

Applying Egan's Theory of Imagination and Learning to Middle Years Practice:
A Professional Learning Community's Experience

By
Anne-Marie Dooner

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
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MASTERS OF EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamics of a group of teachers as they collaborate over a two-year period to understand Kieran Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning and its Vygotskian underpinnings, and to apply the theory to their practices. The analysis begins with Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory and Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) essential elements of communities of practice. In the second year of the two-year collaborative process, however, social capital theory was inadequate in effectively analyzing the group's complex social dynamics. For this reason, Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory was used to further examine members' social interactions.

The Middle Years teachers who volunteered in this study included the principal investigator of the group, as well as five other classroom teachers, and the school's principal. Data collection throughout the group's two-year experience involved members' journal entries, focus-group discussions, and individual interviews. The study examines the factors that enhance and hinder collaboration and how members adapted to the competing expectations in the group. It also examines how the group supported the development of members' unique understanding and application of Egan's theory to teaching practice, and what professional outcomes were created as a result of the learning.

The findings will highlight group practices that support and threaten the stability of the group, as well as members' ongoing efforts to balance established group norms with

the changing, and often competing expectations of members. It will also explore specific factors, such as the role of members' emotions, that can de-stabilize group work.

Furthermore, this study will explore members' implementations of Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory to their Middle Years practice, including the cognitive tools used in teaching and learning.

Based on the synthesis of Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) three essential elements of communities of practice, and Weick's (1995) sensemaking, the study will also examine the reasons why social capital theory was inadequate in effectively analyzing the group's social dynamics. It will then suggest some changes to the theory so that it can more effectively represent the group's complex interactions and their adopted practice.

Finally, the study will explore the factors that enhanced and hindered collaboration and why the group's efforts were challenged more in the second year of the experience. It will also examine the specific ways that this professional learning community adapted to the competing expectations of members, and how they worked to maintain social stability. This study will conclude by identifying implications for practice and for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The Problem

Human beings create meaning from social interaction. As Blumer (1969, p. 12) states: “The meaning of anything and everything has to be formed, learned, and transmitted through ... a social process”. It is not surprising, then, that teachers’ individual classroom practices are heavily influenced by the values and beliefs of their colleagues, both past and present. Hargreaves (1994) explains that these relationships between teachers create an environment that either strengthens or weakens an individual teacher’s commitment to professional development and ultimately influences the quality of classroom teaching. In fact, he argues that the relationships that are created among teachers and their colleagues are the most “educationally significant” in their professional lives. “Sharing ideas and expertise, providing moral support when dealing with new and difficult challenges, discussing complex individual cases together – this is the essence of strong collegiality and the basis of effective professional communities” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 109). Yet, is sharing ideas, providing support, and fostering collegial contact enough to understand how professional learning communities develop? On this question, Little (1990, p. 531) states that:

Patterns of interaction that support mutual assistance or routine sharing may account well for maintaining a certain level of work-force stability, teacher satisfaction and a performance “floor”. They seem less likely, however, to account for high rates of innovation or for high levels of collective commitment to specific curricular or

instructional policies. They seem less likely to force teachers' collective confrontations of the pattern of practices that have accumulated over time.

Collaboration

Patterns of interaction imply that teachers collaborate. What, then, is collaboration? Tikunoff and Ward (1983) describe collaboration as involving, among other factors, the need for members to "work together" and to experience "mutual growth" within the process. Belinsky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) describe a "connected knowing" that can result from a developed relationship of reciprocity between teachers. Hargreaves (1994) adds that collaboration is the process that helps extend teachers' thinking beyond personal reflection so that they can develop a shared expertise by working together to "make sense" of relevant educational issues. Yet, what happens during the collaborative process that results in the development of valuable "group knowledge" and why does it sometimes fail to materialize? Kapuscinski (1997), for example, describes her dismay when she learned, five years later, that the structure at the basis of her "collaborative" study involving teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers ultimately fostered an environment that suppressed open participation among members. In one instance, a teacher, interviewed about his participation in a collaborative school project, confided that working with some colleagues would be detrimental to his learning. He explained: "First of all it would be their ideas. And I would have to fit into their teaching style, and it would have to fit into their time slot. And I don't think anybody should have to work like that..." (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 179). In fact, the creation of a collaborative culture is often significantly limited by teachers'

uncertainty about how collaboration functions. Elliot and Woloshyn (1997) add that although most working relationships are considered collaborative in nature, there appears to be no firm understanding of what the collaborative process actually entails.

And so, what makes a working relationship collaborative and why is this of value? Little (1990) explains that inquiry into teachers' beliefs, ideas, and intentions and the degree to which they support the "intellectual, emotional, and social" needs of students is generally at the "heart" of teachers' collegial dialogue. The extent of collaboration during these transactions, however, reflects the intensity of collegial influence on teachers' professional practice. With an increase in the depth of interactions, along with its inherent potential for conflict, teachers are more likely to move away from practices dominated by personal prerogative and freedom from critical reflection to ones that reflect both individual personality and a collective commitment to professional development. Little (1990, p. 522) says that:

Without abandoning basic canons of courtesy, teachers who are engaged in joint work displace the norm of non-interference; an alternative norm prevails, one that favors [*sic*] the thoughtful, explicit examination of practices and their consequences. Joint work enables teachers to engage in direct commentary on the moral, intellectual, and technical merit of classroom practices and school-level programs or policies. Teachers both accept and expect initiative on matters of professional principle and craft.

Elements of a Professional Learning Community

What, then, does this type of “joint work” involve? Dufour (2004) explains that the issue of joint or collaborative work is fundamental to the concept of teachers’ professional learning communities which have as their ultimate goal the development of teachers’ capabilities to enhance student learning (Hargreaves, 2001). This kind of learning community exists in most, if not all, professions, and is described as “a ... group of people who share a common interest in a topic or area, a particular form of discourse about their phenomena, tools and sense-making approaches for building collaborative knowledge, and value activities” (Fulton & Riel, 1999, p. 1). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder’s (2002) description of “communities of practice” reflects a similar experience as a group of professionals sharing a particular interest or concern commit to interacting on an ongoing basis with the goal of sharing resources to collectively develop a common body of knowledge. Underscoring Wenger et al.’s (2002) description, however, is the fundamental point that communities of practice (sometimes known as professional learning communities) integrate three essential elements: community, practice, and domain. In fact, these elements reflect the different means of participation that motivate people to join this type of learning community. The element of *community*, for example, involves far more than a network of interpersonal relations through which information or common interest are shared. It relates to the nature of the relationships between group members and whether the “social fabric of learning” within the group is based on trusting relations that foster honest interactions, challenging questions, critical feedback, and candid admissions. Wenger et al. (2002) explain that it is through the development of community that group members learn to share ideas, take risks, engage each other in

inquiry, and develop a sense of belonging to a group that is committed to the achievement of shared goals. In fact, the element of community that encompasses the social structure's various roles and positions of authority creates a unique "social learning system" that generates value beyond the "sum of its parts" by enabling the development of interpersonal relations that facilitate the sharing of group resources throughout the learning process (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 34).

Although Wenger et al. (2002) views the element of *practice* as connected, but separate from the element of community, it is clear that they are deeply embedded in one another. Community and practice develop as group members form close relationships and develop particular ways of engaging each other in learning that is not easily adopted or even understood by people outside the particular group. The element of practice relates to the group's common approaches and standards that ultimately generate collective action. Explicit tools, such as images, symbols, procedures, defined roles, and documents are important to a group's practice. Tacit knowledge, however, in such forms as understated cues, underlying assumptions, unspoken "rules of thumb" and shared views are essential in the development of both community and practice. "It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do. In this sense, practice is always social practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). It is because of the highly interrelated nature of both community and practice that this study will combine the two elements when exploring the issue of collaboration within a professional learning community.

The element of *domain*, however, needs to be viewed as interrelated, but separate (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). It is the "raison d'etre" why people have come

together. A group's domain that may involve such topics as designing aircraft wings, studying cross-country cycling techniques, or learning a new educational theory is the common ground that guides the community's inquiry. As Wenger et al. (2002, p. 30) state, a community without a commitment to a particular domain is just "a group of friends." The domain establishes the identity of the community by defining its purpose, as well as the value of its accomplishments to both members and to people outside the community. As the depth and breadth of the domain evolves throughout the process of shared inquiry the community's sense of purpose transforms as well. The group's sense of identity is derived from its shared, yet evolving domain. Domains that bridge the passions and aspirations of a community's members with relevant professional needs can ultimately inspire a spirit of inquiry that fosters deep personal and professional growth. Conversely, if a domain lacks interest or relevance to members, they will struggle significantly in this learning process.

Although the development of a professional learning community demands that attention be paid to each of these three elements, it is, in fact, the interplay between community/practice and domain that creates a unique value for group members. The nature of this value, however, changes throughout the life of the community; over time, a community can produce, among other things, supportive relationships that generate a unique and accessible "systematic body of knowledge" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 60). It is important to remember, however, that the nature of the value created by a group changes over time and may be only partially apparent or wholly unapparent at any given moment in a group's experience. Interestingly, although a professional learning community's

collaborative value, or what Little (1990) describes as “high joint benefit” is often assumed. In her words (1990, p. 522):

There has been relatively little examination of teachers’ influence on other teachers’ thinking or classroom performance.... Few researchers have made use of observational data or in-depth interviews to describe and assess influence.... Yet we have little in the way of close-up description of the *work* people do together versus what they attempt alone, or the actual decisions that arise from deliberately ‘participatory’ interactions.

Thus, it is the value created from teachers’ collaborative efforts that will be addressed in this study when it later explores Ecole Belair School’s professional learning community and the nature of the professional outcomes or intellectual capital created from the group’s experience of working together over a two-year period.

Development of a Professional Learning Community’s Elements

If a unique value can develop from the interplay between a group’s community/practice and domain, then how can this value be effectively nurtured? The specific relationship between community/practice within the context of domain is complex. Little (1990) argues that as teachers progress from an independent practice guided primarily by personal prerogative to a more dependent state guided by critical feedback and reciprocal expectations, they naturally increase the frequency and the intensity of their interactions. As a result of this change, the opportunity for mutual influence, as well as the potential for conflict within the community increases substantially. In response to this, Goulet, Krentz, and Christiansen (2003) suggest that

among other factors, listening to one another, valuing “every contribution” and creating a sense of belonging that nurtures open and respectful interactions fosters collaboration among members. “Openness in collaboration means that partners are ready to reflect on their own practice as well as on their roles in ... the process.... Openness and trust are interdependent” (Goulet, Krentz, & Christiansen, 2003, p. 332). In describing how seven group members’ collaborative efforts ultimately led to the creation of a published article, Elliot and Woloshyn (1997), for example, highlight the role of guilt in meeting group expectations as a significant factor in fostering a sense of commitment to the attainment of a community’s goals. Furthermore, members’ commitment to one another developed to a point where:

The work was an excuse to get together, discuss the article, and simultaneously provide support for each other. We agreed that the article became a vehicle to confirm our loyalty and support for each other. We began to realize that a good metaphor for the article was that [of a] shock absorber that cushioned the bumps on the road we were travelling” (Elliot & Woloshyn, 1997, p. 34).

As such, the underlying importance of the group’s domain to the elements of community/practice is central to the success of the group. When members care about the issues of domain and are committed to developing an understanding of the topic, they are motivated to develop strategies that strengthen the development of community/practice that ultimately fosters growth in knowledge. What is less evident, however, is how the group’s domain is effectively developed. Little (1990) questions whether some commonly accepted collegial interactions that link a group’s community/practice and domain effectively foster the mutual influence necessary to develop teachers’

professional practice. Storytelling, for example, can be a valuable way of sharing information, but it must be shared within a context of critical dialogue to successfully promote professional change. In short, stories, which can present selective accounts of complex issues or act as a “cover” in the quest for assurance, can be used as a “comfortable” substitute for more vigorous forms of deliberation. Furthermore, the underlying issue of sharing generally implies a fair and reciprocal exchange of insights between members. In reality, however, group dynamics may be dominated by members who, unwilling to critically examine their own teaching practice, choose to share very little with their colleagues other than friendly support. In fact, collaboration within schools is usually described within the context of “socioemotional support” or “generosity of spirit” and is rarely described within the realm of respectful, yet “hard-nosed deliberations” related to issues of professional practice. Little (1990) notes that a common expectation among teachers is that they will offer their colleagues professional assistance “when asked”, but only when asked. Asking questions, however, is usually perceived as a request for help and rarely understood as a necessary precursor to open critical dialogue. As such, Little (1990) states that it is reasonable to conclude, then, that teachers will not engage in professional inquiry with colleagues if doing so somehow weakens their self-esteem and renders them professionally vulnerable.

And so, as the autonomy of teachers’ professional practice within a professional learning community moves from private to public and teachers’ deeply held beliefs regarding their professional practice are critically challenged, either directly or indirectly, the potential for conflict arises. In fact, this is an inherent aspect of the value that can be created by a professional learning community. However, the existence of conflict within

collegial relations is a serious concern for most teachers. Although a moderate amount of conflict is a natural part of the growth of an effective professional learning community, many teachers perceive collaboration as “thinking alike”, “being on the same wavelength”, and remaining “friendly to colleagues”. When studying a reflective community of elementary teachers, Mandzuk (1999), for example, notes that teachers experienced varying levels of comfort when their ideas and thoughts were challenged by other members of the group. While some teachers felt threatened by the challenging questions, others were frustrated by some members’ lack of critical stance. As one teacher explains:

There is definitely some negative connotation to the word “challenge.” Debating, however, is part of the business.... It’s mess finding, it’s mess making so you’re throwing all these curve balls. But, with us, what’s happened in most of the sessions is that we end up patting each other on the back. We’re not getting to the substance of it. That’s where it is lacking (Mandzuk, 1999, p.17).

Hargreaves (2001) adds that when conflict does occur, teachers often describe themselves as “devastated,” “personally attacked,” and “angry,” and tend to avoid any further uncomfortable dialogue by engaging in “superficial politeness.” Wenger et al. (2002) argue, however, that members cannot realistically benefit from the strengths of a professional learning community without striving to effectively manage these less comfortable aspects of professional group dynamics.

How can the conflict that inevitably arises within a professional learning community be used to foster further collaboration? Again, this is unclear. Goulet, Krentz, and Christiansen (2003) argue that although conflict needs to be addressed “respectfully and

constructively,” they later state that certain group members within their own research needed to put conflicting expectations “aside” and they needed to work “creatively” together. In exploring the collaborative work of several university professors, Elliot and Woloshyn (1997) only vaguely address possible tensions relating to members’ roles and responsibilities by highlighting the need to re-establish group goals. Wenger et al. (2002) stress the need for members to identify group problems within the context of either community/practice or domain and then to correct them by selecting from a prescribed list of interventions that include increasing the awareness of individual members’ needs and interests, enlisting new members with new perspectives, and sharing leadership by renegotiating members’ responsibilities.

Research Questions

Based on the questions surrounding the nature of collaboration in relation to a professional learning community’s essential elements of community/practice and domain, this study is guided by the following question: What is the practice of a professional learning community of teachers as they collaborate to understand, develop, and implement the group’s chosen domain to their individual teaching? This question arose when a group of teachers from Ecole Belair School, a moderately-sized Middle Years school in suburban Winnipeg, decided to develop the imaginative component of their teaching and studied and integrated Kieran Egan’s theory of Imagination and Teaching into their professional practice. Briefly, Kieran Egan’s (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning that is grounded in L. S. Vygotsky’s (1987) work argues that there are innovative ways in which the imaginative capacities of both

teachers and students can be further engaged in order to enhance learning. More specifically, then, this study explores the dynamics of a group of Middle Years teachers as they work together over a two-year period to understand Egan's theory, as well as its Vygotskian underpinnings, and then to develop and apply the theory to their respective Middle Years practices. Arising from the question posed above are the following research questions: (a) What factors within the professional learning community *enhance* or *hinder* collaboration among group members? (b) How do members adapt to the *competing* and *changing expectations* within the group? (c) How does the professional learning community's practice support the development of members' *unique* understanding and application of Egan's theory and its Vygotskian underpinnings to their respective Middle Years practice? (d) What professional capabilities do members develop as a result of the group's collaborative efforts and how valuable is the group experience in creating these outcomes?

Significance of the Study

This study examines the two-year experience of a group of seven staff members from one Middle Years School in suburban Winnipeg. The community/practice developed by this group, as well as its chosen domain is unique to this particular experience, because it is highly dependent on the shared resources of individual members, the changing social dynamics of the group, as well as its shared common goals. The intent of this account, then, is to analyze the elements of the process that can support collective learning in teaching, as well as in other professions. As Peshkin

(1985, p. 280) writes:

When I disclose what I have seen, my results invite other researchers to look where I did and see what I saw. My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily as truth ... but as positions about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that may fit their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries.

Theoretically, this study will contribute to the understanding of the specific practices adopted by a professional learning community that can enhance or hinder the development of teacher collaboration. Moreover, it will help to deepen the understanding of the complex dynamics involved in teacher collaboration to include, among other issues, the possible conflicting and changing expectations of group members. As Little (1990) states, there exists very little “close up description” of the work that teachers do together, as well as the professional capabilities that their interactions produce. This study will not only serve to describe how teachers develop a greater understanding of Egan’s (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning, along with its Vygotskian (1987) underpinnings, but also how teachers collaborate to ultimately apply their individual visions of the domain to their respective Middle Years practice. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the understanding of what professional capabilities may be produced as a result of this type of collaboration.

Empirically, this analysis can help teachers and administrators, as well as school boards, to better understand the complex dynamics involved in long-term professional learning communities, as well as the capabilities that may or may not be produced from this type of joint work. Furthermore, it can provide teachers, administrators, and school

boards with innovative ideas regarding the development of imagination in Middle Years teaching and learning.

Limitations of the Study

There are four significant limitations to this study. The first limitation involves the principal investigator's participation as an active member of the professional learning community that was studied. Although this dual role allows the investigator to develop a more profound understanding of the ongoing experiences of Ecole Belair School's group members over a two-year time frame, it also raises the possible issue of bias. Members, who are being asked to privately reflect on issues relating to the ongoing group process, either through journal entries, focus-group discussions, or individual interviews, are submitting these entries to the principal investigator who is also a fellow group member. In this respect, Weick (1995) acknowledges that maintaining a stable professional learning community often comes at the expense of members' sense of freedom of expression. Because the investigator is also an active participant in the ongoing social dynamics of the group, members may have felt constrained from freely sharing their individual reflections of their group experiences for fear of negatively impacting the long-term social dynamics of the group. This may, in turn, have shaped the investigator's interpretations of group events over the two-year period.

Nevertheless, the dual role of principal investigator and active group member provides the investigator with a unique perspective on the group experience. It may also help to build trust within the professional learning community as members witness the investigator struggling with similar issues and concerns. The participation of the

investigator as a group member in the ongoing experiences of the professional learning community, however, demands a degree of personal involvement in the group's shared experiences. The "intersubjective" nature of the inquiry, then, challenges the investigator to ensure that all members' voices are genuinely represented throughout the process. As Connolly and Clandinin (1991, p. 128) state:

Seeing and describing story in the everyday actions of teachers, students, administrators, and others requires a subtle twist of mind on behalf of the enquirer. It is in the tellings and retellings that entanglements become acute, for it is here that temporal and social/cultural horizons are set and reset. How far of a probe in the participants' past and future is far enough? Which community spheres should be probed and to what social depth should the inquiry proceed? The two narratives of participant and researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry.

The second limitation of the study involves the role of the principal in the professional learning community that was studied. Because the principal of the school is an active participant in the group, members are not only able to benefit from her broader perspective, but also from her general commitment to professional development and lifelong learning in the school. Although from the outset it was made clear that the principal's involvement in the group reflects her professional goal of familiarizing herself with Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory, other group members may feel limited in their freedom to freely express their thoughts and ideas if they perceive her role to be evaluative in nature. Furthermore, the principal's participation in the group process may unwittingly bias members towards a certain educational perspective throughout the

group process if members think that they need to confine their exploration of issues of the domain to either the framework of the school, the principal's personal view, or the school division's broader educational philosophy. In other words, the professional learning community's practice may be affected by the principal's active participation in the group process.

The third limitation of the study involves the nature of the professional learning community. All members are part of the larger Ecole Belair School staff community and although this may provide them with ongoing support between meetings, it may also complicate the dynamics of the professional learning community in question. Possible tensions between members stemming from the larger staff community can potentially complicate and destabilize the social dynamics of the smaller professional learning community even though the tensions may not have their origins within the group itself. Because of the possible permeation of the dynamics of one social system into another, it may, at times, be difficult for the investigator to fully appreciate the source of a particular tension that has somehow constrained the development of the group's essential elements of community/practice and domain.

Finally, the fourth limitation involves the issue of trust. As mentioned earlier, Coleman (1990) argues that all relations involving time asymmetry and the long-term investment of group resources include "risk." To accept risk in a simple point, is to accept to trust in the relations between group members. The importance of developing a relationship of trust between members of the professional learning community and the investigator are important so that members feel safe in sharing their personal reflections for study purposes. A member's loss of trust in the investigator will, in turn, negatively

impact on the investigator's ability to accurately study the professional learning community's experiences. Alternately, if the investigator loses trust in a member or members of the group, she may not be willing to accept the risk involved in a certain area of inquiry or in the investment of certain group resources. As a consequence, her ability to study the professional learning community's experiences could be negatively impacted. Overall, her two-year analysis of the group's work will occur in the following manner.

Overview of the Study

While the purpose of Chapter 1 has been to explore the issues relating to the research problem and its related questions, the purpose of Chapter 2 is to examine the conceptual framework and to review the related literature underlying the issue of collaboration in a professional learning community. The experiences of Ecole Belair School's professional learning community, then, will be examined using Wenger et al.'s (2002) framework of the three essential elements of collaboration: community/practice, and domain. The elements of community/practice are initially explored, with limited success, using Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital and more specifically, the four forms of capital that include: (a) trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. How this type of collaborative work ultimately impacts on group members' professional practice, however, is another issue. The concern here is not the nature of the group's chosen domain or stated purpose, but rather what the group *does* with the chosen domain and how it is developed and integrated into the members' professional practice. In order to

study the group's intellectual capital, or what Rastogi (2003) describes as the innovative capabilities created from the sharing and combining of individual group members' "knowledge resources," the group's domain must also be discussed. It is for this reason that Chapter 2 will examine the Ecole Belair School group's chosen domain that relates to Kieran Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning and its' Vygotskian (1987) underpinnings. This chapter will then conclude with a brief discussion of intellectual capital and whether the outcomes created by the group are substantive or tangible in nature, and/or symbolic in their affect of professional values and beliefs (Pfeffer, 1981).

Chapter 3 focuses on the study's methodology and will begin by briefly discussing the background of the study, as well as the nature of the sample. It will then outline the Ecole Belair School professional learning community's goals as they relate to the research questions. Because the collaborative experience extends over a two-year period, both the study's planning and implementation stages will be explored, as well as the study's ethical implications. The research instruments over the two-year period that involve group members' journal entries, focus-group discussions, and individual interviews, will be outlined, along with the analysis of the data using Wenger et al.'s (2002) essential elements of professional learning communities, namely, community/practice, and domain. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a brief summary of the main points of the methodological framework that will be used.

Chapter 4 will present the results of the study in relation to the literature on professional learning communities and the analysis of the group's development of community and practice within the context of Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) human and

social capital. The findings relating to the group's dynamics will also be linked to the development of the professional learning community's chosen domain that relates to Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning.

Chapter 5 will provide an overview of the study and an initial discussion of the findings within the context of Coleman's (1987; 1988; 1990) theory and Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) three essential elements of communities of practice. The findings will then be further explored using Weick's (1995) Sensemaking. From this, changes to social capital theory will be suggested. Finally, this chapter will discuss implications for both practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Wenger (1998) highlights the elements of community/practice, and domain as essential in the development of collaboration within a professional learning community. This type of community is defined as a group of professionals sharing particular interests and who commit to collaborating in sharing group resources on an ongoing basis to develop a body of shared knowledge that will ultimately contribute to all members' professional practice. The elements of community and practice refer to the nature of the dynamics between group members as they develop ways of engaging with one another with the common goal of developing shared knowledge in the chosen domain. The domain, then, is the group's "raison d'etre" or rather, its purpose. What isn't clear, however, is how value is created in the interplay between these three elements of a professional learning community. Moreover, what value is created from this type of joint work? As Woolcock (1998, p. 155) argues, "the latest equipment and most innovative ideas in the hands or minds of the brightest, fittest person... will amount to little unless that person also has access to others to inform, correct, assist with, and disseminate their work".

In studying the factors that both nurture and constrain the collaborative efforts of Ecole Belair School's professional learning community, as well as the innovative capabilities created as a result of these efforts, this chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part of the chapter examines the elements of a group's *community/practice*. Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory is used in the

analysis of professional learning communities because it considers the individual concept of human capital, or value, as well as the four forms of capital that are generated from a group's elements of community and practice. Therefore, how members work together and develop common ways of engaging in the study of the group's chosen domain will be explored by examining the concept of individual human capital and the four forms of social capital that Coleman (1988) has identified: (a) trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. What the professional learning community studies is relevant to the group's development of community/practice, but it also reflects the group's purpose and therefore, it defines the value of their accomplishments.

The second part of this chapter explores Ecole Belair School group's *domain* that is Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning, and its Vygotskian (1987) underpinnings. Examining the nature of the group's domain within the context of its community and practice does not, however, address how the group's collaborative experience has affected members' professional practice. In other words, what innovative capabilities does the interplay of community/practice and domain produce? Do the professional outcomes ultimately affect student learning? The third part of this chapter explores these questions of the interplay between the elements of *community/practice and domain* by using Nahapiet and Goshal's (1998) concept of "intellectual capital," which refers to the unique value or innovative capabilities created by the development of a group's community and practice that enables the sharing of individual resources or rather, their human capital. As Rastogi (2003, p. 3) explains, "Intellectual capital ... may properly be viewed as the ... capability of an enterprise to co-ordinate, orchestrate, and

deploy its knowledge resources towards creating value in pursuit of its future vision.”

The concept of intellectual capital will then be further discussed using Pfeffer’s (1981) concepts of substantive and symbolic outcomes in the exploration of both the professional beliefs and actions developed as a result of a group’s collaborative efforts.

Community/Practice

The Initial Framework

The spontaneous and decentralized emergence of social order among humans is one of the most important developments to be studied in the late twentieth century (Coleman, 1990). Studies, in fact, show that the organizational information exchanged through informal conversations often occurring in both primary and secondary relationships, such as at the company coffee machine or at a popular “watering hole”, often proves to be of equal, or even greater value, than the information shared through formal forums, like meetings and industry journals. Social order is so important, in fact, that Fukuyama (1999) suggests that it, and thus social capital, can be created from a variety of sources ranging from the more hierarchical and centrally structured forms of authority to highly spontaneous and decentralized relationships. Lin (2001) describes a social structure as a hierarchically connected set of individuals in varying positions and roles that possess varying types and amounts of resources. The members of this group share specific standards or codes regarding the use of group resources and they entrust each other to “act on” these codes. “Social structure implies a generic self, an interchangeable part – as filler of roles and follower of rules – but not concrete, individualized selves. The ‘relation to subject’, then, at this level, is categorical and abstract” (Weick, 1995, p. 71). The “spontaneous order” that emerges from social structures, whether it be from rigidly

structured negotiations or from “blind interaction of natural forces” between individuals, tends to be centered on the existence of informal norms and standards of behaviour. In contrast, hierarchically structured organizations are more likely to rely on published rules and regulations that promote collective behaviour.

In an attempt to describe human action and the creation of social capital within a social structure, both Fukuyama (1999) and Coleman (1988) refer to the essential integration of the economic and the sociological perspectives on the creation and stabilization of social order. The discipline of economics, on the one hand, with its focus on market exchange, notes that order is primarily created by the existence of spontaneous and rational norms for the purpose of maximizing the realization of individual interests. Fukuyama (1995, 1999) explains that the term “rational” simply refers to the fact that alternative norms are considered and debated prior to individual action. The discipline of sociology, on the other hand, is focused predominantly on the existence of hierarchically and “inherited” societal norms. Fukuyama states that sociology’s devotion to the study of social norms lies within the context of the individual’s gradual internalization of a set of roles and identities, and as Coleman (1988) adds, the influence of societal constraints and obligations.

Coleman (1988) claims that social capital theory combines the economic principle of rational action and its underlying premise that each individual has control and interest in certain resources and events with the sociological focus on social context. By integrating the two paradigms, social capital theory rejects the rational action model’s tendency towards highly individualistic thought. In this respect, Lin (2001, p. 42) explains that “we define ... social capital as those resources accessible through social connections.” In

this study, what is being “connected” are the individual group members’ resources that form the basis of a professional learning community’s social capital that is crucial to the group’s shared success. This is why the study of social capital must first begin with an examination of human capital, or what Rastogi (2003) refers to as individual member’s “knowledge resources.”

Human Capital

What, in fact, is capital? Bourdieu (1986) explains that “capital is accumulated labour ... which, when appropriated ... by agents or groups of agents enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of ... living labour” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). This definition describes a “force” that exists in social structures that is at the basis of the consistencies inherent in the “social world”. It has the potential to produce gains and to replicate itself in either its original form or in a more developed version. The “distribution” of the different types of capital within a structure reflects the forces that govern its functioning. In other words, the different types and varying levels of capital, or value that exist in a social structure are reflective of the forces that create social order in groups.

Although there are potentially many ways of defining capital, Coleman (1988) argues that human capital exists in the cumulative knowledge, skills, and experiences, that allow individuals and groups to act in innovative ways. Less tangible than the physical or financial capital that embodies either tools and equipment or money, human capital involves the utilization of *personal* resources. Lin (2001) explains that the acquisition of personal resources can involve the transfer, exchange, or inheritance of

resources, as well as the investment in one's own efforts and assets. It is important to distinguish between personal resources, such as education and experience that are fully owned by individuals and "positional resources", such as status, that are inherent in particular social positions. The latter form of resource is less permanent because the benefits are limited to the time that individuals are associated with those particular positions. Positional resources are more powerful, however, in the range of other resources that they can control. Lin (2001) adds that individuals occupying positions in hierarchical structures use and manage resources that can extend well beyond those that the positions are allotted. This issue of sharing group resources that is at the basis of a group's community/practice moves this discussion beyond the issue of human capital and into the creation of a group's social capital.

Social Capital and Social Structures

As described earlier, social capital is embedded in the changing nature of the relations among individuals within social structures. In fact, it is through the development of a group's community/practice that members' human capital or rather, individual resources, are collectively shared. In the end, the necessity for adequate physical capital and the development of a group's human capital fosters a unique social capital or value that ultimately results in the attainment of the group's shared goals.

Why, then, do group members collaborate in order to achieve their collective purposes? Granovetter (1992) states that it is often in the individual's best interest to do so, or that it is perceived as the "morally right" thing to do. Also, members may choose to collaborate with other members because they perceive the regular expectation to do so

as an integral part of their personal relationships with other members of the group. These points underscore Granovetter's (1992) notion of "embeddedness" that is the basis of the social structure of networks. He argues that all social action and outcomes are influenced by "structural embeddedness" that relates to the structure of the relations of a group. Structural embeddedness encompasses the impersonal elements of relationships, such as the positions and the roles of members, and where they are located within the group. Coleman (1988) adds that variations in the structure of relations are affected by such factors as the logistics of social contacts, the degree of individual resources, the need for personal assistance, and each member's tendency to request and offer aid to other members. Furthermore, the "closure" of the social structure, or the degree to which members are able to provide feedback to each other regarding the sharing of the group's resources, helps to foster trustworthiness that results in effective collective behaviour.

Although it is true that beneficial transactions often occur between strangers, the expectations and obligations embedded within these temporary relationships are minimal. Within a closed group, however, the reciprocal exchange is far more complex and far more important. As such, Granovetter (1992) explains that this exchange is not often immediate or simultaneous, and is often not based on the careful loss-gain calculations that characterize "temporary" or "one-of-a-kind" market transactions. Rather, it is based on the kinds of personal relationships, and more specifically, the concern for the welfare of other members of the group. In essence, a member's behaviour is not only affected by specific relations in the group, but by the "aggregate impact" of all the relations in the social structure. In the end, these relationships depend on the mutual expectations that have been embedded within the structure of personal relations that can ultimately result

in high levels of trustworthy behaviour. Group members, in fact, like each other. The issue of expectations and the subsequent development of group trust, then, are fundamental to the development of a group's community/practice that generates the social capital that enables the attainment of the group's shared goals.

Forms of Social Capital

The attainment of a group's shared goals depends on the value created in the development of a group's community/practice, with its basis in individual members' human capital. This value can be examined using Coleman's (1988) four forms of capital that include the group's development of: (a) trustworthiness, expectations and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. It is these forms of capital that enable the "micro-to-macro" transition of members' individual strengths to valuable shared group resources. Coleman (1990, p. 304) states, "Social capital... is created when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action."

Trustworthiness, obligations, and expectations. Different social arrangements are necessary to achieve a group's shared interest when noneconomic transactions are not enforceable with legal contracts. Coleman (1990), in fact, explains that any relation that involves time asymmetry, where the goals of a group require the investment of resources in order to create value over a prolonged period of time, involves "risk". Obviously, legal contracts are attempts to reduce risks, but groups, such as professional learning communities cannot have legal contracts for each and every obligation. "This

incorporation of risk into the decision can be treated under a general heading that can be described by the single word “trust” (Coleman, 1990, p. 91).

Thus, an important question is: Why do members of a professional learning community decide to place trust in each other to achieve shared goals? Coleman (1990) argues that the specific relationship between trustor and trustee implies an investment in authority by the trustor that will enable the trustee to act in new and different ways that benefit all concerned. A community of mutual trust is, to some extent, a generalization of the more specific trust relations developed among members, but even more valuable than simple relationships. “In a well functioning community, people are constantly doing small favors for each other without expectation of direct returns” (Putnam, 2000, p. 21). This type of more “generalized reciprocity” is unique in that it is not based on the level of trust placed on a specific group member, but rather on the belonging of members to a shared community/practice. Within this context, then, members are engaging in the same activity that will ultimately lead to the achievement of the group’s shared interest. Members, therefore, must trust, at least to some degree, that others will fulfill their obligations since no one member can fully observe the actions of all the other members. Again, it should be emphasized that trust is not necessary for cooperation. Fukuyama (1995) states that group members’ self-interest, along with legal contracts, can effectively ensure that participants’ expectations are being satisfied and that the group’s common purpose is being respected. The most effective communities, however, are developed from the expectations and subsequent norms that stem from “shared ethical values” rather than formal contracts (Fukuyama, 1995). The acceptance of group norms that are rooted in members’ expectations regarding such values as honesty, dependability, and loyalty

allow for the creation of social capital that fosters the emergence of a much broader and richer set of relationships. In these types of communities, the created social capital is not developed primarily from self-interest and legal contracts, but rather from the social virtues reflected in the form of group norms that are based on individual member's expectations. In the educational system, "this means teachers trusting people who may not be well-known to them, who are not familiar friends, whose predictability and reliability have not been proved many times in the past" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 28). Within this type of social structure, each member is both trustor and trustee for others. When group members decide to break the trust of others by rejecting established norms, however, valuable feedback in the form of enforced norms and sanctions serves to protect the group's community/practice.

Norms and sanctions. Social norms can obviously reinforce trust within a professional learning community since they purposely dictate what actions that are considered correct and proper by members in achieving their collective goals. "Norms are expectations about actions – one's own action, that of others, or both – which express what action is right or what action is wrong" (Coleman, 1987, p. 135). Fukuyama (1995) adds that when people collaborate in an enterprise and trust each other's actions because they have all agreed to behave in accordance with certain shared ethical values, the social capital generated from the new associations can be significant. Within this context, social norms are valuable because the norms, accepted by members, generally result in more cohesive community, as well as a more efficient practice that ultimately leads to a higher level of collective satisfaction. Coleman (1987), in fact, argues that the group's

overall acceptance of a norm is most greatly influenced by the number of individuals who actually observe the norms, which is self-evidently true. However, a high level of group satisfaction can sometimes be created at the expense of certain members whose actions are most constrained by those norms. Hargreaves (1994, p. 194-195), in fact, suggests that:

Collaborative cultures can be bounded or restricted in nature with teachers focusing on rather safer activities of sharing resources, materials and ideas, or on planning units of study together in a rather workaday fashion ... without challenging each others' practices, perspectives, and assumptions. Collaborative cultures can, in these instances, degenerate into comfortable and complacent cultures. Collegiality can be reduced to congeniality.

Thus, norms are a form of capital that have the potential to strengthen a group's community/practice leading to the attainment of a group's shared goals. They also work to constrain actions that ultimately limit a professional learning community's ability to create unique value or to act creatively. In some groups, obviously the status quo becomes the predominant norm and sanctions are applied to members who deviate from it.

In an effort to reinforce social norms and to limit the negative external effects on individuals within the group, sanctions, in the form of either rewards or punishments, are often necessary. Coleman (1990) explains that in groups with strong social relations, sanctions often involve "restrictions of exchange" with offending members. For example, the sharing of resources or the interactions involving offending members may be limited for a period of time. Without the presence of norms reinforced by sanctions,

the level and direction of the group's developed practice could reflect the interests of a few or even a single member. In this respect, Coleman (1987, p. 153) notes that "the social system then comes to consist of individualistic solutions to individual problems, with all suffering at the hands of each, as each carries out his actions unconstrained by their consequences for others".

Coleman (1988) adds that once a norm becomes internalized by members, they identify, more or less, with the "will" of the group and allow this to direct the group's practice. By identifying with the group's will and internalizing the group's interest as their own, individuals develop an "internal sanctioning system" that renders the on-going supervision of their actions less time consuming. Regardless, internal and group generated sanctions both indicate group members' decisions to give up the right to control some of their personal actions. This "giving up" is explored within the context of authority relations.

Authority relations. Fukuyama (1999) explains that although social order is often hierarchical and highly centralized, the basis for order can also emerge from more unstructured or "decentralized" interactions of individuals. Individuals, believing that it may be in their best interests to do so, may decide to give up the right to control some personal actions within a social structure. In other words, when an individual has the freedom to control particular actions and yet, also has the freedom to transfer control of these actions to other members, the voluntary vesting of authority in some members often results. Coleman (1990) states that in social structures, which often consist of one or more authority relations, group members hold rights to control, and to transfer that

control to others, over a range of actions. Goulet, Krentz, and Christiansen's (2003) study on the fundamental components of collaboration among teacher educators, for example, highlights the importance of recognizing the "shifting role of expert" and the value that can be created from the "complementary relationships" of authority within the group.

Why would members of a professional learning community vest rights of control over some of their actions in each other or in one member? This type of transfer from one person to another or a group of people is often made because members believe that the exercise of authority by another person or other people will benefit them individually. The subordination of a particular member's interest may result because the individual believes that acting alone is too costly or that the actions implemented by the individuals in authority, or those under this authority, are as effective at achieving the individual and group goals as the person's own actions would be. Little (1990) adds that the issue of interdependence is central in this type of decision-making. The motivation to collaborate within a social structure is increased significantly when members perceive the success of their goals to be more easily attained, not on their own, but when they are working with one another. How is the motivation to collaborate nurtured? In this culture, at least, Pfeffer (1981) points out that rationality is a "valued social ideal" and consensus related to a group's practice and shared perspective is more easily achievable than consensus relating to preferences and values. A significant source of group authority, therefore, stems from members' abilities to not only effectively argue the benefits of a specific course of action in achieving the group's goals, but to also successfully argue that the

chosen course of action will honour the preferences and values of all group members. As Pfeffer (1981, p. 16) states:

thus, in a situation of interpersonal influence, one might expect to see attempts made to claim that a given choice accomplishes or provides what the individual wants, rather than a strategy which directly attempts to change the preferences or values of the person.

Furthermore, the vesting of authority in others can be “rationally contagious.” If a number of members have vested authority in a particular individual and this vesting is no more costly than retaining the authority to themselves as individuals, then it is a rational choice to follow the advice of the person in achieving the collective goals. Moreover, a closed social structure enables members, who may have made the vesting of authority “mutually contingent” to sanction individuals who do not comply because they are able to provide direct feedback to other members regarding the group’s shared practices. Once vested, however, there are at least three limitations to authority. Specifically, authority is limited to a range of activities over which it can be implemented; to the timeframe within which authority can be exercised; and to the prescriptive nature of the authority being evoked. In the end, members in the informal organizations always retain the right to revoke vested authority (Coleman, 1990).

For this reason, the limitations inherent in a professional learning community’s authority relations can be significant for understanding how it works. The group’s shared goals and the support that can be generated by members to continue to work to further this interest may lead individuals to transfer too many rights to a central authority, creating serious limitations on individual autonomy and creativity. In turn, too little

authority vested in the community negatively impacts on the group's community/practice and limits the creation of social capital that is necessary to achieve the collective goals. Hargreaves (2001) further adds that significant "emotional fallout" often occurs in a professional learning community as a result of sensitivities and uncertainties relating to issues of status and authority between members. In fact, because of pre-existing statuses, assuming a leadership role for a teacher in a group can create emotional discomfort for other members that ultimately affect the group's community/practice. In a professional learning community, however, many different types of authority relations exist, as well as a general consensus regarding the individuals who are best suited to further the group's interest. In the end, the essential elements of community/practice are inevitably linked to the group's collective goals and rely on the effective sharing of the group's resources. Information channels, then, is the fourth form of capital that enables the creation of social capital from the group's community/practice.

Information channels. Coleman (1988) explains that the potential for sharing information is embedded in the group's social relations. Because the acquisition of information demands the investment of personal resources, the sharing of information, both directly and indirectly, can be an efficient way of developing social capital. Granovetter (1992) argues that "cohesive groups," are more effective at sharing information and generating norms that foster the necessary behaviour for the attainment of the collective goals. Fukuyama (1999) agrees that groups that have informal norms based on shared ethical standards are conducive to a freer flow of information than hierarchical, bureaucratic, organizations where more legally-defined less flexible rules

and regulations often cannot facilitate the transfer of complex information. Pfeffer (1981) adds that social structures are comprised of people with diverse experiences regarding norms, values, and expectations who become members of a social structure partly with the intention of developing enough of an understanding of the social environment so that a stable and predictable working community can be created. This point highlights the nature of social systems as “structured informational environments” where the development and implementation of information channels from the interplay of a group’s community/practice and domain determine, to some extent, how causal relations are perceived and which dimensions in the learning process are emphasized by members. In fact, it is through the development of the group’s controlled interaction patterns that “consensually shared perceptions and definitions of the world” are established (Pfeffer, 1981). This type of sharing not only further connects members to the group, but it also provides support for the legitimation of their beliefs. To challenge a group’s understanding of their learning is to question their developed beliefs and adopted actions in the pursuit of their shared goals, and to introduce a measure of uncertainty and ambiguity into the learning process. It is for this reason that Pfeffer (1981, p. 21) states that “given the certainty and social cohesion they facilitate, it is quite understandable why shared paradigms or systems of meaning ... come to have great stability and resistance to change”. They become, in a sense, a new status quo. Even though information channels are important to the development of the group’s community/practice, they still do not address the nature of the information being shared. What, then, is the group’s specific interest or purpose? Why are they organizing a learning community? What is the topic

or issue being examined? In other words, what is the professional learning community's domain?

Domain

So far, this chapter has explored the issue of human capital vested in individuals, and the social capital vested in groups, created from the development of a group's community/practice. The specific purpose or "raison d'être" of the professional learning community, however, can only be explored through the group's domain. It is what establishes the group's identity to people, both inside and outside the social structure, and ultimately, it defines the value of the group's achievements.

The specific domain of Ecole Belair School's professional learning community surfaced in 2003 when Kieran Egan and the "Imaginative Education Research Group" (IERG) at Simon Fraser University applied for SSHRC funding in order to systematically implement and test Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning in eight diverse schools across Canada, one of which was Ecole Belair School in Winnipeg. In response to Egan's funding proposal, seven staff members volunteered to be participants in the study and began familiarizing themselves with his theoretical work. Unfortunately, in October of 2003, Egan's funding proposal was denied and the project was, at least for a time, abandoned. The seven interested staff members, who were still very interested in both the notion of reflective practice and Egan's theoretical framework, began to explore possible ways of integrating the theory into their own Middle Years practice.

In order to examine the value created by Ecole Belair School's professional learning community, the human capital and the subsequent social capital created from the group's community/practice is analyzed in this thesis. The group's "raison d'être", however,

must now be explored. The domain not only establishes the group's purpose, which is to study the nature and development of imaginative teaching and learning in Middle Years, but it also provides the necessary context for the later examination of newly developed capabilities, or rather, the intellectual capital created by the group's collaborative efforts. It is for these reasons that the general principles of Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning, and its Vygotskian (1987) underpinnings will now be discussed, as well as the "cognitive tools" that include the different strategies needed to enhance imaginative thinking throughout childhood development.

Essentially, imagination is at the basis of an individual's creation of meaningful knowledge of the world. Within this view, Egan (1992) is referring not as much to a person's ability to create surreal images in the mind, but rather to the imaginative tendency that exists in the synergy between such features as perception, memory, emotion, and idea generation. Egan's (1997) theory is deeply embedded in Vygotsky's (1987) work that emphasizes that the learning of sign systems, like oral language, develops into "psychological functions" that shape an individual's understanding of the world. Imagination is the integral element embedded within this process that enables a person to think of things in a more flexible context. The constructed images of reality that are generated through the social interactions fostered by speech development are, in turn, created alongside the constructed images of the imagination. In this sense, imagination has a highly directed nature: "It is not, in particular, something distinct from reason, but rather it is what gives reason flexibility, energy, and vividness (Egan, 1992, p. 64). The development of this type of imaginative thinking, then, requires the careful consideration of the types of understanding, both in breadth and depth, most actively

dominant in learners at any given time throughout their development. It is for this reason that the types of understanding that Egan refers to as the Somatic, the Mythic, the Romantic, the Philosophic, and the Ironic will now be explored in detail.

The study of Egan's (1997) theory begins with the issue of Somatic understanding. It is a "prelinguistic consciousness" that allows people to make sense of their surroundings beginning at birth although it continues to exist to varying degrees throughout life. The mimetic skills associated with this type of consciousness, such as smiling or hitting, have been used over thousands of years and have allowed humans to represent and share thoughts, often essential for survival, in a non-linguistic manner. This genetically generated understanding exists throughout life, although it is continuously affected by the growth of other types of understanding.

If we are born with a certain prelinguistic understanding of our environment, how is this understanding further developed in the early years of childhood? Mythic understanding is most actively dominant in children between the ages of two and eight years and develops alongside the weakening genetic influences of somatic understanding. This level says that the use of narrative is an effective way of not only communicating relevant information about people and events, but also to develop their own sense of the characters' moods, experiences, and sentiments. In fact, Egan (1997) adds that although there is a strong inclination in the educational setting to base young children's learning in the immediate and the concrete, young children also appear to readily accept, and naturally integrate, inversions of reality in their stories and playtime. For example, young children's understanding of the world often includes multicoloured horses that can fly, clothed rabbits that can talk, and tin men that can think. Embedded within these myths

and fairy tales are binary opposites, such as living and non-living, that help children to not only understand the concept of oppositions, but intermediate terms as well, such as half-living or half-dead. For example, after spending some time talking to the dog and watching him eat, children eventually conclude that the dog does not talk back and isn't able to eat using utensils. It is through the gradual creation of this particular human/animal binary opposite, and its basis in language development, that children are able to organize information and gradually develop a sense of understanding of their environment.

Because in Egan's conception one type of understanding adapts to the growth of another, the cognitive tools necessary for the development of Mythic understanding are also essential for the growth of Romantic understanding. In fact, this type of understanding is particularly relevant to the Ecole Belair School group's goals of understanding and applying Egan's (1997) theory to their respective Middle Years practice. It is between the ages of eight and fifteen years that young and adolescent children strive to develop a sense of security about who they are and where they "fit" into what is often perceived as an infinitely extensive reality. By exploring the "edges" of reality, such as learning about the tallest man or the fastest woman in the world, and learning about heroes and their transcendent virtues, such as compassion and selflessness, children develop a sense of control in their own lives. This changing blend of rational and mythic thinking, fuelled by the humanizing of knowledge and thinking in metaphors, is unique to this type of understanding and reflects these people's vacillating "compromise with reality". Eventually, binary opposites can no longer accommodate the complexity of the adolescents' environments and earlier myths give way to more mature

definitions of facts of reality. In the end, this promotion of rationality, with its basis in language acquisition, weakens Mythic understanding by depleting children's "intuitive relationship" with their environment.

These types of understanding do not exist in isolation, but rather they foster the development of the others. Thus, with its basis in both Mythic and Romantic understanding, Philosophic understanding is nurtured mostly through the support of academic communities. From the earlier perspectives of the extremes and the infinite, adolescents' fragmented understanding of young children are now beginning to be perceived as the connected parts of a larger system or process. Egan (1997) argues that the meaning of these larger concepts cannot yet be grasped, although the thinking associated with this type of understanding is purposely directed towards the gradual understanding of "truth" relating to both their environment and to themselves. It is for this reason that the identification of detail is the basis of Philosophic understanding. By struggling with incongruent details and opposing facts, the framework of understanding in young adults is challenged and developed. In the end, the gentle creation of dissonance in early adult thinking can facilitate a deeper and more complex framework of understanding. At the extreme, these disjunctions can result in adolescents' development of thoughts of anxiety, depression, and suicide.

Although Ironic understanding is less relevant to Middle Years teaching, it is important to the understanding of Egan's (1997) theory. As the development of Philosophic understanding strives to organize and clarify information into broader and more meaningful schemes, the goal of Ironic understanding is to explore and "play" with the inconsistencies that exist between constructed representations of reality and the

existence of reality itself. In short, it rejects the premise of the earlier understanding that a constructed scheme can easily represent the truth about reality. Egan (1997) argues that, in fact, it is through the use of such strategies as jokes, myths, and metaphors that the deficiencies in the use of language are exposed and a “truer” meaning of reality is sought. Reflexiveness is central to this type of thinking. For example, a variety of understandings can be generated by ironists from a common body of knowledge without them believing in the truthful representation of reality in any one irony. It takes the mental flexibility of people’s thinking to expose the inadequate flexibility of the human mind.

Egan’s (1997) levels of understanding and related cognitive tools represent the different ways that people are able to creatively construct meaning of their environment at various points in their intellectual development. Imagination is the factor that gives reason “flexibility, energy, and vividness” and ultimately enables people to think of things as “possibly being so” (Egan, 1997). In the end, these theoretical points represent the body of work of Ecole Belair School’s chosen domain, along with the goal of applying the theory to the teachers’ Middle Years practice. To study the interplay between the group’s domain within the context of their community/practice is to explore what the group does with the domain. This point relates not only to how the group develops their understanding of Egan’s (1997) theory, but also what, if any, innovative capabilities are created as a result of their individual and joint work. The value created from the interplay between a group’s community/practice and domain relates to the issue of intellectual capital that will now be explored.

Community/Practice and Domain

So far, the group's elements of community/practice, along with its integration of both human and social capital have addressed how members "come together" and engage one another in the study of the chosen domain. The element of domain, however, is separate as it addresses the group's chosen topic of study. It reflects the professional learning community's common interest in understanding and integrating Egan's (1997) theory to members' Middle Years practices. It is, in fact, the group's "raison d'être". The value created from the group's two-year collaborative effort, however, remains unclear. What knowledge will be developed and how will it impact on professional practice? What, if any, newly developed capabilities will be created from the interplay between the group's community/practice and domain? As Little (1990, p. 525) asks:

... do we have in teachers' collaborative work the creative development of well-informed choices, or the mutual reinforcement of poorly informed habit? Does teachers' time together advance the understanding and imagination they bring to their work, or do teachers merely confirm one another in present practice?

Intellectual Capital

This question relates, of course, to the intellectual value that teachers create from their collaborative work. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define intellectual capital as "the knowledge and knowing capability" of a professional learning community that generates a unique capacity for collective action. Rastogi's (2003) definition of intellectual capital more specifically refers to the capability of a group to organize, combine, and deploy individual members' knowledge resources to create value within the context of a group's

future vision. This description not only emphasizes the learning capability of the group, but also highlights the importance of working within the group's chosen domain. By emphasizing the group's ability to organize, combine, and deploy human capital, Rastogi (2003) is arguing for the need to create social capital through the development of the group's community/practice. In fact, both definitions emphasize the value associated with a group's ability to share and combine members' individual knowledge resources, which is a point that runs parallel with Coleman's (1988) notion of human capital with its emphasis on the individual capabilities of group members. Rastogi (2003), however, also emphasizes the need for the group to use its social capital to work towards the group's vision of the future. The importance of considering the group's domain is emphasized by Wenger et al. (2002) who argue that it is only by knowing the boundaries or the "leading edges" of the domain that members can effectively identify the information worth sharing and how the group's practice can best pursue its learning. Similar in nature to both human and social capital, however, intellectual capital is also integrative and complementary in its potential to create value. As Rastogi (2003, p. 2) also notes: "Intellectual or knowledge resources generate value only in and through their mutually supportive combinations and cross-fertilization. Unconnected or detached from one another, [the resources] tend to lose their meaning, significance and worth." And so, although the intellectual capital of a professional learning community has at its basis the human capital of its members, it also encompasses the social capital created by the group's community/practice working within the context of its chosen domain. The research questions for this study, which are (a) "What factors enhanced or hindered the Ecole Belair School group's collaborative efforts as they worked to understand Egan's

(1997) theory of Imagination and Learning, and apply the theory to their respective Middle Years practice?”, (b) “How did members adapt to the changing and at times, competing expectations within the group?”, (c) “How did the group support the development of members’ unique understanding and application of Egan’s theory to their respective teaching practices?”, and (d) “What professional capabilities do members develop as a result of the group’s collaborative efforts and how valuable is the group experience to the created outcomes” are questions that not only encompass the human capital of individual group members, but they are also the social capital created from the group’s community/practice, and its domain. It is the interplay between these essential elements that ultimately creates the innovative capabilities or intellectual capital that are specific to the group’s unique nature. An example of intellectual capital created from the interplay between community/practice and domain is found in the following description of the efforts of a group of teachers trying to develop an understanding of a particular concept within that domain:

At one point we were stuck in an awkward place where our articulation was fuzzy at best. None of us was satisfied with our understanding One of us started asking questions and verbalizing her doubts Another began drawing a diagram on the chalkboard in an attempt to capture the ideas ... As she did so, the rest of us responded to the diagram in ways that caused her to erase some parts and add others We soon found ourselves focusing on both the diagram that was evolving ... and on the new ideas being put forward by other people: new ideas to which we responded and that in turn changed the diagram. This interactive process continued

until we succeeded in clarifying our thinking (Goulet, Krentz, & Christiansen, 2003, p. 335).

Intellectual capital, then, is the combining of the group's unique resources to create or to deepen an understanding of a studied concept.

Substantive and Symbolic Outcomes

How, then, does this type of collaborative work affect teaching practice? As Little (1990, p. 525) says, "Arguments in favour of collaboration assume that teachers' understanding of their work will be advanced through time spent with others. A more ambitious curriculum will be achieved and more inventive instruction attempted. Such assumptions deserve examination." Pfeffer's (1981) work explores this specific issue from an organizational leader's perspective, but it relates as well to more loosely structured professional learning communities where members are both "leaders" and "recipients" of the value created by the group. Pfeffer (1981) argues that the two types of value generated from collaborative work are: (a) the "substantive" outcomes that involve activities and other observable results having a physical and objective referent, and (b) the "symbolic" outcomes that include sentiments of affect relating to professional values and beliefs. Although the development of symbolic outcomes relating to professional principles is crucial to subsequent objective or substantive actions integrated into practice, the existence of one does not ensure the existence, or future existence, of the other; the processes that develop substantive outcomes do not run parallel with those that develop symbolic outcomes of values and beliefs. Although external demands placed on group work can tighten the relationship between the two types of outcomes, the link

between the two is typically weak. This is a concern in teaching, and one worth examining, because “the intellectual capabilities and dispositions that colleagues bring to their work, and the quality of the products that follow from joint ventures, are no less crucial” (Little, 1990, p. 525).

Regardless of the nature of the outcomes produced, the fundamental point remains that the development of a professional learning community’s innovative capabilities is fostered through the relentless development of its human capital, the ongoing creation of social capital, and a persistent focus on the domain. In this respect, Coleman (1988) describes human capital as the value that exists in the cumulative knowledge, skill, and experience that allow individuals to act in innovative ways. It is through the development of a group’s community/practice with the collective purpose of studying a chosen domain that these individual resources are then shared and combined to create intellectual capital, in the form of both substantive and symbolic outcomes that are unique to the nature of the professional learning community that I examined.

Summary

The practice generated by a community and its shared goals is not intrinsically emancipatory in nature. It can be the source of personal transformation, as well as the agent of serious constraints. “The indigenous production of practice makes communities of practice the locus of creative achievements and [sometimes] the locus of inbred failures; the locus of resistance to oppression and the locus of the reproduction of its conditions; the cradle of the self but also the potential cage of the soul” (Wenger, 1998, p. 85).

With the goal of identifying factors that both nurture and constrain the value created by the Ecole Belair School group's experience, this chapter began by examining the interplay between two of the three elements that Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) described as essential to professional learning communities, namely community/practice. The analysis integrated the principles of Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory, including the fundamental issue of human capital. The interplay created from community/practice, then, was examined by integrating the theory's four forms of social capital that included: (a) trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. Although these forms of capital addressed how group members came together to engage one another in study, they did not address the focus of this study. It was for this reason that Wenger et al.'s (2002) third essential element of domain was introduced that referred specifically to Ecole Belair School group's exploration of Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning, and its Vygotskian (1987) underpinnings. Yet, how did the development of the domain impact professional practice? In other words, what was produced in the interplay between the group's elements of community/practice and domain? Based on these questions, Ecole Belair School's professional learning community's ability to create innovative capabilities or rather, intellectual capital in the form of both substantive and symbolic outcomes was explored. How this study specifically analyzes human, social, and intellectual capital will be further explored in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

By exploring the joint work of Ecole Belair School's professional learning community over a two-year period, this study identified factors that both enhance and hinder the group's collaborative efforts in attaining their shared goals. Although the data is specific to this community, the analysis of the significant factors to be considered in the educators' collaborative efforts is relevant to teachers in many other schools, at all grade levels, and hopefully to administrators and school boards. This study is qualitative in nature; it explores the research participants' narratives and reflections over the two-year period as they collaborate to develop a community and practice in the study of their chosen domain. Mills (2003) explains that this descriptive approach to data collection and analysis enables the investigator to understand the different group experiences from the unique perspectives of the research participants. Before exploring the study's sample, however, I will begin with a brief discussion of how the study began.

Background

As already noted, in 2003 Kieran Egan and the "Imaginative Education Research Group" (IERG) at Simon Fraser University applied for SSHRC funding in order to systematically implement and test his theory of Imagination and Learning in eight diverse schools across Canada, one of which was Ecole Belair School in Winnipeg. In response to Egan's funding proposal, seven staff members volunteered to be participants in the study and began familiarizing themselves with Egan's theoretical work. Unfortunately,

in October of 2003, Egan's funding proposal was denied, and the research project was abandoned. Fortunately, six of the original seven staff members of the school, along with one new member, remained interested in both the notion of reflective practice and Egan's theoretical work. Collectively, they began to explore possible ways of independently examining their own Middle Years practice using Egan's framework, and they decided to continue to study and apply Egan's theory to their teaching practice independent of the original SSHRC funding proposal. Following this, I began to study the members' experiences in attaining their shared goals as part of my Master's program at the University of Manitoba. A description of the staff members that chose to participate in the study will now be discussed.

The Sample

Early in 2003, the seven teachers at Ecole Belair School were informed of the possibility of Kieran Egan's research taking place at their school. Egan's SSHRC research criteria necessitated, however, that any volunteer participants integrate the theory into their teaching of Natural Science and/or Mathematics units. Once the SSHRC funding proposal was rejected, the seven teachers began to organize themselves into a professional learning community and to plan for the study and application of Egan's theory to their respective Middle Years practice. Because the planning process was already underway, the group decided not to re-open the project to other teachers. If another staff member had requested to take part in this project, a decision regarding possible participation would have been made collaboratively by the members who were already committed to the project.

The group of seven Middle Years staff that volunteered to participate in this study were all from Ecole Belair School, which is a moderately-sized Middle Years school in suburban Winnipeg. This non-probability sample that included me as the researcher consisted of one Grade Six teacher, three Grade Seven teachers, and one Grade Eight teacher from the English program, one Grade Seven teacher from the French Immersion program, and the principal of the school. The group consisting of five females and two males ranged in teaching experience from less than one year to twenty years of experience. The teacher that later joined the group was encouraged by other group members to do so because as a new university graduate, they could benefit from the new teacher's fresh teaching approach, his interest in educational theory, as well his possibly unique perspective as a young male teacher. It was also believed that the teacher could benefit personally and professionally from the collaborative experience that would ultimately result in the implementation of domain.

The Professional Learning Community's Goals

The group's chosen domain related to Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning. Briefly, this theory argues that there are innovative ways in which the imaginative capacities of both teachers and students can be further engaged in order to enhance student learning. Thus, the purpose of Ecole Belair School's professional learning community was to: (a) come to an understanding of Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning, along with its Vygotskian underpinnings, (b) collectively develop strategies to integrate the main ideas of Egan's theory to the Middle Years curriculum, and (c) apply these strategies to members' respective Middle Years practices.

Ultimately, the changes in the group's teaching practices were intended to enhance the quality of teaching and learning for all Middle Years students involved in the experience. A priority for the group was to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning of the Middle Years curriculum was in no way compromised by the integration of Egan's ideas. The study, however, not only analyzed how group members implemented Egan's theory to their teaching practice, but also how they collaborated to understand the theory.

The Study's Problem Statement and Research Questions

This study, then, explored the dynamics of a group of Middle Years teachers as they worked together over a two-year period to understand Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning and then to develop and apply individual applications of the theory to their respective Middle Years practice. Again, the research questions included: (a) What factors *enhanced* or *hindered* the collaboration among members of the professional learning community? (b) How did members adapt to the *competing* and *changing expectations* within the group? (c) How did the professional learning community's practice support the development of members' *unique* understanding and application of Egan's theory? (d) What professional capabilities do members develop as a result of the group's collaborative efforts and how valuable was the group experience in creating these outcomes? In order to answer these questions, a substantial amount of planning was required.

The Study's Stages

Planning Stage

From October 2003 to July 2004, the members of the professional learning community met regularly to develop the practice and to familiarize themselves with their chosen domain that included relevant literature relating to Egan's theoretical framework and its Vygotskian underpinnings, and to develop application strategies based on his theory. These meetings took place once or twice monthly, either in the evenings or during "educational leave days" generously granted by the school division. Participants were asked to: (a) attend meetings of two to three hours duration, (b) complete prescribed readings, (c) write journal reflections after group meetings based on the guiding questions provided (see Appendix A), and (d) collectively develop agendas for subsequent meetings.

There was one focus group session held in May 2004 during which group members had the opportunity to discuss issues relating to the domain that included the main ideas found in Egan's theory and the possibility of applying these ideas to the prescribed Manitoba Middle Years curriculum. The group discussion also explored issues of community and practice relating to the benefits and challenges of working collaboratively. This discussion was guided by a set of questions that were developed in advance, based on Shank's (2002) guidelines for interviews and focus-group discussions (see Appendix B). Dr. David Mandzuk (Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programs) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba facilitated the recorded session. Shortly afterwards, a written transcript of the group discussion was provided to all members.

Implementation Stage

This stage of the process took place from September 2004 to June 2005. During this time, subjects continued to meet once or twice monthly to develop their community/practice and to further develop their understanding and application of Egan's theory. Examples included the integration of "villains and heroes" into the teaching of "Particle Theory" in Grade Seven Natural Science and the incorporation of natural extremes in the teaching of Integers in Grade Seven and Eight Mathematics (Egan 1990, 1992, 1997). These meetings also provided members with the opportunity to report on the perceived effectiveness of the strategies in teaching Middle Years content. During this period, subjects continued to record their thoughts in journals at the end of, or soon after, each meeting, based on a set of guiding questions (see Appendix C).

The two focus group discussions during the implementation stage took place in November 2004 and January 2005. Although Dr. Mandzuk was originally requested to act as facilitator for the focus group sessions during the implementation stage, group members later unanimously expressed the view that the group's critical discussion points could most effectively be explored by the members themselves. Therefore, only the seven group members participated in the second and third focus-group discussions.

Whereas the focus group discussions during the planning stage were centered on the "understanding" and the possible implementation of Egan's theory to Middle Years practices, the purpose of the focus group discussions during the implementation stage were centered on the application of the ideas identified in the planning stage. The questions for both focus group discussions were formulated using Shank's (2002)

interview guidelines and they focused primarily on the social dynamics of the group (see Appendix D and E for guiding questions).

Individual interviews took place at the end of the implementation stage. Each interview's discussion points were based on a set of guiding questions (Shank, 2002) that allowed for further exploration of relevant points raised either in members' respective journal entries or the group discussions (Appendix F). All of this took place over a two-year period and required approximately 250 to 300 hours of each group member's time.

Ethics

Informed Consent

Prior to presenting the consent form, ample time was given for the group members to meet and openly discuss the following points: (a) the goals of the group, (b) the goals of the study, (c) the rights of members within the group and within the study, (d) the principal investigator's role as participant-observer, (e) the role of the school principal as group member, and (f) the nature of the collaborative decision-making processes within the group (Poupart et al., 1997). Once these points had been adequately discussed and clarified, a consent form was made available to group members early in the evolution of the process. Members were encouraged to take the consent form home, to reflect on the consent, sign it, and to return the form by the specified date. Furthermore, subjects indicated on the form whether they wished to receive a written summary of the study's conclusions. If so, the requested information is to be placed in their school mailboxes by the principal investigator within six to eight weeks of completion of the study.

Risks and Benefits

From the outset, the principal of the school made it clear that she was participating in the group for her own professional learning. Her goal was to familiarize herself with Egan's (1997) theory by collaborating with the group, and not to be evaluating or supervising other members in any way. She did not have access to other group members' journals. All information shared through the journals remained confidential. The principal's active participation in the process, therefore, involved little risk to other group members since she was not assuming an evaluative or supervisory role. Her involvement in the group discussions reflected, and modeled, her personal commitment to professional development and lifelong learning.

Poupart et al. (1997) suggest that the investigator's role as both group member and researcher may have added a degree of complexity to the process. It may also have added a level of reassurance since group members were aware that she, too, was sharing the challenges and frustrations of trying to apply a newly-learned theory to practice. Regardless, group members were well-informed of the investigator's goals in gathering information throughout the process and were assured that no information was to be used for evaluative purposes. In fact, group members took the necessary time at the beginning of the process to discuss the investigator's different roles within the process, as their colleague in the school, as an active member of the group, and as a researcher. Based on these discussions, individual group members needed to establish their "comfort level" regarding the sharing of their written and oral reflections with the investigator. Again, group members were made fully aware of the fact that they could have withdrawn from the study at any time. The level of involvement in all group discussions was at the

discretion of each individual. It was also made clear to group members that they could have participated fully in the group discussions while being under no obligation to submit any data for study purposes.

Research Instruments

Throughout the two-year collaborative process, three methods of data collection were used in the study (Shank, 2002). During the *planning stage*, the subjects' journal entries and their participation in a focus group discussion provided data for the study. In both cases, the subjects had the opportunity to reflect on the development of their understanding of Egan's theory, their plans to apply the theory to practice, as well as the benefits and challenges of the group's collaborative efforts. The subjects' journal entries were guided by a set of questions (see Appendix A) and the focus group discussions were guided by a protocol (see Appendix B).

During the *implementation stage*, the subjects' journal entries, their participation in two focus group discussions, and individual interviews provided data for the study. Again, subjects reflected on the development of the group's domain by reflecting on their individual understanding of Egan's theory and their application of the theory to their own teaching practice. The group's development of community/practice was also explored as members reflected on the benefits and challenges of working collaboratively to attain these goals. As in the planning stage, the subjects' journal entries were guided by a set of questions (see Appendix C) and the focus group discussions and individual interviews were guided by protocols (see Appendices D, E, and F).

As mentioned, reflective journal entries of approximately one to three pages from each group meeting were used as a source of data. Subjects gave their consent to have their journal entries used as data and were reassured that should they have declined to give their consent, they could have continued to participate in the group process without any consequence.

Subjects participated in three focus group discussions, which were each approximately two and a half hours in duration, during the planning and implementation stages of the study. These discussions were tape recorded. Subjects were also told that they could decline to participate in any or all focus group discussions, or withdraw from focus group discussions at any point. As well, subjects could participate in focus group discussions without consenting to have their conversations tape-recorded. In doing so, they were assured that there would be no negative consequence for such a decision. Copies of all focus group transcripts were subsequently provided to members for their personal records and for further analysis.

Individual taped interviews, each approximately one to two hours in duration, took place in the last few months of the implementation stage. Each member's discussion points were based on a set of guiding questions (see Appendix F) that allowed for the further exploration of points raised in either their respective journal entries or during the focus group discussions, if necessary. Interview transcripts were then re-submitted to the relevant group member to check for accuracy.

To summarize the key points relating to the study's framework, Table 1 presents the stage's goals and the research instruments used during the study. It should be noted that

Table 1

Summary of Study's Stages and Research Instruments Used Throughout Ecole Belair School's Professional Learning Community's Two-Year Experience.

Study's Stages	Goals	Research Instruments
Planning: October, 2003 to July, 2004	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop group's community/practice 2. Study domain relating to Egan's theory and its Vygotskian underpinnings 3. Begin to develop application of theory to practice 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular journal entries 2. One focus-group discussion
Implementation: September, 2004 to June, 2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to develop community/practice 2. Continue to develop understanding of group's domain 3. Implement and develop application of theory to practice 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular journal entries 2. Two focus-group discussions 3. Individual interviews with group members

all journal entries and focus group or interview transcripts submitted to the principal investigator for study purposes were treated confidentially.

Analysis of Data

The study's analysis began with a general reading of the collected data to familiarize myself with the issues raised by members, beginning with individual interviews, focus-group discussions, and finally members' journal entries. As Poupart et al. (1997) state, a more systematic reading of the data then needed to occur that involved recording my general impressions of members' discussions points. During this pre-analysis stage, I coded the collected data for the subjects' identity and the method of data collection. I also recorded onto the transcripts how my earlier recorded impressions and the issues raised by members related to the concepts in the study's conceptual framework. It was then that I filed relevant data under the indicators presented in Table 2, which provides a summary of the key points of the theories presented, but also how they relate to the examination of Ecole Belair School group's two-year collaborative experience. Briefly, the group's essential elements of community/practice are reflected in Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) human and social capital, and the forms of capital that include: (a) trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. These forms of capital are indicators for analysis of group members' interactions with each other. However, the focus of the group's study; what establishes their identity and what defines the value of the group's achievements is not represented in Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) forms of capital. For this reason, I added the group's chosen domain that is Egan's theory of Imagination and

Table 2

The Conceptual Framework Used in the Analysis of Ecole Belair School's Two-Year Experience.

(Community/Practice)	(Domain)	(Community/Practice & Domain)
Human & Social Capital	Egan's Theory of Imagination and Learning	Intellectual Capital
1. Individual members' resources & 1. Trustworthiness/ obligations and expectations 2. Norms and sanctions 3. Authority relations 4. Information channels	1. Somatic understanding 2. Mythic understanding 3. Romantic understanding 4. Philosophic understanding 5. Ironic understanding	1. Symbolic outcomes 2. Substantive outcomes

Learning (1992, 1997, 2005) to the study's analysis. Once all three essential elements of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002) were represented in the study's conceptual framework, I was able to then include the group's intellectual capital; the substantive and symbolic outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981) created from the group experience. I continued to organize data using these indicators until the same issues and patterns found in the analysis continued to repeat themselves (Poupart et al, 1997). This indicated to me that I was now ready to critically examine the study's conceptual framework more broadly and to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses in the analysis of the professional learning community. However, the study's indicators for analysis need to be explored in more detail because they are central to the identification of relevant group data.

Human Capital

Central to the study of a group's human capital (Coleman, 1987, 1988, 1990) is how it is differentiated from the group's intellectual capital. This is important because it could be argued that what the group collaboratively creates is "more" human capital. Although a group's generated intellectual capital certainly adds to individual members' human capital, it remains different in nature. Whereas human capital encompasses the individual's broad range of cumulative knowledge, skills, and life experience that generates action within a group, intellectual capital, which is professional in nature, refers specifically to the value related to the group's shared goals or visions. Therefore, as indicated in Table 2, human capital's indicator for analysis relates to the general resources that individual members "bring to the group" that enhance the attainment of

members' shared goals. How the members shared the individual resources relates to the group's social capital.

Social Capital

As mentioned, the indicators for analysis of the group's social capital are Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) four forms of capital that include: (a) trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. This will allow, with some limitations, for the identification of data related to Ecole Belair School group's relations that either enhance or hinder the group's collaborative efforts in attaining their goals.

Egan's Theory of Imagination and Learning

The group's goals relate to its chosen domain, which is Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) and Vygotsky's (1987) theories. Developing a knowledge base of the theory involves learning about the five types of understandings, as well as the specific cognitive tools and strategies associated with their application to teaching practice. These levels of understanding integrate aspects of imaginative development that include binary opposites and narratives, rhythm and patterns, myths and fairy tales, the use of metaphor and transcendent virtues, heroes and the extremes of experience, the humanizing of knowledge, the grasp of general ideas, as well as incongruent details and opposing facts. The Vygotskian underpinnings also involve examining the nature, purpose, and development of imagination in children. As indicated in Table 2, the indicators for Egan's theory are his five types of understanding: (a) Somatic, (b) Mythic,

(c) Romantic, (d) Philosophical, and (e) Ironic. To understand the results of the group's collaborative efforts in studying the domain, the concept of intellectual capital must be examined.

Intellectual Capital

The indicators for analysis for the concept of intellectual capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) include both substantive and symbolic outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981). Again, the substantive outcomes refer to the tangible results that have a physical referent while the symbolic outcomes relate more to those solely affecting professional values and beliefs. Value created from the group's collaborative efforts will, therefore, be "loosely" organized depending on whether the study and application of Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory involve substantive and/or symbolic outcomes.

As Shank (2002, p. 129) explains, the analysis of data means being attentive to the "... patterns of order that cut across various aspects of the data." Furthermore, Poupart et al (1997) state that identifying these patterns in the data often requires that the original research questions become more specific as the study unfolds. For this reason, I developed specific questions for data analysis that are presented in Table 3. These questions were formulated to help me to better distinguish between the indicators of analysis and to look more purposefully for patterns that related specifically to the concepts of human and social capital (Coleman, 1987, 1988, 1990), Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning, and Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) intellectual capital.

Table 3

Specific Questions For Data Analysis Relating to Ecole Belair School's Group Experience.

Themes	Concepts	Indicators for Analysis	Specific Questions for Analysis
Community and Practice	Human Capital	1. Individual members' resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What resources do individual members "bring to the group" that enhance the attainment of the group's shared goals? 2. How do these resources enhance the group's collaborative efforts?
	Social Capital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trustworthiness/ expectations/ obligations 2. Norms and sanctions 3. Authority relations 4. Information channels 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are members' expectations? 2. What are the group's norms and how are they established? 3. Are the norms challenged? Why? How? 4. Are sanctions used? If so, what are the effects of sanctions on group dynamics? 5. Do emotions play a role in this process? Why? How? 6. What are the group's authority relations? Are they challenged? What are the social effects of these challenges? How do the changes affect the sharing of information? 7. What actions enhance/hinder the attainment of the group's goals?

Table 3 (continued)

Specific Questions For Data Analysis Relating to Ecole Belair School's Group Experience.

Themes	Concepts	Indicators for Analysis	Specific Questions for Analysis
Domain	Egan's Theory of Imagination and Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Somatic understanding 2. Mythic understanding 3. Romantic understanding 4. Philosophic understanding 5. Ironic understanding 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which types of understandings are most relevant to Middle Years teaching and learning?
Community/ Practice, and Domain	Intellectual Capital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substantive outcomes 2. Symbolic outcomes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What parts of Egan and Vygotsky's work have been developed? 2. What parts of Egan and Vygotsky's work have been implemented into practice? 3. What cognitive tools have been used? 4. What other professional capabilities have been developed through the experience? 5. Has the group's efforts been important in developing an understanding/ application of Egan's theory and its Vygotsky underpinnings?

Summary

Ecole Belair School's professional learning community is comprised of seven Middle Years teachers from grades 6, 7, and 8 in both the English and French Immersion programs, as well as the principal of the school. This group met once or twice monthly over a two-year period, from October of 2003 to June of 2005, with the goal of developing an understanding and application of Egan's theory to members' respective Middle Years practice.

Data collection of the group's two-year experience involved regular journal reflections, three focus group discussions, as well as individual interviews with group members. Data analysis is based on Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) three essential elements of a professional learning community that involve community/practice and domain. The group's community/practice is studied using Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) concepts of human and social capital. Human capital is examined by exploring the individual resources that members "bring to the group". The group's developed social capital is examined using Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) four forms of capital that include: (a) trustworthiness, expectations, and obligations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. These four forms of capital enable the examination, with some limitations, of the value embedded in the group's social relations. The group's domain related to Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory of Imagination and Learning which is grounded in Vygotsky's (1987) work. The group's learning of the theory will be analyzed using Egan's types of understanding: (a) Somatic, (b) Mythic, (c) Romantic, (d) Philosophic, and (e) Ironic. Finally, the professional value created from the group's collaborative efforts is be examined through

the concept of intellectual capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) and more specifically, the group's creation of substantive and symbolic outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The data collected from Ecole Belair School's professional learning community focused on the development of the group's community/practice and the study of their chosen domain, which is Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning. Throughout a two-year period, data collection involved members' journal entries, as well as transcripts from focus-group discussions and individual interviews. The data was analyzed using Coleman's (1990) social capital theory and more specifically, the four forms of capital: (a) expectations, obligations, and trustworthiness, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. The intellectual capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) created from the group experience, in terms of both symbolic and substantive outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981) are also explored in this chapter.

Trustworthiness, Obligations, and Expectations

The issue of trustworthiness is inherent in the collaborative process. Coleman (1990) explains that relationships that demand the long-term investment of personal resources, such as time and energy, without the immediate creation of personal value involve "risk". When members of a professional learning community accept this risk, they decide that the generalized reciprocity that occurs through the development of a group's community/practice will eventually fulfill their individual expectations. In essence, they trust that members will fulfill their obligations in attaining the shared interests of the group that reflect, to some extent, their own expectations of the group's work. The group

norms that eventually develop from members' expectations of such values as dependability, loyalty, and honesty dictate what actions most members consider effective and ineffective in attaining the group's goals.

Risk-Taking and Trust

All members of the Ecole Belair School's professional learning community highlighted the need to develop trusting relationships before any significant risks could be taken within the group. Because the issue of risk-taking is fundamental to the group's ability to meet individual members' expectations over time (Pfeffer, 1981), what were the initial expectations of group members? All members expressed a desire to become more creative in their teaching practice. But, there were also other expectations motivating members to participate. A few members believed that the group experience might offer leadership opportunities within the school division. For many, the group experience offered the possibility of developing a social support system within the workplace to help them both professionally and personally. The idea of getting better acquainted and having an enjoyable time with colleagues was an important factor for many. One member, new to the teaching profession, expected the ongoing group dialogue to nurture professional supports, but was also very focused on developing a theoretical framework for building future practice. Another member with a history of frustrating professional group experiences saw this as an opportunity to "work through" some issues that had affected his past collaborative experiences. One member with a more administrative perspective saw this as a way of "getting a sense" of what people were experiencing in

their classrooms and also, how the theoretical dialogue could further develop the professional skills required to be an educational leader.

Developing the trust between members that was essential to professional risk-taking was described as both a slow and uncomfortable process, and for some, a fleeting one. One teacher described the difficulty associated with taking professional risks in the following manner:

I'm going to try something new and if it doesn't work, what will happen to me? I don't think that anyone ever really just decides that they don't want to learn... I've never met a staff member who thought that they knew everything and that they had nothing else to learn... There is usually something there – something threatening to them.

A colleague added: “ If there is a personal connection or level of trust, then there is a greater sense of patience and you're more willing to go to the person you trust with questions or concerns”. In fact, most members described feeling “threatened” at the beginning of the group process, not only by the difficult nature of the Egan and Vygotsky readings, but also by some of the group members who appeared far more “current” in the use of theory and research. Many said that it took the first six months of the process before they felt that they could risk being forthright about their struggles in the learning process. One member explained that “while I *hear* that we are not being officially evaluated I can't help but feel otherwise. I want my opinions to count but fear that I will seem ignorant of the subject”. Another member whose practice impacted staff directly described the discomfort of feeling very “public” and, by extension, “so vulnerable” when attempting to implement Egan's theory to practice. Throughout the second year,

one member, believing that larger staff issues were negatively impacting the professional learning community's dynamics, chose not to trust a number of people within the group. This, of course, affected other group members' abilities to trust that particular colleague. As one member explained:

If there is a level of trust within the group, people will come now with thorny or uncomfortable questions... Uncomfortable for them to ask... I guess if you have a strong level of trust that's built, then a large component of that is built in that social arena that can only positively impact the business arena. When that trust goes, I think you really see a huge decline in people's engagement generally.

Aligning Members' Expectations

Feeling engaged in the collaborative process, however, is difficult when individual expectations relating to personal vision of theory and work ethics were not aligned with other members. Although all members of Ecole Belair School's professional learning community agreed that they would collaborate to create a healthy community and a common practice, they also stated that the group process could not occur if the creation of a *shared* "finished product" was expected. Members believed that engaging in shared activities could only occur if they were given the freedom to develop their own unique implementation of Egan's theory to practice. Otherwise, the misalignment of expectations relating to work ethic, professional abilities, and quality of work would have overwhelmed the group's collaborative efforts. For example, one member stated that she learned best by challenging herself to "jump into" the theoretical application and to use Egan's theory to begin planning a teaching unit, even though she was just developing her

knowledge of his work. However, a colleague explained:

I look at this global picture and [the theory] slowly comes down. I feel a bit of anxiety because I feel like I need something quite structured within a certain period of time. I don't know how much structure I can give it right now..... I'm just not there yet.

Still another adds:

When final... [group] projects are required... , they can be overwhelming and I can't think that way all the time. I like the idea that we've been given an "umbrella experience" where we are allowed to choose where we want to focus our experience because we are all focusing our practice in different areas.... I've focused in on an area that's fascinating to me – it may not be fascinating to someone else – but it's sticking at some point with theory, but it's my own individual area that I find strength in...

Finally, one colleague observed:

It's inevitable that each person brings to the role different levels of skills and confidence levels. That's life. But in the end, we're not responsible for a group project – this is a good thing. It takes a lot of the tension out of the process. There would be that undercurrent of animosity involved with equal credit, shared workload etc... It is then that people get intolerant of others' weaknesses and limitations.

Because members expected "equal voice" in the group process, they agreed that assigned readings and meeting agendas would be decided upon as a group at the end of each meeting. Furthermore, members expected a "fluid kind of leadership" where no individual person was "in charge" of the group. Instead, they adopted strategies, such as

the use of “rotating chair” that allowed each member the opportunity to lead the group discussion. In fact, one member described these strategies as a “convenient and safe” way of reminding the group of members’ stated expectations. In the second year, however, these norms were regularly challenged by some members as the discussion points they raised often strayed from the group’s agenda.

Competing and Conflicting Expectations

In fact, the first meeting in the second year was considered by two frustrated members to be so “social” that they considered ending their involvement with the group, stating that their prepared questions and discussion points were not being addressed. Later in the second year, this misalignment of expectations (Weick, 1995) was exacerbated by the fact that each member’s unique implementation of Egan’s theory demanded varying amounts of time and intellectual energy. For some, the second year implementation of Egan’s theory to practice lasted several weeks and for others, it lasted the entire second year. It was argued by some that as members completed their planned implementations, they felt less obligated to fulfill the group’s expectations. One member observed:

I think that the fact that some of us were doing long-term applications makes it harder. Some forget that others are actually still struggling through the application and are still in the midst of making changes. When the application is over and you’re tired of hearing about the theory, you don’t have the same motivation to participate.

Another noted:

What I noticed ... is that there [are a few] members that seemed to be presenting the

same applications as last summer. They haven't really moved along... They're kind of frozen in last June... Sure, they've been participating in group discussions....

But to what end... For [some], the work was done in the first year.

Because it was expected that members had "equal voice" throughout the learning process, a "rotating chair" was selected for each meeting. The chair would lead the group discussion and ensure, by means of a "running list", that everyone who wished to speak was given the opportunity to do so, and that the group's agenda was being followed.

Although this group norm was clearly supported throughout the first year, it was increasingly challenged throughout the second year when a few members began ignoring the rotating chair's list of names and began interrupting others with related issues. For group members newer to the teaching profession, this was a significant source of frustration.

As one member explained:

On important points, we came to decisions as a collective. We all had a voice... it's just that at times, some voices were louder... probably because of their personalities Well, it's going to affect it to some degree because the knowledge created by the group IS the sharing of members' perspectives... So when some voices are heard less, it's going to affect what is created by the group because it shapes the discussion.

In fact, this point did reflect a serious misalignment in members' expectations. As another member described the importance of such group strategies as "rotating chair", it was suggested that:

This structure has to happen at the very beginning just to establish a routine and build

some kind of artificial structure ... No surprise to me that it became less important as we went along... At the very beginning when you're building relationships, there has to be some kind of "super effort" to make sure everybody's heard and that everybody's involved and that there is a very lateral kind of revision of leadership, of the workload and so on...

Due to the demanding nature of the Egan and Vygotskian readings, and the anxiety that many members felt regarding their abilities to cope with the challenges, all members expected to be supported throughout the learning process. This meant that no one would be "left behind" and not receive the help they needed to meet the group's goals, but also that members would "push each other's thinking" in the implementation of theory to teaching practice to ensure a high quality outcome. How was this done? The structured meetings generally involved discussing assigned readings in the morning and devoting the afternoon to the concepts and practical ideas surrounding the implementation of theory. The morning discussions later involved a general outline of some assigned readings, provided by one or two members, to help those struggling with the reading content. Although "pushing each other's thinking" meant asking difficult questions in a respectful manner, it also involved the use of the "hot seat". Strategically, throughout the two-year learning process, members volunteered to present their most recent plans for implementation and group members, focused on the possible alignments and misalignments between theory and practice, would constructively examine the ideas and provide questions and feedback. In fact, all members highlighted this adopted action as one of the most effective at supporting the development of individual implementations of Egan's (1992, 1997, 2005) theory to practice. As one teacher noted, "we weren't being

critical... but [we were] pushing [the member's] thinking. What are you doing? Why?

What's the purpose?" Another member observed:

It comes from collegiality. [The member] presented and we asked him questions for a half hour. In the end, the summative response was 'I don't know', which was excellent. In fact, I was envious.... I don't have any more answers than [the other member] does. Yet, it forces [a person] to reformulate.

In anticipation of the afternoon "hot seat" process, a colleague added:

It's all about working as a group or as a close knit community..., but also we're doing readings, discussing, probing which gets you to reflect and makes you stronger in the end. This is what I hope to accomplish this afternoon. I'm very structured. I need my whole unit planned. I may change things, but I need the structure in place. I'm hoping that this afternoon, they can pack on the questions and I'll be better at reflecting.

The key, as one teacher explained, is that, "If we are critiquing one person in the hot seat, we expect that they will do the same to us and that we can trust that we're not going to be attacked. It's all about moving forward...."

Externally-Imposed Expectations: Opportunities and Pitfalls

The issue of expectations, however, did not arise solely from within the group. The school division had provided Ecole Belair School with a number of school days of leave time throughout the two-year period and expected that, in time, the group would share their learning with other staff members in the school and throughout the school division. Again, a misalignment in members' expectations was evident as some embraced these

opportunities, whether they were informal discussions with school staff or more formalized divisional conferences, as chances to develop their leadership skills. On the other hand, one member commented:

Well, I have some ambivalence about the whole notion that this now should ripple out to the other members of the staff. I honestly think that it's a good thing when that happens, but I also know that it's incredibly rare that it happens.... Because I don't see it as my job, I don't want to spend a lot of effort and a lot of my resources doing that. So, that's the next step and I'm a bit stymied as to how that's going to happen and what my role in that will be.

Still another stated:

To me, leadership means that everyone is doing their jobs and actively participating in the group work. Also, it involves taking our work outside of the group and sharing it within the division.... I think that our jobs as leaders will last for years as we help others to understand these theories in more informal ways...

All group members, however, agreed that the division's investment of educational leave time was a significant factor in the quality of the group's learning experience. Members had committed a significant amount of their personal time to the group experience and they expected that the division would show the group tangible support in the form of educational leave time. Not only was this time considered essential to the professional learning community's existence, but in the eyes of group members, the additional time reflected a formal acknowledgement on the part of the division of the group's efforts. As a teacher explained:

I think that you can generally get people to do all kinds of things and include all

kinds of efforts if a) they feel supported that somebody else is putting in some effort and b) that there's some value placed on it It's not quite appreciation... but that somebody somewhere values it.

Divisional support for the group's learning also included sending the seven members to the IERG Imagination Conference in Vancouver in July of 2004. As enriching as this conference was, a teacher noted:

The conference was a high that could not be duplicated. These types of experiences don't normally happen for teachers. It's an exciting moment... but, I wonder if it would have been better to have offered the group the opportunity to go this year, instead of last year. In my view, it was a culminating activity that happened in the middle of a process. For some, it was hard to re-establish the momentum. I noticed it in some members and I certainly felt that way. It was a general feeling going into the fall [of 2004] – some frustration, some sense of a 'let down'...

Furthermore, the expectations of the larger school community became an issue when the Ecole Belair School group's educational leave days resulted in increasing the general staff's workload. Although it was generally believed that the greater staff recognized members' efforts within the professional learning community, some staff members expressed frustration and even anger regarding the number of teacher substitutes in the school during the group's educational leave days. One member noted:

Taking full days caused some tension on staff. I don't know the long-term effects of that, to be honest. I also don't know if it can be done any differently. But the group should be careful. At one point, we were about to take a Friday – we discussed it and rethought it. I think that those discussions are important. And that the staff knows

that we are having these discussions.... My advice before starting a similar group is to make [the experience] available to anyone on staff, even if you know that most are not interested If they feel left out, it causes resentment.

Another stated:

I've seen two sides... I've seen the side where people are very positive and ... asking questions ... What's this about and I want to hear more about it to the point, now, where I've had conversations with [staff members] who are giving me articles on stuff that I think is really neat and doing that sharing... There are some negatives ... but I think ... 'Ok, what's the percentage of that?'

Norms and Sanctions

Expectations from both the Ecole Belair School group and the larger school community shaped the development of the professional learning community's norms and goals. What happens, then, when members' changing expectations compete with previously established group norms? As Coleman, (1987, 1988, 1990) states, norms reinforce a sense of trust in the community by dictating what actions members consider effective and ineffective in attaining their shared goals. When certain group members begin challenging the established norms, either directly or indirectly, a degree of uncertainty is introduced into the group process. As one member stated:

The group as a whole is affected by the behaviour of individual members. You know, one bad seed can ruin it for the others... It can also impede learning and... raise uncertainty about their commitment to the group.

However, a colleague adds:

I have a lot of respect for [another member's] perspective – It's different than mine and although I can find it quite irritating at times, I can learn a lot from the difference... Once I work past the irritation, I often find that I'm pushed by some of the ideas...

Maintaining Group Stability: Calming the Tensions

How did group members cope with their feelings of frustration and irritation as group norms were challenged by some? Generally, they reacted very carefully. Almost all members talked about the need to “calculate” whether acting against the competing expectations was worth the possible stress caused as a result. Even if the competing expectations could be discussed in a professional manner, many members argued that the lingering personal sentiments, such as anger and hostility, could become a factor that later hindered the development of the group's community/practice and the learning of their chosen domain. As one teacher explained:

It's that idea that you've agreed as a group what you will and will not talk about... we were able to work around it and so we did. If we weren't able to work around it, we would have said something. But each time situations like these present themselves... you have to decide whether it's going to interfere with the stability of the group and if it's worth it. Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't.

And yet, one of her colleagues argued:

It's very difficult to put stuff on the table until it kind of comes to a head. So, you

don't really know that it's a problem until it becomes a problem... until it comes to a head.

Furthermore:

I think that teachers have a difficult time talking to people honestly about what's bothering them because we spend all day long - most of us - being very gentle with students, being very sensitive to people's feelings... And rightly so... And I think that that kind of leaks over into our relationships with our colleagues. You know, teaching is such a personal thing to do... I think that we sometimes personalize very, very easily. The teaching process is all personal and so, because that's what we do all day long in our jobs, it's always really close to the surface... and it's really easy to personalize things that are not personal. Sometimes they are, but not necessarily. And as soon as these things are happening to people, it's harder to check it because it becomes a big hairy deal to say 'Can I talk to you about something....' It becomes very difficult.

During another individual interview, similar concerns were expressed. Comparing the need to work with members over a two-year period to "getting along as a family", one member stated that "you're always wondering if it's going to shake up or wreck the group. And then you have to wonder if dealing with the issue was worth it...". Other members argued that dealing with challenging group behaviour was, at times, difficult because of the authority that some people held within the group. If members had "strong personalities" or assumed key roles within the group or the workplace, it was more difficult to confront their challenging behaviour. In fact, some members argued that when assuming the role of "rotating chair", they found it very difficult directing

particular members' behaviour. In this respect, one teacher noted, "We had things to say, but then [the member] would cut in or try to re-direct the agenda. Sometimes, [the member] would try not to follow the chair....". Another teacher stated:

Sometimes at meetings, some people didn't have as much of a voice as others...

They weren't able to say as much and then we make assumptions that they don't have as much to say ... We can make assumptions about people that aren't necessarily true. Maybe listening more, at times, and talking less.

Still another commented:

I thought that everyone was pretty comfortable with being chair. I didn't really feel that some people were taken advantage of... Within this group, we all have pretty strong personalities. And so when some people surface as strong personalities within this context, well, that's pretty strong.

A colleague described feeling "strangely obliged to maintain group dynamics" during some group meetings. A number of members said that they relied on some of the more "outspoken" members to keep the group focused and on task. Although some argued that they may have "come close" to sacrificing too much of the quality of the group's work by trying to tolerate the, at times, angry and/or distracting behaviour associated with other members' competing expectations, they also stated that they were satisfied with the balance created between the two tensions. In the end, most members felt that the group always made sure that they were "getting the work done".

Were there times when sanctions needed to be adopted in order to protect the group's norms? Yes. Some members who were frustrated by the lack of structure in an early fall meeting in 2004 were thinking of "packing it in". Throughout the next few weeks, it was

decided through informal conversations in school that individual members' expectations and subsequent group norms needed to be re-affirmed by all members before continuing into the group's second year. Issues such as members' obligations regarding assigned readings and the general discomfort associated with the highly social and difficult fall meeting were discussed. The group conversation was forthright and, at times, uncomfortable, but it reassured most members of the group's ability to attain its shared goals, although some members appeared "hurt" by some of the concerns that were raised. It is during this time that members were also preparing for the Vygotskian scholar's visit from Simon Fraser University, who was going to spend a few days working with the professional learning community after the group presented at Egan's Imagination Conference in Vancouver. Group members were either working feverishly trying to "keep up" with the added demands of the extra readings or displaying distracting and, at times, "under the table" antagonistic behaviour towards the group process. Either they felt that the Vygotsky readings were too numerous and too difficult to understand, or that the group was "moving too quickly" through the readings. Nevertheless, most members described the group dynamics during this time as "energizing", "tense", "constrained", and "messy".

Threatening Group Stability: Simmering Frustrations

In the end, the external expectations that were placed on the group, either by the school division or by the visiting Vygotskian scholar could not help but affect the group's social structure. Although most members were excited by their changing plans and accepting of the external influence that had modified the group's meeting schedule and assigned

readings, some members struggled with the adapted group norms. One member was now openly struggling with the adapted group's norms, describing it as a "subtle pressure" and a "kind of homogeneity". This frustrated teacher stated:

We've become kind of this 'group monster' walking together ... and thinking the same things... and I can think of a couple of different examples where we've made decisions individually based on ... what is perceived as the need by the group, and I think that that is dangerous and it's a bit unsatisfying for me, quite honestly.

Still another observed:

I think that we need to look at [sharing roles] because what often does happen in groups is that [when] one person doesn't take responsibility ... it does fall apart... Even though it's shared or we say it's shared, it does sometimes fall into the lap of one person to keep it going and if there isn't that one person to do it, then what happens is that it just falls apart.

And so, greater responsibilities had been assumed by some members during this time that altered the general dynamics of the group. As a result, separate discussions were taking place between specific group members and key external people, such as the Vygotskian scholar and the school division's superintendents, leaving other members to participate "after the fact". During the second focus-group discussion, it was clear that some members had assumed too much responsibility during the chaotic preparation phase while others were no longer fulfilling their obligations to the group process. In fact, one member noted:

So, as professionals, it is our duty ... to be brutally honest ... 'I'm not always

keeping up with the articles and I'm not journaling as much as I should... Why is that and what can I do about it?' That's how I feel ... that we need to reaffirm our commitment to this and what I have to do to fix some of these things so that it's working for the group but it's also working for me professionally.

A frustrated colleague stated:

As we have more meetings ... I feel that we're starting a bit later, we're wandering in and out, we're doing this and that... Maybe we're not totally, totally on the ball the way we're working in the actual meetings...

Still another commented:

I think between September and now, we've had an exceptional amount of professional development opportunity.... It's been hard to generate these roles and I think that it would be a good thing at the next meeting to just say 'let's re-focus' because we've had so much inundated information on our brains ... It's now time to go back and [to] say 'how can we use it...'

These excerpts are indicative of the nature of the second focus-group discussion where members restated their personal expectations and identified misalignments with other group members. Although one member thought that members had waited "too long" to renegotiate group expectations, most stated that the heated group discussion following the scholar's visit was timely and effective at tackling simmering group frustrations. It should be noted that although this focus-group discussion was intense and, at times, stressful, most members described it as one of the most helpful activities they had during the two-year period. It was explained that:

As a group, we did a really good job openly talking about these issues and I think

that one of the things that really helped was the focus-group discussions. Without stopping and voicing the issues and concerns of group members, the group just proceeds without ever addressing the issues and are just “under the table”. The first focus-group was more collegial, but once we started the second year, it became “Here are the issues and let’s put them on the table”, but still in a respectful way...

However, this member noted that:

It’s very difficult to get a group to a place where they can be openly critical, yet always respectful Often, it doesn’t get to that point. We got to that point

[Yet] some people struggle with the critical piece – they still take things personally.

Another explained:

There is a general ambiance difference [with focus-group discussions]. It seems to make people more accountable when they know that what they say is going to be recorded. When it’s just a general meeting, it can become too casual. It’s not that people don’t come prepared – it’s just a general mood difference. The [second] focus-group meeting ... was awesome. We were all on-task and really engaged in what was being discussed.

Other teachers described the focus-group discussions as a safe way of “hashing things out” and an effective way of placing issues “under the microscope” and making members “more accountable” for their behaviour. As one member noted: “I think that until focus-groups surfaced, direct thought as to the group’s stability was never raised”. For others, it also raised important questions as to why some members were feeling so frustrated and angry, and what could be done to support the group through this part of the learning process.

Authority Relations

As the discussion thus far suggests, the collaborative process is strained when members' expectations compete with the group's norms and goals and the destabilizing effect on the community can cause feelings of anxiety among members. If collaborating within a group is so difficult, why do teachers voluntarily do it? Fukuyama (1999) explains that group members decide to give up the right to control some of their personal actions because they think that it is in their best interest to do so. They may believe that acting alone is too costly or that the actions implemented by the individuals in authority are as effective at achieving the shared goals as the member's own actions. How, then, is authority within a group established? Although some authority is inherent in the status of certain organizational positions, Pfeffer (1981) adds that a significant source of authority stems from members' abilities to effectively argue specific courses of action that will successfully achieve the group's goals. Furthermore, if a number of people have vested authority in certain members and this vesting is no more costly than retaining authority themselves, they may choose to follow these other members as well.

Overriding Vision

Ecole Belair School's group members discussed leadership from a number of perspectives. A few of the younger members described leadership as a personal commitment to come to meetings "prepared" and to have the confidence to share ideas and opinions in a group. It was also described in terms of the human capital that members brought to the group. Individual abilities to communicate with divisional leaders, to organize social events, to integrate computer technology, to explain theoretical

concepts, and to share innovative thoughts were viewed as important factors in the group's development.

However, members also stressed the need for the group to have certain individuals with a "driving force" to help "move the group along" in the learning process. This type of leadership involved anticipating future group needs in relation to the established goals and formulating possible options for group practice. As one member explained:

You need to appreciate that as a group, we decide on the concept to be explored and its 'angle', but it's necessary to have a few people, or even one person, to always be a few steps ahead in the process.... So, yes, the topic is decided upon as a group, but someone has already been thinking ahead and is drawing from a broader perspective a broader view. ... Needless to say, a lot of trust is necessary for this process to actually work... But... this thinking is what ensures that the smaller decisions consistently align themselves to the greater goals, which is the common denominator linking members together.

This does not mean that only a few members were making group decisions or mapping out the group's practice. Members agreed that individual resources within the group were readily acknowledged and generally shared. In fact, during any group meeting the teachers argued that it would be difficult to identify any one of them as the "leader". Some members noted, however, that having a person with a broader perspective was like having a "wise owl" in the group – someone who could be trusted to see the "larger picture" throughout the group process. In preparation for a group presentation, for example, one person stated that she "found it discouraging to hear [some members] not

really understanding... [and] was relieved when [a member] just took control of the whole thing and laid out a diagram and key points for the [member].

Hindered Group Relations

These relationships of trust, however, could be threatening. While most members decided to vest authority in specific individuals throughout the second year in order to attain the group's goals, some members were no longer as willing to take that risk. This issue of competing expectations initially became evident during the group's preparation for the Vygotskian scholar's visit in the fall of 2004. The visit not only altered the group's norms regarding developed agendas and assigned readings, but the reliance on particular members' resources highlighted to others the emerging patterns of authority within the group at the time. One member later observed that "the dynamics of the group changed after the ... visit. I don't know why but it was as though some members were struggling for control of the group after that...". Another explained:

Middle Years teachers find it extremely difficult taking direction from each other even when it's obvious that they need it. It might be obvious, but no one calls one person leader – it's all very democratic "without one strong leader in place". Middle Years teachers feel most comfortable working within this context, even if it's not entirely accurate. They need to believe it.

Still, another member observed, "We have become kind of this large group with subtle pressures.... It's not about assigning blame, it's not about being critical, it's an observation I'm making about how now we are making decisions." Many members noted that all teachers deferred, with varying degrees of ease, to the individual within the

group who could best argue the most effective way of attaining the group's goals. During the second focus-group discussion, in January 2005, a member observed that "we may be leaders in the division in how we apply the [Egan] concepts, but we have separate roles that aren't necessarily leadership within the group..."

The leadership role that the principal played within the group was different. Although this member often felt "vulnerable" to staff when implementing new ideas during staff meetings and professional development days, it was explained that:

If you're asking staff to embark in a process like this and in a sense, you're asking people to take a risk... You also have to take that risk. If you're asking people to look at their practice, you should also be looking critically at your practice. You should be modelling that.... If it's important for them, it's important for you. If you want people to take risks professionally, you better be willing to do the same.

It was noted, however, that the type of conversations that a principal can have within this type of learning group is limited because acting as a "critical friend" can sometimes sound "judgmental" and "evaluative" to certain staff members. In short, "things you say can be heard differently, interpreted differently ... because of who you are".

Furthermore, the trust that needs to develop between the administrator and the group members can become complicated. Although a more trusting relationship needed to occur to help group members to take professional risks, the line between a professional and a social relationship can become blurred over time, especially if an administrator works closely with her staff. At times, then, group conflict occurred when some members, disoriented by the close working relationships that developed over a two-year period, struggled to separate their personal issues from the professional issues.

Information Channels

As Pfeffer (1981) states, collaboration demands that members vest authority in those best able to help the group attain its goals. Of course, the achievement of the group's goals also involves the formation of information channels, as Coleman (1990) notes, that provide members with information relevant to the development of the group's community/practice, and domain. In this sense, the exchange of information embedded in members' social dynamics is an important form of social capital that is fundamental to the group's community/practice. Just as the group's norms reflect members' collective expectations regarding community/practice and the learning of the domain, the group's information channels address how these norms are supported within the group. And so, where did the Ecole Belair School group's information come from, and why?

On the surface, this analysis seems straightforward. Members with varying individual strengths were able to share different forms of information within the group. For example, relevant information from the Board office relating to educational leave funding was shared by the member with the strongest ties to the divisional office. Group presentations were developed by the member with strengths in technology. Although the ongoing nature of the group's learning process was decided upon by all members, the readings that supported the process were regularly researched by a member with an established link to the university and its library facilities. From time to time, other group members either shared interesting articles with the group or requested personal readings from the library depending on their specific implementation of Egan's theory to their teaching practice. Members benefited from each other's different perspectives, whether it involved a special interest in psychology, Vygotskian theory, or the arts. Outside the

group, two university professors, involved in the study of Ecole Belair School's group's dynamics over the two-year period, were important factors in understanding the complex dynamics of the group. Furthermore, all members agreed that the Vygotskian scholar was an important source of information for the group because she was able to highlight the basics of Vygotsky's work to members, and to provide them with suggestions for how they might apply these basics to their practice.

Learning Egan's Theory

Yet, what was going on within these information channels? How did the adopted actions within these channels shape the group's practice? Members discussed the ongoing need to develop a shared language where "common denominators" of ideas relating to Egan's and Vygotsky's general theoretical principles and concepts were shared. Most members agreed, however, that this was where the "conceptual commonalities" between members ended. When group members discussed any one concept in greater and greater detail, there were significantly fewer "points of contact" in understanding. As one of the teachers explained, this limited shared language was acceptable to this particular group because in the end, members had the freedom to apply Egan's theory to their practice in their own unique way, rather than creating one "shared outcome" as a group. Another member explained that "I think that we agreed on the main ideas where we 'come together' and also the issues and points where we have agreed that we don't come together. We agreed to respect that".

The actions considered most helpful in developing the group's common language and reducing the disparity in members' abilities to understand and integrate Egan's

theory included the use of the rotating chair and a “rolling” speaker’s list, collectively set agendas, brief outlines of difficult readings, respect for individual implementations, and the ongoing expectations that members were to “push each other’s thinking” and to consistently support each other in their understanding of the theory. Assigned readings became so important to the development of the group’s shared language that one member, not having fully completed the assigned readings for a meeting, explained:

Before last week’s meeting, I didn’t have one of the two pieces of reading finished. I came to the meeting feeling guilty... I had read for about 30 minutes each day. I don’t devour readings [because] they take me awhile. Anyway, I decided to just tell the group that I hadn’t finished and get that off my chest and face whatever repercussions there were. I was honestly surprised by the reaction that I got. There was not one iota of judgement that came my way... In fact, the opposite was ... true and voices of understanding came forth.

In the second year, a colleague confided:

You speak to [some members] who make their way through the readings... [They] will openly tell you that for the most part, [they don’t] get it... [They] get frustrated with [themselves] and live for a short period of time in some degree of dissonance – and... begin to question [their] abilities... [They] make it clear that [they] rely heavily on group discussions and outlines to help... to understand the readings...

Furthermore, some members found the written transcripts of meeting discussions helpful in understanding the assigned readings. One teacher noted: “The minutes were very important to me because it allowed me to review the [meeting] discussion at my own pace and to absorb the material”.

Members also stated that an important part of the collaboration that occurred during group meetings related to the time spent between meetings considering possible options for group practice and their potential challenges. This type of planning was often done alone or as one member described, “in my head”, as well as informally with certain members. Regardless, many members believed that a lot of the important group planning occurred outside of the meetings, freeing up much of the actual group meetings for the implementation of decisions.

Furthermore, individual presentations of planned implementations and the group’s “hot seat” process were considered by many members to be some of the most effective strategies adopted by the group at aligning Egan’s theory to their teaching practice. Although many members stated that in the first year, the “hot seat” activity generated the most critical feedback, another teacher argued that:

In the second year, [it] generated more interesting and in-depth feedback... It wasn’t as challenging for the hot seat participants because they were used to the process and because they had a more developed understanding of the theory. It wasn’t as exciting for them... In a sense, they want the thrill of the original experience, but they aren’t at that place anymore... The second year hot seat wasn’t as poignant, but in my view, it generated more important dialogue.

Nevertheless, all members volunteered to participate in the “hot seat” process at least twice over the two-year period, although some struggled to take this risk. After a unit presentation to the group at the end of the first year, one member noted:

My stint seemed so small compared to everyone else’s... I felt much better after a colleague credited me. Why am I still so insecure with this group? I don’t feel

intimidation anymore but I still haven't moved into complete security.

Planned events, such as divisional and conference presentations, were considered by all members to be valuable in the group's learning process. As one teacher explained: "It forces us all to keep trying to understand the theory and how it relates to practice. If we didn't have these events, the interest in applying the theory wouldn't be as high for me.

These more formalized events are motivational". A colleague added:

It forces a closer examination of the group's adopted action in relation to their understanding... In a sense, it forces the group to justify.... The events can be exciting and challenging, but some members need that "prompting" to 'pull their act together'. They might otherwise let it slide...

Although members agreed that these events help "to take stock" of the quality and quantity of work accomplished by the group, some wondered if it was also distracting the group from the attainment of their goals. In this respect, one member stated:

The learning that you need to do to move on – the stuff you need to 'trudge through' is not the 'shiny' presentation stuff. At some point, you need to put the more polished material aside and be willing to get dirty again. Otherwise, the learning stops.

Still another added:

That conference gave us a bounce... I'm not sure we would have gotten to the end of our second year as reasonably and as successfully as we did otherwise.... I don't think we could have done as much as we did without the big bounce off the conference and the smaller bounces of the smaller activities like [the Vygotskian scholar's] visit... if we hadn't experienced them. It's like a little turbo shot. So if

I'm asked the value of each and every one activity in itself – that's different... That they exist at all and that we all participate... That's the main thing.

Understanding the Group's Evolving Interactions

Important information channels, however, cannot simply refer to the sharing of information relating to the group's domain. All members noted that the focus-group discussions, especially in the second year, were an effective way of sharing important material and a "safe" way of "hashing out" concerns related to the group's community/practice and domain. Throughout the group discussion, however, it soon became obvious that simmering sentiments of frustration and hostility among some members would also need to be examined in order to safeguard the group's stability. During this time, a written transcript of the focus-group discussion was provided to members shortly after the discussion so that they could reread the exchanges and further examine the relevant concerns privately, at a later date. In fact, one member compared the perspective that these transcripts provided to being like "a fly on the wall" during the discussion on that day. In the end, it allowed members to distance themselves from the "heat" of the exchange and to examine the issues more objectively. The unearthed emotions, however, would still need to be discussed without further putting the group's stability at risk. At the following month's meeting, then, members explored the group's earlier social dynamics and its emotional undercurrent using the conceptual framework outlined in Karl Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory. This framework, researched and outlined by one of the group members, was shared with her colleagues shortly after the focus-group discussion. It provided a helpful context for a more systematic and objective

discussion of the group's concerns and related emotions at the following month's meeting. In the end, establishing and clarifying members' expectations through focus-group discussions, sharing written transcripts of group discussions, using Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory to clarify conflict, and the informal sharing of ideas and thoughts among members between meetings were important in providing the group with the necessary information to nurture their community/practice.

The meeting in January of 2005 represented one of the last day-long meetings attended by all group members. In the last few months of the collaborative process, the teachers "broke off" into smaller groups to further develop their implementations with their teaching partners or with specifically chosen group members. Although the entire group still met at the end of the educational leave days to briefly discuss group plans, members expressed relief that they were now working in smaller groups and away from the larger group's complex social dynamics. One teacher commented:

I'm ready for the formal group meetings to be over. The last meeting was good and I believe in leaving on a strong note. But I do believe that we've said what we can say to each other... We've read what we can read within this group... Now that we're beginning to focus on different applications, it seems to me to be completely appropriate to pair off and [to] focus in on specific and more individual interests

Another stated:

We are more separated now... We are less connected as a group because we are now focusing on our applications for next year. It's the same feeling as when you sell your house. The neighbours start treating you like you're already gone... In a real sense, we've already started to say goodbye to each other.

During Spring 2005, Ecole Belair School was offered a small provincial grant to continue developing the professional learning community experience. After a few months of planning, a new group began that involved a few staff members from three different Middle Years schools within the same school division, including Ecole Belair School. Four of the seven members from the original professional learning community began participating in the new group, although some expressed some concern that the dynamics from the original experience were going to affect the new one. All four members are participating because they want to continue to develop professionally within the context of collaborative learning. Furthermore, some have stated that they feel a responsibility to share the value of the professional development experience that was generously supported by the school division with their Middle Years colleagues.

Intellectual Capital

In the end, group members collaborate to share and synthesize information for what purpose? What was created from the group's two-year learning process? Pfeffer (1981) states that the value generated from collaborative work involves: a) the *substantive* outcomes that involve observable changes to practice, and 2) the *symbolic* outcomes that include sentiments relating to professional values and beliefs. During the first year of the Ecole Belair School group experience, the focus was on theory exploration and implementation planning that generated significant symbolic but little substantive value. Time was spent exploring Egan's (1997) theory of Imagination and Learning and some of the key concepts related to Vygotsky's (1987) work. Important guiding questions, such as "What is imagination?", "What is perception?", and "How is the affective domain

involved in imaginative thought?" were central in understanding Egan's use of such concepts as metaphor, narrative, transcendent values, association with heroes, and extremes of reality. The in-depth and broad exploration of theory was considered by most members to be vital to the long-term implementation of theory to practice, although a few members expressed a desire to see the group begin more "practical" discussions and to do this more quickly. In response, one teacher explained that "I'm nervous about getting into the practical too quickly. I'm worried that we are going to lose the theory base". Another stated, "We often miss the basics in teaching, which are the underpinnings. We want to rush to apply. Too much of the PD is focused on the practical – the 'not why', but 'how'... The rationale behind the strategies is often missed". Also, there was a significant disparity in the expectations of members regarding the learning and implementation of the theory to practice. Although some members were sometimes disappointed with the depth of theoretical study, particularly in the second year, others were not concerned with this issue. In fact, one member stated:

In all of this... my metaphor for this is like a big educational smorg... you just take the stuff that looks good and that you want to have and you leave the rest behind... and nourish yourself that way.

Yet, a colleague commented:

I think... that we do want to see if we can apply [Egan's] theory and to that extent, we have some responsibility to know it properly, to... revisit it, to... give it a shot, and then [to] change it and get [the] feedback as to what works and what doesn't....

Developing Teaching Philosophy

Overall, the learning during the first year was described by members as very theoretical in nature, with members experimenting and “playing” with possible ways to implement Egan’s theory to practice. One member noted:

I think that this is going to be the hard part – pushing ourselves out of our own way of thinking.... Making new connections.... Seeing teaching in a new way.... When I try to think of ways of teaching differently in my own classroom, I fall back into the things that I do.... In the end, I’m looking for ways to flip the questions around....

Another teacher explained:

It’s becoming [clearer] to me that the connections between imagination, thinking, language, [and] perception are so important to understand as a middle school educator. We are taught about all of the physiological changes that pre-adolescents experience, and Vygotsky is helping me to see another side [of students].

It is important to note, however, that once group members developed a shared “operational definition” of a theoretical concept, it became very difficult to change their understanding. During the visit at the beginning of the second year of the group experience, the Vygotskian scholar pointed out to group members that Egan’s concept of binary opposites had been misunderstood. This, in fact, had been a concept that had been regularly discussed by members throughout the first year of the process. Members described feeling disoriented and stressed by this revelation, and they reacted with an overwhelming unwillingness to revisit the issue. A teacher who had later rejoined the group discussion of binary opposites, stated forcefully that “walking into that was a bit

freaky.... You were all sitting there but, when I walked in there was this big cloud of cognitive dissonance, which is not necessarily a bad thing...". Another person, arguing that "it would have been easier to get a 'bus to fly' than to get the group to rethink the 'binary opposites' issue" noted that "once [the group's] ideas have been aligned and some sort of working understanding has been established, it appears to be very difficult to change. These frameworks become entrenched very quickly".

All members, however, noted that, to varying degrees, the exploration of Egan's theory and its Vygotskian underpinnings changed their ways of understanding how Middle Years students become engaged in learning. As one teacher explained:

It has changed my practice in a very real sense, but the Vygotsky underpinnings are huge for me. In this sense, I feel like I'm only starting to change.... I know that I've made some really significant changes to my practice – how I see my role, how I perceive the flexibility between ideas, between subjects... but I know in my heart that I'm only just beginning in this process.... The changes that I've experienced so far have been far more profound than I originally expected – they are changes in how I see the world. But I know I'm only starting...

Yet, another teacher noted that the group process confirmed that "I've been doing this type of teaching intuitively all along, but now I have a theoretical framework from which I approach it".

The group process of interacting with each other also helped members of the group to develop other aspects of their practice. Some members stated that the experience "revitalized" their need for ongoing professional development. One member noted that it taught him collaborative skills that enabled him to "team teach" more effectively. Many

members noted that the group process highlighted the need to “slow down” in their teaching practice and to value “quality over quantity” in student learning. Some teachers noted that the process provided insight that, in turn, fostered reflection, regarding the many differences in members’ teaching practices, and how these differences could potentially influence their own practices. A member stated: “I think that I have developed more empathy for how people are struggling to develop their thinking – I didn’t really understand the points at which people can struggle.... In the end, I guess that I’ve learned to slow down and dig deeper”. A colleague added: “Because I was going through some tough personal issues, I was beginning to doubt my [teaching] capabilities. The Egan experience has helped to ground me.... Now, I feel that I have a lot to offer and I feel more confident about myself ...”. Another stated: “Last year, [some members were] using the group experience as a healing process... Those were very definite needs ... Also, we’re all trying to be friends or to maintain friendships. It’s all part of the puzzle, [but] it can be very tough”.

Changing Teaching Practice

Did the collaborative process, however, actually affect members’ teaching practice? What were the substantive outcomes that emerged from the group process? For some, the planned implementation of Egan’s theory to practice focused on a particular teaching unit that lasted between six and eight weeks early in the second year of the group process. After that, the implementation to practice was more sporadic and more informal. For some, short term attempts at applying Egan’s theory to practice occurred, but the value remained predominantly in the philosophical and symbolic outcomes, such as developing

their understanding of the stages of growth and the need for creativity in learning. For others, the implementation lasted throughout the entire second year of the professional learning community's experience and involved planned ongoing attempts at applying Egan and Vygotsky's theory in one or a number of subject areas (See Appendix G). One member noted that:

During [a] presentation, a former student said that if I had integrated subjects and taught in this manner at the time, he probably would have been more interested in Science. That stays with me... It's clear that I left him behind... [Now] ... I'm broadening my perspective of what I can do as a teacher and who I can reach... The Egan and Vygotsky readings have really helped to further develop this. So, now I'm teaching the heating curve using a narrative... I'm teaching ecosystems using art. It's only the beginning.... I want to continue to think about these questions and how they are reflected in my practice.

Another teacher added:

First, I find that I have worked harder to familiarize myself with the curricular objectives in all subject areas.... Second, I am much more concerned about quality over quantity. In my application, I have moved away from daily worksheets and small projects and into more long term inquiry-based projects.

Furthermore, a colleague stated:

Well, in the past I said to my students simply write. They did, but they didn't understand the elements of a story. They just wrote. Now, I noticed the stories were more detailed and I told them stories too throughout the unit. Doing this, they were able to be more imaginative, which really engaged them more. Most kids love using

their imagination while creating their story about their own beast.

What factors most affected the members' ability to implement Egan's theory to practice? One important factor was time. Other professional commitments, such as the maintenance of the school's technology system, limited the time that some of the teachers were able to spend implementing the theory. Furthermore, the disparity in the members' abilities to understand and apply Egan's theory to practice, which became more obvious in the second year of the process, was another significant factor. Referring to the varying levels of complexity of members' implementation of Egan's theory, a member observed:

What you get, in the end, are people who can connect ideas and then apply them to practice... and then you get the people who can ... study the ideas, but struggle to connect them and can only apply the ideas separately, but not as a theory.... They are left 'plugging in' interesting ideas into their original practice.... I'm not surprised that some [teachers] ... 'drop off'. Connecting and applying ideas involves more abstract thought, in my opinion, than just studying separate ideas.

This member added, however, that: "I wouldn't trade the second year of the Egan group for anything or the learning that has occurred throughout the second year, but it's not as comfortable". A colleague added: "At the beginning, it's exciting. The deeper my understanding goes, the more difficult the applications get... Everything gets more complicated. I'm seeing more dilemmas than answers...". Also, individual members had varying expectations regarding the depth of substantive change that they wanted to implement to their practice. Although all members stated that they had experienced significant symbolic change because of the group experience, not all members

experienced such changes in their classroom practice. As one teacher explained:

I didn't find that I was making wholesale changes in my practice. In fact, the outer effect for kids is mostly the same. The changes are more in how I'm thinking about it and how I'm framing it for myself as I go along...

In the end, how important was the collaborative process to the learning and implementation of Egan's theory to teaching practice? In the first year of the process, one teacher noted:

Once again, I picked up the ... book that was collecting dust on my shelf and attempted to read it *one more time*. I'm glad that we have decided to [do group work] around this book as I know I would not have read this book again [on my own].

In fact, this sentiment was expressed many times over. Several teachers stated that they would not have found the time to study Egan's theory on their own, partly because they did not feel confident in their abilities to understand the demanding theoretical work. Attending a conference on Imagination and Learning after the first year of the group experience, however, one member stated:

I believe in the project and in the success of [our applications of] the theory to practice. It doesn't seem to be alien anymore. I actually understood what presenters were talking about because of our [group] studies. That made me feel accomplished".

A colleague stated that she was able to critically analyze her teaching practice more effectively because of the group support. She explained: "I know [that] I couldn't have made as much progress without the support and feedback of the group. I am better at

taking critical feedback from others than giving it to myself". Another teacher added: "The group discussions and the meandering nature of the learning... have been [enriching]. I'm sure that this process would look different if I were on my own. The group process takes you to new and different places...". Finally, one member concluded:

The two year group experience? Yes, I would ... definitely do it again. For me, it revitalizes the importance of PD. You need to get excited about something. You need to find something to feel passionate about... You don't want to be one of the teachers counting the days to Spring Break... That's no way to live...

Summary

The findings in this study highlight key issues embedded in this particular professional learning community's collaborative process. Once the group expectations were established in the form of norms and goals, then the collaborative process involved maintaining or nurturing group stability by protecting these collective expectations. As the findings suggest, effective group action in stabilizing its social structure is not always evident to members as they weigh their options.

The findings also underscore the emotional undercurrents associated with members' unsatisfied expectations. The data suggests that group members' emotions can significantly destabilize a social structure and that they can complicate the group's development of their community, their practice, and their understanding of the domain. The results also suggest that members' emotions become more of a factor in group work as time progresses. In the first year of the collaborative process, the Ecole Belair School teachers in the group were able to consistently focus their resources on joint action that

nurtured the community and its chosen domain. Throughout the second year, however, more of the group's resources were used to sustain the group's sense of community.

The findings also suggest that placing increased demands on professional learning communities has both positive and negative effects on the collaborative process. Although group members believed that external demands helped to motivate them in their learning and implementation of Egan's theory, they also wondered if these demands distracted them in some ways from the learning process. Without question, external demands placed on the Ecole Belair School group throughout the two-year process excited many members, even though they had a destabilizing effect on the learning community. The added demands and the increased workload associated with some activities appeared to misalign some members' expectations with the group's norms; this had a profound effect on their sense of belonging. Of course, this had a significant effect on the group's development of its community, practice, and domain.

The findings also highlight the interrelated nature of Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) essential elements of community, practice, and domain. Joint action adopted by the group places value on certain aspects of the chosen domain while de-emphasizing others. This cannot help but affect the group's social relations as members respond by assuming certain roles and responsibilities within the group. In turn, the social relations that develop shape the group's practice. As one element of the process is affected, so are all the others. The conclusions drawn from these findings, as well as their implications for practice and future research, will now be explored.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Discussion

This study analyzed the two-year collaborative process of the Ecole Belair School group of seven teachers as they worked to understand and integrate Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning into their teaching practice. The researcher began the study with the intention of only using Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory to analyze the group's dynamics. However, the data collected from the teachers quickly indicated that the group's chosen topic of study was playing a more significant role in shaping the social structure and therefore, it became clear that social capital theory would not be sufficient for understanding the evolving group dynamics. For this reason, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) three essential elements of a professional learning community, namely community, practice, and domain were integrated into the social capital framework to better understand how the study of Egan's theory was influencing the group's community. The focus on domain, however, raised some fundamental questions relating to collaborative work: What did the group *do* to learn and implement Egan's theory? And just as importantly, what did the group's collaborative efforts produce in terms of changes to professional practice? The two-year experience of the Ecole Belair School's professional learning community was initially analyzed using the following conceptual framework: Wenger et al.'s (2002) essential elements of community/practice which were studied using Coleman's (1990) social capital, and more specifically the four forms of capital, (a) trustworthiness, obligations, and expectations,

(b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. The study's conceptual framework also indicates the inclusion of Egan's theory of Imagination and Learning, which is Wenger et al.'s (2002) third essential element of communities of practice. The professional outcomes created from the group's collaborative experience will be analyzed using Pfeffer's (1981) symbolic and substantive outcomes that described both the sentiments of affect relating to the teachers' professional values and beliefs, as well as the tangible referents to practice.

This conceptual framework was effective in analyzing the collaborative process throughout the group's first year; Coleman's (1990) four forms of capital provided important insight into the development of the necessary structural components that needed to be in place for members to collaborate. In fact, as the group developed, it was possible to use Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) four forms of capital, that include (a) trustworthiness, obligations, and expectations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels, to identify the changes in the development of the group's community. In this respect, social capital theory was invaluable in providing a structural perspective to the analysis of the group experience by identifying factors that enhanced the collaborative process. It was less helpful, however, in identifying factors that hindered collaboration. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the theory inadequately represented the group's adopted practice; the collective actions taken by members affected "who did what" in the group and which parts of the domain were prioritized for learning. These are important aspects of group work that needed to be considered when analyzing factors that enhanced and hindered collaboration.

In fact, changes in the group's practice throughout the second year of the process became a concern for members; Which factors were hindering collaboration? How was the group adapting to competing expectations and how were they affecting the group's ability to learn and implement Egan's theory? Also, the fact that some members were discussing the possibility of leaving the group prompted a search for another conceptual framework that could provide further insight into the difficult group dynamics. It was, then, during the second year of the group's collaborative process that Karl Weick's (1995) sensemaking was integrated into this study's analysis. In fact, an outline of Weick's (1995) theory was used by members during the last focus-group discussion to facilitate their exploration of the group's dynamics. Weick's (1995) theory provided group members with valuable information regarding the overriding importance of members' expectations in shaping the collaborative process and how competing expectations, and their related emotions, influenced the process. In the end, the integration of the sensemaking theory with Coleman's four forms of capital provided a more dynamic understanding of collaboration; the study's framework still reflected the community's structural perspective found in Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) four types of capital, but it now also represented how these factors interrelated to either enhance or hinder collaboration. Sensemaking (Weick, 1995) also enabled an understanding of how the actions adopted by the group to support the development of members' unique implementation of Egan's theory to practice shaped the collaborative process.

By integrating Weick's (1995) sensemaking, this chapter will begin by exploring the more challenging issues experienced by the seven teachers throughout their two-year collaboration. From this, a discussion of why the original conceptual framework

involving social capital theory proved inadequate in understanding the collaborative process will be discussed. Based on the synthesis of Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) essential elements of communities of practice, and Weick's (1995) sensemaking, suggested changes to social capital theory will be explored. Finally, implications for practice and for future research will be discussed based on the study's research questions: (a) What factors within the professional learning community *enhance* or *hinder* collaboration among group members? (b) How do members adapt to the *competing* and *changing expectations* within the group? (c) How does the professional learning community's practice support the development of members' *unique* understanding and application of Egan's theory and its Vygotskian underpinnings to their respective Middle Years practice? and (d) What professional capabilities do members develop as a result of the group's collaborative efforts and how valuable is the group experience in creating these outcomes?

Integrating Sensemaking

At the heart of an effective professional learning community is the issue of collaboration. If groups are to function effectively, the members must work together to achieve common goals. Why, then, did members of the Ecole Belair School group experience challenging times working with each other? In this respect, Coleman (1990) suggests that norms purposely dictate what actions are considered acceptable by members in achieving their collective goals; they reflect individual member's expectations

regarding the appropriate joint actions to be taken by the group. And, Weick (1995, p. 153) adds:

In an unstable world, what people need is some sort of stability. A small pocket of stability is a joint product of selective noticing and shaping that recycles over time. The combination of selective noticing, selective shaping, and ... self-fulfilling prophecies eventually constructs a social world where people may then be able to worry about accuracy rather than stability.

Stability in groups, however, is fleeting. As problems and opportunities fluctuate and individual member's expectations begin to deviate from the group's norms, the professional learning community's environment becomes less stable and less predictable. This was the case with the Ecole Belair School group's collaborative experience where some members' expectations eventually began to compete with the group's norms and goals, which had a destabilizing effect on the community. For example, when a member's expectations challenged the group's norms of completing assigned readings or allowing equal voice among members, significant time and energy was often invested by other members in attempting to re-establish the group norms and increase stability within the group. Throughout the two-year process, members often "mentally calculated" whether sanctioning other members' behaviour that challenged group norms would, in fact, create more stability and facilitate the attainment of the group's collective goals or not. Most members agreed that the second year of their collaborative experience demanded that they consistently question the need to either tolerate distracting behaviour associated with competing expectations or intervene with sanctions. Although most members were content with the balance established between the two possible actions,

some members believed that the distracting behaviour “came close” to negatively affecting the group’s practice in significant ways. Yet, members often tolerated the questionable behaviour of others because the creation of a stable and predictable social structure demanded that each teacher adapt to the group’s norms of “getting along”. Maintaining a stable social structure, however, could come at the expense of a group’s ability to share knowledge, ensure informational accuracy, and achieve shared goals. As Weick (1995, p. 153) notes: “Instead, their goal is to establish some sort of stability and predictability under conditions that work against this goal”.

So, why did Ecole Belair School’s collaborative experience become increasingly challenging to the seven teachers? Why was there more tension between group members throughout the second year? To understand these complex dynamics, it’s important to explore Weick’s (1995) concept of sensemaking. Briefly, people filter and prioritize different environmental stimuli, based on personal needs and goals, so that they are not overwhelmed by constantly changing information. These filtered cues or points of reference are then given meaning as they are connected to similar interpreted cues from their past experiences. As a result, filtered information is made more meaningful by prior knowledge and is ultimately made more understandable to individuals. As Blumer (1969, p. 8) explains: “The actions of others enter to set what one plans to do... One has to fit one’s own line of activity in some manner to the actions of others”.

Emotions, however, tend to complicate this rational process. Emotions surface when expectations are interrupted; it provides a warning to the individual that “the world is no longer the way it was” (Weick, 1995) and that the stability of their environment has been threatened. Between the time that the expectation is first interrupted and the time that the

interruption is somehow resolved, negative emotions experienced by some members of the group will impact their ability for sensemaking because emotions encourage recall and retrospect of earlier experiences that hold the same emotional tone (Snyder and White, 1982). For example, anger at being interrupted will promote the recall of past experiences where feelings of anger were prevalent. This has important implications for the sensemaking process because once strong emotions become involved, past experiences are no longer being recalled because they are observed as similar, but because they are now also being “felt” as similar. “The resulting attempt to use a feeling-based memory to solve a current cognitive puzzle may make sensemaking more difficult because it tries to mate two very different forms of evidence” (Weick, 1995, p. 49). This further affects group practices because individual members then share their emotionally-charged perceptions within the group prompting others to reciprocate by revealing events of similar nature in their own experiences. “Accordingly, individuals actually may come to live in worlds in which not only their own cognitive activities, but also the behavioral activities of other people with whom they interact will serve to maintain and perpetuate their own mood states” (Snyder & White, 1982, p. 166).

Why, then, did emotions become a challenge only in the second year of the Ecole Belair School group’s collaborative process? Over time, as group members came to expect certain behaviour within the group, opportunities for interruption become more plentiful. In fact, Weick (1995) argues that collaborative sensemaking might occur more in combination with negative emotions since: a) group members have little control over the beginning and termination of many interruptions, b) more interruptions of expectations occur because of attrition, shifts in focus, and reorganization, and

c) the accomplishment of goals tend to be slowed rather than accelerated due to interruptions. Therefore, once expectations become established in the form of norms, such as with the group's collective assigning of readings or agreed upon agenda, negative emotions can easily occur from the interruption of the norms. On the other hand, positive emotions can only occur if *unexpected actions* further facilitate the achievement of the group's goals. Significant positive emotions, then, cannot generally be created from consistently generating the "expected behaviour" within a group. Ironically, the norms that purposely exist to stabilize a group also create a significant destabilizing force if they are interrupted. This means that as relationships become more predictable over time, it is easier to generate negative emotions by interrupting expectations than it is to create positive emotions.

And, some of the Ecole Belair School group's interruptions, whether, they were generated by the needs of individual group members or by the group's structural reorganization to meet externally imposed demands, were more serious than others. For example, the Vygotskian scholar's visit, although creating an exciting and enriching opportunity, increased the group's workload significantly. As most group members worked feverishly to complete the assigned readings, many teachers noted that the behaviour of some group members was distracting and even mildly hostile. Furthermore, some members stated that the pace and the amount of information being processed were having a negative impact on the quality of their learning. Again, the underlying issue here relates to the interruption of expectations. In order to make sense of the new situation introduced by the scholar, and to not be overwhelmed with the new information, the group members needed to focus on the primary tasks of performance. As a result,

they began to overlook the more peripheral factors that are at the basis of a more sophisticated understanding of the group's events. Weick (1995) explains that a group's "intensified focus" tends to sensitize members to divergences from the central task cues; group actions that were once quite loosely coupled are now tightly sequenced and causal ties become overstated. This "tight coupling" of events causes members to ignore important cues that are relevant to the overall performance of the group. It is, in fact, during this time of intensified focus that some of the group's norms (such as the expectations of collectively assigned readings and developed agenda) were interrupted. Furthermore, important cues relating to some members' discomfort with the interruptions, as well as the implications associated with the now tightly sequenced events and the issue of the group's shared leadership were ignored by members with vested authority. The tight coupling of events meant that separate discussions were now taking place between specific group members and key people at both the Divisional School Board office and with faculty members in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, leaving other group members to participate in the decision-making process "after the fact". Although the missed cues reflected members' efforts to focus on key information and to "keep up" with the hectic pace of events, the lingering consequences of these actions were significant to the dynamics of the group. As Weick (1995, p. 130) explains:

Key information is lost, which means that some interactions among task elements are forgotten, misunderstood, or ignored. These oversights increase the probability that complex interactions will be set in motion in a system that is becoming increasingly

tightly coupled. These interactions will spread more swiftly, in ways that are now incomprehensible.

How did group members react to the interrupted expectations and to the hectic pace of events? At least one member became unwilling to vest further authority in the group's developing authority relations. In this case, at least, the trust was degenerating and the behaviour associated with this consequence had a destabilizing effect on the group's positive dynamics. In the aftermath, focus-group discussions helped to provide some measure of stability by offering members the opportunity to cautiously clarify concerns, to "vent" any related emotions, to re-establish group norms, and to re-affirm their collective ability to achieve the goals they shared. One cannot help but think, however, that to have "slowed down" the process during the time of the group's "intensified focus", to have enabled a more accurate interpretation of important cues, and to have addressed the prevailing needs of some members, would have been a more efficient and effective way of enhancing the group's stability. As Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p. 159) state: "There is something inherently uncontrollable about the informal, and therefore it presents an unavoidable risk of dysfunctional behaviours [sic]. To allow communities to flourish, it is more important to pay constant attention and fine-tune the process as it evolves".

As Weick (1995) explains, the aligning of individual members' acts to create joint action affects sensemaking because it places value on shared information. By choosing to act, members have shaped their group's practice in three different ways. They have, to some degree, agreed on reasons why the chosen act is valuable, they have agreed to focus on the act and explore any related information, and they have agreed to invest more

resources exploring only certain parts of the learning process. And so, whether the Ecole Belair School group decided to focus more intensely on Vygotsky's concepts of perception and imagination or Egan's use of narratives and metaphors, the members collectively decided to place value on certain shared information and not on other information. These decisions, then, continued to shape the development of the group's community, practice, and domain, because "binding decisions affect the task we are attracted to, the reasons that move us, the values we try to realize, the plans we admire, and the people we seek out" (Weick, 1995, p. 160).

Sometimes, however, group members adapt their beliefs to justify their joint actions. For example, once the group realized that they had misunderstood the use of binary opposites in Egan's work, some individuals were unwilling to re-examine the concept. Instead, their beliefs were "selectively mobilized" to justify the position they chose. In effect, "it is the committed act in search of an explanation that anchors this form of sensemaking" (Weick, 1995, p. 156). Why did this happen? Developing some degree of understanding among members relating to key concepts in Egan's theory, such as binary opposites, connected individual members to the collectivity and provided reassurance for the reliability of the beliefs that shape their joint action. To challenge the shared beliefs and chosen actions, then, was to introduce a measure of uncertainty that could destabilize the group's social structure. "Given the certainty and social cohesion they facilitate, it is quite understandable why ... shared systems of meaning and belief come to have great stability and resistance to change" (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 21). Although the issue of social stability is vital to collaborative work, this point questions the degree to which the

sustenance of a group's stability should affect the accuracy of the information, and by extension, the quality of its symbolic and substantive outcomes.

And so, what was actually accomplished from the group's two-year experience? Of course, the degree of substantive change to teaching practices depended on individual members' strengths, as well as their personal commitment to the learning process. Some implementations lasted an entire year while others lasted a few weeks. In fact, this misalignment in expectations caused frustration among some members who felt that others were less committed to the collaborative process once having completed their implementations. And although the group generally devoted entire afternoons to the implementation of Egan's theory to practice, some members appeared to eventually get frustrated and to lose interest in the work required to make those changes. And finally, there is the issue of members' varied expectations regarding changes to their teaching practice. Some members appeared to challenge themselves to develop their implementations throughout the two-year process, while others stopped and to some extent, "re-used" the same implementation throughout much of the second year. In fact, some teachers' implementations only fully developed in the second year, while the growth of other members' applications mostly ended after the first. A few teachers used the first part of the collaborative process to theoretically prepare for the second year, while others appeared to lose their focus and possibly, their interest, after the first year.

What were some of the capabilities created from the collaborative process? One member noted that the group experience taught her the skills of "teaming" with other teachers. By being given the time to work closely with colleagues on an ongoing basis, she was able to identify and develop the skills necessary to successfully "team teach".

Other teachers stated that through their ongoing attempts to implement Egan's theory to practice, they learned to "slow down" and to focus on the "quality of learning" related to curricular outcomes, rather than on the "quantity of learning" associated with "getting through" its specific objectives. On a more practical level, members created unique and imaginative implementations in different subject areas that helped foster student engagement (See Appendix G). The cognitive tools (Egan, 1997, 2005) most frequently integrated in their implementations involved: (a) narrative understanding, (b) metaphor use, (c) focus on extremes and limits, (d) association with heroes and human transcendence, (e) the issue of revolt and idealism, (f) role playing, and (g) myths and fantasy.

What were a few of the more obvious symbolic outcomes created from the collaborative process? For some members, the knowledge altered their way of "seeing the world". The experience initiated deep changes in the way that some of the teachers understood teaching and learning which they planned to develop over the next few years. For all, the knowledge had a practical orientation; it involved understanding more about the importance of imagination in human development and making a commitment to learn and integrate more creative strategies into their teaching. And for some, the process taught them more about working with people, whether that involved developing greater empathy for people as they struggled with difficult challenges, or whether it involved the development of the more practical collaborative skills necessary for effective "teaming".

In the end, how important was the group's collaborative work to the learning and implementation of Egan's theory? Although most members of the Ecole Belair School group stated that they needed to invest a significant amount of effort into maintaining the

group's stability, especially in the second year of the process, they all stated that the learning either "met" or exceeded their expectations. Furthermore, most members stated that they needed the support of the group to implement Egan's theory. On their own, they argued that they would have found the theory too difficult to understand, they would not have found the necessary time, and that they needed the "fun" generated by the group to complete the required work. In fact, all members expected to enjoy the company of their colleagues as they "worked through" the difficult challenges. As one member stated, "People in the group genuinely like each other... and that helps a lot."

Social Capital Theory Revisited

Does social capital theory, then, recognize the fundamental importance of group members' expectations in the ongoing development of their community, practice, and domain? This is an important question because members' expectations in the form of norms, goals, and competing expectations represent the schema within which joint action is understood. It makes sense, then, that "because [expectations] are so compelling, they need to be uncovered, monitored closely, and retuned as interests change" (Weick, 1995, p. 190). The group's experience confirms this point when, in the second year of collaboration, members scrambled in search of a more profound understanding of their complex needs than what could be explained using social capital theory. Although this theory's four forms of capital were helpful in identifying the structural components of the group that enhanced collaboration, the theory was unhelpful in analyzing how these components could hinder it. Because there is no indication that the four forms of capital interrelate, the theory cannot identify how the group adapted to some members'

competing and conflicting expectations. What actions are adopted by the group to support the development of members' unique understanding and implementation of Egan's theory cannot be analyzed using social capital theory because it does not represent the essential element of practice. Of course, without the element of practice that reflects the nature of the group's chosen domain, it is difficult to discuss the professional outcomes created as a result of the collaborative work.

In the end, the two-year study of the Ecole Belair School professional learning community highlights five main observations with respect to the application of social capital theory: (a) expectations is not one of four forms of capital, but rather, it is fundamental to all the components that enhance or hinder collaboration, (b) Coleman's (1990) four forms of "capital" need to be understood as highly interrelated if they are to analyze how a group adapts to competing and changing expectations, (c) The four forms of capital need to be realigned to more effectively reflect the complexity of group dynamics, (d) The four forms of capital need to be understood beyond the context of "assets" or "gains", but as necessary components of group work that can both enhance or hinder collaboration, and (e) The four forms of capital, however, need to more adequately represent a group's adopted practice; social capital theory reflects only the element of community (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) and is unable to more accurately represent how the group supports individual member's learning and implementation of the domain.

Coleman (1990) refers to the issue of expectations, in combination with obligations and trust, as only one of the four forms of capital that include norms and sanctions, authority relations, and information channels. The results of this study suggest, however,

that to understand the development of a group's norms, sanctions, authority relations, and information channels is to appreciate the underlying importance of the expectations of members of the group. Group norms purposely dictate members' expected behaviour, within the realm of community and practice, in attaining their collective goals. These goals, of course, reflect the members' expectations regarding their chosen domain, such as the goals to understand Egan's theory, to develop implementation strategies, and to apply them to teaching practice. And so, once group norms and goals have been established, collaboration becomes a question of which joint actions will most effectively address their expectations and by extension, which actions will be considered threatening to the achievement of the expectations. In this light, the vesting of authority to specific group members becomes a question of which members are most able to help the group meet the expectations of individual members. The issue of trustworthiness is relevant to this process because it demands that members must be willing to invest personal resources into the generalized reciprocity of the group now being directed by certain members. The development of the group's information channels is then being shaped by the group's norms and goals, and the emerging authority relations. The group's inevitable emotional tension can also be understood as evolving from the interruption of expected behaviour and the subsequent issue of sanctions can be interpreted as joint action that can protect the group's threatened norms and goals, and promote stability. In the end, members' expectations relating to their community of practice and domain are at the basis of all four forms of capital and as the data suggest, it is clear that they are interrelated. One cannot affect the group's authority relations and by extension, its

community, for example, without impacting on the members' synthesis of information that includes both practice and domain.

Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) four forms of capital are interrelated, but not as they are currently presented: (a) trustworthiness, obligations, and expectations, (b) norms and sanctions, (c) authority relations, and (d) information channels. Of course, the aligning of members' expectations to form the group's norms and goals is what transforms a group of people into a "community". The stabilizing force of the group's norms and goals unite people's efforts; it is the common denominator in the group's practice. Sanctions should be viewed, then, as a possible way of responding to competing expectations that threaten the group's norms and goals; as one option that can be used in the maintenance of group stability. The issue of trust is fundamental to the development of authority relations. Simply put, trust occurs when authority is vested in a person or persons considered most likely to help the group sustain its norms and attain its goals. Trust needs to be understood as an integral part of authority relations; it has a more distant relation to expectations. Finally, information channels only partially reflect the issue of the group's practice, which is integral to the group's development of community. Similar to the issue of sanctions and trust, information channels need to be understood as necessary parts of the "broader picture" that involves maintaining the norms, achieving the group's goals, and ultimately fostering social stability.

Furthermore, is it helpful to refer to Coleman's (1987, 1988, 1990) four forms of capital as "capital" in the analysis of group work? To refer to these components of collaboration as "assets" or "gains" is to oversimplify the complexity of their role in group work. The study's results indicate that the aligning of members' expectations

creates group stability, in terms of norms, that shape the development of its community and practice. However, competing and conflicting expectations can also de-stabilize collaborative efforts as members invest limited group resources to adapt to some members' challenging behaviour. The findings also suggest that the ability of any proposed sanction to enforce group norms needs to be carefully considered; sanctions can address one concern and yet exacerbate another to further weaken the group's stability. As mentioned, authority relations and the vesting of authority are based on group expectations. The study's results suggest that this form of "capital" can also generate competing and conflicting expectations that can seriously destabilize a community and affect its practice. Of course, information channels are integral to all these other forms of "capital" and can be used to stabilize or to de-stabilize group work.

The synthesis of information that occurred throughout the group's two-year collaboration raises another concern regarding the application of social capital theory. In Chapter 2, it was noted that Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) essential elements of community/practice seemed to be embedded in Coleman's (1990) four forms of "capital". The study's analysis of the data, however, has shown this not to be the case. They reflect the essential element of community and only hint at the direction of the group's practice (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). Issues of expectations and norms, authority relations, and even information channels adequately represent how the community is "shaping up", but these forms of "capital" fail to capture what the group *does* in the form of joint action. This issue of practice is important because it then influences what information the group deems relevant, which future actions it considers appropriate, and which people are most likely to "make it happen". And so, whether the

Ecole Belair School group examined aspects of its domain, such as the Vygotsky readings, or whether it discussed the development of its community and practice as they did during the focus-group discussions, any joint action taken by the group inevitably shaped the future development of its community, practice, and domain. Essentially, it is the group's element of practice that is missing in Coleman's (1990) four forms of capital; a gap exists between the group's norms that reflect the alignment of members' expectations and the group's information channels.

Furthermore, the group's practice indicates, among other things, what aspects of the chosen domain will be prioritized and developed. As Weick (1985, p.133) explains:

Action generates outcomes that ultimately provide the raw material for seeing something. Before action takes place, the meaning of any situation is essentially limitless. The situation could become anything whatsoever.... The situation takes on distinct form and meaning only when action is inserted into it.

This being so, the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 is limited because the three essential elements that involve community/practice and domain are more important than suggested. The inherently interrelated nature of Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) three essential elements of community, practice, and domain implies that the inclusion of the group's practice in the study of its collaborative efforts needs to include members' expectations in the form of both *norms* and *collective goals*. The group's goals, after all, are members' expectations as they relate to their learning of their chosen domain and represent their "raison d'etre". From this, the question must then be asked: Have the group's goals been met? To discuss collaboration in terms of norms and goals and to ignore whether the group succeeded in satisfying the members' fundamental

expectations of creating significant change in their teaching practice is insufficient. And so, as Little (1990, p. 525) asks: “does teachers’ time together advance the understanding and imagination they bring to their work, or do teachers merely confirm one another in present practice?”

Changes to Social Capital Theory

The need to effectively represent the group’s community, practice, and domain in the analysis of their collaborative work suggests some changes to social capital theory. The issue is not whether to accept or reject social capital theory; Coleman’s (1987, 1988, 1990) four forms of “capital” provide a valuable structural perspective for analyzing the collaborative process. For the most part, it’s a question of realigning the original conceptual framework so that it can more effectively represent the group’s efforts to sustain its stability while adapting to the de-stabilizing effects of members’ competing expectations. Why is this necessary? Without the changes, this study’s initial conceptual framework that is centered on social capital theory only represents the components that *enhance* collaboration, and then only as four distinct parts of the group’s community. The realignment of the main components of collaboration fosters a better understanding of how they interrelate; what factors enhance and hinder collaboration? How the group adapts to competing and changing expectations? How the group supports members’ unique understanding and implementation of theory to practice? What professional capabilities do members develop as a result of the group’s collaborative efforts and how valuable was the group experience in creating these outcomes?

Answering these questions must begin with the alignment of members' expectations to develop group norms and goals. Earlier, it was argued that the issue of group expectations is not one of the four forms of capital, but it is an integral part of all of the elements that enhance collaboration. It is, in fact, members' expectations, in terms of norms and goals that unite members' efforts into a common practice, which establishes the aspects of the domain to be explored and the nature of the community. For this reason, *individual expectations, norms, and group goals* need to be understood as fundamental to collaborative work. Once norms and goals have been established, specific information relating to the domain is synthesized based on members' joint actions, social roles are established and fulfilled by certain group members, and relationships of all kinds are developed throughout the process. It is, however, individual expectations, norms and group goals that initially begin, and then continue to "drive" the process. The ongoing influence of expectations occurs because the creation of group stability that is necessary for collaborative work demands that group norms and goals be maintained. "The goal ... is to create and identify events that recur to stabilize their environments and make them more predictable" (Weick, 1995, p. 170). How do members adapt when competing expectations challenge group norms and threaten to destabilize the social structure? Joint action in the form of group sanctions result and now need to be discussed.

Group sanctions refer to the joint actions taken by members that serve to protect group expectations, expressed as both norms and goals. Sanctions can take many forms, but are consistently used to protect group stability by limiting the effect of members' competing expectations within the social structure. In effect, sanctions are needed when

members' individual expectations, whether they relate to community, practice, or domain, compete with the group's norms and goals. As Coleman (1988) explains, sustaining group norms with sanctions can limit a group's innovativeness because it constrains "deviant" actions that could harm, but also benefit, group members. And this is an important point. Any action can be sanctioned if it is perceived as being a threat to the group's stability. However, the data suggest that members' overriding concern was whether or not the sanction itself would possibly promote group stability. Nevertheless, members' *competing expectations and possible sanctions* need to be understood as a way of protecting the group's norms and goals.

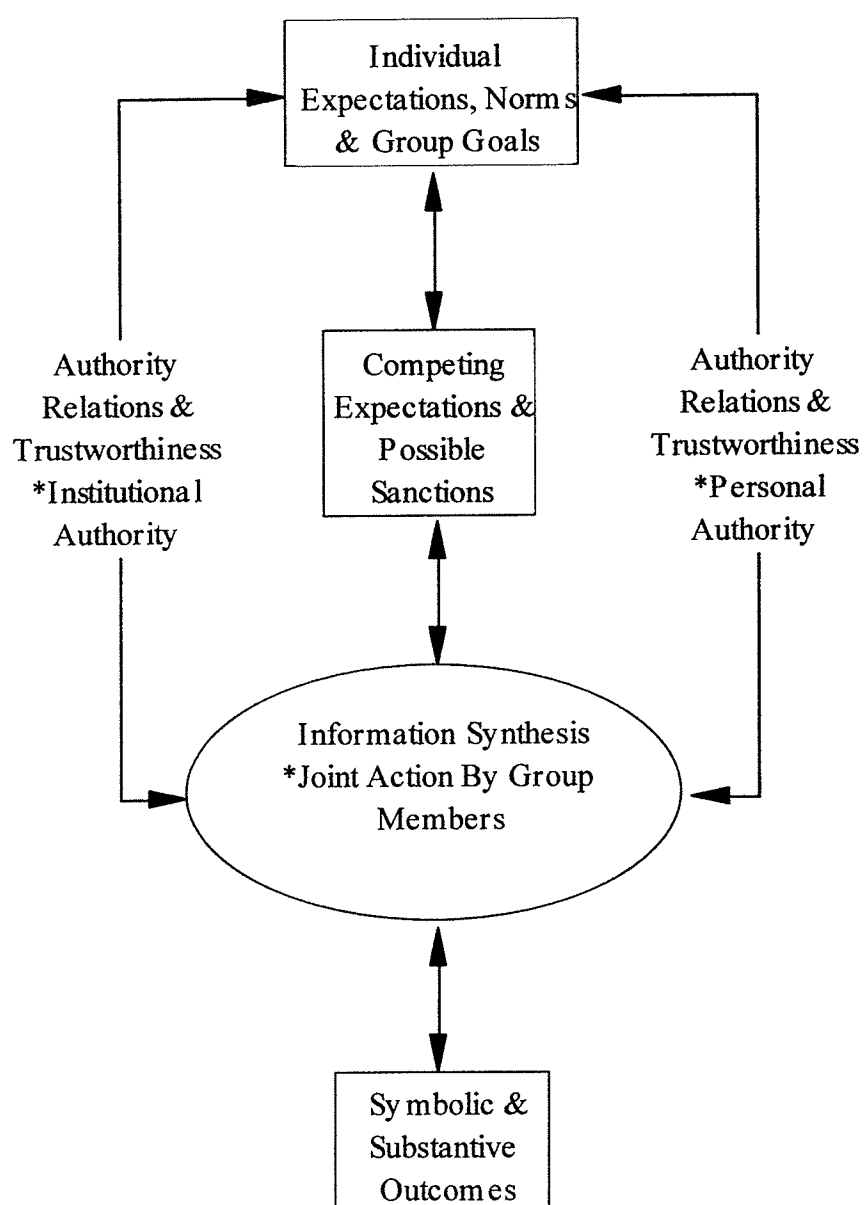
And so, in order to create a stable and predictable social environment, members have to align their expectations to create norms and goals. Furthermore, the protection of the group's stability occurs through the possible use of sanctions. But, how is the group satisfying members' aligned expectations? What is the group actually doing to support members' unique understanding and implementation of Egan's theory to practice? This is an important question that can be only partly addressed by using Coleman's (1990) conception of information channels; it only addresses where the group's information is coming from and not how it is being synthesized. As Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p. 14) explain: "Caring for a domain goes beyond mere interest. It entails developing a shared practice, which directly affects the behaviours [sic] and abilities of members". Group actions, such as the use of the rotating chair, focus-group discussions, and the "hot seat" process prioritize parts of the domain for group synthesis and increase the social interactions among members. Joint actions, then, in the form of the group's

synthesis of information, is an integral part of the collaboration that needs to be considered when analyzing group work.

Figure 1 is a very basic representation of the process so far. Members' expectations, norms, and group goals are at the basis of group work; they are the initial "points of contact" that are necessary for collaboration to occur. From this, the group's synthesis of information takes place. This comprises the joint actions adopted in the ongoing development of the group's community, practice, and domain. Throughout this process, members' expectations change, and at times, compete with the established norms and goals of the group. Sanctions must, therefore, periodically be used to protect the group's stability so that members can achieve their shared goals. The issue of authority relations permeates all parts of the process; members with vested authority help to shape and maintain the group's norms and goals by guiding its practice. This is done with both institutional and personal authority. Waller (1961) explains that institutional authority is derived from the social position a person holds within an organization, whereas personal authority is generated from the personal resources, expertise, and experience of the individual. As Pfeffer (1981) argues, authority is vested in certain members of a group because they are perceived by others as being most able to help the group maintain its norms and to achieve its goals. They are able to align joint action to members' expectations while maintaining a broader vision of the group's work. Taking the risk to vest authority in certain people involves trust; it needs to be understood within the context of authority relations. In short, the group's *authority relations and trustworthiness* represents the risk that certain people have assumed based on the perceived trustworthiness of specific group members to "get the work done".

Figure 1

Changes to Social Capital Theory: Creating and Maintaining Group Stability



In the end, what professional capabilities are developed as a result of the group's collaborative efforts and how valuable is the collective experience in creating these outcomes? As Little (1990) argues, "Patterns of interaction that support ... routine sharing may account well for maintaining a certain level of work force stability, teacher satisfaction, and a performance 'floor'. They seem less likely to account for high rates of innovation...". Is it enough that the collaborative process could potentially develop teachers' values and beliefs or is there also an expectation that it should produce actual changes to teaching practice? Is it acceptable that this form of professional development mostly affect teachers' thinking or is it expected that the collaborative learning directly benefit the students as well? The need to understand what is created from the collaborative process underscores the importance of including Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) essential element of practice into the analysis. By taking into account the learning of certain prioritized aspects of the domain, it is possible to develop some understanding of the changes created by the process. The knowledge created from collaborative work, then, can be explored in two ways. Pfeffer (1981) explains that the group's substantive outcomes refer to the changes that have a tangible referent while the group's symbolic outcomes relate to the sentiments of affect relating to professional values and beliefs. Of course, how important a role the collaborative process plays in the created outcomes must be explored. Does the investment of group resources to create a predictable and stable learning environment always enhance learning or could the same, or possibly stronger, professional outcomes be created from members working on their own or in pairs?

Implications for Practice

The professional learning community's goals reflect members' expectations regarding their chosen domain. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) argue that the group's domain is what brings the members together; it is their "raison d'etre". But, is it? This study suggests that people initially "come together" to collaborate for many different reasons that involve the personal, the social, and the professional. Furthermore, it is possible for a group of learners to come together and to then choose a domain as a community. In both these instances, it would appear that it is members' varied expectations based on individual needs, such as the need for professional dialogue or the need for social support, that bring them together as a group. The domain, then, becomes the initial common ground upon which group members begin to align their expectations in the form of norms and goals. The group's domain may serve to explain and legitimize its purpose and value both to its members and stakeholders; in this light, the domain can be described as the group's "raison d'etre". However, people are motivated to collaborate for many different reasons and group members' expectations of the experience can be varied and at times, divergent. This is what can make the collaborative process so enriching and yet, so difficult.

Factors That Enhance and Hinder Group Stability

On first glance, one might argue that the quest for group stability and the ongoing alignment of group members' expectations means "mapping out" in advance the development of the group's community, practice, and domain. This, however, would be a mistake. It is important to remember that the group's domain, although chosen, still

needs to be learned and this process will require that members prioritize specific information and value certain perspectives along the way. In fact, this is what the “aligning of expectations” means; allowing the collaborative process to reflect the uniqueness of the group and to not constrain the process by mandating expectations and by over-planning the experience. It follows, then, that interest in aspects of the domain is going to change, as well as members’ expectations of the collaborative process. Furthermore, some members’ expectations, at some point, will compete with the established norms and goals of the group. And this is an important point. Competing expectations are going to eventually exist between members. In fact, they should be expected because these changes are naturally embedded in group work even though they are also the changes that tend to destabilize the collaborative process. Competing expectations only become a concern if a significant amount of group effort becomes focused on re-establishing stability at the expense of attaining the group’s collective goals. At this point, too much energy may be spent “keeping the group together” and not enough may be focused on learning about the chosen topic.

And so, if the success of collaborative work rests firmly on the ability of members to maintain group stability, but the trend of long-term group work is to create competing expectations that de-stabilize the group, then how is collaboration fostered? There is no easy answer. This study, however, highlights the need to develop strategies that will help the group to cope with the inevitable conflicting expectations that will arise so that the members can maintain a functioning degree of group stability.

Adapting to Competing and Conflicting Expectations

The strategies that members found helpful in maintaining group stability included:

(a) explicitly establishing and then, regularly re-confirming the group's aligned expectations, (b) sharing meeting transcripts so that members could reflect on group discussions between meetings, (c) developing agendas with specific discussion points, (d) encouraging respectful and forthright interactions between members during focus-group discussions and meetings, (e) deliberating carefully as to when and when not to use group sanctions, and (f) integrating Weick's (1995) sensemaking and more specifically, the role of emotions, to help members discuss possible feelings of frustration using a "safe" and objective framework.

The informal conversations that occurred among members between meetings should also be mentioned. This is an important point because it extends the issue of collaboration beyond what happens during meetings. In fact, many members viewed the monthly meetings as opportunities to consolidate the group plans that had already been thoroughly discussed and examined informally "outside" of the meeting time. This informal planning time was used to negotiate and to further align expectations so that during meetings, joint action could occur (Blumer, 1969). This part of collaborative work is demanding and time consuming, but it is important preparatory work to productive meetings. In fact, all members noted how much more difficult the collaborative process would have been if they had not all worked in the same school and had not been able "just to talk in the halls". One member, unsure of her school placement the following year, was considering leaving the professional learning community; she felt

that being apart from the informal, day-to-day conversations among members would make the collaborative process too difficult.

There are specific times in the group experience, however, when competing expectations are more likely to be generated. When demands, such as formal presentations, are placed on the members by the school division or other outside organizations, hectic times for the group will ensue. These are the periods of time when, no matter how exciting the demands, certain members with vested authority must “streamline” the group’s consultative process so that decisions can be made with fewer people involved (Weick, 1985). This happens because the act of prioritizing group resources and information is going to help members cope with the hurried pace of events. Nevertheless, the strategy introduces certain risks to group stability. By focusing primarily on the group’s new demands, important norms, such as shared decision-making, are going to be temporarily neglected. Because the coping strategy also involves placing value on only certain information, some individual member’s expectations are also going to be ignored. Nevertheless, the strategy of simplifying the synthesis of information during hectic times means that the group has decided, to some degree, to achieve specific goals at the expense of their social stability. Are there any other options? Weick (1985) explains that during hectic times, another option is to slow the process down and to modify the group’s learning goals after a more careful deliberation of members’ needs. In this scenario, then, the group’s stability is maintained at the expense of the achievement of new and exciting goals. Either way, some individual members’ expectations are eventually going to be neglected and the group, to some degree, will be de-stabilized.

Does this mean that the hectic times created by new and changing plans should be avoided? On the contrary, members of the Ecole Belair School group believed that the demands that caused the more hurried pace of events were “motivational” and that they challenged members to keep aligning their implementation plans to their developing theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, demands on the group were believed to be effective at keeping members “accountable” for the work that they produced; it pushed the group to create both symbolic *and* substantive outcomes. It just highlights the fact that the factors that can enhance group stability can also hinder it. For example, this study suggests that when the hectic times de-stabilized the group, members were not willing to revisit points of the domain, such as Egan’s binary opposites, that had been originally misinterpreted or misunderstood. As Pfeffer (1981) explains, to critically examine established beliefs would be to further destabilize an already insecure environment. Although the misconception continued to bother some members in the study, the group coped with the hectic pace of events by choosing to continue to work with an identified theoretical misconception rather than to revisit the issue. Although the group’s misconception was not a serious one, the tendency to ignore an obvious theoretical misconception in order to sustain the group’s stability needs to be considered. It raises the question: to what degree is the learning of the domain and the attainment of the goals modified to accommodate the stability of the group?

Supporting Members’ Unique Understanding and Implementation of Theory

Again, the importance of members’ expectations surfaces. For the most part, supporting teachers’ unique learning involves balancing the tensions between learning

“too little” and “too much” theory. This point gets negotiated between members time and time again, both during group meetings and informally between meetings, as some teachers lose interest and want to begin implementing their knowledge very early in the process while others need to learn a theory in great depth before applying any concepts at all. The support also involves identifying strategies that help members experience success in their learning and implementations of the theory so that they can feel more confident in their abilities as teachers. For the Ecole Belair School group, these strategies included: (a) rotating chairs to highlight members’ leadership skills, (b) “speakers lists” so that during meetings, all members had “equal voice”, (c) collectively developed meeting agendas so that all members had input into the learning process, (d) outlines of difficult articles so that all members could participate in group discussions, and (e) the “hot seat” process where members could be challenged in their implementation of theory in a “safe” and respectful manner. Furthermore, the “educational leave” days spent studying the theory were structured with members’ different expectations in mind; mornings were used to study the theories and the afternoons were left for implementation planning. All members participated in both learning activities regardless of their “readiness” to do so which meant that everyone struggled, to some extent, with challenges relating to either theory or implementation. Involvement in formal presentations and conferences, although stressful, helped to support members’ learning because it usually challenged the teachers to further align their theoretical understanding to their teaching practice.

Created Outcomes and the Value of the Collaborative Process

What were the professional capabilities created from the process? In this study, it was clear that members' collaborative efforts could not have continued over a two-year period if the group had been expected to produce one collective implementation. In fact, all members stated that one "collective implementation" could not have been created by this group. Part of the successful aligning of expectations involved knowing what parts of individual member's professional practice could be safely explored in group work and which parts needed to be avoided. And so, by allowing members the freedom to create their own individual implementations from the group's shared practice, they were able to prioritize the alignment of group expectations; members were able to "come together" when necessary while still be allowed the freedom to "steer clear" of obvious points of disconnect. Pfeffer (1981) states that a group's information synthesis is far more likely to happen around the perceived cause-effect relations of the domain rather than around shared personal preferences and values. This is an especially relevant point in professions, such as teaching, where educators' personal preferences and personality traits play such an important role in the development of their individual practice.

Should the duration of members' implementations to practice be "mandated" by the group? Some of the teachers would argue "yes" because they felt that some colleagues were less engaged in the learning process after the completion of their shorter implementations. Whether such an action would serve to maintain or to threaten group stability is the question; in the end, some people will always persevere more than others. Again, competing expectations regarding the investment of time and level of engagement become an issue.

The changes to teaching practice that aren't directly related to the study of the domain should also be considered. Developing skills to "team teach" by collaborating in a professional learning community, to "slow down" and to pay attention to the depth of student learning, or to "dig deeper" to become more empathetic to the struggles of others are valuable professional outcomes that directly enhance student learning. In the end, the creation of substantive outcomes should encompass more than just an implementation of the domain. It should also involve growth in terms of our interactions with people.

It is impossible to effectively describe members' symbolic outcomes; who really knows what beliefs and values have been significantly developed from the collaborative process? The distinction between substantive and symbolic outcomes is helpful, however, if only to remain aware of the changes that have, in turn, enhanced student learning. Teachers' collaborative efforts and their effects on teaching practice are not always evident; at least one of Ecole Belair School group members stated that the "outer effect" for the students didn't change significantly at the end of the two-year process. If the goal of the collaborative effort is to enhance teaching and learning for students, then shouldn't the educational benefits to the children who have directly sacrificed the time with their teacher be a serious consideration during the process?

In the end, is the experience worth the time and effort? Yes. All members in this study stated that their understanding and implementation of the group's chosen domain were far more developed because of the sharing of members' diverse resources. In fact, some members thought that they could not have learned or applied the theory without the ongoing group support. What about all of the time and effort used in the second year of the process to promote group stability so that the sharing of resources between members

could continue? The energy invested by members in stabilizing the group was substantial but again, they all stated that they were satisfied with the demands required of the process in relation to the learning generated as a result. As Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p. 37) state: "In good communities strong bonds withstand disagreement, and members can even use conflict as a way to deepen their relationships and their learning".

To summarize, the main implications for practice include:

1. All components of collaboration, whether it involves authority relations and trust or information synthesis, have the potential to enhance or hinder group work. Once the group's norms and goals have been established, competing expectations are eventually going to occur that will require that members use some of their resources to stabilize the learning environment. Ongoing attention should be given to the amount of resources needed to sustain the group and the level of energy left for the actual learning of the domain, especially in the second year of group work. In short, how much learning is actually taking place?
2. Demands, such as presentations, are motivational and further challenge teachers to connect the theory to their practice. Extra demands also create the hectic times that tend to destabilize group work because as certain members prioritize relevant information for decision-making, some members' expectations are going to be ignored. The group can either focus on "meeting the demands" and de-emphasizing some members' expectations or it can focus on addressing these expectations and neglecting some of the demands. Either way, it's going to destabilize the group.

3. Competing expectations are inherent to the collaborative process and their existence simply means that the group must adopt strategies to cope. In fact, adapting to competing expectations really only becomes a concern when they start to deviate too much energy away from the group's learning. This "draining" of group resources often occurs when members' emotions become involved in the rational processes of group work and group energy is spent adapting to members' "distracting" behaviour.
4. It is important that all members shape the group's practice. Care needs to be taken to find the unique ways that each group member will balance the competing expectations involved in learning and applying a theory. Although a broader vision of the group's "learning path" needs to exist, the steps in the process cannot be mandated by a few; all members need a voice in its development. If the group's path meanders too far from any one member's expectations, they are going to leave the group.
5. Just because a professional learning community is studying a theory does not mean that its members are making changes to their practice. The difficulty in applying a theory to practice is often underestimated; it's probably more challenging than studying the theory alone. Explicit actions, such as the "hot seat" process, need to be adopted to ensure that members are being supported during this difficult and stressful time. Actions, such as presentations, also need to be in place to further challenge members to make the changes to practice.
6. The group's domain needs to be chosen very carefully. Whether the topic initially brings the members together or whether it surfaces, in time, from group meetings,

the domain is going to shape how members collectively choose to learn and “who does what” in the process. The necessary time needs to be taken to ensure that the chosen domain truly reflects the group’s interest.

7. Developing a professional learning community is time-consuming and, at times, stressful, especially in the second-year of the process. It is, in fact, during this time when certain members will experience some of their most meaningful learning, while other members will lose interest in the group’s goals. The second year of the process offers incredibly valuable learning, although the needs of the group’s community can be demanding.
8. The ongoing consequences to the larger staff need to be monitored when a professional learning community exists. The group experience can create close relationships and exciting learning opportunities that can be perceived as exclusionary to other staff. Furthermore, if the collaborative work also requires release time from regular work responsibilities, more demands could be placed on colleagues that can result in staff tension.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study raise a number of questions for further research, four of which will now be explored. The first question focuses on the outcomes created by professional learning communities. What strategies, such as professional presentations, can be used to successfully challenge group members to keep aligning their attitudes and beliefs to their practice during the collaborative process? How could members be further supported in the difficult task of critically and realistically examining their own practice

for evidence of their newly developed knowledge? Professional presentations caused the hectic times that effectively challenged members of this study to further align their beliefs and values with their practice. At one point do internal and external demands placed on a group effectively challenge members to create both symbolic and substantive outcomes, and at one point do these demands risk overwhelming the groups' resources and permanently destabilizing the community? Are there indicators within the social dynamics that can help to gauge when a group is no longer being appropriately challenged by imposed demands and when its very existence is being put "at risk"?

The second question focuses on the evidence of learning. Although they are a popular form of collaboration, do professional learning communities regularly promote actual professional development? If so, how? What professional changes arise from this process? Are the outcomes more symbolic in nature or do they impact professional practice in a substantive way? In short, how often do children directly benefit from this type of collaborative work? The learning that significantly shapes practice and ultimately benefits children demands the exploration of educational issues beyond the sharing of classroom strategies. It demands a theoretical understanding of specific concepts. What other strategies, then, beyond this group's use of shared readings and summaries can help members with varying individual strengths to develop substantial symbolic outcomes? Furthermore, what strategies can be integrated into the group's ongoing practice, beyond the issue of presentations and conferences that will comfortably challenge members to extend their newly developed knowledge into their actual practice?

The third question refers to the role of professional learning communities within the present educational system. Can this type of ongoing group learning play a central

and integral role in schools' professional development plans or are professional learning communities seen more as peripheral to the presently established schools' professional development days? Are they legitimized or valued by the very organizations that promote them? If so, how does the meaningful aligning of expectations and the subsequent sharing of resources occur in a large staff? Are groups allowed to be "self-selecting" based on shared expectations or are they developed centrally? Is the domain mandated or are groups given the freedom to identify their own shared interest? In a large staff with many groupings, how does the staffing community eventually "come together"? Would several professional learning communities possibly cause factions and political division within the larger school community? In short, is there an authentic role in the present school system for professional learning communities and the unique collaborative learning experience that they offer?

The final research question relates to teachers' relationships with their colleagues. How does the participation in a professional learning community affect the relationships of the general staff; members with members, members with non-members, and administrators with both members and non-members? Can events that occur within the professional learning community significantly affect relationships within the larger staff? Can close, collaborative relationships in a professional learning community cause tensions that actually hinder the development of collaboration in the greater staff? Can these changes ultimately affect student learning in the school?

Professional learning communities offer teachers a unique opportunity for professional growth because the members themselves establish their goals for learning and their collective expectations of the process. Because of this, teachers can work to

shape the experience so that it reflects their professional learning needs. It can also provide its members with the opportunity to develop close relationships that can be a source of support both professionally and personally. As enriching as this experience may be, however, there are some questions to be considered: How is collaboration nurtured among group members and how can it be hindered? What actions helped the group to “work together” to learn its chosen domain? Does collaborative work always provide a valuable learning experience?

This study critically examined the use of Coleman’s (1987, 1988, 1990) social capital theory in analyzing the group’s ongoing social dynamics in the attainment of its goals. In the first year of the study, however, the need to more closely examine how members’ learning of their domain was influencing their community became apparent. For this reason, the study integrated Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder’s (2002) three essential elements of communities of practice that include community, practice, and domain. In order to understand the more complex social dynamics of the Ecole Belair School group, Weick’s (1995) sensemaking was introduced in the second year of the group process. The professional capabilities created from the group’s two-year experience were examined using Pfeffer’s (1981) substantive and symbolic outcomes. Based on the synthesis of these theories, this study has suggested some changes to social capital theory so that it might more effectively analyze a professional learning community’s collaborative efforts. As a result, implications to practice have been explored, as well as important questions for future research.

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APPENDIX A

Guiding Questions for Journal Entries

Planning Stage

Content/Practice:

- Which of Egan's major concepts seem to be surfacing from your own reading and the discussions that you are having with others?
- In your opinion, has the group achieved consensus on Egan's major concepts? How?

Application:

- Which of Egan's major concepts do you feel that you could apply into your classroom practice?
- How could you apply these concepts into your practice?
- What challenges do you foresee in applying these concepts into your practice? (ie: subject, grade level, specific units, methodology...?)
- Based on these applications, how would your practice look different than what it is now? How do you feel about the changes that you foresee making in applying these concepts into your classroom practice?
- In your opinion, which ideas (if any) cannot be applied into your classroom practice? Why?

Process:

- What kinds of observations have you made about the functioning of the group? What does the group have to be mindful of as they meet on a regular basis?

APPENDIX B

Protocol for Focus Group Session

Planning Stage

Content/Practice:

- Based on Egan's work, what two or three concepts have you identified as more readily applicable to your classroom practice?
- In your opinion, has the group achieved consensus on Egan's major concepts? Explain.

Application:

- How do you foresee Egan's major concepts applied into your classroom practice?
- What challenges do you foresee in applying these concepts into your practice?
- Based on these applications, how would your practice look different than what it is now? How do you feel about the changes that you foresee making in applying these ideas into your classroom practice?
- In your opinion, which ideas (if any) cannot be applied into your classroom practice? Explain.

Process:

- What kinds of observations have you made about the functioning of the group? What does the group have to be mindful of as they meet on a regular basis?
- What strategies have been/are helpful in enabling the group to achieve its goals? (ie: journaling, facilitators...)

APPENDIX C

Guiding Questions for Journal Entries

Implementation Stage

Content/Practice:

- Which of Egan's major concepts have you decided to apply into your classroom practice? Why?

Application:

- How have you applied Egan's concepts into your classroom practice? (re: application strategies).
- Now that you are applying Egan's concepts into your practice, is your teaching different? How? Explain.
- In your opinion, how are your students reacting to the changes in your teaching practice?
- What are the challenges and the benefits that you have encountered as you have attempted to apply Egan's concepts to your Middle Years practice? How do you feel about the changes to your practice?

Process:

- In your opinion, has the functioning of the group changed over time? How?
- In your opinion, what strategies have helped to make the group discussions more fruitful?

APPENDIX D

Protocol for Focus Group Session

Implementation Stage

Content/Practice:

- Which of Egan's two or three major concepts have you decided to implement into your classroom practice? Why?
- Have the major concepts that you have chosen changed throughout the implementation stage of the process?

Application:

- How have you implemented Egan's major concepts into your classroom practice (re: application strategies)?
- Now that you are applying Egan's concepts into your practice, is your teaching different? How?
- What are the challenges and the benefits that you have encountered as you have applied Egan's concepts into your Middle Years practice? How do you feel about the changes?
- In your opinion, how are your students reacting to the changes in your teaching practice?

Process:

- Has the functioning of the group changed over time? What are your observations?
- How has the process of journaling helped you to develop your ideas regarding the application of Egan's concepts into practice?
- What other strategies have helped you to develop your ideas?

APPENDIX E

Protocol for Focus-Group Session

Implementation Stage

Content/Process:

- What is the goal of this group? Is it to develop a “shared understanding”?
A “consensus?”
- What are we doing when we share information in a group? What are we doing with this information?
- Is the goal of sharing to align ideas? To overlap ideas? To eventually agree on ideas?
- Do we share all ideas? Are there areas/subjects that we, as a group, have tacitly agreed not to discuss or share? If so, why?
- Do emotions play a role in the group process? If so, how? Why?
- What impact do group presentations, such as the one at SFU in Vancouver have on the group dynamics? The sharing of information between members?
- What does leadership look like in this group? What type(s) of leadership do we have?

APPENDIX F

Questions for Individual Interviews

- What are we doing as a group when we share information? Although we may have different perspectives and visions regarding the information, eventually we find a “common way” of acting... How do you describe what we do as a group?
- What are some of the costs and benefits to working collaboratively as a group?
- Is there an “expense” to group cohesiveness? Does it ever demand too much in terms of time, energy...?
- How important have the external demands, such as the conference or PD activities, been to the overall development of the group?
- What actions taken by the members helped/didn't help to develop the group's community/practice in the study of Egan's theory? How did these actions affect the sharing of ideas and the development of individual theory applications to practice?
- What kinds of leadership are more helpful to the group? What is your perspective on leadership? How do you define it? What do you expect from it?
- How have changing and possibly competing expectations been dealt with in the group? What affect have these dynamics had on the sharing of information?
- Describe the changes in your practice, if any, since you began participating in the Egan study group? Have the changes been more or less what you expected?
- What advice do you have for any teachers starting a study group over an extended period of time?
- What, in your view, were the effects of the “ed. Leave” days on school staff? Generally, what is the group's relationship with the greater staff?

APPENDIX G

Ecole Belair School's Implementations of Egan's Theory to Practice

One group member's implementation focused on the social studies curriculum and understanding the distinguishing features related to the concepts of human/non-human, populated/unpopulated, and socialized/unsocialized. Man's tendency to be both a creator and a destroyer, and the related heroic qualities and narratives associated with this concept were explored. As well, the issue of chaos versus order and the strength of the collective versus that of the individual were also examined. All of these points were explored as students developed their own unique "dream islands" that featured maps that highlighted location and climate, and also integrated the social organization, the legal and economic systems, the environmental habitats, and the philosophical and military beliefs. There was a focus on Vygotsky's concept of reproductive memory and the idea of the creative imagination as students created innovative plans, and completed weekly reflections in journals as they developed their "island" ideas while integrating the outlined content. With the integration of role playing and drama, students became characters in their developing story and adopted the role of either a human, animal, or inanimate object on their dream island. The exploration of Fairy Tales and the creation of "fairy creatures" in clay were also integrated into the learning process.

Two of the group members focused on an integration of the Social Studies, Natural Science, and English Language Arts curriculum while implementing Egan's theory to their practice. The Science unit integrated the issue of "ecology" with a focus on bears as being both "feared and revered" in society. Although there were specific scientific parameters and definitions to be integrated, students' computer animation work was imaginative and meaningful with many students adding cultural components to their stories of different species of bears in their respective ecosystems. Background information for these projects was researched through Social Studies and English Language Arts assignments. Students developed "creation myths" to accompany PowerPoint presentations showing a northern sky with constellations drawn by the students. A culminating trip to the Manitoba Museum Bear Exhibit also further engaged the students in the learning. The concept of structures was also explored as students invented a new personal transportation vehicle taking into account design efficiency, safety, all-weather capability, and aesthetic design elements.

The English Language Arts component introduced the extreme of creating a journal using absolutely no punctuation in order to authentically examine the need and use of punctuation, as well as its history. Also, the historical narrative surrounding place values and the Dewey decimal system was explored. At one point, the issue of heroic qualities was also examined by exploring the stories of people who were able to "rise above" hardship and "go beyond" what people normally accomplish. Students were asked to create their autobiographies while focusing on what possible hardships they needed to overcome in their lives. There was also a focus on the transcendent value of empathy.

Finally, a poetry “toolkit” metaphor was introduced that enabled students to explore the many tools that can be used to create different kinds of poems.

One member explored different type of stories in English Language Arts. Different types of narratives were used to study the five key elements of a story (setting, character, plot, point-of-view, and theme). Students began by reading mythical and legendary stories about such things as unicorns and Bigfoot, and eventually developed their own creative mythical stories integrating the story elements using their own imaginary beasts.

Creating prototypes of their beasts in clay was also planned. Eventually, students created a mini-persuasive essay arguing why their imaginary beast did or did not exist, as well as a drawing of what the beast might look like. All of their work was then developed into a final pop-up book.

A member focused on the use of narrative, metaphor, and extremes in the teaching of the Natural Sciences curriculum during implementation. Originally, extreme and exotic stories, and bizarre facts were researched and integrated into teaching in order to engage the students, although they appeared to still be at the “receiving end” of a lot of information. Eventually, the students were encouraged to create their own narratives, collectively, by imagining themselves as particles in either a solid, liquid, of gas state. “Extreme states” were described and visually represented as students imagined

themselves in heated and cooled matter, or talking to dissolved particles. An ongoing love story was visually created and acted out in plays as particles became either homogeneous or heterogeneous mixtures. The narrative was extended to include the concept of abandonment as students observed the water particles, once in a water and salt solution, change their state from liquid to gas. A connection to both the Social Studies and Math curriculum was introduced as students explored the Egyptian mummification process, visually represented the action of salt in the mummification process of store bought chickens, and completed metric conversions of the changing chicken mass and the volume of liquid “drawn” from their chickens by the attraction of water and salt particles. Throughout this time, teaching and learning was guided by Vygotsky’s “scientific concepts” and the focus on essential features.

One member focused on the concept of water systems and how water could be both a source of life and a source of devastation. Guided imagery was used to imagine water on both grass and concrete, and a narrative was created from this exercise. The humanizing of knowledge and transcendent values were explored using stories from the Red River flood. A visit to the Red River Flood Museum in St-Agathe was also planned. The use of metaphor was later introduced in teaching the concept of integers in Mathematics. Students collectively created a narrative using the “Integer Queen” integrating both her positive and negative moods.

During an implementation, the concept of narrative was explored with the staff by introducing an article on the importance and value of narrative in the learning process. In preparation for a professional development day, staff members were asked to read the assigned article and share one or two narratives that reflected important moments in their teaching practice. Because adults were involved, the cognitive tools associated with Romantic understanding, such as extremes and limits, and heroic qualities were not as relevant as the features associated with Philosophic understanding, which included organizing and clarifying information into broader and more meaningful schemes, and exploring any related inconsistencies. Developing an ongoing dialogue in the form of a shared written journal with some staff members enabled a more meaningful exploration of relevant teaching principles and how they related to teaching practice.
