriented leadership and result in acceptance of that.

While I have shown in the above section that collaboration and modeling are an integral part of principals' strategies in affecting school culture, I wish to focus briefly on each of these other two components, for they emerged as the most visible means which the principal in my case study used to bring about change.

Collaboration

Collaboration appears to be important both in the formulation of a school's vision and goals, and in the process of actualizing them. In Blase's (1987) study regarding factors which teachers identified with effective principals, teacher participation in goal setting and development was reported by roughly half the teachers. Teachers were involved in the definition, evaluation and redefinition of goals, and this "seemed to contribute to the creation of common values and norms and to the integration of social and cultural patterns" (p. 600). Teachers also linked shared decision-making to the quality of decisions made by principals. The data indicated that teacher participation was either consultative, with principals making final decisions based on their input, or shared, with decisions evolving through discussion. All teachers in the study reported that "effective principals encouraged teacher participation by developing open relationships" (p. 604). This was linked to principals showing trust and respect for teachers, and when participation was encouraged it positively affected the amount of time, energy and caring teachers put into their work.

In his later study Blase (1993) found that empowerment orientation, as opposed to control orientation, was characterized by involvement in decision-making, and was observed in 51% of the data. Decision-making was defined as when "principals and teachers jointly assumed authority and

responsibility for determining goals, and means to achieve them, and/or principals empowered teachers individually and collectively to assume decisional authority and responsibility" (p. 153). In many instances (49% of the data), teachers were limited to giving their opinions regarding issues defined by principals, with principals taking these opinions seriously but retaining decisional authority and responsibility. These were considered authentic requests for advice, not decision-making, but were still linked to effective principals. Principals encouraged teacher involvement in decision-making through formal committee or team structures, which met regularly, and through informal participation opportunities, for example, impromptu conversations. Formal team structures were related directly to increases in the degree of teacher involvement in actually making decisions, as opposed to their participation being confined mainly to giving advice through informal means.

Leithwood (1992), as a result of a number of studies aimed at exploring the meaning and utility of transformational leadership in schools, found that one of the main goals these leaders focused on was developing and maintaining a collaborative professional school culture. He found that in collaborative school cultures staff members often talk, observe, critique and plan together. They were involved in collaborative goal setting, and shared power and responsibility through delegation to school improvement teams. Collaborative problem solving occurred during staff meetings, ensuring a broad range of perspectives from which to view problems and discussion of alternative solutions. The school leaders actively listened to different views, clarified and summarized information at key times, and maintained "a genuine belief that their staff members as a group could develop better solutions than the principal could alone, a belief apparently not shared by the nontransformational leaders in [the] study" (p. 11).

Kirby et al. (1992) found that exceptional leaders often enlisted the help of both supporters and questioners, to prevent problems and build trust in a project. They involved others in setting and achieving objectives and evaluating progress, often forming teams to do this, but also trying to involve as many persons as possible. The studies found that extraordinary leaders

took the initial steps to structure change, providing resources and selecting key participants, but "they were careful not to overdefine the structures. Instead, involvement continuously expanded. The leader's role was flexible; it was often deemphasized as others proved increasingly capable of self-direction" (p. 309).

What emerges as important from this is that for exceptional leaders collaboration is not merely a seeking of advice or an informal sharing of opinions. It entails an authentic belief that if many people are actively involved in problem-solving, goal-setting, and making and implementing decisions, the likelihood is that the results will be better than if only one person is involved. Leaders cannot presuppose what change will necessarily look like as it becomes enacted, as others may have better ideas or a better idea may result from many minds working together. The principal's role, however, remains pivotal. As Sergiovanni (1991) maintains, principals "need to allow people to have an important say in shaping the direction of the school and deciding on the changes needed to get there, but they cannot be so detached that these individual aspirations remain more rhetorical than real" (p. 269).

Modeling

This brings us to the importance of principals showing commitment to decisions, which they do through behaviour and actions, not rhetoric. As Burns (1978) stressed regarding moral leadership, leaders must "take responsibility for their commitments--if they promise certain kinds of . . . change, they assume leadership in the bringing about of that change" (p. 4).

Blase (1993) defines modeling as "principals' actions that exemplify their implicit and explicit expectations for teachers" (p. 152). In his study on strategies used by principals seen by teachers as effective, three personal characteristics were considered aspects of modeling: (a) *optimism*: a global and positive orientation; (b) *consideration*: exhibiting a sincere and broad interest in teachers as human beings; and (c) *honesty*: the willingness to be straightforward and to demonstrate consistency between talk and behaviour.

Kirby et al. (1992), in their study of behaviours associated with exceptional leaders, found that modeling of attitudes and behaviours was viewed as a powerful form of persuasion by most of the respondents. Specific examples of behaviours associated with modeling were: showing strong conviction, enthusiasm and commitment; volunteering to take responsibility; and participating as an equal member of the group. Closely related to modeling was challenging followers to grow and achieve. This was an accepted leadership strategy because the leaders themselves modeled risk-taking. These leaders were viewed as challengers to the status quo, but they carefully calculated their chances of success and often built in formative evaluations to make necessary modifications. This kind of modeling encouraged others to engage in change.

Reconnecting With the Data from My Case Study

In summary, then, I stress the importance of these three factors of culture, collaboration and modeling in effecting authentic change, and emphasize that they are interwoven. Principals are in a position to affect school culture. Authentic change means that it has become embedded in the values and norms of a school. Authentic change comes about through collaboration. Modeling can be both an impetus for change and a means of building change-orientation into the culture.

The principal in my case study appeared to be effectively using these strategies to make a fundamental change in the school culture. Mary wanted students to have more voice and to play a larger, more visible role in decision-making and implementation. This was a fundamental shift in the values of Hilltop School, towards more democratic student involvement. She implemented this change through much collaboration with teachers. Her original vision of a Student Council was combined with the school's traditional format, and in practice an entirely new format resulted. All teachers continued to be involved in reviewing student decisions, a committee was responsible for reevaluating and refining the change, and two teachers shared the responsibility for the Leadership Program with the

principal. Mary modeled her commitment through taking on the initial responsibility of the Student Council, and modeled the meaning of this change by being open and collaborative with both students and staff. For at least one teacher, Peter, she was instrumental in inspiring him to be more democratic in his own classroom, a value he held already but was not always able to put into practice. By the end of two years teachers appeared to be seeing the need for more competency skills to implement democratic student involvement and were committing to staff development to do this, and Mary was cognizant of her need to let others take on more responsibility for this change she had initiated.

I would be cautious about categorizing Mary's leadership as transformational at this point. Although it is a possibility, it is too soon to tell if the changes being implemented are authentic or if they truly reflect the values of the staff. The data indicate, however, that she has become aware of the need for democratic student involvement to be a value widely held by a staff if it is to outlast the principal at a school. It would appear that while she was earlier in the initial or transactional stage in Sergiovanni's (1991) conception, which he termed *leadership by bartering*, she is now entering the stage where it becomes transformational, or *leadership by building*.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Summary and Reflections Regarding the Case Study

In summary, the principal initiated a Student Council because of her belief that students having a voice makes school a more educative place for them. Through on-going collaborative processes involving teachers and students, an inclusive Leadership Program emerged, providing services and activities for the school. As more students became involved at the school level, more adults became involved in democratic practices, in the Leadership Program itself and in their own classrooms. The principal was highly involved in this process; however, as more responsibility was taken by others democratic student involvement increased as a characteristic of the school climate and became more embedded in the culture. One of the principal's goals was that this would continue even if she left the school.

One of the most interesting findings of this case study has been a pattern which students and teachers go through when students are empowered. When the students were interviewed in November they seemed very accepting of teachers having the final say or setting the limits. By the time I interviewed the principal in February, at least some students were beginning to push at these adult-imposed limits. In the previous year a similar pattern was apparent, with students beginning to question the limits after a few months. This challenging of adult authority seems to emerge as students gain confidence in their power, and perhaps want to test how much they really have. The way in which this was handled by adults was crucial according to the principal. This, I would hypothesize, is a pivotal point which determines: (a) if adults have learned the skills of negotiating with students to reach a mutually acceptable solution, and (b) if democratic student involvement has become a deeply held value or is simply superficial.

It is understandable that adults will struggle with this stage. As one teacher said, it is hard for some teachers to get used to the idea of students

running so many things around the school. Students will undoubtedly make mistakes, and some teachers may be impatient with that. How much more impatient, and perhaps threatened, teachers are likely to feel when students are testing the limits of their power. The pattern, however, is similar. Teachers who were at first uncomfortable with the "messiness" of students running things came to realize that the initial chaotic stage of a project could be problem-solved into a workable form. This pattern was repeated many times throughout the year as new projects were begun and reached fruition. It was also starting to be realized that the same process of respectful negotiation could resolve problems when students pushed at the limits, and that resorting to a non-democratic show of authoritarianism would likely exacerbate the situation. With more teachers involved in the Leadership Program, becoming more familiar with this negotiating process, more teachers then had democratic strategies to use when confronted by these challenging student behaviours. The problem seems not so much *that* students question limits, it is *how* they do this.

If we believe in democratic values, and that schools should develop in students the skills and attitudes needed to be critical, responsible democratic citizens, we need a clear vision of our adult role in this. Yes, we want students to be able to question and challenge, for this is how improvements begin. No, we do not want them to do this in ways which impinge on the rights of others or show disrespect. We need, therefore, to teach students how to question and challenge in appropriate, effective ways. When they are challenging and questioning us we have a ripe, teachable moment.

Another very interesting finding that has emerged from this case study is the different pathways, both direct and indirect, through which democratic student involvement was spreading in the school. The principal was directly involving teachers in the Leadership Program, and, somewhat more indirectly, by team-teaching in many classrooms she was modeling collaboration and interactions which respect student voice. A less obvious pathway between the principal and teachers also emerged: the principal directly influenced the students, and the students then influenced the teachers. Both teachers interviewed indicated that once students had already

gained some skills for democratic involvement, then the teachers felt more inclined to democratize their classroom practices. It appeared that teachers themselves lacked knowledge to help students learn these skills.

This points to the need, I believe, for more resources to be readily available to classroom teachers. While a principal's modeling, as in my case study, may be a powerful influence on teachers gaining a first-hand understanding of democratic strategies, it is unlikely that many teachers will be provided with this "lived experience." Even so, they may not know how to translate this into classroom practices. The Ministry's Mission Statement (Ministry of Education, 1994) stresses that the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a democratic society are one of the paramount purposes of the school system, yet it appears that teachers lack the necessary support to enable them to accomplish this. While some of these skills, and suggested pedagogy, are embedded in parts of the curriculum documents, if this is a paramount purpose of the school system, it should be highlighted and stressed to a greater extent. This could be done in existing curriculum guides by explicitly identifying such sections. Further curriculum support documents could also be developed. These might explain in detail such democratic strategies as class constitutions of rights and responsibilities, student-chaired class meetings, and student-mediation.

Highlighting again the role of the administrator, what has emerged is a paradox: Administrators need to allow themselves to be influenced by teachers in order for participatory democracy to develop effectively as a cultural norm of a school. As Burns (1978) proposed in his theory of leadership, transformational leaders work with followers in the pursuit of a common purpose. Burns saw change generated through such transformational leadership as real change, that which becomes truly embedded in the culture. Change made through transactional leadership, where leader and followers negotiate, may be necessary initially (Sergiovanni, 1991), but it will not endure because there is not a common vision.

The principal in my study expressed much concern that in her previous school the Leadership Program did not endure when she left, and she felt the students were the ones to suffer. She was more concerned now

with truly embedding democratic student involvement in the culture of the school, such that it would outlast her. Change becomes authentic through administrators allowing themselves to be changed and influenced by teachers, as everyone can become bonded in a common purpose. There is evidence in the data that this process was happening. For instance, the principal expressed a great deal of satisfaction that in working with two other teachers in the Leadership Program each person's areas of weakness were complemented by the others' strengths. She recognized that she was learning to not take on so much responsibility herself, and that when others share more in these responsibilities, there is increased likelihood that changes which result will be lasting. An important question arises: If respect for student voice is not a commonly held value and does not continue, has one done damage by raising false hopes in those children, or will that sense of empowerment continue but be demonstrated in other contexts?

Patterns have emerged regarding how democratic student involvement affects students, teachers and an administrator in the social-emotional dimension. When power shifts and one group gains more, it will not be sustainable if it is at the expense of those who previously had more. Ideally, the democratic sharing of power empowers everyone involved. Paradoxically, "the kids should come first" is an oft-heard sentiment in the education field and yet in practice adults make most of the decisions for children. In a democratic community one group should not come first ahead of any other. Empowering students should not necessitate loss of adult power, but empower them as well. In my own practice as a teacher, I have certainly experienced this personal empowerment. Not having to make all the decisions means not having to rely on my one little brain to think of everything. With the pooling of many ideas from many minds, the decisions made are much better than I could always make. With students taking on many responsibilities and putting much energy into implementing their decisions, I am freed to be more facilitative than totally responsible, and have extra energy to do other things. The closeness and mutual respect I feel with students is also empowering. We are all free to take risks, be vulnerable, make mistakes and offer suggestions. Instead of feeling that students respect

me because of a role I play, I feel respected for who I really am, foibles and all. This personal experience is given as corroboration, then, that by giving more power to students, a teacher can gain immensely.

Looking back at the actual form of democratic involvement at Hilltop, we see a pattern of becoming more and more inclusive or participatory. Voting and representation have not become a major feature of this democracy, as they are of most democratic political institutions. Students rejected voting for representatives as morally unsound, basically as corrupt favouritism. In this sense, a representative Student Council might be viewed as perpetuating elitism and hierarchies. The message came through loud and clear from the data: Everyone has the right to be involved. Widespread sharing of power, a shift away from hegemonic authoritarianism, and development of a democratic form that is not the dominant democratic form of politics are areas which I will explore through further discussion of literature regarding democratic theory.

Socio-Political Implications with Reference to the Work of Henry Giroux

Throughout this study, I have been particularly intrigued with its connections to Critical Theory, which looks at the relationship between the process of schooling and the reproduction of inequity in the wider society. I have made numerous references to critical theorists and cultural studies researchers (e.g., Giroux, J. Goodman, Kreisberg, McLaren), yet I have found it difficult to gain a satisfyingly clear understanding of this theory. Much of the writing of critical theorists and cultural studies researchers, generally those not cited in this study, I have found to be a curious mix of abstruse esoterica and alarmist hyperbole. Although overall I have gained *some* understanding, to be perfectly honest, after reading many a sentence by McLaren (1994, 1995), one of the foremost critical theorists in education, I have often been left stunned by my inability to comprehend even the gist of what he means. I find it quite annoying that when one is purporting emancipatory theory, claiming today's schools are keeping the oppressed oppressed, one writes in language so convoluted and jargonistic as to be ultimately inaccessible. Popular reading

for the masses, or even for most educators, it is not! Henry Giroux's writings I do find more accessible, and as he is the most prominent and widely published person today both in democratic education and in critical theory in the field of education, I have chosen to focus on his work here, through which I will attempt to elucidate some of the broader socio-political implications of my study.

Giroux holds a strong moral commitment to democratic practices that engage all citizens in common governance, and a belief in the centrality of education in determining political and social relations. His "critical pedagogy has arisen from a need to name the contradiction between what schools claim they do and what they actually do" (1992, p. 151). While schools purport to be non-political and value-neutral, and to promote such democratic virtues as equal opportunity and critical inquiry, what they actually do, he believes, is reproduce the discourses, values, and privileges of the existing elite. He attempts, then, to "transform . . . relations of power by connecting educational struggles with the broader social struggle for the democratization, pluralization, and reconstruction of public life" (1992, p. 22). His critical pedagogy is based on two main assumptions: (a) the need for a language of critique and a questioning of presuppositions, and (b) the need for a language of possibility, a positive language of human empowerment.

Giroux contrasts the rhetoric that equates Western culture with democracy in its highest form with such indicators as low voter turnout, growing illiteracy rates, and an increasingly prevalent notion that social criticism and social change are attacks on a democratic way of life. There is a smugness, he claims, in the West's presupposition that democracy has reached its culmination, yet an indifference towards substantive political life. We need, he says, to "affirm the capacity of human beings to shape their own destinies as part of a larger struggle for democracy . . . in which people control the social and economic forces that determine their existence" (1992, pp. 41-42). A basic concern is that those who believe themselves, for whatever reasons, to be personally powerless may either: (a) remain powerless, and thus by default maintain the status quo of inequitable, hierarchical power distribution, or (b) assert power by joining one of the many "fugitive

cultures" which are "deadly serious in representing violence as a legitimate practice to define one's identity and negotiate the terrain of everyday life" (1996, pp. 11-12).

No one need feel personally powerless in all aspects of one's life. It is my contention, based on my case study and previous experience, that democratic participation goes beyond casting a ballot in an election, and then either being on the winning side and feeling a modicum of power by letting someone represent your political views within a governing body, or being on the losing side and feeling completely unrepresented and powerless. I view democratic participation as being available and viable in all spheres of one's life, from relationships and the family to the workplace and community. What is necessary is feeling personally empowered, knowledgeable, and skilled to participate as a full citizen, to imagine and create possibilities. As educators we can develop these capacities in individuals, within the classroom and school community, in preparation for negotiating the complexities of the larger adult sphere with a confident, caring voice. Power comes not just from being heard, it comes also from listening to and working in accordance with others. If students live such experiences and relationships in school, the hope is that they will develop the expectation that their voice and other's voices carry legitimate power, and will not be so content to be silenced, or prone to silence others.

Giroux has asked how individual and social identities might be reconstructed in schools in the service of democratic citizenship and human imagination of possibilities. Answering this question has been a major thrust of my thesis. Giroux argues that modernism, postmodernism and feminism, which share differences and common ground, together "offer critical educators a rich theoretical and political opportunity for rethinking the relationship between schooling and democracy" (1992, p. 42). How might these theories or movements connect to my work? There is a need, first, for further definition of these terms.

There is controversy as to both the definition and central assumptions of modernism; however, Giroux (1992) defines three kinds: (a) social modernism: confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science, technology

and rationality; (b) aesthetic modernism: rebellion against normative, formal aestheticism; and (c) political modernism: rooted in the capacity of humans to want to remove the causes of suffering, to promote liberty, equality and justice.

Postmodernism is both "the buzzword for the latest intellectual fashions . . . and conflict-ridden terrain" (Giroux, 1992, p. 51). Giroux believes, however, that "the discourse of postmodernism is worth struggling over . . . as a discourse of plurality, difference and multinarratives . . . to explain either the mechanics of domination or the dynamics of emancipation" (p. 51).

Postmodernism rejects absolutes, working to achieve multiple awarenesses. It is a critique of totality, reason and universality, and an emphasis on first-order, particular, situational truths. It looks at local narratives as opposed to normative meta-narratives. Postmodernism thus calls into question the intellectual traditions of knowledge, truth, objectivity and reason, and suggests that these are actually the effects of hegemonic social power, presenting itself as truth rather than as one interpretation. Postmodernism, Giroux says, offers to reclaim "voices that have been relegated to the marginal and, therefore, seem to be unrepresentable" (p. 56).

Feminism shares with modernism a concern for equality, social justice and freedom. It shares with postmodernism a rejection of universal laws exalted at the expense of specificity and contingency. It opposes, as does postmodernism, a linear view of history that legitimates patriarchal notions of subjectivity and society. Contrary to modernism, and again in line with postmodernism, feminism rejects science and reason as directly corresponding with objectivity and truth. Giroux (1992) thus sees *postmodern feminism* as attempting to combine modernism and postmodernism into a broader theory. It attempts to connect gender politics to a broader politics of solidarity, and to understand the broader workings of power as not only oppressive but as full of possibility, with a focus on the positive rather than the negative. Postmodern theorists have stressed the historical, contingent, and cultural construction of reason, but have not emphasized, as have postmodern feminists, how reason has been constructed as part of a masculine discourse. Postmodern feminists thus provide a powerful

challenge to this position, "in their analyses of the ways in which reason, language and representation have produced knowledge/power relations, legitimated in the discourse of science and objectivity, to silence, marginalize, and misinterpret women" (p. 67), and, *I might add, children.*

To reiterate the question above: How might individual and social identities be reconstructed in the service of democratic citizenship and human imagination of possibilities? This can be looked at now in different terms: What pedagogical principles emerge from a convergence of the various tendencies within modernism, postmodernism, and postmodern feminism? Giroux suggests that such principles would aim to reconstruct democratic public life so as to "extend the principles of freedom, justice and equality to all spheres of society" (1992, p. 73). They would retain modernism's commitment to critical reason, agency, and the power of humans to overcome suffering. They would retain postmodernism's challenge to totalizing discourses and emphasis on contingent and specific difference. And they would retain postmodern feminism's redefining of the relationship between margins and center, linking personal and political as part of a broader struggle for justice and social transformation.

Giroux contends that we need, then, to "construct schools as democratic public spheres" (1992, p. 73), providing students with opportunities to challenge and transform existing structures. Students need the knowledge to see themselves in a broad, historical and social context, and the skills to find their own voices. There should be a focus on the student's subjective experiences as complex, involving history, race, gender, and class. There should also be a focus on ethics, Giroux contends, "as a practice that broadly connotes one's personal and social sense of responsibility to the Other" (p. 74).

This is in basic agreement with my above contention, that if students have participatory democratic experiences and relationships in school, they will carry the expectation into later life that their voice and others' voices have legitimate power. Giroux goes beyond this, however, in his assertion that critical democratic pedagogy needs to clearly and explicitly recognize "that in cultural production there are contested and unequal power relations"

(1992, p. 3).

It is not enough to live democratic experiences; Giroux claims educators need to delve right into raising awareness of such political and social issues as inequity, how power is maintained, and how truth is constructed. This can be done using the students' own experiences, "acknowledging how different students produce meaning through the diverse social and cultural formations that give them a sense of voice and identity" (1992, p. 236). It can also be done using the existing curriculum, "examining critically how [it] constructs relationships between dominant and subordinant cultures" (p. 236). He justifies such "politicization" of pedagogical practices by arguing that education is inherently political, and to ignore it serves to mask it. The dominant culture exerts and maintains itself, he claims, through political mechanisms such as disregarding the social construction of knowledge. For instance, the "culture of positivism, with its limited focus on objectivity, efficiency, and technique, is both embedded and reproduced in the form and content of public school curricula" (1981, p. 38). As another example, he gives the distinction between high, refined, or true culture and popular or mass culture:

True culture is treated as a warehouse filled with the goods of antiquity, waiting patiently to be distributed anew to each generation. Knowledge in this perspective becomes sacred, revered, and removed from the demands of social critique and ideological interests. (1992, p. 185)

Viewing culture in this way is consistent with a pedagogy of transmission, with students being the bearers of received knowledge. Popular culture in this distinction, then, is vulgar, "a form of barbarism" (p. 185), or merely folk culture in its contemporary form. The implication here for critical pedagogy is to affirm the lived realities of students by using them as "an agenda for discussion and a central resource" (p. 201). He emphasizes, however, that this *does not require teachers to suppress or abandon what and how they know* [emphasis in original]. Indeed, the pedagogical struggle is lessened without such resources. However, within this position teachers and students are challenged to find forms within which a

single discourse does not become the locus of certainty and certification. (p. 201)

What Giroux is basically saying, then, is that by not engaging with students in the questioning of such hegemonic assumptions, by not being actively and transparently inclusive and pluralistic, educators are relegating many students to the cultural margins and colluding to maintain economic and cultural inequality, rather than promoting democracy. The lived experience of a democratic community within a classroom or school goes a certain distance towards this, however, is not sufficient; discourse must connect it to the broader socio-political sphere.

One of my original quests at the beginning of this thesis was to find reasons for an authoritarian education system maintaining hegemony in a democratic society. My own case study did not sufficiently answer this question, although I think it pointed towards answers. The tension between adult authority and student empowerment showed the difficulty of those who have more power finding advantage in sharing it. The need for more focus on knowledge and skills, for both adults and students, to learn how to share power with each other, showed how support for pedagogy that directly addresses this is lacking. Looking at Giroux's work, however, I think this question has now been answered more fully.

Implications for My Own Practice

First of all, in reference to Giroux: There is always a danger in enthusiastically embracing something that sounds so rhetorically good and makes me feel a little guilty for not doing that myself. Yes, I provide a lived democratic experience for my students; no, I do not often engage them in questioning how knowledge is constructed, how relationships of power marginalize certain segments of culture, how the oppressed stay oppressed and the dominant stay dominant. While part of me says, "Gee, I better do that," I know that the route from theory to any individual's practice is not one-way and linear. I know the folly of making grand plans and commitments for what I will do, based on theory that seems the

quintessential way to make this world a better place for more people. Plans and commitments hatched in removed, theoretical contemplation will end up being at best completely revamped in practice, or perhaps totally abandoned due to unforeseen circumstances. Still, I find Giroux's work captivating and intriguing and a logical extension of what I have already begun. What I will commit to is looking for possibilities for how to examine these issues more critically with students.

In looking at so much literature regarding democratic student involvement at the classroom level, I have certainly validated how democratic my classroom really is (notwithstanding it falling short of Giroux's ideal). Every September we write a class constitution, coming to a full consensus on our rights and attendant responsibilities, and these become a code by which we live as a group. We hold weekly class meetings with rotating student chairpersons and recorders, such that everyone has two or three opportunities a year to run a meeting. The agenda is compiled throughout the week, containing both concerns to problem solve and opportunities for planning events. Decisions are sometimes reached by voting, but more often by consensus, incorporating a number of suggestions. In Writing Workshop students choose what to write, and often work cooperatively to produce multi-voice products such as magazines and newspapers. In Reading Workshop they choose what to read from a wide selection of a certain theme or genre, and organize their own *ad hoc* groups for discussions or creative activities. Students are involved in deciding on the criteria for grading assignments, often self-evaluate, and within most assignments there is some degree of choice. We focus specifically on skills for working together, such as good listening behaviour, expressing feelings, sharing responsibilities, and conflict resolution. We often have impromptu votes to decide such things as what should take priority if we're short of time, or what games to play or books to read aloud, and if a vote is close we try to allow for multiplicity. We often evaluate how routines are working, suggest improvements and make fine-tuning adjustments. There are also certain areas where I have the final say, for instance topics and learning outcomes according to the curriculum. Sometimes I will ask for input from students,

but I make the final decision. Conversely, in Class Meetings I get one vote and sometimes decisions are made with which I'm not in favour, although these decisions cannot be against school policy or pertain to the curriculum. The list could go on, but this gives a flavour. Many of these practices are common in classrooms today; many are contained in Ministry documents or approved resources. What I think is unusual, based on my experiences in dozens of classrooms while supervising student teachers, is the degree to which I implement such practices and how pervasive they are throughout my work with students, whether they be primary or intermediate children, or, using somewhat different formats, adults. Still, through reading so much literature on democratic education, I see many ways in which I can further democratize my classroom, and now have stronger theoretical grounding in how this is socially and politically significant.

A key need in terms of classroom curriculum and pedagogy is more support documentation to explicitly highlight what the Ministry of Education Mission Statement states as the purpose of the British Columbia school system: "to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society" (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 20). As I have stated previously, many such practices are embedded throughout curriculum documents, but these generally pertain only to specific subjects areas. Practices outside particular subjects, such as class meetings, class constitutions or how to engage in shared decision-making, are ignored or given scanty explanation. If we are to move beyond lofty-sounding rhetoric into practice, we need to have readily available, explicit support materials. Having validated for myself that I do indeed have a very democratic classroom, I have interest in being involved in developing such support materials. At the very least, as I will be involved this coming year on a district-level committee preparing support documentation for the new Language Arts curriculum, and within that context I can try to highlight and explicate democratic practices.

My case study of democratic student involvement at the school level has certainly raised my awareness of the complexity of issues surrounding a

Student Council. I was asked by my principal this past spring to implement and sponsor a Student Council at our school this coming year, where there has never been one before. At first I was thrilled for the opportunity. This was soon followed by my concern that without administrative involvement it might be difficult to legitimize student responsibilities. The vice-principal also proved eager to become involved, however, so we will work as a team. As our school is changing from a Grades K-7 to a Grades K-5 school this year, this can become an opportunity for young students, who have never had a leadership role in the school, to help create a new vision. While I am excited about this opportunity to develop something new at the school level, I also have trepidations. Having seen such a high-functioning Student Council as at Hilltop School, it is difficult to restrain from desiring to emulate that. I need to remind myself that each group trying to be democratic will create a form suited to its unique needs. Some of the basic principles which I will follow, however, are to involve other teachers in formulating the vision for this Student Council, to start small, and to expand as we become ready. I would hope that in numerous ways it is a Student Council with permeable boundaries, not closed to a few select students, and with other teachers free to be involved in many capacities.

Comparing my initial vision of democratic student involvement at the school level with what I have witnessed at Hilltop School, a major learning for me personally has been how capable students are of creating their own opportunities. Previously, I had a more limited view of students being involved in solving existing problems rather than envisioning desired possibilities and bringing them to fruition. This past year in my own classroom my students also seemed to spontaneously move to this level. Whereas Class Meetings in previous years had focused on solving problems, students suddenly started announcing they were organizing various activities for recess and lunch, such as class chess tournaments and a soccer league with set teams and student referees. These students, incidentally, are only in Grades 3 and 4. They also took on the complete responsibility for organizing a Valentine's Day party, with various committees. The games and entertainment they provided for each other were far more geared to their

own interests and desires than I would have planned, and included a magic show and a cooperative game where everyone worked as a team and won.

In terms of my aspirations to at some point in the future to become an administrator, a main implication is that I have seen what a valuable resource students can be at the school level. Administrators who do not involve students to a high degree are, I believe, missing an enormous opportunity. We need to know how students view situations, what they see as possibilities, and what they desire if we want schools to be better places for them. Students will put tremendous energy into making their decisions work. I also see that working with students democratically is an area of strength for me, something that comes quite naturally in some ways, but I have also been very cognizant of developing skills and knowledge and always improving my practice in this area. As with Mary in my study, this may be a logical starting point for me in a school, a place in which to invest my energy with confidence.

Areas for Further Research

The most pressing need I believe is to seek student perspectives in numerous areas and in numerous ways. As an example, I was involved in an action research project in Math this past year. I chose to research student attitudes towards the various kinds of activities we did in Math. I did this through surveys at different points in the year, where students rated how much they like the various types of activities we had done, and made written comments as to their reasons. What I found surprised me and other educators. Assumptions I had made were based on my own personal likes and dislikes in Math, what other educators promoted, and the most vocal students' opinions. Assessing the attitudes quantitatively gave me an entirely different picture. The point I wish to make here is that we cannot assume what students think and what they want. We need to ask them, and we need to do so in ways where they can all be heard fairly.

In terms of my case study, I see that collecting quantitative data would be a next step. From the qualitative data certain themes emerged; however,

they may only relate to a few people. These themes could be used to formulate tentative norms and more students and teachers could be surveyed to check if these were views held by most. This would also afford an opportunity to express different viewpoints. In the case of the teachers, this would be very helpful, as both teachers interviewed were highly supportive of democratic student involvement. Major teacher concerns were only heard indirectly, and it would be useful to have these perspectives directly from those holding them.

A multi-site study comparing several forms of democratic student involvement would also be a next step. It would prove very interesting to compare Hilltop's inclusive, participatory format with, for instance, a Student Council with elected representatives, a school which has had a Student Council for a number of years, or a Student Council which has minimal principal involvement. Such a study would be useful in determining if one format is better than another, or if indeed the people in each site need to find what is suited to their unique situation.

A longitudinal study, following students into high school, could help determine if democratic involvement raises false hopes in students and actually does them a disservice if they then move into authoritarian situations, or if they can use the skills they have learned to effectively negotiate that terrain as well.

Assessing effects of democratic schooling on academic performance would give information in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Theoretically, involvement in decisions about school and one's education increases motivation and sense of responsibility, and this should enhance learning. And what if it did not? If schools practicing democratic student involvement actually experienced decreases in academic performance, would we revert to authoritarian power structures? Or are there more important qualities which democratic schooling develops in a citizenry?

Thus I again quote phenomenologist Clarke Moustakas: "Knowledge does not end with moments of connectedness, understanding, and meaning. Such journeys open vistas to new journeys for uncovering meaning, truth, and essence--journeys within journeys, within journeys" (1994, p. 65).

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