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Beyond Organizational Commitment: Selected Elementary
School Teachers' Work Commitments

by

Christine Elisabeth Joffres



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

in

Educational Administration

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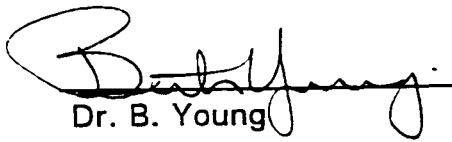
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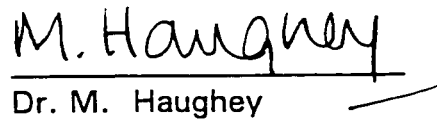
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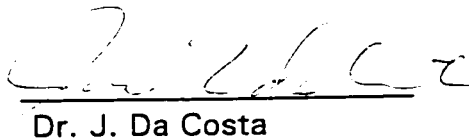
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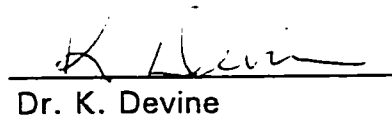
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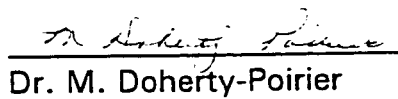
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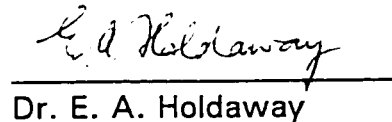

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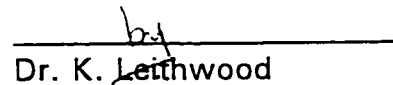

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first and foremost to me.

It is also dedicated to all the women who completed a degree, while raising a family and working, and to my storytellers for their courage and honesty.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of commitment of selected elementary school teachers.

The study was conducted within the naturalistic paradigm. Participants were full time teachers and worked in elementary schools. Fourteen teachers (three males and eleven females) participated in this study.

Teachers indicated that they experienced multiple commitments. They suggested that their main commitments were to the children, their growth and learning, their colleagues, the children's parents, and their administrators. Nonetheless, commitments varied in foci and intensity throughout the teachers' careers. The rise and fall of the storytellers' commitments were influenced by the teachers' experiences of positive and negative events, and the degree to which they felt successful in their work communities. Teachers' feelings of success were facilitated and/or hindered by social/organizational processes (e.g., the community emphasis on collaboration, continuous learning, specific recruitment processes, socialization processes) personal characteristics (e.g., the storytellers' core values, tolerance to frustrations, locus of evaluation), the storytellers' understanding of their personal and professional history, varied social influences (e.g., significant others, exemplar role modelers), and socio-cultural expectations.

Commitment to teaching was influenced by the storytellers' feelings of performance efficacy and their relationships with the community members.

When teachers experienced high feelings of efficacy and deep feelings of community with the community members, their commitment to teaching increased, along with their commitments to the community members and work communities. Alternately, when storytellers felt unsuccessful (e.g., low feelings of performance efficacy and poor relationships with the community members) and when they attributed their lack of success to specific community members, their commitments to these community members and work communities decreased. Storytellers suggested that their commitment to teaching only decreased when they felt powerless to influence the children's learning and other community members and when they experienced deep feelings of hopelessness (i.e., they did not believe that practice would improve or that their situation was likely to change).

Recommendations and suggestions for further research have been generated from these findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge Dr. Margaret Haughey for her exemplary and unfailing support and faith in me. Without Margaret I might never have conducted a qualitative study. I will always keep a place in my heart for her.

I also want to extend my thanks and love to my dear friend Anita Muller who has taught me many things beyond qualitative research and writing, to my father, Alain Jeantin, for his interest in my topic, his willingness to review my chapters with great care, his insightful comments, and for maintaining a dialogue with me.

Finally, I also want to acknowledge my husband Michel for his patience and for never putting any pressure on me to finish this project, and my son Kalanga who drew all the figures in the study.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

creating commitment - synchronizing employee and company goals to create self-motivated employees - is nothing new. Its desirability, particularly for jobs requiring self-discipline and responsiveness and service, has long been known. What has changed today is that these sorts of jobs now prevail. In terms of the jobs to be done, we have entered the age of unpredictability and innovation and initiative. As a result, we have entered an age in which employee commitment is not just laudable, it's indispensable. (Dessler, 1983, p. 8)

Organizational commitment¹, also referred to as OC in this thesis, or the employees' attachment to their organizations has been repeatedly identified as a critical variable in understanding employees' work behaviours. Recent findings (Cohen & Hudecek, 1993; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Kushman, 1992) have indicated that low levels of commitment may result in decreased student achievement test results, increased staff turnover, and higher absenteeism.

Teachers' organizational commitment has been found to be associated with students' achievement test results. Rosenholtz (1989) who studied teachers' commitment in 78 elementary schools in Tennessee concluded that commitment was a predictor of both student reading and mathematics achievement test scores: the higher the teachers' commitment scores, the higher the students' grades in reading and mathematics tests. In a different study, Kushman (1992) who examined 63 elementary and middle schools from a large urban district in northwestern United States also reported a positive and significant relationship between teachers' organizational commitment and student achievement test results over a three year period. Kushman (1992) concluded:

Overall, the case studies indicated that teacher organizational commitment can operate both as a cause and effect of student achievement. Teacher commitment and sustained achievement are interactive and together can define a cycle of improvement and sustained excellence in inner-city schools. (p. 34)

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Randall (1990) provided evidence that

¹ The reader will notice that although this study was initially based on organizational commitment, the story tells me very much beyond the concept of organizational commitment.

low commitment levels were linked to higher turnover rates. Educators may not have escaped this problem since Arnold (1993) found that, in 1987-1988 and 1988-1989, 6% of the total number of teachers left classroom teaching in the United States. Similarly, Rollefson (1990) indicated that the teacher national attrition rate in the United States averaged 4.1% in public schools and 8.7% in private schools. Forty percent of public school leavers and 43% of private school leavers were reported to be engaged in non-teaching activities. Moreover, younger teachers (less than 36 years old) tended to leave the profession more frequently than older teachers (Rollefson, 1990). In 1989-1990, in Alberta, 4.3% of teachers left the profession and another 6% retired early (Alberta Teachers' Association 1992).

Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982), and Reichers (1985) reported that OC and attendance were significantly and positively related, that is, higher levels of commitment tended to result in lower levels of absenteeism. Absenteeism may be a particularly important phenomenon among teachers since Bridges (1980), Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Rees, and Ehrenberg (1991), and Madden, Flanigan, and Richardson (1991) found that the national absence rates among teachers were higher than the absentee rates in industry or the national absence rates for all employees. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) indicated that the teachers in the 381 districts they surveyed in New York State used 8.9 leave days per teacher in 1986-1987. Given a school year of 180 days, the absentee rate was slightly less than 5%. However, at approximately the same time and using the same type of calculation, the national absence rate for all employees was only 2.6%. Ehrenberg et al. (1991), Jacobson (1989) and Wrinkler (1980) also found that tenured teachers had higher usage of sick leaves than non-tenured teachers, and older teachers (55 years old and above) used fewer sick leaves than younger teachers. They suggested that absenteeism may be partly the result of a pain-reduction strategy for dissatisfied and uncommitted teachers. As well, Lewis (1981) pointed out that in the United States the cost of paying substitutes added to the cost of absent teachers amounted to approximately two billion dollars per year.

Ehrenberg et al. (1991) also reported that higher student absenteeism was associated with higher teacher absenteeism, and they suggested that increased teacher absences may decrease students' motivation to attend school, thus increasing students' absentee rates. Concurrently, Bridges (1980) and Rosenholtz (1989) found a statistically significant association between teacher attendance and student achievement test results for specific schools. Rosenholtz (1989) contended that teacher absenteeism correlated negatively with student gains in math and reading scores. Bridges

(1980) demonstrated that the rate of teacher attendance made a discernible difference in the level of student achievement over a three-year period in schools classified as "average achieving." Ehrenberg et al. (1991) did not replicate the above findings; however, they aggregated all the students of their sample which may explain that his results did not support Bridges' (1980) previous findings.

Figure 1 summarizes the above findings. However, it is important to remember that some of these relationships (e.g., the associations between teachers' absenteeism and students' achievements and motivation to attend school), are still tentative.

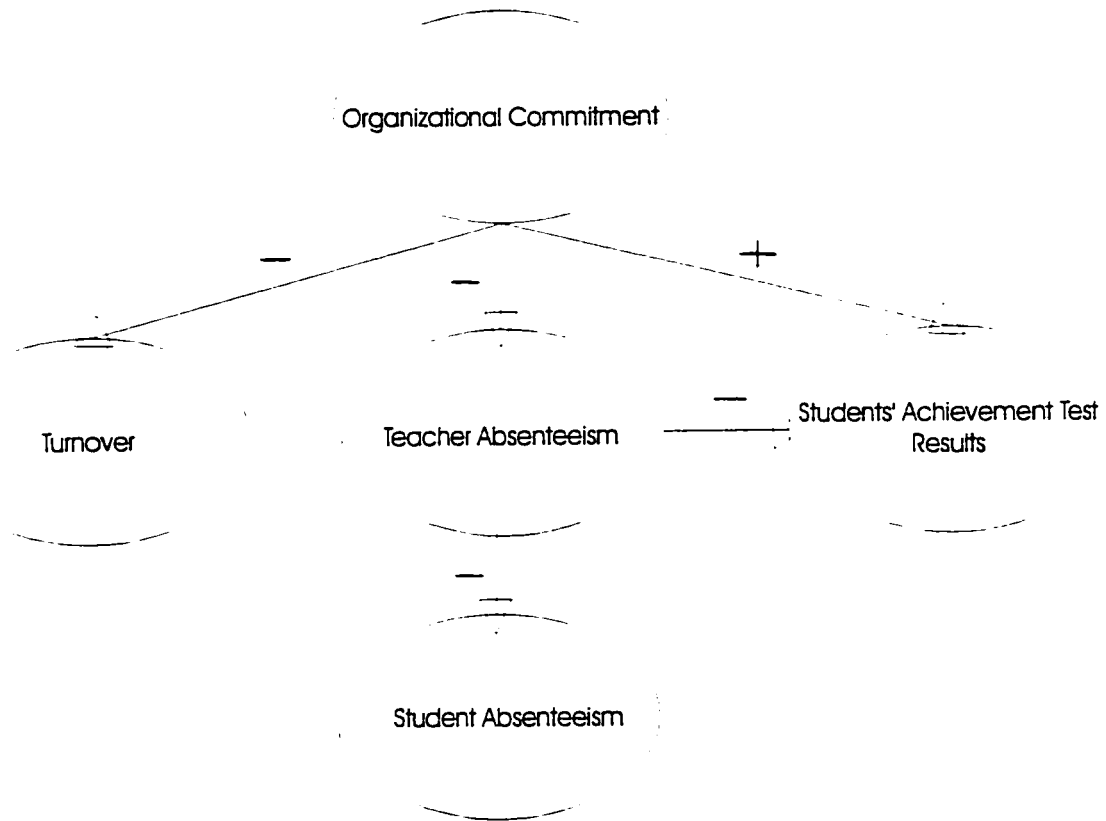


Figure 1. Outcomes of Organizational Commitment

As mentioned by Reyes (1990) and Blase (1986), these findings combined with the perceived slippage of North American employees' global competitiveness, the steadily increasing unemployment rate, and the poor press comments regarding test scores, have given citizens and policy makers some reasons to be concerned over weak linkages between employees and their organizations. As a result, sociopolitical pressures for organizations, including schools, to demonstrate increased effectiveness and efficiency

have surfaced, and research on organizational commitment has intensified.

However, Firestone and Pennell (1993), Kushman (1992), and Sagaria and Johnsrud (1987) have emphasized that little is known about organizational commitment, and even less is known about teachers' organizational commitment. As Kushman (1992) pointed out,

Empirical studies on how schools foster or hinder teacher commitment are scant, and key questions, such as whether commitment is related to important school outcomes or whether it can be altered by school design and management, have not been addressed. (p. 6)

Salazar (1993) who agreed with Kushman's (1992) contention further suggested:

The literature on commitment has raised far more questions than it has answered. As a result, we are still in the dark as to how it is that organizational members come to be committed to the organization, and when over-, under- commitment becomes detrimental, or advantageous, to the individual, the organization, or a subsystem of the organization. (p. 13)

Concurrently, researchers (Becker, 1992; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Salazar, 1993) have put forward a number of methodological and conceptual problems that may explain the current research gaps and inconsistent findings on commitment. For example, Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Randall (1990), and Salazar (1993) have indicated that the multiple conceptualizations of organizational commitment may partly explain the inconsistency of findings regarding the nature, predictors, and outcomes of this phenomenon. Compounding these definitional inconsistencies, other researchers have used different terms (e.g., involvement, assimilation) to describe organizational commitment (Morrow, 1983; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Salazar, 1993).

Larkey and Morill (1995), Randall, Fedor, and Longenecker (1990) and Reichers (1985, 1986) have also suggested that researchers' tendency to define commitment from reviews of literature, and, or hybridizations of previous definitions while ignoring individuals' own experiences further increased the confusion surrounding commitment. Reichers (1985) contended that OC definitions "may not accurately reflect the way people in organizations experience their own attachments to organizational life" (p. 469) since previous research disregarded what Guba (1981) termed "tacit knowledge" (p. 7). Moreover, Guba (1981) insisted that studies that depend essentially on "propositional" knowledge (p. 7) limit the in-depth exploration of complex experiential material:

The terms "propositional" and "tacit" knowledge differentiate between knowledge that can be put into a language form from knowledge that one intuitively knows or understands. People know more than they can say, but the rationalistic paradigm requires that whatever is studied must be cast into the form of an hypothesis or question before the inquiry begins. Those making the inquiry do not immerse themselves in a situation, using themselves as tacit instruments to discover what may or may not be worth pursuing in that situation. As a result, intuitive insights cannot become proper objects for inquiry. (p. 7)

Randall, Fedor, and Longenecker (1990) have emphasized that further research on commitment "must include an attempt to understand commitment from the standpoint of the committed" (p. 213).

This lack of emphasis on participants' experiences may also explain the inconsistent, low, and, or non-significant correlations between commitment and its predictors and outcomes. In the past, researchers have typically determined the a priori significance of specific variables to be studied in relation to commitment. However, this practice has been denounced by several researchers (Larkey & Morill, 1995; Randall, Fedor, and Longenecker, 1990; Reichers, 1985, 1986). For example, Randall, Fedor, and Longenecker (1990) declared

This [a priori] selection of commonly studied dependant variables presents problems in that these outcomes [or antecedents] may not be seen by employees as even remotely important expressions [or predictors] of organizational commitment. (p. 213)

These authors, as well as Menzies (1995) and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), provided initial evidence supporting their claim. Menzies (1995) who studied faculty members' commitments in five colleges in Ontario found that the teachers' concern for quality with respect to class preparation and/or assignment marking, their willingness to update course materials, their involvement in professional development, their willingness to make time for their colleagues so that they could learn from them, their innovativeness, their patience with their students, as well as their flexibility, friendliness, availability and approachability were better indicators of her sample's commitment outcomes than absenteeism or turnover, two of the most commonly studied outcomes of OC. As well, Randall and her colleagues (1990) claimed that employees in a medium-sized manufacturing plant in Mid-western United States reported expressing their organizational commitment through behaviours other than tardiness and absenteeism. More specifically, they found that the organizational members with high OC scores reported engaging statistically significantly more often in behaviours indicating a concern for quality, a sacrifice orientation, and a willingness to

share knowledge than those with low OC scores. Randall and her colleagues (1990) have since deplored that past studies on commitment have frequently included absenteeism and tardiness as important outcome variables and neglected other potentially more relevant variables. They have also urged researchers to use respondent-generated input in order to better understand commitment, its predictors, and outcomes.

Becker (1992) and Reichers (1985, 1986) also indicated that the researchers' lack of attention to the nature of the organization itself in organizational commitment may partly account for the diverse and confusing findings on commitment. These authors, along with O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), have contended that a re-examination of the nature of the organization seems warranted since it is presumed to be the focus of individuals' commitment. These authors suggested that the constructs of organization and OC may not be as monolithic as depicted in the literature, and that the conventional view of commitment, which posits that employees experience commitment as a global phenomenon, may not adequately explain commitment. Reichers (1985), in particular, buttressed her argument with findings from research on organization theory, reference group theory, and role theory to argue for a multiple foci conceptualization of commitment. This author claimed that organizations are political entities comprising diverse interest groups (e.g., top managers, co-workers, customers, unions, etc.), each with their own sets of goals and values which may or may not be in conflict with the goals and values of other organizational coalitions. She further contended that organizational members are aware of the competing organizational goals and may experience varying levels of commitment toward relevant organizational constituencies. Reichers (1985) stressed that research should recognize and include the multiple foci of commitment. Later studies by Menzies (1995), Kushman (1992), Becker (1992), Reichers (1986) have provided initial evidence to support the idea that employees may experience multiple commitments.

As noted by several researchers (Cohen, 1992; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Salazar, 1993), studies on commitment tended to ignore differences across and within organizations. As a result, data collected across organizations are generally aggregated or averaged, making it virtually impossible for researchers to uncover conceptual similarities and differences across organizations, individuals, and occupational groupings. However, Randall (1990) who conducted meta-analyses of white- and blue-collar workers drawn from 36 studies, found substantial differences in commitment levels across occupational groupings and organizations. She concluded, like many other researchers (Cohen, 1992; Salazar, 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), that further research on organizational commitment should pay

particular attention to contextual and individual differences.

Research on organizational commitment has also suffered from other methodological problems. The vast majority of studies have been conducted within the quantitative paradigm and have required unrealistic manipulations of human, social, and cultural factors. It is not uncommon for quantitative researchers to attempt to control confounding variables through statistical manipulations. Unfortunately, these manipulations may produce conflicting findings since statistical models can only control for the limited number of confounders that have been measured, and problems of multicollinearity frequently occur when statistical models include highly correlated or overlapping variables. More specifically, multicollinearity has been shown to lead to misinterpretation of coefficients, misleading significance levels, and opposite directions of associations, and quantitative studies on organizational commitment have been affected by these statistical problems.

The operationalization of organizational commitment reflects the conceptual inconsistencies of the construct. There is little agreement on the measurement of OC. Researchers have developed calculative and attitudinal scales to measure this phenomenon. Calculative instruments reflect the calculative conceptualization of organizational commitment, whereas attitudinal scales reflect the moral or attitudinal conceptualization of this concept. However, as reported by Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Randall (1990), many of the instruments have not demonstrated strong psychometric properties. In particular, Randall (1990) emphasized that "Little evidence exists of any systematic or comprehensive effort to determine the reliability or validity of the various instruments [measuring organizational commitment]" (p. 372). These criticisms which were primarily directed at the calculative scales have now included the most widely used attitudinal scale, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire or OCQ developed by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). Recent findings (Bar-Hayim & Berman, 1992; Cohen & Hudecek, 1993; Reichers, 1985) have provided initial evidence that the OCQ is not without problems. In fact, this instrument may suffer from concept redundancy since it includes in its operationalization items on turnover intentions which are supposed to be the result of commitment. Thus, existing instruments may not accurately assess or may not assess at all what they claim to be evaluating.

Purposes of the Study

The current confusion regarding the definitions, predictors, and consequences of organizational commitment, outline the limitations and gaps

of past research on OC. However, organizational researchers (Kushman, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989) seem to agree that commitment may be the spark to organizational effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the key to students' effective learning, and that it is crucial to better understand this phenomenon. Hence, the purpose of this exploratory study is to examine elementary teachers' experiences of commitment and to explore the organizational and individual characteristics and processes that facilitate or hinder its development from the standpoint of the 'committed,' as suggested by Larkey and Morill (1995), Reichers (1985, 1986), and Randall, Fedor, and Longenecker (1990). Therefore, the research questions of this study are:

1. What are the foci of elementary teachers' commitment?
2. How do teachers experience their attachment (or lack of) to elementary school life? What does it feel like to be committed or uncommitted?
3. What are the organizational and individual characteristics and processes that foster or hinder commitment?
4. What are the psychological, social, and behavioural outcomes of commitment or lack of commitment from the teachers' perspectives?

The naturalistic paradigm with its ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions provided the basis for this research since it takes into account some of the methodological and conceptual problems encountered in previous research.

Assumptions of the Study

This study was based on four assumptions:

1. The perceptions of the storytellers regarding organizational and social processes are valid ways of exploring selected aspects of teachers' commitment.
2. The storytellers were able to understand the interview questions as intended by the investigator and to report their experiences of commitment.
3. All the storytellers were sincere in their responses to the interview questions.

4. The researcher was able to report the storytellers' experiences of commitment with clarity and accuracy.

Delimitations of the Study

This research was delimited as follows:

1. It was delimited to the responses of 14 volunteers from elementary schools.
2. The interview data were collected over three years and focussed on the organizational, social, and individual processes and characteristics that influenced the storytellers' feelings of commitment.

Contributions of this Study

This study should contribute to education-related organizational research and theories about teachers' commitment by enhancing our current understanding of commitment. The descriptive nature of the study should also permit further discussion about the appropriateness of the current conceptual definitions, predictors, and outcomes of this phenomenon. Moreover, the exploratory nature of the study should help us improve our understanding of the processes by which OC comes into existence. Finally, the findings of this study may also have practical implications since this research should provide useful insights into teachers' commitment for those who assume the responsibility and management of elementary schools, and for all those involved in educational administration.

Ethical Considerations

This study has been conducted in conformity with the ethical guidelines of the University of Alberta General Faculties Council and the Department of Educational Policy Studies. Concerns for participant anonymity have been given particular attention.

Conclusion

The purposes of my study were to explore and describe commitment experiences as well as to examine the processes that may influence this phenomenon from the storytellers' standpoint. I have done that by focussing on a selected number of elementary teachers' aspirations, achievements, satisfactions, and disappointments regarding their work experiences.

The outline of the thesis is as follows:

The second chapter presents the existing literature on commitment. It includes the different theoretical perspectives on the definitions of commitment, its development, predictors, and outcomes.

The paradigm within which the study was conducted is described in the third chapter. It also includes an outline of the study design and a description of the methods I used to select the storytellers, collect and analyse the teachers' interviews.

Chapters four and five focus on the description and analysis of the findings. Chapter four describes positive and negative work experiences that have been critical in shaping the storytellers' professional commitments and the outcomes of these experiences. Chapter five builds on the experiential scaffolding of the previous chapter and examines the personal and work community processes that facilitated or hindered the storytellers' commitments from their perspectives.

The sixth chapter includes a summary of my findings, comparisons with the results from the literature review, and recommendations for educators.

I have included a brief update on the teachers' lives and commitments at the end of the study (Appendices A to J).

Chapter Two

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: THE RESULTS OF FOUR DECADES OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the literature on OC. The first part of this review focusses on the definitions of OC. The second part presents the existing theories regarding its development, and the third and fourth parts respectively examine its predictors and outcomes. A brief summary highlights some of the issues that past research on commitment has left unanswered.

Organizational Commitment: Three Different Theoretical Perspectives

Organizational commitment has been a popular research topic for decades. As the popularity of OC increased, so did its number of definitions. Morrow (1983) identified 29 commitment-related definitions. Nonetheless, researchers (Meyer & Allen, 1987; Randall, 1990; Riechers, 1985) suggested that most of these definitions can be grouped into three main frameworks: the behavioural perspective (i.e., commitment results from behaviours or decisions that bind individuals to their organizations) (Becker, 1960; Salancik, 1977); the attitudinal approach which claims that commitment is an attitude binding an individual to his or her environment (Mowday et al. 1982); the normative perspective which contends that commitment stems from an individual's moral obligation to do what he or she 'ought' to do (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Wiener, 1982).

The Behavioural Perspective

Behaviourists (Becker, 1960; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981) claim that commitment is grounded in behaviours that bind individuals to organizations. As employees become aware of the costs associated with leaving their organizations, they become bound to their organizations. This binding may be a function of the constraints on an individual's ability to leave the organization (Becker, 1960), and/or the result of definite and committing choices and events (Salancik, 1977; Staw, 1981). Whichever is the case, commitment results primarily from the individual's recognition of his or her interest in staying with a particular organization.

One of the earliest attempt to define OC was carried out by Becker (1960). Becker (1960) defined commitment as an individual's tendency to "engage in consistent lines of activity" (p. 33) and suggested that an individual's OC depends on the individual's perceived fulfilment of his or her

extrinsic needs (e.g., salary and other fringe benefits) by the organization, and the individual's perceived costs of leaving his or her organization. In this sense, individuals become bound to an organization because they have sunk costs (e.g., pension plans, status, etc.) invested in the organization and/or side-bets (e.g., a reputation for stability). Becker (1960) suggested that side-bets can be placed by individuals and/or organizations. For example, organizations make side bets for employees by engaging in practices (e.g., non-portable pension plans, rapid rate promotions) that may lock employees into continued organizational membership. On the other hand, an employee may bet on his or her reputation as a loyal employee by remaining in the same organization, and/or by acquiring organization-specific skills that may not be transferable to another organization. Moreover, side-bets can be voluntary or involuntary. Certain personal attributes such as age and gender are also considered side-bets in view of their ostensibly constraining influence on alternative employment. Therefore, OC is an incremental phenomenon which primarily (but not solely) develops post hoc as perceived investments or side-bets, placed by individuals and/or organizations, accumulate. Thus, commitment results from an exchange relationship between employees and their organizations. The degree of commitment is determined by the degree to which the exchange relationship favours an employee (Day, 1987; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Gouldner, 1960): the more favourable the exchange from the employees' viewpoint, the greater their commitment to the organization.

Farrell and Rusbult (1981), and Rusbult and Farrell (1983) further expanded Becker's (1960) investment model. They suggested that OC is a direct function of organizational rewards (e.g., pay, promotion opportunities) and costs (e.g., inadequate resources, lengthy travel to work, undesirable shifts), the perceived magnitude of an individual's investments, and the perceived quality of an individual's job alternatives (i.e., an alternative job or not working). These authors predicted that poor job alternatives would increase an individual's OC to his or her organization while good job alternatives would inversely impact OC.

The attribution perspective (Salancik, 1977) also reflects the behavioural perspective (i.e., an individual's willingness to stay with a particular organization). It focusses on the individuals' need for cognitive consistency and contends that commitment is developed to justify actions that can no longer be changed. Salancik (1977) claimed that commitment is primarily a function of a person's unequivocal and voluntary behavioural acts. He further reasoned that the degree of OC depends on the extent to which an individual's behaviours are explicit (i.e., undeniable and clearly observable), irrevocable (i.e., irreversible), public (i.e., overt), and volitional.

This author noted that an individual's degree of volition depended on a number of factors: (a) the number of alternative choices (the more alternatives, the more volition one needs to engage in a specific course of action), (b) the presence of external demands for action (someone who does something on his/her own has more volition than someone who does something to comply with an order), (c) the presence of extrinsic rewards (the more extrinsic rewards, the less volition one needs to do something), and (d) the presence of other contributors to actions.

Staw (1981) suggested that the strongest commitments are a function of insufficient justification, that is, when the actual benefits resulting from a specific course of action do not justify the costs that have been invested by individuals. This author postulated that such a situation may lead individuals to an escalation of commitment. In other words, certain individuals may become locked into a costly course of action because they need to justify their initial course of action in order to maintain their self-esteem needs (internal justification), and they want to appear competent to organizational and external agents (external justification). Staw (1981) further contended that the current emphasis in many organizational settings on consistency in action compounded the above phenomenon. Thus, behavioural commitment results from social constraints through social influence processes, and personal constraints (private justification). In its extreme form, this type of commitment may lead to entrapment (Rubin & Brockner, 1975).

Behavioural definitions of OC are commonly referred to as continuance (i.e., commitment to continue specific lines of action), calculative, or compliance commitment. Although behavioural definitions of OC may differ from one author to another, they have the following commonalities: they define commitment in terms of behaviours or behavioural intentions, and they suggest that commitment develops from a perceived rational or rationalizing process that results from an individual's assessment of his or her work environment. The side-bet perspective and variations of it have been used by Alutto, Hrebiniak, and Alonso (1973), Becker (1960), Farrell and Rusbult (1981), Grusky (1966), Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972), Rusbult and Farrell (1983), and Sheldon (1971). The attribution perspective (i.e., individuals attribute an attitude of commitment to themselves after engaging in specific behaviours) and variations of it have been used by Kiesler and Sakumura (1966), O'Reilly and Caldwell (1980), and Salancik (1977).

Evidence supporting behavioural claims on OC have been inconsistent. Although some findings (Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973; Hrebiniak, 1974; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978) have lent initial support to Becker's theory, others (Aranya & Jacobson, 1975; Ritzer &

Trice, 1969) have been less supportive or have even provided discrepant evidence. As well, Oliver's (1990), Farrell and Rusbult's (1981), and Rusbults and Farrell's (1983) studies have not supported the investment model developed by Farrell and Rusbult (1981).

These discrepancies might be due to different factors. First, instruments that measure calculative commitment have shown poor reliability (internal consistency and test-retest reliability) (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1990). Researchers have also used different scales to measure calculative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausford, 1994). As well, researchers used different methods of computing collected data. In some studies, data were aggregated across organizations, while, in others, they were averaged.

Moreover, different scholars included different predictors in their model. For example, some researchers only looked at age and gender as potential predictors of calculative commitment while others included, in addition to age and gender, other variables such as education and/or organizational tenure. Different researchers also investigated different elements of the behavioural definitions of OC. Some researchers examined calculative commitment by looking at the organizational rewards, the perceived magnitude of individuals' side-bets, and the employment alternatives, while other researchers only integrated one or two of the above elements in their studies.

As noted by Meyer and Allen (1984), inconsistent findings may also be due to the fact that while some costs associated with organizational membership may increase overtime (e.g., seniority privileges and organization-specific training), others may decrease. For example, as younger employees gain experience, alternate employment opportunities may increase, thus decreasing the magnitude of one cost associated with turnover, that of not having another job.

The Attitudinal Perspective

The attitudinal scholars define commitment as an individual's emotional attachment to his or her organization. This binding of individuals to their organizations is referred to as attitudinal or affective commitment. The attitudinal perspective includes a psychological approach to commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) and a sociological conceptualization of commitment (Etzioni, 1980; Kanter, 1972; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

The psychological view of OC has perhaps best been described by

Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982). Mowday et al. (1982) defined employees' organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 27). As a result of this bond, a committed person is willing to accept and believe in the organization's values and goals, exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and maintain membership in the organization. Mowday et al. (1982) have emphasized that OC is a more stable attitude than job satisfaction over time, since it is more strongly associated with organizational values and goals than job satisfaction. Attachment to the employing organization develops slowly as the organization provides a vehicle for an individual to display his or her abilities and satisfy his or her intrinsic needs. This form of OC has been suggested to be the most effective of motive patterns since the internalization of organizational goals and values represents a more powerful source of employee motivation than compliance or extrinsic rewards. In other words, rather than being motivated by a stream of extrinsic rewards, individuals become internally motivated as their values and goals become congruent with the organizational values and goals (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Kushman, 1992).

Kanter (1968) who was one of the first scholars to investigate the social processes that influence commitment focussed on highly religious communities such as the Shakers and the Oneida. She contended that successful communities use several commitment building processes. Among these, she identified sacrifice (i.e, communal members have to give something up as a price of membership), communion which includes a variety of social processes emphasizing the 'we-feeling,' mortification processes such as confession and mutual criticism, and transcendence (i.e., the surrendering of communal members to a guiding ideology). Sacrifice may take diverse forms such as irreversible investments (e.g., members give their resources, time, and energy to the community) or renunciation (e.g., communal members accept to relinquish outside and, in some cases, inside relationships that may threaten the group cohesion). Justification for sacrifice is drawn from the cognitive consistency theory. As Kanter (1972) pointed out: "the more 'it costs' a person to do something, the more 'valuable' he will consider it, in order to justify the psychic 'expense' and remain internally consistent" (p. 76). Communion involves social practices such as communal work, regularized and frequent group contacts, implementation and regular observance of group rituals. The purposes of mortification and transcendence practices are to strengthen members' connectdness by enhancing individuals' awareness of group standards and developing and continually reinforcing a sense of mission or purpose among communal members.

Etzioni (1961) and Etzioni and Lehman (1980) who also examined the

social processes that influenced OC suggested that OC might be a multi dimensional phenomenon. They further contended that the diverse dimensions of OC are a function of the use and distribution of organizational power. In Etzioni and Lehman's (1980) typology, coercive control over organizational members generates alienative commitment which is characterized by low levels of involvement. Etzioni and Lehman (1980) hypothesized that alienation is higher when supervisors exercise excessive control over employees, employees have little participation in decisions that affect them directly, the job is closely defined by work standards, formal rules and procedures², and authority is centralized and autonomy is limited. Utilitarian organizations (i.e., organizations that use mostly material rewards to control organizational members' behaviours) produce compliance or calculative commitment. Compliance generally occurs when organizational inducements reflect employees' varying levels of involvement (i.e., organizational rewards vary according to individuals' performances). In the absence of flexible reward systems, organizational members adjust their levels of involvement to match the organizational incentives. Sergiovanni (1989) and Steers (1977) both argued that compliance commitment may not lead to increased performance since employees who respond to outside forces tend to limit themselves to giving "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" (Sergiovanni, 1989, p. 5). Normative organizations (i.e., organizations that rely mostly on symbolic rewards to control organizational behaviours) induce moral commitment (i.e., an intense and positive orientation toward the organization). Moral commitment exists when employees have internalized organizational values and goals. Etzioni (1961) and Etzioni and Lehman (1980) further suggested that moral involvement which is characterized by employees' high organizational involvement is relatively insensitive to changes in the level of extrinsic rewards and is relatively stable.

Other scholars (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Salazar, 1993) have also emphasized that diverse organizational processes generate varying dimensions of commitment. Kelman's (1958) taxonomy of social influence processes provided the theoretical basis for their research. Kelman (1958) suggested that individuals can accept influence via compliance, identification, or internalization. Compliance occurs when an individual accepts influence from another in the hopes of gaining a reward, and/or, avoiding a sanction from that other. Identification occurs when an individual accepts influence to

² Some studies, however, have shown that reduced job autonomy does not necessarily lead to a feeling of alienation, and/or job dissatisfaction, even though it has been demonstrated to be perceived as alienative by the vast majority of employees.

establish or maintain a satisfying relationship (i.e., an individual may feel proud of or want to belong to a particular group, respecting its values and achievements, without adopting them as his or her own). Identification depends on two factors: the attractiveness of the relationship and its salience to the targeted individual. Internalization occurs when an individual and organizational values and goals are congruent. Internalization depends on the credibility of the influencing agent and the relevance of attitudes, values, and behaviours to the targeted individual. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) contended that compliance, identification, and internalization generate three different dimensions of OC, which, in turn, generate different work outcomes.

Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed a slightly different conceptualization of OC. For these authors, commitment has the three following distinct components: continuance commitment, affective commitment, and normative commitment. Normative commitment is based on the employees' sense of obligation to the organization. Employees with strong normative commitment remain in the organization "because they feel they ought to so" (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 253).

Reichers (1985) examined OC from another and yet different perspective. She contended that commitment was a multi-directional phenomenon and that organizational members experienced varying degrees of affective attachment toward the diverse constituencies that formed an organization. She used findings from research on organization theory, reference group theory, and role theory to argue for a multiple foci conceptualization of OC. She further identified different foci for employees' commitments (e.g., co-workers, superiors, subordinates, and costumers). Later work by Menzies (1995), Becker (1992), Gregersen (1993), and Reichers (1986) provided initial empirical evidence for Reichers' (1985) contentions.

Although definitions within the attitudinal perspective may vary from one author to another, they also present the following commonalities: commitment is characterized by an individual's positive attitude toward an organization; commitment increases as the individual and organizational values and goals become congruent; high commitment is internally generated since it lies in the alignment of individual and organizational goals and values; affective commitment is both member based (i.e., the locus of commitment resides in individuals) and organization based (i.e., OC is a function of perceived organizational features) (Angle & Perry, 1983), and it is a fairly stable attitude. This approach and variations of it has been used by Angle and Perry (1981), Bateman and Strasser (1984), Firestone and Pennell

(1993), Kushman (1992), Reyes (1990), Morris and Sherman (1981), Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982), Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979, Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974), Steers, (1977), Stumpf and Hartman (1984), and Welsch and LaVan (1981).

Empirical findings on the attitudinal perspective of OC have been inconsistent. Researchers (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994) who examined Allen and Meyer's (1990) model of commitment found that the normative and the affective components of their model tended to overlap, and they concluded that these dimensions may not be completely distinguishable. As well, a number of studies (Bar-Haym & Berman, 1992; Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990; Salazar, 1993) have suggested that identification- and internalization-based commitment may not be as distinct as O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) thought they were. Caldwell et al. (1990), Sutton and Harrison (1993), and Harris, Hirschfeld, Field, and Mossholder (1993) also argued that O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) concepts of internalization and identification were indistinguishable both in terms of the psychometric properties of the instrument developed by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and in their relationships to OC and other behavioural outcomes.

The inconsistent results regarding the multi-dimensionality of OC may be due to diverse factors. Some of the dimensions of OC may actually not be separate. Salazar (1993) hypothesized that compliance-, identification- and internalization based commitment were better represented on a continuum of intrinsicness, that is, behaviours and attitudes reflecting individual and organizational value congruence would be at one end of the intrinsicness scale and generate internalization-based commitment, while attitudes and behaviours acquired through compliance would be at the other end of the intrinsicness continuum and produce compliance commitment. The following figure summarizes Salazar's (1993) hypothesis:

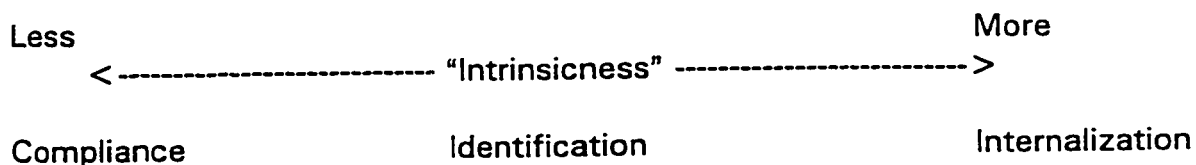


Figure 2. Levels of "Intrinsicness" Associated with Kelman's Processes of Social Influence (Source: Salazar, 1993, Organizational commitment, socialization, and identification: A new approach and directions for future research, ED 360 659)

As well, the particular measures of identification-, and internalization-based commitment may be inadequate. Whichever is the case, this only further highlights the complexity of the OC phenomenon, and the fact that the quantitative paradigm which tends to reduce human phenomena to a limited number of variables may not be the most adequate paradigm to investigate commitment.

Moreover, results from studies that correlated presumed predictors and outcomes and OC tend to be inconsistent, statistically not significant, or small. Researchers (Bar-Hayim & Berman, 1992; Larkey & Morrill, 1995; Randall, 1990) have claimed that these inconsistent results might partly be attributed to the weak reliability of the OCQ. As noted earlier, the OCQ may suffer from concept redundancy since it includes in its operationalization turnover intentional items which are supposed to be the result of commitment. As a result, the OCQ may not accurately assess what it claims to be evaluating. In addition, quantitative studies that include in their statistical models variables that are correlated (e.g., satisfaction and commitment) may produce spurious results due to multicollinearity (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Inconsistent results might also be due to the fact that different scholars have included different predictors and outcomes in their statistical models. Moreover, some researchers have also included moderators in their research while others have not done so, and the moderators that were included were not necessarily the same.

As well, different researchers investigated different elements of the attitudinal definitions of OC. For example, some researchers (Mowday et al., 1982) examined affective commitment by looking at individuals' desire to remain in the organization, employees' work performance, and the organizational members' involvement in the organization, while other researchers only integrated one or two of the above elements in their studies. Moreover, the elements included in the sub-categories varied considerably from one study to another. Some studies examined an individual's intentions to leave an organization while other investigated actual turnover.

In conclusion, attitudinal commitment has been defined as the affective binding of individuals to an organization, specific activities, or specific organizational constituencies. However, although researchers tend to agree on the importance of this affective attachment and the fact that commitment may be a multi-dimensional concept, they do not necessarily agree on the definition of the varying dimensions of attitudinal commitment and/or the factors that may influence commitment.

The Normative Perspective

The normative perspective of commitment reflects an employee's feelings of obligation toward his or her organization. From a normative perspective, organizational commitment is described as a function of an individual's social normative beliefs (i.e., a person's beliefs of how others expect him or her to act), his or her personal normative beliefs (i.e., a person's beliefs of how he/she 'ought' to act), and an individual's personal characteristics (Wiener, 1982). Wiener (1982) defined OC as the "totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interest" (p. 421). He emphasized that individuals engage in specific behaviours not because they may personally benefit from these behaviours, but primarily because "they believe it is the 'right' and moral thing to do" (Wiener, 1982, p. 421).

Wiener (1982) also argued that the type and strength of an individual's OC depend primarily on the type and strength of two distinct sets of normative beliefs: the individual's norms of loyalty and duty, which he called type 1 values, and the individual-organizational value congruency, or type 2 values. He further argued that type 1 and type 2 values are "the immediate determinants of commitment" (p. 422), and that individuals develop and internalize normative beliefs through diverse social processes such as familial and cultural socialization (pre-entry socialization) and organizational selection and socialization.

Wiener (1982) further refined his theory by identifying three "qualitatively different types of commitment" (p. 423):

Blind commitment which is primarily based on a person's norms of loyalty and duty. In this case, commitment levels may vary from "high"³ (Wiener, 1982, p. 423) to alienation depending on the strength of type 2 values.

Moral obligation which is primarily influenced by the individual-organization value congruency. In this instance, commitment levels may vary from "medium" to "high" (Wiener, 1982, p. 423).

Balanced commitment which reflects the contribution of type 1 and 2 normative beliefs. In this instance, commitment levels may vary from "high" to "medium" (Wiener, 1982, p. 423).

³ Wiener did not further characterize this qualifier.

Evidence supporting the normative perspective is mitigated (Angle & Lawson, 1993; Horn & Hulin, 1981; Prestholdt, Lane & Matthews, 1987; Wiener, 1980). Inconsistent results may be due to the fact that this perspective has never been fully investigated (researchers have limited their investigation to type 1 values or type 2 values and OC) and partly because the scale to measure normative commitment has a "low" (Wiener and Vardi, 1980, p. 92) reliability. As well, Wiener's (1982) model of OC suffers from a number of weaknesses. Wiener's (1982) did not address in his model the key criticisms that have affected past research on normative explanations. Researchers (Berkowitz, 1972; Darley & Latane, 1970; Krebs, 1970) have argued that norms are "intrinsically ill-fitted to explain behaviour" (Schwartz, 1973, p. 350) for diverse reasons. They are often stated too vaguely and generally (e.g., help the needy) to actually guide concrete actions in specific situations, and this is unquestionably the case for Wiener's (1982) definitions of normative beliefs. Moreover, since values generally used in normative models are accepted by virtually everyone, they do not adequately account *by themselves* for the diverse ways in which individuals behave in similar situations.

Summary

Definitions of OC have been divided into three main frameworks: the behavioural perspective with the calculative/continuance/compliance approach which emphasizes that commitment results from perceived costs and rewards associated with organizational membership, and/or an individual's desire to remain psychologically consistent across diverse situations, the attitudinal/affective perspective which posits that commitment is an internally generated attitude which results from personal features and perceived organizational characteristics, and the normative perspective which claims that commitment is generated by a feeling of obligation towards an employing organization and other internalized values. Meyer and Allen (1987) nicely summarized the above by stating that an employee who experiences compliance commitment engages in specific behaviours because he or she *needs to* in order to avoid certain costs and gain certain rewards, an individual who is affectively committed to an organization engages in certain activities because he or she *wants to*, and a person who is normatively committed engages in specific behaviours because he or she *should*. Table 1 summarizes the main conceptual perspectives of OC.

Table 1. Behavioural, Attitudinal, and Normative Definitions of Organizational Commitment: A Summary.

Behavioural Perspective	
General Definition	Organizational commitment is grounded in behaviours that bind individuals to organizations.
Side-Bets	Commitment is a function of the rewards and costs associated with organizational membership; These increase as tenure in the organization increases (Becker, 1960).
Investments	Commitment is a function of organizational rewards and costs, the perceived magnitude of an individual's investments, and the perceived quality of an individual's job alternatives (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983).
Attributions	Commitment develops when individuals attribute an attitude of commitment to themselves after engaging in behaviours that are explicit, volitional, irrevocable, and public (Salancik, 1977).
Justification	Commitment results from the individuals' need to justify their initial course of action in order to maintain their self-esteem and to appear competent to organizational and external agents (Staw, 1981).
Attitudinal Perspective	
General Definition	Commitment is an affective attitude that binds individuals to the organizations.
Psychological Perspective	Commitment is an internally generated attitude that results from personal and perceived organizational characteristics (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).
Sociological Perspective	Commitment is a function of diverse social influence processes (Etzioni, 1961, Etzioni & Lehman, 1980; Kanter, 1972).
Normative Perspective	
General Definition	Commitment results from an individual's feelings of loyalty and generalized duty and from a congruence between the organizational and individual values (Wiener, 1982).

However, in spite of the advances of research on OC, many of the questions that motivated early research on commitment have been left unanswered. There is still a great deal of disagreement among researchers

regarding the definitions and bases of commitment, and OC is still a phenomenon that is not clearly understood. A number of researchers (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1990; Salazar, 1993) have argued that the confusion surrounding OC is due to definitional problems, the multiple operationalizations of OC, and the definitions and operationalizations of OC's predictors and outcomes. As a result, research findings on OC have not provided consistent evidence in any of the three competing perspectives of commitment.

As well, in many OC studies, researchers have focussed on only one aspect of commitment (e.g., behavioural or normative) to the exclusion of others⁴. Nonetheless, the boundaries that researchers have established between and within the three OC perspectives may be somewhat arbitrary. For example, it may be difficult to clearly disentangle the effects of identification and internalization and/or affective and normative influences on OC, and therefore, to establish a clear distinction between normative and attitudinal commitments and/or between identification- and internalization based commitments.

Finally, as pointed out by Larkey and Morill (1995), Randall et al. (1990), and Reichers (1985), most definitions on commitment stem from reviews of literature, and/or hybridizations of previous definitions while ignoring individuals' own experiences. However, Reichers (1985) contended that OC definitions "may not accurately reflect the way people in organizations experience their own attachments to organizational life" (p. 469), and she, along with other researchers (Randall, 1990; Wolfe Morrisson, 1994) reiterated the importance of studying complex human phenomena by including respondent-generated input and insights in the research process.

The Development of Organizational Commitment: Two Main Theories

There are two main perspectives on the processes by which people become committed to their organizations. The first posits that commitments stem from rational calculation (i.e., people use available information in a reasonable and rational way to arrive at a behavioural decision) (Fishbein, 1980). The second focusses on individuals' need for cognitive consistency which leads to post hoc justification of action (Salancik, 1977).

⁴ Although researchers on attitudinal commitment have made some efforts to develop a multi-dimensional conceptualization of commitment, study results tend to indicate that there is little consensus on the diverse dimensions of OC developed by these researchers.

The Theory of Reasoned Action

The first perspective (i.e, rational calculation) contends that commitment is a reasoned action that results from an individual's perceived balance of inducements and contributions. This theory, upon which rests the exchange model, holds that individuals systematically and rationally evaluate the inducements they receive from an organization in exchange for their contributions. Membership and performance are maintained as long as the inducement-contribution balance is perceived favourable by the employees. Adams (1963) further refined the model by introducing the concept of equity (thus developing the equity-exchange model). He suggested that individuals compare their contributions and inducements to the inducements and contributions of comparable others. Organizational membership and performance continue as long as there is a balanced ratio between organizational rewards and contributions as compared to those of others. Imbalance may cause individuals to actually change their level of contributions, change their perception of the current contribution-inducement balance, or leave the organization.

Although Becker (1960) and Rusbult and Farrell (1983) made direct references to rational calculation processes to explain OC development, it has been argued by several researchers (Kushman, 1992; Firestone, 1990) that individuals also use similar processes in attitudinal commitment. Employees rationally evaluate the degree to which their intrinsic needs are met by the organizations to determine the extent of their contributions. In other words, the degree to which individuals' intrinsic needs have been fulfilled by their organization determines the extent of their commitment. Mowday et al. (1982) further suggested that, once individuals become attitudinally committed to an organization, they engage in specific courses of actions or behaviours which, in turn, reinforce their commitment. In other words, committing attitudes and behaviours reciprocally influence each other over time. Thus, according to Mowday et al. (1982), the following figure illustrates the development of OC⁵:

5

The above is the main contribution by Mowday et al. (1982) on the processes that may influence OC development. As pointed out by Oliver (1990), Mowday et al. (1982) have been very discreet on the psychological and/or mental processes that build OC. They only briefly mentioned that OC is based on a reciprocal exchange between an employee and his or her organization.

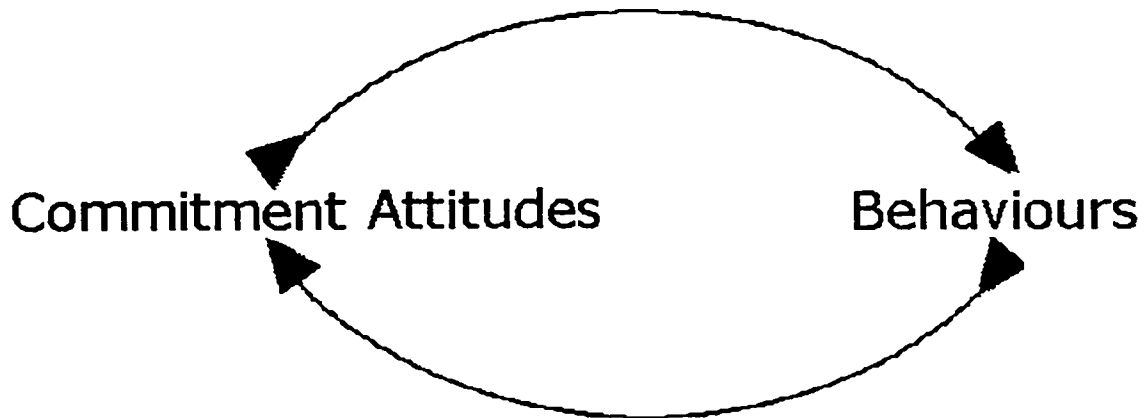


Figure 3. The Development of OC (Source: Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Employee-organization linkages,).

The theory of reasoned action or TRA has been best developed by Fishbein (1967, 1980) who contended that individuals are "rational animals" (p. 66) that systematically utilize, organize, process and evaluate (a) available information, (b) potential consequences of outcomes of intended behaviours, and (c) the normative pressures of specific referents. More specifically, according to Fishbein (1980), a person's behavioural intention to perform or not perform a specific behaviour is the immediate determinant of the behaviour. Behavioural intentions are, in turn, determined by combining additively two distinct constructs: an individual's attitude towards a specific behaviour and perceived normative influences from important others to carry out or not carry out that behaviour.

Nonetheless, research findings on the ability of Fishbein's (1980) model to predict behaviours are inconsistent (Burak, 1994; Miller, Wikoff, & Hiatt, 1992; Ross & Mclaws, 1992), and researchers (Bagozzi, 1981; Ryan, 1982) have suggested different explanations for the weak support of the TRA.

Scholars (Burak, 1994; Bagozzi, 1981) claimed that Fishbein's (1980) model precludes the impact of certain individual, demographical, and/or situational variables that may in fact significantly impact intended and actual behaviours. For example, a number of studies provided initial evidence that self-efficacy (Knibbe, Oostveen, & Van de Goor, 1991; Tedesco, Keffer, & Fleck Kandath, 1991), the stability of specific attitudes (Schwartz, 1977),

the extent of prior experience with focal behaviour (Burak, 1994; Fazio & Zanna, 1978a; Ross & McLaws, 1992), the degree of confidence in one's attitude (Fazio & Zanna, 1978b), and/or one's consistency between affective and cognitive responses (Norman, 1975) tended to moderate behavioural intentions, and/or behaviours. Burak (1994) who investigated 198 elementary teachers' intentions to teach HIV/AIDS found that reasoned action theory only accounted for 47% of the variance of teachers' intentions to teach HIV/AIDS, while 3 demographic variables (in-service training, teaching higher grades, and past experience teaching HIV/AIDS) accounted for 64% of the variance in intentions. In a different study, Knibbe, Oostveen, & Van de Goor (1991) found that accidental situational factors were better predictors of their respondents' (16-25 years) behaviours than the variables of Fishbein's (1980) model. Similarly, other studies (Miniard and Cohen, 1983; Ross & McLaws, 1992; Powell-Cope, Lierman, Kasprzyk, Young and Benoliel, 1991) have demonstrated that variables other than rational calculation (e.g., normative and attitudinal influences) may have a greater influence on behaviours than rational calculation.

Inconsistent findings may also be due to some of Fishbein's (1980) assumptions that tend to weaken his model since they are not based on empirical and/or theoretical support. Some examples of Fishbein's (1980) unwarranted contentions include:

Fishbein's (1980) assumption that a person's intention to perform or not perform a behaviour necessarily leads to that behaviour. In contrast, studies on turnover (Mowday et al., 1982; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) have shown that intention to leave does not necessarily lead to turnover.

Fishbein's (1980) presumed incommensurability of attitudes and subjective norms. Fishbein (1980) has offered no theoretical or empirical evidence that individuals actually experience these two sources of influence as separate and distinct. In contrast, several studies (Miniard & Cohen, 1981; Bagozzi, 1981) have found that subjective norms may be sensitive to personal attitudes and that personal attitudes may be influenced by subjective norms. Similarly, other studies have provided initial evidence that normative information was more favourably evaluated if it supported the respondent's views (Manis, Cornell, Moore, 1974), that respondents more readily accepted an attitude in line with the reference group's majority opinion (Cvekovich & Baumgardner, 1973), and that respondents were more likely to act in accord with stated attitudes if such attitudes were consistent with actions of other referents (Norman, 1975).

Fishbein's (1980) assumed unidimensionality of norms and attitudes. Several scholars (Warshaw, 1980; Bagozzi, 1981) have reported that subjective norms and personal attitudes may be multidimensional constructs and should be reflected as such in the *modus operandi*. For example, Shimp and Kavas (1984) reported that individuals maintain separate cognitive representations for perceived positive and negative behavioural consequences and behavioural predictors. Moreover, Bagozzi (1981) and Ryan (1982) contended that the basis underlying an individual's acceptance of social influence, that is, compliance, identification, and/or internalization, should be accounted for in Fishbein's (1980) model since these bases have been hypothesized to be distinct and to lead to different behaviours.

Fishbein's (1980) claim that attitudes and norms cannot directly influence behaviours. Fishbein (1980) was quite definite in his specifications of the paths among cognitions, affect, intentions, and behaviours. In fact, he consistently claimed that attitudes only influenced behaviours through the mediation of intentions. However, Bentler and Speckart (1981, 1979), along with Bagozzi (1981), found that attitudes could directly impact behaviours under specific circumstances. These authors suggested that the role of intentions and diverse cognitive calculations diminish and that the impact of emotional determinants of behaviours increase when a behaviour becomes more sensitive to impulsive factors, and/or highly arousing or compelling stimuli, and does not require intensive planning. They further suggested that a point may be reached where affect toward an act has a direct impact on a subsequent behaviour (Bentler and Speckart, 1979, 1981).

Finally, Fishbein's (1980) conceptual ambiguities are reflected in the operationalization of his model constructs. Miniard and Cohen (1981, 1979) and Ryan (1982) have contended that most studies that used Fishbein's (1980) model suffered from multicollinearity (i.e., high correlations between predictors in a multiple regression may cause unreliable and possibly invalid regression coefficients) and/or "double counting" since personal attitudes and subjective norms tend to contaminate each other. Moreover, most studies have used single item instruments to measure individuals' behavioural intentions, their normative beliefs, their attitudes towards a specific behavioural act, and their motivation to comply to a specific act. However, it is virtually impossible to assess the reliability of single item measures. Studies have also used different scoring methods. For example, in some studies, items were recorded on a 1 to 7 scale, while, in others, they were recorded on a -3 to + 3 scale.

In conclusion, research findings on the theory of reasoned action, which posits that individuals systematically and rationally evaluate the inducements they receive from an organization in exchange for their contributions, have been inconsistent as shown by the varying degrees of success for the model to predict behavioural intentions and behaviours. Inconsistencies in the predictive ability of the TRA can be attributed to a number of reasons, including differences between samples, design characteristics, and operationalizations of the model. Moreover, it may be that behavioural decisions and actual behaviours may be more complex phenomena than originally thought by Fishbein (1980) and other researchers (Becker, 1960; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983).

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

Contrary to the TRA, the cognitive consistency perspective (Festinger, 1957) does not assume that men are rational animals, but rather that men are rationalizing animals, that is, they attempt to appear rational to themselves and to others by developing psychological mechanisms that justify behavioural decisions that may not be justifiable on rational grounds and are perceived as difficult to reverse. According to Festinger (1957), individuals experience an uncomfortable state of arousal called dissonance when they simultaneously hold two cognitions (i.e., beliefs, evaluations, or opinions) that are psychologically inconsistent. To reduce dissonance, individuals tend to change one or both cognitions so that these become consistent. Moreover, these cognition changes have been hypothesized to influence subsequent behaviours. In other words, when behaviours and beliefs are at odds, and behaviours cannot be changed, individuals develop attitudes that are consistent with their behavioural choices. Hence, Kanter (1972) and Salancik (1977) suggested that commitment develops after individuals engage themselves in behavioural decisions and/or specific actions. Salancik (1977) claimed that, once individuals make the decision to work for a specific organization, they develop psychological mechanisms that enable them to live with their decisions. He also argued for a self-reinforcing cycle of commitment in which behaviours strengthen attitudes towards the organizations, which, in turn, further energize behavioural linkages to the organization:

You act. You believe your action is valuable, worthwhile, desirable. You act again, renewing the belief. In time, without realizing it, you have made a myth; your sense of veracity and value has been merged into the pattern of action. The myths sustain the action; and the action sustains the myth. (p. 20)

Since all actions may not influence OC, Salancik (1977) and Kanter

(1972) tried to identify criteria that make actions or decisions committing. As mentioned earlier, Salancik (1977) emphasized that acts or decisions that build commitment have four characteristics: they must be explicit (i.e., observable), irrevocable or irreversible, voluntary, and public since publicity increases the irreversibility of actions. Similarly, Kanter (1972) identified several processes that increase or build an individual's commitment to a group: sacrifice (individuals justify their sacrifices by making organizational membership meaningful and valuable), investment (giving of one's possessions or self provides the individual with a stake in the organization and makes leaving costly), communion (e.g., shared work, regularized contacts within the group, common background and rituals), mortification processes (e.g., public confessions and mutual criticisms), and transcendence (i.e., the surrendering of communal members to a guiding ideology). The purposes of these processes are to enhance individuals' awareness to group standards and reinforce a sense of purpose among organizational members.

However, as noted by a number of researchers (Aronson, 1968; Croyle & Cooper, 1983; Elkin & Leippe, 1986; Elliot & Devine, 1994; Tesser & Collins, 1988), research findings on the dissonance theory are discrepant. Aronson (1968) and other researchers (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Leippe & Eisenstadt, 1994; Tesser & Collins, 1988) have suggested a number of explanations for these inconsistencies. First, as mentioned by Aronson (1968), "The very simplicity of the core of the theory is at once its greatest strength and its most serious weakness" (p. 7). The weakness or, more appropriately, the weaknesses of this theory lie in the definitions and/or descriptions of some of its theoretical constructs:

Festinger (1957) failed to clearly define his concept of psychological inconsistency, thus, leaving the door open to numerous and diverse interpretations (Aronson, 1968).

Festinger's (1957) conceptual definition of dissonance is also ambiguous (Aronson, 1968; Bem 1967). Festinger (1957) stated that "two elements are dissonant, if considered alone, the obverse [the opposite] of one follows from the other..." (p. 278), without further specifying the 'follows from' relationship. As a result, Festinger's (1957) theory tends to fall prey to what Krebs (1970) termed circular reasoning, that is, whenever a predicted attitude change occurs, it is always interpreted as evidence of cognitive dissonance, whereas the nonoccurrence of a predicted attitude change tends to be taken as evidence that cognitions are not dissonant.

The psychological consequences of perceived dissonance may also be too vague since they are merely described as an unpleasant state or a state of discomfort (Higgins, 1987; Bem, 1967). Yet, the clinical literature in psychology has long ago demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between different emotions, as well as the intensity of these emotions, since qualitatively distinct emotions can lead to distinct behavioural and psychological consequences (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Higgins, 1987).

As well, research findings on dissonance may be somewhat misleading since the vast majority of experiments on dissonance have been conducted under carefully controlled conditions (i.e., in laboratories) which tend to deviate from real-life conditions in a number of ways (Aronson, 1968; Bastoz, 1975). As noted by Bastoz (1975), the influences of important others during and following the presentation of disconfirming information (i.e., information presumed to arise dissonance among observed subjects) were carefully eliminated in laboratory studies. Furthermore, the issues involved in most laboratory studies may not have been of central importance to study participants. Finally, as noted by Aronson (1968), laboratory conditions tend to limit the number and choice of dissonance reduction strategies otherwise available to individuals (e.g., search for disconfirming evidence).

In addition, inconsistent results on dissonance theory may also be due to the fact that Festinger's (1957) model does not take into account individual and/or situational differences. Research studies (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Cooper and Fazio, 1984; Elkin & Leippe, 1986) have demonstrated that individuals may not experience dissonance if they perceive they have been 'forced' or manipulated to commit attitude-discrepant acts since the perspective "I was given little or no choice in what to do" is usually sufficient to prevent damage to one's self-identity, thus, reducing the need for an attitude change. However, in a recent study, Leippe and Eisenstadt (1994) reported that high publicity may counteract the above. These authors found that their subjects changed attitudes after experiencing dissonance under conditions of induced compliance when the behaviour and the subsequent attitude espousal were highly publicized. They hypothesized that the knowledge that others are watching may increase the salience of the behaviour and the need to account for it, thus increasing the need to change one's attitude. Similarly, Schlenker (1986) and Baumeister (1982) reported that individuals' self-presentational concerns (i.e., the impression one wants to project to the outside world) may influence experienced dissonance.

Other studies provided initial evidence that an individual's concept of

self-responsibility (i.e., the individual's felt responsibility for bringing about aversive consequences in a given situation) (Scher & Cooper, 1989; Cooper & Fazio, 1984), his or her tolerance for ambiguity (Aronson, 1968), and his or her emotional vulnerability (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Aronson, 1968) may also significantly impact the nature and the quality or intensity of the experienced dissonance. Ilgen and Gunn (1976) who studied the affective consequences of disconfirming performance expectations among a group of students demonstrated that dissonance is not always experienced as an aversive state. In fact, they found that students who received success feedback on their tests after expecting failure were significantly more satisfied with their performance than those who continued to receive failure feedback. This is in contradiction with dissonance theory predictions since dissonance theory, when applied to performance behaviour, predicts that individuals will perform in line with their expectations since performance consistent with expectations is more pleasant than performance discrepant from expectations, and an individual is motivated to maintain the most pleasant state of being. Elliot and Devine (1994) and Aronson (1968) also reported that the saliency or relevance of certain attitudes for specific individuals (i.e., an individual's self-concept or self-image) also influence the qualitative nature of the affect experienced as a result of a counterattitudinal behaviour. More specifically, Devine et al. (1991), and Higgins (1987) have demonstrated that the violation of well-internalized standards tended to generate a general negative affect (global discomfort) as well as feelings of compunction (e.g., guilt and self-criticism) while the violation of less-internalized standards did not create any self-aversive feelings. Elliot and Devine (1994) emphasized that discomfort or other similar negative affects do not always result from a seemingly counterattitudinal behaviour or cognition since a number of appraisal theorists of emotions (Fridja, 1988; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Ellsworth & Smith, 1987) have empirically demonstrated that individuals may experience distinct affects in similar situations depending on the individuals' cognitive appraisal of these situations.

In addition, Cooper and Fazio (1984), Zanna, Higgins, and Taves (1976), and Zanna and Cooper (1976) have demonstrated that subjects who experienced dissonance do not always change their attitudes. The above authors reported that subjects often tend to seek out external explanations when experiencing dissonance, thus avoiding to reduce dissonance by changing attitudes. For example, Zanna and Cooper (1976) found that subjects did not change their attitude if they believed that a drug (actually a placebo) that they had been given caused the discomfort they experienced following a counterattitudinal behaviour. Zanna, Higgins and Taves (1976) replicated the above results and reported that subjects consistently preferred

misattributing experienced dissonance to an external cause rather than changing their attitudes. Other studies (Elkin & Leippe, 1986; Zanna & Aziza, 1976) have found that certain respondents preferred to deal with dissonance by forgetting it, thus also preventing any attitude changes.

Clearly, dissonance theory is only applicable to explain some human behaviours since, carried to its extreme, it implies that, every time one acts, attitude change occurs if the behaviours are counterattitudinal, something which has been demonstrated does not happen (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Elkin & Leippe, 1986; Zanna & Aziza, 1976). Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that individuals, even though they may attempt to reduce dissonance in specific situations, may also spend time and energy doing other things such as reflecting on their personal experiences. As Aronson (1957) pointed out,

if a person is ever going to grow, improve, or avoid repeating the same errors, he must sooner or later learn to profit from past mistakes. One [however] cannot profit from one's mistakes without first admitting that one has made a mistake. And, yet, the admission of mistake almost always arouses dissonance. The fact is, people frequently do profit from their mistakes; thus, people occasionally do not avoid to reduce dissonance. (p. 26)

Summary

The theory of reasoned action and the cognitive dissonance theory do not adequately and fully explain the processes by which individuals become committed. The above research findings seem to indicate that, although individuals may be rational and may spend time rationalizing some of their decisions, they are also sensitive to other factors (e.g., the influence of important others). Studies (Beauvois, Joule, & Brunetti, 1993; Rubin & Brockner, 1975; Staw, 1981) have demonstrated that an individual's decision to remain engaged into a specific course of action depends on more than his or her desire to be psychologically consistent with past decisions. Other factors (e.g., social influence) may in fact outweigh an individual's psychological pressures to remain engaged into a specific course of action. Similarly, researchers (Burak, 1994; Fazio & Zanna, 1978a; Ross & McLaws, 1992) have demonstrated that rational processes can be moderated by other factors such as personal characteristics and/or emotions (Fridja, 1988), and that these mediating factors cannot always be intentionally (i.e., rationally) controlled by the individuals experiencing them.

Predictors of Organizational Commitment

Best practice firms have recognized that quality, and flexibility improvements

require levels of commitment, responsibility and knowledge that cannot be obtained by compulsion or through cosmetic improvements in human resource policies. (Dertouzos, et al., 1989, p. 139)

The main predictors of OC have been classified into four categories: organizational characteristics, role characteristics, job characteristics, and individual characteristics. Figure 4 illustrates the main predictors of OC.

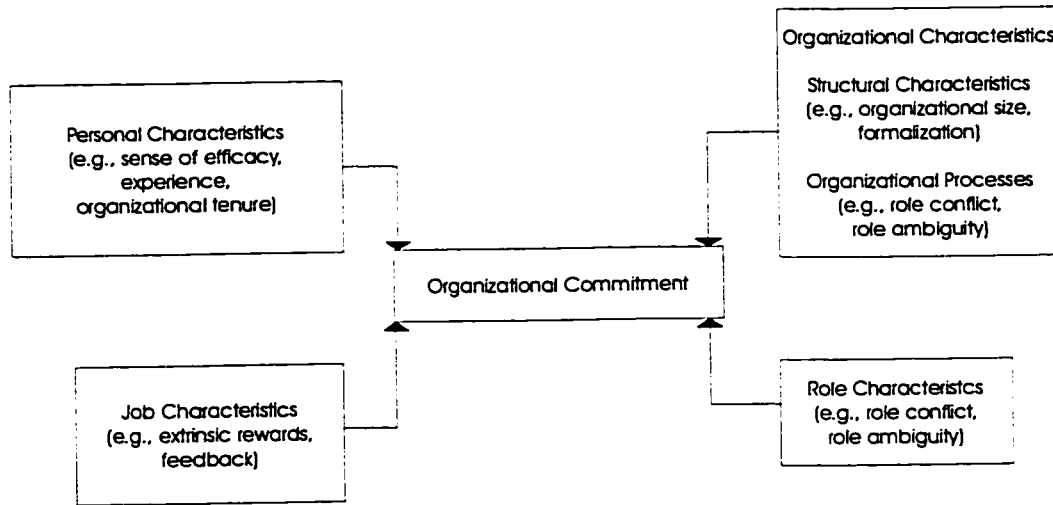


Figure 4. Main Predictors of Organizational Commitment

Organizational Characteristics

Organizational characteristics include organizational processes (e.g., leadership) and structural characteristics (e.g., organizational size, formalization).

Empirical evidence tends to indicate that specific organizational processes may influence OC. A considerable amount of literature (Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley & Bauer, 1990; Duke et al., 1981; Blase, 1986; Conway, 1984; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1985) supports the idea that staff participation in decision-making processes has a significant impact on staff morale and OC. Both quantitative and qualitative studies of schools (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988; Firestone & Roseblum, 1988; Kushman, 1992; Reyes, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989) reported associations between teacher participation in decision making processes and commitment.

Nonetheless, Cheng (1990) and Reyes (1989) did not find a significant relationship between participation in decision making and teachers' OC. Similarly, Lichenstein et al. (1991) who conducted a one-year longitudinal and qualitative study of site-based management schools in California and Florida concluded that shared decision-making did not always result in increased teachers' OC. Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, and Bauer (1990), Firestone and Pennell (1993), and Reyes (1989) suggested that these inconsistent findings may be due to several factors such as decision content, voluntary versus mandatory participative decision making, and involvement versus influence in decision-making. Lichenstein et al. (1991), Bacharach et al. (1990), Johnson (1990) and White (1992) found that teachers are mostly interested in decisions directly linked to instruction and/or classroom management, and feel justified in investing time only on issues that matter to them. Bacharach et al. (1990) and Conway (1976) also suggested that teachers' perceptions of their schools varied according to whether teachers were involved less than, more than, or as much as they wished. As well, Johnson (1990) and Duke et al. (1981) found that some teachers refused to participate in shared decision-making because they felt that they had no *influence* in the final outcome of the process.

Researchers (Louis & Smith, 1992; Kushman, 1992; Martinez-Ponz, 1990; Reyes, 1992) also suggested that higher levels of collaboration tended to be associated with higher levels of OC among teachers. Firestone and Pennell (1993) argued that collaboration and/or collegiality allows teachers to meet their personal needs for social interaction, reassurance and psychological support. In its most basic form, collegiality reduces teachers' stress: colleagues' understanding and support mitigate the isolation and uncertainty that teachers often experience at work and provide the necessary trust for more organized collegial exchanges (Rosenholtz, 1985, 1991; Blase, 1986; Johnson, 1990; Hargreaves, 1991). Little (1981) and Reyes (1992) also found that collaboration sustained teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and created powerful and satisfying learning experiences. Johnson (1990) claimed that many teachers liked collaboration because it allowed for good teaching to be recognized and praised by fellow teachers in an environment where recognition, whether formal or informal, is often rare. Collaboration is also an essential source of pedagogical advice and academic expertise, and it increases teachers' sense of teaching efficacy.

However, collaboration accounted for very different levels of variance of commitment in qualitative and quantitative studies (Louis & Smith, 1991, 1992). Furthermore, using the same set of data, but different definitions of collaboration, Reyes (1992) found a strong association between collegial

climate and commitment, while Rutter and Jacobson (1986) reported an extremely weak association between the same variables. Furthermore, in her study of elementary schools, Rosenholtz (1989) did not find a direct link between collaboration and commitment. These contradictory findings could be explained by the variety of collaboration models. Little (1982, 1990a) distinguished collaboration (which she defined as joint work) from less intense forms of interactions such as story-telling and scanning, aid and assistance, and sharing. It is possible that only specific forms of collaboration affect teachers' OC. Further research may need to differentiate between the collaboration models, and/or to integrate in the study, contextual and individual factors.

Research (Martinez-Pons, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Lichenstein et al., 1991, Blase, 1986) also emphasized the importance of professional development in enhancing OC. Lichenstein et al. (1991) reported that professional development provided teachers with "access to professionally relevant knowledge" that made them feel "revitalized, professionally empowered," (p. 5-6), and more effective in the classroom. Rosenholtz (1989) also argued that opportunities that allow people to grow and develop, to improve current skills and learn new ones, to progress, and to develop a sense of accomplishment increased the meaningfulness of work, teachers' sense of teaching efficacy, and teachers' commitment. Studies (Blase, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1985, 1989) provide empirical evidence that teachers who use the same instructional techniques and practices year after year, often complain of professional stagnation, sometimes to the point of becoming bored, unenthusiastic, and unable to adequately motivate students. Kushman (1992), Lichenstein et al. (1991), and Rosenholtz (1989) found a positive relationship between learning opportunities and OC.

However, other studies (Rutter & Jacobson, 1986; Newman et al., 1989) found no direct relationship between staff-development through inservice activities and teachers' OC. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993), McLaughlin (1993) and Maeroff (1988) contended that traditional approaches to staff development such as in-service instruction have limited uses and mitigated success. Like many top-down programs, in-service instruction is generally met with indifference or resistance from school personnel. Teachers do not feel ownership of the projects since they did not participate in the choice, planning and design of these programs, and they have little or no personal investment in the program objectives or success. Furthermore, since in-service instruction is usually carried out by school principals or assistant principals, teachers often worry about their performance and do not feel inclined to confess shortcomings or difficulties to the person or persons who also evaluate them at the end of the year.

Thus, in-service instruction suffers from a basic problem: it does not address teachers' specific needs and difficulties since teachers generally do not openly acknowledge what they know or don't know to the person or persons responsible to evaluate them. Finally, in-service instruction is also limited in scope, mostly addressing the technical dimension of teaching. However, different teachers have different needs and research has shown that in-service instruction is particularly unpopular among experienced teachers who are already familiar with most of the techniques of instruction and may find in-service programs somewhat unchallenging. After a few years of experience, teachers may be more interested in exploring new areas (e.g., action research), and future research needs to further explore teachers' perspectives on this issue since there is a great deal of unexplained variance across studies between OC and professional development.

As well, specific leadership characteristics have been associated with increased OC. Leader initiating structure (i.e., the extent to which leaders focus on production by establishing clearly defined patterns of organizations, channels of communication, and methods of procedure), leader consideration (i.e., the degree to which leaders exemplify behaviours indicative of warmth, friendliness, mutual respect, and trust), and transformational leadership (i.e., the degree to which leaders bring about performance beyond mere compliance by articulating and modelling a vision for the organization, stimulating new ideas from workers, and demonstrating concern for individual development through support and recognition) have been positively associated with OC (Bass, 1985; Kouzes, & Posner, 1987; Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt 1985; Blase & Kirby, 1992; Decotiis & Summers, 1987; Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Menzies, 1995; Niehoff, Enz, and Grover, 1990).

Nonetheless, the above results are based on a very small number of studies, particularly in the case of transformational leadership and/or are far from consistent. Cheng's (1990) sample of teachers did not confirm that principals' consideration was related to teachers' OC. As well, Tarter et al. (1989) reported that the positive and significant correlations that they had established with Pearson's correlations between supportive leadership (i.e., the degree to which principals motivated teachers through constructive criticism, the example of hard work), principal initiating structure, principal consideration and OC became non-significant when they used multivariate analyses, a problem that Reyes (1990) also encountered in one of his study of teachers' OC. These inconsistent results further emphasize the need for future research on commitment to be conducted within a paradigm different from the quantitative one.

Other studies have also provided some evidence that specific values

may influence OC. Research showed that respect and respect (Koys, 1988; Peters, 1988), integrity (Greenberg, 1991; Folger & Konovsky, 1989), caring and recognition (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Eisenberger, Fasolo, Davis-LaMastro, 1990), excellence (represented by the implementation of agreed-upon high expectations) (Brookover et al. 1979; Rosenholtz, 1989, Peters, 1988), flexibility and adaptation (Peters, 1988; Zeffane, 1994), dependability and accountability (Peters, 1988; Tarter et al. 1989; Zefane, 1994), innovativeness and risk-taking (Peters, 1988; Reyes, 1992), and procedural justice (i.e., employees' perception that an organization uses fair processes to make and implement decisions) (Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1993; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992) tend to be linked to higher OC scores when they are actively modelled and encouraged by organizational leaders.

As well, value and goal congruency (Rosenholtz, 1989; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991), perceived high student ability (Kusman, 1992; Rutter & Jacobson, 1986), deemed adequate instructional resources (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Johnson, 1990), orderly environments (Newman, Rutter, & Smith, 1989; Reyes, 1992; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), and felt appropriate workloads (Corcoran, Wlaker, & White, 1988; Johnson, 1990; Reyes, 1992) have been shown to facilitate teachers' OC.

Finally, a very small body of literature also indicated positive and significant relationships between OC and other organizational processes such as peer support (Pretorius, 1993), effective leader communication (i.e., employees were kept informed about what was going on in the organization and superordinates were attentive and responsive to subordinate communication), (Guzley, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990), the active socialization of employees to the organizational values, norms, beliefs, and objectives (Caldwell et al., 1990; Jones, 1986; Orpen, 1993; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and specific recruitment processes. More specifically, a number of researchers (Orpen, 1993; Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1990; Wanous, 1980; Wanous et al., 1992) have suggested that realistic job previews (RJPs) (i.e., employers provide prospective employees with accurate, specific, and detailed job and role content information, information on organizational values and expectations, and employees provide employers with specific role and job expectations and information on personal values) may enhance worker adjustment, stability, and commitment.

Study results remain very inconsistent with respect to extrinsic rewards and OC (Cheng, 1990; Kushman, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Reyes, 1992), distributive and procedural justice and OC (Greenberg, 1990;

Konovsky & Folger, 1989; Reyes, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989), and group cohesiveness and commitment (Howell & Dorfman, 1981; Stone & Porter, 1975).

There have been only two structural characteristics, organization types (Zeffane, 1994; Reyes, 1993; Reyes & Pounder, 1993) and physical conditions (i.e., the extent to which organization are well maintained and provide employees with adequate space) (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Martinez-Ponz, 1990) that have been consistently associated with OC, even though these results are based on a relatively small number of studies. Zeffane (1994) and Johnson (1990) found that employees who worked in private organizations tend to be significantly more committed than their public counterparts. Rutter and Jacobson (1986) who studied 10,370 teachers from 482 different secondary schools found that being in a urban school influenced their respondents' OC negatively. Reyes (1993), and Reyes and Pounder (1993) also found that school types were significantly related to teachers' OC. These authors reported that elementary teachers are significantly and positively more committed to their schools than secondary teachers, and that teachers working in private schools (Catholic schools predominantly staffed by Catholic teachers) are significantly and positively more committed to their schools than their counterparts working in public schools. Reyes (1993) hypothesized that these results could be explained by the fact that there could be a greater homogeneity among faculty in elementary schools and in private schools. For example, the homogeneity in religious beliefs could have increased individuals' sense of mission and community and influenced their OC.

The other studies that correlated structural properties such as organizational size (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Reyes & Madsen, 1989; Rutter & Jacobson, 1986), centralization (Cheng, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), formalization (Dornstein & Matalon, 1989; Podsakoff, Williams, & Todor, 1986; Mathieu & Hamel, 1989; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) (i.e., the extent to which organizations explicitly formalize their standard practices, policies, and job descriptions) and OC have exhibited inconsistent, even contradictory results.

There may be several explanations for the above findings (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al. 1982). First, organizational structures and processes that researchers examined may not directly influence OC (Mowday et al. 1982). The influence of structural factors and organizational processes could be mediated by other variables in the work environment and/or personal characteristics. For example, specific structural factors may shape work environments and may encourage or facilitate certain leader behaviours,

which in turn affect OC. Second, researchers have often used different instruments to assess the independent and dependent variables in their research studies. Third, data were not always similarly calculated. Finally, particularly with respect to organizational processes, results tended to be based on a relatively small number of studies.

Role Characteristics

Mowday et al. (1982) hypothesized that *role ambiguity* (i.e., the degree to which role expectations held by leaders differ from role expectations perceived by organizational members), *role conflict* (i.e., the extent to which role expectations are contradictory or mutually exclusive) and *role overload* were predictors of OC. They suggested that role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload may result in considerable role stress and decreased OC. Meta-analyses between these variables and OC by Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Jackson and Schuller (1985) and by Fisher and Gitelson (1983) indicated that role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload were negatively and significantly correlated to OC. Although no theoretical explanation has been provided to explain these results, the most common assumption is that role characteristics result from the perception of the work environment and influence affective responses. Therefore, employees who report higher levels of role strain also tend to report lower OC levels.

As far as teachers are concerned, Alutto (1972) did not find a relationship between role conflict and OC in his sample. Nonetheless, he demonstrated a relationship between his sample's OC and felt role tension, a concept which included constructs such as role ambiguity and role overload.

Job Characteristics

Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980) proposed a conceptual model attempting to systematize the relationships between job characteristics and individual responses to tasks. They suggested that *task variety* (i.e., the degree to which a job requires a variety of different skills and talents), *task identity* (i.e., the extent to which individuals complete a task from the beginning to the end with a visible outcome), *task significance* (i.e., the degree to which a job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people), *autonomy* (i.e., the degree to which a job provides freedom, independence, and discretion to individuals in determining the procedures necessary to carry out a task), and *feedback* (i.e., the extent to which individuals can obtain direct and clear information regarding their performance from their work activities) prompt three different psychological states: *experienced meaningfulness of the work* which is the degree to which

individuals consider their work as being valuable, worthwhile and meaningful; *experienced responsibility of work outcomes* which is the extent to which individuals feel personally responsible for the results of their work; and *knowledge of results* which is the degree to which individuals know and understand how effectively they perform their tasks. These psychological states, in turn, lead to positive work outcomes such as decreased tardiness, turnover, and increased organizational identification and performance. Hackman and Oldham's (1980) basic hypothesis was that complex jobs enhance motivation, job satisfaction, and OC. Studies by Fried and Ferris (1987), Loher, Noe, Moeller, and Fitzgerald (1985), Spector (1985) tend to support the validity of this model. More specifically, the five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from the task) tend to show moderate to strong relationships with job satisfaction, higher motivation, OC, and increased performance. Furthermore, in their meta-analyses of the antecedents of OC, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) reported a significant and positive relationship between overall job scope (computed as the average of the job characteristics model components) and OC.

Studies examining teachers OC found that teacher autonomy (i.e., teachers' freedom to schedule work and determine the procedures to carry it out) was significantly associated with teachers' OC. More specifically, Rosenholtz (1989) and Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) found that autonomy was the best predictor of commitment in a survey of 1,213 teachers in 78 Tennessee schools. These authors hypothesized that autonomy or self-determination is central to internal motivation and encourages commitment to successful instructional and management practices which in turn enhances OC. Similarly, Bacharach et al. (1990) reported a negative association between decision deprivation in operational areas (i.e., classroom decisions) and OC. More recently, Rosenholtz (1987) found that some of the policy makers' initiatives (e.g., minimum competency testing of the students) reduced teachers' autonomy, which, in turn, reduced their OC. However, Charters et al. (1984) found only a small negative relationship between autonomy and OC, and Reyes (1989) provided evidence that there was no relationship between autonomy and commitment among his respondents. Researchers did not explain these inconsistent results. It could be that other factors such as collaboration, and/or felt isolation mediate the relationship autonomy-OC.

Feedback has also been argued to be crucial to maintain high internal motivation to work and organization (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Moreover, Deci and Ryan (1985) have indicated that feedback may enhance competence and efficacy feelings (when it confirms useful instructional

efforts or signals problem areas), which, in turn, also affect OC. Teachers have six sources of feedback: students' work, formal administrators' evaluations, formal peers' evaluations, and informal evaluations from administrators, peers, and parents. Louis (1991) found that teachers who reported a high level of "meaningful feedback on [their] performance from supervisors or peers " (p. 36) were more committed to their schools than others. Charters et al. (1984) also reported a positive, though weak, effect of feedback on OC.

These findings may not be generalizable since many studies (Rosenholtz, 1989; Talerico & Blumber, 1990; Maeroff, 1988) suggested that teachers are predominantly unhappy with the feedback they get from their administrators (insufficient, and/or inadequate) and from peers (isolation, lack of collaboration). Johnson (1990), Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993), and Darling-Hammond (1990) argued that an overwhelming number of teachers claimed that current evaluation practices fail to accomplish anything but to contribute to teachers' scepticism and disappointment regarding supervision processes and decrease teacher OC.

Personal Characteristics

A number of personal characteristics have been examined in relation to individuals' OC. Nonetheless, there have been only few personal characteristics that have shown a consistent correlation with OC. Among these, only efficacy has exhibited a relatively strong correlation with commitment (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Reyes, 1992; Rosentholtz, 1989).

Other personal characteristics such as ambition and upward mobility (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972), a high need for achievement (Steers, 1977), work-oriented central life interest (Dubin, Champoux, & Porter, 1975), Protestant work ethic (Kidron, 1978) have shown a weak, yet significant, correlation to higher levels of OC. As well, in two large studies of teachers' OC, Cheng (1990) and Reyes (1992) found that the respondents' locus of control was related to their OC: teachers with an internal locus of control were significantly more committed than teachers with an external locus of control.

Results between variables such as age (Cohen, 1993; Billingley & Cross, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), gender (Aranya et al., 1986; Graddick & Farr, 1983; Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990), marital status (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972), education (Kushman, 1992, Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), experience (Cheng, 1990; Reyes & Madsen, 1989; Shaw &

Reyes, 1989), tenure in the organization (Kushman, 1992; Reyes, 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and career stages (Allen & Meyer, 1993; Buchana, 1974; Mowday & Dade, 1980) and OC have been inconsistent or even contradictory.

The generally weak or inconsistent correlations between personal characteristics and OC might be due to different factors. For example, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) have suggested that personal characteristics shape or influence OC only if employees perceive the organization as a source of needs satisfaction. In other words, OC may partly be the result of an exchange relationship between the organization and employees: individuals may become committed to an organization to the extent that the organization provides for their growth and achievement needs. Another explanation is that organizational and/or non-organizational factors may moderate the relationship between personal characteristics and OC. Werbel and Gould (1984) argued that employees feel more free to leave their job when they perceive that the demand for their profession is high. In addition to that, the unique influences of personal characteristics such as age, tenureship in organization and rank cannot always be separated. Many predictors of OC, whether they are personal characteristics, group variables, role or job characteristics, and/or structural variables may be inter-related, and may jointly influence OC. Moreover, most researchers have included personal variables in commitment studies for descriptive rather than explanatory purposes. As a result, there has been very little theoretical work explaining why and how personal characteristics relate to OC.

Summary

Findings that correlated the structural properties of organization, job characteristics, personal characteristics and OC tend to be inconsistent, not significant, or small. As noted, different reasons may partly explain these discrepant results. The antecedents that were examined in relation to OC may not influence OC since they were not generated from respondents. The influence of antecedents may have also been mediated by other variables in the work environment and/or personal characteristics. As well, researchers have often used different instruments to assess the independent and dependent variables in their research studies, and data were not analysed in the same way: some studies averaged data, while other studies aggregated them.

The relationships between organizational processes and OC also need further exploration. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) insisted that the results from the meta-analyses and individual studies strongly suggested that

organizational processes might be moderated by specific factors. In addition, in some cases (e.g, organizational values and OC), findings are based on a very small number of studies.

Contrary to the above findings, enhanced job characteristics or job scope have been consistently and positively associated with OC. In other words, jobs that increase felt responsibility and perceived challenge tend to increase employees' OC.

Outcomes of Organizational commitment

Researchers (Tett & Meyer, 1993; Randall, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) have linked OC to five different outcomes: turnover, absenteeism, tardiness, work performance, and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Figure 5 illustrates the above point.

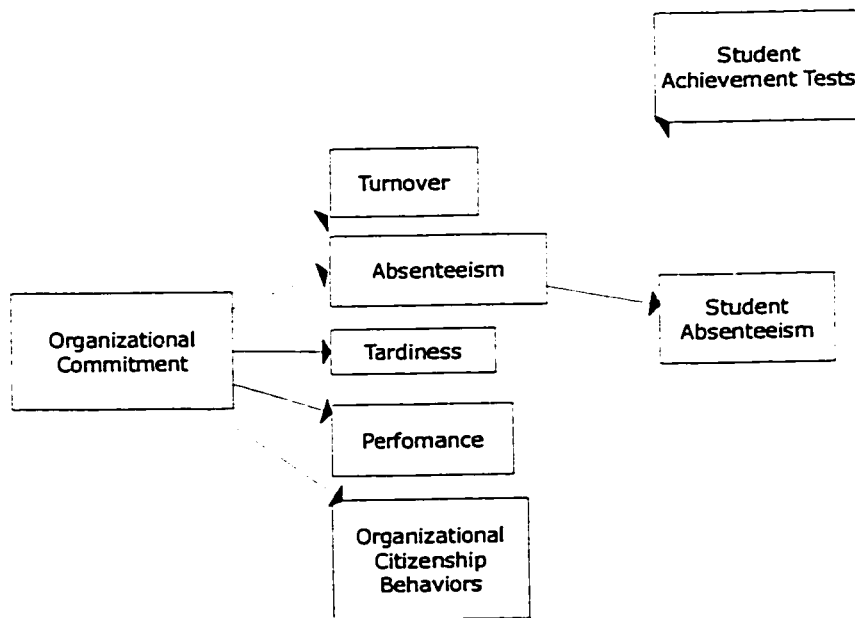


Figure 5. Outcomes of Organizational Commitment

Turnover

Findings from meta-analyses by Tett and Meyer (1993), Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Cotton and Tuttle (1986) as well as individual research studies

(Shore and Martin, 1989; Werbel & Gould, 1984) have shown significant and negative correlations between turnover and OC. However, the magnitudes of these effects are relatively small, and the above authors claimed that turnover-OC correlations are moderated by cognitive and behavioural intentions. March and Simon (1958), and Vroom (1964) suggested that turnover results from two major factors: the perceived desirability of leaving the organization and the perceived ease of movement from the organization. March and Simon (1958) further argued that perceived desirability of movement is influenced by individuals' attitudes toward their work environments which are, in turn, influenced by job and role characteristics, individuals' met expectations on the job, as well as work experiences and the perceived possibility of transfer within the organization. They also suggested that felt ease of movement is influenced by the number of perceived extraorganizational job alternatives which, in turn, is influenced by the current level of business activity (Stoikov and Raimon, 1968, and Armknecht & Early, 1972, found that voluntary mobility increased in prosperous times), and the number of organizations. Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino (1979) and Mobley (1977) elaborated a model focussing on the intermediate linkages between job attitudes and employee turnover. These authors postulated that job dissatisfaction leads to thinking of quitting, intention to search for another job, intention to stay with or leave the organization, and finally actual turnover. Figure 6 illustrates their theory.

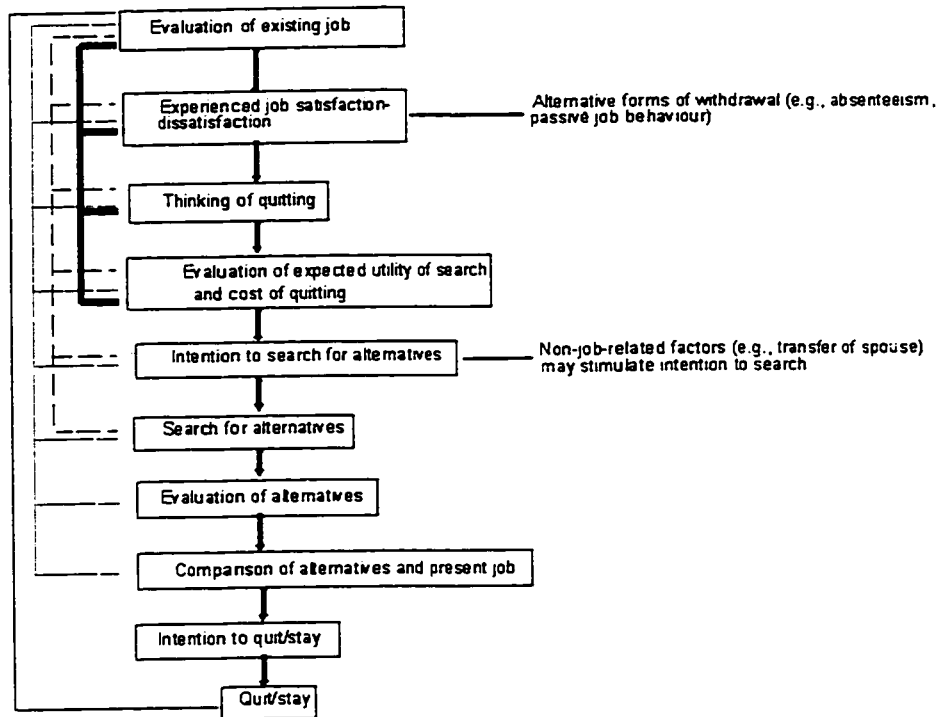


Figure 6. A Model of Employee Turnover (Source: Mobley, 1977, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62, 237-240)

However, results regarding the relationship between OC and turnover have not been consistent. For example, Rothschild-Whitt (1977, 1979), and Oliver (1984) have reported that members of social movement organizations can show high commitment, but regard their stay with the organization as a transitory one. Moreover, Mowday et al. (1982), and Mathieu and Zajac (1990) have also demonstrated that intention to leave does not necessarily lead to turnover. In fact, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) reported that the correlations between OC and intention to search for alternative jobs as well as intention to leave one's job were much stronger than correlations between OC and actual turnover. Other characteristics such as length of service, higher/lower status occupations, and career stages have also been found to moderate turnover rates (Arnold, 1993; Cohen, 1991; Cohen and Hudecek, 1993; Weber and Gould, 1984). Turnover seems higher among white-collar workers, particularly among teachers (Hofstadter, 1963), and more specifically among teachers with less than five years in the profession (Arnold, 1993; Schelchty & Vance, 1983; Murphy, Hart, & Walters, 1989). Arnold (1993) (Huselid & Day, 1991; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Shore & Martin, 1989).

As well, researchers (Larkey & Morill, 1995; Randall, 1990) claimed that the weak and/or inconsistent results between OC and turnover could be due to the fact that the commonly selected outcomes of commitment "may not be seen by employees as even remotely important expressions of organizational commitment" (p. 213).

Absenteeism

Gandz and Mikalachki (1979) estimated that the annual cost of absenteeism in Canada ranged from \$2.7 billion to \$7.7 billion. Moreover, Ehrenberg et al. (1991), Madden et al. (1991), Klein (1986), and Bridges (1980) found that the absentee rates among teachers in the United States were higher than the absentee rates in industry or the national absence rates for all employees. Ehrenberg et al. (1991) found that the teachers in the 381 districts they surveyed in New York State used 8.9 leave days per teacher in 1986-1987. Given a school year of about 180 days, the absentee rate was slightly less than 5%. However, at approximately the same time and using the same type of calculation, the national absence rate for all employees was only 2.6%. Two other studies (Unicomb, 1992; Pikoff, 1993) yielded higher absenteeism rates among elementary teachers than secondary teachers. Research findings (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Reichers, 1985; Mowday et al., 1982) suggested that OC and attendance were significantly and positively correlated. That is, higher levels of OC tended to result in lower levels of absenteeism. In fact, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) concluded that, in spite of the heterogeneity of attendance measures (several studies did not differentiate between "voluntary" and "involuntary" absenteeism), the attendance meta-analysis represented the only instance when more than 75% of the between study-variance was accounted for. Steers and Rhodes (1978) posited that employee attendance is a function of two variables: the employees' motivation to attend and the employees' ability to attend. They further argued that employees' motivation to attend results from a combination of the employees' affective responses to the job situation and a number of internal and external pressures to attend. They examined different studies and concluded that task identity, task variety, level of responsibility, job challenge, role conflict and ambiguity, and participation in decision making yielded consistently positive and modest relationships with absenteeism.

Other findings (Ehrenberg et al., 1991; Madden et al., 1991; Klein, 1986; Bridges, 1980; Owens, 1966) indicated that pressures to attend, whether internal or external, represented the second major influence on the desire to come to work. These pressures have been classified into different categories: economic and market conditions, incentive/reward systems,

work-group norms, personal work ethic, and OC. Owens (1966) found that absenteeism tends to decrease in deteriorating economic markets (employees are less likely to be absent for fear of reprisal), but that it increases prior to layoff periods. Similarly, other studies demonstrated that policies or incentive systems can have a direct impact on absenteeism. Ehrenberg et al. (1991), Jacobson (1989) and Wrinkler (1980) reported that teacher sick leaves increased or decreased as a direct result of school district policies and attendance incentive systems over a five year period. Mowday et al. (1982) also suggested that group norms can influence attendance: when a group emphasizes the importance of regular attendance for the benefit of the group, employees tend to come to work, especially if the group is cohesive. Finally, individual values and commitment to the organization can motivate employees to come to work and to contribute to the organizational goals ((Huselid & Day, 1991; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986).

On the other hand, Mowday et al. (1982) emphasized that the ability to attend may also affect absenteeism: in some situations, employees may want to come and have a high attendance motivation but not be able to come for the following reasons: illness and accidents, family responsibilities, and transportation problems.

Clearly, absenteeism is influenced by many factors, whether these factors are organizational or non-organizational, within or beyond employees' spheres of control. However, it is a serious and costly problem, particularly among elementary teachers. Moreover, Rosenholtz (1989) and Bridges (1980) found a statistically significant association between teacher attendance and student achievement tests for specific schools, even though a subsequent study by Ehrenberg et al. (1991) did not replicate the above finding. Nonetheless, Ehrenberg et al. (1991) found that higher student absenteeism was associated with higher teacher absenteeism and they suggested that increased teacher absences may decrease students' motivation to attend school, thus increasing students' absentee rates.

Tardiness

Mowday et al. (1982) suggested a relationship between lateness (which is one form of employee absenteeism) and OC since employee motivation to come to work on time seems to represent the primary influence on timely attendance, provided that employees have the ability to be on time. Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) meta-analyses yielded a negative but small correlation (not significant, $N = 1,485$) between lateness and OC. In a different study, Randall (1990; $N = 564$) found a positive, although not significant, correlation between coming to work on time and OC. These

authors, and Clegg (1983) emphasized that lateness is a relatively spontaneous act that can be influenced by many factors beyond the control of employees.

Job Performance

Mowday et al. (1982) hypothesized that OC is characterized by employees' willingness "to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization" (p. 27). They further hypothesized that employees' willingness to work hard would be translated into increased work performance. DeCotiis and Summers (1987), Shore and Martin (1989), Van Maanen (1975) found a positive relationship between OC and work performance across different professions (e.g. policemen, bank tellers, restaurant managers) and private and public organizations. Rosenholtz (1989) who studied teachers' OC in 78 elementary schools in Tennessee concluded that teacher OC was a predictor of both student reading and math achievement. In a different study, Kushman (1992) who studied 63 urban elementary and middle schools also found a positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' OC and student achievement over a three year period.

Nonetheless, these positive correlations tend to be weak. As well, other studies have only partially supported the relationship OC-work performance. For example, Steers (1977) found that OC was positively related to quantity of work and promotion readiness, but not to quality of work and overall performance (as measured by supervisory ratings). This result echoes Chelte and Tausky's (1986) who demonstrated that, for their respondents, OC was related to effort (measured through the numbers of working hours) but not translated into an increased number of publications. Similarly, two other studies (Randall, 1990; Allen & Meyer, 1990) found that increased performance was correlated to affective commitment but not to calculative commitment. These findings led Allen and Meyer (1990) to conclude:

The value of commitment to the organization, therefore, may depend on the nature of that commitment. When commitment reflects and identification with and involvement in the organization, the organization may benefit both in term of reduced turnover and superior performance. In contrast, when commitment is primarily based on the recognition of the costs associated with leaving, the benefits of reduced turnover may be obtained at the price of relatively poor performance. (p. 155)

Randall (1990) and Steers (1977) suggested that the weakness, or the inconsistency of the work performance-OC relationship could be due to the conceptualization of OC, the definitions and operationalizations of OC and

work performance, data collection and analyses. For example, researchers have used a wide variety of performance measures such as annual income (base on straight commission) (Wiener & Vardi, 1980), operating expense ratio (Angle & Perry, 1981), food, liquor, and labour costs (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), supervisory ratings (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Van Maanen, 1975) and diverse self-report data (Chelte & Tausky, 1986; Jenner, 1984). As a result of the wide diversity in performance assessment instruments, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found a positive and significant relationship between OC and job performance using primarily supervisory ratings, but no significant relationship between OC and performance using output measures, while Randall (1990) found a positive and significant relationship between OC and self-report data on work performance, as well as between OC and objective data sources of work performance but no relationship between OC and supervisory ratings. Finally, Steers (1977) argued that some organizations, particularly those that are public service-oriented, may be more concerned about staff retention and absenteeism than about work performance, thus creating a work environment in which performance is not the most valued organizational goal. Once again, these results further emphasize the importance of getting respondent-generated input with respect to the determination of perceived relevant work outcomes.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Organizational commitment has also been associated with organizational citizenship behaviours (Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Organizational citizenship behaviours or OCBs are "job-related behaviours which are discretionary, not formally recognized by the organizational system reward, and, in the aggregate, promote the effective functioning of the organization" (Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993, p. 210). The most commonly studied OCBs are altruism (i.e., behaviours aimed at helping specific persons who may or may not have requested assistance), conscientiousness (i.e., discretionary behaviours that go beyond the minimum role requirements in the area of attendance, obeying rules, taking breaks, etc.), courtesy (i.e., discretionary behaviours on the part of employees aimed at preventing work-related problems with others from occurring), civic virtue (i.e., behaviours that indicate that employees are involved in the life of the company such as fund-raising activities) and sportmanship (i.e., willingness of the employees to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining).

Studies by Becker (1992), Moorman, Niehoff, and Organ, (1993), and Meyer and Allen (1987) have provided initial support for a weak but positive relationship between OCBs and commitment. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986),

in particular, found that commitments based on internalization and identification were positively and significantly related to extra-role behaviours, whereas compliance commitment was not related to extra-role behaviours in two different studies. However, contrary to the above results, Williams and Anderson (1991) did not indicate any relationship between extra-role behaviours and commitment.

In a different study, Becker (1992) who studied 440 respondents from 30 different organizations did not report any significant relationship between extra-role behaviours and organizational commitment, whereas he reported that commitment to specific constituencies (e.g., commitment to management) was significantly and positively associated to extra-role behaviours. The above results have been partly confirmed and partly disconfirmed by Gregersen's (1993) findings. Gregersen (1993) found that career stages may mediate the relationship OCBs-multiple commitments. More specifically, while this author did not find any relationship between OC (at least measured with the OCQ) and extra-role behaviours for respondents with two years or less and more than eight years of organizational tenureship, whereas OC was positively and significantly associated for respondents with more than two but less than eight years of tenure. Regarding multiple commitments, Gregersen (1993) found that commitment to proximal supervisors was significantly related to extra-role behaviours for respondents who had been in the organization more than 8 years, whereas commitment to top management (distal management) was negatively associated with extra-role behaviours. Commitment to different constituencies (proximal and distal management, co-workers, and customers) was not related to extra-role behaviours for respondents who had been less than 8 years in the organization.

Williams and Anderson (1991) have provided a long list of statistical and methodological reasons that may explain the inconsistent results regarding the relationship OCBs-OC and/or multiple commitments. Many of these reasons (e.g., different conceptualizations and measurements of constructs) have been cited elsewhere in this document. Moreover, in a recent study, Wolfe Morrison (1994) reported that a survey of 317 clerical workers demonstrated that the boundaries between in-role and extra-role behaviours are often ill-defined and vary from one employee to another and between employees and supervisors. Wolfe Morrison (1994) reported that the higher the level of affective and normative commitment, the more broadly employees defined their job responsibilities, thus including a number of previously called OCBs in their intra-role responsibilities. She pointed out that this is not very surprising since previous researchers (Graen, 1976; Rousseau, 1989; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) have noted that roles in

organizations are rarely fixed and that role perceptions evolve as employees and supervisors negotiate the scope and the content of work activities. Once again, the need for respondent-generated input seems to be crucial in further research on commitment and work outcomes.

Summary

Research findings tend to indicate small, and/or inconsistent relations between commitment and work outcomes. Once again, the previously cited methodological and statistical reasons may explain some of these results. However, these weak, and/or inconsistent relationships could also be explained by the fact that, although certain behaviours (e.g., teachers spending extra time on class preparation or tutoring students) may be reasonably good indicators of engagement, commitment cannot be assessed from a very small number of observable behavioural outcomes that have been determined by researchers with little or no respondent-generated input.

Similarly, certain teachers may engage in specific activities (e.g., extra-curricular activities) because they feel highly committed toward a specific constituency, whereas others may engage in the same activities to comply with some written or unwritten expectations (i.e., compliance commitment). Moreover, it is conceivable that the diverse reasons for which employees engage in specific behaviours may be reflected in the ways they carry out these activities, an area which most researchers have neglected to examine.

Finally, if Reicher's (1985) conceptualization of multi-foci commitment is appropriate, researchers also need to identify, through respondent-generated input, the diverse activities and behaviours that may reflect high (or lack of) involvement towards the diverse organizational constituencies. For all of these reasons, operational definitions of commitment based exclusively on specific observable behaviours, even more so if these behaviours are geared towards only one organizational constituency, are likely to be inadequate.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to describe our current understanding of commitment. Nonetheless, there is still little agreement among researchers regarding the definitions of commitment, its development, antecedents and outcomes.

Commitment definitions have evolved from three different

perspectives: the behavioural, the attitudinal, and the normative perspectives. The inconsistencies of these definitions and the weaknesses of the instruments measuring OC have been emphasized throughout this chapter. Inconsistencies may also partly be due to the fact that definitions have not been based on respondent-generated input.

The operationalization of OC further compounds the definitional issues. Researchers have used different instruments to assess OC. Some researchers measured OC with attitudinal scales, while others used calculative or normative instruments. Nonetheless, Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Allen and Meyer (1990) have emphasized that these scales did not demonstrate strong psychometric properties.

Two main theories have been used to explain the development of commitment: the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the cognitive dissonance theory. The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein, 1980) emphasizes that individuals engage in specific behaviours after they have systematically and rationally evaluated the inducements they receive from an organization in exchange for their contributions. The cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) posits that when individuals' behaviours and beliefs are at odds, individuals develop attitudes that are consistent with their behavioural choices. Nonetheless, research findings do not support the influence of TRA or the cognitive dissonance theory with respect to the development of commitment.

Researchers have also tried to identify commitment antecedents and outcomes. These are illustrated in Figure 7:

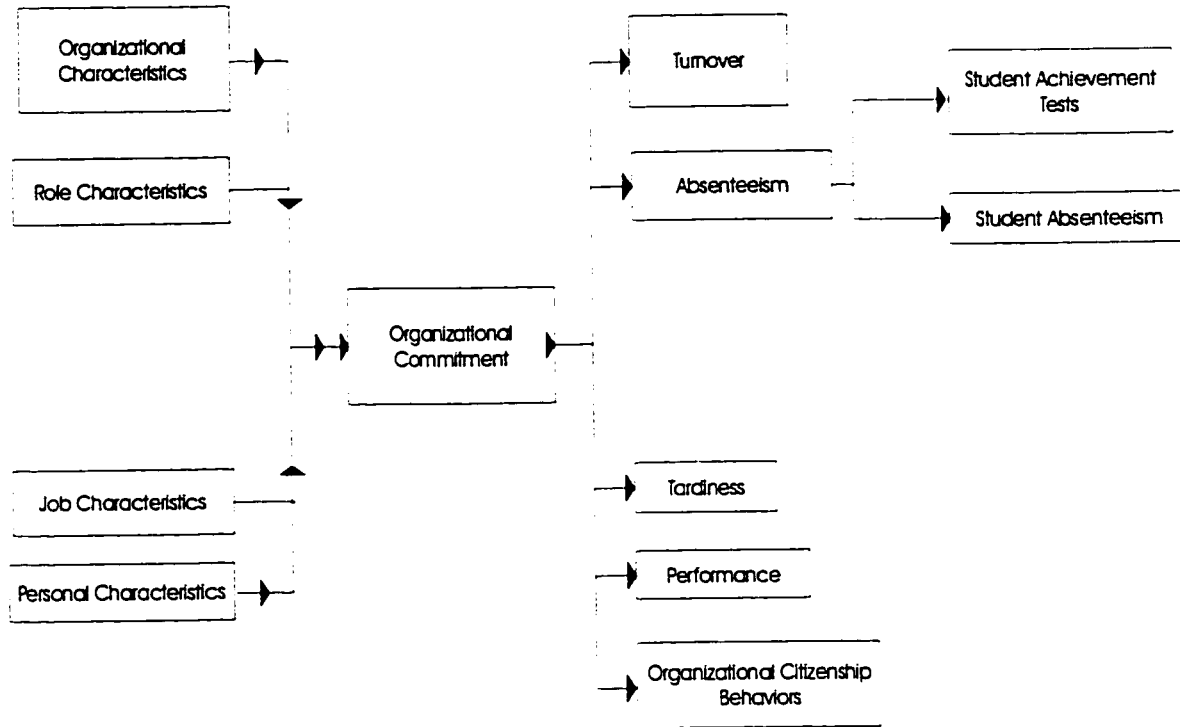


Figure 7. Antecedents and Outcomes of Organizational Commitment.

However, as mentioned earlier, research findings on the predictors and outcomes of commitment are inconsistent. Once again, the lack of respondent-generated input may partly explain these discrepancies. Researchers have usually determined the a priori importance of antecedents and outcomes that affect OC, even though studies (Randall et al., 1990; Reichers, 1985) have emphasized and demonstrated that these variables may not be significant expressions or predictors of OC from the respondents' perspectives.

Moreover, since research on OC has been predominantly conducted within the quantitative paradigm, it suffers for some of the quantitative research shortcomings, namely multicollinearity and unrealistic manipulations of human, social, and cultural factors. It is not uncommon for quantitative researchers to attempt to control confounding variables through statistical manipulations. As well, statistical explanations are always constrained by the number and types of confounders that have been measured and by the limited number and types of variables that have been entered in the model.

Concurrently, researchers have included different variables in their

models. They have also used different methods of collecting and analysing the data. As well, some studies used Pearson's correlations, while other research used multivariate regression analyses, therefore controlling for potential confounders, or a combination of Pearson's correlations and multivariate analyses. Some of the statistical tests that were used in the OC research were not appropriate: categorical variables, in particular dichotomous variables should not be analysed with the Pearson's correlation test, and in some cases, non-parametric tests should be used for variables not likely to be normally distributed. Further compounding the above, some researchers have collected behavioural data months or years after assessing OC and they did not use a repeated measure of OC (Marsh & Mannari, 1977), while others (Angle & Perry, 1981; Ferris, 1981) measured OC levels after collecting data on work outcomes.

There is still a great deal of confusion regarding the phenomenon of commitment. Concurrently, Kushman (1992), Salazar (1993) and Reichers (1985) have highlighted some of the research areas that have been left unexplored by past studies. For example, little is known on the effects of differing levels of commitment on both the individual and the organization. Similarly, by and large, the outcomes and processes involved in sub-organizational commitment have not been investigated. Moreover, we still are in the dark regarding individuals' own experiences and understandings of OC. Therefore, the purpose of my work is to examine commitments from the respondents' perspectives, and particularly to focus on the areas that have been neglected by previous research. By examining selected respondents' experiences, I address Reichers (1985) and Randall's (1990) concern regarding the lack of respondent-generated input, as well as some of the shortcomings of quantitative research. The rationale for a qualitative study and the methodology of this chapter are developed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

THE STUDY PARADIGM AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focusses on the methodology of my study. It includes an outline of its design and a description of the methods I have used to select the storytellers, collect their stories and analyse the teachers' interviews. It ends with a summary of the basic characteristics of my research study.

General Considerations

Clandinin and Connelly (1994), in a particularly insightful review of research paradigms (i.e., logically held-together assumptions that orient thinking and research) that researchers use in social sciences, noted that

The social sciences are concerned with humans and their relations with themselves and their environments, and, as such, the social sciences are founded on the study of experience. Experience is, therefore, the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry. (p. 414)

An important question arises with regard to this comment: how can human experiences be best studied, understood, and described? In answer to this question, a number of researchers (Denzin, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1981) have suggested that the naturalistic paradigm is "the method of choice when dealing with [studying] human behaviours" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 63). Denzin (1994) further pointed out that "In nearly all situations, individuals are able to articulate interpretive stories, or working theories, about their conduct and their experiences" (p. 506), and that the researcher's task is to uncover these empirical theories "showing how they work in the lives of the individuals studied" (Denzin, 1994, p. 506). Denzin (1994) further claimed that thick descriptions such as the ones generally produced by naturalistic researchers are the best tools to uncover and explore these pragmatic theories since only "Thick descriptions and inscriptions create thick interpretations" (p. 506). Other researchers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) have also emphasized the importance of generating theory that is grounded in multiple lived experiences as "theory will be speculative, hence ineffective" (Stauss, 1987, p. 1) if it is not grounded in systematically and intensely analysed data. Following Denzin's (1994) and Guba and Lincoln's advice, this study was conducted within the naturalistic paradigm.

The Naturalistic Paradigm

This study has been designed within the naturalistic or constructivist paradigm. Naturalistic studies present the following characteristics:

Experiential data are collected in natural settings by the researcher who is the key instrument. Researchers strive to present thick, emic descriptions of human experiences, so that readers can probe the text for internal consistency and arrive at their own conclusions.

Naturalistic research is descriptive and interpretive. The aims of constructivist inquiry are to understand the storytellers' experiences from the storytellers' point of view, and to uncover the conceptual structures that guide the storytellers' interpretations and constructions of reality. To achieve that, naturalistic inquirers explore the mundane affairs that characterize everyday existence. They believe that nothing is trivial and that everything has the potential to illuminate our understanding of a particular phenomenon.

Naturalistic researchers are essentially concerned about the meanings of experiences. They want to understand the processes by which different people make sense of different or similar experiences. They do not attempt to generalize or predict consequences of events, instead they are concerned with the "how" and "why" of human experiences.

Naturalistic researchers build theories from the bottom up by using the multiple pieces of evidence they have collected. Naturalistic knowledge is grounded in the respondents' and researchers' interpretations of specific experiences. Knowledge is presented as holistic "pattern theories or webs of mutual and plausible influence expressed as working hypotheses" (Lincoln, 1990, p. 77).

From an ontological perspective, the constructivist paradigm emphasizes that people's interpretations of their experiences are socially constructed, multiplistic (Greene, 1990), and time- and place-bound. Thus, the constructivists' task is to reconstruct the multiple, holistic, and often conflictual 'realities' of the storytellers within a given context. As well, Lincoln (1990) emphasized that the presentation of these multiple realities should create a sense of "vicarious, *deja vu* experience" (p. 73) in the readers. This vicarious experience should help readers understand the "nuances and subtleties of conflict and agreement [regarding the experiential phenomena] *in this place at this time*" (p. 73).

Epistemologically, constructivists ensure the credibility of their research findings by developing thick and contextualized descriptions of lived experiences that enable readers to make judgements regarding the transferability of research findings, by feeding back the presentation or reconstruction of lived experiences to the respondents who become the arbiters of the research adequacy, and by following certain methodological procedures, such as the maintenance of an audit trail that can be checked by other researchers. A developing awareness of one's biases and the researcher's adherence to follow certain ethical standards also strengthen the dependability and credibility of findings.

Axiologically, the constructivist researcher recognizes that inquiry is value-bound, that interpretive knowledge is permeated by the researcher's and the respondents' values. The choice of the paradigm within which the study is conducted, the choice of the research question, the choice of the respondents also reflect the inquirer's values. However, as pointed out by Lincoln (1990),

inquiry that purports to be value free is probably the most insidious form of inquiry available, because its inherent but unexamined values influence policy without ever being scrutinized themselves. (p. 82)

From the constructivists' perspective, values should not be avoided. In fact, they must be carefully explored and examined for they are the very foundations of all human enterprises. As Grumet (1990) pointed out, we cannot examine values without "encountering ourselves along the way" (p. 337). It is the examination of the multiple and conflictual values that undergird our actions and thoughts that helps us understand who we are, what we care about, what fascinates us, what disgusts us, and what makes us human. Therefore, one of the researcher's roles is to search for those values that may influence his or her attempts, as well as those of the respondents at making meaning of lived experiences. This interpretive, value-searching orientation of naturalism not only helps researchers in their understandings of human experiences and of themselves, but also enhances the credibility, integrity, and dependability of their research since it is the awareness of one's and others' beliefs, biases, and values that allows for less distorted (or more faithful) social constructions and analyses. As Namenwirth (1986, p. 29) noted, "Scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious."

Methodologically, naturalistic research often requires an on-going dialogue between researchers and storytellers. The methodology for this

study is hermeneutic and dialectic. Guba (1990) noted that "The hermeneutic aspect consists in depicting individual constructions as accurately as possible, while the dialectic aspect consists of comparing and contrasting these existing individual (including the inquirer's) constructions" (p. 27). As mentioned earlier, constructivism requires that the inquiry is field- rather than laboratory-based, and that the researcher becomes the instrument of inquiry. The research methodology should also be flexible and evolve as salient issues emerge. For this reason, naturalistic research designs are never completely articulated until the very end of the inquiry.

Strategies of Inquiry

Researchers (Janesick, 1994; Morse, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) suggested that the research questions and the aims of the study guide the selection of the study methodology. Following this advice and the recommendations of Morse (1994), Strauss and Corbin (1994), Glaser and Strauss (1967), I primarily used the grounded theory methodology for this project. Grounded theory seemed particularly appropriate for this project since the research questions were "process" inquiries and the aims of the study were to develop plausible relationships between the processes that might affect commitment and to present credible explanations for the rise and fall of the storytellers' commitments. I also used Strauss' (1987) and Glaser's and Strauss' (1967) strategies of inquiry for identifying concepts and follow-up discussions with my informants. This allowed me to pursue the respondents' stories in depth and over time in order to enhance my data.

The Storytellers

Naturalistic researchers are not interested in drawing an a priori and random sample. They prefer to focus in depth on a relatively small number of participants selected purposefully,

The logic and power of purposeful selection lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (Patton, 1990, p. 145)

In order to find "information-rich" storytellers, I used two selection methods. The first one called simple criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) allowed me to select a group, members of which would be relevant to the study. Since the project was aimed at elementary teachers, it was decided that storytellers would be full-time teachers and work in an elementary school.

I also used theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is recommended for research projects that aim at generating theory or plausible explanations for specific phenomena (Morse, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1994, Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The basic criterion of theoretical sampling is theoretical relevance. The storytellers' experiences have to be relevant to the phenomenon under study, and, at the same time, they have to present enough similarities and differences to allow researchers to generate multiple, information rich categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that while similarities facilitate the generation of categories and their properties and increase the credibility of the study, differences ensure the richness of the data, and thus, of the subsequent analyses.

Since the purpose of my study was to examine the different organizational and individual processes and characteristics that might influence commitment, I decided to look for volunteers who had experienced changes in their professional commitments. Change was what made the storytellers' experiences similar. Nonetheless, it also meant that I looked for storytellers whose feelings of commitment would have either increased or decreased over the years, or both increased and decreased, if that was possible at all. The differences among the storytellers with respect to their age, experience, the number and type of schools they worked at (e.g, inner city schools, urban schools, rural schools), the children they worked with, as well as the other community members (e.g., principals, teachers, parents) partly ensured that the data would be rich and varied.

The selection of the final 14 participants (three males and eleven females) occurred over a period of five months. The selection process was based on on-going inclusion for two reasons. First, I had no possible way to know in advance how many participants I would need to ensure that I collected enough information on the processes that might influence commitment for the study to be credible. Second, on-going inclusion enabled me to ensure that I spoke with both participants who had experienced an increase in their feelings of commitment and respondents whose feelings of commitment had fallen.

I stopped selecting and interviewing new informants when I developed a sense of saturation, that is, when the informants did not give me any new information on their commitment experiences or on the events that had preceded and followed these experiences.

Gaining access. Gaining access to potential respondents is crucial in a qualitative study (Bodgan & Biklen, 1982). I asked colleagues from the

Department of Educational Policy Studies, teachers and principals I knew, or whom Guba and Lincoln (1981) termed "gatekeepers" (p. 290) (i.e., persons who have the power to facilitate or prevent access to respondents) to recommend participants who might be interested in and relevant to my study. As well, I asked the teachers and principals I knew to mention my study in their schools or to colleagues whom they felt might be interested. In some cases, school principals encouraged me to come to a staff meeting to present my study and ask for volunteers. I also went to a number of evening classes in the Department of Educational Policy Studies in the hope of finding volunteers.

To gain the support of gatekeepers, and following Guba and Lincoln's (1981) advice, I informed them of the purposes of the study and the use of the data. I assured them that neither the participants nor the schools in which the respondents worked would be damaged by the study. I further emphasized that the storytellers would be able to withdraw from the study at any time and would have opportunities to verify the accuracy of the transcribed tapes.

When teachers expressed interest in the study, I always told them the purposes of the research and explained why I was interested in doing this study. We also went over issues regarding their protection, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the logistics with regard to time, place and number of interviews to be scheduled. I also checked whether or not they met the two most basic criteria of the study (e.g, they worked in an elementary school and were full-time teachers). Following that, we would converse about their work experiences. These conversations allowed me to ensure that teachers had indeed experienced changes in their feelings of commitment and were willing to talk openly about their experiences.

Gaining trust and establishing rapport. Because the quality of a study partly depends on the information that researchers collect, it is crucial that they establish open and trusting relationships with their informants. With respect to trust, Guba and Lincoln (1981) insisted that "Trust, unfortunately, is not a state of mind that can be established once for all. Trust must be established with each individual, over and over again..." (p. 292). Similarly, Johnson (1975) claimed that:

the relationship of trust is a *developmental process* to some extent biographically *specific* in nature.... It no longer seems plausible to think in terms of developing trust as a specifiable set of procedural operations. Rather, two or more persons engaged in a common course of action may develop a sense of trust between them. It is a reality necessarily fluid and changing, always subject to reinterpretation. (p. 94)

Berg (1988) pointed out that knowledge about the people being studied and their working environment facilitates "entry as well as rapport once entry has been gained" (p. 56). However, as Van Manen (1990) suggested, interviews may also be used "as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience " (p. 66). In other words, the researcher's sensitivity and genuine interest in each storyteller's perspective facilitates the development of trust between researcher and participant, and I have found that to be particularly true in my relationships with the storytellers. I also believe that the fact that I was interested not only in what storytellers told me about their work, but also in what they were willing to share with me about their personal lives further fostered our relationships. I did spend a lot of time trying to get to know my informants beyond their professional lives, trying to find out what they felt passionate about, what they liked and intensely disliked, and what they hoped for in their professional and personal lives. I joked with them, I ate with them, I went to the movies with some of them, and I also shared my experiences with them. I told them of my passions, my pains, my vulnerabilities, my achievements, and my experiences with commitment.

The fact that storytellers repeatedly allowed interviews to run beyond the anticipated time, seemed eager to share their experiences, often expressed open gratitude for having been provided with an opportunity to share some of their experiences, offered me small gifts, and have kept contact with me over the past two and a half years have encouraged me to think that I was able to establish mutual respect and trust and to develop a good rapport with my storytellers. I have been generally overwhelmed by the openness, the honesty, and the courage with which the storytellers have allowed me to enter into their lives, and I am truly grateful for their insights and courage.

Data Collection

When in doubt, observe and ask questions. When certain, observe at length and ask many more questions. (Patton, 1990, p. 7)

Always be suspicious of data collection that goes according to plan (Patton, 1990, p. 143)

Interviews are by far the favourite methodological tool of qualitative researchers, and, like many of them, I collected most of my information through in-depth interviews. Patton (1980) insisted that the aim of qualitative interviews was not "to put things in someone else's mind (for example the interviewer's perceived categories for organizing the world) but

rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (p. 196).

I mixed and matched interviewing methods for this study. The first (and probably the most structured) interview with the informants allowed me to acquire some basic demographic data (e.g., years of experience, grades taught, type and number of schools they had worked at). It also served two purposes: as storytellers spoke about themselves and their environments, they achieved a "reasonable" level of comfort, and the demographic data established a base to defend the credibility of the storytellers.

Subsequent interviews were informal conversational interviews and general interviews guided by a set of issues (Patton, 1990). Informal interviews facilitated the generation of spontaneous questions and allowed me to pursue information in whatever direction seemed to be most appropriate for the research questions. This interviewing format was particularly useful when storytellers gave me new or different information about a specific process, incident, or experience, and when I wanted to clarify something with them (and that happened often and throughout the interviews). The general interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) enabled me to explore similar sets of issues with each respondent. Conversations with the storytellers focussed on their work careers, and particularly on their experiences of high or low commitment and the circumstances that surrounded these experiences. As well, we spoke about their aspirations, achievements, satisfactions, and disappointments. Although these issues were pre-determined, questions were not always written in advance, and I was able to adapt both the wording and the sequence of questions to the storytellers in the context of the actual interviews. A combination of these two types of interviews increased the salience and relevance of questions since it allowed me to be highly responsive to individual differences, to address issues that naturally emerged during an interview, and to increase the comprehensiveness and the depth of the collected data. Issues were pilot-tested with key informants and colleagues from the Department of Educational Policy Studies.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) emphasized that methods, and therefore questions aimed at studying personal experiences, should simultaneously be directed in four directions: "inward and outward, backward and forward" (p. 417). They defined their criteria as follows:

By inward we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions and so on. By outward we mean existential conditions, that is, the environment... By backward and forward we are referring to temporality, past, present and future. To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask

questions pointing each way. (p. 417)

Therefore, following Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) as well as Patton's (1990) advice, I asked the storytellers to describe their experiences of low and high commitment, the circumstances that surrounded these experiences, the community members who were involved, and their decisions and actions during and after these experiences. I asked them about their hopes, their satisfactions and dissatisfactions, their values, and their goals prior to, during, and after their experiences of changing commitment. I had also many questions aimed at understanding the emotional impact of these experiences with respect to the professional and personal lives of the storytellers, as well as their emotional responses to their experiences. I ensured that we explored not only their present experiences, but also their past experiences, their past and present satisfactions and dissatisfactions, and their past, present, and future aspirations.

As advised by Guba and Lincoln (1981), I always started interviews by asking storytellers to talk about themselves, not necessarily in the context of the research, but about things in which they could take pride or about which they felt positive in order to allow them to be "as comfortable as possible" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 312). I only brought up the issues that I wanted to discuss with them when I felt that they had achieved some degree of comfort. At the end of the interview, I sought the storytellers' recommendations for further issues to explore.

Interviews ran over a period of five months. I had anywhere from three to six interviews with each storyteller, and the length of the interviews varied from one to two hours. All the interviews were taped and transcribed. I provided storytellers with a transcript of their interviews so that they could verify the accuracy of the interviews and prohibit any quotations. I have also kept field notes to support the credibility of the data collection. More details are given about these field notes later in this chapter.

After the initial interviews and for a period of two and a half years, I continued to collect information from all the storytellers, but two, via e-mails, letters, or phone conversations. I lost contact with two informants, one went to Australia and the other moved without giving me a forwarding address.

Data Analysis

The challenge [of qualitative inquiry] is to make sense of massive amounts of data and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals. (Patton, 1990, pp. 371-372)

Data analyses were approximately spread over two and a half years, and I used several analysis strategies to try and make sense of the storytellers' experiences. As advised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1994), I started the data analyses with the content analysis of the pilot interviews. I usually replayed immediately (or as soon as possible) each interview. This allowed me to prepare questions for the following interview and to start identifying a number of issues that could be used to interpret the informants' stories. I also wrote a short summary of each interview that outlined the main events or incidents described by the storytellers, the time at which they took place (e.g., was it the informant's first teaching experience? His or her fourth or ninth year of teaching? Did these events happen after a good teaching experience? A bad one? Was it the first time that the informant went through such experiences?), the different community members who were involved in those events, and the storytellers' reactions. Once this was done, I displayed each key event or incident in a matrix form. Matrices reported the flow and configuration of the storytellers' experiences, reactions, and decisions.

When the interviews were transcribed on a computer diskette (and they were transcribed on an on-going basis), I printed them in such a way that one third of each page was blank. I used this margin to note down the concepts that the informants had linked with their experiences of high and low commitment, the concepts that recurred in the storytellers' information, and that previous research had associated with commitment. I also wrote down constructs that I felt might be related to commitment with a question to pursue with the informant. At the same time, I underlined all the storytellers' statements or key words that were related to their experiences of commitment. Once I had done that with a set of interviews (and there was one set of interviews for each storyteller), and before going to the next set of interviews, I went back to my initial displays of events and regrouped them into two categories, positive experiences and negative experiences.

Using these displays and the interviews, I compared the participant's positive experiences with all his or her other positive experiences, and the informant's negative experiences with his or her other negative experiences. This constant comparison of the storytellers' experiences advised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss (1987), and Strauss and Corbin (1994) enabled me to generate more categories, properties of categories, and additional recurring themes. I then compared the storyteller's experiences of positive and negative events and generated further categories, themes, and relationships between these themes and categories. At that point, it became fairly clear that positive and negative experiences had been facilitated by a number of different factors, which I grouped into different categories (e.g.,

organizational processes that affected commitment, individual characteristics that might have influenced commitment, and the influence of different community members or groups on the storyteller's experiences of commitment). I did the same with the outcomes of the informant's experiences (e.g., emotional outcomes, behavioural outcomes, individual outcomes, group outcomes).

At the same time, I began to realize that different experiences had affected the storyteller's commitments in different ways, and I created new files which I called commitment to children, commitment to teaching, commitment to school administrators, commitment to colleagues, commitment to parents, and other commitments. I then went back again to the storyteller's interviews and noted in each file the pages, along with the interview number and the name of the participant, where I found a reference or references to one of the above commitments. Following that, I tried to find relationships between the categories and the properties of the categories, and noted them down, more often than not under the form of a question, along with a brief and tentative explanation for these relationships.

I also wrote down a quick summary of these initial findings and e-mail them to or called the storyteller for verification and possible new insights. These were short theoretical memos (Strauss, 1987) which helped incorporate my readings and make sense of the results of the coding. After that, I moved to the next set of interviews, which I treated in much the same way.

The constant comparative method was not the only method I used to analyse the interviews. I regularly 'immersed' myself in an informant's situation or experiences. I tried to experience the storyteller's experiences. To do that, I closed my eyes and imagined I was the storyteller. I took his or her name, his or her face, and I slowly re-constructed his or her story, pausing whenever my attention was coming back to my own reactions, my own feelings about the situation, only moving forward when I felt that I had become again the storyteller. I then examined my feelings, my reactions, my decisions, my actions, and I would invariably 'come back' with a much greater understanding of the storytellers' experiences. There was also a lot of "quiet contemplation" (Moustakas, 1981, p. 56) or regular incubation phases during which I would turn and turn a specific situation or incident in my head and try to make my own sense of the respondent's reactions and emotions, or try to find plausible explanations in the data for his or her reactions, or allow intuitive or tacit insights to surface and develop.

Cross-case analyses followed the case analyses. Patton (1990) defined

cross-case analyses as a process by which a researcher regroups answers to similar questions from different people, and analyses participants' different perspectives. Guba (1978) emphasized that researchers must look for "convergence" in data (p. 56) as well as "divergence." The purpose of cross-case analyses is to further the exploration and understanding of the phenomenon under study and to develop new themes. To do that, I continued to use the constant comparative method (Glaser & Stauss, 1967), and compared all the storytellers' positive experiences and their negative experiences, the outcomes of these experiences, the circumstances that surrounded them, and the different factors that might have facilitated them. I did the same with the storytellers' different commitments. New categories emerged, while some patterns and themes recurred. With the additional information that I obtained from the cross-analyses, I was able to better understand relationships between categories, between categories and the storytellers' commitments, and between the properties of the categories. As well, as I filed more and more information on the participants' different commitments, the interaction of these commitments, the influence of significant others on the storytellers' commitments, and the influence of the storyteller on his or her commitments became a little easier to understand. New hypotheses emerged, and new questions as well, which invariably sent me back to my interviews.

Ultimately, the categories and concepts were assembled in short paragraphs and tested for what Guba (1978) termed "completeness" (p. 56) (i.e., plausibility, transferability and credibility). Guba (1978) stated:

1. The set [concepts & categories] should have internal and external plausibility, a property that might be termed "integrability". Viewed internally, the individual categories should appear to be consistent; viewed externally, the set of categories should seem to comprise a whole picture...
2. The set [concepts & categories] should be reasonably inclusive of the data and information that do exist...
3. The set should be reproducible by another judge... The second observer ought to be able to verify that a) the categories make sense in view of the data which are available, and b) the data have been appropriately arranged in the category system...
4. The set should be credible to the persons who provided the information which the set is presumed to assimilate. (pp. 56-57)

Following Strauss' (1987) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) strategies of inquiry, I also systematically ascertained that the emerging categories and concepts were grounded in the storytellers' experiences.

Interpretation and synthesis of findings followed the analyses. Patton (1990) suggested that interpretation goes beyond data description since "It means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations..." (p. 423). He further argued that the purposes of interpretation were to make "the obvious obvious" (p. 423), make "the obvious dubious" (p.423) (i.e., highlight any misconceptions regarding the phenomena under study), and "make the hidden obvious" (p. 423). Interpretation in qualitative studies emphasizes understanding and illumination of human experiences. Synthesizing is a process by which the researcher matches and integrates the different elements of the study so that the final product presents an holistic and accurate understanding of a phenomenon. Denzin (1994) noted that writers have to address the following issues as they start writing: making sense of the data (i.e., fitting the pieces together in a meaningful and comprehensive way, representation (i.e., seeking a balance between an emic and an etic interpretation of the findings), legitimation (i.e., trustworthiness of the study), and what he termed "desire" (p.504) (i.e., the writer's ability to create a "vital text" (Denzin, 1994, p. 504) that "invites readers to engage the author's subject matter (Denzin, 1994, p. 504).

Writing was not an easy task either, particularly at the beginning. I first started by describing the participants' experiences using my own words and, when I read what I had written, I very vividly remembered Richardson's (1994) comments on the boredom she experienced as she tried to read countless qualitative research studies. So, I re-wrote, and re-wrote, and re-wrote, endlessly changing my words and sentences at each re-writing, until I finally realized that the storytellers expressed their emotions and feelings and explained their decisions, reactions, and experiences much better than I could do it. I subsequently decided that 'my' writing might considerably improve if I let the storytellers share what they had to share rather than try and present what they had to say.

The above processes described poorly the periods of elation (extremely rare at the beginning of the analyses) and frustration (very common in the initial period of analyses, and unfortunately, still frequent at the end of the analyses), that I experienced while analysing the informants' stories. Many of my frustrations were caused by the following recurring problems:

Trying to force old concepts or models on the participants' information. This was particularly true at the beginning of the analyses. Every time I came across a difficulty, something that I could not quite understand, I rushed to the library and dug out books and

articles. If I could not find anything in education, I explored other domains, psychology, medicine, political science, even marketing. I did not look at my data again until I had found a model, a concept, something, which, I believed, would solve my problem. I would then try to force these concepts or models on my data, and it would take me several days and a great deal of frustration before I admitted it would not work. My doing that was partly related to my uncertainties about my abilities to carry out a qualitative analysis, which was a completely new domain for me, and my prior educational background which was strongly oriented toward verification of theory rather than generation of theory. I also strongly believed that a mere student could not succeed where so many researchers had experienced difficulties before.

Refusing to accept the obvious and the simple. It took me a long time to accept that my storytellers liked teaching because they felt good and efficacious when they taught and influenced the students. I just could not accept that my informants did things just because they felt good when they were doing them. Surely, that was not enough. Surely, the researchers who examined commitment before I did would have found something that simple and obvious.

Refusing to move on to something simpler when I came across a difficulty. This was also a major issue for me, and it costs me a lot of time and a great deal of frustration.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The essence of naturalistic inquiry is to derive meanings from the lived experiences of others in relation to a specific phenomenon. In order to establish the "truth value" (Guba, 1981, p. 80) of inquiries, naturalistic researchers try to consolidate the trustworthiness of their studies prior to, during the data collection, and while writing the text. Guba (1981), Lincoln and Guba (1982), LeCompte and Goetz (1982), and Van Manen (1990) have suggested a number of techniques to ensure the credibility, the transferability, the dependability, and the conformability of naturalistic inquiries during and after data collection.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the issue of credibility as the researcher's ability to represent "those multiple constructions of reality adequately *from the perspective of the participants*" (p. 296). Following their recommendations, I have used the following methods to ensure the credibility of data while collecting data: repeated and in-depth interviews

with the storytellers, member checks, regular peer debriefing with key informants and some of my colleagues, triangulation of information, and auditing of each chapter through three key informants before sending them to my committee advisor. The continuous, repeated, and in-depth interactions with the storytellers have allowed me to collect extensive descriptions of experiences and stories, check emerging hypotheses or insights, explore emerging issues, and understand what was pertinent and irrelevant to the storytellers' experiences of commitment.

As recommended by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), I also made certain that categories and concepts were relevant to my research and grounded in the data. To do that, I systematically and minutely coded the interviews, carefully analysed the data, repeatedly examined the respondents' words and sentences, and regularly compared or contrasted them. These systematic comparisons and verifications ensured that I did not overlook important categories and properly identified the emerging categories and concepts, as well as their dimensions. I also verified that the relationships that seemed to emerge between the categories and concepts were grounded in the informants' stories by frequently writing theoretical memos which I regularly checked against the data, compared, and updated. The thick and multiple descriptions that I included in the next two chapters will also allow readers to ascertain that the concepts I linked to the informants' commitments were grounded in the data, that the linkages I established between these concepts were systematically researched and grounded in the data, that the events or incidents that led to the discovery of these concepts and their categories were systematically and intensively analysed, and that my findings are relevant to the participants' experiences of their work commitments.

Member checking, that is, the process of obtaining feedback from the participants has also been extensively used. A transcript of the interviews have been sent to each participant, as well as the summary of their experiences, and summaries of my findings and hypotheses for verification purposes. As well, peer debriefing throughout the data collection and analyses with key informants and colleagues ensured that methods to collect and analyse the information were appropriate, and that I was on the right track with respect to emerging concepts and relationships between the processes that influenced commitment. Finally, data collection was also triangulated through the constant comparative method and different data sources. According to Jick (1979), triangulation can:

capture a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study... Elements of the context are illuminated. In this sense,

triangulation may be used not only to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives but also to enrich our understanding by allowing for new and deeper dimensions to emerge. (pp. 603-604)

Patton (1990) indicated that triangulation of data sources does not necessarily yield a totally consistent picture of the phenomenon under study, and that the researchers' task is to study and understand when and why there are differences. Triangulation tends to outline similarities and differences of phenomena. And Patton (1990) noted that "consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources and reasonable explanations for differences in data from divergent sources contribute significantly to the overall credibility of findings" (p. 467-468). After data collection, credibility of findings has been established through structural corroboration, member checks (analytical triangulation), and further peer debriefing. Structural corroboration was established by "testing every datum and interpretation against each others to be certain that there are no internal conflicts or contradictions" (Guba, 1981, p. 85), and "systematically identifying and examining all causal and consequential factors" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 32). Moreover, a formal check with the participants has been conducted at the end of the writing of the final draft. I gave participants the opportunity to respond to the transcriptions and interpretations of the researcher since Patton (1990) suggested that:

Another approach to analytical triangulation is to have those who were studied review the findings. Evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, fairness, and validity of their data by having the people described in that data analysis react to what is described (p. 468)

The credibility of the research can also be further enhanced through the use of techniques that reduce researchers' biases and preconceptions. As Denzin (1989) stated:

All researchers take sides, or are partisans for one point of view or another. Value-free interpretive research is impossible. This is the case because every researcher brings preconceptions and interpretations to the problem being studied. The term *hermeneutical circle* or *situation* refers to this basic fact of research. All scholars are caught in the circle of interpretation. They can never be free of the hermeneutical situation. (p. 23)

Therefore, peer debriefing also ensured that critical interpretations were valid and accurate. I have also used theory triangulation (Patton, 1990) by contrasting and comparing my emerging theoretical frameworks with frameworks from other studies. The combination of the above techniques has allowed me to make interpretations that explained similarities and apparent contradictions of the processes that influenced commitment and to

write a report that was coherent and accurate.

The second concern in conducting interpretive research is transferability. Naturalists believe that social/behavioural phenomena are always context-bound. Therefore, the task of naturalists is to develop "statements descriptive or interpretive of a given context - idiographic or context-relevant statements" (Guba, 1981, p. 86) so that readers can make informed judgements regarding the study transferability. To facilitate this process I have used theoretical sampling during the data collection, and collected "thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1983). Theoretical sampling allowed me to maximize the range of information I uncovered and to refine the descriptions and interpretations of the organizational and individual processes and characteristics that might influence commitment. After the data collection, I developed and integrated thick descriptions of all the pertinent contextual factors in my final document. The presentation in the final document of "thick" descriptions provides the necessary information to facilitate comparisons with other contexts and to test "the degree of fittingness" (Guba, 1981, p. 86) with these contexts.

The third concern of interpretive inquirers is the dependability of the inquiry. Dependability is the process by which researchers demonstrate that the inquiry processes fall "within the bounds of good professional practice" (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 3). Guba (1981) who suggested that dependability can be established through an "audit trail" (p. 20) insisted that:

The naturalist will, during the study, establish an 'audit trail' that will make it possible for an external auditor to examine the processes whereby data were collected and analysed and interpretations made. (p. 20)

The purpose of the audit trail is to ensure that the methods chosen for the data collection are appropriate to the phenomenon under study, and that the techniques of analyses utilized are "those consonant with the form in which data are collected and assembled" (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 8). Following Lincoln and Guba's (1982) advice, I have archived all the interviews, kept a log of the activities conducted during the inquiry, including all the field contacts with the purposes and outcomes of contacts, and kept a log of the methodological decisions.

As well, constructivist inquirers are concerned by the issue of confirmability of findings. While dependability establishes that the processes used during data collection are ethical, confirmability ensures that the product of research can be substantiated from the data collected. Since confirmability is also established through an audit trail, I have kept a log of

the data analyses during and after data collection, a file with my developing insights, changing hypotheses, and emerging relationships that have emerged during data collection. Moreover, since confirmability and dependability are closely interrelated, the steps that I took to ensure the dependability of the data collection have also safeguarded the confirmability of data. Thus, the tape recordings and transcriptions of interviews, the use of transcripts to analyse the data, as well as the collection of data from different perspectives and different sources (triangulation of data) have facilitated confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

This study has been conducted in conformity with the ethical guidelines of the University of Alberta General Faculties Council and the Department of Educational Policy Studies.

I have explained to the storytellers the purposes of the study as well as the procedures I intended to use. I have advised them that they could personally withdraw or withdraw information at any time. They have been asked to approve the accuracy of interviews and have been able to prohibit the use of any quotations. A copy of their summarized stories (chapter four) was sent to all the storytellers.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) insisted that the main concern of researchers should be the care and the personal, psychological, and emotional welfare of his or her participants,

The care and responsibility of researchers should be first directed toward participants... As personal experience researchers, we owe our care, our responsibility, to the research participants and how our research texts shape their lives. (p. 422).

I have tried to keep these authors' advice foremost in my mind throughout the study, not only because I agree with them on this issue, but because I liked my storytellers. Their openness, their generosity, honesty, and courage have fostered in me a great deal of commitment and affection toward them. As well, because of my feelings of commitment, I have tried to report their experiences, joys, and trials as faithfully as I could and to explain them as best as I knew how.

Conclusion

The constructivist paradigm with its ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions has provided the basis from which this research has evolved. The primary method of data collection for

the study was in-depth interviews with different participants, and detailed field notes to ensure the dependability and confirmability of the research. Interviews have focussed on the following themes: the storytellers' experiences of high and low commitment, the circumstances that surrounded these experiences, the emotions, decisions, and actions that they elicited, and the informants' aspirations, achievements, satisfactions and disappointments regarding their work experiences.

Data analyses started with the data collection and a final comprehensive analysis was undertaken when the data were collected. I have used a variety of analytical methods to facilitate the emergence of categories and themes. The analyses and subsequent interpretations were conducted under the guidance and with the help of my committee advisor, the storytellers, and key informants.

The participants' stories are presented in the next two chapters. Because of the focus of this study is to delineate the concepts associated with commitment and their relationships, I have placed several of the interviewees' stories in Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and F. Chapter four contains eight stories which provide some evidence of the variety of circumstances associated with commitment.

Chapter Four

COMMITMENTS AND CRITICAL EXPERIENCES: TEACHERS' STORIES

All those who have shared their stories with me have identified diverse work experiences which they have described as critical in their understanding of their work commitments. These experiences have influenced the storytellers' understanding and shaping of their professional and personal commitments. This chapter relates some of these critical experiences from the informants' perspectives. Other stories can also be found at the end of this work (appendices A, B, C, D, E, F).

In order to protect the anonymity of all those involved, I have changed the names of the storytellers, their colleagues, including their superordinates, and their schools. A number of contextual details have also been removed from the teachers' stories.

I refer to those who have shared their experiences with me as storytellers, respondents, informants, or teachers. The word 'teachers' in this work only includes the persons with whom I have had conversations.

Tina

At the time of our conversations, Tina had taught kindergarten children for nine years in three different schools. She entered the teaching profession for two main reasons:

When I graduated from high school in 1981, you could either be a teacher or a nurse. They were the female things to do. As a teacher, you could have a family, you could work or you could temporarily leave the profession, there were always lots of jobs.... And I would have to say that I've always enjoyed children.

Tina remembered two teaching experiences for very different reasons. She described one of these experiences as "very positive," and the other one as "frustrating." Tina's "positive" experience was characterized by a genuine sense of community among the staff members, a sense of certainty with respect to the school direction and goals, shared values and beliefs, a sense of freedom, and mutual recognition and support,

Over the years, a real rapport had grown between everybody who was on staff and the principal. It was a situation where 98% of the people were going in the same direction, where people believed in the same things.... It was one of those situations where you wanted to go to work, you felt like what you were doing was good and fine. You felt that people appreciated

what you did for the school and what you did for the classroom.... and it was very good, it was very nice.

When Tina's principal took a one year leave of absence, a new administrator was appointed. Changes were implemented. Old staff left and new teachers were hired. This left Tina feeling "abandoned, with a real hole." Tina also pointed out, "things just didn't get done the same way." When asked to describe some of these changes, Tina answered,

Joking was one of them. The new principal didn't seem to have a sense of humour.... [Under the former principal] we spent a lot of time laughing. We used to look forward to the staff meetings because we laughed a lot. It would be hilarious, and the job was getting done. But [under the new principal], things became very formal all of a sudden. We had to take notebooks when we went to the staff meetings, take our own notes. The job was kind of getting done, but it was like pulling teeth. So, those sorts of things.... People stopped coming in [the staffroom] for lunch, because again, things that we would do in there would be frowned upon. When we went out socially, it became a complaint session, not a fun session, and so, you start to get into the negatives.

Tina's increasing sense of loss and frustration was intensified by three phenomena: the addition of new teachers who held different values from Tina, Tina's comparisons and close contacts with her support group, which validated and enhanced what she termed her "negativity" towards her new environment, and Tina's own comparisons between her earlier and subsequent teaching experiences.

The perception that the principal "brought in his own people the second year" created "cliques" (Tina) among teachers. These partisan groups had two main effects. On one hand, Tina developed even closer relationships with staff members who were also disappointed by the new principal. On the other hand, Tina admitted distancing herself from some of her former colleagues "who had jumped ship" and the new staff members as well. Tina reported feeling betrayed by some of her former colleagues.

Tina also emphasized that there were "lots of tension in the staffroom" between the two cliques. She indicated that "people weren't talking to other people," whereas, under the former principal, "there were lots of discussions, lots of open discussions." She further reported that staff members stopped expressing their opinions in the staffroom for fear that they would be reported to the principal, and thus, teachers of each group "just shut their mouth up" in the presence of teachers from the other group. In fact, many teachers "just stopped going to the staffroom for their lunch." Moreover, each group of teachers tried to avoid working with the other group, and

when they had to, namely in committees, Tina reported "it was very, very stilted."

As mentioned earlier, Tina's growing consciousness of her social estrangement from certain colleagues and the new principal was aggravated by her comparisons between the former school climate and the new one, and her close contacts with some of her colleagues, during which they mutually reinforced their feelings of frustration and anger. As Tina noted, her support group played a dual role. It enhanced negativity among group members and allowed blaming of specific others, and, it also enabled her to rationalize her anger by providing a mutually agreed upon basis for inappropriate and appropriate behaviours and decisions:

Negativity breeds negativity... and it becomes more and more negative. But, I guess you need to have that, it's a perception check: I am okay. You need that support.

Aggravating the above phenomenon, the support group members went from merely noting (and discussing) the principal's perceived inappropriate decisions and behaviours to *actively* searching for new reasons to justify their disappointment, anger, and frustration:

You start building negativity, you become more and more focussed on the negative things... and you find more and more negative things and you become more and more negative. In fact, these things, they justify you being angry.

In addition to her initial sense of abandonment and social estrangement, Tina became increasingly conscious of a disjuncture between what she had been led to expect regarding the new principal's values and beliefs and what she experienced everyday in school, and her own educational values and beliefs, which had been nourished and supported during the previous principalship, and the new principal's values and beliefs. As a result, Tina became increasingly angry. Simultaneously, compounding her sense of cultural alienation (i.e., her perceived estrangement from the values of her new environment), Tina also felt a deep sense of victimization, that is, she felt utterly alone in her struggle to maintain her values, in spite of her support group, and she also felt a growing sense of powerlessness:

It was this year that I had a lot of difficulties.... What I believed in, and what I tried to do that was important for the students and for the school wasn't what was being supported by the [new] administration.... I became more and more frustrated with the way things were done and why things were done [that way].... I was angry at the fact that all of a sudden what I believed in was not valued by anybody beside myself.... I was angry that

things were changing, and that they weren't changing for a positive way, and I couldn't change that.

Several other factors aggravated Tina's sense of felt powerlessness. She perceived that many of the changes her principal introduced and implemented appeared in a somewhat clandestine fashion. She also reported that her new principal was not listening to her, pretending not to understand her complaints, and not responding to and/or not acting on her grievances:

It just kept being a negative place and three or four of us decided to approach him [the new principal] and say, "look, this place is really negative, and we can't change it. As a leader what can you do? We don't want to come to work anymore...." He just said, "we'll work on something, and we'll do this, and we'll do that." But nothing ever came of it, and that's the way it always was with him I guess he was really being unresponsive. And, if you are looking at a breaking point, I think that, for the four of us, that was it. We had been really honest, but he didn't seem to hear us, he didn't seem to care.... and I started to wonder 'what the use of being there? And thank goodness, that was May or April, so we had been mostly through the year.

Tina also experienced a sense of meaninglessness and self-estrangement (i.e., a growing confusion about her values and beliefs). Her attitude toward her work environment drastically changed:

You come to work and you are not as enthused.... You feel that your [former] experience there had meant nothing.... The school becomes a negative place.... You really start to question who you are and where you are going.

Meaninglessness was intensified by the fact that Tina also experienced a sense of normlessness, that is, she felt uncertain about the new principal's goals and direction:

I thought this person has no idea [of where he was going].... I didn't think he had a vision. He never made that very clear.

Tina further pointed out that, because of her external locus of control, she stopped believing in herself and felt worthless. Furthermore, her husband's and friends' support were ultimately not sufficient to counteract the work environment's affect on her morale:

I'm not very confident, and when I start having things I am doing being questioned, that affects right away my confidence. I felt I wasn't valued....I lost my self esteem, my confidence in myself.... if somebody, especially somebody in authority, isn't seeing me as competent or able, I start to question whether I am competent or able.... and [important others'] support is not enough because it [sense of confidence and self-esteem] needs to

come from inside.

Tina summarized her experience by saying,

You feel alienated. You are depressed. You feel worthless, you feel valueless... you lose your self-esteem. You start to lose confidence in yourself.

At that point, Tina decreased her involvement inside her classroom and at the school level:

Of course, if you try things and you're not getting any support or success, you start getting into that self-fulfilling prophecy that it's not worth trying, and I think that's what happened with me. I stopped trying because no one else was seeing value in it. I also cut down the amount of time I put in for the kids.... I stopped volunteering for things, spending extra time at school, and I started to do just what was considered to be 'my job.' The principal didn't want me there, so, what was the use of working?

She also distanced herself from her principal:

I didn't openly support any of his initiatives or anything that he did with the parent group or with my colleagues. I cut myself from him.

She made the conscious decision to separate herself from the values of her new work environment and to stand by the values her former principal had supported and in which she believed:

What I believed in, and what I tried to do that was important for students and for the school wasn't what was being supported by the administration.... And what I couldn't do was to say, "that's alright, I'll do what you are doing." I just couldn't give up on what I believed in, and I think that was why there were so many problems between the administrator and myself.

She started actively searching for new employment, and making new contacts:

I searched out new schools where I thought I would fit in, that seemed to believe in the same values that I believe in.... [I started] planning for my move, getting my resume out, calling up people whom I knew, seeing if there were jobs.

These behavioural changes, however, further intensified Tina's dissatisfaction with her new work environment, as she felt more and more guilty about her decreasing involvement in school:

You feel guilty because you are not giving the children the type of person you might have given them a year ago.... I guess that what I felt most guilty about was losing my commitment because, when you lose your commitment, you do get angry and you do lose a lot of self-esteem.

When asked to specify what she meant by losing commitment, Tina said,

It had nothing to do with whether I was going to be a teacher or not, that really did not come into question. It was that I could not be a teacher there.

She also reported that her work dissatisfaction may have affected the children in her classroom in ways she was not aware of:

It is very hard not to have that [dissatisfaction] trickle into the classroom... you are not the same person you were a year ago.... Do I think I did a disservice [to the kids]? I'm sure I did. Not that it was ever anything that I consciously did, but I am sure it happened.

As Tina felt guilty, she also tried to justify her emotional and behavioural detachment from her school by partially blaming her new administrator for not valuing her contribution to the school and her classroom:

I guess that when you lose your commitment, it's partially because someone has stopped valuing what you do.... You just say 'the heck with it,' I am not going to do that. You don't want me, you don't need me.... So, what's the use of working?

The following year, Tina was transferred to a new school and she reported,

I have been able to regain what I had lost.... I enjoy going to work everyday. I really think that teaching is challenging and fulfilling. The fulfilling part is that I feel good at the end of the day, I feel like I am helping the children, like I am doing something that is worthwhile, like I am making a positive influence on people's lives, and that is very fulfilling. The challenging part is that I am working with people, and I think that working with people is challenging because there are so many unknowns. In an average classroom, there are 30 unknowns, and you have to keep thinking of the best ways to help the children, and you are always making decisions and trying out different things, and that's very challenging and exciting.

Tina added,

When you feel valued, you keep wanting to work, and there are certain sorts of things that you are more likely to do. You are more likely to become

involved above and beyond what is expected of your job. You are putting in more time, you are volunteering to do more activities,..., and that's okay because you believe in where the school is going, and you are committed to see that school being successful and to make a difference in the children's lives.

Tina suggested that her teaching experiences have allowed her to develop a better understanding of herself, as well as of the extent to which she could influence her environment. She learned that, in spite of her inability to change or influence specific aspects of her working environment, she was not totally powerless as there were still choices to be made:

I've learned that I need to believe in myself more than I do, and not rely on other people telling me "that's good, or that's good work, or you're a good teacher" because I should know that from inside.... I think I've also learned that I cannot control everything. And you know, it may be very easy for me to say that, but it is also very hard because I like to control things.... I believe that I have become more realistic.

Tina has further developed a sense of mission regarding her teaching responsibilities and a strong sense of commitment towards the children and her profession:

I believe that, over the time that I have been teaching, I have developed a sense of what I believe in and where my commitment is. What I have sort of developed is that I am the most important person for these kids for five and a half hours a day, that I can make a difference in their lives, and that is what I have to do. That is my main goal and my main job.... We need to stop thinking of schools as places for teachers, and start thinking of them as places for students. We need to understand that we are here for the kids, that this is our job.... When I first started teaching, you know, I would have never guessed that teaching would be that fulfilling.

Concurrently, Tina has developed a strong sense of efficacy:

I think I have good ideas, I think that what I believe about education is good, I have proven it, and I intent to continue to prove it.

Mary

At the time of our conversations, Mary had taught for over 15 years in different elementary schools. Mary entered the teaching profession because she felt "a bit of a calling," and always loved working with young people:

I've always liked working with kids. I always babysat, I spent my summer working in Parks and Recreation, it [teaching] wasn't necessarily a planned career, it was something that sort of naturally happened because I felt I had

skills in that area as well as interest.... I think in ways it probably was a bit of a calling. Working with kids, working with young people, you know, is very exciting. I loved doing it and I still love doing it.

When asked to recall work experiences that were significant for her, Mary shared three different experiences with me. The first one happened early in her career as she taught special needs children:

My first three years with the Junior Adaptation kids were very interesting. I had 12 kids and a full-time teacher aide and that was very helpful. Moreover, my principal believed in this type of program and he was very supportive.

A shared sense of mission, the sense that she became increasingly better at helping the kids, and her principal's support brought Mary great satisfaction:

I learned a lot. I really learned a lot about different learning needs and how to try and work effectively with these kids, and I found that very satisfying.... Moreover, at that time, special needs kids were segregated from other kids, so another teacher and I really tried to integrate them more in the school, and that was very interesting.... It was a really positive experience for me.

However, Mary's principal left, and the new principal cut the funds to the Junior Adaptation program. Mary felt that these cuts hindered her effectiveness with the children:

When the new principal came in, my class went from 12 to 16 kids. At the same time, I hardly had any teacher aide time.... There was no way I could not do a good job in these circumstances, and I became very frustrated.... I no longer had enough time and resources to really help these kids. The kids were hardly learning anything, and I felt defeated because I couldn't help them.... I felt very unsuccessful.... I knew what I needed to do a good job with these kids, but I couldn't get it, and ultimately, I couldn't accept that.

Partly as a result of her felt lack of success, Mary left Special Education:

One of the things I did learn and still find very frustrating is that, although we can recognize learning disabilities in Kindergarten, we don't seem to do anything about it until these kids are 3 or 4 years behind in their learning, ..., and this is one of the reasons why I left Special Education. I just couldn't take that we wouldn't help these kids until they saw themselves as failures, and by then, we weren't even given enough resources to successfully help them.

Other factors (e.g., lack of influence) further fuelled Mary's decision to leave Special Education:

I guess that the new principal did not value Special Education as much as my previous principal... and I knew I had no control over how the money was spent. I also knew that my class brought a lot of money into the school, but that not all the money went to the kids. This is a common practice in many schools when you get special education funding, and that really frustrated me.

Mary's growing awareness of a disjuncture between her former principal's and her own beliefs regarding Special Education and the new principal's beliefs might have intensified her feelings of social and cultural estrangement:

My other principal believed in using all of the Special Education funding for the special needs kids, and so did I. I really felt that the money the provincial government, or whoever else was footing the bill for these special needs kids, should go to these kids... and I felt that the new principal's decision to divert some of this money to other programs was totally unfair to these kids, but I knew I couldn't influence his decision. So, I left.... It was just too upsetting.

As a result, Mary lost her commitment to Special Education and requested a transfer to a different school. Moreover, she grew quite angry at her principal and the school district:

At that time, I still felt committed to the children, they had nothing to do with that situation, but I was no longer committed to Special Education... and I was also very angry at my principal for his decision, and at the school district for not doing anything to prevent such a practice.

Mary's second significant experience was in an inner-city school. She described this experience as particularly "rewarding" because her values and objectives regarding the children's education were congruent with her work environment's values, thus providing her with a clear sense of direction and strengthening her sense of purpose. Furthermore, Mary truly valued the sense of spiritual and social communion that existed among school staff members, including the principal, the larger community, and the diverse governmental agencies the school staff worked with:

The school I was thinking about was a community school... it did have a philosophy that we all bought into, and we also worked very extensively with the community, and it was very rewarding. We all wanted to help the kids, and it was very, very rewarding.

Mary suggested that she cherished this experience because teaching in this school was viewed as a collegial experience:

It was a very exciting school with a very dynamic staff. People worked a lot together, planned a lot together, and that was very exciting for me. We worked really well together. We were encouraged by the administration to work together.

Staff members, including the administrator, also shared similar values. Innovation, creativity, respect, and support were very much part of the school culture:

I think there was a community of values.... I don't think that it was anything that was sort of written down, it was something that was sort of understood. One of the best thing was the sense of empowerment that you felt as a staff member. If you had an idea that you wanted to try, and if you bounced it off the principal, he would say, "go ahead, try it, and see how it goes." So, you were able to take risks and try some of your ideas, and that was really encouraging, and it made you feel that you were trusted in your judgments.

The school staff was primarily focussed on the children and their learning experiences:

I think it [the school] was very much student centred, and I think that's what turned a lot of teachers on. It was one of the values the principal believed in, that we were there for the kids, and we kept looking for ways to make learning a positive experience and actually have them learn.

The school was also very open to members of the larger community. This allowed Mary to recognize her interdependency with the larger community and to foster her sense of belonging:

One of the goals of the community school is that you open your facility to anyone who wants to use it. We had the Boys and Girls Club working right at the school, we also had a daycare in the school, which was very good for the community. We also had a reading program for adults at school. We had different community groups and we had teachers in these groups. The community programs were based on the community needs, just whatever the community needed. There were also courses for women to teach them how to deal with abusive men because that was a problem for some of the women that lived in the community.... We had a lot of mothers at the school that were on welfare, and we worked hard with them, and, in turn, they came into our school, and did volunteer work with our children, with us, and most of them gained enough confidence and work skills that they were able to get jobs and get off the welfare. It was really exciting, you know, to watch the whole community grow... it really benefited everyone. There was also a lot of work with seniors, and everyone had the opportunity

to grow and learn, but I think the children grew the most and that it was very rewarding for them.... I really felt that I could make a difference, but I could also see how each one of us making a small difference made a large difference to the large picture, to the children, and that was very exciting, very, very rewarding.

Mary emphasized it “was a fantastic experience.” It gave her the opportunity to enrich some of her skills, to feel valuable, and to experience a strong connectedness with the community members and the school staff. She also loved the diversity of the activities she was involved in:

It was a very profound experience. I was allowed to take off in terms of leadership skills, or what have you. It was very profound, there was so much going on all the time. There were tree planting things going on with Parks and Recreation. There were Christmas dinners for the people in the community, which we [teachers] all volunteered for, and we took shifts at serving and cooking, or whatever. And we invited so many different people, you know. What it [this experience] did for me is that I got involved in life long learning.... It reminded me of the older days, I suppose, where the school was the centre of all the communities’ activities... it was really the sense of the community coming alive. The community sense came alive because people cared about one another sincerely and helped one another.... Older people who weren’t even part of the school cared about the kids, and the kids cared about the older people, and we just got a sense of like, perhaps, a small town or something where people really cared and watched for one another.... I remember feeling just thankfulness and a great sense of pride that I was part of it all, that I was part of this group who was doing some really wonderful things in the name of education and in the name of just being a community. Yes, it did feel very, very good.

Helping others and the recognition she got from that was very fulfilling for Mary:

It [that sense of community and caring] really did add meaning and it did fulfil needs for myself, you know, and for a lot of other teachers as well. It opened my eyes to how all of us can work together for the better of humanity, I suppose. I really felt that I could make a difference.

Similarly, she also felt enriched by this experience because it changed her beliefs about education and her social awareness:

I grew, grew and grew. I never grew so much personally and professionally as I did in those three years. I think the more we can link learning with real life, the more valuable and memorable it becomes for the children, and that’s also where my learning experience has become the most memorable, I realized how realistic learning can be.... There were some very sad moments where you would meet with parents and you would feel really sorry for some of the things going on in their lives. There were lots of sad cases of family violence, and one of the things we felt we were doing for these kids

was to provide them with an environment where things were more structured, more organized, more predictable for them.... But this experience was a real eye opener for me because I had lived a fairly sheltered life and I had not seen poverty and so many serious dysfunctions, and I found that very disturbing to be honest. But what really hit home for me is that I understood that some of the things that we pay for are really needed, things like, you know, social programs or food for kids, and I think it also developed a lot of the feminist ideas that I have today because I saw that the people who were the most affected were women and children, that those who were on welfare in this country or in this school were women and children, and men were nowhere to be seen, they were not being accountable for having these children... and I saw the suffering of these women and children, and it made me very angry, and I wanted to share that message, I wanted to share that knowledge with some other people. I think it [the learning] was part of the excitement and what kept me there because I was learning so much about a completely foreign life to my life experience that it did keep me very intrigued.

Beside developing a new awareness regarding social issues such as poverty, its impact on children and women, and feminism, Mary also reported an increased sense of teaching efficacy:

I gained a lot of confidence. I grew a lot in learning about how to teach mathematics. I also learned about different styles of teaching because there were all kinds of different teaching styles happening, all different kinds of teachers here, you know, and different ways people approached things.

As well, Mary's commitments to others and to her profession increased:

Yes, my commitment did grow and grow, my commitment to teaching, my commitment to the kids and my colleagues, and I was very proud to be a teacher, very happy that I felt that I could make a difference in people's lives.

To this day, Mary has kept alive the sense of closeness with her like-minded colleagues:

It's funny, you know, because I haven't work with those people [her colleagues at that time] for about six years now, but every year, faithfully, we get together to have a celebration, a celebration of what we did, and we celebrate one another and our lives... the link between us is incredibly strong.... Our commitment to one another has remained very, very strong, and if anyone within that group ever needed another person, we would all be there right away.

However, Mary reported that this experience was followed by "one very bad year" when her principal left the school and was replaced by a new

principal. In fact, she suggested that her new principal nearly drove her to leave teaching:

After that, I had a very bad year with an administrator who just really turned me off from teaching. I almost quit teaching because of this experience. It was unbelievable. A few staff changed, but most of us were the same staff, and yet everything changed: the feelings, the emotions, the attitudes, everything was gone in an instant.

What nearly drove Mary away from teaching was the new principal's invalidation of her colleagues' and her past contributions at the school level. Moreover, the timing and the manner in which the new principal supported his allegations about the school's past accomplishments did not ingratiate him with the school staff:

My enthusiasm sort of dwindled throughout the year and I think it was because what we had done in the past wasn't valued by the administrator. We felt that all the hard work we had done wasn't being acknowledged. We were told we really did not make any difference. He slapped up all these statistics and told us we were the worst school in the district and that we had the worst reputation, and that did not really help a lot.

New unpleasant emotions permeated Mary's experience as a teacher,

We were continuously cut down for our ideas... he was very, very negative.... When somebody made a mistake, he would always announce it at a staff meeting, and we knew who it was, it was a small school. Oh, he was always polite and superficially respectful, and no names were ever mentioned, he was too professional for that, but he would basically go on and on, you know, very calmly, about why that was not right on the teacher's part to do these things. He totally embarrassed people and I was a victim of that once. We did feel devalued and undermined.... He would always start our meetings ripping us apart for everything that we had done wrong.... but we were the most cooperative people. If he would have just treated us in a different way, I think he would have obtained a lot more cooperation out of us.

As a result, she felt confused, helpless, and powerless:

I did not understand his purpose in slamming us down, almost to the point of being abusive. I was very confused. I did not understand where this person was coming from... and I did try to speak my mind up to clear the confusion, to discuss what we should do, but I learned very quickly that we weren't supposed to ask questions, we weren't supposed to speak our mind, to rock the boat.

She also felt threatened:

It was completely and totally fear tactics. So, I felt very threatened. I felt that he could do something to me in terms of my job, that he might be able to say nasty things about me in my evaluation.

Mary added,

I worried that this person would be unpleasant with me, and I would get defensive. So I guess that my emotions were fear and a lot of worry. I was not insane enough to think that I was going to lose my job, but I was quite concerned by the situation.

Mary's sense of powerless and her felt lack of recognition angered her:

I felt I was being undermined and I was not supported in my decisions, and I felt very frustrated exactly for those reasons.

Mary was not alone in feeling powerless. The principal's emphasis on hierarchy, structure, close supervision, and orderliness dismayed the school staff:

In the first meeting, he made very clear he was the boss. He had the whole diagram of the order of command in the school system. And he told us, this is the order of command: I take orders from x, and you take orders from me. And so, he made it very, very clear right away, he was in charge. We were the troops and we'd better listen to him.... That's how he first intimidated us as a group... And, before the first staff meeting, he had already established all these rules and policies, you know, about discipline and things, and we had no input into that...His administrative style was dictatorial, and I really found that I could not work at all under that type of leadership. [For example], the school came out with a new philosophy, a new mission statement... but we had no input into it, and when you don't have any input into some of these things, it is very difficult to buy into them.

The principal's leadership style was also reflected in his conflict management techniques:

He [the school principal] always had to have a win/lose situation, you know. He couldn't ever have a win/win situation. He always had to be right, even where kids were concerned. He had to win. The other person had to lose, whether it was a teacher, whether it was a parent or a kid.... He was a control freak.

Mary went on,

We were very stressed, and when you are stressed, you're not effective.... Our commitment did go down, our spirit was broken down.

Normlessness about the school goals and objectives further intensified

Mary's and her colleagues' confusion and frustration:

I don't think that we really knew how we would reach our goals. We did not know how to achieve them, we never discussed that. It was very, very frustrating.

Mary's increasing frustrations and her sense of powerlessness led her to "obsess" about her situation. She also started predicting horrendous scenarios with significant others:

I would anticipate "circles of disaster" with some colleagues.... I was very much obsessing about the whole thing to the point that I would make myself crazy.

Feelings of guilt and self betrayal overwhelmed Mary as she did not stand up to her values and felt that she had to impersonate someone she was not:

What I felt the most, I think, was guilt. I felt guilty about changing some of my teaching methods to suit him.... I felt guilty for not being true to myself, not being true to my convictions.... I felt I could not be honest. So, you just play, you play a role. And, with my administrator, my game and my role was, this person is my boss, so I have to follow directives, but I was very disappointed in myself.

Mary also felt guilty towards the students since she was not as effective as she used to be with them:

We were always on our guard, always afraid, and worried, and we were not effective with the kids. And the kids sensed that and the guilt comes in again because we were supposed to be there for the kids.

Her sense of efficacy decreased, pervading not only her professional life but also her personal life:

This year, I did not feel good about who I was, about anything I was doing.... It was devastating. Four months of working with him and I knew I just could not take it.

Mary felt she was not the only one affected by the principal's leadership:

The staff's morale started to deteriorate. That was a year I'll never forget because I watched people around me become really emotionally upset, drastically upset. A couple of teachers did quit teaching from this experience.

As new teachers were hired, dissensions among teachers escalated and coalitions were formed:

We [senior staff members] were a very close group and we continued having our own private get together without the new people. Well, we would get together with the new staff, but we would not talk, we stopped sharing as a group. We were 'the outsiders.'

Labelling, derogatory comments, and unfounded accusations consolidated the gap between the senior and junior staff:

We [senior teachers] called them [the new teachers] his lackeys.... Meanwhile, three of the new staff were busy accusing us of being incompetent and blamed us for the school discipline problems. They had that 'you people' condescending attitude.

Mary's fear increased since the newly hired staff members "were like spies who would use against you anything you said," and the already strong cohesion among senior staff was further strengthened as it allowed staff members to validate their perceptions, confirm their experiences, provide support for each other, and to bring some release or some sort of emotional balance in an increasingly dissatisfying work environment:

This experience helped us [senior teachers] become closer. There were a lot of us that stood strongly together, and that bad experience helped create that.... I could be myself with my closer colleagues and I could express my values. We also compared our experiences with our previous experiences, and we found that we all felt the same. We felt connected, even though it was a very bad time for us... Without that, a lot of us would have left on stress leaves.

Mary decided to distance herself from her administrator:

I just totally avoided him. I distanced myself physically by avoiding him. Also, I distanced myself psychologically by tuning him out in meetings. I just stop listening to his jargon, I just tuned him out.

She also distanced herself from some of her colleagues and reduced her involvement in extra-curricular activities:

In the beginning, we tried to work with the new staff, but then, they started to blame us for the school discipline problems, they accused us of being incompetent, and they became condescending. So, I just kind of gave up, I spent less time with extra-curricular activities, and we stopped sharing as a group.

Mary justified her distancing and her decreased involvement in extra-curricular activities by suggesting,

Everything was already planned by the new staff, and anyway, anything we suggested was cut down. We were always told our ideas or suggestions were worthless, so why pursue them?

Mary went on,

That high energy we had before, it was all gone. I was always tired. So, we stopped taking initiatives, trying new things, developing new projects.... We also lost that sense of freedom we used to have because we could not make our own decisions in class. And in the process, you lose yourself because you try to be someone you are not. That's where all your energy goes, in trying to figure out what the principal wants you to do and in doing it.

After four months, Mary decided to ask for a transfer. At the same time, she took a stress management class. However, she still developed health problems:

The whole year just progressed to almost near disaster, for me anyway. I did develop some nerve problems called panic anxiety disorder. I was just terrified by the principal.

This and an incident that was particularly "devastating," triggered the beginning of a transition period in her responses to her working environment:

After this incident, I just did not want anything to do with him anymore. I had just had it with him and his games.... I wasn't prepared to be a doormat anymore, and I was not prepared to be stepped on and insulted anymore.

Mary explained,

Once I realized he couldn't really hurt me, then I became stronger and I could stand up for myself, for my convictions. I got my confidence back.

Her health disorder further stimulated her to reflect on her experiences:

My health problems also forced me to look inside myself and say, "how did you ever allow yourself to get so worked up that your nerves are so bad that you have to take pills?" And I made a conscious decision that I was not going to become a victim of this disorder, I was going to overcome that, I was going to really look inside and see why it happened, and do something about it... and I also started to look at other ways to do it [teaching], other ways to grow. I had to grow in the ways I wanted to as a teacher, as a professional. So, it was a time to reflect, a big time to reflect on what had happened, and my transfer allowed me to do that because my new place was non-threatening.

However, as Mary noted, her "recovery" was a slow process:

First, I had to go over my anger... and once you get past that, you can begin building again, building yourself up.... It actually took me a couple of years to regain my commitment to teaching. It was a slow process, and it was a learning process. I had to decide, you know, if I wanted to quit teaching or if I wanted to stay. And, once I decided to stay, I decided that I might as well be happy, I might as well do what it is I need to do to be happy, and know that there are some things I will probably have very little control over, but there are still lots of things I can have control or influence over, and concentrate on those things I can change, and celebrate my successes as a teacher.

Regarding what she learned out of this experience, Mary pointed out,

I learned a lot of skills. I learned to stop 'awfulizing' situations, to stop doing the predicting. I had to learn to self-talk, to shut the negative chatter box off in my head.... I also learned a lot about myself. I learned I could stand up for my values. I learned what I needed to learn, and I think that one of the things I needed to learn was to become more assertive and more confident, and to feel good about myself.

She also pointed out a change in her attitude toward her former principal:

I also learned that he did do something that was needed for the school, which was to get some discipline, because we had a lot of discipline problems. However, I never saw it till a year or so later.... He was talented in terms of getting kids turned around. So I learned that although he seemed like the nastiest person in the world, he did have some positive qualities too, he did have some things to offer education that were necessary. I did learn that, but it took me a long time to learn it.

Larry

Larry, is an elementary teacher in an immersion school. He had taught for more than 20 years in both elementary French immersion and Anglophone settings at the time of the interviews, and he reported entering the teaching profession by default, primarily for economic and convenience reasons:

I was a science graduate, and my first job was a sales correspondent with a [scientific] company. The job only lasted six months and I was laid off. And so my thought was, "well, what am I going to do now?" So I stayed out for a year and looked for work, and then, I realized that a job would not be likely with a general science degree. Yet, I did not feel I had saleable skills for other jobs: lab work, specialized work... So I thought, "what's the easiest way to use this?" And I could see that the fastest thing to go into might be teaching, and I thought that there were some skills that I might have. My Mom suggested that I go into teaching, but I didn't really want to. I looked at the role models I saw in school as a student, and I thought I did not really want to be like those guys. I did not really feel that was the image

of what I wanted to be. You could say, it kind of turned me off a little....
So, in effect, I fell into teaching. I did not choose it as a first choice.

However, Larry felt that he was very committed to teaching at the time of the interviews. When asked if he would choose teaching again, he answered:

I think actually I would. I probably would not have been so sure about that some years back, but, now, yes, I would say that I would choose it again. One feels that there is a contribution you are making, that you are not just a John Doe teacher, that maybe you have some unique qualities that allow you to make a difference... You're encouraging kids to think, to develop their thinking skills. That's important... I would also choose it again because there is a fair bit of room for creativity in this job. The job [also] offers a variety of areas you can develop your expertise in. It's an interesting job. It's a challenging job. I really like teaching.

Not only did Larry find his profession intrinsically satisfying, but he also pointed out that there were other more calculated reasons for him to stay in the teaching profession:

It wouldn't make sense to go into something else that might be financially questionable since I have a wife and a daughter to support. So, there is a financial need as well. And then, at the same time too, one has to consider that there is a pension somewhere in here, and as hard as it is for me to accept, I have to think about the realities of pension. I am not that far off from that part of my career.

Nonetheless, Larry did not always feel committed to teaching:

I would say there has been an evolution in the kind of commitments I have had. The first few years of my teaching, that would include four or five years, were analogous to a kind of honeymoon that one could have in teaching. One overlooks the problems and there is this euphoria with the job and you're so enthused... And then, after that period... for about a decade, there was a kind of low time in my career, especially as far as commitment goes. These [years] were marked by a certain futility and a certain emptiness... And then, there was a kind of renaissance in my commitments and I began to come out from under a certain veil or a certain cloud of uncommitment.

In an effort to justify his increasingly negative attitude toward his role and his work environment, Larry reactivated latent beliefs toward teaching and the care of young children, which he both believed to be "women's jobs." These beliefs, which caused Larry's initial ambivalent attitude toward teaching elementary children, came from Larry's own experiences as a student, and his felt inadequacy, as a male, to address young children's

affective needs:

I let myself think that teaching the lower grades was not a man's job... First, I didn't really want to [go into teaching] as the role models I saw in school as a student kind of turned me off a little... And I also wondered at times if this [teaching] was a really respectable profession [for a male]... I wondered if this was not more of a woman's job, if women were not be better prepared or better able to take care of the kids' affective needs, to fulfill this mothering type of activity.

Larry subsequently found enough reasons in his work environment and his teaching experiences to confirm his initially ambivalent attitude toward young children and teaching. As well, Larry became increasingly bothered by aspects of his work and work environment that did not bother him during his initial honeymoon. In a process similar to the one described by Tina, he began to increasingly focus on the "negative aspects" of his role, job, and community members.

Larry was disappointed by the little appreciation and support the students and his colleagues exhibited toward the extra efforts he made for the students' outdoor education activities:

At that time, I was really interested in outdoor activities. I'd take the kids and we'd go canoeing, swimming, orientation, and other related activities, and they [these activities] would take a lot of time to prepare. And I remember being willing to put in weekend hours organizing outdoor education activities, being involved with upgrading my qualifications such as swimming, taking evening courses, taking instruction in canoeing and safety courses, and all these on my own time. Yet, I would not feel there was much respect toward what I was doing. My colleagues thought, "well, that's just his own interests, he is not really benefiting the school," and the kids weren't really appreciative either. In fact, I was struggling with them in the classroom, and there was a sense of being drained, and I was offended by their lack of interest.

Not only was Larry not recognized by his colleagues or his students, he also reported he was neither supported nor respected by his administrators, whether in school or in his jurisdiction:

The administration did not do as much as I might have hoped, and there was a little bit of resentment, bitterness. Here I was, trying to bring in unique outdoor education activities that had never been attempted in our jurisdiction, and there wasn't any support. There was maybe resentment expressed toward me from the very top right through the head office, which was not really fair, and I think there was a feeling that this person is, shall we say, a loose cannon. He's a disturber. We don't really appreciate this kind of aggressive, assertive person who wants to establish new things and

do things that involve a fair amount of risks where you take students out canoeing and swimming and spending several weeks at it. Yet, this was the area I wanted to get into, but there wasn't the support, and so, in my mind, I saw myself breaking my back to do things that were beneficial to the school and the students, but not getting any sense of support.

Larry's attitude towards his colleagues and his administrators became somewhat negative:

I felt a little bit of resentment towards my colleagues because I felt that all they were concerned about was what they did... I would have liked to see a little more interest as to what I was doing.... I also came to resent the principal. There were times when I thought, "were it not for circumstances, I'd be there [in the principal's seat] and you would be on the other side of the desk. It's just chance and circumstances that put you there, or somebody's bad decision.

Similarly, Larry became increasingly negative toward the children. Nonetheless, in an effort to rationalize his attitude toward the students at that time, Larry explained,

I didn't really appreciate the kids' attitudes.... I thought the kids were particularly tough that year. They sure were not nice kids, and boy, if they were going to be tough, I was going to be really firm and just pull the reins right back tight... [However] as you don't feel very positive toward the kids you work with, that bothers you, and you become a little more negative toward them, of course.

Moreover, Larry's perceived isolation and his lack of male role models further reinforced his attitude toward teaching:

I rarely had more than one or two other male colleagues on my same staff, and this probably affected my morale when things were a bit rough. I had no one to confide in and gain strength from, and I felt I was not respected because I worked with little kids.... and I started doubting whether I wanted to remain a teacher.

Larry reported feeling "drained" by the activities he carried out in school. Teaching became less and less meaningful to him since he was primarily interested in teaching domains that were neither rewarded nor recognized by other educators, and/or children, and he had to teach subjects he found uninteresting:

There would be times when I'd think, "if it wasn't for some of the domains like outdoor education which I like, I sure wouldn't want to continue to be a teacher, because struggling along with the kids in the school environment rather than outdoors is kind of frustrating," and there was a feeling of futility

that would get me down. It would really nag on me, and so, year after year, you'd say, "well I do enjoy some of these subjects, but some of the other ones are not as rewarding." I enjoyed science and outdoor education, but I wasn't just teaching science and outdoor education. I was involved with language arts, and math, and social sciences, and other things that were not as appealing. At that time, at least, they weren't.

Teaching became a bit empty. There was a lack of fulfilment, and I was tempted to say, "well, I'm only here for a while. I'll find something better and will move on." I became critical toward teaching.... I was not convinced I could make a long term commitment to teaching.

Intensifying his role alienation, his decreasing commitment toward teaching, and his dissatisfaction with other educators, Larry felt that his hope of becoming an administrator became less and less likely as time went by:

There has always been an agenda in my mind that I didn't want to just stay as a classroom teacher. I was hoping to be an administrator. I thought, well, I am a male and I've got some leadership abilities. I started teaching in a two room school, and I was the principal. I was only there for one year, and then, I moved on to another school, but, I always hoped I would have a chance to become an administrator. I thought I had a feel for that. I did fairly well the first year, and it was early in my career, but the doors weren't really opening for me... there wasn't the support... the jurisdiction was kind of holding me down.... I was labelled as being a disturber and somebody that causes problems, and let's keep him away.

Not only did Larry feel increasingly powerless in the face of the local bureaucracy, but he also felt unfairly treated. The fact that he had already been an administrator for a year, and that he had been transferred quite frequently during the first 12 years of his career⁶ had led him to believe that his teaching competencies had been noticed, and that a principalship would only be a matter of time. However, as time went by, and as he began to realize that he would probably not get a principalship, his sense of being victimized and unfairly treated grew:

I realized, "Larry, you are not going to go anywhere as far as administration. The day when somebody says, "come and apply [for a principalship], we need you," that will be the only opportunity you'll ever have in this jurisdiction to advance as far as administration, because to think that you are accepted on equal grounds with others is not true.

Larry's increasing sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness further

⁶ The respondent taught in five different schools during the first 12 years of his career.

reinforced his negative attitude toward the students:

I was frustrated and I could see that it affected my attitude toward my students at that time. I became cool, rather hard, rather demanding. I think I kind of deflected my frustrations towards the kids. They became the target of my frustrations.

Larry reported he alternated between feeling angry, "subdued," and full of pity for himself. He became hopeless and no longer felt a sense of purpose:

I was feeling held back, unappreciated, I was kind of angry at being in the job... that was a kind of low time in my career, especially as my commitment goes. These [years] were marked by a certain futility, a certain emptiness that was likely tied into the sense of not seeing opportunities to grow within the job, not an optimistic future for going into administration... I kind of, shall we say, burned out a little possibly... I laboured under the feeling of being held down and sort of being subdued... Some self-pity crept into my mind that made me feel cheated out of chances for my advancement.

Larry also indicated feeling forced to act in ways and do things that were alien to his current state of emotions. He felt that he had to portray the role of a committed teacher, something he no longer was. Therefore, he experienced a sense of self-estrangement, intensified by his self-blame and guilt:

I was wanting to portray an image of being committed... I would have to be talking as a committed teacher, going through the motions one could say, but I would not have the real gut or heart felt sincere commitment, and again, that would cause feelings of frustration, guilt, anxiety.

His anxiety was generated by a number of reasons. Not only was it created by his guilt, by his acting as a committed teacher when he knew he was no longer committed to his job, but also by his awareness that "deep down, I knew that the job was not the problem, it was me." He also reported being torn by a sense of self betrayal as he believed that he had failed to live up to his self-image or to his own definition of a worthy teacher, and by extension, a worthy member of society. Larry also feared that his colleagues, and possibly his administrator, would finally realize he was uncommitted, and would, subsequently, definitively, shunt him aside. As a result of these self-representational concerns, he became increasingly fearful, and further cut down his social contacts with his educational colleagues, thereby, solidifying his social isolation. His anxiety was also intensified by self-doubts. Larry had started wondering whether his lack of commitment was not partly due to his

inability to deal appropriately with student discipline, or possibly by the fact that he was "inferior" to his colleagues. He no longer believed "in his heart" he was doing a really good job. This increasing uncertainty about who he was and what he did, this anxiety, and guilt led him to feel increasingly frustrated, resentful, and also jealous of his colleagues:

The feelings I experienced at such times would include a certain degree of guilt, a feeling that I was not as committed as I would have liked, a feeling of frustration at not having that commitment in my heart, and another item would have been a sense of betrayal... a sense of not feeling sincere... I also envied other teachers who just seemed so involved and committed to teaching... the result was discouragement, and a certain amount of anxiety, because I felt, well, are others better than I am? Am I keeping up to others? Is my attitude equivalent? And there is that automatic tendency to compare and the anxiety that results from not feeling as committed in one's mind.

Larry also admitted that this experience and his comparisons with his colleagues led him to lose his self-esteem and self-respect, as well as his sense of efficacy:

Low self-esteem is another point too. After reaching a certain level of uncommitment or non-commitment, I believe that less respect can be seen coming from others, because there is a point where your colleagues will pick up on your attitude and begin to think that you are not showing a professional attitude, and of course, then, the less respect you have, the more you sink into the quagmire of feeling inferior and not really be a part of the team, like a square peg in a round hole, one could say.

His feelings of worthlessness reinforced his initial doubts toward the teaching profession and his initial low feeling of efficacy:

I guess I was depressed, although I am not sure I would call it that, but I had no sense of real purpose, and certainly no great fulfillment.

At the same time, he alternatively put the responsibility for his dissatisfaction and unhappiness on his colleagues, his administrators, his students, or on any combination of the above groups. As well, Larry became increasingly involved in projects not related to his work:

At that point, I got married, and I would say that was also coinciding with a period of six to seven years that were a kind of a low time in my career, especially as far as commitment goes... but I was able to immerse myself in the aspects of setting up home, getting started in a marriage, as well as involving myself in hobbies such as home built aircraft, and that put a fairly good demand on my summertime and my evenings, and then, a couple of years on into my marriage, we began to look at home building, and we designed and built our own home. So, that required some creativity, and it

was a type of outlet that I wasn't able to have in teaching, and then, in the 1982 period, I became a father, and so that began to be another dimension of commitment.

The turning point for Larry came in 1984. There were several elements that seem to have facilitated his transition to what he called "a renaissance in his commitments." Among these elements, Larry mentioned a particularly unsatisfying year at work:

The turning point for me would probably have been in 84. It was a very negative year in which I did the basic job, but there wasn't the relationship I should have had with the kids.... and at the end of the year, as I looked back, I thought, 'this is awful. This should have never happened. You kind of victimized those kids.'

Larry had also realized that no other job opportunities were likely to come along:

After 10 years of hoping I would get an administrative position, I think I began to realize that job opportunities would not come for me.

Thus, Larry's transition period seems to have been facilitated by his consistent sense of emptiness and unfulfillment, an overbearing sense of guilt due to the fact that he knew, deep down, that he was a participant in his own experiences, the realization that other job opportunities would not come along, and a growing awareness of a disjuncture between what he professed to believe in and how he actually behaved at work, along with its ensuing guilt. Larry emphasized that he realized that his attitude and subsequent behaviours toward his students and colleagues was not "a Christian attitude," and being a devout Christian, this profoundly disturbed him:

Because of my Christian values and my guilt, I realized that I must change or spiral down into a futile attitude that would drive me out of the job... I wanted people to look upon me as a person who talks and acts, and generally represent an attitude that is Christian. I want my personal and my professional life, my ethics and my attitude to reflect my Christian beliefs.

Subsequently, he began observing his colleagues and reflecting on his own attitude:

I saw other teachers working with my students and I thought they seemed to relate well with them, and I thought, 'how come there is this barrier, this coldness, this aloofness between you and your students, whereas it's not there with other people?' And I started to see that I had set up a kind of system, of atmosphere that was negative. Oh, we got through the year, we

did the academic part of it, but the relationship, which is so important in teaching, was not good... I began to realize, well the problem is not out there, that I was the problem... I had to cast off my negative attitude... I had never established some of the positiveness I needed to establish in class.... After that year, I knew I was the problem. I was the one who was a resentful individual. The kids were only victims of my frustrations.

Larry mentioned that this phase is marked by several processes. He started a process of self-examination, that is, he examined the feelings and emotions that had been internally generated by his experiences. He also compared his relationships with his diverse work community members and important others' relationship with the same community members. As well, he examined his past actions and attitudes toward the main participants of his work environment, and his eventual responsibility in creating his own experiences. Finally, he initiated a process by which he examined some of his socio-cultural and epistemic assumptions. Regarding his motivational forces or epistemic assumptions, he commented,

There are two orientations one can take in life. We either go a way that is essentially [characterized by] acquiring, getting, and it is egocentricity. It's acquiring people, things, more power, money, and it's a very selfish way. The other way is one of outgoing concern, one of spending one's self for the good of others.

Concurrently, Larry started to think prospectively about what he could do to atone for his feelings of shame and guilt regarding his decreasing commitment and his attitudes toward his students, to reestablish his own self-definition as a worthy professional, and thus, as a worthy member of society. He also established a plan of action since he had come to recognize his shortcomings:

I was not in a situation where I felt I had an awful lot to give, and I decided, "this is it, you can't go on like this, you have to be able to establish some positiveness in the class." And I ran across a program called Project Teach, and I took it.... During the course, I realized that I wasn't unique in my frustrations with teaching, and especially the hassles of discipline. The course wasn't a great revelation of new ideas, but it reviewed basic principles and gave me the perspective that I could make my school year enjoyable.

This course further facilitated Larry's attitude change:

The next year with the same class, different students, of course, was a much more rewarding year. There was a pleasant atmosphere throughout the year.

Since, Larry has recovered his enthusiasm toward teaching, his sense of commitment and fulfilment, and he explained why,

I've [now] chosen to focus my personal life on giving, serving, helping, in other words, spending myself and my resources for the good of others, and of course, the end result of that, I believe, is that there is a return... There is a great deal of satisfaction and also self-esteem and fulfilment, knowing that our life is not focussed on personal gain and own personal ambitions, that we achieve, I achieve happiness through an interest in others.

Thus, Larry's motivational forces as well as his goals shifted from his personal ambition to the intrinsic rewards he got from helping others. As he changed his epistemic beliefs, he also changed his professional mission, and his role:

I have grasped the tremendous need and ability to have a caring, nurturing attitude toward the children... We're here to help them blossom. We bloom together... they are truly like little plants growing up, shall we say, like little trees that given time and proper nurturing will develop into massive landmarks... and I'm holding the watering can. I'm there to give my little part, to water them, and nurture them, help them grow one little bit more than if I weren't there.

As can be noted from the above quotation, Larry had re-defined and enlarged his teaching role. He no longer only focussed on the teaching of the curriculum. He has embraced another function of teaching, the nurturing of the children. His use of "we" indicated that the initial boundary he had erected between himself and the students had been removed. They have all become part of the same learning community. Interestingly enough, Larry also seemed to view himself in a totally different light. At the time of the interviews, he deeply cared about the value of what he did and in the unique differences he made in his work environment, which might also contribute to his growing sense of efficacy and fulfilment:

Another value in the profession is that we make a difference. Because of one's life as a teacher, we literally deal with thousands of children and, this is a really incredible thing, that out of that, there may be a number of children who would not be what they are were it not for some interactions we have had with them. They [the children] may have had an attitude change, or they may have blossomed, or have developed an interest in something that would not be there were it not for me... I can contribute something that may be special or unique to myself, being able to have some expertise in physical education that others may not have or may not show, being able to help with the computers, having some expertise in that area that would be to a degree unique to me, because, as the years go, we all grow in different areas. All staff does....

To date, Larry has not stopped the reflection and learning process he started at that time. He has learned new domains. For example, he has familiarized himself with computers, to the point that he became the computer facilitator in his school and "helps teachers along in their use of computers and their students' use." He has also learned new roles and taken on new responsibilities. In particular, from teaching physical education to a small group of students, he also became the school program coordinator of physical education. Larry suggested that this opportunity allowed him to learn "to work cooperatively with other teachers," and to improve his interacting skills with other adults. For the past few years, he has become "an itinerant teacher," that is, he moved from class to class teaching science or French as a second language. He also worked part-time as a resource teacher. Change still motivated him, and, rather than focussing on himself and his personal desires, Larry indicated, "I just feel, whatever way I can best serve in, I should work there."

Larry has also gained a new understanding of and a new respect for children. He has come to trust them, to trust their potential, and to believe in their willingness to learn:

At one time, through the earlier 10 years of my career or thereabouts, I felt, looking back, that I was quite demanding, somewhat cold, often quite negative, not that patient or understanding, and certainly not in the same mind-set at all as I am right now. Now more than ever, I do respect children... these are children who have vast potentials. I'm impressed by the work habits children often have, their positive attitudes.... Children have an innocence and a sincerity, and that 's a wonderful quality that I would like to aspire to as well.

Larry's attitude toward his colleagues has also changed. They have become a source of knowledge, of support, and of admiration:

There were times in my life where I felt a little bit of resentment toward some of my colleagues... Well, at this point, I see them truly for what the prefix 'co' means, as co-workers. We work together. We are very much in the same situation. There are times when they struggle with the same problems as I have.... There is a bond with the staff. We work together, we suffer together... I have come to admire the stability of some of my colleagues, to admire those diligent and patient teachers who sometimes work with difficult children without being resentful or being filled with self-pity, and who are still, or at least still appear to be, patient, committed to their job, and very dedicated to the children.

Similarly, Larry's relationships and attitude with his administrators have changed. Regarding his current administrators, he said,

I respect their efforts and appreciate their support. I know their burdens are heavy at times. I know they will help me as much as they can within time limitations. They are open to suggestions. I don't feel there are areas we can't discuss. I know I can trust them to back me up, and I believe, they can trust me to be honest and sincere with them... I would like to mention that under the present administrators who are females, I have seen a dimension that is maybe unique to them of being caring and concerned for the emotional needs of people, for being aware of the need to look beyond just the strict aspect of is this person doing his job? And looking at teaching for a caring and gentle approach, a sensitive approach, and possibly, female administrators are particularly strong in that area.

He also fondly and admiringly remembered a previous administrator who became a friend of his, and an exemplar role model:

From administrators, I should mention such thoughts as the inspiration that has come to me from seeing in one case a dear principal, a good friend, who was only 53 years of age and was stricken with cancer, died from it, and yet, even in his final months, he was able to focus on the school. He had an interest in how everyone was doing, talked with thoughts towards the future as if he would be there, was an example also for his commitment, his thoroughness. It really impressed me that he did not show the signs of, shall we say, burn out or cynicism that sometimes professionals fall into... That was an inspiration to me that showed that professionalism and commitment are not just in those that have wonderful, exciting new jobs or who are in the honeymoon period of their teaching career, and so, that was most encouraging to me.

Larry even modified his attitude towards the administrators of school district about whom he said, "the school district has treated me reasonably, looking at it from the big perspective, they have done their part."

Larry indicated a deepening interest in his profession. From a feeling of powerlessness and meaninglessness, he developed a sense of professional ownership, a sense of empowerment, and of fulfilment:

I would say that my respect for the job has grown. I feel that it definitely is a respectable profession. It's not a job any Joe can do. It's a demanding and challenging work... I think that the profession gives us a tremendous opportunity to work with people... it allows you to interact with adults, with children, and you have an impact on those people, and vice versa... you can make a difference.

Larry also noted that he has gained a new and strong sense of commitment through his experiences and his consistent reflexion on these experiences. In fact, he used the word "renaissance" to speak about his renewed commitment:

Through the period of about 1984, there was a kind of a renaissance in my personal commitments... it has been a kind of evolution where I've gone through a strong drive to teach because I could be involved with outdoor education to looking at teaching as a source for money, a means of having the money to make purchases, qualify for mortgages.... At that time, the job was not meaningful. And then, my third phase is [characterized] by a fairly strong commitment, that is a personal commitment to teaching.

As can be noted from the above quotation, Larry referred to his professional commitments as "personal commitments." The former boundary that he had created between his work and his outside-of-work activities has been removed. Work activities along with other activities have all become part of living, feeling alive and having a sense of purpose and fulfilment:

Now, I would like to also say that my professional life has been enriched and broadened by my interest in such topics as science. I've done various things through my life that have enriched it in the scientific domain. My wife and I have designed and built a unique solar home. I've designed and built a passive solar greenhouse and also been involved in ultra-light aircraft and built one of my own plane, and I've been involved in some ambitious outdoor programs where I've taken children out canoeing, and then my interest in computers has made my life a little richer as well as the development of a business that includes the plan and designs of unique ice and land sailing craft and also a hydroplaning kind of catamaran. All those things might seem as just isolated interests, but, in fact, I believe that they combine and make me into an individual that shows a genuine interest in science and I believe that radiates to the students and they capture some of that. So not only the spiritual domain, but also the domain of past times and hobbies has interacted with my professional life to make it richer and better.

Larry also developed a strong sense of efficacy:

I am where one is able to be a key player, one could say, and I am able to have a beneficial impact upon the staff. I have other teachers who need assistance and that gives me a feeling of belonging, a feeling of being an individual who has a key role, a certain amount of self-worth.

Finally, Larry was able to bridge his spiritual beliefs and Christian values with his professional and personal life:

The spiritual dimension of my life is very important, it would be almost, shall we say, an umbrella or type of overall theme. I would like to think that people look upon me as a person who acts and talks and generally represents an attitude that is Christian, and so, my personal philosophy of life has a Christian basis that, I believe, colours the way I go about my professional life and my personal life. My attitude and my work habits, and all these things are based upon this foundation of a Christian perspective in my life.

Jeremy

Jeremy had taught elementary students for approximately two decades in five different schools at the time of the interviews. Like Larry and Corinne (Appendix A), he entered teaching by default. Nonetheless, he rapidly developed a strong interest in teaching:

I thought it would be worthwhile to try teaching and see if I liked it. And you know, when I did my practicum, I found teaching quite interesting, so I carried on... I really enjoyed the children.

Jeremy took two leaves of absence without pay during his 20 years in the teaching profession. His first leave, which he took four years after he started teaching, was primarily motivated by his desire to travel, the state of his financial affairs, and his job security:

I wasn't married yet.... I really didn't have any financial commitments, I had saved enough money to allow me to travel for a year without really needing to work, and I wanted to travel.... I also knew that I'd get a teaching position when I came back.

At the time of his second leave of absence, Jeremy admitted he "was quite interested in getting away from teaching at that point." Task routinization and lack of lateral and upward mobility led Jeremy to say, "teaching became a bit of a drudgery,"

I was getting a little bit tired of the same routine, and I felt I needed a change... I was experiencing some boredom perhaps...I was thinking it would be good to try something different...[but] when you have worked with this age level [Grade 6] a long time, you are considered maybe an expert at that, or that's your area of expertise, and it's sometimes hard to find a different age [group]... I could change slightly, like I could go to grade 5 or 4, which is in division II, that would be quite easy, but basically, that's the same kind of work. I mean it's not a major change, and that's a problem with teaching. There is not a lot of opportunities to change within the profession, to change your role, or to change your focus.

His comparisons between his initial and his latter mobility intensified his sense of "being stuck,"

Since I started teaching I've taught in five different schools, and the first two or three times that I transferred, it was really easy. You could practically pick the school you wanted to go to or you could certainly pick three or four and you would probably be able to get one of them. Now, it has become extremely difficult.

Jeremy tried several times to get different positions in Education, although not necessarily as a teacher, but, as he indicated:

You have to be willing to be patient, and to keep trying with no real guarantee of any results. So, I just gave up basically [looking for different positions]... I did not feel like investing that much of my time and energy into that.

At the same time, Jeremy's interest in teaching children decreased:

At first I found working with children quite interesting, but, as the years have gone by, I've grown a little tired of it. When you deal with children constantly, you can become sort of burnt out from it.

Jeremy also felt that his working conditions were not entirely "fulfilling,"

At that time, I was not perfectly happy with the school. It was a fairly small elementary school, and I was kind of interested in being in a larger school.... I also felt I'd like to work for a different principal. I was getting a little tired of the one I was with. He just wasn't really involved with disciplining students and so on. I felt like I would have liked a little more support in that area.

Jeremy decided to take another leave of absence. He was, however, "quite happy to go back to work after that" since this leave of absence turned out to be "quite depressing."

At the time of our conversations, approximately eight years after his second leave of absence, Jeremy indicated that he had resolved his earlier disappointment in teaching:

I find the work [teaching] interesting. I like working with the children and other people on staff. Also, my compensation for the work is at the maximum of the salary grid for experience, and that's an important factor.... At this point in time, I am really not experiencing a decline in my commitment. [Choosing to teach] turned out to be a fairly reasonable decision, and I am not regretting that I made that decision... I feel I am committed to the profession, and I'll continue teaching unless I become extremely dissatisfied with the work or the workload.

Changes seemed to have lost the appeal they once had for Jeremy. Instead, certainty, stability, predictability, autonomy, and a problem free environment became important objectives for him. Jeremy's desire for stability and predictability was reflected in his professional objectives:

Now I am starting to feel more like staying in one place and doing the same thing for a longer period of time... I plan to continue teaching in this school, in the same grade, in the same classroom.

Jeremy explained why he wanted to continue an unchanged repetition of his work life:

As people get older, their risk-taking decreases. I'm probably not as likely to put myself in a risk taking situation at this point in my life as when I was younger. Also, at that point it would be difficult to change [profession] without having to spend time and money to retrain, and you know, other positions that would be of interest may not offer the same kind of salary, and that's an important factor too.

As well, Jeremy pointed out that he liked his school because it "is relatively problem-free and many of the children are very serious, very cooperative and work really hard." He also described parents and the principal in appreciative terms:

The parents in this community are very easy to deal with by and large. They are fairly supportive, but also, they don't interfere very much, which is a positive thing... and the principal gives us a lot of freedom here. He treats us as professionals and he trusts us. He doesn't come in our classes unless he has a reason and I like that. I feel like my classroom is my castle.

Jeremy's desire for predictability and stability was also reflected in his vision of education. When asked what kinds of changes he would like to see in education, he answered:

At this point I am more concerned with what I hope does not change... I think we should limit ourselves to what we can do in the time we have, and to continue to do things we have been proven successful at doing, like basic academic things, and then, the social aspects come as sort of a by-product to that. I don't think we should spread ourselves too thin in terms of doing other things, new things.

Jeremy's ability to hope or envision some kind of future also changed after his second return to the teaching profession. When asked to describe his ideal school, he simply replied: "I don't see any greener pastures, you know." Moreover, unlike Larry, he did not appear to have specific projects or goals once his professional life was over.

Barbara

At the time of the interviews, Barbara had taught elementary children for seven years in different urban centres in central and southern Alberta.

Like some informants, she entered teaching by default:

I became a teacher because I was a girl.... My mom wanted me to go into Education because it was a good profession for girls and the counsellors gave me the choice between Home Ec., Education and Nursing. So I went into Education, but it wasn't my choice at all, I really wanted to go into Engineering... It was like by default.

When Barbara got her first position as a teacher, teaching was just a job for her:

I got hired, but it was just a job for me. It was better than waiting tables and it was better than working in a hospital, but that was it.

However, Barbara developed an interest in teaching very early in her career as she realized that she could make a difference in children's lives:

I remember that one particular child... I was watching this little girl and she was doing really poorly. It was in grade two, and she was doing really, really poorly. She was not able to read, she could not follow instructions, and I was watching her, and I got one of these insights, you know, I thought she was deaf. So, I started doing things behind her, and it took me the rest of the day to figure out that she wasn't hearing anything. Yet, she had not been diagnosed deaf, she probably got progressively deaf... So, I talked to the mom who took her to the doctor and, sure enough, the child was deaf. They put tubes in her ears, her ears were not draining properly for some reason, and, after that, she could hear. And I don't remember how much she learned that year, but she became such a different child. She was just withdrawn and all alone before that, and then suddenly, she just bubbled out of this whole thing, and it was just great to see that. So, she is the kid that hooked me. She is the kid that got me inspired.

Barbara recalled different types of critical events, difficult and enlightening ones. Among the difficult ones, Barbara recalled two consecutive poor teaching experiences. Her first negative experience left her with a sense of failure due to a lack of knowledge and training, feelings of helplessness, role overload and role conflict, and discords with some staff members.

Barbara's sense of failure was partly generated by her feelings of helplessness and the school staff's lack of training with respect to special needs children:

One time, he [a special needs child] took to hitting me, and I just picked him up and put him in the principal's office, and it's not that he [the principal] didn't work with me, but he just did not know what to do with this child. Then, we did not know how to work with special needs kids, and we did not have any support staff either.

School norms with respect to collaboration and Barbara's own beliefs further intensified her feelings of helplessness:

I think the [school] climate didn't seem to be there to ask for help, and secondly, ..., I really felt it was my responsibility to deal with this child. I didn't realize that someone else should have been helping too. I just came with the assumption that it was my job, that I should deal with this child by myself.

In addition, Barbara recalled that neither the child's mother nor her superordinates at the school or the district level were very supportive:

His mom was pretty difficult because she thought that her child was perfect, and that the system was where all the mistakes were made, you know, so there was not much cooperation there... And I got a minimum support from the administration, you know, the kind of supportive pat on the back, but nothing that would have really helped, no help at the administrative level at school or at the district level.

As a result of this lack of support, Barbara found out that she had to sacrifice more and more of her personal time as she had to prepare two separate programs to try and meet the needs of the integrated child as well of those of his same-aged peers:

I used to always try to stay in the building [school] until 5:00 or 5:30 and get all my work done before I went home. My kids went to a daycare after school. Then, I would pick them up, go home, put them to bed at 7:30, and I used to have between 8:00 when they went to sleep and 10:00 to myself, these were my two hours of the day. But what I found myself doing more and more was taking more and more of my school things home, and then, once my own kids were in bed, I'd spend my evenings trying to find out what I could do, trying to read, trying to make sure that whatever program I was setting up for the class, these other kids would be in a situation where they could work independently when I was going to be occupied with the special needs child.

Barbara was also faced by other problems when in class. In particular, she remembered experiencing role conflict and overload, and powerlessness:

This kid, you know, he was always disrupting activities. You set up a filmstrip and he'd be fine. You would turn it on, and this kid would get up and stand in front of the projector, between the projector and the screen. So, you'd have to get him to sit down again, and you'd get the other kids back on task and settle down, and then, he'd get up again, and you'd do this three or four times. So usually, I'd have to sit with him, and I would have put a lot of the responsibility for the rest of the lesson on the class because you can't go and help them if you have to stay within two inches of this person who's taking all of your time. We'd do an activity and I had to always know where he was. So, it was hard to focus on someone else and

the other kids lose out that way. I really did not see I could help this kid very much and I felt really bad that I was neglecting the rest of the kids, that's where I felt really bad.

As briefly mentioned above, and in spite of her extra efforts to try and meet the child's needs, Barbara remarked she did not feel very successful with him:

We never did make any headway with him. The things I tried to do with him were by trial and error, but I really did not see I was helping him.

As well, Barbara felt also unsuccessful at building positive and nurturing relationships with her other students:

You don't have much time to spend on the other kids, you're really spending a lot of time with the special needs kid, and you cannot create with the other kids the same kind of bond as in a regular classroom, and you never seem to find the ability to cross that gap that you see widening between you and the other kids.... I felt really bad because I was neglecting the rest of the kids, and so I tried to do even better, harder, whatever I could think of to kind of buffer the effects of this child, but, it was a detriment all the way around to the other kids, socially, emotionally, mentally, the whole thing was a detriment to them.... These kids really deserved a lot more, and because of the situation, there was so little I could give them.

Barbara emphasized how powerless, helpless, and inefficient she felt:

There was no way to control this situation.... Yes, I had no control over anything that was going on.

Barbara's sense of isolation and failure was not only due to her lack of success in the classroom, but also to her inability to build positive relationships with her colleagues following a personal incident with another teacher:

She had been on the staff for a long time and had a lot of support. She had a lot of friends on staff. You know this stuff [Barbara's problems with her colleague] was going on outside of school, but she decided to bring it back to the school. It didn't belong in the school, you know, and I thought that was pretty unprofessional to do that because it concerned social matters outside of school. But anyway, it was like, if I was in the staff room, she'd come in and she'd purposefully go and sit at the other end, or if I came in, she'd get up and leave, or if I suggested an idea at a staff meeting, well, of course, it was not a good idea, and she spread some pretty vicious rumours about me too, and it got definitely to the staff, and they believed her because they had known her for a long time and me for a short time. It was a pretty difficult situation.

Barbara felt alienated from staff members and her principal:

I was not making a lot of headway with the staff, I was not making too much headway with the principal either, and of course, I didn't know how much he listened to the rumours.

The final straw came at the end of the year when Barbara was requested by her principal to pass the integrated child into Grade four, something she thought was totally inappropriate. Nonetheless, the principal still decided to allow the special needs child to pass into Grade four. This left Barbara with a feeling that her professional expertise was totally disregarded to comply with a top-down vision from the Central Office. At that point, Barbara felt betrayed and undermined by the Central Office and her principal, and she was emotionally exhausted:

I was very frustrated with the system [the Central Office] and the principal.... At the end of June, I left teaching very tired, very tired and disappointed... I was exhausted, and I was fed up, and I was very angry. I was just so tense, you know, and I knew that I just couldn't take it anymore, that I was going to explode.

She was also very angry and perhaps bitter. She further indicated that she had mixed feelings about teaching:

There was nothing positive about that year at all. Yes, I learned something about integration, but we don't have to fail to learn something. You shouldn't have to learn things the hard way. It was an awful year.... In the Fall, I didn't have a job and I was not worried about it. I didn't care if I taught if that was the way I had to teach. I was kind of like on a plateau.

Barbara's next teaching experience was also "devastating." In October of that year, she was hired to fill the position of a teacher who was on a temporary disability leave, but she was quickly disappointed by her assignment:

I went in that first day, and they [the class children] were all over the place. It was like a class from hell, and I had never taught kids that old, I had no tricks, I had no knowledge of the curriculum, nothing. So, my first impulse was to put in some semblance of order, you know, because we were not going to even make it through the first ten minutes unless there was some order... So, I had them sitting down, and I actually had them reading for a few minutes while I was looking for some lesson plans. There weren't any. So, I looked for a schedule, there wasn't any. So, I asked the kids what it was we were supposed to do, but they didn't know or pretended that they didn't know. So, I picked up a book, ..., we struggled through that first day, and I went home very tired, but I had with me all the books to prepare for the next day.

Barbara recalled putting a lot of efforts in the preparation of her

classes to keep the students on task and to enhance their learning:

The next day, I put down some guidelines on behaviours, at least stay at your desks kind of guidelines. And from that day on, I'd always take papers and pencils with me, you know, so that they couldn't pull any of that 'I don't have paper, don't have pencils, don't have textbooks.' In fact, I remember Xeroxing the pages of the textbooks, so that they couldn't go, "I don't have a textbook" kind of thing. I eliminated all those things.... I put a lot of work that year at home again, doing preparation when my kids were in bed, so that I could make sure I was on top of it.

Although some children started to learn, a few remained very rebellious and verbally abusive:

I got some support from about 75 percent of the kids who were learning something, you know, and they knew they were learning something, so that kind of swayed them, but the other 25 percent of them were just awful, just awful. Whatever they could say to you that would upset you, they would say it.

In addition, and probably confirming Barbara's perception of her class, there was a wide consensus among staff members on how difficult this class was, which only intensified Barbara's feeling of powerlessness:

This class was horrendous for everybody, not just me. They were notorious right through the school.... All the teachers who taught that particular class would get together once every two weeks, and we would all do the same thing. It was like, 'yes, this one is awful, this one is awful, this one is awful,' and we didn't know what to do with this kids, we all had difficulties with them.

Compounding her sense of powerlessness and failure, Barbara was not getting any support from the school principal:

There was no support from the principal. I'd go to the principal and talk to him about the kids and their attitudes, but it was like, 'I can't help you.'

Similarly, she could not get any support or help from her colleagues:

When I got there, they [Barbara's colleagues] had already given up on them. They had already decided, they are who they are, there is nothing we can do to help them, so we are just going to let these guys do just about anything they want as long as they don't overstep someone else, but other than that, we'll let them do whatever, you know. That was the kid of attitude when I got there.

Barbara's feeling of helplessness, estrangement, and powerlessness was further aggravated by a sense of normlessness regarding discipline issues and intraorganizational conflicts on the ways to address discipline

matters in school:

Their discipline policy said that kids should be in the classroom, which is a very fine, philosophical statement because they can't learn if they are not in the classroom, but they were never any consequences for these kids, you know, no matter what they did. A lot of these kids loved the athletic program, so I suggested that kids be deprived of some of their games if they'd muck around in class, or they'd be off the team, something like that, but it was vetoed right away. The principal was a physical education person and he decided that these kinds of ideas were not suitable. Their approach, and I can understand it, was that team involvement was one of the few positive things in the kids' lives and that it wasn't really fair to take it away from them. However, they [the other staff and the principal] never suggested anything else, there were no suggestions, no ideas from anybody as to what to do and how to do it, and they only considered my ideas for as long as it took them to say 'no.'

Barbara became very angry at her colleagues and her principal:

I couldn't believe that that many professional people couldn't figure out what to do with this bunch of kids, you know. I seemed to be the only one believing in those kids. Nobody else was believing in them and it became very hard to work in that kind of situation. These people weren't doing what they were there to do. What we should have been doing was figuring out solutions to those problems together.

Barbara indicated that this new experience further reinforced the sense of hopelessness, meaninglessness, exhaustion, and failure she had experienced during her previous teaching experience:

If you add that [experience] on top of the year before, it was like I was getting to the point where I was starting to believe there were no answers, you know. So I started thinking, 'if that's what teaching is about, what's the point? If we are not here to enable these kids, then what are we here for? If that's what education is about, then I don't need it.'

I became very, very tired, just worn out. I don't think I had a personal life that year. I didn't do anything that year, except work, work, work... and I still couldn't make a dent in these 25 percent of kids.

Not only did Barbara feel frustrated at not being able to help 25 percent of her students, but she also felt guilty about the type of learning that took place with the rest of the students, which she assessed as far from appropriate to their age-level:

Yes, some kids were making some headway, but miles behind though, many, many miles behind, and these 25 percent of kids, as soon as you put them in a normal math lesson or something, whatever they called normal, you know, a grade appropriate math lesson, their behaviour got really, really

ugly. That was not their instructional level. And so, it just got to be again trying to do too much for this small group of kids, not being able to stop myself from doing it and losing the rest of the kids, maybe not completely losing them, but here I was, again not having enough time for them all, again neglecting the rest of the class and feeling guilty about it. I really felt rotten, I really felt terrible about the situation.

At that point, she started questioning again the efficacy of the “system,”

The system did not offer students anything different, they didn’t offer these 25 percent of kids anything different. They never offered any alternatives for these kids.

Barbara finally decided to leave the teaching profession three months before the end of the academic year:

It was not that I didn’t like teaching, it was that I could not teach in that kind of environment. I couldn’t do it by myself, and there was no support from the principal, none from the system. So I left. I was never going back to teaching because I really was getting the impression that they [the schools] were all like this, you know, that I didn’t fit in. I mean there was no sense in continuing teaching because I was just going from a place I didn’t like to a place I wouldn’t like.

Barbara blamed the system for her early departure. She condemned its lack of flexibility and its staff’s unwillingness to cooperate with teachers:

The system tied my hands so bad that I couldn’t do anything for these kids, and you can only bang your head against a brick wall so many times and then, you got to quit. I had to quit, you know, I couldn’t close my door and pretend it’s not there. It’s there, it’s right outside your door and there is no way to get away from it.

Barbara further expanded on the system’s lack of flexibility with a passionate discourse,

It [the system] has set up the same middle class and I am going to use the term white, I don’t care if it’s not politically correct, it has set up the same white middle class male message that we are asked to send every day, year after year to these kids, you know. These teachers on staff, you know, they didn’t see the kids for who they were. They only saw them as disruptive, so they chose to give up on these kids but they never knew who they [these students] were or where they came from and what they hoped of doing. Our profession is a middle class profession filled with middle class people who are full of middle class ideals that they are trying to spill over a bunch of kids who are not middle class and that’s where they run into problems because they are basing their teaching on their knowledge of the world, and if they had only middle class kids to teach, they’d probably do fine with them, but you don’t get only that, and you can’t just give up on the 25

percent who don't fit the mould you know. These kids have also to be given a fair chance at an education. I am not saying that they all have to go to university, but, at least, they should be given the opportunity to go if that's what they want to do, if they have the motivation and the capability, at least, we should open a door for these kids. We shouldn't slam it shut because they don't fit, because they need a little bit of an alternate teaching style, or a different book, or a different program. I felt so sorry for these kids.

Barbara's teaching experiences had left her shaken and consumed with intrapersonal conflicts:

I guessed I felt I had been kind of pushed into teaching, but at least, I had that. I had that label, you know, I am a teacher. But on that day [her last day of school], it was like, if I am not a teacher, what am I? And you go back to being 12 year old and you have lost your identity because if you are not a teacher anymore, then who or what are you?

After leaving the teaching profession, Barbara worked as a disk jockey for a few months. She subsequently moved to southern Alberta and went for an interview for a teaching position:

I did not want this job though, I had not handled last year very well, but I had to go to the interview because otherwise I'd be cut from the UICs. So I went to the interview, and I pretty well laid out my capabilities and my limitations. I told them [the interviewers], these are the things I do, I work best with primary kids, I work from a thematic approach, I teach both whole language and phonics, and I am waiting for these people to say at any time, 'thank you for coming, we'll contact you,' but it was like, 'you sound perfect, we can't wait to have you with us.' I asked them to take me on a tour of the school, and I met the other grade three teachers, and I saw the kids working, and they seem like very nice kids. So, I took that job on, and it was one of the best teaching years I've ever had.

This experience was critical for Barbara since it allowed for her re-entrance in the teaching profession, as well as a renewed enthusiasm toward teaching. Barbara emphasized that she really enjoyed the sense of community that characterized her new school, as well as the unique feeling of working with staff members towards common and innovative goals which gave her a clear sense of direction. Teaching in this school was clearly considered and set up as a collegial enterprise for the benefit of the children:

Everyone on staff worked together for what they believed and I still believe today was the benefit of the kids. So, you know, the end result was the benefit of the kids and I just loved it.

As Barbara noted, collegial work also allowed staff members to develop a feeling of connectedness or belongingness:

There were times when we would meet with our grade level people and our divisional people and set up units of themes. We developed some of these themes during staff meetings, instead of listening to a list of dates and things to do by these dates. So, yes, the bonding and the working together, instead of working in isolation, was just terrific.

Furthermore, Barbara found teaching in this particular school meaningful not only because it was innovative and collegial, but also because it was result-oriented, that is, addressing concerns or issues specific to the environment:

We were actually doing something about kids' problems, about teachers' problems, about teachers being isolated. We were trying to find ways around all these things, to use the best abilities of the teams that worked together.

As far as her principal is concerned, Barbara has only admiration for her genuine and apparent interest in people, her supportiveness, her collaborative orientation to problems which focussed on mutual problem-solving and the satisfaction of all the involved parties, her visibility in school and her approachability:

Penny was a people person. She knew you as a professional, but she knew you as who you were too, and when I think all the principals I enjoyed working with the most were all like that. They made a point of spending their time with people, not with papers. I don't know when they ever got the paperwork done or if they ever got the paperwork done, but they were always walking around the schools. And Penny was like that, she was always there, she was always supportive. If we had a problem, it was like a no-fault situation, and it was like, okay, what are we going to do about this problem? What are our choices? That was the way she dealt with problems. You always felt like she understood you. She was a people person. She knew everybody by name, but she didn't know just your name, she knew something about you.

Barbara also pointed out that her principal condoned participative decision-making. Moreover, the decision-making process was flexible and primarily involved the persons concerned by the issues to be dealt with:

As far as the way things were run, it was always taken from a team approach, always. If there was something that needed to be decided, we did it in small groups, we did it in same age groups, we did it in same curricular groups. It was not always the same groups and it was only the groups that were involved in the issues. And it always worked that way with her.

In addition to that, the principal recognized the staff members' efforts, gave rapid feedback, and was very honest with the teachers when she noticed something could be improved:

She walked around all the time and she was constantly nurturing what you were doing. You always knew when you did something right, she'd tell you about it. And you knew when you did something wrong, too in a way, because then the conversation was a little more serious, you know, but it was done always in a positive way.... You felt like in a big family, you felt like you were part of a family, the whole building felt like that. I don't even know how you knew it but you just knew it. You were with all your relatives, you had just met your second cousins.

In return for this love and support, Barbara emphasized she would have gladly sacrificed herself for the principal, and so would have all the other staff members:

I really respected Penny. You just liked her, just loved her so much. It was unconditional, you would do anything for her, but she never abused that, and we would all do anything for her, and we would make it work.

Barbara emphasized she felt strongly committed to the school:

I felt a high sense of commitment toward the principal, but more of a sense of commitment toward the whole school.... and there was also a very strong sense of to the whole school, you know, the staff, the kids, the parents.

Barbara also expressed gratitude towards her colleagues who enabled her to re-discover that teaching could be fun and exciting and gratifying when it was collegially experienced. Moreover, it also allowed for the development of deeply satisfying relationships based of respect and love, as well as the disintegration of rigid boundaries between personal and professional activities:

We [teachers] did professional things together for the school, like the ones I've described, and we did social things together, we did absolutely silly things together, we had all sorts of activities all the time. We had families, or most of us had families, so lots of the activities were family-based, you know, bowling on Sunday afternoon and all sorts of things like that. We'd practically ate, slept, breathed, lived together. They truly became my family.

As noted above, Barbara also indicated she felt committed to the families as the principal had build up diverse communication systems that enabled school staff and families to develop and foster relationships and support each other:

Yes, families were part of the school too. We were one big family. When we worked out this theme thing, there were many families who came and worked with us and we got the support of the parents because we built these initial relationships, you know. Also, one thing I learned to do, that year, was to send a newsletter home every Monday and it would outline what we were going to do that week and invite the parents to participate in

our activities. So, the parents felt really connected with the programs and what was going on, and they knew when a test was coming up, and they felt really good about this, you know, especially the working parents who couldn't come to the school all the time. With this type of communication, at least they knew what was going on at school. That year, I also learned to call the kids' homes regularly, to make positive phone calls regularly, you know.

At that point, Barbara recovered her enthusiasm toward teaching:

You know, when I went to this interview, I didn't want this job, there was no commitment there, but I learned so much that year about myself and about teaching that my whole commitment just turned around, and from all time low it went to all time high.

This experience also allowed Barbara to realize that bureaucracies were not all alike, and to re-experience hope:

I knew that those things that had happened in the past weren't the system's problems, they were just a system's problems because I saw one that was totally different, and it worked.... After I worked with that principal, I saw there were choices, I became a lot more politically astute.

Natalie

Natalie had been teaching for four years in elementary rural schools at the time of the interviews. She initially taught Kindergarten children in two different Francophone schools, and was subsequently given a full time-contract by one of her schools. She entered the teaching profession, primarily because she loved learning. Her deep interest in educational philosophies, learning processes and teaching methodologies reflected her love of learning, as well as her decision to become a teacher:

Education is something I've always loved and been interested in. I really like learning, and I have always been interested in educational philosophies and looking for new methods of teaching, new methodologies, and I quite enjoyed learning about them.

I'm a teacher because I want children to learn, to have valuable learning experiences, and to enjoy learning... I find the challenge of working with children and seeing them learning and succeeding, very, very satisfying.

Natalie further emphasized that her first three years of teaching were very fulfilling, "hard but very satisfying,"

My first year of teaching was very, very difficult because I was teaching at two different schools, and I didn't have a break in between. So, it was physically very tiring, yet it was also very rewarding because I was able to

do what I wanted to do. And the second and third years of teaching were even better because I could put more energy into my program. These three years were extremely fulfilling because, again, I was able to teach the way I wanted to.

Natalie's working conditions were not always optimum at that time. In fact, she suggested that the physical layout of her working environment during her first year of teaching was very poor. She also found her two teaching assignments "exhausting,"

The workload during my first year was very heavy, and it was a difficult year because it was my first year teaching, and there were all sorts of factors that came into play, in particular with my time management, and also, I was teaching two Kindergarten classes at two different schools. So, I had two different classes to set up, and I had to duplicate all sorts of things, such as games for example, and basically that doubled up on my work. So, there were many stresses this year. And, one of the school was under renovation, and all the immersion classes were put in the gymnasium, which is about the worst possible scenario for immersion teachers because the acoustics were terrible, and the students could not hear properly. So, there was noise, overcrowding, dirt, and not enough bathrooms or drinking fountains for the children, and it was very stressful. On top of that, because I was teaching at two different schools, I would finish in the morning at one school, and I would have to leave that school immediately to go teach and set up the other Kindergarten. Moreover, I would do that during my lunch hour. So, basically, I did not have a lunch break during my first year, and by the end of the day, I was often exhausted. It was a very difficult year, ..., yet a rewarding one as well.

Natalie went on explaining that her working conditions did not impact her sense of commitment because there were "extenuating circumstances." In particular, she pointed out that the renovations were temporary, that they affected everyone, and that they created an unexpected but appreciated feeling of togetherness and support among the school staff. She also suggested that her teaching efficacy improved as she gained experience:

The first year was frustrating, and I did feel powerless because it was a situation I could not change, but I never considered leaving teaching. I realized it was my first year of teaching, and I was trying new things, and some worked and some did not, but I was learning along the way, and I also realized that there was really nothing that could be done about the renovations. Also, it was not just me, every one was working under the same conditions and there was a kind of mutual support there, a closeness, because we were all going through the same thing.

She also reported that she had an initial positive experience with both school principals who emphasized respect, tolerance, and flexibility:

I think both principals emphasized acceptance of individual differences and respect of each person, and that went from the staff down to the smallest child in the school, and it made a big difference. In both schools, the staff was asked for their opinions and their opinions were definitely valued. The administrators were also quite accommodating, and I could ask for someone else to come in my class, even if it was another teacher, or if I wanted to observe a teacher teaching a certain lesson, there was always that possibility as well.

Natalie further suggested she felt "fortunate" to work in schools with a positive school climate. She insisted,

I had a very good experience in both schools during these first years, and I did feel very fortunate.... I learned that I really enjoy teaching.

However, shortly after making these comments, she continued,

I love teaching, but lately, I have also learned that I am not willing to put up with certain situations that are unfulfilling and frustrating. Teaching can be extremely rewarding, but also very frustrating under certain conditions.

Natalie clarified this comment by suggesting she became increasingly dissatisfied with her working conditions, even though she had obtained a full-time position in one of the schools where she had previously worked. In particular, she indicated that she found her workload unrealistic:

For the past three years, I have taught Kindergarten full-time. This year, I teach different subjects to Grades 2, 3, and 4, and I am still in charge of the Kindergarten program, except that I only teach it half-time, and the assistant runs the other part of the program. However, I still plan everything for the Kindergarten children, I still deal with a parent committee, and I'm still responsible for evaluating all the students in the class. I am also responsible for sending out their newsletters, for looking after all kinds of little things that are involved in the program, which is very, very time-consuming. So, the workload in Kindergarten alone is very similar to what I was doing last year, and, on top of that, I am also teaching in other grades. I do feel that I've been given an excessively heavy workload this year. It's totally unrealistic.

Natalie further emphasized that her felt overload was compounded by a profound sense of powerlessness over her work environment, her teaching responsibilities, and her public image. This, in turn, often induced a sense of panic in her:

Quite often, I have the feeling that I'll never be able to catch up on what I want to do, that I'll never complete what I want to complete because I just don't have the time, and there is often a sense of panic, particularly during the evenings... This is the first time in my working history that I have been

in a work environment where I feel that I don't have control over what's going on, and I find that extremely frustrating because I am very well aware that if I start not doing a good job in all my classes, it will show, and then, I will get the reputation of being a bad teacher, and that's something I can't accept personally.

Natalie's heavy workload, her reduced autonomy, her sense of powerlessness further intensified by her belief that the children were not getting what they needed to become successful learners, left her with a decreased sense of efficacy and a deep feeling of frustration:

I just can't do a proper job in any of the classes. I am teaching too many classes, too many levels, and too many different subjects... I am not able to teach the children what they need to learn. I am very, very frustrated by the fact that the children are not getting half of what they need to learn a second language... We are at the end of March now and I am able to compare the progress they [the Kindergarten children] have made to last year's, and they only have half the vocabulary that they had last year, and it is not enough, it's just ludicrous... And I could pick any topic. I teach health in the fourth grade, and there's very, very little time to do it, and I have to teach about a third of what I'd like to teach, and that's very frustrating because you don't get to the details and children don't learn as well either.

Furthermore, she experienced a sense of unfairness and helplessness as her principal refused to let her teach a grade one class as she had requested:

Because of the cutbacks, some teachers have been given heavier workload than others, you know, and I do feel I've been given an excessive workload this year. I realize that it may be extremely difficult for the principal to juggle all the classes and that sort of things, but I think it should have been done differently. I had requested a change of position last year. I didn't want to teach Kindergarten anymore because I knew it was going to be awful. So, I asked for a grade one class, and there was a teacher who had only been here for a year. Well, she was allowed to continue in the grade one. However, I thought I should have been given the choice as to the grade since I had more seniority.

Natalie further emphasized she did not feel valued by her principal. Their conflict of interests increased her sense of alienation, and her attitude toward her principal⁷ changed:

I did feel that the reason I was placed in the position that I am was for convenience solely. I happen to be a Kindergarten teacher and the program worked well the previous years, and no one else wanted to teach it, and she

⁷ Natalie has had the same principal since she started teaching in that school as a part-time teacher, four years before these interviews.

[the principal] couldn't bring additional staff, and that's why I got the Kindergarten program this year again.... I definitely feel removed from the principal, and we don't seem to see each other as much now... I feel very uncomfortable [in the presence of the principal] and I do try to avoid her. I don't know if I have much respect for her now, because of her lack of understanding in the type of assignment that I've been given this year.

Natalie also indicated being in the process of losing other sources of support, recognition, and fulfilment. For example, she experienced an emotional distancing from the children because of her lack of time to know them:

I don't know them [the children] as well and as in-depth as I used to. Last year, I spent two hours in the class, and this year, I only spend one hour, and during that one hour, I don't get to spend much time individually with each child, so it's very, very hard to get to know the children, and so, there is definitely a distance with the children.

Similarly, she missed her previously regular contacts with the parents, and she reported feeling emotionally remote from them, in spite of herself, and as a result of their decreased contacts:

I enjoy people, be it children or older people, and I find that I miss my time with the parents this year because I now see them for a lot less time than I used to in previous years. I'm in the Kindergarten class only during the first part of the class and I don't see the parents at the end of the day. However, a lot of parents come to pick up their children, and it's actually quite a nice time to let a parent know about a situation that happened in the class or whatever, and it's a very, very nice time to see the parents and to speak with them, but now, I never see them.... So, yes, they [parents] may be less supportive now, but it's not that they want to be less supportive, it's mostly because I don't have much contact with them and I am very hard to track down. So, I do find that I am distancing myself from the parents because I don't have the time for them the way I did last year.

Not only did Natalie have to decrease her contacts with the children and the parents, two important sources of support and fulfilment for teachers, but she also indicated she had few contacts with her colleagues as well, because of her work schedule and workload:

Because Kindergarten runs a very different schedule than the rest of the school, I don't have many opportunities to talk with other teachers. Kindergarten starts a bit later than the rest of the school, and I teach during the recess breaks, and that's when you get the opportunity to sit down for 5 or 10 minutes and talk with another teacher if he or she is not working through the recess, but, I don't have that opportunity because I am working in the Kindergarten class at that time. And when I am teaching in the other

classes in the school, I'm just in the classes, I don't have a chance to see the teachers, and my lunch break is half an hour before the rest of the school, and so, I don't often have a chance to sit and talk with the other teachers.

In addition to the above, the 5% cutback imposed by the provincial government on all public school employees aggravated Natalie's stress and anger:

This year, we've had cutbacks. Five percent cutbacks and these five percent have made a tremendous difference in my financial situation because I am a single parent and I support my two children on my own, and with everything else increasing and a salary decreasing, I find it very, very difficult to make ends meet.

Finally, she was also worried by next year's uncertainty regarding her working assignment and potential further cuts in education:

My fear is caused by the cutbacks in education since we will be facing those again next year, and they could very well be worse. And I am also worried by my teaching assignment next year. I think that not knowing what could happen next year is difficult to bear as well.

As a result of her teaching assignment, Natalie had to reorganize her professional life. This reorganization and the emotional turmoil that accompanied her work changes both frustrated and exhausted her:

I do see differences in the way I was teaching last year and the way I teach this year. I've had to cut back on what I'd like to do in every class because I just can't do it, and I also tend to do fewer extra things, you know, like very detailed lesson preparations where you're preparing things specifically for children who are either above the norm or below the norm, because those are the ones who would need the extra time and the extra help. Even though I might wish to do it, I am unable to do it because I just don't have the energy at the end of the day, you know... I had to cut down on the amount of preparation that should be done, and that's where the frustration is. If I wanted to do as much planning and as much preparation as I think I should be doing, I'd have to put five or six extra hours at the end of the day, and I just can't do that, I have a family, I have to make dinner, I have to get some sleep, and it's not just that, you know, my children also deserve quality parenting from me.

Simultaneously, and in spite of herself, she had stopped being proactive:

Today, my kindergarten assistant asked me what we were going to do next week, and I don't have any idea because I haven't planned it yet. I'm just exhausted, I don't seem to have any energy, and so, I do tend to put off

things.

Natalie also mentioned that her heavy workload forced her to give up some of her personal activities:

Now, I just can't go out and do things on weekends. I have to make sure that I sleep, that I get to bed early because I can't function otherwise. Other years, I've been able to get a late night or so, and I was able to catch up later, but there's just too much work this year... Similarly, I love reading, but, this year, just finding 30 or 45 minutes of reading in the evening is something I can't always do, and I find that very frustrating... I am finding it very difficult to get an evening off this year.

However, she was not the only one suffering from her work situation, her own children had also been affected by her fatigue:

Because I am so exhausted, there is sometimes an abruptness with my children, you know, and I find that's something that I can't accept either because it's not really fair for them, and that's another reason why I have stated I would refuse a similar assignment next year.

As a result, Natalie felt a sense of alienation toward her school:

I don't really feel I am a part of the school, and again, it's mostly because of the Kindergarten program. I don't blame the school for that, but, the Kindergarten children are not always involved in the older children's activities, like their cultural activities for example, and I am not involved in sports day or whatever, Kindergarten runs their own program. Moreover, because of the different schedule of the Kindergarten program, I don't always get to know the rest of the staff either.

Her words speak loudly of Natalie's frustration, loneliness, anxiety, and profound malaise:

This year for me has been extremely difficult because I can't do a proper job in any of the classes I'm teaching. I just can't get to the depth that I would like to have with each subject, and I am spread too thin... My frustration did not grow gradually. It started the first day when I started teaching in September because my assignment was just so horrific... I find teaching extremely frustrating now and a lot less satisfying than I had hoped. If I could put it [the respondent's satisfaction with teaching] on a scale of 1 to 10, I'd say, it would be around 4 to 5, you know, and that would be pushing it.

Natalie further justified her anger at having lost control over her professional and her personal lives:

There has been lots of anger this year because when you think of the teaching profession, it's really important to do your work and to be

dedicated, but you also need leisure time. And that's the part where the anger comes out because I might want to go out and do something in the evening, but I realize that I can't do it because I'll be too tired the next morning, and if I go to school being tired, it's like suicide because I can't maintain the pace and I can't be on top of my work, and the kids have a sixth sense about that. They know when the teacher is not fully prepared and they take full advantage of it.

Natalie also explained why her principal's decision to give her the Kindergarten program angered and devastated her:

I believe that the principal does not really want to listen to what I'm saying. I know that I am not being listened to, and the problem has been put on my shoulders. It's has been suggested to me that I see somebody who could help me learn how to deal with what I am dealing with, and yet I know it's not a psychologist that I need, it's just a more realistic work schedule.

Not only was she angered by her life's professional and personal changes, as well as by her principal's lack of understanding, but she also reported being angry at the provincial government and her school board:

I am very angry at the whole system, at the government, at the school board for allowing things like this [cutbacks] to happen, for putting me in a position that I feel [is] extremely difficult.

Natalie was also deeply confused. She accused the government of indifference towards educational matters, but she also went back and forth between blaming her principal and exonerating her, and blaming herself for her working conditions and increasing frustration:

I feel that the principal doesn't really understand the task involved in running a Kindergarten program, and I am really baffled she has given me such a heavy workload... and I'm not just the only one, you know, who thinks I have an unrealistic workload, other people, friends, teacher friends, even other principals also think so.

Natalie further added,

The principal may not have had many choices either about the teaching assignments because of the extreme cutbacks in the program and she may not have known where to slot everybody, and I am just one of many people in the school... This year, I feel that my wishes haven't been listened to, but then again, there has been many situations where teachers have asked for transfers or other requests they haven't got as well.

Concurrently, and further illustrating her turmoil, Natalie suggested that her frustrations were self-induced as she was a perfectionist with a high

internal locus of evaluation:

I have been told [by my administrator] that the way to handle my workload was to cut back on the amount that I would teach per classroom, per subject, because it was just impossible to cover each subject in the depth I wanted to, but I found that very, very difficult to accept. It doesn't suit my style. I do tend to be a perfectionist, and I want to do better than a good job. I want to be able to teach my subjects to the depth that I want to. If I am going to do something, I like it to be a better than a good job, and it has always been like that.... I guess I am feeling very frustrated because of my own expectations, it's definitely my expectations.

In spite of her awareness that she may be partly responsible for her problems, Natalie explained that she couldn't let go of her expectations regarding the programs she taught. She was angered by her perceived loss of her job autonomy because she felt it affected her public image, and her self or private image. She feared she might become the high school teacher she had as a teenager and whom she found "so very boring" because of her inability to make learning fun and interesting:

If I start not doing a good job in all my classes, it will show, and then I will get the reputation of being a bad teacher, and that's something I can't accept personally... I don't want to go into a classroom and not do a good teaching job because I'm wasting my time first of all, and I'm also wasting the kids' time. I mean it's not right to have kids sit through boring lessons and it goes back to my initial philosophy. Remember, I told you that I became interested in education to make learning interesting to the kids, and this is where the frustration and anger come from. Right now, with my workload, I just can't make learning fun and interesting for the kids.

Natalie pursued:

Staying in the profession under those conditions would go against my philosophy. I am here because I want the children to have valuable and fun learning time. I don't want to continue teaching if I can't do that.

Not only did she feel she could not go against what motivated her to enter the teaching profession, but she also insisted that it was how she derived her sense of success, or worth:

I get my sense of achievement by teaching children to feel good about themselves in their learning because I really feel that good self-esteem is the key to success, ..., it's when I finally break through and help a child realized his or her own potential that I am the happiest. You know, it's a very, very good feeling when you can help a child learn how to learn.

Further intensifying her internal turmoil, she also received opposite

feedback and advice as to her situation. Some of her colleagues strongly supported and validated her frustrations, while others, including her principal, offered her a very different perspective:

Many, many friend teachers were absolutely horrified when they heard the amount of preparation I have to do. A lot of them have told me, 'you have to take time off, you should never have been given such a workload.' They know that I am very tired, exhausted, they know that I have started to feel completely overwhelmed... Others have told me, 'you have to learn to do less, you have to learn to let go a little bit.' Unfortunately I do happen to enjoy all the subjects that I am teaching this year, and I don't feel good unless I give 100 percent of myself. Yet, as I have told you before, I realize that I may have to let go of certain things, but I still don't accept it.

As a result of her inner turmoil and her increasing sense of frustration, Natalie experienced an increasing sense of mental and physical fatigue, as well as feelings of depression:

It's physically very, very exhausting every day to change to so many different classes, so many different subjects, and it's impossible to go into a classroom and give a mediocre performance because as soon as you do that you have discipline problems and the children are not learning, and you know that you're not teaching them properly. So, you still have to give some sort of quality to each subject and that's what extremely difficult. I am exhausted... It's like my mind can never rest, and at night, I've difficulty sleeping, or I just wake up in the middle of the night and I just can't go back to sleep... I am completely exhausted, and there has been many, many times this year when I felt on the point of a nervous breakdown, you know, I can see all the signs, you are doing something and suddenly, for no reason whatsoever, tears come to your eyes, and that has happened to me lots of times. I'll be walking in a department store and I'll suddenly realize that I am about to cry, and I have no idea why. I guess it's a kind of depression.

Fatigue and felt lack of control over her environment often induced a sense of panic in Natalie, which in turn, generated guilt, more anger, additional stress and more fatigue:

I feel powerless. I also tend to panic, particularly during the evenings, when I think I need to do this and I need to do that, and I am so tired that I just can't do it. I feel I never have the time I need. And then I don't feel good the next day because I feel that I should have done more the day before... I mean there is so much that I want to do but can't do, and, because of that, I feel lots of guilt, and it's so frustrating, the frustration is just so overwhelming.

Natalie reported that she had to take more sick days this year than ever before:

This year, I have definitely been sick much more often than before. Over the past three years, I've missed an average of two and a half days per year, and this year, I'm probably on my sixth or seventh. I've lost count now, but that's a lot for me, because I'm usually a healthy person.

Natalie also felt a deep despair at her situation:

I am such so exhausted and so very frustrated that sometimes I think, 'well, why even bother teaching?'....This year, I have put my personal life on hold, and I know that's wrong because you do need a balance between your professional and your personal life... I don't know what will happen next year, but I know that physically I will not be able to put up with the stress that I've had this year.

As well, her commitment to teaching was not as strong as it was when she started teaching:

In a sense: deep down: I know it [commitment to teaching] is still there: but the feeling of frustration is so very intense that it's overwhelming... I want changes: and yet: I am powerless to do anything about them: and so: maybe: in that sense: it affects my commitment.... I have decided that I will quit next year if I am given the same assignment....I just can't go on teaching like that.... There's a limit... It's inhuman to expect a person to do the type of work that I'm expected to do and to do a good job.

Natalie added:

Good and bad days definitely affect commitment. Commitment is related to both what you do and your attitude toward what you are doing, and this year has been extremely difficult for me. Like I told you, I still want to be a teacher, but there is a limit... the frustrations are so powerful that they are threatening to become overwhelming.

Ultimately, Natalie concluded on a note of hope:

I definitely want changes for next year, but I've accepted to teach from September to June, and I'm going to do that. I guess I don't accept defeat very easily and it just makes me want to succeed more than fail... Also, I know that one way or another I will continue teaching, even though I may quit the teaching profession for a while. I am tough, and I usually get what I want when I decide to do something... And, just this past Friday, it was announced that our school board will fund a full 400 hour teacher led program in kindergarten, so that could be good for me.

Beth

Beth had been an elementary teacher for over a decade at the time of the interviews. She entered the teaching profession because she identified with specific persons and as a result of commonly held socio-cultural

expectations regarding female professions:

When I was in Grade 7, we had a really good basketball coach,...., and I thought it would be a really neat job to teach like her. She was really a strong inspiration to me, and then, when I was in high school, I really like some of my teachers... they became sort of role-models to me, and I wanted to be like them. And, in those days too, we are talking late 50's, early 60's, girls became teachers, nurses, social workers, or secretaries, you know. So, it just seems like that was the expectation.

Beth first taught in a Catholic school for four months. Her initial experience with teaching was very "disappointing" for a number of reasons. Among these, Beth suggested that she never had a good concept of self:

In my high school years, I developed this really, really bad inferiority complex. I didn't believe that I had one speck of intelligence, I really had no good concept of myself at all.... I just kept thinking [that] I was no good. I had believed that for so many years, and I went into teaching so green, so ignorant, and so non-believing in myself that I couldn't be successful, there was no way I could be successful, no way.

There were also other beliefs and perceptions that came into play in her first teaching experience. For example, Beth felt totally unprepared to enter the teaching profession:

My practica were not great, I wasn't showing a really natural ability, I was kind of clueless as to what was happening, and I did not do anything in my third year that really prepared me for the classroom... Many of the courses I took were just like being in a B. A. program... And so, when I was hired, I knew nothing, I knew nothing. For example, I didn't even know that you had to give a certain amount of minutes of mathematics, a certain amount of minutes of Science... I thought you could go in and make your own schedule.

Beth further reported that her principal was mostly invisible, which left her helpless and with an increasing feeling of powerlessness and inadequacy:

[When I was hired], I got the school I wanted, I got the year I wanted, Grade 2, and I got the smart kids. It was like everything fell into place, and I got everything I wanted, but it turned out that the principal was like a year before retirement and he didn't care very much. And I hardly saw him, he never evaluated me, he was never there to answer questions, and somehow, I got the idea that to ask a question showed that you didn't know what you were supposed to know, and so, I didn't ask about anything.

The principal's lack of support deeply disappointed her:

I was very disappointed by that. And I remember being very disappointed

that he never showed up or never helped me out.

Similarly, her colleagues did not really help her either as far as educational matters were concerned:

My colleagues were a friendly bunch, they were nice in the staff room, and I remember getting along with them, but I don't remember them offering any kind of help or me ever going to them and asking for help. There was like a silent rule or something around there that said, 'you don't ask for help, you are supposed to know these things.'

Beth indicated being engulfed by feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, fear, isolation, emotional exhaustion, and fatigue:

I was just trying to make sense of where I was and what I was doing, and what I was supposed to do. I was just trying to establish a picture about what was going on in class and what I was supposed to be doing. I had no guidance at all, and no direction, so I just had a sense of floundering, ..., and inside, I was just being chewed up with indecision.

Fear dominated these four months... You know, there is a part of me that always handles things brightly and cheerfully, and, then, there's the underground me that was terrorized, knowing I didn't really know a damn thing.

it was very tiring, it was emotionally exhausting, you always feel like a fraud, I wouldn't say a liar, but definitely a fraud, and I felt very isolated.

After four months, Beth became pregnant and had to quit as "in those days, in that board, once you started showing that you were pregnant, you were strongly encouraged to go on leave." However, she indicated:

I was happy to quit, the taste in my month was not like I was a real winner. I've always had a commitment to do the best job I can wherever I am, and that's where the pain comes from, when you really want to do a super job and you just don't believe you can do it, there's a lot of pain in that, you know.

She further commented,

I didn't have a commitment to teaching at that time, I couldn't, I was just scared of the whole process. It was like, give me an out and I'll take it, and I took it. Pregnancy, good, I'll resign... and there was no way I could have a sense of commitment to teaching, no way, I was just too scared.

For the next decade, Beth raised her two children, did some substituting, and took a job with City Hall for which she was overqualified. However, she liked her job because it was so easy that she "didn't have to

worry about my adequacy or inadequacy.”

Beth went back to teaching in the 80s, primarily because she needed money as she had become a single parent with two children. She taught for approximately a decade in a school mostly populated by underprivileged children. Teaching in this school also turned out to be painful for Beth who had not yet resolved her feelings of inadequacy:

One of the strong factors that pulled me back was the salary. I needed the money, but I was still really scared, and all the things I didn't like about teaching started to overwhelm me again... Remember, what I told you about the outer and the inner persons? Well, the outer person is sort of acting from my head... whereas, the inner person is from the heart, and it was a place I didn't know very well at that time.

Because of her feelings of inadequacy, she worked extremely long hours. However, in spite of her long working hours, things never seemed appropriately prepared, which only further aggravated her feelings of incompetence, powerlessness, and her anxiety:

Work, I was working really hard because fear was the motivator that kept me working really, really hard, because I didn't want to ever not cover my tail, I didn't want to be exposed, I didn't want people to know how inadequate I felt.... And there was also that work ethic again that I have. If I'm hired to do something, I try to do it well, it's like a sense of fairness.... So, I would work hours and hours, you know, to prepare things, but often, when I got to class, I thought I was not really prepared, or that I didn't really know this part or whatever, and I would just be terrified.

Beth described what it was like for her to teach,

I was really not feeling good. The last year was just agony.... I couldn't wait until the day was over, until I could leave.

She touched again on the fear she experienced, and on the emotional and physical exhaustion generated by her feelings of inadequacy,

I sure wasn't going to tell my colleagues and my principal how inadequate I felt. So, immediately, I've got a bit of that actress thing going on again. There is also that feeling that you're a fraud and that you're going to be found out, that they [your superordinates and colleagues] are going to find out that you are not as good as they thought.... And you're constantly afraid [that your act is going to be discovered].

You constantly feel that you have to do more, and more, and more, and, at the same time, enough is never enough, and things are never good enough.... You are setting up standards that you can never reach, no matter how many hours you work, and you just cannot let go [of these

standards].... And, you are constantly fighting to try and have that underground part of you match or fit or catch up with that surface or public part of you... and it is so very tiring, so exhausting.

Beth's felt inadequacy and her fear of being discovered also caused her to be very isolated:

I was a really, really private person. There was always a part of me, even when I sat around a staffroom table, I was very careful, you know, I was very conscious of what I might disclose about me. I was not going to ask my colleagues for help.... So, I was pretty tucked in, you know, pretty shy.

Her stress was so great she became physically sick:

The last year of school, I was really not feeling good.... I was desperately, desperately tired.... I was so worn out. I could not sleep well, my muscles were hurting all the time and I was diagnosed as having something called fibro myalgia. And it seems to be a stress-related disorder.

Beth's experience was so painful that it became unbearable:

In the end, it didn't become a choice of just changing schools, it was rather more like, this is not working for me, I have to stop teaching because this is too uncomfortable for me. And I didn't see any other options, I knew I had to take a year off.

That she was well liked by her principal and her colleagues, and that she loved the children she worked with did little to alleviate her pain. Moreover, Beth reported that her emotional state at work was aggravated by personal problems with one of her children. Nonetheless, Beth was aware that her working environment had little to do with her frustrations and unhappiness:

All my unhappiness in teaching had nothing to do with the kids, or the principal, or my colleagues. See, I was trusted there, I got lots of feedback saying I was really good at teaching, but I never felt it, and so I would live these doubts, these agonies, day in and day out, and I never really felt I belonged in that school, or in any other school for that matter.... It was the fear, you know, the fear, the agony that, some day, they [the principal and your colleagues] would know that I was not really good, that I didn't belong there, with them.

Beth did not re-enter teaching for four years as she "was still dominated by the same fear, the same agonies, and the same disease." However, during that period she joined a self-help group to deal with her fears and poor self-concept. This period marked a beginning transition in her attitude towards herself:

These last few years have been quite a big process for me. It [her changing perspective on self] started in the last couple of years before going back into teaching... Part of this process is getting to know and to accept myself, getting to know my strengths, and learning in some ways to ignore my weaknesses, or striving really hard to overcome them if they are getting in the way. And the self-help group I joined has really helped me, it has been a big part of the process.

Two years after she initiated her "healing" process, Beth started teaching again, and she suggested that her principal's support and recognition sustained and even strengthened her attitude shift about herself:

My principal is 100% behind me, you know, I can't get away with any kind of I'm not a good teacher around her. She tells me, "if there's one thing you are going to know before the end of June, it is that you're a good teacher." She is really, really helpful, really encouraging.

Beth further mentioned that her principal removed some of her uncertainties regarding teaching by setting clear expectations, providing her with specific feedback, and by being result-oriented:

What I have learned with Pam [the principal] is to be accountable, because she demands accountability all the time, and she's in your classroom all the time. I see Pam maybe four times a week in my classroom.... Her expectations are very clear, and maybe one of the differences between Pam and my other principals is that, instead of patting me on the back, she tells me specifically how I'm doing a good job, and this puts me on track, it gives me a sense of direction.... You know, those Grade 3 exams at the end of the year? Well, here at X [the school at which the participant worked], all the staff has a look at the results of those exams on the first day of the new term, and we determine the areas we should improve on, for example, reading-comprehension, or whatever, and when the first report cards come, we match these against the areas we wanted to improve. So, we're getting a really strong guidance, and also, it's a team approach, you know, we are all responsible to help these children, it's not just the Grade 3 teacher's job, we all have to do something to help the kids, like the Grade 1 teacher will have to do her share with the kids and take them to a certain place, and the Grade 2 teacher will have to take the kids from that place to a different place, and that way, we can focus on specific things, and we know what's expected, and we are not all over the map.

As a result of her growing process, Beth has been able to improve her concept of self and her feelings of efficacy:

Now, I can look over and see when there is a spark in the kids' eyes. I know when they are feeling challenged, when they are feeling, "hey, this is fun," and that does tremendous things for me, right, because I want to see that spark in their eyes. That spark tells me I am good, and now, I know I can

challenge the kids, that they are excited about learning, and that feels really good, you know. So, my confidence level is increasing, I'm happier, I'm brighter, and I don't have to hide being afraid because I'm not.

Regarding teaching, she emphasized:

I feel much more positive about my work now, I am in a happier frame of mind. Sometimes, it feels like self-sacrifice, like there are other things I'd rather be doing, but, lots of times, it feels like this is the best thing in the world, like this is really fun. Some days, I am just so grateful that I am doing this, and some days, I feel yuck, but those are really fewer than the good days, the great days, you know.

Furthermore, she also indicated a growing commitment to her principal and her colleagues:

I love my principal dearly. She is fun to be with and you can take that sense of fun back into the classroom. I also know I can be honest with her and that she won't use it against me. She just opens things out for you, she breaks down barriers, she really knows you.

I also opened up to my colleagues, I decided to be friendly with them. We might have some big egos on staff, but I am not perfect either, right?... and a magic started to happen. People felt that there was no resistance coming from me or whatever, and they became more responsive, and I am happy, now. I have two friends on staff.

Beth concluded:

My biggest commitment is to myself, to be willing to examine my beliefs, to question what I did the day before in my teaching, and to keep learning. I am committed to live in this world in a respectful manner, which means that I want to be the best teacher I can.

Natasha

Initially from Quebec, Natasha taught as an immersion teacher in five different elementary schools for about 15 years. Teaching was her first choice profession:

My parents told me that I always said I wanted to be a teacher. As a child, I would set up teaching activities for my sisters, and a few days later, we would review whatever we had done, and I would also organize games for them, and colouring and other art activities. At 12, I was already thinking how I would teach printing to Grade 1 kids. So, teaching was always something I wanted to do.

When asked to relate a significant event about her profession, Natasha

chose to speak about one of her experiences in rural Alberta where she was asked to implement and pioneer a French immersion program in an elementary school. Natasha was initially ecstatic with this assignment as she was extremely dedicated to the promotion and teaching of French as a second language:

I definitely had a sense of mission regarding bilingualism, regarding the promotion of French in Alberta, and because of that, I was also totally committed to the program... I was willing to sacrifice it all to get this program in place.

Natasha emphasized that the innovativeness and the importance of the program electrified her,

I also felt needed... I was totally thrilled, I felt I was part of something big and important, and I was going to do my very best for this program.

Natasha had also practical reasons to make the program a success:

I wanted to prove to everybody that I could implement the program because, when I was hired, the deputy superintendent said, 'many people think that this program will only last six weeks, but if it lasts at least six months, then your contract will be renewed.' So, I had a lot of reasons for doing it.

The high visibility of the program might have also intensified her perception of doing something important and meaningful:

A lot of attention was drawn to the program and to the people working in it... the local paper came to my school to interview me about the program, and the French television station also interviewed me. So, I was on television and my teacher aide was on television.

Natasha's excitement was further increased by her job autonomy and the apparent trust of her superordinates who had "given free range, or *carte blanche* to do what [she] thought would be best" to pioneer the immersion program. She felt "formally recognized" and indicated that it encouraged her to work harder.

Moreover, other factors, besides her deep sense of mission, her personal confidence in the program effectiveness and its high visibility, and her job autonomy also intensified Natasha's sense of purpose. Her previous teaching contract had not been renewed for personal reasons. This had left her uncertain about her professional and personal abilities, and determined to prove to herself and important others that she was "a good teacher,"

It [not getting a renewed contract with the Catholic Board] renewed a strong

desire to go out there and prove myself. It renewed that desire to prove that I was someone decent, as a professional and as a person.... First of all, I wanted to prove to myself that I was a good teacher, and that I could hold a job, and get a permanent contract. Second, I wanted my parents to be proud of me because I was very close to them at that time. I did not want them to be ashamed of me, they weren't too proud of the fact that my [first] contract was not renewed. So, yes, I had a lot of reasons for taking the job. I was highly committed to the program, I wanted to prove that I was a good teacher, I wanted to get a permanent contract, and I was totally delighted by being asked to do something big and important in my estimation.

Finally, as Natasha worked closely with the parents during the implementation of the program, she was able to foster close and fulfilling relationships with them and to generate more support for the program:

I worked really closely with the parents, and the parents were happy with what I was doing... they relied on my judgement, they were extremely supportive. And everybody was enthralled with the program.... I liked the parents, I really enjoyed the parents. These people had become my friends.

The support of the parents, as well as the trust and recognition her supervisors had demonstrated by hiring her to pioneer the French immersion program, increased Natasha's sense of efficacy, her confidence in her abilities, and her willingness to spend energy on the program:

I felt recognized, formally recognized.... I felt I was able, that I would be capable of implementing a good program for the children... it confirmed that what I was doing was good, was alright, and more than alright, and it also encouraged me to continue [what I was doing].

The only difficulty that she reported at that time was her perceived estrangement from her Anglophone colleagues,

At the same time, it was difficult because the other teachers was me as a threat. They began to think that perhaps with French immersion implemented at their school, there would be fewer students in their classes, and then, they might lose their job. So, they saw me as a threat and they stopped communication, or at least that's what I felt, and so, it hindered our relationships.

However Natasha's felt isolation from her colleagues was considerably alleviated by her satisfaction with her work:

I felt quite isolated, but at the same time, I knew that what I was doing was good for the children, and the parents were happy with what I was doing, and I was happy. Everybody was enthralled.

Her commitment to the program showed in a variety of ways. Natasha suggested she went "beyond the call of duty,"

I spent lots of extra time doing school related things, whether at work, on location, or at home.... I spent a lot of time outside of school hours thinking and planning about teaching, and I also spent a lot of time in committee meetings with the Canadian Parents for French at the local level, and also going to bookstores and to library fairs to buy books and search for materials. I went to the ATA French Council Conference in either Calgary or Edmonton at my own expense in the first few years. I went to the Canadian Association for Immersion Teachers' Conference which was outside of Alberta at my own expense. I also went to a book fair in St. Paul on my own time to get some resources for the students and the school.... I attended a lot of the Canadian Parents for French social functions and meetings. I was the editor of the publications that were published three or four times a year by the association.... Also, I would go and be a part of the float representing French immersion and publicize and promote our program.... I went to the local bake sales and made pancakes to help parents raising money, I sold plants at Christmas with them, you know, I did all these things.

Nevertheless, as time went by, Natasha indicated:

After a few years of establishing and pioneering, I began to tire. I thought that perhaps it was time to move on a different grade, or a different school, or a different position. If I were to stay on, it would have to be in a different capacity. I wanted to have more administrative duties of some kind.

Natasha gave a variety of reasons for her change of perspective about the program. Among these , she mentioned her superordinates' lack of cooperation to secure additional resources for the program, the increasing hostility of a few parents, and the silent but perceived solidarity of the other parents with the angry parents.

Natasha explained that four parents became increasingly irritated because their children were struggling in the program and the administrators seemed unable or unwilling to help these students, in spite of their numerous requests:

I had told the administrators that specific students had difficulties that needed to be addressed. I asked for additional resources to help them, but after two years of asking for more resources, my request was turned down. So these students experienced more and more difficulties and their parents started getting mad because they saw that the school board was not ready to address the issue.

Angered by the administrators' perceived indifference to the students'

difficulties, these parents became increasingly susceptible to the influence of individuals who criticized French immersion programs:

Then the parents began attending various conferences, and they fell under the influence of one particular woman who made very negative comments towards certain aspects of French immersion programs, and they began making demands.

Consolidated in their growing concerns about French immersion programs, these four parents tried to enlist Natasha's support:

The parents started to call me directly for something that, normally, they would talk about to the principal, or even people at the district level, and so, after a while, I told them, 'I cannot help you, it's beyond my jurisdiction, it's beyond my level of decision.' So, they got mad... they were really upset.

Natasha pursued:

They [the parents] started to change their attitudes and their techniques... and, the following year, it went from bad to worse.... They used methods to get what they wanted that I disagreed enormously with because they had the baseball bat approach. It's what they used to call it in their meetings. If we don't get this, we'll use the baseball bat approach.... they felt they had no other choice to get what they wanted for the program.

Natasha who disagreed with the parents' influence tactics decided to "withdraw a bit" from the parents," which only further angered them,

They saw me totally siding with the school and the school board with which they had a lot of animosity... and, at that point, they went on a warpath with me.

These four parents subsequently decided to step up their campaign against the program and its educators. They intensified their recruitment campaign among parents and other educators, and they tried to increase their influence on the school board via multiple influence techniques, such as coalitions, increased visibility in the school and at the district level, and clandestine tactics (e.g., manipulation and distortion of information). They also tried to increase their control over the program:

They wanted me to teach within an approach that was against the whole philosophy of the province in relation to the teaching of French language. They wanted me to have a specific grammar book and to teach verb conjugations which were considered by the province far beyond the grade four level.... They wanted me to have a separate booklet or duo tang with vocabulary lists out of context.... They also wanted cameras to film our

teaching, and they wanted to do it whether we felt comfortable with it or not, so things like that, and things became a bit crazy.

Natasha reported that her job autonomy decreased, along with her sense of teaching efficacy:

I could not teach the way I had wanted to teach because of the interferences from the parents. I felt like I was hindered, I was stopped from using the techniques that I wanted to use, that actually worked, and I felt that the program could not work because I was not given the liberty to use these techniques.

Natasha's felt powerlessness and alienation increased:

Powerless is what I felt. I felt I did not have the power to influence people as I used to... and at the time, basically, I was left alone with all the requests and demands coming from the parents, and not being able to provide them with what they wanted.

A sense of normlessness further aggravated her sense of powerlessness. Natasha did not know how to deal with the parents' demands and her superordinates had become invisible or were never available. She added:

That year, I felt like I was always behind, always having to catch up, never really having the resources I needed, but also, even though I had planned on paper my long-term plans, I felt like I was not really following them, and I could not be proactive.... I felt I could not get things together.... I felt I had regressed. I felt like I was in my first year of teaching again when you are trying to cope with everything, you know, the program and the resources.

Natasha's frustrations increased when she became aware that her present job would have little or no relevance to her future plans for an eventual administrative position in the district,

I asked the director of educational services if the school board might need a second language consultant, but she answered negatively, and I saw there was no way that I would advance my career.

She felt trapped in a job without any future. At the same time, her job had become meaningless since she felt powerless to influence her superordinates and the parents, unable to do what she wanted in class, and without any guidance as to what she could do to change her situation. Ultimately, she lost her sense of efficacy, and her concept of self shifted:

I did not feel too much recognition in the end, and it is not good for the self-esteem and the confidence level. I felt that I was at a low ebb after that year of teaching grade four, I felt crushed, I felt diminished, I did not feel

good about myself. I did not feel I was being the best person and teacher I could be.

Compounding her self-doubts, Natasha also felt an overwhelming guilt:

I felt I had let the parents down because they were so disappointed in me, and I felt guilty because I thought that maybe I should have spent more time pioneering and getting resources, materials, books, and more aids, visual aids for the classroom.... I felt guilt, I felt shame.

She also felt guilty toward the students, as some of them seemed uncomfortable in her presence:

They did not know any longer how to relate to me, they did not know what to say to me. I felt hurt because some of them did not feel comfortable communicating with me.

Natasha became very angry:

I was mad. I was mad at my principal. I thought he could have done more to promote the program. I was also mad at the Central Office. As far as I was concerned, it was clearly the Central Office's and the principal's fault.... I saw it as a lack of commitment of their part toward the program.

She continued:

I felt guilt, I felt shame, I felt anger, I felt disappointment... I felt powerless.... It's like a death, or a divorce, or a break up. You are sad, very sad because you did not reach the goals that you had set up for yourself, and all of a sudden, you regress.... my relationships with the parents were destroyed and I felt a deep hurt because I considered a lot of them my personal friends. But they felt betrayed and so did I.

Natasha became physically and mentally exhausted:

I had put my heart and soul into this job, and so, it was very hard for me. I did not have the energy to react, to fix things up. I was losing my hair, my nails weren't growing... I had very little energy. I had trouble getting up in the morning.... I was more apt to cry, to be upset, more apt to be mad. I was really disturbed by all this stuff, and physically, I just could not go on.... I was back at the survival level.

Natasha was diagnosed as having a hypo-thyroid. She suggested that the symptoms of her condition may have manifested themselves at that time because she was under severe stress.

Natasha lost her sense of purpose:

I just loved to work up to that point.... In the last year, my commitment

went down.... And, when there is less commitment, you feel less like going to work, and so, you go because you have to.

Natasha's commitment toward some shareholders decreased:

My relationships with parents and my administrators were kept to a minimum... with the four parents, they were nil, except for parent-teacher interviews.... I was turned off... the pain was too great, and so, not only do you decrease your commitment toward a person or a small group of persons but [you also decrease your commitment] to the larger community or group that these people are connected with.

She also invested less time and energy in her class. Moreover, she felt that the parents' attitudes justified her decision:

I put my energy outside of the classroom. I'd go and do my time and get out of there [the classroom] as soon as possible. I felt it did not matter what I did in my classroom that year, they [the parents] would not like it anyway, so what the hell, you know, I might as well put my energy in something constructive instead.

Natasha looked for new sources of satisfaction outside her class. These changes allowed her to restore some kind of emotional balance and to satisfy her social needs,

My commitment shifted from the classroom to the school as a whole... So I focussed on other children, on the school as a whole. I did the English spelling bee at the 4 to 6 level. I did the play component of the musical in English. I taught drama in English to grades 4 and 6 children. I started to see I could contribute a lot to the school as a whole, not just by promoting French, but also by teaching in English to kids, and [I started] relating to my English colleagues.... I had felt too isolated for too long and I was tired of feeling that way. So I put my energy outside of my classroom, in the school as a whole, and also in the community.

Her increased involvement in different activities generated a lot of support from her English colleagues, her principals, and some parents,

I had started doing amateur stage theatre, and I was working as an instructor and a cashier at the local swimming pool, and some of the teachers were parents of students I had taught the previous year, and so, they became more open-minded to me as a person, to me as a colleague, and to me as a member of the community. They knew me from a different point of view... and it helped... and my principal eventually sided with me and defended me... and my colleagues, you know, they became very understanding, totally sympathetic.

At the same time, she also spent more time with her boyfriend, and

she started looking for a new school:

I also spent more energy into my personal relationship, and also, that's what kept my sanity because I would talk to him about what was happening, and he thought it was ridiculous. He is not French, and so, he has a different view of things, which is good sometimes, because it shed a different light on things.

I decided that my time was finished there... it was too political, too difficult, and it was time to let go.

The transition point for Natasha seems to have been primarily brought by the following events: her multiple conflicts, her perceived isolation, the lack of support and recognition from the Francophone parents and her superordinates, and the growing importance of her relationship with her boyfriend:

I was now in a relationship with an English speaking man. And so, I thought I might not go back to Quebec, that, maybe, I was going to live here [in Alberta] a bit longer than I thought, or a lot longer than I thought. And I figured that I would have to get along with people, and so, at that point, I decided not to be so narrow-minded toward Anglo-Albertans, and to open up my mind, you know, to be better understood and to better understand them.... I had felt isolated for too long, I was seen as an outsider or as a foreigner, and I was tired of feeling that way.

From then on, Natasha started a retrospective examination on the events she had just been through and an envisioning of the types of relationships she would like to develop in the future:

To better understand the context in which I was living I had to mediate and negotiate in my head, with myself, to become less categorical and less militant, more understanding.

My boyfriend helped me a lot, he knew what was happening and how I felt and all that... we talked about our values, and things like that, and I started thinking about what I was doing or what I did, and the position in which I was placed, you know, on a pedestal, and I started to realize I was playing with power, and I saw I was manipulating others, because I did to manipulate the parents when I talked to administrators, and I did have to manipulate administrators when I talked to the parents, so that I could get out of them what I wanted for the students.

This reflective process "forced [Natasha] to come face to face with what was important" to her. She realized the importance of having common foundational values guiding her professional life and her personal life,

You have to be committed to certain principles and values. I also realized that what I am committed to in my work has to be related to what I am committed to in my personal life, there has to be a connection somewhere... there has to be a congruency between the commitments I have I work and the ones I have in my own life, outside of work.... There is a greater sense of commitment when there is no major conflict between what is expected of me and what I expect of myself, when there is a congruency between what the school stands for and what I believe in.

When asked to define the values she now believes significant, Natasha had little hesitations,

I believe in treating others well, respecting others, whether they are adults or children, making other people's lives better, or accommodating other people while respecting their differences, and being true to myself and to others... in having a certain integrity, values and principles... in humbling myself a little bit, in pushing my ego aside, in getting past the barrier of the ego... in making an effort to look at things from others' perspectives.... Well, another value would be that of peace and so to compromise more and put myself in the other person's position, the person who feels threatened by the French immersion program, or the French immersion teacher, the person who does understand French when it's spoken in his or her presence. So, peace, tolerance of differences, compromise, love and respect, more harmony, also, [these values should] not just be limited to children, but to adults and the people I work with.

This shift in values from the promotion of French and bilingualism to serving, understanding and nurturing others, was reflected in a new awareness about her role as a teacher,

My focus went from the program, and being French, and promoting bilingualism, to the child... or from the parents to the child, of from impressing the administrators to the child.... My definition of commitment changed in the sense that I decided I would be committed to the students first, not the program.... I would do my best for the students, and I have kept that level of commitment to the students and it has helped me ever since. So no matter what non-sense is happening with parents or teachers or principals or whatever, I do what's best for the students at that point in time.... And that's what has kept me on track ever since.

Her attitude toward her colleagues changed as well,

To tell you the truth, my sense of commitment toward my colleagues was not very high when I started the program because of how I was initially perceived... but after, my level of commitment toward my colleagues started to change because they became very supportive of me. I understood I could rely on them. And that's when my understanding of collegiality changed. At that point, you know, I received so much from these English teachers that I just started giving back.... So, I have learned to make sure that I speak as

much to English teachers as to French immersion teachers, something I did not do previously. I mix more with teachers without getting into criticizing. I just try to find something that I have in common with as many people as possible, so that we can have a common ground, and so they feel comfortable with me, instead of seeing me as a French person, as a French immersion teacher.

Similarly, her relationships with administrators and parents gained a new meaning,

[Since] I made some really good contacts and good friendships with administrators, and so I started to see administrators as people first and as principals or administrators second. That's one thing I learned through the years, I try to see a person as a person first, and that makes me forgive what they do more easily, you know.

Then I realized that if parents know that you want what's best for their child, they'll be on your side. So you have to make that very clear in the way you teach and from what you communicate to them. If you always focus your discussions on the child in a positive way, even though the child has problems, if you talk about them [the children] in a positive or in a constructive way, the parents will be more receptive to hearing the problems, you know.

As Natasha reflected on her role in the previous events, she became increasingly aware of the importance of communication:

I learned that administrators need feedback. They don't always know what's going on and they need us to tell them what we want. They need us not to be shy or afraid of them, to go and tell them what's happening, because they don't always know, and we are the link between the kids and the parents and them.... [Also] if other English teachers or librarians cannot understand why you want more books for the program, if you explain it by giving an example of how it affects the child, then you have more of a chance of getting through to this person.

More generally, her concept of self shifted. She stopped seeing herself as separate and different from others. She stopped erecting a boundary between herself and the Anglophones. She opened up to others, reached toward them, and supported them in diverse activities. She began to relate to them as persons, and no longer as representatives of a culture, a language, or a specific profession. She developed a new understanding of others and self, and that transformed her relationships with others and enhanced her sense of efficacy:

I began to see myself not just as the French immersion teacher, as French, but as a teacher... as a person... and I began to think that if we unveil all the layers of stuff that are in our bodies, in our lives, we find little gems,

gems full of love.... So, you have to kind of let go and let that [love] come out of you.

I believe that what I do is valuable. I know I can be replaced. That's one thing I realized with the experience in rural Alberta, but at the same time, I know that one person can make a lot of difference. Even little differences count, every little step toward making a change, and I know that if I put my best foot forward, then I can contribute, do something that is valuable. I believe that we are here for a reason and that I can make a difference if I decide to make a difference, even though it's a little difference.

She re-defined the meaning of her experience in rural Alberta. At the time of the interviews, she emphasized it has helped her becoming "a better" person and a better teacher, and thus, was a growing and enriching experience,

In my case, I think I am a better person and a better professional for it [the experience in rural Alberta]. And yes, there are wounds, yes, there were sad moments, but I have grown, I have become wiser, and that's joyful. And I think that the fierceness and the intensity of your purposes can still be there, but you have learned when to show it and when not to show it. Also, it helped me to be humble, and I think that, at times, it's good. Things may get to your head, and you need to come back down to Earth, you know, to accept criticisms, to be a better person. I learn to compromise, you know, to be more tactful more diplomatic, more thoughtful. I became more forgiving. Now, I try to see the good in people and the good side of things, you know. I have also learned to be more conscious about being flexible, and to balance, you know, to look for balance in life, and in relation to my personal and professional life.

I have included other stories (Corinne, David, Jane, Tim, Caroline, Teresa) and an update on the informants' commitments two years after the interviews in the appendices (appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, G). Although each one of these stories is unique, they tend to confirm the above informants' reactions, emotions, and decisions when faced with a disorienting dilemma or going through a fulfilling experience.

Conclusion

The teachers' stories highlight that the storytellers' professional commitments were not limited to how they felt about teaching, the community members they worked with, and their life at school, but encompassed the whole of their lives. Teachers also suggested that they experienced different levels of commitments to the community members or community groups, and that the intensity and focus of their commitments were susceptible to changes. As well, storytellers indicated that the rise and

fall of their commitments were often facilitated by specific organizational characteristics and processes. Teachers who worked in “positive” environments often experienced high commitments, whereas informants who taught in “negative” communities tended to experience a decrease in their commitments, except their commitment toward like-minded colleagues.

Teachers identified different foci for their commitments: teaching, the students, their colleagues, principals, the parents’ children, and their work communities. Nonetheless, even though teachers became committed to their school when they developed strong bonds with the different community members, commitment to school did not appear to have a significant impact in the teachers’ professional lives. Although this may seem rather ironic since previous research on commitment has been primarily focussed on organizational commitment, this finding supports Menzies’ (1995) research. Menzies (1995) who studied faculty members’ commitments in five colleges in Ontario (N = 331) reported that their commitment to their colleges was not as important to them as their other work commitments (e.g., their commitment to teaching and/or to their students).

The informants’ stories suggest that specific organizational and psycho-social characteristics and processes may have facilitated their commitments. Among those, storytellers mentioned agreed-upon goals that benefited the children, a clear sense of direction, collaboration, innovativeness, continuous learning, support and recognition, and exemplar role-modelling. Storytellers also indicated that in positive communities the school’s emphasis on the children’s welfare and the community’s shared values and goals were reflected in the school’s daily routines (Barbara, Caroline, Teresa). As well, they emphasized that principals⁸ through their leadership played a crucial role in the development of positive work communities.

The teachers’ stories further indicate that when storytellers worked in what they described as positive environments, they were more likely to:

Develop positive attitudes toward the different community members, their work communities, and teaching.

Exert extra efforts and support the school goals. Storytellers were quite willing to “spend more time and energy inside and outside of

⁸ The influence of principals on the story tellers’ commitments is carefully examined in the next chapter.

class" (Tina) and to increase their collaborative work. This included planning, designing, researching, and preparing teaching materials with other teachers (Barbara, Teresa, Mary), working with their colleagues on diverse committees (Jane, Natalie, Mary), sharing their knowledge with the other community members, and engaging in frequent, continuous talk about teaching practice with the community members (Teresa, Jane, Tina).

Be committed to teaching. Teaching was described as "very challenging and fulfilling" (Tina), "very rewarding" (Mary), "very interesting" (Tim), "very exciting" (Caroline), or "very encouraging" (Jane). Teachers believed that teaching was an art, an act of creation. They also believed that teaching could not be mastered simply and that life long learning, collaborative work, and the willingness to critically examine their practice was necessary for them to become more effective teachers.

Experience a deep-felt commitment toward the children. They wanted "to be the best teachers they could be for the children" (Jane); they were prepared to critically reflect on their daily practice (Tina, Jane), and to keep learning and searching for new strategies to reach more children (Barbara, Tina). They were aware of individual differences among children and took these differences into account when they planned, prepared, and presented their lessons to the children. If children failed to learn, these teachers did not blame the children, or their parents, or their environments, they looked for new strategies, asked for additional advice, and sought new materials. Although these teachers were concerned by the academic achievements of children, they were also very concerned by their social and emotional needs, including the necessity to develop a "caring and nurturing attitude toward the children" (Larry) so that both teachers and children could "blossom" (Larry) together.

Gain in certainty about their teaching efficacy. As well, their concept of self and others shifted. Their self-esteem increased as a result of their achievements and through their affiliation with and recognition from significant others. These teachers felt that each one of them were endowed with unique qualities and talents and that they were interdependent. They also felt at peace within themselves as they reconciled who they were as teachers with whom they felt they 'ought' to be. Larry described this process particularly well when he spoke of his being finally able to integrate his spiritual principles into his every day life. Thus, they became one within themselves and one

with their community members as they developed a deep sense of connectedness with them and as they incorporated significant others' gifts and knowledge into their practice. Their professional and personal lives became increasingly meaningful as their sense of professional worth permeated their personal lives.

Experience a sense of fulfilment and joy. Teachers believed that they fulfilled an important role in a worthwhile enterprise.

The above information is also enclosed in Table 3 (Appendix I).

The teachers' transition from feelings of fulfilment and high commitment to feelings of meaninglessness and worthlessness seemed to have often been induced by the informants' growing awareness of a disjuncture between their expectations and their actual experiences (David, Jeremy, Larry), and/or between their previous and actual working experiences, particularly when their previous experiences had been fulfilling (Tina, Mary, Natalie). Some respondents (Corinne, Mary) also suggested that a particularly unfair incident might have precipitated the decline and/or shift of their commitments.

Nonetheless, respondents also suggested that specific organizational characteristics and processes might have facilitated a decrease in some of their commitments (e.g., lack of value congruency, intraorganizational conflicts, normlessness regarding the school direction and/or goals, the attribution of diverse school rewards, task routinization, lack of upward or lateral mobility). Again, many storytellers emphasized the crucial role that principals played in developing a felt negative environment.

As well, teachers stated that their dissatisfaction was often strengthened as they engaged in diverse processes, such as an increasing focus on the negative aspects of their roles, community members, and work environments (Larry, Mary, Tina), the reactivation of latent and negative beliefs about teaching and teachers (Larry), the internalization of new beliefs regarding teaching, community members, and themselves (Tina, Mary, Natalie), frequent comparisons with previous more positive environments (Mary, Tina, Teresa), the participants' attempts to rationalize and justify their growing anger.

Storytellers further suggested that when they worked in negative communities, they were more likely to:

Develop unfavourable attitudes toward specific community members,

their schools, and, in some cases, teaching.

Decrease their involvement inside their classes (Beth, Natasha, Tina), and, or in the school. At the same time, they redirected their energies toward other activities in the larger community and devised different options to cope with their felt stress (e.g. creation of coalitions, self-disclosure of emotions). Natasha, however, re-directed some of her energy toward both the larger community and different school activities as well.

Experience a deep sense of powerlessness and failure. The storytellers' feelings of failure and powerlessness were fostered by the teachers' felt inability or great difficulties to control their classes and influence the children's learning, their inability to influence the school decisions and the work community's members, their lack of autonomy, their inability to live up to their internal standards and values, to build warm relationships with the community members, their difficulty to deal with continuous and somewhat aggressive interferences from specific community groups or members, and to achieve valued goals (e.g., a continuing contract). Helplessness, normlessness, lack of experience, the teachers' inability or unwillingness to ask for help further compounded the storytellers' feelings of role conflict, overload, role alienation, increasing powerlessness, and ultimately generated a sense of meaninglessness in the storytellers' lives.

Feel a deep sense of cultural and social alienation. The storytellers' feelings of cultural alienation were partly caused by the fact that storytellers and new community members held different values and beliefs (Mary, Tina), by the teachers' growing recognition of a disjuncture between their expectations and their actual working experiences (David, Jane, Jeremy, Larry, Natalie), by the constant interferences of specific interest groups and the community members' lack of support (Natasha, Tim), by competitiveness, rivalries, and favouritism within the work community, and by some of the community members' attempts at character assassinations (Barbara, Natasha). The teachers' feelings of alienation were often reinforced by different phenomena, such as the rapid emergence of countercultures and the betrayal of some of school staff who "jumped ship" (Tina) and espoused the new cultures' values and beliefs. The emergence of countercultures (and coalitions) was facilitated by important staff turnover (Tina). Staff turnover also weakened the storytellers' support systems since some of their close colleagues left and were replaced by new staff. As a result, teachers felt that they did not belong or fit in

their work environments and they felt estranged from the diverse community members.

Develop a sense of self-estrangement. This feeling was induced by the teachers' felt obligation to present themselves to other community members as if they were a different person, that is, to construct and playact faces and behaviours that were alien to them. Storytellers felt compelled to act in ways that were foreign to them when the new staff's values and beliefs were different from their own values and beliefs (Mary), when their commitments decreased (Larry), when their professional dedication was questioned by other members of their work community (Jane), and when they were overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy (Beth). This playacting often induced considerable feelings of guilt, self-betrayal, and self-disappointment in the respondents and affected their concept of self. In addition, to try and avoid or at least to delay their colleagues' awareness of their playacting, many of the teachers further distanced themselves from their colleagues (Jane, Larry) and avoided self-disclosure (Beth, Teresa), thereby further increasing their sense of isolation.

Experience feelings of meaninglessness. The teachers' feelings of meaninglessness were not only caused by the storytellers' sense of powerless and failure, but also by a sense of "boredom" (Jeremy) or task routinization (Tim), different unfulfilled expectations or ambitions (Larry, Jeremy), specific organizational characteristics (e.g., helplessness), and the teachers' feelings of alienation and self-estrangement.

Feel a sense of worthlessness. Ultimately the storytellers' feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness, and hopelessness boosted their sense of worthlessness and permeated the teachers' personal lives.

Feel little commitment toward their schools, their administrators, specific community members, and the school goals. In fact, most teachers initiated a search for a different working environment. Some of the teachers who reported that their commitment to teaching decreased (Barbara, Jeremy, Natalie) temporarily left teaching. Nonetheless, the teachers' commitment to teaching only decreased when storytellers experienced both a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness.

As well, informants suggested that the principals' inability or unwillingness to help them technically (Barbara, Natasha), emotionally (Mary,

Tina), and/or financially (Natasha, Mary, Teresa), their failure to recognize and appreciate the participants' efforts and successes, their failure to support already established school-wide norms regarding the school goals, the children's behaviours, and/or norms guiding the community members' social relationships (e.g., norms regarding collaboration), the principals' failure to provide teachers, in particular inexperienced teachers or teachers with an external locus of evaluation, with relevant and frequent feedback on their performance (Beth, Caroline, Jeremy), and/or a supervision style that limited the teachers' autonomy (Jeremy, Mary), further compounded the participants' feelings of powerlessness, failure, and meaninglessness.

The above information is also encapsulated in Table 5 (Appendix K).

As noted earlier, to decrease or soften the emotional impact of their growing frustrations, many teachers searched for colleagues who shared their feelings and experiences and formed cliques (Tina, Mary). Cliques often helped storytellers reduce their feelings of isolation, provided them with some welcome emotional reassurance, helped them maintain some sort of connectedness, and ultimately restored some sort of temporary emotional balance in them. Nonetheless, the emotional relief that these coalitions provided the teachers with was short-lived. Teachers indicated that they still felt very frustrated (Mary), increasingly unhappy (Mary, Tina), and deeply distressed (Mary, Tina). Their strong identification with like minded staff might have further accelerated the their' feelings of distress.

Coalitions also reinforced the teachers' feelings of cultural alienation. Tina and Mary suggested that they strengthened their "negativity" against their environments via the following processes: sharing and validation of like-minded individuals' experiences in their new environments (i.e., gaining conviction and confidence in their judgements), "awfulizing" (Mary) and "obsessing on" (Mary) many of the aspects of their environments and of their experiences, predicting further deteriorations, actively searching new reasons to justify their disappointments, collectively comparing their previous and actual environments and blaming new staff members for their felt experiences, collectively rationalizing their anger and frustrations, and providing a mutually agreed upon basis for culturally inappropriate and appropriate behaviours and decisions.

As well, these cliques rapidly reinforced the growing polarization and tensions among the staff members (Mary, Tina). Like-minded individuals further distanced themselves psychologically and physically from the new staff by "tuning them out" (Tina), avoiding common spaces, such as the lunchroom, and avoiding any kinds of collaboration (David, Tina, Mary).

Derogation, blaming, name-calling, and critical postures solidified, and as Tina noted "it became very, very stilted." The joy, the energy, and the enthusiasm that these teachers had experienced were all but gone, and, as Mary emphasized, it ultimately affected the children,

It's not healthy for the kids when teachers stop sharing those good ideas or their good strategies. Kids are missing out then. And if we want to have continuity from grade to grade, we need to share, we need to know what works and what doesn't, and if we just hide in our classrooms and don't talk, what are we going to do as a school for our writing program, or our science program or our math program? If we don't talk about these things, that hurts the kids.

The teachers' transition from alienation and meaninglessness to a renewed sense of fulfilment was facilitated by the storytellers' recognition that they had reached their "breaking point" (Tina). Storytellers reported that they "just couldn't take it anymore" (Barbara, Mary), they were "going to explode" (Barbara), they were not longer "willing to put up with certain situations that were unfulfilling and very frustrating" (Natalie), and that their situation "was just too uncomfortable" (Beth):

I've learned that I have a tolerance level and that I will put up with only so much.... This year, the frustration has just been overwhelming... and I don't believe [that] I should put up with that kind of frustration just.... There is a limit to everything. (Natalie)

The storytellers' recognition that they had reached their breaking point was fostered by different factors. Among those, teachers mentioned the extent to which, they could tolerate continuous frustrations and a consistent sense of unfulfilment (Natalie), the amount to which they could endure overbearing feelings of guilt due to the fact that they knew they "had little to offer to the children" (Larry), that they were not as effective as they had been in previous years (Mary, Teresa, Tina), that they violated their personal standards and values by impersonating committed individuals or people who were alien to them (Beth, Larry, Mary), that they had betrayed the teachers they wanted to be or felt they ought to be (Jane, Larry), and were in the process of losing all self respect (Jane, Larry, Mary), by the extent to which teachers held dear the values that were challenged in their changed environments (Tina), and by their fear of being revealed for the uncommitted individuals that they were (Jane, Larry).

The teachers' growing recognition of their unhappiness might have also been accelerated by the workplace coalitions and the teachers' realization that their discontentment and problems were shared by others,

and by the increased “negativity” (Mary) that these coalitions seemed to generate. As well, the teachers’ fruitless efforts to change their situations (e.g., Tina’s principal had refused to act on her grievances and was not listening to her; Mary’s attempts at questioning her principal’s changes had been shot down; Barbara’s request for help and proposals for changes had been brushed aside) further compounded their discouragement and disenchantment. As Barbara noted, “ you can only bang your head against a brick wall so many times, and after that you have to quit, to look for something else.”

Some teachers (Corinne, Mary) also suggested that specific critical incidents might have triggered or accelerated their transition phase. These incidents included the diagnosis of a serious illness (Beth, Mary, Natasha), a “particularly bad year” (Larry), or the storytellers’ realization that they had been denied something they truly valued (Corinne, David, Jane).

Nonetheless, and although teachers shared to some degree some of the above feelings, their stories and the reasons for which they entered the transition period remained ultimately very personal. For example, Mary reported that it was a combination of her felt powerlessness to change her situation, her growing dissatisfaction at her working environment, her increasing dissatisfaction at her own ineffectiveness in class, her awareness of her close colleagues’ pain, her illness, and a particularly unfair incident that prompted her to look at alternatives. In Natasha’s case, it was a combination of her felt powerlessness and helplessness to accommodate the angry parents and effectively help their children, her desire to connect with her Anglophone colleagues due to her overwhelming feelings of isolation, her reduced job autonomy, and her relationship with her Anglophone boyfriend that drove her to reflect on her values and the future she wanted to build for herself. Finally, as far as Larry was concerned, it was his consistent sense of emptiness, which lasted approximately a decade, his overbearing sense of guilt due to his awareness that he was not behaving as a Christian, and his realization (and acceptance) that he would no become a principal that incited him to re-examine his attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Once teachers recognized that they had reached their limit or their breaking point, they started a prospective reflexion process about the type of relationships they would like to develop in the future, the people that they would like to work with, and the work environments that they would like to be in. This reflection process was carried by the teachers themselves (Larry, Mary, Natasha), and at times, with the help of significant others (Natasha), or self-help groups (Beth, Jane). As well, many of the storytellers, supported by their self-help groups or significant others, engaged in a retrospective and

critical examination of their past actions and attitudes towards their work community members and their past actions.

As storytellers reflected on their experiences and attitudes, they began to accept that they might have some responsibility in what had happened to them:

I began to realize [that] I was the problem... that I was not a victim of the kids that came into my classroom or the people I worked with, or the school administration, or all the other things around me. I was pretty well in the kinds of circumstances that I had created myself. (Larry)

They [the members of Jane's self-help group] helped me look at my responsibilities into the matter, to admit that I was the one that got myself into that situation. (Jane)

Teachers (Larry, Natasha) suggested that these examination-reflection processes tended to expand into the examination-evaluation of their values:

I had to look at my values.... You can go along in your personal life and your professional life and never even think of values, or beliefs or principles, there is a conflict, and you start thinking about them, and examining them. (Natasha)

I came to understand that there are two orientations one can take in life. We either go a way that is essentially [characterized by] acquiring... acquiring people, things, more money, more power, and it's a very selfish way. The other way is one of outgoing concern, one of spending oneself for the good of others. (Larry)

At the same time, storytellers searched for alternate roles, work environments. By exploring their options, implementing a plan of action, and provisionally trying new roles and environments, teachers were able to regain their sense of efficacy and their commitments.

The end of the teachers' transition was characterized by the storytellers' search for meaning or what Natasha called a time of "spiritual development," the exploration of new definitions regarding their roles and purposes, and the integration of their learning into their everyday experiences (Natasha, Larry, Mary). Although teachers learned many different things from their experiences, there were two themes that tended to come back, love and a greater concern for others:

I began to see my colleagues, the administrators, the parents not as colleagues, or administrators, or parents, but as persons.... I began to think that if we unveil all the layers of stuff that are in our bodies, in our lives, we find little gems, gems full of love... So, you have to kind of let go and let

that [love] come out of you... (Natasha)

I've now chosen to focus my personal life on giving, serving, helping, in other words, spending myself and my resources for the good of others... There is a great deal of satisfaction and also self-esteem and fulfilment knowing that our life is not focussed on personal gain and our own personal ambitions, that we achieve, I achieve happiness through an interest in others. (Larry)

Briefly summarizing the above, the teachers' transition period was characterized by disorienting dilemmas or experiences, the teachers' recognition of their own discontentment, guilt, and fear, the teachers' prospective examination of their future and retrospective reflection on their past actions, attitudes, and values, the teachers' explorations of options for new roles, work communities, and relationships, the implementation of a course of action, the storytellers' provisional trying of new roles and work places, the storytellers' making meaning of their experiences, redefining their roles and purposes, and the integration of their learning into their everyday lives.

The processes by which teachers became committed are more closely examined in Chapter five.

Chapter Five

MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENTS: TEACHERS' STORIES

In this chapter, I build on the experiential scaffolding of the previous chapter and on additional information from my conversations with the storytellers. My purposes are to further examine the reasons for which teachers remained in the teaching profession, and the diverse processes that facilitated or hindered the storytellers' commitments from their perspectives.

Teachers' Commitment to Teaching

Teachers' stories suggest that respondents remained in teaching for intrinsic and extrinsic factors and to recover a sense of self worth, particularly after a poor experience. They also downplayed the importance of the extrinsic factors.

Intrinsic Incentives

Among the intrinsic factors, teachers focussed on the delights of working with children and adults and a number of felt fulfilling role characteristics, such as the subsequent feelings of importance and success that came from teaching young children and being valued by the adult community members, the feeling of doing something that "felt right," and the multiple challenges that teaching offered them. In the following pages, I look at the personal and work community characteristics and processes that facilitated and hindered the storytellers' commitments to their colleagues, the children's parents, and the principals. Following that, I looked at what attracted the storytellers to children and teaching.

The teachers' colleagues. At the time of our conversations, when I asked storytellers who were the community members they felt most committed to, half of them ranked their colleagues in second position, right after the children and before the children's parents, and the remaining half ranked their colleagues in third position, after the children and the parents.

Many of the teachers stated that they really enjoyed working with adults. The satisfaction that they derived from working with other people and contributing to their lives was illustrated in comments such as: "I believe [that] I'm a people's person. I really enjoy spending time with people, be it children or adults" (Natalie), or "One of the things I value most about this job is being with students and being with adults, working with them" (Tim).

Teachers also suggested that the similarities of their situations facilitated an identification process, or initial feelings of solidarity, with their colleagues:

Well, at this point, I see them truly as the word 'co' or a prefix 'co' would be, as co-workers. We are in the same profession. We work together. We are very much in the same situation. They often experience the same joys and problems... We suffer together... it creates a bond. (Larry)

They also emphasized that similar personalities, familiarity, and regular contacts further increased their identification with and commitment to their colleagues,

I do feel more committed to some colleagues to some degree, certainly. It's partly because I have more contact with some of them, just by virtue of the fact I teach some of their students more often. That's certainly part of it. (Tim)

I think that commitment is a lot like any friendship that develops. You tend to like more people who are somewhat like you in different ways, with perhaps similar personalities. (Mary)

A common vision, shared values and goals also promoted feelings of affiliation and commitment among teachers. Many of the teachers felt more committed to colleagues who shared their interest in children and children's growth since that was what they valued the most:

The bottom line is that I do feel the commitment to teachers, who like myself, are in it [teaching] for the kids and for whom kids are number one, and my commitment gets lost when somebody is in it for reasons other than that. (Caroline)

Hard-work also seemed to strengthen the storytellers' commitment to their colleagues and fostered the teachers' desire to help and support their colleagues:

I would do anything to work with colleagues who are hard working, dedicated professionals, and I certainly feel committed to them. I am definitely more committed to teachers who are really hard working. (Tina)

I have always done my best to help teachers that are committed, even if I don't always see eye to eye with them about how they do something. If you see somebody working hard, it's very difficult just to push their concerns or ideas to the side. (Tim)

Several storytellers suggested that they came across exemplar role-

modelers who inspired them and to whom they became deeply committed:

When I was a young teacher, I came across a man who was teaching music in a school here in Edmonton. He was by far one of the most remarkable men I ever met and certainly the most remarkable teacher, and he had a profound impact on me. He made a profound difference, because he also took me in. He mentored me and I kept in touch with him for years after I started teaching.... His imparting made a big difference to me.... There were other teachers as well who became role-models for me, people you'd aspire to be like. (Tim)

These exemplar role-modelers also helped storytellers shape or deepen their understanding of teaching and of their roles as educators, socialized them to new educational values and beliefs, many of which they internalized, and strengthened their concept of selves:

These teachers were my role models and I wanted to be like them. Maybe I didn't have a strong personal identity, and these teachers helped me define what I wanted to be like, or what I wanted to become. (Beth)

Collaboration, which was often encouraged by the school principals, further reinforced the storytellers' commitment to their colleagues. The teachers' enthusiasm and excitement at collaboration resound loudly in the following quotations:

The exchange of ideas was very, very stimulating, very rewarding.... I felt a sense of family there.... We were very much a team working for these children, and I remember the love we shared for the children and the discussions we had in the staff room, and the tremendous fun we had (David)

It's really fun working with others, it's really exciting.... Collaboration is really wonderful because it's a real learning opportunity. (Caroline)

Collaboration also generated support (or reciprocation) from the community members, and support became mutual:

I felt that it was time for me to be part of the whole staff... So, I put my energy outside of my classroom... I did the English spelling bee at the 4 to 6 level... I taught drama in English to grades 4 and 6 children.... and, it helped, the English teachers really started to support me... they became very understanding, totally sympathetic... it was wonderful.... It was at that point that I decided to continue doing what I had done, and when I transferred to a new school, I continued supporting my colleagues, working with them. (Natasha)

In that school, there was a lot of different people, lot of different personalities, and they didn't work with each other, but as we started

working together on this evaluation project, I noticed that teachers who had not spoken to one another other than just hello or goodbye, actually started speaking together, and sharing, and helping each other. It was shocking. Things have certainly come a long way, and I believe that because we actually started talking and communicating, we saw that other people too had stuff to offer, and they started to realize that differences can actually benefit the staff and the children as well. (Mary)

This reciprocal support was particularly important for teachers when they were in difficult situations:

Teacher friends are very important. Whenever, I have a problem, they listen, they offer emotional support, sympathy, understanding, and reassurance, and that's very important to me. (Teresa)

Collaboration fostered the teachers' appreciation of each other's strengths and their own uniqueness (Barbara, Larry). Teachers grew to recognize, respect, and admire each other. Others' respect and admiration also influenced their sense of efficacy and their commitment to teaching:

When you work together, you get lots of pats in the back, you know... you learn about one another talents, people respect you, and support you, and you respect and admire them, and you support them too... you grow more confident about your abilities and more willing to try new things. (Mary)

When you work with other people, it's very rewarding. You get a lot of different ideas, you become more effective. You gain a lot of confidence, you become a better teacher. It allows teachers to build on each other strengths... and your commitment to your colleagues increases, but so does your commitment to teaching. (Natasha)

Support seemed to increase the teachers' willingness to share professional information, engage in conversations about educational issues (Mary, Tina, Jeremy), work collaboratively on committees and extra-curricular activities, and to listen to their colleagues' advice and guidance (Beth, Jane, David). As well, teachers developed a personal interest in each other, and strong affections bonded them to each other,

What started to happen as people worked together is that there was more personal interest in each other. People asked each other, "How was your weekend? What's new? How is your wife? How is your garden? " There was more connectedness between us, even though we were a very mixed bag. (David)

You felt like you were part of a family.... it was probably the first time in my life [that] I felt I belonged to a family, aside from my own immediate family, my husband and my children. (Barbara)

The pleasure, fun, and lightness that teachers experienced through their growing relationships expanded into their activities inside school, and teaching became a highly enjoyable, an extremely fun enterprise:

We did wild, silly things together at school, but we felt it was okay... It was never hurtful to anybody... Nobody was going to use that against us, and we had so much fun. (David)

These relationships also often extended beyond the walls of the school, and over many years, even when teachers no longer worked together:

We practically ate, slept, breathed, and lived together. We did professional things together for the school, we did social things together, and we did absolutely silly things together. We all had families, or most of us, and so lots of the activities were family based, you know, like bowling on Sunday afternoon, things like that. (Barbara)

I haven't worked with those people [Mary's colleagues at that time] for about six years now, but every year, faithfully, we get together to have a celebration, a celebration of what we did, and we celebrate one another and our lives... the link between us is incredibly strong. (Mary)

These affective bonds reinforced the teachers' mutual feelings of commitment:

The better we know each other, the deeper we know each other, and the more satisfying and fun the relationships, and the more commitment you feel toward your colleagues. (Barbara)

As well, these community-building processes benefited the children:

In that school, people liked sharing, they liked working together, and it showed up in the children. The children were very happy to be there and they also did very well when they wrote the provincial tests. (Jane)

Previous experiences in other working environments also affected the teachers' commitments to their colleagues (Barbara, Tina),

There is little doubt that what you have experienced before in different environments kind of influence how you feel about your colleagues when you go to a new school. If you had positive experiences with your colleagues, you are bound to have developed a positive attitude toward your colleagues and that facilitates your initial feelings of commitment to your new colleagues. The rest depends a lot on what happens in your new school. (Natasha)

Three teachers (Beth, Larry, Nicole) stated that personal transformations facilitated their feelings of commitment to their colleagues. These teachers initiated an internal process of reflection and a communal or self examination that ultimately changed their attitudes towards their colleagues (Larry):

I finally realized that I was pretty well in the kinds of circumstances that I had created myself, that my attitude was coming back to me in the ways people responded to me, and I realized it was time for me to change. (Larry)

Alternately, many of the teachers reported that they felt little commitment for teachers who were not committed to teaching and the children:

What turns me off are teachers who don't care, people who show up at quarter past eight and leave at four o'clock, or teachers who treat kids without respect, that really bothers me, and I am not committed to these teachers. (Tina)

I have a major problem with teachers not doing their jobs, with people who don't care if the kids learn, teachers whose kids don't learn and who blame it on the kids, on the family, on society, or the administration, and I don't associate with them. (Barbara)

Teachers also tended to turn away from unsupportive colleagues, or colleagues who did not treat them as professionals:

My commitment to my colleagues depends on the respect that they treat me with and their support too. (David)

Isolation, lack of contacts, and little or no collaboration also made it difficult for storytellers to become committed to their colleagues:

When I first came to that school, I didn't feel a sense of commitment toward other teachers. I didn't know any of them, and it took some time for me to develop a sense of commitment towards my colleagues here, and it was difficult because people weren't working together. (Mary)

I don't feel very committed to my colleagues.... I don't know them and they don't know me because we don't do things together, so there is no opportunity for me to get to know them. (Teresa)

The storytellers' isolation and lack of collaboration was sometimes voluntary. Shyness, feelings of inadequacy or low feelings of efficacy, social fear, feelings of guilt, felt differences, and feelings of worthlessness tended to hinder the teachers' desire to collaborate and/or to self-disclose:

Sometimes, it is hard to open oneself to other relationships, particularly in your school, because you always want to appear to be on top of it. (Tim)

In other schools, I've done a fair amount of socializing with teachers outside of the workplace, but here, I don't, and it may be partly due to my age. Certainly when I was not married, when I first began teaching, I didn't have the commitment of a family, so I had more time to socialize. (Jeremy)

Different work schedules, different curricula, uneven class distribution, role conflict and role overload, as well as other commitments also affected the teachers' ability to collaborate and develop fulfilling relationships with their colleagues:

I am not sure I feel strongly committed to my colleagues because I don't know them very well... Kindergarten runs a very different schedule than the rest of the school and I don't have many opportunities to talk and form close relationships with other teachers. (Natalie)

At this school, I don't work with the other Grade one teacher because she teaches in French, and our programs are totally different.... Moreover, our classes are also totally different, it's day and night. I've had 4 marriage breakups since the beginning of the school year and she doesn't have any. So, it's a totally different situation and it's very hard to work together. (Teresa)

As well, teachers' isolation tended to be facilitated by specific organizational processes. Favouritism, and intra-organizational conflicts kept the storytellers apart from their colleagues (David, Larry, Tina). In the previous chapter, Larry recalled how his envy at his colleagues' dedication kept him at a distance from them. Similarly, another teacher stated:

There was lot of tension in that school, people weren't talking to other people. We were afraid that people were going to use what we said against us. So, we just shut our mouth up. In fact, many of us just stopped going to the staffroom for our lunch. (Tina)

Teachers further pointed out that rivalries and competitiveness destroyed the school climate and affected the staff's commitments:

People create their own support group, and they seek support within their own group, and the negativity grows, and pretty soon, it's just all gloom and doom, and they talk themselves out of being committed, and out of doing a good job basically.... So, it's really not healthy for the school, and it's not good for the children either. (David)

There is favouritism going on here. As a result, the staff is quite divided, and

this is a big morale downer...There is no way you can stay committed in a school with a fragmented culture, because it's too much of a roller-coaster emotionally. The staff's divisions and disagreements eventually eat at you. (Corinne)

The personal and work community characteristics and processes that fostered and hindered the storytellers' commitment to their colleagues are summarized in the conclusion of this chapter and encapsulated in Table 2 in Appendix H and in Table 4 in Appendix J.

The children's parents. Teachers suggested that their relationships with parents were fulfilling when parents were supportive and appreciative of their efforts. Parental support, collaboration, and recognition bolstered the storytellers' feelings of personal teaching efficacy and self-worth, fostered the development of mutual appreciation and respect, grounded the teachers' feelings of commitment to the parents, and benefited the children's learning experiences, which also fulfilled the teachers' sense of purpose.

When I asked the teachers who were the community members they felt the most committed to, seven ranked the children's parents in second position, right after the children and before their colleagues, and the remaining seven ranked them in third position, after the children and their colleagues,

My primary commitment is to the children, and then, to the parents, my colleagues, and the administrator comes last. I couldn't teach if I lost my commitment to the children. And that feeling is almost the same with the parents. However, I know I can do good work with the children and the parents even if I have almost no communication with the administrator or my colleagues. (David)

Many of the teachers pointed out that the intensity of their commitment towards parents evolved during their careers. They recognized having little awareness of (and little commitment to) parents as young teachers:

When I started teaching, I did not feel committed to parents, and I probably felt the same way about other teachers. I just didn't have time to think about them. I was just worried about making sure I could present my lessons every day, about making sure that I could survive my first years or months of teaching. Once I got past the instructional part or the worry of it and knowing that I could plan my lessons effectively and so forth, I started thinking about what other things I could do, I think I probably noticed that the parents played a big role at that time, especially since I was working in a community school. (Tim)

Teachers' commitment to parents increased as a result of the parents' willingness and effort to support them. Storytellers suggested that parental feedback and support often enriched the children's learning experiences, enhanced their tasks, and affected their feelings of success, fulfilment, and their concept of self. Parents showed their appreciation for the teachers' efforts and involvement in their children's education in many ways, such as oral comments, written notes and thank-you cards, formal letters sent to the school administrators or the Central Office, and small gifts. Whatever the form, teachers reported that such marks of appreciation led them to feel "valued" (Tina), "appreciated" (Natasha), "recognized" (David), re-energized and enthusiastic about what they were doing (Barbara), and help them feel good about themselves (Natasha, Mary):

Nothing feels better than when parents tell me that the progress in their child has been just phenomenal. These parents are so complimentary and so filled with thanks that it's just a great feeling.... Nothing feels better than knowing you've touched a child enough to change their view of themselves. When it works, boy, I tell you, it feels really good. (Caroline)

Many storytellers confirmed that parental support not only increased the teachers' feelings of commitment to the parents, their feelings of success and self-worth, but it also benefited the children:

Over the years, I have realized the importance that parents play in the education of the children. Parents are the most important persons in their children's lives and they are a big key to what we are doing in school. If we can work together, we'll just get a lot more done for the children, whereas it is always much harder when you don't have the support of the parents. (Tina)

When you involve the parents, everyone benefits, the children benefit, the teachers benefit, the parents benefit, the whole school benefits. One of the major things I've learned over the years is that what you do is always better when you do it with a whole team of people. It's way better for everybody. We shouldn't do things alone. We shouldn't even try to do things alone. (Barbara)

Most of the storytellers reported that mutual respect, specific, clear, and regular communication with parents, teachers' increased visibility, and teachers' willingness to open their classes and the schools to parents tended to facilitate the development of good relationships between parents and teachers, as well as smooth out many potential problems and conflicts:

I have realized that if parents know that you want the good of the child and that you make that very clear in the way you teach and in your communications with them, then, parents will be on your side. (Natasha)

It's amazing to see what parents will do to help us when they are invited in the school. The biggest thing for a parent is actually seeing a teacher or a group of teachers doing something for his or her child. I believe [that] good work speaks for itself and when parents see someone do something for their children, it is the same as if this person was doing something for them. So, you do for the child, you do for the parent, and it creates a sense of community, the feeling that we have a common ground, the feeling that we are here together, that we are focussed on the same goals.... All they [parents] want to do is help the child, and once they know you also want to do the same thing, they become very appreciative and they want to help and support you. Parents can become our biggest allies. (Tim)

Tim's viewpoint was induced by one of his very first experiences with parents. He described what happened as his principal opened the school to parents and other community members and encouraged them to become more involved in the school's daily activities:

She [the principal] really made a big effort to involve the parents in the school. Parents were welcome from the time the school opened into the building, not just as volunteers but to participate in many different school activities. So, there was a fostering there, an effort to try and make sure that parents became part of our school, and not just the parents, but other community members were invited as well. She wanted to make sure that the school was not a just a building where the kids spent 6 hours a day... and when parents and other groups actually came in and saw what we did for the children, when they saw that the beneficiaries of what we were doing or what we wanted to do were the children, they started to help us... for instance, we found that there was a real lack in the library, and the parents got motivated and raised a lot of money to purchase new books. At the same time, they computerized the library, and then, they stayed and helped us run the library, and I supposed they enjoyed that... Anyway, as a result of the parents' decision to help us with the library, we [the school] got more money for the library, and the children got more reading materials, which was very important.

In addition, as pointed out by Tim, parental involvement often goes far beyond the enrichment of the school life and the children's experiences,

What the funds [collected by the parents] also bought was the parents' commitment to the school. After that, they [parents] wanted to know how else they could help and they wanted to be involved in other activities.

Tim emphasized that parental support created much more than simple appreciation on the teachers' part. It started a process of reciprocation, a process of heartfelt mutual commitment,

That process I mentioned earlier, it's the same for teachers. If a parent does something for a child, he or she does for the teacher, especially if they are

supporting what you are working with, what you're doing, and you do want to return and support the parents' efforts for his or her child. There's no question about that, you can't help but feel that when people are making an effort with those little people, they shouldn't expect anything but the same from you. You can't be indifferent to others' efforts to help children.

I had a parent who ran a pawn shop, and she came to see what our computer set was like, and she came back a few weeks later, and I indicated that I needed a few more machines for the children. Well, she donated two computers to the school, and I, in turn, put brass plaques with the family's names on the computers. But by coming into my room and seeing how many students I had and how many machines we had, she saw we could use two more machines. And she came up with something for me, and it certainly strengthened a bond with that parent, and I felt that I should do my very best for her kids in a practical educational way and take care of their overall well being. If a parent is going to be taking the time and effort to try and make a difference for their children and others' children, you are not going to want the parents and children see that the computers haven't been used. You want them to know [that] those efforts have been appreciated, and not just with a plaque, but in their everyday use, and that means providing the best instructional computer program you can provide for the children. (Tim)

The parents' support also inspired Tim to use part of his professional development fund to buy bells for the children, which, in turn, incited his administrator to give some money,

I wanted hand bells for the music program, and I basically got them by going to the principal and telling him, "I have \$2,000.00 minus \$200.00, and I need \$2,700.00 for the bells. I'd like \$300.00 from the parent group, \$300.00 from the school, and I will give up my \$300.00 professional development money this year because I'm within that much of getting those instruments," and he [the school principal] said, "good, I'll give up mine too and those bells are yours."

Other teachers (Barbara, Mary) described a somewhat similar process. As the school principal invited parents and other community members in the school, people came to appreciate each other, support and trust each other, and developed nurturing relationships. As a result, teachers reported a deep commitment to supportive parents,

My commitment did grow at that time, in particular for the parents who were always in the school and for those other groups who came and helped us. (Mary)

I am very committed to the parents. In fact, they were the ones who helped me get through my bad [teaching] experience. They were always willing to talk, they were always willing to listen. They were very complimentary, telling me I made a very big influence on their child's life. So, that kind of

support is really nice. It does help if you're frustrated, it makes you feel valued, it makes you feel good. (Tina)

Many teachers also developed close relationships, even deep friendships with parents who were particularly supportive,

I worked really closely with the parents... they were extremely supportive.... I liked the parents, I really enjoyed the parents. These people had become my friends... (Natasha)

Beyond the feelings of affiliation and success that teachers experienced when they gained the parents' support and recognition, many storytellers emphasized that parental support motivated them to continue their efforts to facilitate the children's learning and growth. Teachers stated that they found the parents' support very "encouraging" (David, Mary), that they "tried harder" (Mary), or were more "innovative" (Tim) with respect to educational matters when they felt recognized. They also mentioned that they made every effort to "be honest" (Mary) with the children's parents, to inform them regularly about their children's progress and problems, to prepare and implement strategies with parents when changes were needed, to make them "feel welcome in their class and the school," and to involve them in as many school activities as they desired:

I really felt empowered by the parents who recognized what I had done, you know, it's very powerful when parents are saying, "you're a good teacher and we want our children in your classroom." It's really, really encouraging... I really feel committed to the parents. I am committed to having open and honest communication with them so that they know exactly where their child is at and exactly the kinds of things children have to work at and improve on. (Corinne)

Some teachers (Tim, Jeremy, Larry) also indicated that their empathy for parents increased as a result of their own experiences as parents,

When you become a parent, you have a little more insight into the role of parents and, I think that it has some impact on how you teach, or at least you tend to have more sympathy or empathy for the position of the parents. (Jeremy)

Alternately, teachers felt little commitment for parents whom they did not know or had little contact with. Parent-teacher lack of contacts might have been caused by difficult to control external factors, such as a language barrier between the teachers and the parents (David), unusually heavy workloads (David, Natalie), role conflict (Barbara, Natalie, Teresa), and different other reasons:

I find it is very easy to be committed to parents who are very involved with their children's education. It's harder when there isn't a lot of parental involvement. In this school, for example, even families who care so dearly for their children aren't very involved because they feel a language barrier. So, you don't hear very much from them, you don't get a lot of feedback and you can't quite communicate to them as well, and it is very hard to feel committed to them. (David)

In some cases, however, teachers suggested that they willingly avoided contacts with parents because of previously poor experiences with them, low feelings of efficacy, and a deep concern regarding their public image (Mary, Natalie). Teachers also felt "guarded" (Beth), "defensive" (Mary), "cautious" (Tim), and did not feel very committed to parents whom they perceived as overly critical or unsupportive:

I think that I am hurt and feel disappointed when parents downplay the school's importance, when they're not loyal to the school, to its values, when they are casual toward their commitment to their child being in school on time and ready to learn... It's quite hard to feel a real heartfelt commitment to parents who aren't really supportive of a teacher's efforts, who aren't willing to follow up on whatever homework has been given out or to take a look at their child's homework, who don't show an interest in the child's learning for the day, and who over-commit the child to activities outside of the classroom that crowd out the importance of homework and other related school learning activities. (Larry)

Mary described what emotions she went through as she was caught in a conflict with a mother at the time of our conversations:

I feel I am being undermined by this mom, and [that] I am not being supported in my decision to help this child with behaviour and I just feel very frustrated exactly for those reasons... Probably the first thing that came to my mind when this conversation was going on, and it was pretty heated, was that I didn't think I wanted to be a teacher anymore... I am also a bit worried because I know it hasn't ended because the mom was really hostile. So, I know it's not over, I know I can expect the husband to be involved, and I'll either receive a phone call from him or a visit, and I don't anticipate that it will be pleasant. So, yes, I am concerned about this situation, and I know it will have to be dealt with, that I'll have to find some sort of solution for this situation.... I do expect some unpleasantness in my job, I guess it's part of the job, but that's a very unpleasant part of the job. In fact, it's probably one of the most unpleasant parts because it is really hard to set up a learning environment where the kids can learn if you haven't got the support of the parents.

Many of the storytellers felt little or no commitment for parents they perceived as attempting to or infringing on their professional autonomy and expertise, particularly when these attempts were tainted with

aggressiveness:

They [parents] wanted me to teach within an approach that was against the whole philosophy of the province in relation to the teaching of French language... and they became very aggressive... I could not teach the way I had wanted to teach because of the interferences from the parents. I felt like I was hindered, I was stopped from using techniques that I wanted to use, and [I knew] actually worked... I was devastated... and so, not only do you decrease your commitment toward a person or a small group of persons but [you also decrease your commitment] to the larger community or group that these people are connected with. (Natasha)

However, the above reported transfer of emotions from specific individuals to other similar individuals did not affect all the storytellers. Tim did not experience a similar transfer when a few parents opposed quite aggressively the human sexuality program. As well, Jeremy who was also confronted by several hostile parents at one point in his career suggested,

I don't feel that my attitude towards parents in general was sort of affected [by these aggressive parents]. I think I have been lucky enough to be at schools where the parents that have been difficult to deal with have been very few. Also, before this incident, I had worked with really excellent parents for 5 or 6 years. So, I just felt that this was an isolated case, and again, in this school, parents are usually fairly helpful. So, I have maintained a pretty positive attitude towards parents in general.

Storytellers also felt little commitment towards parents who showed little respect for their expertise, or who tried to rally them to their side either against another teacher or against a principal,

I feel somewhat guarded when parents view teachers as their servants, when they believe that we are there to serve them because they pay the tax dollars, they pay our salaries. I don't know how they get this idea that none of us pay tax dollars. And some of that [attitude] comes out in children and that really bothers me because I find it's really disrespectful. Just the whole notion that some people don't think of us as professionals really bother me. (Mary)

In one of the school I was at, parents really disliked the principal, and they'd come and shared their comments with me... but I didn't want to hear anything about him [the principal], I didn't appreciate being caught in the middle the way I was.... I mean, I was working for that person, and it made it very difficult for me to listen to those parents... but parents often don't see things that way. Either you listen to them and agree with them or they equate you with the principal.... I was very uncomfortable. I found myself very much avoiding them, and I did transfer from there. (David)

Teachers disliked conflicts with parents for diverse reasons. Many of

the storytellers felt that conflicts were unpleasant and hardly ever led to some sort of resolution:

it's very difficult to be controversial to parents, confrontations are rarely pleasant, you know, and they often don't achieve much. (Mary)

Nobody likes confrontation. Nobody likes to be thought of in a negative way, and I don't particularly like to have parents that complain about something I did in class. (Caroline)

Many of the teachers pointed out that the deterioration of the parent-teacher relationships affected the children's morale and their learning:

The incidents with the parents affected my classroom teaching, and the students, and the atmosphere in the class. Those students loved me... but they did not know how to relate to me anymore, they did not know what to say to me.... I also felt hurt because some of them did not feel comfortable communicating with me. (Natasha)

There is a practical side to it, as well. Poor relationships with parents make your life harder in the classroom and in the school... you feel a little fearful.... In my case, I certainly wasn't as comfortable as I would have liked to be, ... and so, you back away [from difficult parents]. You just want to play it safe because you know that everything that you are going to do from that time on is going to be subject to question in the light of a decision some parents didn't agree with, or because parents don't trust you anymore.... You become more careful, less innovative... and in a sense, you do back away from the children a little bit... You are certainly not the best teacher you could be for the children. (Tim)

Other teachers (Caroline, Teresa) also mentioned that they tended to have lower academic and behavioural expectations for children whose parents they were in conflict with. They also reported that they "were really hesitant" (Beth) around kids whose parents were unsupportive or angry, that they "couldn't be exactly free with that child anymore" (Beth), or that they tended to self-monitor what they said and did a lot more.

Ultimately, parent-teacher conflicts led teachers to feel "deeply hurt" (Natasha), "guilty" (Natasha), alienated (Jeremy, Natasha, Tim), helpless (Natasha, Jeremy, Tim), "powerless" (Natasha), and very unsuccessful:

In situations like that [teacher-parent conflicts], the children are affected, and it's very hard to accept because I work so hard for the kids to be happy. To me, that's the bottom line, I want the kids to be happy, and when they are affected because their parents are hostile, I don't feel very good about it.... It's very depressing. (Mary)

The personal and work community characteristics and processes that fostered and hindered the storytellers' commitment to the children's parents are summarized in the conclusion of this chapter and encapsulated in Table 2 in Appendix H and Table 4 in Appendix J.

School administrators. Teachers reported that they felt varying levels of commitment to their school principals. When storytellers were asked who were the community members they felt most committed to, principals were either not mentioned or ranked last. Nonetheless, several teachers (Beth, Barbara, Caroline) had been deeply committed to their administrators. Storytellers emphasized that they felt more committed to principals who were able to create work communities that were supportive and stimulating, student-centred, facilitated feelings of community, and fostered their feelings of efficacy.

Many of the teachers particularly enjoyed working in environments that boosted feelings of affiliation and togetherness. They indicated that the principals' caring, that is, the extent to which principals were perceived to feel and demonstrate genuine concern for others, affected their commitments to teaching and the school administrators. Teachers felt more committed to principals whose concerns for others went beyond their professional expertise to include "the whole person" (Larry):

They [Larry's administrators] are sensitive and caring individuals... They care about the emotional needs of people, they are aware of people's personal trials, aware of people's personal difficulties... The present administrators have a dimension that is maybe unique to them, which is that of being aware of the need to look beyond just the strict professional aspect to the human aspect of a person. They try to look beyond the professional aspect of people to the whole person. And these things have really impressed me. (Larry)

The principal was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. She was a people's person. She knew you as a professional person, but she also knew you as who you were, and you felt like she just loved you for who you were.... When you were with her, you always felt like a person, you always felt like she truly understood you. (Barbara)

Principals' empathy was reflected in their availability and approachability. Caring principals were exemplar listeners, and they were eager to get input from and share ideas with their staff:

The principal listened to me. I mean he genuinely listened to me, and I was very impressed by his interest in what I had to say and in what I was doing. I felt very much supported by him, and I think that just helped cement the relationship. He was a wonderful man. (David)

Such principals also stressed collegial relationships:

There is a real collegial kind of relationship. This principal does not make you feel that he's the manager and you're the worker, he really works at having a really collegial relationship develop. He speaks to us as an equal, as a partner in some decision making. (Jeremy)

The principals' empathy for the teachers was not only manifested in their availability and approachability, but also in their visibility and support. Teachers reported that the principals' emotional support was very important as it validated what they did, enhanced their morale, and raised their feelings of efficacy. The principals' recognition was a form of emotional support that teachers deeply cherished, and that helped them feel "valued" (Tina) and "appreciated" (Barbara). As Teresa noted, "I think it's very important that you not only have successes, but that they are reflected back at you." Teachers also noted that recognition could take many forms, such as verbal or written praise, a public or private homage, a formal or informal evaluation, a small gift, or the attribution of valued leadership activities:

She was always there, she was out and around, and so she knew what you were doing. And she used to have this really bright pink paper and she wrote happy notes on it, and so, you would go down to your mailbox, and there would be a happy note. She had stopped at the back of your classroom and looked in, or saw you out on supervision with the kids or something, and she would stick a happy note in your mailbox, and it was just such a lift for the day. It was just a 2 minute, not even a 2 minute note stuck in your mailbox, and yet, it just made your day. (Tina)

She [Jane's principal] has a way of relating with adults and children that's very encouraging, very empowering. For example, when she greets you in the morning, and she usually is right by the school entrance before everybody else arrives, she makes you feel that you are a very important part of that place right from the minute you step in the school and she sees you. She always has a cute little joke or a pet phrase when she sees me, or she sings a song that has my name in it.... So, she initiates or recognizes that you are there, and she does it in a way that's very empowering. (Jane)

Jane went on,

The human aspects of the principals, their friendliness, their humour, their support are very important aspects of leadership because they set the tone in the school. You feel like you walk into that tone, that colour when you enter the school, and you can take a rest from what's going on in your class if you have a bad day, you can lighten up, and then go back into the front lines, so to speak.

The principals' felt acceptance and recognition of the storytellers led them to feel "secure" (Corinne), "safe" (Teresa). As well, the teachers' awareness that they were appreciated for being who they were (Caroline, Teresa, Tina, Jane) encouraged them to "innovative" (Mary), and to open themselves up (Caroline, Tina). Teachers (Caroline, Mary, Teresa, Tina) felt that they could share their uncertainties about the educational programs, the school expectations, and their performance with their administrators:

She [Jane's principal] allows you the freedom to be natural, and she does that by exposing her own weaknesses and revealing her humanity, and, as a result, you're not afraid to acknowledge what going on with you, and you know that it doesn't mean that you are a bad teacher, it just means that you are human. She allows you to be yourself. She has a way of including or accepting all sides of humanity, the dark and the light side of beings, so that you are not afraid to reveal yourself, or your weaknesses. (Jane)

Furthermore, as noted by many teachers, sharing their problems with others often created the space to find solutions, helped them become better teachers, and increased their feelings of affiliation:

Teachers need to feel safe, they need to know that they can share their problems and discuss what needs to be improved. They need to know that these things aren't going to be thrown in their face later on. If you feel you cannot discuss your problems, you can no longer be a part of the solution, you don't even look for a solution, you are too busy hiding the problems. (David)

I am very honest with her [Beth's principal], but I also know that the only reason I am honest with her is because I feel safe. I just know that she isn't going to harm me in any way. She knows my weaknesses, or what I feel are my weaknesses, and she wants to help me become a better teacher, and she provides me with some really strong guidance, and she gives me for really, really good advice. So, how scary can that be? (Beth)

Not only did the principals' empathy affect the teachers' feeling of efficacy, but it also influenced their concept of self (Caroline, David, Teresa), and their commitment to teaching:

She [Caroline's principal] gave me confidence in myself almost from day one. She let me know time and again that I was doing a good job and that she was really happy with me.... She made me see my successes, and I started to get more confident with the fact that I was doing a good job, or that I was doing something right... and when you feel successful, you feel good about yourself, and you enjoy what you do, and you want to do it. (Caroline)

I guess that in many ways we are like kids, if you are being supported, you

keep getting positive, and you keep working, and your commitment keeps climbing. I think at teachers, we feed off successes just like kids do... we continue doing things that are recognized and successful. (Tina)

As well, teachers started to reciprocate their principals' support, and their commitment to their principals increased:

Now, I just do like her. I go in her office and I give her a big kiss, I write her cards, and I try to be aware of where she's at, or if there's something I can do to help her. Leadership can be a lonely place, you know, and administrators need our support too. (Jane)

You cannot but be deeply committed to a principal who shows genuine care or a genuine willingness to support you. (David)

The principals' concern for others also facilitated the teachers' internalization of new values, and shaped the teachers' relationships with others, as well as their teaching practice:

She [Tina's principal] was a true mentor. She and I have very similar beliefs about students, educational values, and I have gotten a lot of them from her because she was always available to discuss with you and she valued what you had to say. I really think [that] I got a lot out of my years with her because of our discussions. In many ways, she has shaped who I am now and what I am thinking. I think a lot of what helps to shape our commitments has to do with the people we work with, our administrators, our colleagues. (Tina)

In this school, teachers are often acknowledging each other, and I believe it's to the principal's credit. She is doing things other people don't do or don't think of doing, and she does them more frequently, more verbally, more generously. And other people have started doing the same thing. Teachers here are more open, more generous than I've seen on many, many staffs. I believe that the principal has provided us a way of being with other, and I am not saying that you can't be generous or friendly or open on your own, that you always need somebody to role-model what's appropriate and what's not appropriate, but it's easier to follow along that way if the tone is set up by someone who is administering. (Jane)

Nonetheless, storytellers also pointed out that, in some cases, the principals' recognition could lead to rivalries and the deterioration of the school staff's morale:

We have extreme sub-groups on this staff, and it's a big morale downer. These sub-groups have been chosen by the principal whether he intended to or not. They [they chosen ones] are the kind of personalities that want to please him, and so, he has asked them to do special leadership things. As a result, the staff is quite divided. (Corinne)

In contrast, Mary pointed out:

Our principal was wonderful... I don't believe the man even played favourites. He acknowledged every one of us at any particular time, and I didn't ever feel that anyone was more valued than I was, I think we were all equally valued by him, and we didn't seem to seek approval from him either. We knew he valued us all equally.

Many of the teachers further indicated that the principal's concern for their staff was the instructional support they provided the staff with since instructional support increased the staff's feelings of efficacy, success, and fulfilment:

I was very fortunate to have been at that school for my first experience, and I suppose it did affect my commitment because everything just clicked for me there, you know... she [the principal] was able to guide and assist me in areas such as curriculum or classroom management when I needed assistance... She also told me she expected me to have questions and concerns as a first year teacher, and she opened her door for me, so that I would be comfortable turning to her when I had a concern or a question. Her help was invaluable. (Caroline)

Storytellers found their principals' frequent feedback on their performance very "helpful" (Teresa), particularly when they were related to their practices (i.e., relevant), specific, and immediate,

My former principal would come in for very short observations, a few minutes. I am sure [that] in the first week, she came to my classroom perhaps 20 times... anyway, she often came into my classroom, and her comments were very, very specific. She actually gave me very detailed examples, using my exact words, and she was always positive, very warm. If something needed to be improved, she was not negative about it, she'd made suggestions or ask for your suggestions, just her warmth though, made a big difference.... She honestly made me feel I was wonderful, and [that] I didn't have to prove it. (Teresa)

Every morning, she [the principal] walks around the school, comes into your room, sits for a few minutes, and she does that with everybody, whether you are a seasoned teacher or a new teacher. It's her way to let you know [that] she is present, she is there to support you, and then, and she'll say something about what she saw, like she'll say, "I liked what you did with that kid," or if she sees something that can be improved, she'll let you know about it right away. If something does not work, she is never demeaning, she is always very encouraging... and you don't have to wait till the end of the year to find out what she thinks about you in a written evaluation that you can't change anyway. (Jane)

Storytellers further suggested that they did not find the principals' frequent presence in their classrooms intimidating:

I don't feel intimidated at all and I believe it's because of the whole relationship that she has developed with me, like she gets to know you, she breaks down barriers, and it just opens up things. If she came only once in a while and I wasn't sure what she was seeing, if she was not feeding back to me constantly than I am on track, I would be worried. But she lets me know like on a day-to-day basis that I am doing okay.... Basically, I know that her only intention is to have you do the best job you can, and that she is there to help you achieve that. So, what have I got to worry about, right? (Beth)

She gives you lots of chances to improve. After her note yesterday, she came back to see what I was doing, and I know she'll want to come in another time, probably tomorrow. So, she gives you useful feedback and suggestions about what you can do to change your way of teaching, and lots of opportunities to change, and that's very encouraging. (Jane)

The principals' interest and their frequent visits to the teachers' classrooms seemed to motivate them to do their best:

Her regular presence into my class has been very good for me because I have my lessons prepared every single time, and I am on track, and part of it is that I know she'll be in my class, looking at what I have done... and I can see that I am gradually becoming better and better at being consistent.

It [the principal's visibility] both scared and highly motivated me at the same time. But being at that school with that principal definitely kept me motivated, it kept me on my toes and doing the best job I could. (Caroline)

Principals also provided them with other forms of instructional guidance, such as assistance from the Central Office, or inservice programs. In addition, as mentioned earlier, principals also promoted voluntary collaboration since collaborative work was also a source of professional growth for teachers, influenced their feelings of efficacy, self-esteem, affiliation, closeness, and their commitment to teaching. They also promoted teachers' autonomy, encouraged them to be innovative, and supported their initiatives, all of which gave storytellers a great sense of freedom. Teachers stated that they felt "rejuvenated" (Jane), "re-energized" (Tina), "very hopeful" (Teresa), and "enthusiastic" (Mary) when they worked in environments that promoted innovations and professional growth. They qualified such environments as "very exciting" (Barbara, Teresa), "very encouraging" (Mary), "fun" (Jane), "very progressive" (Mary), "very innovative" (Tina), and expressed their desire to continue working in such environments:

We were really encouraged to try new things, even if we fell on our face. In fact, at the beginning of every staff meeting, we used to describe something new that we did or were doing in our class, say what worked and what didn't... we had to evaluate what we did, and it was very good, very good... It was by far the best staff I have ever taught on. (Teresa)

Many of the teachers stated that the school's emphasis on innovativeness and communal learning often gave them the opportunity to be recognized and reinforced their sense of togetherness, which they found motivating and fulfilling:

It was often an opportunity to get a pat in the back... It was really exciting, it was really neat. I believe it [sharing of information] did help us create a real feeling of community, and it spiced up our work. It was very stimulating, very enriching. (Teresa)

Jane remembered how her principal's confidence in her abilities affected her commitments to the children and to her principal,

He [the school principal] was also very trusting, and he gave us [teachers] a lot of freedom, and we did try to make him look good, and we certainly did the best we could for him and the kids.

Some teachers (Barbara, Tim) further pointed out that nurturing principals also promoted parental involvement in schools, a process which was also described as very satisfying by Barbara and Tim as it led to increased empathy, reciprocal support, and higher feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Caroline, Tim).

Many of the storytellers suggested that they particularly enjoyed working with principals who had similar values, beliefs, and goals. Spiritual cohesion increased their feelings of closeness. As well, teachers tended to feel more committed to people with whom they had congruent values and goals:

Yes, I was very committed to my principal, but I think you tend to develop stronger relationships with people that you share values with. (David)

My last principal was a terrific leader.... I worked very well with her because our basic philosophies were very similar, and she worked really hard at creating a sense of community, and part of it, I believe, was that we had common goals and common beliefs. (Tina)

Similar beliefs and goals bolstered camaraderie between people by creating a web of shared understandings, fulfilled the teachers' needs for reassurance, facilitated a bonding or identification process between the administrators and the school staff, and strengthened the teachers' sense of belongingness:

As you realize that other people want and value the same things as you, you

start to realize that they are not sitting there to judge you, and you feel a little more secure.... I think that they [similar beliefs and common goals] create a common ground, the feeling that we have something in common, that we care about the same things. (Tim)

You really felt a part of it, a part of the whole... and I believe a lot of it was because we had common values and we kind of believed in the same things. (Teresa)

Congruent values and common goals reinforced the storytellers' commitments to their school, teaching, and the school goals. As well, they strengthened the teachers' sense of purpose and gave them a sense of direction:

It was a very exciting school. There was a community of values, and it came from the principal and it created a sense of community, [the feeling] that we were there together, [that] we knew where we were going, [that] we were focussed on the same kind of goals. (Barbara)

It was a situation where ninety-eight percent of the people were going in the same direction that the principal wanted to go... And it was very good, it was very nice. It was one of these situations where you wanted to go to work, you felt like what you were doing was good and fine. (Tina)

Storytellers indicated that the principals' hiring practices could either reinforce or destroy the school staff's social and spiritual cohesion:

I asked once one of my principals how she managed to build such a teaching community, and she told me she hired personalities. She didn't hire teachers, she hired people. She believed that you can always learn the curriculum, and she looked for people who could fit in the school. (Tina)

We had very strong egos on our staff. Some staff would always put their own interests ahead of the children's, and there were tensions and conflicts, and people didn't collaborate much, and you felt very isolated. I never felt I really belonged to that school... And I think that came partly from the administration, the kinds of people that were selected, you know, the staff that was placed there. The principal mainly hired people on basis of the curriculum. He also checked their personal references of course, but he never asked people about their beliefs, he mainly checked how much they knew the curriculum.

Nonetheless, teachers also emphasized the importance of having a diverse staff, that is, a staff with different talents, different expertise, and different teaching styles since they felt that a large part of their professional growth took place when they worked with different people:

I think administrators have to realize that they are never going to have by themselves all the skills that they need for a school to be successful, that they have to look to many different types of people to help them and to be able to use those people to make them into a team to function well for the mission of the school, to take their human resources and really put them together for the benefit of all the different kids that we have. (Larry)

Teachers also emphasized that they were invariably “turned on” (Mary) by principals who emphasized the importance of children and children’s learning and who were able to develop communities in which shared beliefs were primarily articulated around the children’s growth:

My commitment did grow in that school... the school was very, very child-oriented... We were all dedicated to do our very best for the children. The principal made it very clear that we were there for the children, and moreover, it was reflected in the school practices. (Teresa)

Principals continuously reinforced the school staff’s values and goals by reiterating the school values and goals formally or informally in front of many different audiences (e.g., parents, students, new staff members):

I think that the school values were quite clear, were made quite clear to us...She [Caroline’s principal] always used to say, “we are here for the kids, and that’s the long and short of it” and it became a given in her school and in her teachers... and it [the school’s focus on the kids] really motivated me. (Caroline)

The principals’ role-modelling also shaped the school staff relationships with the other community members and socialized the community members to the school values and goals:

There was a great deal of love and kindness when she [the school principal] was with the children. And that’s part of what she [the school principal] taught me as well, that gentleness with the children. (Jane)

He [the school principal] is very friendly, very warm, and positive toward the children, and this is good.... this attitude [the principal’s warmth toward the students], in turn, affected the teachers. (Jeremy)

In contrast, a teacher pointed out:

The principal does a lot of things that looks like she is child centred, but I am not really convinced she is. I find it really difficult to believe that you value kids when you can be hugging them one minute and telling them that you love them, but make a nasty or sarcastic comment about them or their family as soon as they walk out of the office door. It looks like she [the participant’s principal] values the kids, it even sounds like it, but I am not

really convinced that is the case.

This teacher continued:

It's extremely difficult to be committed to a principal like that... and it's certainly affecting some of the staff.... I have seen some teachers behaving exactly like the principal.

Thus, external signs of commitment to children such as children's work exhibitions or warm and friendly behaviours can be meaningless, even counterproductive, unless they *genuinely* reflect the community members' internal values. Many of the teachers indicated that the realness of community members' feelings toward the children were not only reflected in their behaviours or physical environments, but that they also impregnated their discussions and their attitudes toward work and other community members. In other words, the community values were not only professed, and/or evidenced in a few external signs, but they were lived with passion, shared with enthusiasm, and prominently expressed in their work. Storytellers (Barbara, Caroline, Mary, Teresa) pointed out that when students were genuinely valued, school discussions were predominantly articulated around the children's growth and the teachers' learning since it contributed to expand the teachers' knowledge and increased their classroom effectiveness. Tina, Mary, and Teresa described such environments in their interviews. They portrayed teachers, teachers and principals, teachers and parents, and teachers and students celebrating the children's successes, zealously sharing a new workshop or a new conference, and industriously discussing and devising new ways to address children's difficulties. In fact, these teachers also suggested that they spoke about the students' learning and their own learning in school and outside school, when they met socially.

Alternately, teachers (Barbara, Corinne, David, Tina) described work communities torn by interpersonal and/or intergroup conflicts with either empty or nearly empty staff rooms as the staff chose to eat their lunches in their own classes, avoiding specific others, and jealously keeping what they had learned for themselves and a few chosen colleagues.

Many of the teachers also pointed out that the fact that children were valued was also evidenced in the staff meetings,

Staff meetings, oddly enough, are an area where it [teachers' focus on children] really comes through. Most of our discussions are centred around children and what is good for the kids. It's just there. Meetings filled with individuals who obviously know their stuff and really care about children.
(Caroline)

Alternately, Mary reported:

Staff meetings were stand-up lecture style, agenda items one through fifteen or whatever, and one of the things that really upset me was that I never heard the work curriculum, except if somebody asked about the dates for the provincial tests or whatever. I never heard anyone talking about kids and curriculum... You didn't speak or hear about kids during the staff meetings at that school, and it really bothered me.

Students and their growth not only impregnated the staff discussions in student-centred schools, but the staff's concern about their students was also visible in many other school routines. Storytellers (David, Mary, Teresa) remembered schools where the children were always welcomed in the principals' office, where administrators reserved a morning or an afternoon every week to discuss children's concerns or different issues with the children, schools in which administrators set up weekly meetings with the staff to discuss children's difficulties and successes, where administrators and other staff shared the children's games during the recesses, in which administrators involved diverse organizations from the larger community for the benefit of the children. Mary summarized the thoughts of many storytellers when she suggested:

When principals value kids, they make time to be with them. People always find the time to do what they really want to do. One of our administrators was often outside on supervision, and he regularly came to visit our class. So the kids knew him, he was visible on supervision and he was visible in the classes, and he was very approachable. The kids would hang on to him, they loved him. What I am saying is that the principal didn't come to our class only when there was a discipline problem, he also came when we had special activities and he participated in these activities, he played with the kids, they had fun with him, and because of that, the kids loved him and respected him.

Thus, caring principals continuously socialized the teachers to their school values and goals by frequently reiterating them, and role-modelling them. The principals' daily activities, the ways they spent their time, the intensity of their involvement in certain activities, the types of activities they suggested and role-modelled, and the ways they behaved throughout the day communicated to the community members what was valued and important in the school. Moreover, as indicated earlier, a felt safe environment facilitated the school members' socialization to the school values and goals as teachers were willing to engage in conversations with the diverse community shareholders when they were in such environments. As well, several teachers (Caroline, Tina) indicated that they tended to identify more easily with administrators who valued them, which, in turn, facilitated the teachers'

internalization of the school values.

Teachers also reported that involvement in the school decisions and school goals tended to increase their feelings of affiliation and belongingness:

The administrator really encouraged participative decision-making, and what it did for us is that it created a sense of community, the sense that we were a team.... I do think that participative decision making helps teachers develop a common spirit. (Teresa)

I think [that] good leaders create a sense of ownership and empowerment within the people they work with, and one way to do that is to ensure participative decision making. That's a really important one, too. It creates a sense of community, the feeling that we are here together for the kids. (Mary)

Storytellers emphasized that the staff involvement in decisions about the school goals bolstered their morale, strengthened their sense of purpose, and reinforced their commitments:

There is definitely value in deciding common goals. They give you a sense of purpose and a direction. They keep you on track. (Beth)

When the school staff really set common goals and common purposes, it gives you a sense of ownership, a sense of purpose. It keeps you going in the right direction, and it also develops a sense of community among teachers. (Barbara)

Nonetheless, teachers did not want to be involved in all the school decisions. They primarily wanted to be involved in instructional decisions, the school goals, specific school-wide policies (e.g., school wide behavioural expectations), and decisions about staff professional development:

I do not want to be involved in every single decision to be made, that would be a waste of time, but I do want to be involved in decisions that affect my students and me, or in specific areas that interests me... I do want to be involved in deciding the school vision and its goals and in decisions on professional development. For me, these two areas are crucial for teachers. (Mary)

Storytellers indicated that school goals were more meaningful when they were compatible with or linked to the school vision, and consensual,

This year, we didn't start discussing the school goals until we defined the school philosophy and values. So, the first thing we did was to ask ourselves, "What does it mean to be a teacher in this particular school? What are the purposes of our school?" Everyone was involved, and it took a

tremendous amount of time to reach some sort of consensus, but she [the principal] allowed us to define the direction we wanted to choose and that required a lot of soul searching, but it was a tremendous experience. It did help us reflect on our values, our roles, and responsibilities not only as teachers, but as human beings... Once we had decided on the school general philosophy and values, we started to look at school goals, and we looked at school goals that would reflect our values, and to me, that made a lot of sense... In my previous experience, we defined school goals in a more mechanical way, mainly because it was part of the budgeting process and we had to come up with a goal. And, we also knew that the principal would have the final saying anyway, so it was hard to be really involved in the process, and the school goals were certainly not as meaningful. (David)

Can we say that participative decision making is democratic when everything comes down to a vote, and the majority wins? I am not sure. Minorities have a lot to say too, and people have to be willing to sit down, and talk, and genuinely try to understand each other well enough so that they are going to find that middle ground between it all, and if we do that, in the end, we might not even need a vote. (Barbara)

Teachers described what happened when the school goals were not reached consensually:

We have school goals and priorities, they go along with the budget document, but they are treated as a big joke because, in this school, school-based management means principal-based management. It's the principal who sets the goals, and then, he gets us to sit around and talk about it. So, the goals are on paper, but we don't try to meet them wholeheartedly. (Corinne)

I don't think the school staff really believed in the school goals, or even really worked at meeting them because people realized that the principal did have the final say. Decisions had been made before we actually met. The principal talked with some teachers before we all met, and he strategically placed his key players in the teachers' groups, so that they got us to agree with whatever had been decided prior to all of us meeting together. So, it was more a manipulation exercise than anything else. (David)

School goals should be concrete, achievable, and regularly reviewed:

Right at the beginning of the school year, we took a look at the results of the provincial achievement tests. We looked at what we achieved and what needed to be improved. We went through each exam question, and searched for recurring problems, and all the staff was involved, and we tried to define goals to work on to give the kids a better opportunity at improving specific areas, and then, throughout the year, these goals are regularly mentioned. X. [the principal' first name] said, "Let's not forget that our kids need extra help for this or that," and when the first report cards came, we took those goals into account and it was also another opportunity for us to

review where we are at. I had never seen that before, but it is a really good idea. (Beth)

Not only did the reviewing process reinforce the participants' sense of purpose, but it also bolstered their feelings of efficacy and togetherness:

I think it [the reviewing process] did two things. First, we'd get some nice ideas from our colleagues, then, we'd also get a pat on the back, and finally, it told us that we were moving in the right direction, and you got that every month. It was very nice. (Tina)

It [the reviewing process] certainly made you understand more of what was going on in the school... and it did create more togetherness among the staff, and it was a wonderful experience. You really felt you were a part of something important. (Teresa)

Teachers also stressed the importance of linking the school goals with appropriate resources and professional development:

The schools that I really liked to work in have always been very clear about the sorts of things that we needed to work on. Last year, for example, we had very poor science results, so we decided to make science a priority. We put money into science kits. We trained people and forced up science, and we wanted it to become something that we all worked toward, because the Grade 3 teacher is not the only one responsible for preparing the children for the P. A. T [Provincial Achievement Tests], it should be everybody's responsibility... and, once a month, we would go through our list of priorities and say, "what did we do that supported this priority or that priority this month?", and we would just run through the whole list of priorities, and it took about fifteen to twenty minutes. (Tina)

Strategies to achieve the school goals must also be clearly outlined since they reduce the staff's sense of normlessness:

We had goals, but I don't think that it was really thought through clearly how we would reach our goals. We did not know how to get there, how to achieve them. (Mary)

Finally, one teacher urged caution when it came to evaluate the school goals as there were often many things to consider in evaluating whether or not school goals had been achieved,

We have school goals, goals on achievement in language arts and math, goals on professional development, and finally goals on communication with parents and the community, and I think these goals are good, and they are needed as a starting point. They also provide us with a school focus, and that's a very good thing, but we have to allow for flexibility when we evaluate whether or not these goals have been achieved. Circumstances can

change, you also have to look at your student population, the parental community, there are so many factors to be considered when you evaluate the school goals. (Caroline)

School goals bolstered the teachers' feelings of affiliation, closeness, and efficacy when they were congruent with the school vision, concrete, achievable, consensual, frequently discussed with the community members, regularly assessed, and linked with adequate professional development.

Caring principals were also tireless role-modelers. Many of the teachers were truly inspired by the visible dedication and effort that some of their principals put into their work to facilitate the development of learning and caring communities:

I also want to mention the inspiration that's come to me from seeing a dear, a good friend in a professional sense, who was only 53 years of age and was stricken with cancer, died from it, and yet even in his final months, he was able to focus on the school and worked really hard. He had an interest in how everyone was doing, talked with thoughts toward the future as if he would be there. He was an example of commitment, of thoroughness, and he really impressed me because he never showed any signs of, shall we say, burnout or cynicism that sometimes professionals fall into. He was an inspiration to me because he showed me that professionalism and commitment and professional attitudes are not just temporary attitudes that one might have during the honeymoon period of our teaching career, and that was most encouraging to me. (Larry)

She was a really hard worker. I always felt the job was her life. She was totally involved in her job 5 days a week, whereas this principal gets to school about half an hour before the school starts and leaves when the classes are done... and I guess it is easier to leave school right after 4:00 PM if you see the principal and other people leave everything behind at 4:00. I guess other people's commitments affect yours too. (Teresa)

The principals' role-modelling often inspired teachers and motivated them to work harder:

I guess that her very strong dedication and commitment to the field of education and to the children did rub off on me. It did influence my commitment to the children. I too want to be representative of what she was. I too wanted to do my very best for the kids. (Caroline)

The principal was working so hard and was so supportive that we all wanted to do well to please her. When you have a principal like that, you are willing to go out on a limb for her, for the school. You want to give her as much as you can. (Barbara)

Nurturing principals also buffered teachers against irritants that pulled them off teaching. Among these sources of irritation, storytellers (Barbara, Beth, Caroline, Jeremy, Larry) mentioned trivial administrative matters, frequent interruptions during class times, discipline problems, and felt aggressive parents.

To decrease discipline problems, caring principals supported consensual school-wide policies with respect to discipline (Beth, Corinne, Jane, Larry, Teresa). Behavioural policies had a clear set of behavioural expectations and specified the consequences for students who failed to comply with the school behavioural expectations, and they were consistently enforced throughout the school by both the principal and the school staff. Teachers suggested that the principals' lack of support regarding discipline matters was very demoralizing:

He [Beth's principal] was constantly devaluing what we did. Like when I tried to make a point with a kid who had been fighting at recess, he'd go by and joke with the kid, give him a little something in the shoulder, whatever, but I didn't appreciate that. There I was, trying to make a point with a child and he'd invalidate it. It was very frustrating. (Beth)

The principal has a habit of attending a lot of meetings outside the school. So, he goes for long periods of time, and there is nobody here to do the discipline. It's not good for the morale of the staff... and when he is here, he is not really supportive and he is not consistent either.... And it's really not good for the staff morale, and since we have no backup, a lot of us kind of wonder, "What are we bothering for?" (Corinne)

As well, principals buffered their staff against "difficult" (Caroline, Mary, Tina) parents since teacher-parent conflicts tended to negatively affect the children's learning and the teachers' morale,

The biggest thing that I expect from an administrator is support... support has always been number one, and when I say support, I mean support with regards to children who are particularly difficult and require the support of your principal, and also support with regards to difficult parents. I believe that we have all come up against a couple a difficult parents in our career, and it's very important to have the administrator's support. (Caroline)

Nurturing principals also reduced the teachers' administrative tasks (Caroline, Jeremy) and protected them against diverse classroom interruptions:

I do like this principal... he doesn't make us perform tasks which have no real inherent value in terms of education of the children. I remember I had one principal who was pretty different from all the others I have had and

definitely made life very demanding in terms of our time. I felt that the time that she was demanding of us was not very beneficial to the children's learning, like we had to write four letters a year to parents, and we had to address specific issues in a specific way, and there were lots of other administrative tasks which just took our time from teaching, and I didn't quite agree with that, and it was a difficult situation for me when she was our principal. (Jeremy)

I find the intercom can be quite irritating at times. When it [the intercom] comes on 800 times a day, how can we learn? We are interrupted far too much in this school, and it's often about small things, things that could easily wait till the recess, or lunch time, or the end of the school day. (Barbara)

As indicated in the above paragraphs, nurturing principals influenced the teachers' commitments and work habits. Teachers reported feeling very committed to principals who were genuinely interested in others, honest and open, whose values were congruent with their own, who were supportive, who facilitated consensual decisions and professional growth, and who buffered them against irritants that pulled them away from teaching. These storytellers further suggested that such principals influenced their feelings of efficacy, fulfilment, togetherness with other community members by promoting specific processes (e.g., collaborative work, hiring practices, role-modelling), as well as their commitment to teaching and to specific schools. Teachers also identified with such principals, role-modelled some of their work habits, and internalized their values. As well, they expressed love, admiration, respect, and loyalty toward such principals:

I've kept in contact with her and I consider her to be a friend. I also think that the fact that we stayed there together as long as we did shows that we were committed to the school, that we were committed to the principal. (Tina)

I had a lot of respect for that principal, you just liked her, you just loved her, you'd do anything for her. (Barbara)

The principals' visibility and willingness to communicate with their staff also gave teachers a better understanding of their tasks and duties:

Because I worked with her [Beth's administrator] a lot, I knew that she worked tremendous hours, and by just understanding that, by seeing it really happening, it took away some of my complaints, and I certainly got way more respect for what she did. (Beth)

I've seen them work.... I know that their burdens are heavy at times, I know that their job is not easy, and I try to be sensitive to their particular frustrations or challenges. I try to avoid being critical and say, "well, if I

were there, I'd do a better job." I certainly try to be open to their needs.
(Larry)

Teachers were more willing to support and collaborate with nurturing principals:

It [having a caring and supportive principal] meant coming to school everyday on the ball, doing your very best to reach the kids... It meant putting out a 110 percent for her everyday, having my kids in my classroom experience success, keeping my parents happy, and letting that she, too, could count on me... it meant being willing to do a gazillion things for the principal, anything from staying behind with a kid who needs help, to coaching a running team, to being available to do the intramurals on a lunch hour when you could be out having lunch, all these extra things that you don't really have to do. (Caroline)

I like being acknowledged by her, so I do what it takes to be acknowledged. I work on committees. I speak well of her to when I am at other schools. I remind the students of what she says, I never make her wrong. I let her know she can count on me. When I see that there are ways of making her job easier, I do that voluntarily. (Jane)

Alternately, storytellers felt little or no commitment for principals who appeared to mainly value their instrumentality or usefulness to the school's programs:

I feel that the principal values me for my skills and for the work that I do for this school, but I don't feel valued as a person, as a whole human being. It's my expertise that is valued here, not David, the person... and it is difficult to feel very committed to your principal in a situation like that. (David)

I have been disappointed by some administrators, particularly for those who value you for your utility to the school... I can understand that the usefulness you have to the school is very important to the principal, but I also think that principals should try and support their staff's aspirations. If there is an ability in a teacher, I believe that principals have an obligation to recognize and support the strengths of this teacher, just like they encourage the kids' strengths when they see them. (Tim)

Many of the teachers did not like working with administrators whose values and beliefs were either incongruent with their own:

Once, I worked with an administrator who wasn't really compatible with me. We had very different beliefs and we also did things differently. And I found it very, very hard to work with her. (Jeremy)

I was once in a situation where a new principal came into school who couldn't accept my way of teaching. I had learning centres, and this was 21

years ago and those were very not very common at that time, and he didn't like them. And it became very difficult.... I tried to ignore his comments because I didn't feel they were valid and to keep my head up, but it became very difficult for me to work with that man. (David)

Teachers also expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction when they worked with administrators who left them with a sense of normlessness with respect to the school vision (Tina), specific issues, such as discipline (Teresa), and the means to achieve the school goals (Tina).

Principals who resisted changes or liked the status quo also left teachers deeply frustrated and unhappy:

I believe that our administrator is not a great leader. Things just seem to go status quo all the time unless there's a big rigamarole, and that's not right. (Corinne)

I think that his [the principal's] biggest value was "don't rock the boat, let's just keep everything calm and not rock the boat." I didn't have much respect for him, you know. I cut myself from him. (Barbara)

Many of the teachers distanced themselves or cut themselves from unsupportive administrators. As well, such administrators influenced the teachers' other commitments (e.g., teachers' commitment to their work community):

I had a very bad year with an administrator who just really turned me off from teaching. I almost quit because of that experience... We were continuously cut down for our ideas... my enthusiasm dwindled sort of throughout the year and I think it was because what we had done in the past wasn't valued by the administrator. (Mary)

I guess that when you lose your commitment, it's partially because someone has stopped valuing what you do... You just say, "the heck with it, I am not doing to do this or that. You don't want me, you don't need me... So, what's the use of working? (Tina)

Larry also indicated that he had little commitment to his administrator who had not recognized the efforts he put into the outdoor education program and did not support his ambition to become a principal. Other teachers (Barbara, Natasha, Teresa) had also little or no sympathy for their principals when they failed to approve diverse requests that might have helped them to address some of the issues they and their students were faced with. As well, David's commitment to his principal eroded when his principal failed to meet some of his expectations.

Many of the teachers also withdrew from principals who reduced their job autonomy to a point that they found unacceptable (Jeremy), showed little respect for their expertise (Barbara, Jeremy, Teresa), and/or had felt 'unreasonable' expectations (Jeremy, Natalie):

I had a principal who was very demanding in terms of what she asked teachers to do. She was very demanding in terms of the paperwork that we had to hand in. We were required to hand in our long term range plans, a certain number of letters to parents, and she would look at the letters and we had to do corrections, and it was the same thing with the report cards. There were also staff meetings that everybody had to attend, and she even made demands in terms of how we approached the curriculum. However, I feel strongly that it's really beneficial for me as a teacher to have a little more freedom. I'd like to be able to carry out these tasks myself as I see them being beneficial to my students rather than having them required as a routine thing. I believe as professionals we can decide on the approach to the curriculum that we want to take or that we feel is best suited to our class, and I believe the teachers are certainly in the best position to make that decision. (Jeremy)

With respect to professional expertise, teachers were invariably shocked and disappointed by their principals when they were not included in meetings and discussions about their students (Mary, Teresa), and/or when their principals asked them to reverse a decision they had taken about one of their students, such as a child's progression into the next grade (Barbara, Teresa).

Some of the teachers' personal characteristics might have also influenced the rise and fall of the storytellers' commitment to their principals. Teachers noted that social fear (Corinne), shyness (Caroline), low feelings of efficacy due to a felt lack of teaching experience, the teachers' locus of evaluation and tolerance level for frustrations, previous poor work experiences, feelings of inadequacy (Beth) might have encouraged the storytellers to isolate themselves, avoid frequent contacts with their administrators, and prevented the development of mutual feelings of trust, respect, and mutual commitment.

When they worked with 'poor' principals, teachers (Barbara, Natasha, Natalie, Teresa, Tina) suggested that they "tuned the principal out" (Mary), or "ignored his comments." They also withdrew socially, emotionally, and physically from their principals. Natalie suggested, "I don't know if I have much respect for her now... I feel very uncomfortable now [in the presence of the principal], and I do try to avoid her," whereas Teresa mentioned, "if I want to go and see the principal, I can go see him, but I have to make the effort to go see him." As mentioned in the chapter on critical events, they

also engaged in diverse processes, such as coalition formation, blaming, name calling, increased negativity through comparisons and validation of their experiences and emotions with like minded individuals falling into a downward spiral of decreasing commitments, or “collecting bad stamps, turning every little thing into something terribly negative” (David), “awfulizing” (Mary), focussing on the negative aspects of the job or the job environment (Larry, Mary, Tina), and/or devaluing the teaching profession (Teresa), decreasing their involvement inside the classroom and sometimes inside the school, while increasing their out-of-school activities, ultimately looking for a new position in a different school, or, as in Barbara’s and Jeremy’s cases, temporarily exiting teaching.

The personal and work community characteristics and processes that fostered and hindered the storytellers’ commitment to their principals are summarized in the conclusion of this chapter and encapsulated in Table 2 in Appendix H and Table 4 in Appendix J.

Children. Teachers described their work with children as one of the most satisfying and rewarding aspect of teaching. They reported that children were their main “raison d’ être” (Larry) in teaching, and they suggested that they felt more committed to the children than to any other work community members:

My greatest commitment is to the kids... the children are my first and foremost concern... If it were not for the kids, I wouldn’t be teaching, and I wouldn’t be discussing this. The kids are the driving force behind my staying in the teaching profession, and my loving what I am doing. (Mary)

Teachers (Barbara, Corinne, Larry, Teresa) enjoyed being and working with children for many different reasons. Among these, they mentioned the mutual affection that they shared with children. Teachers liked children and they liked to be liked by children. This was illustrated by Teresa when she pointed out, “Where else [than in teaching] do you get that kind of love, that unconditional affection?” Corinne’s and Larry’s stories also emphasized how frustrated they became when they did not feel that the children appreciated them and/or recognized their efforts. Not only did the storytellers cherish warm and nurturing relationships with their students, but, as pointed out by David, good relationships with children also facilitated the children’s learning:

You know teaching has to come from the heart. It is an expression that comes from inside. It is a created expression. It is also a very emotional one, and you need to make connections with the children, whether it’s actual physical hugging, some children need that, or something else. Some children need the words, other children need the looks, the wink or the special smile

that happens between that child and the teacher, other children need notes that you write to them, but this [this connection between child and teacher] has to happen for teaching to take place.

Storytellers reported that they liked children partly because they were different from adults, and/or they also reminded them of their younger selves,

I'd rather work with children than adults because of their honesty, their openness, their willingness to forgive, because they treat one another beautifully, and because they don't come with a lot of baggage... They have not yet developed the cynicism and the sarcasm, ..., that often, we, as adults, fall into. (Larry)

I like children because of what they have to offer in the way of vitality and perhaps as a way of remembering my own youth. I can see, that, when I was younger, I wasn't always on track as far as my studies. Although I was never in trouble, I wasn't a straight A bookworm, and I think I can appreciate how difficult it is sometimes for students to fit in, and how interesting it is to see students like that in the school. (Tim)

Many of the teachers had preferences for specific children (e.g., hard working students, special needs children, age specific children),

I think the ideal school would be one where there are disciplined children. My first year of teaching taught me or showed me the tremendous amount of work and accomplishment you can have when you have disciplined, independent working type of children... One can do so much with disciplined children. There is so little time wasted on trivia. (Larry)

One summer, I worked with the Society for Children with Learning Disabilities, and I really liked that work... I really liked the interactions with these children... I realized I particularly enjoyed these kids [kids with disabilities]. (Caroline)

Every year, I teach grade one to see their faces illuminate when they know they can read. (Barbara)

These preferences varied from teacher to teacher, over time, in focus, and in intensity,

Initially, my dream was to work with children who had difficulty learning. I wanted to work with children who really struggled. Not children who were mentally handicapped because I had done some work with them in schools and that wasn't really my niche, but children who perhaps had either a learning disability or emotional problems. Those were really the children I wanted to work with... However, when I got my degree, I started teaching Kindergarten children, and I really liked that. [Now], I have taught three

years of Kindergarten, this is my fourth year, and I am also teaching Grade 2, 3, and 4 children, and I really enjoy working with older children. Actually, now I would really like to work with different age groups, or perhaps older children... Eventually, as my own children grow up, ..., I could see myself working in adult education. At some point in my life, I would also really like to work with illiterate adults, or I would like to teach English as a second language overseas. (Natalie)

I still feel committed to the kids, but it certainly is not all as encompassing as it used to be... (Teresa)

As noted earlier, many of the teachers emphasized that the principals' and the parents' public and consistent support of the school values and goals and of the school staff tended to facilitate positive teacher-student relationships, whereas parents in open conflicts with teachers made for considerably more difficult and less fulfilling relationships between the teachers and the children. As well, disorderly environments, felt role conflict and role overload, inadequate training or experience (Barbara, Beth, Corinne, Natalie) tended to hinder teacher-student relationships.

Role characteristics. Beyond the fact that teaching allowed teachers to be with people, both adults and children, whom they liked, storytellers also reported that helping the children on the road of learning, seeing them progressing and succeeding, and knowing that they played a part in the children's growth, allowed them to experience feelings of success, high efficacy, self esteem, and fulfilment, the very feelings which fostered the teachers' desire to stay in teaching:

I'm here to see the kids learn, that's what I am here for, and when they learn, that's my achievement, I have accomplished what I came for, and it is fun as well. (Barbara)

A good day for me is when the children learn, they are excited, very excited about what they are learning, and a best day is when I go out in the playground on supervision and I hear the children talking about what we have done or doing some extension of what we have done in their play because that shows they are internalizing it, and conceptualizing it, and analysing it, and you know it's becoming a part of them. So, days when I see learning and growth, and I know I am part of that are really good days for me. (Mary)

Teachers spoke enthusiastically of the feelings of joy, success, fulfilment, and self-worth that they achieved when they were able to help the children grow:

There are tremendous rewards in being able to help a child blossom, in

possibly making a difference in his or her life.... It gives me a feeling of satisfaction with a job well done, a feeling of self-worth, and self-respect. (Larry)

I tend to do things that make me feel good, very good, and I am driven by that, and I do feel good when I am with children and see them learning and growing. (Mary)

Many of the storytellers felt “worthy” (Larry), “capable” (Corinne), “successful” (Caroline), “brighter, happier, and more confident” (Beth) when they saw children grow and felt that they played a part in their growth. They also indicated that these feelings empowered them to continue teaching, to “try harder” (Corinne), “work harder” (Tina), to continue helping children (Mary, David, Barbara), thereby, providing them with a self-sustaining or even self-reinforcing source of motivation. In other words, when teachers were aware of their students’ growth and when they attributed this growth to themselves or when others (e.g., parents, principals) attributed the children’s progress and growth to them, their commitment to teaching increased, along with their propensity to exert effort:

[I realized that] if I could allow children like these [special needs] children to experience success, then I was feeling like I was succeeding, and it was just a rush, it was a very good feeling, and it was fun.... and, if anything, I become more committed to see these children succeed. (Caroline)

Seeing children happy and learning does make my commitment stronger. When I see that, I become more determined to do whatever I can for them.... It was because I saw I could make a difference for the children I was dealing with, because I saw I could make their lives happier that I decided to stay in that profession. (Beth)

That success was a very powerful motivator for the storytellers is clearly emphasized in the following quotations:

When you start to see your successes either through the children’s progress or someone else’s eyes, you start to get more confident with the fact that you are doing a good job, that you are doing things right... (Caroline)

I guess that once you see your own successes and you see you are capable, you become committed... Success can empower you, and then, you become more and more committed. (Corinne)

As mentioned earlier, parents’ and school administrators’ feedback and recognition provided storytellers with valuable information on the children’s progress and growth. However, this required parents and principals to be visible, able or willing to communicate with the teachers, and credible (David, Jane, Mary). The community members’ credibility, in turn, partly depended

on their visibility and involvement in the school activities. Invisible principals often left the storytellers wondering about their dependability and their credibility (Corinne). As well, teachers noted that they preferred feedback information to be specific, relevant, and immediate. Students were also an important source of feedback information for teachers. Students' feedback could take diverse forms, such as diverse facial expressions (Barbara, Beth), questions, the children's homework (provided that it was done by the children), the children's direct testimonies, and a certain level of excitement in the class (David, Mary):

I feel really good when I see that the smartest kids in the class are stimulated, when I can look over and see that there's a spark in their eyes.
(Beth)

I do have students that write me letters or phone, or send me pieces that they've written, or tell me what they remember about being in my class, or how I've helped them, or how I've strengthened them. Every teacher is familiar with that. (David)

The parents' and principals' feedback and recognition were particularly important for teachers with an external locus of evaluation, for young and inexperienced teachers (Barbara), and teachers with a high need for recognition (Tina):

If somebody, especially somebody in authority, isn't seeing me as competent or able, I start to question whether I am competent or able....
When you feel you aren't valued, you lose your self-esteem, you lose your confidence in yourself. (Tina)

Other work community processes also facilitated the teachers' work with the children, fostered their feelings of efficacy, and enriched the children's learning experiences and growth. Among those, teachers mentioned school wide policies regarding the children's behaviours, consensually agreed-upon school goals, regular assessment of the school goals, collaboration, professional development programs that enabled teachers to meet the school goals, and involvement of the adult community members in school and class activities, provided that the community members and storytellers who work together had similar goals and values.

Teachers (Barbara, Natasha, Tina) illustrated how their growing commitment to the children affected their every day practice:

When you are committed to the kids' learning, you constantly monitor the kids so that you know where they are at. You need to know your kids to do your planning or when you prepare activities.... I guess that when you are

not committed to the kids, you don't even notice where they are at. You don't see the changes, you kind of screen against them. You didn't know which kids were doing well to begin with, so you don't realize when they are doing poorly, or you didn't know which ones were doing poorly, so, you don't realize when they are improving. You pull back from the kids, you teach a lesson, you don't teach the kids anymore, and you don't really know if they got it or not. (Barbara)

I guess that because I am committed to the kids, I use whatever fits when I teach. Sometimes, I use group work, sometimes I don't. Sometimes, we do hand-on activities, sometimes we do pencil and paper activities. Sometimes I use themes, sometimes, I don't. I don't want to limit myself to a specific program or a specific method because I might not be able to reach all the kids in my class. So, I guess I'm really flexible. Maybe I am committed to flexibility. Can you be that way? (Tina)

As well, teachers were willing to continue to learn, share educational information with, and collaborate with their colleagues and the children's parents for the benefit of the children.

For many storytellers, teaching young children meant much more than imparting the content of a curriculum. It also gave them the opportunity to do something that felt 'right,' to enrich the children lives in ways that would go beyond the time they spent together, and to fulfil their internal sense of mission. For some storytellers, that meant preparing the children to become successful, well-adjusted adults:

I sort of believe that the role of educators is to give each member of society the information and the tools they need to become employed for one, and also to help people function socially with other people... there's also a social aspect to education that I think is as important as the straight academic courses. (Jeremy)

For Jane, Natalie, and Tina, it meant helping the children feel good about learning and good about themselves:

I feel I have a responsibility to try and make a difference for the kids, ..., to help them become better people, to help them feel better about school, feel better about themselves, to help them learn something that isn't part of the curriculum that they can take with them the rest of their lives. (Tina)

I get my sense of achievement by teaching children to feel good about themselves in their learning because I really feel that good self-esteem is the key to success... (Natalie)

Other teachers suggested that teaching was a way for them to help the "underdog" (Caroline, Beth), be they disabled children (Caroline), Native

children (Beth), or other underprivileged children (Jane):

When I switched to Education, my dream or my expectations were that I was going to work for the underdog. I wanted to be the advocate for the underdog, for the kid who couldn't cut it... and special needs kids are the underdog for many different reasons. (Caroline)

Teachers further specified that value congruency between themselves and the other community members, a similar sense of mission, or shared goals made it easier for them to work toward what they strongly believed:

I believe that my professional commitments are stronger when there's a congruency between what the school stands for, does, and what I believe in. There is no question that my personal value system or my personal beliefs have to match or be congruent with what the school believes in. There's a greater sense of commitment when there's no major conflict in what is expected of me and what I expect of myself. (Natasha)

When I asked teachers what influenced their internal sense of mission (beside exemplar role-modelers), they suggested that their professional commitments were very much influenced by their personal values, or to what one storyteller described as "core values," and another as "deep values,"

It would be pretty naive to believe that your professional values and your personal values do not influence each other.... There is no question that my professional beliefs are influenced by my personal beliefs. There has to be a match... my professional beliefs have to match or have to be congruent with my personal value system or my personal beliefs. (Natasha)

What I value in my professional life is very much connected to what I believe in my personal life. It is very hard to separate David the teacher from David the person. (David)

Larry emphasized that his Christian beliefs "coloured" not only his professional commitments, but also the ways he went about all his commitments:

My personal philosophy of life has a Christian basis that, I believe, colours the way I go about my professional and my personal life. My attitude, my work habits, my commitments, and all these things are based upon this foundation of a Christian perspective in my life.

As well, teachers reported that their commitments, beliefs, and goals were partly influenced by their understanding of their own history:

Education for me was my ticket out of poverty. That's probably why I didn't quit in third year, why I finished my degree in the first place. Education was

my ticket out, my way out, and that's what I want to give to the kids, some ticket, something, the ability to have a career some day because they aren't going to go very far if they can't read, write, add, subtract, you know, if they can't even fill out an employment resume. And I feel I'm one of the people who can help them get where they want. (Barbara)

As you know, I have been kind of a hidden sufferer, and, because of my own history, I have always known that there are people for whom this world is not working, and I've always been aware of the underdog, those who don't have much of a chance in this world, and I feel so sorry for people that are hurting, particularly kids, and I want to make their lives better if it can be made better. And I believe that in many ways this is what has attracted me to teaching Native kids, they don't have much of a chance either. Teaching them was like a new thing for me, but it seemed like I knew their souls at the same time. (Beth)

For many storytellers, teaching also meant "touching the future" (Diane) through the children they worked with. The pride and sense of fulfillment that they felt at being able to shape the future of many young people's lives and perhaps the future of the country, is evidenced in some of the statements below:

I think teaching is a very important profession. You are shaping children, and these children are the future, they're young, they're the ones that will be running the country in 20 years and I suppose that part of me says that we have an obligation to make sure they have their crack at success and becoming the best people they can. (Tim)

I don't know of another profession that allows you to really touch the future as teaching does. What I do today with the children will have an effect on them tomorrow. (David)

Teachers also felt a great sense of success when they met specific internal standards regarding their profession:

When you work, you are always competing against some set of internal standards, and when you meet them, you do feel very good about yourself, but when you fail to meet them, you just feel terrible. (Jane)

Beth's and Natalie's stories brings further support to the above. In spite of their administrators' support and recognition, neither Natalie nor Beth were able to develop a sense of success when they were young teachers because they felt unable to meet their internal standards.

Not only did teachers (Larry, Tim) like teaching because it provided for many interesting and fulfilling interactions with children and adults, but it allowed them to pursue specific activities that particularly interested them

and that were compatible with teaching. Larry who particularly liked outdoor activities entered teaching hoping that he would teach physical education. For Tim, it was his love of music that led him to teaching. Nonetheless, teachers also reported that their educational interests evolved throughout their careers. Both Larry and Tim developed a strong interest in computing and the use of computers in class as they started using computers. As well, Larry became very interested in science, whereas Tim felt a growing interest in educational administration. This might explain why many of the teachers (Larry, Mary, Tim) pointed out that teaching, particularly teaching elementary children, tended to act as an antidote to task routinization because it provided them with task variety and often allowed them to gain new expertise in diverse areas:

The job also offers a variety of tasks to do and a variety of areas where you can develop your expertise in. It's not such a narrow job you have to be highly specialized and go into specific areas, such as math or science, and then, you become a math or a science teacher as in high school for example. (Larry)

Many storytellers found teaching attractive because it allowed them to grow professionally and personally. They further emphasized that learning increased their feelings of personal teaching efficacy and left them feeling "rejuvenated" (Jane), "re-energized" (Beth). Other teachers stated that learning was very "exciting" (Barbara, Mary), "rewarding" (Mary), or "very encouraging" (Tina). Teachers also found teaching intrinsically satisfying because of the many intellectual challenges it presented them with every day:

The challenge of teaching is in meeting the needs of each individual child both academically and behaviourally... Children are so different in everything, level of ability, behaviour, and so on so forth, whether they are in special education or regular education. And you have to learn to deal with all these differences, and at times, you are almost at a loss and you wonder, "what can I do for these kids? How do I manage them? How do I get them to learn and be productive?" And you learn by experience and you learn quickly, and you learn by drawing on things that you have learned at the University, and sometimes, you learn just by doing, by trying, and that's a real challenge. Yes, that's definitely a challenge, ..., and that's what make teaching exciting. (Caroline)

Storytellers emphasized that teaching was an act of creation, which engaged their minds, their intuition, and their hearts, and demanded that they be innovative. As well, it was a labour of love and patience:

it [teaching] is a demanding and challenging job. It's a job that allows for quite a bit of creativity, which is very important, especially at the elementary

level where there's so much involved in the way you orchestrate a class.
(Larry)

I believe that being a classroom teacher is like creating a work of art, a painting or a symphony. In working with a group of children all day, I found I could use tools to help them grow in so many different areas. Each year, we lay a new layer, or we perhaps change the texture that make up the whole, the child. (David)

Nonetheless, Beth's story tends to indicate that what constitutes a challenge for someone might be experienced as an obstacle by someone else:

The first two years, I taught Music and Language Arts, and the following two years, I taught Grade 3-4, and the three years after that, I taught Grade 6, and so, in some sense, I was challenged, but at that time, I didn't really love challenges. I thought I didn't have enough time in some areas to get good at what I was doing. Also, I didn't feel confident enough to ask the school to provide more training for me. So, in a way, I felt all these changes were working against me... At that time, I didn't see changes as challenges, I saw them as obstacles, and I didn't believe in myself as a problem solver.

Teresa somewhat echoed Beth's words:

When you feel internally good, you can deal with the challenges you are faced with, but once you start feeling overwhelmed or stressed out, what was a challenge becomes an obstacle, and then, it's a downward spiral.

Thus, storytellers enjoyed teaching partly because it was an important, challenging, and creative job that shaped and influenced children's growth and the children's present and future lives. As well, teaching enabled teachers to live up to and act out their internal sense of mission, to pursue varied interests that were compatible with teaching, and it provided them with a certain amount of task variety. Moreover, when teachers felt successful at influencing the children's progress and growth, when they could live up to their internal sense of mission and their internal professional standards, their feelings of efficacy and commitment to teaching increased, and their concept of self shifted. These feelings of success and fulfillment also provided teachers with a source of self-sustaining motivation. Finally, teachers suggested that their positive feelings about their work and work environment tended to carry over to other parts of their lives, just as feelings of failure and distress experienced at work were also carried over to out-of-school activities and relationships:

When you see children learning, when you see the results, it is a really good feeling, a very good feeling. You feel good about what you do, you feel good about going to school every day, you feel good about coming home, you feel good about what you do all day long. (Barbara)

Alternately, storytellers suggested that their commitments tended to decrease and shift when they felt unsuccessful, that is, when they could not develop fulfilling relationships with the children and the adult community members, influence the children's learning, lived up to their internal sense of mission and their internal work ethic, grow professionally, and achieve valued goals (e.g., a permanent contract).

Storytellers attributed their failure to build warm relationships with the kids and influence their learning to a combination of different factors, such as inadequate training, and/or experience (Beth, Jane, Natalie), role conflict and role overload (Barbara, Natalie, Teresa), helplessness (Corinne, Barbara, Natalie), parents' relentless and angry interferences (Natasha, Tim), and/or personal characteristics such as a poor self-concept or too high expectations for self (Beth, Natalie).

Many of the teachers (Beth, Jane) suggested that they felt unprepared to teach when they got their Bachelor of Education degree. They felt inadequately prepared to deal with many different curricula (Beth, Corinne), classroom behaviour management (Corinne, Natalie), large groups of children (Natalie), age specific children (Barbara, Corinne), children's diverse learning styles and development stages (Barbara, Corinne, Natalie), and the preparation and presentation of lessons (Barbara, Beth, Tina):

The program that I took at University was Early Childhood and I had a theatre complement, but I did not feel trained well enough to teach when I got out.... I also thought that the practicum wasn't long enough. It was too short and you didn't really get a chance to have a feel for what the work was going to be like.... I did feel unprepared, and I think that feeling unprepared is not an uncommon feeling for teachers. (Jane)

The teachers' feelings of inadequacy were not necessarily limited to their first teaching experience. Storytellers (Barbara, Natasha, Teresa) tended to feel unprepared and inadequate whenever they were thrown into a situation for which they had had no prior training, and/or experience, and were not given additional professional resources (Barbara, Corinne, Teresa).

The teachers' felt lack of training and inability to help the children grow and learn was further exacerbated by several organizational and personal characteristics (Barbara, Corinne, Natalie). For example, storytellers mentioned that the principals' unwillingness or inability to establish, support, or enforce school wide policies about children behaviours undermined their attempts at establishing an orderly environment that facilitated the children's learning. Similarly, the teachers' felt helplessness tended to accelerate the

decline of their commitments.

The teachers' feelings of helplessness were partly grounded in a felt lack of technical support and lack of feedback from the community members. This seemed to be caused by a combination of factors, such as the community members' invisibility, the principals' leadership style, the community members' lack of experience or knowledge in specific areas, intra-organizational conflicts or competitiveness between the community members, derogatory rumours (Barbara, Natasha, Teresa), and specific cultural norms (Barbara, Beth):

He [the principal] was very, very negative.... We were continuously cut down for our ideas. So, we just stop sharing our ideas... and we didn't ask for help either. (Mary)

It's not that the principal didn't work with me, but he just did not know what to do with this child then, we did not know how to work with special needs kids. We just didn't know what to do back then. (Barbara)

There was like a silent rule or something around there [the school] that said, "you don't ask for help, you are supposed to know these things." (Beth)

On the other hand, teachers also emphasized that shyness, which was often enhanced by their felt lack of teaching experience (Beth, Caroline) or by their lack of familiarity with the community members (Teresa, Tim), social fear, or a great deal of concern for one's self-image (Corinne, Jane, Larry), overwhelming feelings of inadequacy (Beth), and personal beliefs (e.g., Barbara assumed that she was to deal alone with the special needs child who was placed in her class) often prevented them from asking for help or additional training:

I never asked for help. At that time, I really believed it was my responsibility to deal with this special needs kid, I really believed it was my job and that I should be able to do it by myself. (Barbara).

When you go into a school, and you're brand new, and you're a first year teacher, you are very reluctant to draw attention to yourself. So, you just don't go around and ask questions or ask for help. (Caroline).

The teachers' locus of evaluation also affected the level of their commitments. Teachers often felt discouraged and alienated when they combined a high need for recognition with an external locus of evaluation and worked in communities where neither recognition nor support were fostered. As well, when teachers (Beth, Natalie) had an internal locus of evaluation and low feelings of adequacy or when they set up for themselves expectations that they could not possibly reach, they often ended up being

overwhelmed by feelings of failure, powerlessness, and worthlessness.

In addition, teachers with low feelings of efficacy (Barbara, Beth, Corinne) were more likely to dwell on their adverse experiences. Larry, Mary, and Tina increasingly focussed on their problems and the unsatisfying aspects of their communities when they became more and more frustrated, a process which would have only further decreased their already low feelings of efficacy.

The extent to which storytellers held dear their values and beliefs also influenced the shift and decline of their commitments:

What I believed in wasn't what was being supported by the administration.... And what I couldn't do, what I couldn't say was, "that's alright, I'll do what you are doing," I just couldn't give up [on what I believed] because it was too important to me. (Tina)

As well, teachers who could not live up to their internal sense of mission felt that they had to impersonate individuals who were alien to them, and they experienced increased feelings of self betrayal, guilt, and self-estrangement (Beth, Larry, Mary),

In the process, you loose yourself because you try to be someone you are not... and you do things that you don't believe in... (Tina)

The teachers' perception that they had failed to live up to what they believed they ought to be created deep feelings of worthlessness in them. These feelings were further strengthened by constant comparisons between their committed colleagues and themselves (Larry, Beth), the storytellers' awareness that they might not be the victims they wanted to believe they were, the degree to which they identified with what others believed about them (Jane, Larry), their locus of evaluation, and concept of self.

The storytellers' "tolerance level" (Natalie), that is, the extent to which they could endure unsatisfactory working conditions also influenced the level of their commitments. Once teachers had reached their tolerance level, which varied from one storyteller to another, their commitments were more likely to shift and decline.

Felt role conflict and overload also hindered the teachers' ability to influence the children's behaviours, learning, and growth. Many of the teachers ascribed their feelings of role conflict and overload to the presence of disruptive students in their classes (Corinne, Jeremy) and the principals'

unwillingness or inability to support or enforce school-wide policies regarding children's behaviours in school (Beth, Corinne), as well as the school administrators' unreasonable demands or expectations. Demands were deemed "unrealistic" (Natalie) when teachers did not have enough time (Barbara, Natalie) and/or resources (Mary, Natasha, Natalie) or training to adequately facilitate the learning and growth of all the children under their care:

When the new principal came in, my class went from 12 to 16 kids. At the same time, I hardly had any teacher time.... There was no way I could do a good job in those circumstances.... These kids weren't learning anything, and I felt defeated because I couldn't help them.... This is one of the reasons why I left Special Education.... My commitment to Special Education was gone... (Mary)

When I got there, I found that the class was absolutely wild... I was very frustrated at the kids because they weren't progressing... I just felt I was not capable.... I just felt totally defeated... I sometimes wondered, "Why am I even there? Why do I bother? (Corinne)

In other cases (Barbara, Teresa), felt role overload and conflict was reinforced not only by the teachers' felt helplessness, and the lack of professional resources, but also by their felt lack of training. Barbara and Teresa complained that special needs or behaviourally difficult students were placed in their classes even though they had had no prior training to deal with such students. As a result, these teachers felt overwhelmed and often powerless to influence both the special needs students and the mainstream students. They felt that they could neither adequately help their 'difficult' students nor the rest of the class. Guilt and feelings of role overload caused many of the teachers to decrease their contacts with their peers and the children's parents, two sources of social rewards (Jane, Natalie, Teresa). As well, storytellers (Barbara, Beth, Natalie) suggested they temporarily sacrificed their leisure time and familial activities to their work. In spite of these sacrifices, teachers noted that they never felt able to catch up with their work, and they developed feelings of panic and deep anxiety (Mary, Natalie), as well as symptoms of ill health and depression.

Again, certain work community characteristics such as the lack of, or poor quality of communication between the teachers and their school administrators (Natalie, Teresa), and/or the principals' felt unwillingness or inability to address the teachers' role conflict often compounded the teachers' feelings of role conflict, overload, and powerlessness. Natalie and Mary blamed their felt role overload and conflict on the principals' inability or unwillingness to adequately fund the programs they were in charge of.

Barbara blamed her role conflict and overload on her principal's lack of experience with special needs children, and Teresa blamed her administrator for his lack of administrative experience in appropriately addressing children's behavioural issues. Many of these community characteristics further bolstered the teachers's perception that they had been given an unfair and unrealistic workload.

Again, the storytellers' consistent comparisons between their previous and later workloads strengthened their feelings of role conflict and overload (Mary, Natalie). In some cases (Beth, Natalie), role conflict and overload and specific personal characteristics (e.g., the teachers' tolerance level) interacted further aggravating the storytellers' felt overload and feelings of failure. For example, Beth's feelings of inadequacy and internal locus of evaluation and Natalie's personal high expectations regarding her role and her internal locus of evaluation reportedly increased their sense of role overload. The incompatibility between these two teachers' work ethics and what they felt was expected of them led them to work endless hours without ever achieving any feelings of satisfaction or peace of mind:

I would work hours and hours, you know, to prepare things, but often, when I got to class, I thought that I was not really prepared, or that I didn't know this part well enough or whatever. It was like I never had enough time to prepare what I had to prepare, it was never enough... It was overwhelming, I never felt I had enough time to do what I had to do. (Beth)

Many of the storytellers also experienced a great deal of frustration and alienation when they were not able to build warm and nurturing relationships with the adult community members, be they the children's parents, the principals, or their colleagues. When teachers felt that their efforts were unappreciated or unrecognized, when their expertise was ignored, they felt deeply unsuccessful:

My enthusiasm sort of dwindled throughout the year, and I think it was because what we had done in the past wasn't valued by the administrator. (Mary)

Teachers (Natasha, Tim) also described how specific minorities' endless and somewhat aggressive interferences reduced their job autonomy, prevented them from facilitating their students' growth and learning and achieving feelings of success. These interferences, along with their felt consequences, were facilitated by the minorities' history of involvement in the school activities (involvement that included financial donations) (Natasha, Tim), the teachers' superordinates' and principals' invisibility (Natasha), the weak and often silent support of other parents who did not want to

antagonize the few angry parents (Natasha), and, in Tim's case, by the staff's lack of agreement on the issue dividing parents and the school principal.

The storytellers' failure to live up to their internal sense of mission also boosted their feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and meaninglessness:

I became more and more frustrated with the way things were done and why things were done [that way]... I was angry at the fact that all of a sudden what I believed in was not valued by anybody beside myself.... I guess I felt like I had lost all my value, and so, what was the use of working? (Tina)

Such situations tended to arise when the teachers' values and goals were not congruent with the other community members' values and goals. This phenomenon was further aggravated by careless hiring practices (i.e., hiring practices with little or no emphasis on the job applicants' values and goals) (Caroline, David, Tina), and this would include the hiring of new teachers or the nomination of new principals, the principals' failure to induct the new staff and continuously socialize the 'old' staff to the school goals and values, the storytellers' lack of involvement in the decision making processes, poor communication between the community members (Mary, Tina), the simultaneous departure of a large number of teachers from a specific school, and shifts in the staff's values that tended to coincide with the arrival of a new principal (Tina).

As well, storytellers (Beth, Natalie) further suggested that their felt inability to meet their own professional standards also induced feelings of powerlessness, low efficacy, and failure in them. They partly attributed their inability to keep up with their own standards to overwhelming feelings of inadequacy (Beth), too high expectations for self (Natalie), and/or unreasonable workloads:

I did not want people to know how inadequate I felt. And, there was that work ethic that I have. If I'm hired to do something, I try to do it well, it's like a sense of fairness... So, I would work hours and hours... You constantly feel that you have to do more, and more, and more, and, at the same time, enough is never enough, and things are never good enough... You are setting up standards that you can never reach, no matter how many hours you work, and you cannot let go... and it is so very tiring, so exhausting... In the end, it didn't become a choice of just changing schools, it was rather more like, this is not working for me, I have to stop teaching because this is too uncomfortable for me. I didn't see any other options. (Beth)

The teachers' internal locus of evaluation compounded the above

issue. What significant others told them about their performances had little or no impact on them:

I have been told [by my administrator] that the way to handle my workload was to cut back on the amount that I would teach per classroom, per subject, because it was just impossible to cover each subject in the depth I wanted to, but I found that very, very difficult to accept. It doesn't suit my style. I do tend to be a perfectionist, and I want to do better than a good job. I just can't accept to be told to do less. (Nathalie)

The teachers' felt inability to influence the school decisions and goals further reinforced their feelings of powerlessness and failure (Mary, Tina, Natasha). Many of the storytellers reported that the lack of participative decision making processes, their inability to influence the principals' decisions regarding the school budget (Mary, Teresa), and school wide norms regarding educational matters (Mary, Corinne, Jeremy), their principals' use of specific influence tactics, which Mary described as "fear tactics" and Tina as "sneaky", and the principals' unresponsiveness regarding some of their complaints (Tina) or their invisibility (Natasha, Corinne), the principals' conflict resolution tactics and their overall emphasis on structure, rules, and orderliness (Mary, Teresa) strengthened their feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and meaninglessness.

Other respondents (Natalie, Mary) also testified that, as they felt increasingly powerless, it became more and more difficult for them to stay in the same environment (Mary, Tina), and/or to continue to teach (Barbara, Natalie). The difference between the teachers who decided to search for another environment and those who decided to quit teaching resided in their feelings of hope. Tina and Mary who had had positive teaching experiences prior to their negative experiences believed that they could find another environment in which they would thrive again. Inversely, Barbara, who had had two very poor teaching experiences in a row when she was a young teacher, lost any hopes of finding an environment in which she would fit. It was also a combination of inexperience, helplessness, and hopelessness who initially drove Natalie out of teaching:

The Education Degree was three years, and the practicum was in the third year,...., and I failed miserably because I had no idea how to manage a classroom. At the time, I was given the option of re-doing it [the practicum] a year later... But I left because I didn't know what else to do. I didn't know, at that time, how I could improve my classroom management skills, and I could see no way of improving them.

Many of the teachers also experienced a great deal of dissatisfaction

when they became emotionally and intellectually unable to experience teaching as challenging, that is, when they experienced a growing sense of boredom (Jeremy, Tim). The teachers' increasing sense of meaninglessness was often bolstered by a combination of different factors, such as little or no professional growth (Jeremy, Tim), a sense of task routinization, a lack of upward and lateral mobility (Jeremy, Tim), and, in Jeremy's case, a decreasing interest in children:

I was getting a little bit tired of the same routine, and I felt I needed a change... [however] now, it has become extremely difficult, and it's practically impossible to get the area you want or the school you want...There is not a lot of opportunities to change within the profession, to change your role, or to change your focus. (Jeremy)

The teachers' felt sense of boredom might have been heightened by the fact that boredom tends to be considered a personal as opposed to an organizational problem that reveals individuals' inability to adequately adjust to their environment.

Teachers also felt very unsuccessful when they realized that valued goals (e.g, a permanent contract, a job as a principal) and/or expectations (e.g., a specific class) would probably never be met (Jeremy, Larry), or would not be met within the time limits they had initially hoped for (Corinne, Jane). They felt trapped in jobs that had no longer any relevance to their future plans, which further increased their feelings of role alienation. They felt "held down" (Larry), unfairly treated, and victimized,

I believed I had accumulated quite varied experiences and was "angling" around for possible chances to enter an administrative position. Nothing seemed to be opening up and I was becoming restless and frustrated... I was feeling held back, unappreciated, and so, I was kind of angry at being in the job. (Larry)

The teachers' felt normlessness (Jane, Jeremy, Larry) regarding the allocation of continuing contract and/or principalships, the felt lack of support from their school administrators (Larry, Tim), and perceived non-equitable hiring practices (Larry, Tim) might have further aggravated the storytellers' sense of victimization and dissatisfaction at their superordinates and principals.

As mentioned earlier, the teachers' experiences of failures affected their commitments. The storytellers' commitments tended to decrease, and/or shift when teachers repeatedly experienced feelings of failure or when they felt unsuccessful over a certain period of time. The decline in the level

of the teachers' commitments also reflected their understanding of these negative experiences since the storytellers' commitments decreased in function of their attributions for their perceived failures. When teachers attributed their inability to impact the students' learning to the students and specific community members, their commitments to the children, these community members, and/or the work community decreased. For example, when he recalled the incident about the human sexuality course, Tim explained:

I did feel my commitment to the students decreased somewhat as I felt betrayed by them. We had worked very hard building the concept of "community school," and this was undone by the actions of a few students and some parents. By the same token, my commitment to these parents also changed. I felt that combined with this event, there had been a few other things that gave me reason not to trust speaking or interacting with them other than strictly as a district employee and teacher whereas before I had considered them more like friends... I also started to look for a new school.

Similarly, Larry's commitments to the students, his colleagues, and his principals decreased because he blamed them for his difficulties to implement the outdoor education program:

At that time, I was really interested in outdoor activities.... Yet the administration did not do as much as I might have hoped [to support the outdoor education program], and there was a little bit a resentment, bitterness.... I also felt a little bit of resentment at my colleagues because I felt that they were only concerned by what they did.... They did not care about what I wanted to do.... The kids weren't really appreciative [either]. In fact, I was struggling with them in the classroom, and there was a sense of being drained and offended by the lack of interest...I really didn't appreciate the kids' attitudes... I thought the kids were not nice kids.

In contrast, other teachers (Beth, Barbara, Natasha) emphasized that their commitment to the children did not decrease because they did not attribute the children's failure to learn to the children themselves, but to other community members. Thus, their commitment to the students remained intact, whereas their commitments to the diverse community members whom they felt responsible for the children's failure to learn and their work community decreased:

It is true that I felt a bit uncomfortable with some kids, but it didn't influence my commitment to them... I still loved them and I believe they still loved me. But my commitment to some parents decreased because I felt they were responsible for what was happening. My commitment to my superordinates and to my administrator also decreased because I felt they were not helping me. I was left all alone to deal with the parents. (Natasha)

Barbara went through a somewhat similar experience, and she insisted that her commitment to the children never decreased during her second negative teaching experience in spite of the students' inability or unwillingness to learn. Instead, her commitments to the school principal and particularly the "system" (Barbara) drastically decreased. She lost her commitment to her principal because he never appeared to be really looking for a solution to help the children and to the "system" because it "never offered any alternatives for these kids." At the same time, Barbara lost her commitment to teaching because her "other working experiences with school systems were all like that," and she no longer believed that she "could find a system that would help these kids." As mentioned earlier, teachers (Barbara, Mary with special education, and Natalie) lost their commitment to teaching when their feelings of powerlessness were combined with feelings of hopelessness.

Again, when teachers could not achieve their valued goals, their commitments decreased in function of their attributions for their perceived failures. When teachers blamed their principals or their superordinates for their failure to achieve their valued goals, when they felt that their principals and specific school district superordinates had broken their implicit promise to reward hard work, when they felt that their trust had been broken, their commitments to their school administrators and school district superordinates decreased. However, Corinne only lost her commitment to her principal whom she held responsible for not recommending her for a continuing contract, whereas her commitment to her superintendent increased because he did not support her principal's decision.

Thus, the decline in the level of the teachers' commitments primarily depended on the storytellers' understanding of their situations, and on their attributions as to the causes of their felt failures. In addition, as already alluded to, and further aggravating the teachers' experiences, storytellers, either by themselves or with others, tended to launch out into diverse other processes which aggravated their initial feelings of dissatisfaction. Larry re-activated latent beliefs about elementary teaching and role prescriptions, whereas Mary and Tina increasingly focussed on all the other negative aspects of their profession and environment, facilitated the creation of coalitions, intensified their comparisons between their former and later work environments, and increasingly blamed their negative experiences on others.

As well, when teachers attributed their feelings of failure to specific community members, not only did their commitments to these specific community members decrease, but their commitment to their work

community and/or teaching also decreased. Feelings of hopelessness and/or low feelings of self-worth (Beth) tended to drive teachers away from the teaching profession, whereas previously positive teaching experiences and the teachers' belief that they could find more positive communities only drove them away from their actual work community.

Part of the above information is encapsulated in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 (Appendix H, I, J, K).

Extrinsic Factors

Some teachers (Beth, Jeremy, Larry) suggested that they stayed in teaching partly for extrinsic reasons:

It wouldn't make sense to go into something else that might be financially questionable since I have a wife and a daughter to support. So, there is a financial need as well. And then, at the same time too, one has to consider that there is a pension somewhere in here, and as hard as it is for me to accept, I have to think about the realities of pension. I am not far off from that part of my career, maybe some six years or so. It would be silly to go off to something completely different, to throw away a pension or take far less than what I am currently making and try some new adventure. (Larry)

Nevertheless, extrinsic factors did not always influence the teachers' willingness to exert extra efforts for the benefits of the community members. Larry's story tends to suggest that he became more and more disengaged from teaching and the community members he worked with when his commitments decreased, even though he stayed in teaching (Larry). Alternately, Jane described how hard she worked after her vacation incident when she wanted her principal to recommend her for a continuing contract (Jane). Thus, it might be that extrinsic factors are motivating only when they are valued and as long as they have not been granted.

In any case, most teachers tended to downplay the role that extrinsic rewards had on their commitments. At the time of our conversations, they all clearly indicated that they had chosen to remain in teaching and exerted extra efforts primarily for intrinsic reasons.

Self Worth Recovery

Teachers (Corinne, Jane, Natasha) felt that they had to prove themselves to themselves and significant others, particularly after a poor teaching experience. They further indicated that this process motivated them to do their very best at work. For example, after her contract with the

Catholic Board had not been renewed and she had been hired by a different Board to implement a French immersion program, Natasha stated:

At that point, I felt I had something to prove to myself. I wanted to prove to myself that I was a good teacher, and that I could hold a job, and get a permanent contract. I also wanted my parents to be proud of me... I didn't want them to be ashamed of me, they weren't too proud of the fact my first contract [with the Catholic Board] had not been renewed. So yes, I had a lot of reasons for accepting that job... I wanted to prove I was a good teacher, I wanted to keep a continuing contract, and that certainly motivated me.

Jane also reported that she went through similar emotions after her principal questioned her commitment to teaching, and like Natasha, her willingness to prove to her administrator, superordinates, and perhaps to herself that she was a dedicated teacher kept her in the teaching profession, in the same school board, and trying to be the best teacher she could be:

I kept going back to that school to keep proving myself, to prove that he [the principal] was wrong, that they [her superordinates at the Central Office] were wrong... I should have probably just gone to the Catholic school board. My cousin hired people, and I could have got in through him, but, and I don't know whether that was commitment or whether that was being a fool, I stayed because I wanted them to think that I was a good person.

In such situations, the teachers' decisions and actions were partly influenced by the significant others they wanted to prove themselves to. For example, Jane remained with the public school board because she wanted to prove herself to some of her superordinates who worked for this board. However, because Natasha did not feel any compulsions to prove herself to her superordinates, she had no problems going to a new school board.

Nonetheless, wanting to prove oneself to others tended to be temporary since teachers either built their efficacy feelings again, or ended up temporarily exiting the teaching profession (Barbara, Jeremy).

Conclusion

The teachers' stories suggest that their commitments were primarily intrinsic. Teachers also confirmed that they felt different degrees of commitment toward the different work community members, and that their commitments were susceptible to change in intensity and focus throughout their careers.

In spite of these variations, all the teachers described their work with

the children as the most satisfying and rewarding aspect of teaching, and they suggested that they felt more committed to the children than to any of the other work community members. Storytellers also indicated that they felt the second highest degree of commitment either for the children's parents or for their colleagues. Those who ranked parents in second position ranked their colleagues in third position, and those who ranked their colleagues in second position ranked the parents in third position. Principals were either not mentioned or ranked in last position. Teachers did not mention their schools when they ranked their commitments. Rather, they tended to view their commitment to their school as a consequence of their felt commitments to the community members.

Storytellers suggested that their commitment to teaching increased when they felt successful at work, that is, when they experienced high feelings of efficacy and deep feelings of community. Teachers' feelings of efficacy were influenced by the extent to which they could facilitate the children's growth and learning, live up to their internal sense of mission and professional standards, work in a stimulating environment within which they could grow, and were recognized by the community members. In other words, good performance and the teachers' awareness that they were involved in a worthwhile enterprise were self-rewarding and provided them with an incentive for continuing to perform well. Teachers were driven by the satisfaction and pride that emanated from their achievements, and their feelings of professional success and fulfilment tended to carry over to other parts of their lives.

The storytellers' feelings of commitment toward the community members was affected by the extent to which teachers felt genuinely valued in their communities, that is, the extent to which they felt supported and recognized, experienced a sense of social and spiritual communion with the community members, and the degree to which community members exerted communal efforts for the benefit of the children.

With respect to their colleagues, storytellers suggested that they identified with and were committed to colleagues with whom they had developed a meaningful relationship. Many of the teachers indicated that belonging to the same profession, sharing similar problems and joys, having common interests (e.g., children, hobbies), similar personalities, regular contacts, and previously positive experiences with other teachers tended to facilitate an initial sense of solidarity among the storytellers and their colleagues. Genuine empathy, acceptance of others, similar values and shared superordinate goals (preferably articulated around the children's learning), support, recognition, feedback, collaboration (provided that the

individuals who worked collaboratively had similar values and goals), exemplar role-modelling, and attitudinal transformations appeared to boost the storytellers' feelings of solidarity and identification with their colleagues, and to foster the development of mutual feelings of respect, trust, and admiration.

Shared values and goals created a sense of spiritual communion and highlighted an harmony of interests which increased the teachers' feelings of affiliation and togetherness with the other staff members, cemented their relationships, and further facilitated collaborative work and reciprocal support. As a result, the storytellers and their colleagues developed strong affective ties, increasingly shared professional information, engaged more and more frequently in conversations about the children's learning and other educational matters (Mary, Tina, Jeremy), enjoyed working collaboratively on diverse committees and extra-curricular activities (Mary, Natalie, Tina), listened to their colleagues' advice and guidance (Beth, Jane, David), increasingly offered their peers emotional and educational support (Barbara, Mary, Teresa), and modelled their colleagues' behaviours. As well, collaborative work enriched the teachers' daily practice, helped them become more aware of their uniqueness and of others' diverse talents and expertise, and boosted their feelings of efficacy, three processes which teachers found motivating. By the same token, teachers emphasized the importance of promoting collaborative work in the work place, as well as of hiring teachers with similar values and goals but diverse skills and talents, so that they could continue to grow professionally and increasingly diversify their skills and competencies. Most of the storytellers also indicated that the affective bonds that they had developed with their colleagues often expanded beyond the work community walls and turned into deep and long-lasting friendships, which were also intrinsically satisfying. Storytellers further stated that the teachers' enthusiasm regarding their work and their willingness to work collaboratively were often contagious, joyful, and highly motivating.

With respect to the children's parents, teachers again identified with parents who genuinely valued their expertise and humanness. Personal experiences with parenthood, previous pleasant experiences with the students' parents (Tim, Tina), and the parent's visibility and availability at school facilitated the teachers' development of positive attitudes towards the children's parents and deepened the teachers' empathetic concern towards parents. In addition, the parents' support, positive feedback, recognition, and involvement in school or class activities often fostered mutually satisfying relationships between the parents and the teachers, an increased empathy, and the beginning of a self-reinforcing cycle in which support from one party generated support from the receiving party, which, in turn, generated more

support and empathy. Many of the teachers also suggested that parental support and positive feedback bolstered their feelings of personal teaching efficacy, importance, fulfilment, and affiliation, and facilitated and enhanced their work. They noted that supportive parents also benefited the children's learning. In return for the parents' support, teachers were willing to be the best teachers they could for the children, to maintain open and honest communication with the parents, to increase their visibility, and to try and involve them in as many school and class activities as the parents desired. Nonetheless, Natasha's and Tim's stories also tended to show that parental support in school activities could evolve and become quite trying at times, in particular when parents' and teachers' purposes and values grew more and more divergent.

Storytellers (Barbara, Beth, Mary, Tina) also suggested that specific principals' characteristics, as well as the principals' influence or certain organizational characteristics, played a crucial role on the storytellers' commitments to the community members. Many of the teachers emphasized that they felt more committed to principals who were able to develop learning communities that were supportive and stimulating, student centred, promoted a sense of family and togetherness, facilitated their feelings of efficacy, and who were exemplar role modelers.

Storytellers noted that principals facilitated their feelings of affiliation by demonstrating genuine concern or empathy toward them. This was reflected in the principals' willingness to create a work community in which storytellers felt safe to share their professional uncertainties with others, which, in turn, opened up the space to address them (David, Mary, Teresa). It was also manifested in the principals' availability, approachability, visibility, support, and recognition, as well in their willingness to buffer teachers against diverse irritants, such as aggressive parents (Caroline, Jeremy, Mary, Natasha), discipline problems (Barbara, Corinne), frequent interruptions during class time (Barbara, Mary), and perceive trivial administrative matters (Caroline, Jeremy).

Teachers (Barbara, Mary, Teresa, Tina) also suggested that caring principals tended to promote collaborative work and parental involvement (Barbara, Tim), two processes which they found gratifying and motivating under certain conditions since they increased the storytellers' feelings of affiliation, the development of strong affective ties, bolstered the teachers' feelings of efficacy, facilitated their professional growth, and, thereby, their feelings of excitement, fulfilment, and professional worth (Barbara, David, Mary, Teresa, Tina)

Nurturing principals also hired specific others whose values and goals were congruent with the community members and who were student centred since teachers (David, Mary, Teresa, Tina) emphasized that community members with congruent values and goals strengthened their feelings of spiritual cohesion, closeness, and their sense of purpose and direction. Nonetheless, as noted by several teachers (Caroline, David, Natalie), school values had to genuinely reflect the community members' values to be credible and inspiring. In addition, school values and goals had to be congruent with the school mission, frequently reminded by principals, often discussed with the community members, role-modelled, regularly assessed, concomitant with adequate professional development, supported and clearly evidenced in the community members' behaviours, their daily routines, as well as in the school physical environment. Teachers pointed out that the community members' daily activities, the ways they spent their time, the intensity of their involvement in certain activities, the types of activities they engaged in and role-modelled, and the ways they behaved throughout the day communicated to the community members what was valued and important in the school. Moreover, a felt safe environment and participative decision making processes facilitated the school members' socialization and internalization of the school values and goals. Teachers preferred that democratic decision making included decisions about the school values and goals, their professional development and specific school-wide policies because it increased their feelings of affiliation and belongingness.

Not only did nurturing principals promote collaborative work since storytellers indicated that it was a valuable source of professional growth and efficacy information, but they also provided teachers with other means of instructional assistance since storytellers suggested that felt performance efficacy influenced their commitments, their sense of professional worth, and their motivation. In particular, storytellers (Barbara, Beth, Caroline, David) mentioned that they felt grateful toward principals who gave them frequent, relevant, specific, and immediate feedback on their performance, showed appreciation for their continued efforts to improve their practice, and who were willing to invite in the school consultants from the district office or to promote mentorship and creativity.

Storytellers (Beth, David, Jane, Mary, Teresa, Tina) also suggested that principals such as the ones described in the above paragraphs affected their motivation to work harder, to be more innovative, and their desire to continue to work in their environments (Mary, Teresa, Tina). Such principals further facilitated an identification process with the community members, which facilitated the storytellers' role-modelling, promotion, and internalization of the school goals and values. The principals' impact on the

storytellers' work experiences went beyond the school walls and often permeated their personal lives.

Thus, when informants felt successful at work (i.e., when they experienced high feelings of efficacy and community), their commitments tended to increase. As well, when their commitments increased, their feelings of fulfilment, efficacy, and self-worth increased. Respondents emphasized that they felt good about their work and good about themselves (i.e., they felt successful). The above is summarized in the following figure:

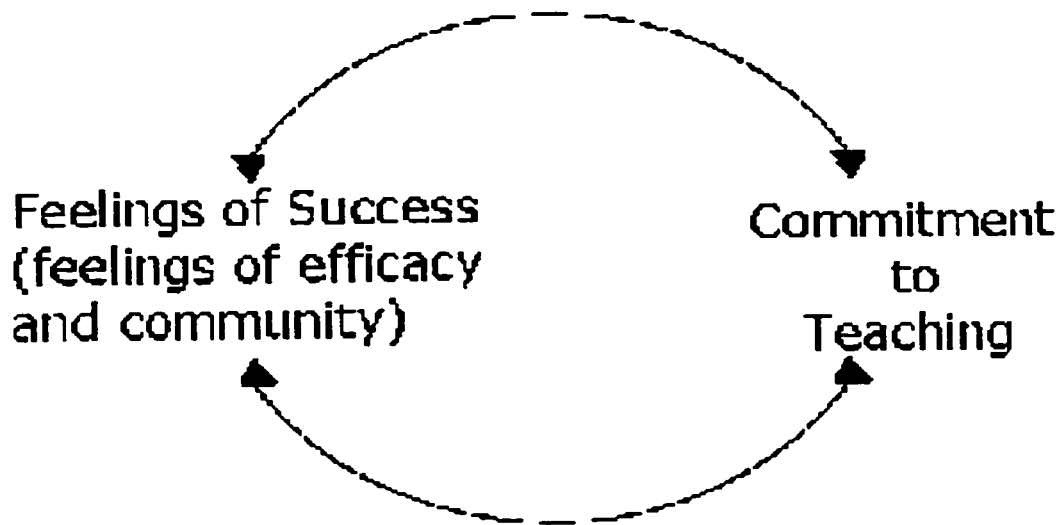


Figure 8. Feelings of Success and Commitment to Teaching

If specific organizational and social characteristics and processes tended to influence the teachers' commitments, specific individual characteristics also influenced the teachers' desire to collaborate and develop relationships with other community members, and therefore their commitments. Among these, teachers mentioned experience, training, locus of evaluation, the storytellers' need for recognition, their shyness, social fear, their previous work experiences, feelings of efficacy, specific expectations and ambitions, and their ability to tolerate frustrations.

Alternately, storytellers (Barbara, Larry) emphasized that teaching became meaningless and unsatisfactory when they could not influence the students' learning, when they could not fulfil their internal sense of mission

and meet their professional standards, whether these feelings of failure were due to personal characteristics such as overwhelming feelings of inadequacy (Beth), the respondents' inability or unwillingness to ask for guidance (Beth, Natalie), a low tolerance for frustrations, an external locus of evaluation combined with a high need for recognition in an environment that provided little or no recognition, feelings of uncertainty about their performance, specific curriculum, specific children, and their training (Barbara, Corinne, Jeremy), and/or specific organizational characteristics. Teaching also became unsatisfactory when the storytellers could not develop fulfilling relationships with the community members, when they experienced a sense of boredom, and did not feel that teaching was relevant to some of their valued goals. Nonetheless, storytellers suggested that felt lack of success did not necessarily lead to a decrease of their commitment to teaching, unless they also experienced feelings of hopelessness (Barbara, Natalie). Instead, they indicated that unsatisfactory working conditions diversely affected their commitments, depending on their attributions of causes as to their felt lack of success.

Storytellers reported that they felt little or no commitment toward colleagues whose values, beliefs, and goals were incongruent with their own, who were not committed to the children's learning and growth, who were unsupportive and unwilling to collaborate. They also indicated that some of their personal characteristics, such as feelings of inadequacy, social fear, shyness, low feelings of efficacy, and a felt lack of experience might also hinder the development of professional relationships with their colleagues, which affected the exchange of educational information and the development of affective ties among the school staff. As well, teachers emphasized that environments dominated by personal and/or professional rivalries, as well as work communities that were perceived as unsafe (Mary, Tina) tended to fragment and hinder their commitments, in particular their commitments to their colleagues, to their schools, and the school goals.

They also emphasized that they felt little or no commitment toward parents who were invisible, unsupportive, aggressive, overly critical of them and/or the school values, who attempted to infringe on their professional autonomy through hostile influence tactics, or who tried to rally them against another teacher or the school administrator. They emphasized that hostile teacher-parent relationships tended to affect the children's attitudes towards learning, the teachers, and the school, which often made teaching more difficult. Ultimately, parent-teacher conflicts often led teachers (Natasha, Tim) to feel alienated and helpless, and to subsequently search for a different school.

As well, storytellers mentioned that they had little or no commitment to principals whose values and goals were incongruent with their own, who were unsupportive, perceived as threatening and manipulative, not inclusive, overly interfering in their teaching, and favouring specific staff members. In fact, these storytellers also suggested that such principals facilitated feelings of anxiety, frustration, low feelings of efficacy and self-esteem, ill health, and influenced their desire to search for a new environment.

Some teachers suggested that extrinsic rewards might have played a role in their decision to remain in the teaching profession, and/or to re-enter teaching. However, teachers tended to downplay the role that extrinsic rewards had on their commitments, and at the time of our conversations, they clearly emphasized that they remained in teaching and exerted extra efforts primarily for intrinsic reasons.

The teachers' recovery of their feelings of self-worth also motivated some of the teachers to remain in teaching and be the best teachers they could, particularly after a poor teaching experience. In such cases, the storytellers' decisions and commitments were partly influenced by their desire to prove themselves to significant others.

Chapter Six

SUMMARY, COMPARISONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purposes of this chapter are to summarize the information that the storytellers shared with me about their work commitments, to compare my findings with the results from the literature review, and to suggest a number of recommendations to educators and other people who might have an interest in commitment.

Summary of the Study Findings

The teachers' stories indicated that storytellers experienced multiple commitments. The five main foci of the teachers' commitments were teaching, the children, their colleagues, the children's parents, and the school administrators. Respondents also reported that they felt committed to the people from the school district and/or other agencies (e.g., Parks and Recreation, Social Services) with whom they had worked closely and who had been particularly supportive. Interestingly enough, they tended to consider organizational commitment as peripheral to their other commitments, a finding that supports Menzies' (1995) research.

Teachers indicated that they experienced their commitments as distinct as illustrated in the following comments,

My biggest commitment is toward the students. Second would be my commitment to the school staff, and then, the parents. (Larry)

My biggest commitment? It has to be the kids. The kids are why we are there.... And then comes my commitment to the teachers, teachers come second. After that comes my commitment to the parents... and then maybe my commitment to the principal. (Mary)

The teachers' commitments differed in a number of ways. They were not always facilitated or hindered by the same factors. For example, good performance and/or the children's visible progress influenced the teachers' commitment to teaching and to the children but not their commitments to the parents and/or their colleagues. As well, the outcomes of the respondents' commitments were not always the same. While teachers who were committed to the children's parents and their students reported that they made a specific effort to inform the parents of their children's progress and difficulties and set up programs that would help the children whenever necessary, they did not necessarily engage in the same type of activities with the rest of the community members to whom they were committed. Many

teachers also pointed out that they experienced their commitments differently. They often described their deep-felt commitment to teaching as a sense of vocation or a "bit of a calling" (Teresa, Tim), whereas they referred to their commitment to the parents and/or their colleagues as a sense of partnership.

Reichers (1985) was the first researcher to hypothesize that employees experienced multiple commitments. Further research has since provided some evidence that supported Reichers' (1985) hypothesis (Becker, 1992; Everett, 1991; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Menzies, 1995). For example, Menzies' (1995) respondents identified six different commitment foci: commitment to teaching, commitment to their profession (e.g. health), commitment to students and student learning, organizational commitment, and extra-work commitment (i.e., other commitments). Kushman (1992) studied teacher commitment to the organization and commitment to student learning. Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) examined teacher commitment to teaching, teacher commitment to students, and teacher organizational commitment. Sikes et al. (1985) who reviewed the literature on teacher commitment identified commitment to teaching as a vocation, commitment to teaching as a profession, teacher commitment to the subject specialty, and teacher commitment to students. Leithwood et al. (1993) and Leithwood (1994) studied teacher commitment to change in restructuring schools. Nonetheless, the literature on commitment has not yet identified a comprehensive list of teachers' commitments, and the study findings must be considered exploratory in this respect.

That teachers' commitments were distinct did not mean that they did not influence each other. Many teachers suggested that their commitment to school was linked to their commitment to their administrators, their colleagues, the children's parents, and the children. Alternately, when teachers did not identify with the remainder of the staff and/or the parents because they felt that these people were detrimental to the children's learning or hindered their work, they experienced little or no commitment to their schools, and in some cases, to teaching. As well, storytellers noted that, in specific circumstances, their commitment or lack of commitment to specific community members could expand to the group that these individuals represented,

When the pain is too great, not only do you decrease your commitment toward a person or a small group of persons, but [you also decrease your commitment] to the larger community or group that these people are connected with. (Natasha)

This type of transfer tended to accelerate when the group members supported the 'troublemakers' or did not publicly disapprove of them, or when the respondents had been repeatedly and deeply disappointed by other individuals who belonged to the same group as the 'troublemakers.' For example, Tim felt a guarded reserve toward principals for approximately ten years because most of the principals he had worked with during these years had not supported his ambition to become an administrator. Similarly, a few storytellers stated that they felt or had felt some wariness or caution toward parents because of several unpleasant experiences with them. These transfers and shifts of commitment did not spread only laterally from a few individuals to the whole group that these individuals represented or belonged to, but they also crossed hierarchical boundaries in some cases. Storytellers suggested that the decline in the level of their commitment to their principals expanded to the principals' superordinates when principals carried out or enforced perceived unfair school district directives without much consideration for the teachers' or the children's welfare. The same happened when a principal for whom storytellers had little or no respect was promoted by the school district, or when the school district personnel silently condoned principals' unfair practices in schools. Barbara's, Mary's, and Larry's stories illustrate these hierarchical transfers.

The community members' commitments also influenced the informants' commitments to teaching, their administrators, their colleagues, the students, and the parents. Many of the storytellers emphasized that working with a group of committed individuals who shared similar objectives and values made them even more committed. Alternately, Barbara and Teresa pointed out that the school staff's felt lack of commitment to teaching and the children's learning affected their commitment to their administrators, their colleagues, and, to some extent, to teaching as well. This finding supports Menzies' (1995) results with her own respondents.

Not only were the storytellers' commitments distinct and multi-focussed, but they were also multi-dimensional. Teachers experienced different degrees of commitment toward the children, their colleagues, the parents, and/or the school principals. Many of the informants reported that they preferred working with specific children. Some particularly enjoyed working with hard working students, while others preferred children with specific characteristics (e.g., special needs students, Native children, or low SES students), or age specific children. As well, respondents felt a deeper commitment to their hard-working colleagues than to those less dedicated. Teachers also tended to be more committed to supportive than to unsupportive, aggressive, and/or overly interfering community members,

There are definitely some colleagues and some parents that I feel more committed to... and I don't think that's particularly unusual. When you work with people, you are bound to like some more than others. (Beth)

The teachers' commitments changed throughout their careers. Changes affected both the intensity and the foci of the storytellers' commitments. Several teachers noticed that their commitment to children grew over the years, whereas other storytellers stated that their commitment to children was not as strong as it used to be, even though they still found children motivational. The other community members did not escape this phenomenon. Several storytellers felt little or no commitment to parents, and/or to their colleagues when they started teaching, but their commitments to parents and co-workers grew over the years as a result of their mutually supportive and nurturing relationships. Alternately, other teachers who were very committed to specific community groups or members at one period during their careers mentioned that their commitments to these groups or group members tended to decrease after particularly unpleasant events or heated conflicts.

As well, the teachers' stories indicate that the speed at which their commitments ebbed and flowed varied from one participant to another. Nonetheless, in several cases, informants reported that their commitments to specific community members decreased very rapidly. These stories tend to suggest that employees' commitments may not be as stable as suggested by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982). In fact, this finding confirms earlier research by Porter, Crampon, and Smith (1976) and Porter et al. (1974). These authors demonstrated that commitment was a fairly unstable phenomenon that could change within as little as one to three months prior to an employee's decision to leave a job. As well, Larkey and Morill (1995) hypothesized that employees' commitment might be rather vulnerable and volatile under conditions of organizational change.

Teachers suggested that their commitments partly rose out of the psychic rewards of teaching, their feelings of efficacy, and their relationships with the different community members. When they experienced high feelings of efficacy and deep feelings of community, their commitment to teaching and to the community members increased. Informants also reported that their feelings of efficacy were influenced by their perception that they contributed to their children's learning and growth, they did something that felt 'right,' that is, something that was congruent with their internal sense of mission, they met their internal standards, and they grew professionally and personally. The teachers' feelings of community were influenced by the teachers' experiences of spiritual and social belonging, the group's communal

effort, and the teachers' beliefs that they were accepted and genuinely valued by others.

These findings partly support previous research on commitment since the teacher commitment literature has provided initial evidence of a relationship between teacher commitment to teaching and teacher efficacy (Kushman, 1992; Menzies, 1995; Shin & Reyes, 1991, Rosenholtz, 1989). As well, in this study as in previous research on teachers' commitment, the intrinsic rewards of teaching were more important than the extrinsic ones (Bredeson et al., 1883; Martinez-Ponz, 1990).

Storytellers further suggested that the factors that influenced their commitments were multiple. As well, changes in the storytellers' commitments were multi-factorial. Teachers reported that specific organizational processes (e.g., collaboration, learning), certain individual characteristics (e.g., core values, need for social contact, feelings of efficacy), their history (personal and professional), their life and responsibilities out of school, and significant others tended to influence their work commitments. They also emphasized that these factors tended to interact and influence one another.

That there are many organizational factors that influence employees' commitments is hardly new, as I have pointed out in the literature review. However, more recent studies (Cohen, Kirchemeyer, 1995; Fouad & Tinsley, 1997; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Menzies, 1995) tend to support what the storytellers have suggested with respect to the influence of non-organizational factors on their work commitments and/or satisfaction with their worklife. Cohen and Kirchemeyer's (1995) respondents (N = 227 nurses) reported that non-work factors (e.g., personal resource enrichment/depletion from nonwork activities, work interference with nonwork) explained a significant percentage of the variance in organizational commitment.

Organizational Factors Facilitating the Teachers' Commitments

As already mentioned, the teachers' feelings of efficacy and their feelings of community were enhanced by specific organizational processes. Among these, teachers mentioned the school's emphasis on value and goal congruence and consensus, the school's emphasis on feedback and recognition, learning, collegiality, and the crucial role of principals as transformational leaders.

Value and goal congruency and consensus. Schools facilitated value and goal congruency by selecting teachers who would 'fit' in their new

environment and share the staff's main values and objectives. The new teachers' careful induction was followed by their continuous socialization to the school values and goals via role-modelling, frequent discussions and reminders of these values and goals, and by regular assessments of the school goals. Values and goals were articulated around the children's growth and learning and the school mission. They were consensual, concrete, achievable, concomitant with adequate resources and professional development, and they were not only professed but lived with passion, shared with enthusiasm, and integrated in the staff members' daily routines. The staff's emphasis on value and goal congruency enabled storytellers to fulfil their internal sense of mission (provided that the school's values and goals were congruent with the teacher's core values), reinforce their feelings of spiritual communion, sense of purpose and direction, affiliation, togetherness, and foster collaboration, mutual support, and the development of strong affective ties among the staff's members. Alternately, teachers suggested that value conflicts tended to contribute to conflicting commitments, decreases in their commitments, and to their dissatisfaction with their work lives. Previous research on teacher commitment have stressed that personal and organizational value congruence increased teachers' commitment (Bredeson et al., 1983, Louis & Smith, 1991; Menzies, 1995; Tarter et al. 1989). Research studies (Bredeson et al. 1983; Louis & Smith, 1991; Reyes, 1989; Tarter et al. 1989) have also indicated that personal and organizational value congruence tended to increase commitment.

Feedback, attribution of the children's progress to the teachers, and recognition. Voluntary collaboration and involvement of different community members (e.g., parents, business owners, and employees from provincial agencies) were often condoned in positive environments since they multiplied the teachers' sources of recognition and positive feedback, particularly when the different community members had a shared understanding of the school's values and goals. Feedback was frequent, relevant, specific, immediate whenever possible, and often conducive to reflection and further improvements. As well, the sources of information were credible. Credibility depended on the sources' level of involvement in the school activities, their awareness of the school's goals and values, and the quality of their feedback. Efforts were made to inform the parents and other outside-of-school community members of the school values and goals so that they could become effective sources of information and feedback. The storytellers' achievements and efforts were frequently recognized. The forms of recognition were varied (verbal, written, public, private), valued by the teachers, and they came from multiple sources. As well, recognition was genuine. It is important to remember that the teachers' willingness to start a

dialogue with the diverse sources of information also depended on specific organizational and personal characteristics (e.g., the school was a 'safe' environment, the sources of information and the participants had similar goals, the sources of information were credible and spoke fluent English, the participants felt confident in their ability to teach, they were experienced and knowledgeable of the curriculum and the students).

The teachers' information with respect to feedback tends to confirm previous findings by Charters et al. (1984), Firestone and Pennell (1993), and Louis (1991). These authors argued that feedback was crucial to maintain high internal motivation to work. As well, other studies (Johnson, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1993) indicated that feedback did not increase teachers' commitment to teaching when it failed to confirm useful instructional efforts, to provide teachers with useful advice and opportunities to learn, to signal problem areas, and/or when the sources of feedback were not credible. In fact, Johnson (1990) found that teachers often doubted that supervisors were adequately trained for supervision and feedback. They claimed that principals did not have enough experience in the subjects or grades that they evaluated, were too distanced from teaching as a result of their responsibilities, and made too infrequent and short classroom visits to make appropriate judgements. Even when praised, teachers were often unsatisfied because they felt that these praises were not the result of a thorough evaluation.

Learning and innovations. Deemed positive schools promoted the staff's learning and growth. Storytellers' learning opportunities were frequent, valuable, and linked to the agreed-upon school goals and the school mission, and they came from multiple sources (e.g., consultations with outside educators, collaboration with colleagues, inservices). The school's emphasis on innovations, creativity, sharing of information, the hiring of people with different talents, the involvement of different community groups in the school activities, collaboration, instructional support, and continuous professional development tended to facilitate teacher and student learning. Again, the teachers' perception was that they worked in a 'safe' environment where they were accepted and valued. Value congruency within the school also increased the teachers' willingness to open their classes, collaborate, share professional information with the school staff, and engage in communal work.

Other researchers (Blase, 1986; Lortie, 1975; Martinez-Pons, 1990) emphasized that if commitment is to be enhanced, schools must provide teachers with opportunities to learn and counter professional stagnation and boredom. Blase (1986) and Rosenholtz (1985, 1989) provided initial

evidence that teachers who use the same instructional techniques and practices year after year, often complain of monotony and professional stagnation, sometimes to the point of becoming bored, unenthusiastic, and unable to adequately motivate students. Researchers (Louis, 1991; Lichenstein et al., 1991; Maeroff, 1988) also failed to find a relationship between learning and teacher commitment when staff development programs did not increase the teachers' feelings of efficacy by increasing their skill variety and/or helping them address specific needs. These authors argued that teachers should participate in the choice, planning and design of development programs since they know better than anyone else their shortcomings and the difficulties they face in their classrooms.

Collegiality. Schools that encouraged collegiality and collaboration positively affected teacher commitment to teaching, their administrators, colleagues, students, and the students' parents. Collegiality was facilitated by specific hiring practices, the induction of the new community members to the school goals and values, the continuous socialization of the community members to the school goals and values, the development of an environment that was perceived "safe" by the community members, and exemplar role modelling. Collegiality reduced the storytellers' feelings of isolation, increased their feelings of spiritual and social communion, and allowed teachers to meet their personal needs for social interaction, reassurance and psychological support. It also enhanced the teachers' feelings of efficacy because it enabled teachers and administrators to recognize and praise good teaching by fellow teachers.

Kushman (1992), Louis and Smith (1991, 1992), Martinez-Ponz (1990), and Reyes (1992) who studied teachers' OC demonstrated that higher levels of collaboration, and/or collegiality were associated with higher levels of OC. Little (1981) and Corcoran et al. (1988) also found that collaboration sustained teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and created powerful and satisfying learning experiences. However, collaboration accounted for very different levels of variance of commitment in qualitative and quantitative studies (Louis & Smith, 1991, 1992). These inconsistent findings could be explained by the variety of collaboration models. Little (1982, 1990) who distinguished collaboration (which she defined as joint work) from less intense forms of interactions such as story-telling and scanning, aid and assistance, and sharing, hypothesized that only specific forms of collaboration affected teachers' OC.

Leadership. Principals were crucial to the development of healthy environments, and well-liked principals were able and willing to communicate genuine empathy, acceptance, respect of individual differences, support, and

recognition. They were also visible, approachable, exemplar listeners, and inspiring role-modelers. They trusted the storytellers' expertise, promoted collaboration and innovations, facilitated the community's learning and growth, promoted participative decision making, hired new community members with similar values and goals but different talents, facilitated the induction of new community members, and continually socialized the rest of the community to the school values and goals via exemplar role-modelling, frequent discussions, and regular assessments of the school goals and values. With respect to the school goals and values, principals ensured that these were not only professed but also reflected in the community's daily routines, that they were concrete, achievable, regularly reviewed, linked to the school mission, articulated around the community' enrichment, and consensually agreed-upon. The principals' activities and interactions fostered openness, reciprocity, and bolstered the community members' morale. Principals galvanized the respondents' energy, provided them with a focus and a sense of direction, inspired them, and protected them against trivial irritants.

This type of leadership, which has often been referred to as transformational leadership in the literature (Leithwood, 1994, 1993, 1992a, 1992b; Rowan, 1990; Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989) has been associated with higher commitment in previous studies (Bass, 1985; Kouzes, & Posner, 1987; Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt 1985). More specifically, Posner et al. (1985) found that subordinates who perceive senior managers to have effectively communicated a vision by identifying organizational values, setting priorities, and setting meaning for achieving objectives also reported significantly higher levels of OC. Similarly, Guzley (1992) reported that organizational clarity was the strongest indicator of OC among his sample of 250 respondents. Peterson and Martin (1990) explained the above phenomenon as follows:

It seems reasonable to believe that one would find higher commitment where there is greater clarity of mission in the organization. This may be the case for several reasons. Commitment, involving both identification and involvement (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982) should increase as the clarity of the mission increases. First, one can identify more closely with an organization when it is clear what core values are held by organizational members, especially if those values are shared by others in the organization. Second, involvement and commitment may be increased by a clear mission because it is simpler to connect to singular, less complex goals or missions. (p. 230)

The literature on teacher commitment also stressed that teacher commitment increased when teachers were treated as professionals and

involved in the decision making processes (Kushman, 1992; Louis & Smith, 1991; Martinez-Ponz, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Shin & Reyes, 1991; Tarter et al., 1989), when teachers worked in a supportive environment with defined goals (Anderman et al. 1991; Hoy et al., 1990), and when they were provided with feedback about their performance (Louis & Smith, 1991).

Organizational Factors Decreasing the Teachers' Commitments

Teachers suggested that their commitments tended to decrease and shift when they felt unsuccessful at work, that is, when they felt unable to influence the children's learning and growth and the other community members, when they could not live up to their ideal of service or their internal sense of mission, when they experienced a growing sense of boredom, when they felt that teaching was no longer relevant to some of their valued goals, and when they could not build warm and nurturing relationships at work. As well, specific organizational processes and characteristics tended to facilitate the teachers' growing sense of meaninglessness and alienation.

Teachers stressed that their felt inability to influence the children's learning and growth was fostered by certain leadership styles, school norms, minority parents' relentless interferences, and the storytellers' feelings of role conflict and role overload. The principals' invisibility, their failure to provide storytellers with adequate resources, professional development, and other forms of technical support, and to support or enforce school wide policies with respect to school behaviours strengthened the teachers' felt inability to contribute to the children's learning. In addition, deemed unreasonable workloads (combined with little or no additional resources), work communities' silent norms against helping each other increased the participants' feelings of helplessness and inadequacy. Relentless interferences from minorities also aggravated the participants' inability to influence the students' learning. These interferences were often facilitated by the minorities' history of involvement in the school affairs, the invisibility of the school principals and other superordinates, the weak and silent support of the other community members (i.e., parents and teachers), and other intraorganizational conflicts.

Although there is been little research on the factors that facilitated the teachers' withdrawal and disengagement from their work activities, Menzies (1995) and Reyes (1992) found a small negative association between teachers' workload and OC (the higher the workload, the lower the commitment). Moreover, Johnson (1990) who interviewed a large number of teachers indicated that the heterogeneity in student ability, experiences, and

attitudes further compounded the problem of class size and increased teacher stress and discontentment.

The teachers' inability to live up to their internal values was aggravated by the lack of value congruency and value consensus between the storytellers and the rest of the community. This was facilitated by the careless hiring practices (i.e., the hiring people did not ensure that the prospective employees' values, beliefs and goals were somewhat similar to the community's), the careless nomination of new principals, the departure of a large number of staff, the de-solidarization of former colleagues, the emergence of countercultures and new influence networks in the communities, the staff's lack of involvement in the decision making processes, and the lack of socialization of the community members to the changing or new community values and goals.

In a previous study, Menzies' (1995) respondents suggested that the lack of congruence between their personal values and the organizational values negatively affected their commitment. Leithwood (1993, 1994) also stressed the importance for transformational principals to foster organizational values and goals that reflected the staff's personal values and goals.

The storytellers' increasing sense of boredom was often facilitated by the participants' increasing sense of task routinization due to little or no lateral or upward organizational mobility, and it was compounded by the school's lack of emphasis on professional growth, innovations, collaboration, and involvement of different community members with diverse expertise and talents.

The teachers' sense that teaching was no longer relevant to valued goals was fostered by the storytellers' inability to follow their internal sense of mission or internal values, their inability to influence the students' growth and learning, their inability to influence the school decisions, their felt helplessness, the participants' perceptions that they were neither valued nor supported in their work community, and a sense of normlessness with respect to different school policies, the attribution of permanent contracts, and other valued rewards.

The informants' inability to build warm and nurturing relationships with the different community members was often facilitated by a lack of value congruency between the community members and the respondents, feelings of helplessness, lack of contacts and familiarity (invisibility of certain community members), feelings of role overload and role conflict. As well,

many teachers suggested that lack of recognition, unwanted interferences from different community members, aggressiveness, competitiveness, the presence of coalitions and diverse influence networks, felt lack of organizational justice (distributive and interactional justice), felt normlessness or lack of support regarding the school discipline and the school values and goals often prevented them to develop strong bonds with their colleagues, the parents, and their administrators.

Principals were again perceived as crucial to the storytellers' working experiences. Many participants suggested that the principals' invisibility, their overly directive style, their unreasonable expectations, their lack of distributive and interactional justice, their failure to exhibit support, genuine concern, and recognition often aggravated the participants' sense of alienation and powerlessness. As well, the principals' failure to promote clear guidelines with respect to specific school policies (e.g., students' behaviours), the attribution of valued rewards, the school values and goals, and the means to achieve the school goals, to foster value and goal congruency and consensus, and to socialize the community members to the school values and goals tended to accelerated their dissatisfaction and sense of meaninglessness.

Personal Characteristics and Teachers' Commitments

Storytellers' personal characteristics also facilitated or hindered their ability to develop warm and nurturing relationships with their colleagues, the children's parents, and their principals. They often prevented teachers from engaging in processes that could potentially increase their feelings of efficacy and community.

Many teachers stressed that their core values influenced their professional commitments. David, Larry, and Natasha described this process and how it affected their commitments. Core values were partly shaped by the teachers' personal and professional history and by significant others.

The informants' feelings of efficacy, feelings of social fear, and shyness played an important role in the storytellers' willingness to learn and develop new relationships. Teachers with high feelings of efficacy, low representational concerns, and with high social needs tended to be more open and willing to communicate and work with others, and thus, were more likely to develop nurturing relationships and increase their feelings of efficacy, fulfilment, and joy, provided that they and the community members they worked with had similar values and goals. Alternately, storytellers with low feelings of efficacy, high representational concerns, and low social needs

were less likely to engage in communal activities and develop warm relationships with the community members. Teachers with a low sense of efficacy were also more likely to dwell on the negative aspects of their work communities, the community members with whom they worked, and their work, as well as on potential problems and difficulties, a process which tended to generate additional stress, anxiety, and anger. The storytellers' feelings of low efficacy were facilitated by previously poor teaching experiences, feelings of helplessness, the teachers' beliefs that they were inadequately trained and/or did not have enough experience with respect to specific curricula, age-specific children, large group of children, children with specific characteristics, feelings of role conflict and overload, and the communities' failure to emphasize recognition, positive feedback, and support.

The degree to which respondents were willing or able to endure feelings of frustration, guilt, and shame also influenced the storytellers' commitments. Teachers suggested that their commitments tended to decrease and/or shift when they could not or were unwilling to tolerate any more frustrations. The storytellers' tolerance for frustration, which varied from storyteller to storyteller, might have been further aggravated by low feelings of efficacy, low feelings of self-esteem, and the existence of coalitions among the community members since coalitions tended to strengthen the teachers' beliefs that their working experiences were unsatisfactory. Similarly, many of the storytellers indicated that they engaged in retrospective and prospective reflection processes when they had reached their "breaking point," that is, when they could no longer endure the shame, guilt, and felt loss of self respect that they experienced when their commitments decreased. These reflexive processes often marked a transition period for the teachers who re-examined their professional commitments and values. The teachers' willingness to regain their self-respect and commitments might have been accelerated by the informants' realization that work coalitions did little to decrease their experienced frustrations and discontentment and that their actual working conditions were unlikely to change.

The teachers' perceived inadequate training, lack of experience, and/or inadequate knowledge of specific curricula, age-specific students (e.g., kindergarten students), specific types of students (e.g., 'difficult' students), and classroom management techniques affected the teachers' feelings of efficacy and commitment to teaching. These inadequacies were partly linked to the teachers' previous experiences and/or training, their feelings of efficacy at the time, their sense of role conflict and overload, and the community's lack of support, feedback, collaboration, and recognition. As

well, the school administrators' lack of support, specific organizational norms (e.g., cultural norms regarding helping colleagues), the participants' shyness, their lack of familiarity with the community members, their concerns with respect to their image (social fear), their unwillingness or inability to ask for help, the teachers' specific beliefs (e.g., Barbara believed that she was to deal with her special needs child by herself), and the teachers' perception that their work community was not 'safe' enough to discuss their uncertainties further reinforced the teachers' feelings of cultural and social alienation, helplessness, and meaninglessness.

The teachers' feelings of self-worth⁹ also affected the teachers' commitments to teaching and to the different community members. Teachers who saw themselves as worthless, as unable to do anything adequately experienced tremendous and continuous feelings of failure which increased their feelings of role alienation. As well, they often isolated themselves from others since they did not want to disclose their feelings of inadequacy, a process which prevented them from developing strong affective ties with and feelings of commitment to the community members.

As well, the informants' internal standards influenced storytellers' commitments. The teachers' ability to meet their internal standards increased their feelings of efficacy, which influenced their commitment to teaching. Alternately, the teachers' inability to meet their internal standards tended to decrease their commitment to teaching and to specific community members when informants attributed their inability to meet their internal standards to an unrealistic workload, and/or the unwillingness or inability of the community members to support and help them.

The storytellers' locus of evaluation influenced the teachers' feelings of efficacy and commitments in different ways. Teachers with an external locus of evaluation were particularly dependent on significant others' recognition to feel that they were efficacious, a process that influenced the teachers' feelings of commitment to teaching. Alternately, recognition had little or no impact on teachers with an internal locus of evaluation and low feelings of self-worth, and/or an internal locus of evaluation and low feelings of efficacy. Only a change in working conditions could affect the teachers' feelings of efficacy in the last case. Natalie who recovered her feelings of efficacy and commitment to teaching when her principal changed her

⁹ Self-worth and efficacy are two different concepts, even though they might influence each other. Self-worth represents the individuals' general image of self, whereas self-efficacy is restricted to the individuals' belief that they can successfully perform specific tasks.

assignment illustrates the above.

History and Teachers' Commitments

The storytellers' history also influenced their commitments by continuously shaping their values and beliefs. Storytellers illustrated how their becoming a teacher was partly influenced by their personal history and core values. Barbara's initial interest and growing belief in education was partly motivated by her own experience with poverty and her subsequent experiences as a teacher. Caroline reported that she chose teaching after she worked with special needs children one summer, an experience that she enjoyed tremendously. Beth' own history with helplessness and failure also partly contributed to her desire to become a teacher. Natalie reported that she decided to finish the Bachelor of Education that she had abandoned years before after she re-discovered the joy of teaching her own young daughters. Several storytellers also indicated that pleasant childhood experiences with young children partly contributed to their interest in teaching. As well, it was Larry's and David's poor experiences as students that initially drove them away from teaching.

With respect to their professional history and working experiences, storytellers emphasized that positive teaching experiences, that is, experiences that were characterized by feelings of success, fulfilment, and joy tended to increase their commitments. For example, the teachers' belief that they contributed to the children's learning and growth invariably increased their commitment to teaching. In addition, if the storytellers' teaching experiences were facilitated by specific community members, their commitments to these community members or groups also increased. Alternately, felt negative experiences, that is, experiences characterized by feelings of powerlessness, cultural and social alienation, self-estrangement, meaninglessness, and hopelessness tended to decrease some of the teachers' commitments. For example, teachers described how their failure to influence the children's learning and growth negatively affected some of their commitments. As well, teachers felt little or no commitment for the work community members who appeared to have contributed to their experiences of failure. Similarly, the storytellers' felt inability to achieve specific valued goals (e.g., a continuing contract, a job as a principal) and unmet expectations tended to temporarily reduce the storytellers' commitments to specific community members and, in some cases, partly contributed to the decline of teachers' commitment to teaching. The teachers' lateral and/or upward transfers of commitment were also partly motivated by the storytellers' understanding of their professional experiences.

The storytellers' experiences, whether personal or professional, also fostered and/or reactivated specific beliefs which in turn seemed to have influenced their commitments. For example, Natalie's experience as a student teacher enhanced her beliefs that she was not able to handle large groups of children, and led her to temporarily exit teaching. Larry also re-activated his belief that elementary teaching was not a male job when he experienced some difficulties at implementing his outdoor education program. This, in turn, partly contributed to his wavering commitment to teaching for about a decade.

It was also their unhappiness and profound distress at some of their teaching experiences that drove teachers to engage in a self-examination of their attitudes and professional values. These prospective and retrospective self-examination processes appeared to have fostered the teachers' internalization of new values and an attitudinal transformation that often changed their understandings of their commitments.

The Contributions of Significant Others

Significant others also shaped the storytellers' professional commitments and values. Many of the storytellers reported that they entered teaching because they had been influenced by or had identified with a close relative and/or a teacher. Beth, described how her identification with her basketball teacher fostered her desire to become a teacher. As well, many teachers reported that their professional values and commitments were shaped and/or influenced by exemplar role-modelers, be they colleagues, principals, and/or other educators. Many of the storytellers indicated that they role-modelled and internalized their exemplar role-modelers' values and/or the values of other people with whom they had strongly identified. Teachers also noted that others' commitments and enthusiasm toward their work influenced their own commitments, and were often contagious, highly motivating, and mutually reinforcing. In other words, the storytellers' and the community members' commitments interplayed and influenced each other:

When you work with people that are really committed too, it makes you even more committed. The whole thing just spirals upwards. It's a really positive feeling... enthusiasm bubbles over when you talk to other teachers, and suddenly, there is a whole bunch of enthusiastic people around you. You are surrounded by people bubbling with energy, and with ideas.

(Barbara)

The teachers' stories neither supported nor disconfirmed Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model of socialization with respect to the influence of their six organizational socialization tactics on employees' commitment since

respondents reported that their induction or socialization experiences had rarely been formalized, were not collective, and did not follow a fixed timetable and sequence. Rather informants' stories tend to support Salazar's (1993) socialization hypothesis, Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory, and Louis' (1980) cognitive and making sense theory. As anticipated by Salazar (1993), storytellers chose to adopt and/or internalize organizational behaviours, attitudes, and values that were congruent with their value systems and role modelled by individuals with whom they identified or whom they admired. Nonetheless, respondents also reported that they engaged in both passive socialization tactics, as those described in the social cognitive theory (e.g, observation, instruction, reinforcement) and proactive socialization processes (e.g., information seeking, active inquiry, networking, and behaviour monitoring) as discussed by Louis (1980) in his cognitive and sense making theory. More specifically, informants indicated that, as new teachers, they often initially relied a lot on observation and instruction as socialization tactics, whereas they increasingly engaged in varied proactive socialization processes as they developed strong relationships with the community members. In any case, participants emphasized that identification with the school staff, the children, and the children's parents was the very base of their voluntary and active socialization into their schools and their internalization of the organizational values. They also pointed out that their organizational socialization was a reciprocal process between the school staff and the newcomers, and that newcomers actively learned the norms, values, and behaviours required of them. That teachers actively participated in their socialization goes against the traditional perspective on organizational socialization which views organizational employees as passive members whose induction and organizational socialization were primarily orchestrated by the organizations (Bullis & Wackernagel Bach, 1989; Larkey & Morill, 1995).

As well, teachers stated that the community members' distress, discontentment, and conflicts tended to make it difficult for them to remain enthusiastic about their jobs and their community. Storytellers illustrated how coalition members influenced their commitments to specific community members and their schools by providing them with a mutually agreed-upon basis for appropriate and inappropriate behaviours,

Others' commitments definitely influence your commitments, there is no doubt about that. The fastest way to bring you down is when everybody else is down, and once you start this down spiral, it's just spinning, like a snowball. (Teresa)

The processes that coalitions used that influenced the storytellers and

their commitments were primarily comparative, normative, and confirmative. Teachers used comparative processes to compare their situations and emotional wellness with those of other groups' members and with previous experiences. The purpose of normative processes was to determine a mutually agreed upon basis for appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and role-models. Validation and confirmation processes enhanced like-minded individuals' identification with one another, their subsequent internalization of the group values and the crystallization of their opinions and judgements. Informants also used blaming processes when they attempted to deflect the group members' felt failure to specific individuals or social organizations, and to further strengthen the group members' frames of references for anti-models.

The teachers' commitments and understanding of their commitments were also shaped and influenced by individuals who did not belong to their communities and or teaching. As well, several storytellers mentioned earlier that close relatives (who were not teachers) influenced some of the storytellers to become teachers. As well, friends, spouses, and/or self-help groups appeared to have facilitated teachers' re-appraisal of some of their values and internalization of new values. For example, self-help groups helped Beth and Jane to reflect on their experiences and regain their commitment to teaching.

Finally, teachers also suggested that some of their commitments and/or values might have been influenced by socio-cultural expectations. It might also have been our culture that facilitated both Larry's belief that teaching elementary children was not a male job and his strong desire to become a principal.

Figure 9 summarizes the above information.

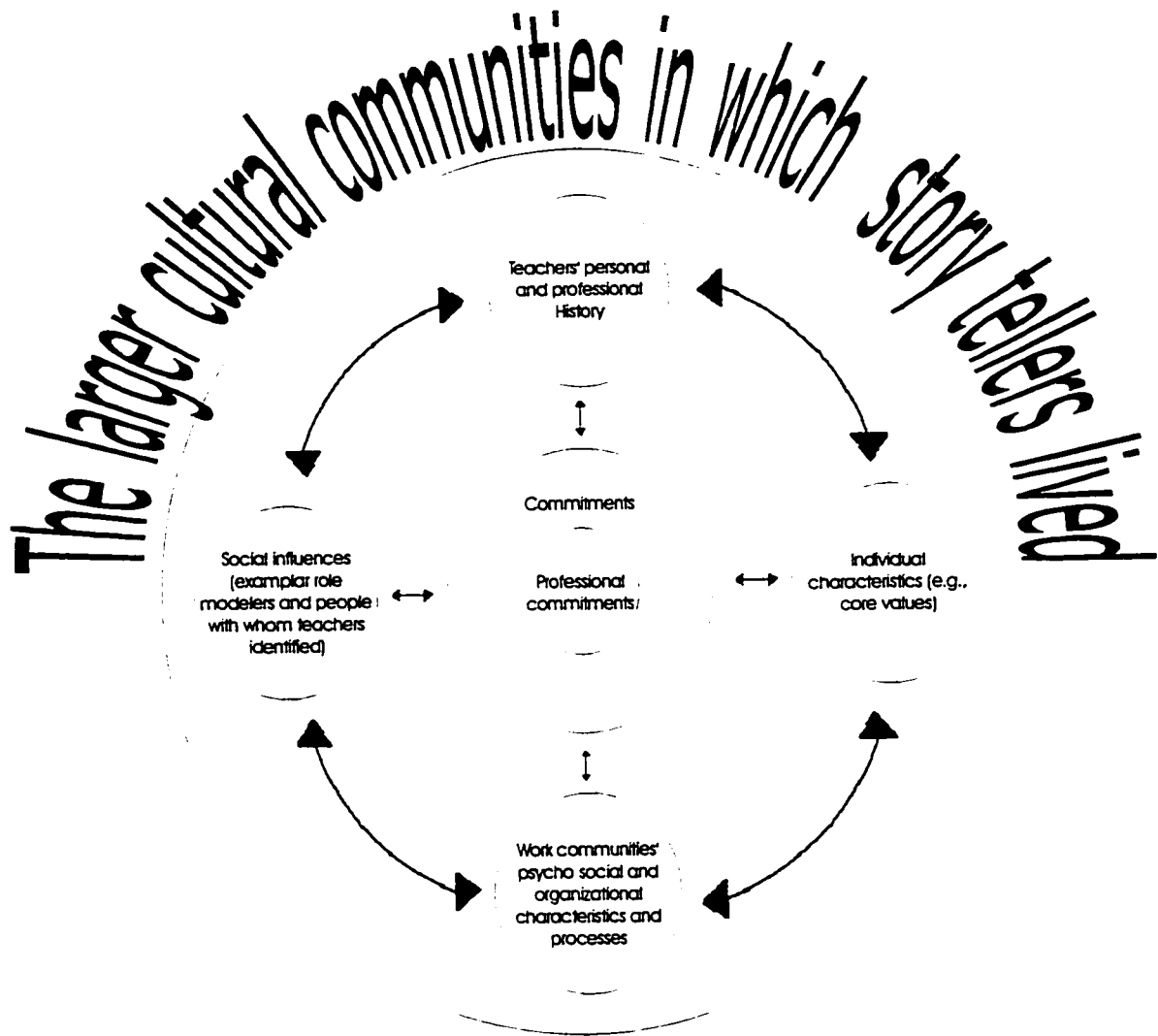


Figure 9. Teachers' Commitments: The Result of Multiple Influences

The storytellers' information suggests that teachers were driven by their need for success. Teachers felt successful when their needs for self-esteem, social affiliation, efficacy, and self-actualization were met. Their commitments to their work and to the community members were influenced to a great extent by the responses that they got from the community members they worked with. When the community members answered positively (i.e., children grew and learn, teachers were recognized by the community members, and community members were eager to work together) to the teachers' efforts to contribute to the children's learning and growth, teachers strongly identified with them, and their commitments to teaching

and the community members increased. Alternately, teachers' commitments decreased and/or shifted when storytellers felt unsuccessful, that is, when they experienced low feelings of efficacy and when they did not feel accepted, recognized, and valued by the community members. In addition, teachers reported that they experienced low feelings of efficacy when they could not contribute to the children's learning and growth, fulfil their internal sense of mission and/or their internal standards, self-actualize, and achieve specific valued goals, such as a permanent contract or a specific position.

The Outcomes of Teachers' Commitments

Commitment outcomes were varied. Many of the storytellers suggested that deep feelings of commitment tended to generate gratifying emotions (e.g., feelings of fulfilment, joy, self-worth), positive attitudes (e.g., increased motivation), and specific behaviours (e.g., willingness to innovate, to try harder) that sustained or further increased the storytellers' feelings of commitment.

When the respondents experienced high commitments, they felt emotionally and physically healthy, fulfilled, happy, and joyous. Their energy seemed to increase. They felt accepted for who they were, "needed" (Natasha, Tim), and "valued" (Tina). They felt "energized" (Barbara), "rejuvenated" (Jane), "capable" (Corinne), and "empowered" (Mary). They were excited about what they were doing. They gained in certainty about their personal teaching efficacy. They were proud to be teachers, and they felt good about themselves ("worthy," Larry). Their concept of self and others shifted. Their self-esteem increased as a result of their achievements and through their affiliation with and recognition from significant others. At the same time, they felt endowed with unique qualities and talents and interdependent with the other community members. They felt at peace within themselves as they reconciled who they were as teachers with whom they felt they 'ought' to be, and they also experienced a great sense of freedom. Their professional and personal lives became increasingly meaningful as their sense of professional worth permeated their personal lives.

They developed attitudes that were conducive to effective teaching, the strengthening of strong affective bonds with the community members, the internalization of new values and beliefs (through an identification process with the community members), and the development of a healthy school culture. Their willingness to reflect on their practice, foster support, reciprocity, collaboration, inclusiveness, openness, and visibility increased. They wanted "to be the best teachers they could be for the children" (Jane),

they were prepared to critically reflect on their daily practice, and to keep learning and searching for new strategies to reach more children. They also became more aware of their uniqueness, of others' strengths, and of their interdependency. The teachers' boundaries between their different commitments (i.e., personal and professional commitments) became permeable, teachers tended to become more inclusive of others, and their sense of identity became stronger. In addition, many of the storytellers viewed their frustrations at work as temporary (Tim noted, "they [negative experiences] are only moments, they are not the whole picture"), were more likely to minimize or oversee them, and to focus on the positive aspects of their work and relationships with the community members. The teachers' willingness to feel more responsible for their experiences, to accept or welcome others' influences, to carry out new functions increased, and they also pointed out that they became more flexible, tolerant, and increasingly turned toward others and others' needs. As well, their concept of time seemed to change, and time became "elastic" (Tina).

They wanted to go to work. They exerted extra efforts, innovated, "tried harder" (Corinne), "worked harder" (Tina), continued to learn so that they could continue to experience feelings of success, affiliation, and belongingness. They closely monitored their students' progress, took their students' achievements and difficulties into account when they prepared their lessons, and set up individual programs when necessary or requested. They frequently engaged in conversations about educational matters and increasingly shared professional information with the community members. Collaborative work increased, as well as the respondents' involvement in school-wide activities. Participants also followed exemplar role-modelers and internalized their values.

They became increasingly committed to teaching, their work community, and the different community members. Commitments "spiralled up" (Barbara). Not only did teachers suggest that their commitments grew, but they also suggested that their understanding of their commitments had been transformed (re-created) and had expanded through personal and communal reflection, the influence of significant others, and exemplar role-modelers. The storytellers' commitments enlarged with respect to their foci and the understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and their purposes in life.

Their communities were deeply alive, bursting with enthusiasm, energy, and new ideas. Increased creativity, innovations, wide spread collaboration, increased focus on the children's learning, high morale and cohesion also characterized these communities, and community members

tended to be very committed to the children's learning and growth.

Alternately, when teachers worked in felt negative environments, they noticed that they often experienced feelings of low efficacy, helplessness, cultural and social alienation, powerlessness, increasing meaninglessness due to the fact that their job was no longer relevant to what they valued, a growing sense of self-estrangement, tremendous guilt, and decreasing feelings of self-worth. They did not feel valued by the community members and could no influence the children's learning and the community members. They emotionally distanced themselves from specific community members, and in some cases, from teaching. Teachers also reported feeling emotionally and physically exhausted (hair loss, digestive problems, sleep deprivation, feelings of depression), and several of them developed serious illnesses.

Such teachers developed increasingly negative attitudes toward specific community members, their work community, and their work. The storytellers' focus shifted from the children's learning to self preservation (as Corinne pointed out: "you are just thinking about ways to survive"). Teachers tended to redefine their mission as "I just do my job" (Tina) or 'make-do' attitudes and behaviours. The teachers' re-defined sense of mission decreased the intrinsic satisfactions that they derived from their work and further undermined their chances for professional fulfilment and a regained sense of self-worth.

They also physically distanced themselves from specific others and increased their "complaint sessions" (Tina) with like-minded people. They stopped listening to specific others ("tuned them out," as Mary noted), decreased their collaboration with certain community members, and stopped sharing educational information. They also increasingly blamed specific others (name-calling, derogatory comments). Teachers withdrew from diverse school-wide activities, and/or class activities, or decreased their involvement in class activities but increased their involvement in school-wide activities. They increased their involvement outside of school activities, and searched for new communities. Several storytellers also reported being increasingly absent as a result of stress-related illness.

The schools in which these teachers worked became increasingly fragmented due to the growing group polarization, the emergence of new countercultures and influence networks. The staff morale deteriorated. Communities experienced increased intraorganizational conflicts, communication breakdowns, and the community members' commitments fell, "spiralled down" (Teresa) and/or shifted. Negativity increased, and the community members' focus shifted away from the children.

The teachers' commitments to the community members and to their schools fell and shifted according to their understanding of their experiences and as a function of their attributions for their perceived failures. Storytellers also suggested that when their feelings of meaninglessness were combined with hopelessness, their commitment to teaching tended to decrease and they were more likely to exit teaching. Nonetheless, two storytellers also indicated that they temporarily left teaching for reasons that had little to do with their working conditions, while others remained in teaching even though they recognized that they were not very committed to teaching at some point during their careers. Therefore it might be important in further studies to differentiate teachers who left teaching because of their dissatisfaction at their working conditions from others who left for reasons external to teaching. The same should be done regarding teachers' absenteeism. Although storytellers indicated that their absenteeism tended to increase when their frustrations increased because they were more prone to illness, one teacher reported that her absenteeism was not related to a decline in her commitments but to external factors that she could not control.

As suggested earlier in this chapter and in chapter five, decreases and/or shifts in the respondents' commitments seem to have been reinforced or perhaps accelerated by the participants' activation of diverse processes. These processes, which were carried out either by the storytellers alone and/or by the teachers with other like-minded people, included the reactivation of negative latent beliefs about teaching and/or children, and frequent individual and collective comparisons between earlier and subsequent teaching experiences, former and later principals, and/or other community members. The creation of coalitions and the strengthening of bonds with like-minded people, the confirmation and validation of the participants' experiences, the individual, and/or communal rationalization of the storytellers' emotions and decisions, the teachers' individual, and/or collective predictions of future deteriorations, their increased focus on the negative aspects of their experiences and relationships with others (Mary described this process as obsessing) also accelerated the teachers' shifts of commitments. Other processes such as increasing references to other like-minded individuals' assessments of one's teaching experiences as proof of validity of their emotions and decisions, stopping any communication, exchange of information, or collaboration with "outsiders" (Mary), that is, those who did not share or agree with the storytellers' evaluation of the community environment, increased blaming and labelling of outsiders, and the development of mutually agreed-upon basis for culturally inappropriate and appropriate behaviours and decisions led to a growing polarization of the community members, mutual distrust, and commitment shifts.

Thus, the teachers' information suggests that the respondents' commitments were multi focussed, multi dimensional, multi factorial, evolutionary, and transformative. The evolutions and transformations of the storytellers' commitments were often facilitated by their identification with others. The respondents' subsequent internalization of new values, their assimilation of new behaviours, and their own experiences and subsequent personal and/or communal reflection about these experiences also influenced their commitments. Commitments also reflected the respondents' tentative search for directions and purposes that emerged from within, their search for personal meaning.

Comparisons Between the Study Findings and Previous Research

For ease of presentation, I have encapsulated both my results and the literature review findings in four tables. The first one is about the commitment characteristics outlined by my storytellers and the literature review.

Table 6. Comparisons of Commitment Characteristics

Study Findings	Other Research Findings
<p>Commitments were a function of intrinsic rewards and varied social influences (e.g., exemplar role modelers), and extrinsic rewards.</p>	<p>Organizational commitment was a function of function of either extrinsic rewards (behavioural perspective), or intrinsic rewards (psychological perspective), or varied social influences (sociological perspective), or the employees' feelings of loyalty and value congruency between the organizational and individual values (normative perspective).</p>
<p>Commitments were facilitated and/or hindered by personal characteristics (e.g., core values), organizational processes, job and role characteristics, the storytellers' history, and socio-cultural expectations.</p>	<p>Organizational commitment was facilitated by personal characteristics and organizational processes, role and job characteristics.</p>
<p>Commitments were multi-dimensional, multi-focussed, distinct, interactive, multi factorial, and forever changing in foci and intensity.</p>	<p>Organizational commitment was primarily presented as a unidimensional concept, although Reichers (1985, 1986) and Becker (1992) argued that employees experienced multi-dimensional, and multi focussed commitments.</p>
<p>Commitments were transformative and they reflected the storytellers' search for meaning and purpose.</p>	<p>—</p>

Differences between my study and previous research projects could be to different methodological choices (e.g., the choice of the paradigm within which the study was conducted, the participant selection, data collection and analysis), the state of the commitment research at the time of the studies (e.g., the concept of efficacy was unknown in the 1950s and 1960s), and other socio-cultural influences (Watson and other behaviorists had a dominant influence on research from the 1940s to the 1960s). As well, some studies included individuals who had different occupations in countries other than Canada and within a different time framework.

Beyond the commonalities and differences between my study and previous research on commitments, this study allowed me to bring forth that the storytellers' commitments reflected their tentative search for meaning, that they were evolutive and transformative, and that they were facilitated

and/or hindered by multiple factors, some of which may not be related to the participants' work communities. This study also showed that identification with significant others and internalization of new values were not only commitment outcomes, but also processes that played a role in the development of the storytellers' commitments.

As well, the storytellers' information suggests that, although the teachers' commitments were distinct, they tended to influence each other. For example, the degree to which teachers were committed to the different community members influenced the degree to which they were committed to their work communities.

Table 7 presents the different perspectives about the rise and decline or development of work commitments.

Table 7. Comparisons of Findings with Respect to the Development of Commitments

Study Findings	Other Research Findings
<p>Respondents' commitments resulted from feelings of success, that is, high feelings of performance efficacy and deep feelings of community (via identification with significant others and/or exemplar role modelers).</p>	<p>Employees' commitment results from a rational calculation between their contributions and inducements (theory of reasoned action), or from the employees' attempts to rationalize behavioural decisions that were difficult to reverse (theory of cognitive dissonance).</p>
<p>When community members felt successful and valued, they increasingly focussed on the positive aspects of their work community, other community members and teaching. Increased tendency to idealization and to overlook problems.</p>	<p>—</p>
<p>Alternately, community members' commitments fell when they felt unsuccessful (i.e., did not influence the children's progress, were not valued, etc.) and attributed their lack of success to specific community members and/or groups.</p>	<p>—</p>
<p>When the teachers' commitments fell, teachers engaged in confirmation, comparison, and rationalization processes with like-minded community members. They increasingly focussed on the negative aspects of their work, work community, and specific community members.</p>	<p>—</p>

The above table shows that there are major differences between my findings and previous research projects with respect to the development of commitments. Whereas the storytellers reported that the rise and fall of their commitments depended on the extent to which they felt successful or found their work meaningful, an experience that was boosted or hindered by individual and organizational processes and characteristics, other studies (Firestone, 1990; Kanter, 1972; Salancik, 1977; Sykes, 1990) claimed that commitments were either the result of the employees' rational calculation between their contributions and the organizational inducements or the employees' attempts to rationalize behavioural decisions that were difficult to reverse.

As I have already reported in the literature review, findings on the influence of rational calculation and cognitive dissonance on human behaviours have been quite discrepant and very contradictory. These theories also present a number of weaknesses which I have outlined in chapter three. As well, I must emphasize that although Salancik (1977), Firestone (1990), and Sykes (1990) claim that commitments result either from a rational calculation or a cognitive dissonance, such claims have yet to be studied. I have failed to find a study that examined the relationships of rational calculation and/or cognitive dissonance and the development of commitments. Most of the studies I have described in my literature review have been carried out in laboratories by medical scientists or researchers in marketing or economics. Moreover, Salancik (1977), Firestone (1990), and Sykes (1990) have yet to explain how they reconciled the fact that commitments, which they described as the employees' affective attachment to the organization, therefore as an emotion, can result from a rational process. That the arousal of emotions can be controlled by rational processes seems counterintuitive.

As far as the cognitive dissonance theory is concerned, several storytellers reported that not only they did not change their attitudes toward specific others when they experienced a dissonance, but they looked for other community members to confirm and/or validate their felt experiences. Similarly, informants did not change their values when they experienced a dissonance between their values and those of the other community members'. Instead they left the community and searched for a school with similar values and objectives. Other researchers (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Zanna, Higgins, & Taves, 1976; Zanna & Cooper, 1976) have also provided evidence that subjects who experienced dissonance did not always changed their attitudes.

Nonetheless, that rational calculation and/or cognitive dissonance might not explain the development of commitments does not prove that feelings of success and/or lack of success contribute to the rise and fall of commitments. Rather, it is the fact that my results are grounded in the storytellers' lived experiences and have been confirmed by them that tend to support the credibility of my findings. Nevertheless, this finding needs to be further researched.

The next table encapsulates the factors from my study and the literature review that facilitated or hindered commitments. However, I have not included in the table the literature review findings that were inconsistent or contradictory.

Table 8. Comparisons of Factors that Facilitated and/or Hindered Commitments

Study Findings	Other Research Findings
<p>Storytellers' commitments were influenced by the amount to which they experienced meaning and success through their work and relationships¹⁰.</p>	-
<p>The above was in turn facilitated by organizational processes such as consensual decisions (provided that they were linked to the school goals, professional development, and school-wide policies), collaboration (provided that storytellers collaborated with staff who had congruent values and goals), the school's emphasis on continuous learning (provided that it was linked to the school's goals and came from multiple sources), mutual support, positive feedback, recognition, induction and socialization processes (frequent reminders and discussions about the school goals and values, role-modelling), and specific recruitment processes that emphasized value and role congruency and diversity in talents and expertise.</p>	<p>Participative decision making (provided that it was voluntary, linked to instruction decision and classroom management), communication, continuous learning, specific forms of collegiality, specific and formalized socialization processes, and specific recruitment processes that focussed on candidates' values and realistic job previews were related to the employees' OC.</p>
<p>Principals' genuine concern for others, consideration, emphasis on innovativeness, continuous learning, risk-taking, respect and trust, congruent values and goals, procedural justice, collaboration, support, visibility, approachability, exemplar role-modelling, and recognition tended to influence the respondents' work experiences, feelings of success, and search for meaning.</p>	<p>Leader initiating structure, leader consideration, transformational leadership, and the leaders' emphasis on trust, respect, dependability, risk-taking, flexibility, innovativeness, and procedural justice were significantly related to employees' OC¹¹.</p>

¹⁰For a more specific definition, see summary of findings.

¹¹There were very few studies that examined the influence of leaders' values on employees' commitments.

Study Findings

As well, the principals' willingness to support orderly environments, their ability, and/or willingness to exert distributive justice with respect to the informants' workload and school resources tended to influence the storytellers' feelings of success.

Role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload tended to negatively affect the storytellers' feelings of success.

Feedback, provided that it was relevant, specific credible, immediate, and preferably from multiple sources, task and skill variety also tended to influence the storytellers' feelings of success.

The informants' feelings of performance efficacy, social fear, shyness, self-esteem, their experience and training, history (previous experiences), their standards and core values, their tolerance to frustrations affected the storytellers' feelings of success.

Other Research Findings

Student ability, the availability of instructional resources, orderly environment, 'reasonable' workloads, well maintained facilities, and adequate space were also related to employees' OC.

Role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload were negatively related to OC

Specify types of feedback, task variety, task significance, and task identity were significantly related to the employees' OC.

A few studies found that the employees' sense of efficacy was related to employees' OC to employees' OC.

My findings and previous findings about the organizational and individual factors that might facilitate the storytellers' commitments present similarities. The main difference resides in the fact that previous research posited that the above organizational and individual characteristics and processes directly influenced the employees' feelings of commitment to their organization, whereas my data seem to indicate that organizational and individual processes and characteristics did not influence directly the storytellers' commitments but rather facilitated their experiences of success, which, in turn, influenced their commitments.

Again these differences might be due to different methodological choices, and to the fact that previous studies included individuals who might not be teachers, lived in countries other than Canada, and/or were conducted within a different time framework.

Table 9 presents the outcomes of commitments as found in my study

and previous research.

Table 9. Comparisons of Commitment Outcomes

Study Findings	Other Research Findings
High commitments	High commitments
Behavioural outcomes	Behavioural outcomes
Performance & organizational citizenship behaviours (extra efforts, innovativeness, increased involvement in extra curricular activities and other school activities, increased exchange of educational information, increased collaboration, etc.).	Performance & organizational citizenship behaviours.
Role modelling of significant others and/or exemplar role-modelers.	—
Emotional outcomes	Emotional outcomes
Commitment to community members increased. Increased sense of spiritual and social communion.	—
Commitment to teaching increased. Increased feelings of motivation, strong sense of purpose and direction. Increased feelings of performance efficacy.	—
Increased commitment to the work community. Increased sense of worth and identity.	—
Increased feelings of fulfilment, joy, and happiness. These feelings permeated the teachers' personal life.	—

Attitudinal outcomes	Attitudinal outcomes
Positive attitudes toward community members, the work community, and teaching.	—
Internalization of new values.	—
Increased willingness to role-model significant others and/or exemplar role-modelers.	—
Increased willingness to be visible, approachable, supportive, flexible, to learn and innovate, to work harder, and to reflect upon one's practice.	—
Tendency to idealization. Increasing focus on the positive aspects of community members, teaching, and work community.	—
Outcomes with respect to the entire work community	Outcomes with respect to the entire work community
Community members exerted extra communal effort. Community members' increasingly focussed on school objectives. They developed a strong sense of purpose, and a growing sense of group identity. Reciprocal support and cohesion increased. School values and goals became institutionalized as community members socialized each other to the community goals and values. Commitments spiraled up.	—
Declining commitments	Declining commitments
Behavioural outcomes	Behavioural outcomes
Transfers, and/or temporary turnover (however turnover did not always demonstrate decreased commitment to teaching).	Turnover
Absenteeism (although absenteeism was not always a proof of decreased commitments).	Absenteeism
Disengagements from varied in-class and/or school-wide activities (except in Natasha's case). Development of 'make do' behaviours. Increased involvement in out-of-school activities.	—
Distancing from specific community members.	

Emotional outcomes

Feelings of cultural and social alienation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and/or hopelessness. These feelings permeated the teachers' personal life as well.

—

Increased feelings of worthlessness and self-estrangement.

—

Decreased commitments toward specific community members, the work community, and/or teaching.

Attitudinal outcomes

Negative attitudes toward specific community members, the work community, and/or teaching. Increased negativity.

—

Increased closeness with specific others.

—

Respondents' focus shifted from community members to self.

—

Informants engaged in different processes that increased their negativity and dissatisfaction.

—

Outcomes with respect to the entire work community

Staff fragmentation. Creation of coalitions. Increased intra-organizational conflicts. The school culture weakened. Coalitions oriented toward self-preservation. Commitments spiralled down. Increased negativity.

Outcomes with respect to the entire work community

—

The storytellers' information tended to support Mowday, Porter, and Steers' (1982) claim that committed employees exert extra effort on behalf of the organization, believe in the organizational values and goals, and maintain their organizational membership. Teachers further indicated that high commitment was not only reflected in their behavioural involvement, including their involvement in activities that were not prescribed in their job descriptions, but they also role modelled new behaviours (e.g., collaboration,

risk-taking) when they strongly identified with community members. As well, high commitments affected the storytellers' emotions and attitudes toward self and others. Teachers experienced pleasant emotions, they developed positive attitudes toward their work community, community members, teaching and specific aspects of teaching (e.g., increased willingness to innovate, to share educational information, and to reflect on their practice), they internalized new values, developed new beliefs, reappraised latent values and beliefs, and developed increased feelings of efficacy and self-worth. They also became more understanding of others, more supportive, more able to appreciate others' gifts, talents, and contributions, more flexible, and more sensitive to their interdependency with others. They came to deeply value interpersonal communication and relationships, to be more open and 'real,' that is, more willing to communicate their true feelings and concerns. The boundaries that they had erected between their work lives and their personal lives, or between their different roles became 'soft.' The storytellers' positive emotions and new attitudes tended to expand beyond the walls of their work community to their personal lives. At the same time, they engaged in processes (e.g., idealization, increased focus on the positive aspects of their work communities, relationships, and work) that further reinforced their commitments, sense of fulfilment, community, and joy.

The storytellers' information with respect to behavioural outcomes (e.g, turnover, decreased behavioural involvement) when their commitments decreased and/or shifted was less supportive of some of the findings presented in the literature review (absenteeism, turnover, tardiness). Some teachers reported that their absenteeism increased as some of their commitments decreased since they experienced migraines, increased sleeplessness, and other illnesses. This supports other study findings with respect to teachers' absenteeism (Bridges, 1980; Ehrenberg et al., 1991; Madden, 1991). Nonetheless, the teachers' information regarding their behavioural involvement did not always support Mowday, Porter, and Steers' (1982) claim that uncommitted employees tend to reduce their behavioural involvement in their organizations. In this study, the informants' decreased involvement partly depended on their attributions of the causes for their falling commitments. As indicated earlier, the participants' understanding of who or what caused their frustrations had different outcomes. When respondents attributed their frustrations to the school administrators, they tended to withdraw from school-wide activities, and, in some cases, particularly when the principals' decisions affected their classes, participants also decreased the amount of time and energy that they used to spend on class-activities. However, when the teachers' felt constraints primarily affected what they did in their classes, they decreased their involvement in class, but did not necessarily decrease their involvement at the school level.

Quite the opposite, Natasha indicated that, while she reduced her behavioural involvement in class because of her growing conflicts with parents, she increased her activities at the school level. Other informants reported that they increased their involvement in class and decreased their involvement on school-wide activities when they were in conflict with their principals or other colleagues. As one respondent reflected, "I just closed my door. My class became my world and I was not extending the boundaries outside the classroom. I just worked harder with my students and spent more time in class." In addition, some storytellers indicated that they sometimes had to decrease their involvement in specific class activities, and/or reduced their contacts with students, their colleagues, and parents, not as a result of a fall of some of their commitments, but as a result of felt role overload and role conflict and/or of other commitments (e.g, family, children's health problems). Thus, commitments' decreases were not automatically reflected in a general decrease of teachers' behavioural involvement. Storytellers indicated that behavioural involvement was influenced by different factors, be they organizational or non-organizational, within or beyond the respondents' spheres of control.

Respondents' information regarding turnover also suggests that turnover does not necessarily reflect a decrease in teachers' commitments. While Beth and Barbara clearly indicated that they temporarily left teaching because teaching had become too "uncomfortable" (Beth), other respondents left teaching for different reasons. Jeremy's first leave of absence was not motivated by his lack of commitment to teaching but by his continuous desire to travel extensively and by timing. Similarly, other storytellers indicated that they left their schools not because they were not longer committed to teaching, but because of spousal transfers, for convenience reasons, or because they had been presented with better professional opportunities (Tim). In addition, many of the participants who changed schools did not change because they had lost their commitment to teaching, but because they were strongly committed to specific educational values and objectives that were not shared by other community members. In contrast, Larry who admitted having lost his commitment to teaching for nearly a decade remained in the teaching profession. Thus, the teachers' turnover and transfers did not necessarily reflect a decrease in their commitment to teaching. More research would be needed in this area.

Recommendations

These recommendations should be taken with some caution since my research was based on 14 storytellers, and I have identified concepts and/or relationships between concepts and commitments that have not yet been

confirmed by other studies. As well, since the teachers' commitments were influenced by multiple factors such as teachers' personal characteristics, their history, their hopes and ambitions, the situations within which they taught, and past and present social and socio-cultural influences, these recommendations may not be appropriate for and/or transferable to different teachers, not to mention individuals in different professions.

Nonetheless, given the fact that intrinsic rewards seemed to be the most potent incentives for the storytellers, it seems important to reiterate the recommendation made by Lortie (1975), Mitchell and Peters (1988), Lichenstien et al. (1990), Sykes (1990), and other educational researchers (Rosenholtz, 1990, 1989; Reyes, 1993, 1992, 1990) that efforts to foster teachers' commitments primarily focus on intrinsically-oriented incentives.

Recommendations for School Principals

Given that teachers have indicated that feelings of performance efficacy and community boosted their commitments and since they have identified organizational processes that tended to influence these feelings, it is incumbent upon principals to ensure that these processes are implemented. More specifically, principals should set up communities with an emphasis on the following issues.

Value and goal consensus. School goals and values are consensual since consensual goals and values tend to generate more commitment than top-down goals and values. As well, school goals are articulated around the community members' learning and continuous growth. They are inspiring, challenging, concrete, achievable, regularly reviewed, frequently discussed, and concomitant with adequate resources and professional development. They are community-oriented, and they are not only professed but lived with enthusiasm and integrated in the community members' daily routines. Consensual values and goals and the community members' consistent role modelling of these values reinforce the teachers' feelings of spiritual communion, their sense of purpose and direction, their feelings of affiliation, and they foster collaboration, mutual support, and the development of strong affective ties between the community members.

Children's learning and growth. Children's success seems to be a powerful incentive for teachers. This means that student learning considerations are the most important criteria used in decision making and that school goals, values, decisions, and the staff's professional development are articulated around the children's learning. As well, a safe and orderly school environment is established and maintained by the whole community

since it facilitates students' learning and teacher-student relationships. Learning time is protected from disruptions, and principals buffer teachers and students against daily irritants, such as trivial administrative matters of low priority and non-essential interruptions during class time.

Teachers' growth and continuous learning. Teachers have frequent opportunities to learn since they increase teachers' feelings of performance efficacy and continuous growth. Professional development is consensually determined and evaluated. It is linked to the school goals, meets the teachers' needs, and comes from multiple sources, such as principals, colleagues (via collaboration), and external consultants. Principals set up daily school routines that emphasize continuous learning, facilitate innovations, and foster creativity and risk-taking. They provide teachers with regular feedback on their performance and on the extent to which they meet the school goals. To be credible, principals devote a great deal of time and effort monitoring the classroom affairs and the student progress and continuously keep abreast of new educational knowledge. As well, they foster positive relationships with the school staff since teachers accept feedback primarily from people they trust and respect and they frequently acknowledge the teachers' effort to continuously learn and improve their practice.

Genuine consideration and recognition. Principals emphasize consideration since consideration is the basis of constructive relationships. Teachers' and students' welfare and growth are foremost in schools. Principals are exemplar listeners and they boost teachers' morale by facilitating their job, enhancing their status, and treating them as professionals. They also increase their autonomy and implement valued recognition programs. They frequently recognize teachers since teachers thrive on external validation and need to know that their performance is appreciated by adults who have enough background to understand what they are doing. They are culturally sensitive and are aware of the community members' basic beliefs and objectives. They try to encourage changes that can be integrated in the school culture without demeaning and/or invalidating the community members' previous achievements and actual efforts.

Democracy. Principals develop communities based on democracy. Teachers must be full partners if their commitments and support is to be earned. Participative decision making tends to boost teachers' feelings of community and ownership, and reinforce their sense of purpose and direction. Therefore, principals genuinely encourage participative decision-making by involving staff members who have the expertise and/or interest in specific educational areas, such as goal-setting, personnel selection, evaluation of work communities' goals and objectives, implementation and

evaluation of professional development programs, and a number of school-wide policies.

Justice. Principals promote interactional, distributive, and procedural justice since injustice and favouritism tend to result in increased opposition, loss of credibility, and increased disengagement from community members. Principals foster interactional justice by considering the community members' viewpoints, suppressing personal biases, increasing vertical and horizontal, formal and informal communication systems, treating community members with kindness and consideration, and by being open and honest about what is going on in the school and school district. They champion distributive justice by fairly rewarding community members taking into account their experience, the amount of effort that was put forth, and the stresses and strains of specific teaching situations. They foster procedural justice by hearing the concerns of all those affected by specific decisions, encouraging requests for clarification and additional information regarding specific decisions, providing community members with opportunities to appeal or challenge decisions, and generating standards so that decisions could be made with consistency.

Collaboration/collegiality. Principals promote collaboration since collaboration and collegiality are essential sources of pedagogical advice and academic expertise, and increase teachers' sense of performance efficacy and feelings of community. As well, collaboration facilitates the teachers' continuous socialization to the school goals and values. Teachers are encouraged to work together, observe each other, share professional information, help and support each other. Asking for and providing help and educational information are school norms and are emphasized and role-modelled by the school principals and the rest of the community. Principals also foster collaboration among the community members by hiring like-minded people, involving community members in participative decision making, creating common work tasks that appeal to the community members, and by using time, space, programs, and class distributions to create opportunities for interactions.

Socialization and induction. Principals facilitate the induction and continuous socialization of the community members to the school values and goals since these processes tend to strengthen the community members' sense of direction, identity, and their feelings of affiliation. Principals are exemplar role-modelers. Exemplar role-modelling inspires community members, facilitates the community members' identification with their principal and the internalization of new values, and foster the community members' willingness to role model significant others. Principals also

frequently discuss and remind community members of the school goals and they ensure that school goals are reflected in the school routines.

Thoughtful recruitment. Principals set up recruitment processes that select staff who share the school community members' prevailing values and standards and have different talents and expertise. The selection of like-minded staff increases goal consensus, reinforces the community members' sense of purpose, decreases group conflicts and competitiveness, and facilitates collaboration and feelings of community. Recruitment is linked to the school goals and values and involves interested staff members since a team is less likely to miss important aspects of candidates' values and/or personality. As well, recruitment processes ensure that the school staff's abilities and talents are diverse since diversity enhances professional growth and decreases boredom.

Recommendations for School Jurisdictions

School districts need to support and help principals in their tasks. They can do that by taking these approaches:

Selecting principals who are culturally sensitive and able to bring about changes without demoralizing the school staff since a belittled school staff is not as effective as a highly motivated one.

Impressing on principals that decreased commitments, boredom, feelings of depression and meaninglessness are not merely individual problems or individuals' failing to adjust to a specific environment but are also organizational problems. As such, principals are expected to try and address these problems. As well, principals are morally responsible for their staff's welfare.

Providing principals with as much information as possible on the phenomenon of commitment, and supporting further research on teachers' commitments.

Carefully examining district policies to determine the effect they have on teachers' commitments and students' achievement. District policies should be focussed on student learning and facilitate teachers' continuous growth and commitments.

Making principals accountable with respect to the school goals. By doing that, school districts ensure that principals do their utmost to foster the teachers' commitments.

Developing relevant and rapid evaluation tools that measure the extent to which schools have met their objectives (principals should spend the bulk of their time with the school students and staff since visibility and support influence the teachers' commitments and not writing out lengthy reports). Evaluation tools are reviewed by external consultants who are aware of the schools' history, culture, past and present achievements and difficulties, and past objectives.

Future Research

As mentioned earlier, relationships between some of the teachers' commitments have not yet been confirmed by other studies. Further research might focus on the influence of teachers' history, core values, and personal commitments on their professional commitments. More research would also be needed on the relationships between the teachers' understanding of their teaching experiences and the outcomes of their commitments. As well, a better understanding of the constraints that principals and district superordinates face when taking educational decisions and the teachers' awareness of some of these constraints might lead to a shift in teachers' understanding of their teaching experiences, and perhaps the enhancement of their commitments. Similarly, it would be interesting to know whether principals and district superordinates are fully aware of the many potential outcomes that their decisions can have on the staff's commitments and whether, once so informed, they could think of some creative ways to enhance teachers' commitments.

Concluding Comments

As indicated by Mowday et al. (1982), storytellers suggested that their commitments were characterized by an emotional attachment to their profession, the community members with whom they worked, and their school. As well, informants reported that their commitments were both outcomes of diverse factors (e.g., personal and professional history, cultural norms, organizational processes) and processes. They also indicated that their commitments were multi-dimensional, multi-directional, evolutive and transformative. The lack of previous research on some of these characteristics, particularly the evolutive and transformative nature of commitments, may be due to the fact that researchers have generally studied commitments as products/outcomes rather than processes.

Teachers also suggested that their commitments were influenced by multiple factors. Prominent among these were the teachers' feelings of efficacy and community, their personal and professional history, their core

values and different other personal characteristics (e.g., locus of evaluation, need for recognition, shyness), specific cultural norms, and diverse organizational processes (e.g, collaboration). In contrast to these findings, previous research had primarily focussed on the effect of personal and organizational characteristics and processes on employees' commitments (Figure 4), and results had been inconsistent.

Story tellers further indicated that commitment outcomes were diverse and reflected their understanding of their experiences, a finding that previous research on commitment had not yet detected and/or explored. As a result, the teachers' commitment outcomes were not limited to turnover and absenteeism (Figure 1). Moreover, informants' stories showed that turnover and absenteeism may be influenced by factors that are not related to work (e.g., a spousal transfer, a child's disease) and that uncommitted teachers may choose to remain in the teaching profession and the same school and express their declining commitments through other behaviours than absenteeism and turnover (e.g., withdrawal from specific school or class activities). Furthermore, this study showed that storytellers' commitments were not only reflected in their behaviours, but also in their emotions, attitudes, their professional and personal lives.

Finally, findings tend to indicate that organizational commitment was only peripheral to the teachers' commitments. From the storytellers' perspectives, students, teaching, and their relationships with the community members were the most important foundations of their work commitments and this should encourage researchers to renew their efforts to examine commitment as a multi-directional and multi-dimensional phenomenon.

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Appendix A

Corinne

At the time of the interviews, Corinne had taught about four years in two different schools. Her first experience, which lasted approximately three months, took place in a junior high school where she taught and worked as a school librarian. After that, she was transferred to an elementary school and she has taught elementary children since that time

When I asked Corinne why she chose the teaching profession, she reported that she entered teaching by default,

My parents are both teachers, and I think I always wanted to avoid being a teacher because of that.... I did an Arts degree, trying to avoid going directly into Education, so that I could keep my choices open. However, when my degree was done, there wasn't any jobs, and I wasn't aware of other exciting things like architecture or that kind of thing, so I became a teacher.

She added,

I am not unhappy with my choice because I think it's an excellent career, and I do think that I make a difference in that profession.

Corinne's critical event occurred during her first year of teaching. Three weeks before the end of her first temporary contract, a depressed Corinne was transferred to a new school,

By the time I actually got into that position [her second teaching assignment], I was just really down. Just before I was transferred, I had been left by myself for three weeks in the library of a junior high, and I did not like that very much.

Corinne did not fair any better in her next assignment. She was quite disappointed by her new appointment, which she only accepted for lack of better alternatives,

I got a position in an elementary school, and I was horrified because I had been trained for junior high, and I didn't know anything about the elementary curriculum. Anyway, I went there because otherwise I would have been substituting, which would have been even worse.

Her students' verbal abuse further compounded her feelings of inadequacy,

When I got there, I found that the class was absolutely wild, and basically, I had a horrible year. The kids were completely out of hand, I was regularly insulted and everything else, and there was nothing I could do...

Frustration and powerlessness characterized her experience,

I was very frustrated at the kids because they weren't progressing the way I wanted them to progress and they weren't doing what I told them to do. They just didn't want to learn.

Feelings of helplessness and a self-imposed isolation further exacerbated Corinne's emotions,

My colleagues were nice, but a lot of them were very young, and that might have been part of the problem, they couldn't identify that I was in a unique situation and they weren't equipped to help me. There were some senior teachers who did sympathize, but not so much that they would go to bat for me, or anything like that.... Moreover, I felt that I could not express to my colleagues that I was having difficulties because I wanted to preserve my image with them.

Corinne's sense of helplessness is quite clear in the following quotation,

Nobody came in [Corinne's classroom] and said, "try this or try that, do this, take this from me, I'll help you with this or that." I was completely left by myself.

Yet, it was particularly important for Corinne to perform well as she very much hoped to get a continuing contract,

I had a probationary contract and if your performance is good, they [Edmonton Public Schools] give you a continuing contract with the district, and that was the year I was supposed to be judged, and I had this really, really awful class.

The principal's decision not to recommend her for a continuing contract, which was announced two days after he had previously told her that he had recommended her for a continuing contract, left her with a deep sense of unfairness and an increased sense of powerlessness,

The principal played kind of a dirty trick on me. He called me on a Friday and said I have recommended you for a continuing contract, and he called me back on Monday and said, "I have changed my mind over the weekend." I was devastated, it was really horrible, and he never told me exactly why he changed his mind.

Corinne reported that she felt completely defeated and totally worthless,

You know, at that time, I just felt I was not capable. I was just trying to keep my head above water, and I just felt totally defeated.

As a result, Corinne blamed the children for their unwillingness to learn and her principal for misusing his formal authority,

I was extremely frustrated at the kids because they didn't learn very much and they didn't care if I was there or not. In fact, they would have liked me to leave, but I was also frustrated at the fact that one person, that being the principal, could hold the key of my future in his hand.

Corinne felt so worthless that she actually "understood" the principal's decision for a short period of time,

I thought, "yes, he [the principal] is right, I have failed, I have miserably failed," and I told him that I understood his decision. I was totally defeated.

However, her apathy was soon replaced by a deep anger at her principal as her colleagues pointed out to her that she had been put in a very difficult situation since she did not have the training nor the experience to teach the class she had been assigned to,

Then, I became very angry, but it wasn't until people pointed out to me, "well, look at the situation you were put into, look at your lack of knowledge of the curriculum, how could anyone be successful in your position?" and they [Corinne's colleagues] told me that I had done an excellent job, that the class was very different from what it was before.

Her colleagues' questioning of the principal's decision and her subsequent anger galvanized her into action. From that moment till the end of the academic year, Corinne's energy was channelled toward the obtaining of her continuing contract and the demonstration that she could perform well in her class,

The following day, I phoned the superintendent's office, I contacted people, and I had people come out and watch me teach. I was just furious, and we [the principal and Corinne] were on very poor terms from April to June, we couldn't speak to each other, and in the end, he left the school and I got my contract.

It became important for Corinne to challenge the principal's decision and to prove him wrong,

I told him [her principal], "you love confrontations and you think you are going to win this one too, but you are not because I am going to bring people in, and I am going to be evaluated by someone else," and I walked out and I slammed his door.

The remaining months of school turned out to be quite difficult for Corinne who kept wavering between apathy and anger,

I went through roller coaster periods of really just frustration and apathy. I was very apathetic because I thought the kids didn't like me, and because there was nobody coming in and saying, "here, try this, do this, take this from me, I'll help you with this or that," and I just went through periods where I thought, "why bother? Nobody else cares," you know.... And I was very frustrated by the kids who weren't learning much and by the principal.

During her periods of apathy, Corinne questioned her membership in the profession. At the same time, she tried to rationalize her apathy by emphasizing her helplessness and her felt inadequacy,

I sometimes wondered, "Why am I even here? Why do I bother? Nobody is coming and helping me, and the kids don't care if I am here. I just felt I was not capable. I did not feel I made a difference for those kids.

Corinne reported that she could not participate in school-wide activities as she already felt overwhelmed by her teaching assignment,

At that time, I wasn't involved in extra-curricular activities because I was just trying to keep my head above water. I was just trying to survive. It might have been better for me if I had done something extra, but I just couldn't, I just felt I wasn't capable.

As was the case with Mary, Corinne's stress affected her in a physical way,

I suffered a lot of headaches and that sort of things at that time, and I had to take some days off.

A new principal moved in the following year, and Corinne suggested,

I think the new principal was a good recharge for me. Of course, there has been ups and downs and there are times when we are very critical of our new leader.

Corinne liked the stability and the feeling of empowerment her new principal fostered in her,

I am in my third year with him now, and so I feel very secure, and I am on excellent terms with him. He has really empowered me.

She further explained how his recognition helped her gain some confidence,

He has removed the vice-principal position because we have in-school budgeting, and he has designated me as acting principal when he is out. And somehow, that has really boosted my confidence.... I think that just being singled out has been a real boost for me. And he has also asked me to do some professional presentations with him, and so, I worked at the Alberta Assessment Consortium and helped him give a presentation on assessment in the classroom.... I think it comes down to the fact that I have been told, "you are good and you are capable."

She added,

Now, I feel very good about what I am doing, and I feel that I make a difference for the children. I feel I contribute to their lives.

Corinne has renewed her commitment to the teaching profession. In fact, she has developed long-term and short term plans regarding her profession. She also registered in a Master's program in Education to be in a better position to reach her long-term goals,

I have put a request for a teacher exchange for next year, and I have set my eyes on X [a foreign country's name]¹².... I also want to move up and become an administrator at some point. I am very committed to my career and I am pretty ambitious.

Nonetheless, the participant's feelings towards her principal were ambiguous. Part of her was grateful for his recognition, but she was also quite critical of him,

He is attending a lot of meetings, you know, and with him gone for long periods, there is nobody to really take care of the discipline, and we have no back-up, and that sort of thing, and that's frustrating too.... Also, we have extreme sub-groups on this staff, and it's a big morale downer. These sub-groups have been chosen by the principal whether he intended to or not. They [the chosen ones] are the kind of personalities that want to please him, and so, he has asked them to do special leadership things. As a result, the staff is quite divided.... He is not a great leader and I think that needs to be recognized by the upper administration. Things just seem to go status quo all the time unless there's a big rigamarole...

¹² Corinne's request for a teacher exchange was approved and the participant went to teach abroad in the chosen country.

As well, Corinne did not feel very much at ease with her colleagues,

I do not want to be put in the same group as those other people, you know, those who have been selected, and I try very much to be open and honest with my colleagues, and if they have a complaint, I listen to them, whereas the other people separate themselves from that. However, I don't want to separate myself from them, I see these people as my colleagues but also as my friends, and I am really trying very hard to stay at everybody's level.

She indicated that she was not very committed to staying in the same school,

If I didn't want the principal to support my request for a teacher exchange, I think I would probably be setting myself up to prove myself to a new group of people at a new school.... There is no way you can stay committed in a school with a fragmented culture because it's too much of a roller-coaster emotionally, and I think that the staff divisions and disagreements eventually eat at you. It's not healthy. No man is an island, and you can't function on your own and stay committed when you see all around you people with their own private agenda.

In spite of the above, the participant indicated she was involved in several extra-curricular activities that benefited the children and the school. In particular, and drawing from her own experience with helplessness and powerlessness, she had implemented a program to help students feel "better about themselves,"

I am also working with a group of 12 or 13 boys who have behaviour difficulties, and I have started a program to help them. I organize daily jobs for them so that they can have responsibilities in the school. We do that so that they feel they contribute to the school life and we want them to feel they belong to the school as well. I am also working on quite a few committees, a discipline committee, and various assessment committees. I have organized a recycling program in the school, I am also piloting an environmental education program, and that takes a little bit of time.

Nonetheless, reflecting on her own commitment, Corinne wondered,

Are you really committed when you serve someone to serve yourself?

Although Corinne did not expand further on the concept of commitment, she did indicate that her involvement in her school gave her a new sense of purpose. Teaching became more than a job for her. It became an activity that had meaning and value in itself. As Corinne indicated,

I had a very happy childhood, and I very much want other children to have a glimpse of that, to experience a moment of happiness too, and I guess that

teaching is a way for me to do that.

She added,

I learned that the teaching profession can be a bit dirty at times, and that it can be wonderful as well.

At the time of our conversations, Corinne had given a new meaning to her critical event. From “a real disaster,” it had become a learning experience,

It [the critical event] was interesting because I found a lot about myself. I found out that I am not a quitter, and it was bad enough that the kids were misbehaving, but when the principal didn't support me, I found out that I don't just withdraw, I found out that I am stronger than I thought.... I found out that I am a survivor.

She has also changed her perspective on her former principal,

As far as his integrity, I look back and I see a lot of wonderful things that he did. He was very supportive of his staff, I was the only one who got on the wrong foot with him, somehow or other. Now, there was an incident on that Friday where one of my students misbehaved, and I supposed he might have held me accountable for that, and that's perhaps why he changed his mind... Also [I liked him because] he didn't necessarily bow to parents, he would go to the parents and tell them they were not acting in the best interests of their child, and he was very progressive.... I actually think that the school environment is less healthy right now than it was then.

Appendix B

David

David has taught for over 20 years at the elementary level in different schools, and in the process, he has developed a predilection for small work communities. Although teaching was not David's first choice of profession, he loved it as soon as he started his practicum,

I stumbled into education thinking it was a second choice, and I couldn't get a job... I thought about education because that way I would still be in a kind of helping profession... So, I went into the After Degree Program, and hated the courses... and I didn't know if I had made the right choice or if I had made a mistake, but, then November came and that meant student teaching, and I just loved it, and I knew I was in the right profession.

David further indicated that being in relationships with children provided him with a deep sense of purpose and gratification,

I find the children to be my inspiration and my reward all wrapped up in one, and as long as I have children to work with, I will love teaching... The first reason for me [to stay in this profession] does have to be the children, definitely the children.

Similarly, he suggested that teaching gave him a unique sense of wonder and fulfilment,

There's a magic associated with being a part of a child's learning... When you see a child finally begin to show comprehension of something and motivation that comes from within, knowing that you have had some part in that, is just tremendously exciting... And when you hear from parents that children start to do experiments at home paralleling some of the things that we do at school, or using some of the problem solving techniques we teach in class, I think it has a really profound effect on me... that's really, really exciting, and that transfer to their everyday life at home is certainly very important and exciting too.

When asked to recall a working experience, David's face lit as he remembered a very fulfilling experience,

It was a small school, and I felt a sense of family there. I remember vividly a situation where I was on a field trip and one of the children became very ill. We called her home but there was no one at home. So, another teacher came to pick up that child and a support staff member went in and looked after his [the other teacher's] class, and that was very much how it always was. People were always looking out for each other. We were very much a team working for these children, and I can remember the companionship, the love we shared for the children, and the discussions we had in the staff

room, and the tremendous fun we had.

He went on to explain,

What started to happen is that we developed more personal interest in each other. People asked each other, how was your weekend? What's new? How is your wife? How is your garden? There was more connectedness between us, even though we were a very mixed bag. In many ways, we were very different. I mean, when I was working there, the custodian was right there in the staffroom with the secretaries and the teachers, but we became one big family who laughed a lot. We shared a sense of humour that was wonderful. It was never cutting. It was never hurtful. It was genuinely funny. And there was a willingness to help, and as I have already alluded to, if someone was in some sort of difficulty, you knew you could count on someone to take over. People were always willing to pitch in without being asked, or if you ever had to re-schedule something, they had tremendous flexibility. Enabling the children to make good choices and the children's was always the staff's main focus.

He also suggested,

Some of my happiest memories are sitting in the staffroom sharing, celebrating the learning what was happening in the teachers' rooms. There was so much education being discussed and being celebrated. Sometimes it was on a philosophical level, and sometimes, it was on a practical level, but there was always respect, and always joy and appreciation for each other and the children.

David also reported that the sense of connectedness he developed with the other staff members was so strong that they still see each other, even though they no longer work at the same school,

We [school staff] make a point of getting together at least once a year, it's important to all of us, that companionship, that feeling that we were a team working for the children.

At the time of the interviews, and a few years after this experience, David suggested that he was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his current work setting,

I am working very hard physically. I am still spending many hours after school and one day of the weekend taking things home [to work]. I think the commitment¹³ is the same, but the joy is not there, and I think that would start to wear on my commitment if it went on for very long... the other day,

¹³ Subsequent clarification with the participant indicated that commitment was used here in the sense of moral obligation.

I had tears in my eyes as I remembered the teacher I was and want to be and cannot be right now... I think it's time for me to do something so that the commitment is there and the joy is there as well.

There were several reasons for David's dissatisfaction. He was in a new school and his role had changed. As a resource teacher, he also felt deprived of one of his primary sources of fulfilment, that is, the ability to develop fulfilling relationship with the children,

I don't have a class, you know, and I'm the kind of person who works very hard to help the children know me as a person and for me to get to know each one of them. I don't believe you can really teach children if you don't know them or if they don't know you. So, I think that this setting with these children who come in and out of the resource room is artificial because I don't know them, and they don't really know me. They know I am the resource teacher, they associate me with the resource room, but they don't really know about me. If you have your own class, you develop a team, like a oneness with them... in September, you start to show the children that you care about them and are interested in them, and are listening to them... and little by little they [the children] learn how to give and care, and let other people care for them as well, and then, slowly, you get into the curriculum. Whereas, in this situation, that foundation is missing and it's really hard.... You know teaching has to come from the heart. It is an expression that comes from inside. It is a created expression. It is also a very emotional one, and you need to make connections with the children, whether it's actual physical hugging, some children need that, or something else. Some children need the words, other children need the looks, the wink or the special smile that happens between that child and the teacher, other children need notes that you write to them, but this [this connection between child and teacher] has to happen for teaching to take place, and it does take time... and your own class.

David found tutoring intrinsically less rewarding than teaching,

In tutoring, I feel like a technician, diagnosing a symptom and having only a short time each day to work with the child, not coming to know and nurture the whole child. I also know that I am a life long learner. New strategies intrigue me. I enjoy trying new ways to reach children and aid their learning. In tutoring, the focus had to be on reading, so I cannot not use new strategies across the curriculum.

David's sense of efficacy decreased, and he reported,

I don't feel I'm as effective without having my own class, even though I may still make a difference for these kids.

In addition, David felt a lack of value congruence with some of his colleagues regarding a teacher's first obligations or concerns,

There are some very strong egos here, you know, some teachers want their own needs met constantly, whereas the other people I worked with always put the children first, we were there for the children, and I guess that's the basic difference, I don't sense that in everyone, here, in some people I do, but not in everyone.

David further explained,

I can see it in the ways children are treated when they knock on the staff room door at lunchtime. Some of them are not allowed back in their classrooms when they've forgotten something. Some of them are treated with sarcasm. Some of them have their feelings just negated if they are upset about something. Yet, I honestly believe children will not bother a staff member if they don't need something, and I think they need to be dealt with respect. I mean, you can do it quickly, it doesn't need to take a long time. I have done it many times. I don't have my own class, but I have helped children who have lost their lunches, I have helped them look for it, or I've tried to get them another lunch. They will soon learn independence.

Compounding his cultural estrangement and his perceived lack of psychic rewards, and intensifying his sense of alienation and meaninglessness, David also reported that some of his colleagues did not seem to value what he did as a resource teacher,

Some teachers just dump their kids on me, and what I do is not being supported in their classrooms, and I'm not involved in what they are doing in class either, and that's difficult for me, very difficult because I don't feel that my program means something.... I don't feel that they [other teachers] place a lot of value in what I am doing or in what I am saying to them.

David further noted that rivalries existed among teachers, which further intensified his sense of cultural and social isolation,

At my other school, I sensed community and a communal effort, whereas, here, I sense competition, and I back off from that, it's not something I want to be involved in. For example, teachers, here, don't share their teaching strategies, you know, or it's happening behind closed doors, with another individual, and no one else is included.[Similarly], no one will come and say, well, I have tried something else today and it worked, or I went to a really good inservice and I learned something. Nobody talks.... I would often bring things [made by the children] into the staffroom and I tried to show them to other teachers, and then, I realized [that] no one wanted any part of that, and it's not that I was trying to blow my own horn, I just wanted to say, look at what this child did, doesn't this just take your breath away or make you cry? But they just kind of looked at me, so, I stopped taking or bringing things in, but that bothers me, you know.

When asked what might have caused these rivalries, David suggested,

I think that comes partly from the administration, the kind of people that were selected, you know, the staff that was placed here, and also from some of the rewards that are given or some of the comments that are made.... Like sometimes, the administrator introduces certain teachers as the top, the most, the best, the greatest teacher he has ever met, but people don't need to hear that. We'd be very happy just to be called one of an excellent staff. And I think that even if a person is very stable and well balanced, it grinds away on you.... And I also think that teachers compete for the administrator's attention, or to get the book or cards that he [the administrator] gives, or it could be to just have other people notice too, like to have some attention focussed on oneself, but see, I would much prefer to have the attention focussed on the children, always, always, always.

As well, although valued, David felt used by his principal,

I feel that I'm valued for my skills and for the work I can do... and over the year, the administrator has given me more and more responsibilities, and I've shouldered them, but I don't feel valued as a person, as a whole being. I only feel valued for the services I provide.

Compounding the above, David suggested that his principal broke his trust by revealing some confidential information with which he had been entrusted,

I believe we [David and his principal] have both changed in being together. I liked him very much my first year. I was very devoted and loyal to him, but I started to hear things that I didn't like hearing, I was given information [by my administrator] about my colleagues that I felt I didn't need to know, and I felt if he [the principal] could do that about them, he was probably doing it about me as well, and that upset me very much... I was also put in a position of saying things to him believing I could trust him, and then, some of my words were used in attacks on someone else, and I found that really difficult. It made me clam up.

He also felt that his principal was not always modelling appropriate behaviours, which reinforced his felt lack of value congruency with his working environment and his sense of estrangement,

He used to be a quieter or more polite kind of person. I find some of the staff room talk is just so gross and loud, and I really believe we're modelling for children all the time, and that we should all behave as we would like the children to behave. For example, I don't swear, but even if I did, I wouldn't swear around children. I believe that role-modelling is part of our job, and that we need to model appropriate behaviours for the children.

David reported,

This year has been my prison year... It is very difficult to work in a school where the administration or colleagues are stifling, or cause you not to be

able to work with children in the way you know is best... It is very difficult for me to work in an environment that prevents me from teaching children, or teaching them the way I believe they need to be taught.

Joy has gone out of David's work,

Joy is not there any more... And I think that joy in what we're doing is very, very important, and that we should never, never lose that... I also think that [the absence of joy] would start to wear on my commitment if it went on for very long... I mean, I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't teach children ever again.

David mentioned some of the techniques he used to help him through this difficult experience,

Yes, I feel some wariness, you know, but I purposely take hold of myself and not let my emotions get away from me... I purposely sort of divorce myself from my emotions right now... I also try to turn things around in my head because I can't let myself stay in that state [of unhappiness]. If I stay in that state, if I walk around with my own little black clouds, it'll affect the children, it will affect the people I work with and it will affect my wife.

He has a close support group, including his wife, who helped him "keep things in perspective" and focus on the "good things he does with the children." David concluded,

I have also learned to start thinking about options, perhaps to try and find another school, another environment, perhaps to try something different, but something that would keep me in contact with children.

Appendix C

Jane

Jane has taught on and off in different schools for approximately a decade. Although, she has primarily taught at the elementary level and was teaching in an elementary school at the times of the interviews, she has also worked in a junior high school and a senior high school for a year. Jane, like some of the other storytellers, entered the teaching profession only as a second choice,

I was not committed to teaching after I graduated from University.... As a woman in those days, we were talked into going either into Nursing or Education. Those seem to be our two choices, and I took Education as something to fall back on.... I did not feel trained well enough to teach, and I was more interested in theatre, so I went to a theatre school for two years. When I graduated [from the theatre school], I didn't have any money, and so, the easiest thing for me was to teach at that time, which I did for a year. However, I recognized that my commitment was not to teaching.... I only taught for a year, and then, I left teaching and went back to acting. But, it's very difficult to get jobs in theatre and I had to substitute [in order to make some money], ..., and I did well and was hired at that point to teach in an elementary school.

Even though she was successful, teaching did not hold a great attraction for Jane,

It didn't seem that I would grow [in education], there wasn't something exciting enough and challenging there that I could see at the time. So, I left again and went back into theatre, actually back into looking for jobs in theatre.

Jane was not able to find a job in acting, and she subsequently started a private business with her brother, which supported her for five years. She started teaching again when her brother's wife joined the business, which could only sustain two partners. Jane has stayed in the teaching profession since that time.

When asked to relate one of her teaching experiences, Jane immediately recalled an event that happened approximately five years ago, as she substituted in an elementary school. At the end of the Spring break, Jane took two extra days off due to an error. Upon her return, her principal told her that he had decided not to recommend her for a continuing contract as her behaviour had led him to question her "dedication as an educator." The respondent indicated,

It was a devastating experience for me... I was totally devastated. I personally phoned associate superintendents and spoke to them on the

phone, begging them to look at this in a different light. I was in tears on the phone saying, "I made a mistake, give me another chance, what do I need to do?"

Jane paid for the substitutes who were hired to replace her during her two days of absence. She also wrote letters of apology to her principal and the school board. She further indicated that she did everything to prove to her administrator that she was dedicated to teaching, but to no avail, which only further angered her,

I kept wanting to prove myself to him. I wanted to prove that he [her principal] was wrong, that they [Edmonton Public Schools' superordinates] were wrong. I really wanted to prove to them that I was a good person, you know, and I did everything I could... It was like I had to prove myself to him everyday, and I did do that. At the end of the year, I went to a teacher's baseball tournament to represent our school, that school, and I broke my ankle, and I came back to school on crutches, and I was there every day... but he didn't recognize that as an expression of my dedication, and he didn't do anything about it. He didn't write any furthering letters, he didn't mention anything about my continuing to come back. However, I had hoped that he might change his mind, that there was a chance that he might change his mind... but my contract was just withdrawn, period end.

Jane did not want anyone to know that she had lost a continuing contract,

I was very embarrassed about the situation, and I hid the truth. I didn't want the staff to know what had happened. I didn't want my family either to know what had happened. My mother didn't find out for two years, and she couldn't figure out why I didn't get hired.... I didn't want people to know the ugly, ugly truth about me. I was afraid they would dismiss me as a valued human being, and I didn't trust the staff to understand why I did what I had done, and I didn't trust my family either that way.

Her feelings of worthlessness and self-estrangement are best illustrated in the following comments,

I started to wonder if my principal wasn't right. I started questioning myself, you know, and I thought that perhaps he [the principal] was right, that perhaps I should get out of teaching if I was able to do something that horrible. I actually started to believe that I had done something truly ugly, truly horrible.

Jane isolated herself from her colleagues and other potential sources of support and she started impersonating someone she was not,

I became a pretty good actor. I'd put on a happy face. I became good at

pretending. I was determined that nobody on staff would know about this incident.... My life became very lonely.

The emotional impact of this incident reached much farther than Jane's professional life. Ultimately, it affected the persons she met and developed relationships with, as well as the types of activities she got involved in,

It had a profound effect on my personal relationships as well. It was a secret, a dark, ugly secret, and I couldn't meet the kind of people I wanted to meet because I didn't want them to discover I had lost a job the way I had lost it. I kept thinking, "what would they think of me?" And whenever I met somebody and he or she asked me what I did, I would skirt around and I'd lie. I would say I was teaching when I was only subbing. I did not want them to discover what a terrible person I was. So, I had to keep a facade, a cover.... Also because I didn't have much money, I had to choose activities where I could participate, where I didn't have to spend much money. Yes, it had a profound affect on all aspects of my life.

Regarding her professional and personal relationships, Jane explained,

It was not good. I was very lonely. I was living a lie.

At the same time, her financial prospects were destroyed,

It had an effect on my income too, and on my future plans as well. My dreams, my financial goals were shattered. I had invested time, effort, energy and money into getting to a point where I figured that I would get some monetary compensation. So that definitely affected my finances and my morale as well.

Like Corinne, Jane was also very frustrated at the principal's power over her professional future, and, like her, she also felt defenceless and inadequate,

It was very frustrating that someone had so much power over my destiny, that he had the power to take everything away from me.... I actually felt completely disempowered out of this whole experience. I suppose it's a lot like when you are a student in school and you get caught by a teacher who handles you severely, you know, I felt like that student. I wondered how much thought he put into what he was doing to me. I had put in 3 or 4 years as a substitute teacher, I came back several times for him in difficult situations, and he withdrew my contract. He had my life in the palms of his hands, and he withdrew my contract.

In addition, she experienced a sense of normlessness and unfairness, as she did not feel the allotment of continuing contracts were the object of

specific rules and regulations,

The whole situation was very unfair.... It was frightening to see the lack of dedication of some of the teachers whom I substituted for. You should have seen how their rooms were, how their desks were, how their lesson plans were...You could walk into some of their classes and probably do a better job with both hands tied behind your back, and those were the people who left on stress leave, and for whom I would come in and clean up, and they were the ones with continuing contracts.

Jane came to distrust her administrator, and her distrust expanded to other educational authorities,

This happened four years ago, and I still find it very hard to trust administrators or people working at the school board, and you know I hate going downtown for anything. If I have to deliver a letter down there, I don't like walking in to the building, I really don't, I am afraid that if I go down there, I might bump into this man [her former administrator] because he works there now. I am also fearful of bumping into the superintendent or the associates I spoke with. And I found it very difficult to separate these people from all those who work at the school board. So, I have painted all the people there with the same brush after my incident.

Five years later, Jane still felt residual fears regarding the people working at the school board, even though she had developed strategies to help her overcome her feelings,

It's still difficult when I go there. Since this incident, I have gone to several inservices and there were very valuable, but, I am still conscious of everything when I walk into that building, the ugly colours, whether it's cold or warm, so, in a sense, there is still something there, but I do not let that affect the value I can get from people who work down there, from the consultants, or the materials you can get there.

However, at that time, Jane indicated that she started to "seriously examine her dedication to teaching,"

From my childhood, my culture, or from my conditioning, I had developed a relationship with authority that was such that I believed that what people in a position of authority said was right, accurate. And I began to wonder, "how could a committed person do what I did? Why would a person do something like that if he or she was committed?" And I had to deeply look as to why I kept coming back to teaching. I had to understand how commitment shows up in people.

Jane also reported that she initiated a reflection process and examined her sense of commitment. She also started to keep a daily journal in which

she recorded her thoughts on commitments and has continued to do so ever since,

I did a lot of soul searching, and that was a very long process, because at that point I was so devastated, so confused, that I didn't really know what to think or what I wanted, or whether I was committed.

Jane was not alone in her search for answers on commitment. A self-help group she had joined a long time ago helped her as well,

They [members of her self-help group] challenged my thinking. They asked me things like, "what are you going to do about it [the incident]? Are you committed?" They helped me acknowledge that I made a serious error in judgement, that I had really put my career on the line, that I had made a highly risky and stupid decision. We engaged in conversations about what engagement was, what it meant to be committed, and they helped me understand that I had broken a trust, that it is very difficult to trust again someone who does that sort of thing. They helped me look at my responsibilities into the matter, admit that I was the one that got myself into that situation.

Nonetheless, it might have been the love of the children, as well as her reflection process, that grounded her commitment to teaching and to the children,

The kids really liked me. That was a turning point for me because they kept responding, and they would write notes and letters, and you know, I kept them all. So, the children became my life line. They were the only ones at school who were responding to my being there.... And they became incredibly precious for me, they were the only ones willing to forgive, the only ones willing to forgive me and to give me another chance.

Five years after, Jane emphasized,

I know that I belong to the teaching profession, and I would choose that profession again, if I were given a choice. I would choose it again because of the many different ways that I feel I can contribute to the children's lives. Education goes beyond the technical aspect of teaching mathematics, or whatever. It's a process, it's helping children to develop an appreciation of learning, it's helping them to self discover, it's listening to them and knowing where they are at, it's helping them grow and hopefully be happy... Teaching is being with people and being able to contribute to their lives. For me, it [teaching] is no longer just about pay cheques, you know, although it is good to get a good pay, but I found out that, teaching is the best way I have to express my love for people. I mean I can express it better in the teaching field than in any of the other fields I have been in, and I find it's especially easy with children, and that's why I went back into teaching... and, I do try to be the best teacher I can be for the children.

Jane further suggested she felt particularly committed to underprivileged children,

They [underprivileged children] are very appreciative, there is a friendliness, a humanness, there is a simplicity about them that other children might not necessarily have. They are friendly, they are fun, they are loving and they really respond to you being to them that way. Ultimately, it's for the children that I am here.

At the same time, she has also found an administrator she is deeply devoted to because this administrator has been willing to give her another chance at teaching, in spite of what was in her personnel file. When asked how she felt toward her administrator, she immediately replied,

Very hopeful, very rejuvenated, very positive, and very supportive. She has a way of relating to children and adults that is very encouraging, very empowering. She is incredibly funny, and she allows you the freedom to be natural.

As a consequence, Jane indicated,

I write her kind notes, I work on committees, I speak well of her to other people or when I am at other schools, I brag her up, you know. I am quite willing to stay longer hours. I let her know she can count on me. When I see there are ways of making her job easier, I do that voluntarily. I go out of my way to resolve undercurrents or issues with other teachers, just because I feel that it would be her way to operate. I love her dearly.

Similarly, Jane has developed excellent relationships with her colleagues,

We have fun together, we tell lots of jokes, we laugh together, and I am willing to work with them on any kind of project, you know, I would work with anybody. I was working with two of my colleagues the other day, and they are just outstanding, and it makes you want to go the extra mile to help them.

Regarding her experiences, Jane suggested,

When it happened, I thought it was a disaster. On the other hand, it might have been a blessing because what I had to do was to question deeply whether I had a sense of commitment or not, I had to know whether I was committed or not... Mistakes can become opportunities to learn. Mistakes aren't necessarily bad, we may all be better off for them, and it is very important that children understand that.

When asked how her experiences may have benefited her teaching, Jane answered,

That experience [her critical incident] gave me a deeper understanding of what compassion and forgiveness are about, and how compassion can be used with children. Children, you know, make mistakes all the time, and most of the time, they don't mean to, and they need to be given another chance. They deserve to be given another chance, so they can change and so they can learn. And not like adults who have developed a pattern of a way of being, children tend to change... I also believe that I am a more effective teacher in the sense that I am much more willing to admit that a lesson or a plan I have worked very hard at preparing didn't work. I am much more open to see what I can do to have it work better, constantly, on a daily basis. I am much better as well as not beating myself up if something didn't work, you know, not saying to myself, "what a terrible teacher you are." I have discovered that I can integrate into my teaching what I have learned in my personal life. I think I have become a softer, more human, compassionate teacher, [that] my life is much more balanced, and [that] I am a better teacher because of that.

In spite of that, Jane suggested that she might again decide to leave her school board if she could not get a full-time contract. However, she did report that her activities would in some ways be related to teaching,

If I don't get back a full-time contract, I will go back to trying to set up a private business, like a dancing studio for children and adults, something where I still would have to teach, or I will send my application to other boards or other towns.

Appendix D

Tim

Tim had been an elementary teacher for 14 years at the time of the interviews. He worked in a rural school district for 10 years, and was subsequently hired by an urban board.

Tim felt “a bit of a calling” regarding the teaching profession since High School. His interest in people and music, combined with the influence of a few “good” role models, seemed to lead him naturally toward the teaching profession,

I was interested in teaching from a younger age. I think it seems as an old axiom but it’s true, I have always been interested in working with people, particularly young children. Moreover, I was interested in music as well and I thought that teaching would allow my interest in people and in music to come together. And I had some good role models who have really helped me in my program and they were teachers.

Regarding his interest in children, Tim simply pointed out,

I like them because of what they offer in the way of vitality, and perhaps as a remembering of my own youth. When I was younger, I was not always on track as far as my studies. Although I was never in trouble, I was not a bookworm, and I can appreciate how difficult it is sometimes to fit in and how interesting it is to see students like that in school.... I also thing I like children, partly because I come from a large family and I was surrounded by children.... I also like to think I have something I can help them with or offer them, even though I suppose there are times when I meet children whom I cannot offer anything to, except perhaps the fact that I like them, or that they are important to the life of the school, and that I enjoy working with them. They are the future in a sense, they are young. They are the ones that will be running the country in 20 years and I suppose that part of me says we have an obligation to make sure they have their crack at success and become the best people they can be.

Tim further emphasized,

In addition to that [Tim’s liking of young people], I had a subject area that I was fortunate to have success at in school and that I liked doing. I thought I could offer something to the children, I am talking about music of course, and that was part of the reason why I chose to go into education and made initially, at least, music my major.

As far as his rural school was concerned, Tim reported that the decision of a group of parents to oppose the implementation of a human sexuality course had created difficult working conditions in his school since the course was met with strong resistance by some parents. Tim, who

taught the human sexuality course, remembered some of the parents' reactions,

The issue of human sexuality was a very, very hot issue. Some parents did not want the school to teach human sexuality for religious reasons.... For the most part, I was really impressed with parents. Many of them accepted the program in the end, but there were incidents with a small group of parents who became aggressive, very verbal.... Some parents would pull out their children from the school for the afternoon when human sexuality was offered for perhaps 20 minutes. They were really mad at the school. And while I thought that most parents reacted very well to the principal's decision, I was disappointed in some of the parents. I thought they went a step too far.

The parents' aggressiveness made Tim very uncomfortable because he had known these parents and their children for a long time and had developed close relationships with some of them,

Those were people with whom I had actually sat down to dinner with, who had eaten with us in the school, and had invited us in their homes. Yet, they were very hard on the school during the meetings on the human sexuality issue because of their religious beliefs.... I was really disappointed.

Moreover, Tim pointed out that some teachers belonged to the same church as the parents who opposed the program, which further intensified tensions among school staff, and school staff and parents,

One of the complicating factors was that some teachers in the school belonged to the church that was making the largest objection to the human sexuality program. So, there were people in the school who actually sided with the parents who did not want the program, and these people were wearing the hat of teacher and also giving information to the parents who were part of this religion that should have been remained very confidential. And it became stressful for everybody. School staff meetings were very, very tense.

The other complicating factor was that the church members used the school buildings for their activities as they did not have their own building, and that church members had become very active in the school, much more than any other group of volunteers. However, as pointed out by Tim, volunteers' participation is desirable only as long as it is democratic and inclusive of other groups,

A very large group of our volunteers belonged to that church. In fact, it was a small group of parents, but it was large in relation to the number of volunteers sitting in our school. And this group of parents said they were speaking on behalf of all the students [when they opposed the program],

which was not true, and that can be a problem. Moreover, these parents started to put pressure on the Board and on the teachers, and the students were kind of in the middle.

As a result, Tim indicated growing tension and fragmentation among the school staff. Concurrently, he grew more careful about what he said. In the end, it became easier for him to limit his interactions with his colleagues. This, in turn, caused him to feel fairly isolated,

So, it became a very touchy issue in school, and that put a distance between the teachers.... A couple of times, the situation got to be a mess, and, for a time, I guess I felt fractured. You could go to certain people and not to others.... You certainly didn't want to discuss the situation with someone who would possibly take it the wrong way, and, in fact, I found that the best way to handle the incident was to basically close my mouth, and keep my comments to myself. So, I felt a bit isolated, I couldn't turn to my colleagues. I suppose I talked [about this situation] to my wife more than anybody else.

However, the growing tensions between parents and school staff ultimately affected the students and their relationships with the teachers,

Parents took their anger on teachers, and we got some bad press from the kids because of conversations that were held at home, and I felt bad about it, because I couldn't really take it up with the kids because some of them were very young.... And the older kids became kind of cynical, and turned against the school. I felt that we weren't trusted... and I felt I couldn't put out for them [the students] the way I would have liked to, because everything I did or we did would be subject to question in light of a decision they [parents] didn't agree with.

Tim went on,

I became distant from these parents, and I became distant from, or careful, if not distant, with the children of those parents.... Also, the teachers who were part of this religion were very close with those children, and it was a very uncomfortable situation.... I certainly was very careful about what I said and I was certainly very careful about how we handled information going home to the parents with regards to the program.... It was not always easy to know what to do and when to do it, but I did the best I could with the students. However, I didn't feel they [the children] got the best out of me, not because I didn't want to give it to them, but because I felt that I had to be very careful... I suppose I might have lowered my expectations toward certain kids, but above all, I tried and avoided problems. I felt like I was balancing between a rock and a hard place.

Tim also reported that he did not feel very valued by his principal. Moreover, he felt there was not enough consultation between the staff

members and the principal,

The principal I worked with always said he took pride in consulting. However, I was one of the last staff members at school on the last day of the year, and the principal told me, "You'll take Grade 4 next year right?" It was not a consultation or a request, it was just a rhetorical question, and I felt a little bit as if I had been "had." The principal never really did anything to promote¹⁴ those he said he valued, and I realized that part of being in a far flung rural district is that you must promote yourself or remain anonymous.

Tim also experienced some task routinization as he had been in the same school for a decade,

I learned a lot in this school, and I went through a lot in this school. I don't know that I would stay 10 years again in a school, not because it wasn't good, but because I stopped learning as many things as I used to. It was just one person [Tim] doing one program in one building, and I didn't find that it was something that I wanted to do until I was 50 or 60 years old. I have always believed it is most important to continue to learn and that was no longer happening for me in that school.

As a result, Tim redirected some of his energy toward his family and continuing his education,

I think I shifted my energy toward continuing with my former education, I started a graduate diploma part-time, and toward my own family.

Tim pointed out that his continuing studies in education might have intensified his desire to leave his rural district,

As I was active in the educational field taking a post-degree diploma and beginning on a Master's degree, I was fortunate enough to develop an awareness of what was going on around me professionally, and I felt it was time to move to a district that was more 'aligned' with my vision of education. Moreover, once I knew where I wanted to be, it was my job to go out and land that position that would professionally satisfy me.

There were also other factors that fostered Tim's desire to look for a new school. Tim who wanted to get an administrative position also felt that the hiring and promotion practices of his district were not always very equitable,

Part of the reason I left the school and the school district was that the hiring practices were not very equitable, meaning that when they [district

¹⁴ At that time, Tim aspired to an administrative position.

superordinates] were advertising for positions, positions were basically already given by the time they were posted. There were seldom even interviews. So there was nothing equitable being done in terms of picking leadership candidates for principals and vice-principals.

Tim had also developed a strong desire to become more actively involved in the community he and his family lived in,

The district was becoming more and more a rural district rather than a urban or suburban one, and it wasn't the direction that I wanted to go in. I think I wanted to serve in the schools or the school district that my children would probably attend. At that time, I wanted to make a difference in the community I lived in. I wanted to do something for the kids who were in my city rather than, I suppose, in an area that was somewhat removed from where I lived.

Financial reasons further motivated Tim to find a teaching assignment in a larger centre,

The principals', the vice-principals', as well as the teachers' salaries [in that rural district] were also slipping steadily on the grid in relation to every one else in the province.

Tim decided to accept a position in a new school district,

When I made a final decision to move out of this rural area to an urban school district, the major factor was what I was moving to as opposed to what I was moving from. I felt that the "management" style used in the urban district closely matched my own. I did not even apply in a number of jurisdictions when I decided to move from that rural area. I just felt that the urban district was the one I needed to go to. In addition or as part of this, I felt that my chance for recognition of my ideas as well as a long term position would be enhanced if I worked with a district that had philosophies closely aligned with my own.... I felt that there were opportunities in the urban district because of the way that district was heading. They were progressive and forward looking in general. I had also heard that the board was looking to fill its ranks with a mix of 'seasoned' people from other districts that had ideas.... It was a classic case of desire matched with the good fortune to be at the right place at the right time. I was ready for a new assignment.

Tim concluded,

I had no question about wanting to teach.... I knew I belonged in teaching. I just wasn't as comfortable in the school as I would have liked to be, and it gives you a little bit of a feeling in your belly or in the pit of your stomach, and you might wonder, "do I really belong in this school, or do I belong with this group of kids?" However, there is no reason to start walking out on a

big investment in education and commitment because there are problems. I realized that there would be ups and downs in the workplace and I still liked the kids.

Appendix E

Caroline

At the time of our conversations, Caroline had taught in elementary schools for 12 years. She had always taught Special Education children, both in Primary Opportunity, a program that includes children from 5 to 8 years old, and in Junior Adaptation, which is a program for children between 9 and 12 years old.

Caroline's choice of the teaching profession resulted from two different working experiences when she was a college student. These experiences were critical for Caroline since they resulted in her changing her initial career orientation. More specifically, Caroline's first experience, which she described as a very positive experience, opened a field that was totally new to her and strongly attracted her. It was as a result of this experience that Caroline decided to become a teacher and to specialize in children with learning disabilities,

One summer I worked with the Society for Children with Learning Disabilities, and I really enjoyed that work. It was almost like a day camp, and we had to keep the kids active and go with them on field trips, things like that, and I really enjoyed it.... I enjoyed the interactions with the kids, and it was fun. I guess that's what threw me for a loop. Here I was working and making money in the summer, but I was having fun doing it. It didn't seem natural. It didn't seem right that I was getting money for doing something that was fun. And I think it [this experience] really opened my eyes. I realized I enjoyed these kids. I enjoyed their company, and I guess that was critical to my going into Education. I saw a real need in these children and I saw I could help them.

Caroline further explained that it was the experience of effectively enabling special needs children to "experience success" that motivated her to teach these children,

That summer, I realized that if I could instill any kind of success in another person, I was feeling pretty good about myself and that other person.... And I think that, that summer, I saw the potential for success with children who did have disabilities: success on my part in dealing with them, and success on their part in achieving success, something that they really were not used to. So, yes, I think it [this summer experience] was a pretty critical experience for me and turned me towards the field of Education.... Success is the main word here. I realized that when I helped children with learning disabilities experience success, I felt like I was succeeding as well, and it was just a rush, it was a very good feeling, and it was fun.... So, when I realized I could be having fun working with special needs kids, I thought it was kind of silly for me not to pursue that.

Caroline further emphasized that teaching students with disabilities allowed her to do something she found intrinsically rewarding, that is, helping those whom particularly needed to be helped,

When I switched to Education, my dream or my expectations were that I was going to work for the underdog. That's truly what inspired me. I wanted to be the advocate for the underdog, for the kid who couldn't cut it, you know, the kid who couldn't make it.... I think that I am a person who always tend to root for the underdog, and special needs kids are the underdog for many different reasons. Often, by the time I get them, they are a mess, and their self-esteem is really low. They don't feel they can do anything and they don't like themselves.

At the same time, Caroline felt more and more reluctant to pursue the field she was training for. As she worked in an intensive care unit as an x-ray technician, she found it difficult to identify with her job because she could not see the results of her tasks on the patients' health. She also indicated experiencing a sense of meaninglessness as she did not feel her job had a significant impact on the lives of the people under her care,

At that time, I pursued a career in x-ray technology, I was going to be an x-ray technologist and I was doing well, and I thought I enjoyed it,...., but when the school took us out to hospitals and we had to go to intensive care units, I left. I could not work with people who were almost dead. I just couldn't do it. It was just too difficult for me.... It was too scary. I felt like there was nothing I could do for these people. I felt they were beyond my help. They needed help, but not the kind I could give them as an x-ray technician. All I was doing was examining something, looking at an x-ray, and passing it on. I mean I was part of a helping organization, but I really felt it was beyond my ability to help them, and that was what really turned me off from that profession, and it saddened me too.... I was also very uncomfortable in intensive care,...., these people were near death. I am not talking about people who came in after an accident and would walk away in a few days or a few weeks, I am talking about people near death, and that was what really grabbed my heart. I felt there was nothing I could give those people. However, if I could give children the ability to believe in themselves and to strive for something that they wanted, then I could feel I helped somebody, and that's why I switched over and ended up in Education.... You just can't keep doing something when you don't feel you are getting anywhere.

Caroline's satisfaction with her decision to enter the teaching profession was further strengthened during her practicum. At that time, she truly relished her work and the responsibilities that she was faced with, her experiences with the children, the learning that took place during her practicum, and the collegiality she shared with her mentor,

I really enjoyed the practical experiences. You have to do the course work, but the practicum was really exciting, interesting.... I enjoyed the practicum for different reasons. Number one, I was finally dealing with the kids, I was finally getting hands-on experiences with the kids.... The kids ultimately were the real drive behind my wanting to do my practicum, and I did learn a lot with them, and it was really exciting and interesting.... Number two, I also enjoyed a lot the mentorship, the collegiality that took place when I did my practicum. I was fortunate enough to have a really good experience. I know people who have not had good experiences and they would probably disagree with me on that one. I, on the other hand, had a very good experience, and I think the mentoring, the collegiality that existed between my mentor and myself was wonderful because it was a real opportunity for me to learn in the face of experience. I mean, here was a source who had the experience, and the know how, and the ability to show me and to help me become a bona fide working teacher. And I think it was most enjoyable to have those contacts and to have that networking going on.... It [the practicum] was hard because you are always watched and you know that everything you do is being monitored, but it was exiting, and it was good, and I enjoyed it.... Number three, there was the work, the actual work. It was both hard and challenging. You had to be on the ball, you had to know your stuff. You had to get the curriculum taught, and it was the first time that you were faced with this degree of responsibility. I think responsibility was kind of another factor as well. When the teacher left your room and left you with 25 kids eagerly awaiting your next step, it was a little frightening, but it was a little awesome too. You realize at that point that you'd better come through, and, for me, it was a real challenge to make sure that I reached those kids. It was a good challenge to face. It was a challenge I enjoyed.... It made me even eager to be able to have my own niche, to take ownership of my own space, my own class. Yes, it really made me anxious to get to that point.

Caroline further reported that her first experience as a licensed teacher definitely grounded her enthusiasm for teaching special needs children. She also pointed out that her first principal's willingness to support her had a critical role in facilitating that process,

My experience with my first principal was a very positive experience. I always look back on it and I think I was very fortunate to have been with her for my first experience.... I haven't yet had an administrator who could hold a candle to her as far as her leadership qualities went. I have seen a lot of administrators who have their own strengths and their own qualities, and good ones, but I have not yet seen anybody as good as my first administrator in many different ways.... I was very fortunate to have been at that school for my first experience, and I suppose it did affect my commitment because everything just clicked for me there, you know.... She [Caroline's principal] was well versed in education, she was very familiar with the field, and she was able to guide and assist me in areas such as curriculum or classroom management when I needed assistance.... I would have to say that, in my first years of teaching, if I had a problem, she was the person I went to. Not a minute, did I ever fear anything with regards to

a recommendation because she gave me confidence in myself almost from day one. She let me know time and time again that I was doing a very good job and that she was really happy with me. She also told me she expected me to have questions and concerns as a first year teacher, and she opened her door for me, so that I would be comfortable turning to her when I had a concern or a question.... If you needed help in an area, she got you that help. She provided you with resources or with assistance from downtown.

Not only did her principal create an environment where Caroline felt safe to ask for help and to depend on others' expertise, she also encouraged Caroline to be independent, innovative, and to explore and pursue her own teaching style,

She [the principal] had enough confidence in her staff members to allow us to be innovative and to let us use the strategies and techniques we wanted to use.... Staff members had different styles and she encouraged that. You were encouraged to have your own style and go with it. She did not want everybody to do the same thing. You were encouraged to be yourself, to express yourself.

Caroline also suggested that her principal's empathy for others and her 'humanness' further attached her to her principal,

I think if I had to use a word or two to describe her, it would have to be compassionate and supportive. Those are the two words that jump out in my mind when I think about this particular principal. If you had a problem, either a professional problem or a personal problem, if you had a child perhaps who was going to be hospitalized, whatever, she was there to support you, and to let you know that your child came first, that you didn't have to feel guilty about putting your own child first. This principal allowed you to have a family life and a professional life. She understood that both were important. She had a good handle on balance. She helped you balance those two [professional and personal lives]. If you got called in the middle of the day at school because your child had been sick or something, she was the first one to say, "go to your child, I'll take your class." She was very compassionate. She exuded compassion, and that did help me professionally as well.... I trusted her implicitly. I knew she would always be there for me if I needed her.... She was somebody I knew I could always go to for support.... She truly was a mentor, and, to this day, she remains a friend, even though she is retired.

By effectively supporting Caroline when she requested it, by recognizing her achievements, and by encouraging her to be innovative, the principal allowed her to become and feel successful, a process crucial to the development of work commitments,

I guess she helped me becoming successful. She also made me see my successes, and I started to get more confident with the fact that I was

doing a good job, or that I was doing something right.... Moreover, as I already told you, success is a key work here. When you feel successful, you feel good about yourself, and you enjoy what you do, and you want to do it.

Moreover, the principal's dedication to the children's learning also influenced Caroline's commitment to the children,

I guess that her [the principal's] strong personality, her very strong dedication and commitment to the field of education and to the children did rub off on me. It did influence my commitment to the children. I too wanted to be a representative of what she was. I too wanted to do my very best for the kids. She always used to say, "we are here for the kids," and it became a given in her school and in her teachers.

Caroline pointed out,

I was highly motivated, and, at the same time, I was scared. But, yes, I definitely think that first experience motivated me. It kept me on my toes and doing a good job.... The principal's very strong persona just made us all want to tow the line for her. We all wanted to do well to please her. Yes, we really wanted to please her.... When you have a supportive principal, you are willing to go out on a limb for her.

Caroline further explained,

It meant coming to school everyday on the ball, doing your very best to reach the kids, giving it your all and then some.... It meant putting out a 110 percent for her everyday. It meant doing a good job for her. It meant showing her my gratitude. It meant having my kids in my classroom experience success. It meant keeping my parents happy. You know I wanted to be able to show her that things were running smoothly in my room and always would. I wanted to let her know that she, too, could count on me.... I also think that, when you feel part of a school as a whole, you go beyond your classroom, even beyond your kids, and you are willing to do a gazillion things for the principal, you know, anything from staying behind with a kid who needs help, to coaching a running team, to being available to do the intramurals on a lunch hour when you could be out having lunch, all these extra things that you don't really have to do or that would be very easy to say no.

Caroline's sense of commitment had expanded beyond her classroom to the wider school environment. Furthermore, what motivated her to stay in her school, beyond the principal's leadership style and humanness, was the feeling that she worked not only in a positive but also in a successful environment. Finally, Caroline insisted again on the importance of the principal in that process,

I guess I liked the feeling of success. I really felt it was a really successful, good working school, and the core of it again being the principal. The principal was the guiding force behind the whole organization, and I guess that's what I liked about it. It [the school] was like a fine tuned instrument. It just worked well, and it worked well because the person at the helm made sure it worked well, yet giving everybody the freedom to be who they were and the kind of teachers they wanted to be. So we were all different types of teachers, but that didn't matter, we still got the job done, and it was well done, and through the goodness of the administrator, who allowed us to be our own individuals, it worked.

However, when she was pregnant, Caroline found that it became difficult for her to work as much as she used to when she was pregnant. She reported that her performance outcomes were not what they used to be,

The only moment when I wasn't quite as committed would perhaps be when I was pregnant, or when I was getting to the end of my pregnancy. I was just so tired.... So that might have impacted on my commitment. I was pregnant twice, I am not pregnant well, I'm not a good pregnant person.

When asked to further explain what she meant by commitment, Caroline specified,

It was just that I couldn't produce as much as I used to, and it did impact the children. My performance was not what it used to be. I still felt committed to the children and to my work, and I knew I had a job to do, but I just couldn't perform as well as I used to.

At the time of the interviews, 12 years after entering the teaching profession, Caroline emphasized,

I stay in teaching because of the kids. It's the old cliché, you know, I have had some kids that I would have no desire to come across again, but, on the other hand, I have had many, many kids whom I have seen go from point A to point Z, and I suppose I am here for those kids, you know, the ones I can make a difference for.

When asked if she would choose that profession again, Caroline expressed some reservations,

My instinctual answer is yes, sure I would choose it again because of the kids.... So, my immediate answer would be yes, because I am doing it for the kids, but the truth of the matter is that things are changing so much that it might become harder and harder to really work with and help the kids.... I think that the emphasis that we have now on accountability might create some problems, and I am not saying that accountability is a bad thing, we need to be accountable for what we do, but it really puts forth a lot more

paperwork, you know, with the individual educational plans, the reporting on kids' achievement, and things like that. Moreover, the type of reporting that we have to do now, particularly with special needs kids, is a very difficult thing to do because we have to put a specific grade level on each and every subject that the children do, and it is heart wrenching to do sometimes. But it's policy, and we have to do it. Actually, I think that until the district comes up with an alternate format for special needs kids, this is something that's going to remain very difficult to do because I don't think that these kids fall into all the pigeon holes that they have for the main stream kids.... Another thing is that we have very much taken over the business model. I mean we are out there peddling our schools, and I think that is putting a lot of pressure on administrators to become business managers, and I think that the Board might have to make a decision. It will have to decide whether it wants a business manager as a principal or it wants an educational leader as a principal, but it won't be getting both at the same time because it's just too time consuming. Principals don't not have any time to be instructional leaders anymore because of all the stuff they have to do to promote the school. Instead, they have become PR masters.... Another thing is that the Board might have stripped principals of their ability to feel compassionate towards their staff, and that's not necessarily the principals' fault. They just are not afforded the luxury of being able to be compassionate because they have become strictly business oriented now.

Appendix F

Teresa

Teresa had been an elementary teacher for over 20 years at the time of our conversations. She had taught in several provinces and throughout Alberta. She was teaching in a large urban centre when the interviews took place. When asked why she chose the teaching profession, Teresa answered,

My mom was a teacher. I am not sure there were any other options for me. I mean it was something from day one that I always wanted to do. When I was a kid, I taught Sunday School and church groups and things like that, and I enjoyed it. I always thought this would be my role in life.

Teresa also indicated being genuinely interested in children from an early age,

I have always enjoyed the kids. They are really neat. They are delightful, and they are so enthusiastic.... I have always liked kids, and, from the time I was eleven, I'd spend all my time babysitting, and I was always involved with kids. So, kids for me were, and still are, definitely a big drawing card.

However, at the time of the interviews, Teresa expressed some ambivalence regarding her profession,

On a good day, I think teaching is the best job going. Where else do you get that kind of love and adoration, and this feeling that you are a brain surgeon, that you can turn a non-reader into a reader, but, on a bad day, when the tension in the class is so great, I can't help thinking, "this is ridiculous, why do I do this?"

Teresa recalled two teaching experiences that have been particularly significant for her, although in opposite ways. She described one of her experiences as particularly "satisfying." Her satisfaction was partly due to the sense of genuine community, the sense of challenge, and innovation that seemed to permeate her school,

We were really encouraged to try new things, even if we fell on your face. In fact, at the beginning of every staff meeting, we had to describe something new that we did or were doing in our class, say what worked and what didn't. After that, we'd go through what we had to. The principal kept things moving, she talked fast, she thought fast, and she moved fast, and we'd often still had one hour, sometimes only half or three-quarters of an hour, for staff development. And we'd either talked about something new that someone was trying in class or about other things people were interested in trying or had heard about. For example, I heard for the first time about the student led conferences during the last half hour of one of our staff meetings. It was a group that really shared, and I guess the most

important thing that I really miss now is the sharing of information. If you had a good idea, you went racing around the school saying, "come and see what I did." It was by far the best staff I have ever taught on.

The school teachers were not only encouraged to try and share new things, but they were also invited to work together. As a result, staff members developed a strong "community spirit," and a feeling of belonging, of being of part of a worthwhile enterprise,

Once a week, we had grade group meetings, and during these meetings, the same grade teachers would plan together and bounce ideas off each other,..., and classes were set up so that the same grade teachers were very close to each other. Once a month, we also had mini meetings that were only half an hour, where the Grade one teachers would meet with the Kindergarten teachers and say things like, "this group of kids doesn't listen very much, what can you do, at your level, to improve the situation." Or we would meet with the Grade 2 teachers, and I remember one Grade 2 teacher complaining that kids couldn't copy off the board. Well, for me, that was not an important skill for a Grade one kid, but all of a sudden, it became one, because if that was expected in Grade 2, I should prepare the kids for that. We also had division meetings every four or five months, maybe twice a year, and we would plan what each grade teacher should do to prepare the kids for the Provincial Achievement Tests, and we did that with a lot of different skills as well. The first year I was there, our goal was to improve the kids's math level. It really made you feel you were working toward a common goal, you really felt a part of it.... You really felt part of the whole school, and you certainly understood more of what was going on in the school. I liked a lot that experience and I liked to see how I fitted into the whole, and my commitment was really high during those two years.

Recognition and feedback were also practices commonly used by the principal in that school,

The principal acknowledged a lot of things that I have never been acknowledged for before or since. She was always positive, very warm. If something needed to be improved, she was not negative about it, she'd make suggestions or ask for your suggestions, just her warmth, though, made a big difference.

Moreover, Teresa further pointed out that her principal was an excellent role-model for the school staff,

She was someone you'd aspire to become. She was totally involved in the school five days a week. I'd go to the school about an hour early and I'd usually get there within minutes of the principal. Either she was there before me or there just shortly after me, and it was the same in the afternoon. I always felt that work was her life... Her office door was always open, you always felt welcome in her office... I'd definitely call her a friend.

Teresa also emphasized that the school was very much child-centred, which was evidenced in various school routines,

We actually had scheduled times when the two Grade 1 teachers would go in [the principal's office] to talk about the kids. We'd take our class list and just go through the class list one kid at a time. C. [a child's name] is doing fine, T. [another child's name] could use a little more work in math, there is a problem in this family right now, and so on and so forth. We'd go through the full list in probably half an hour, and the principal took notes on the kids and put them in her calendar, and she checked on the kids two months later. I had never seen that before, and there is none of that here, but it's a really good idea. If you want to learn something about the kids, why not speak with their teachers?

She further emphasized,

It was very easy to be a new teacher in that school. When I arrived, I had a teaching partner who was sort of my mentor, and whenever I had problems, whether it was with the Xerox machine or complaints about something that had happened, I would always go to her. Mentors or partners were only officially designated after a new teacher had been there for two or three months, but people would automatically do that for you at that school. My partner just took it upon herself to help me when I got there.

As a result of the school climate and culture, Teresa pointed out,

I was very committed to that school... You really felt you were a part of it, a part of the whole... We sort of knew where we were going and had common goals we were all working on, and the staff genuinely cared for each other and for the children. Moreover, we were all trying to improve and do new things, and we worked very well together. I was excited to go to school, and I was excited about my job.

After two years, Teresa moved to a new school that was closer to her house, as she found the 25 km drive to her previous school difficult and time consuming, particularly in winter time. At the time of the interviews, however, Teresa was unhappy in her new school. Her unhappiness was primarily caused by a feeling of isolation and helplessness, combined with a perceived lack of control over her environment and a sense of work overload, a feeling of normlessness and meaninglessness, and an increasingly trying disjuncture between her expectations regarding her role and her work environment and her day-to-day experiences in her new school.

Different programs and curricula, uneven class groupings across similar grade, the physical setting of the classes, the absence of team work, and the principal's leadership style affected Teresa's sense of estrangement and

isolation,

Physically, the way the school is set up certainly does not facilitate team work. The teachers who are the closest to me are the 2-3 split in French and a 4-5 split in English¹⁵. Moreover, unlike the school I was at last year, where there were two classes at each grade level and you worked very closely with your grade partner, this school has only one English and one French Grade 1, and the programs are totally different, so it's very hard to plan and work together... In fact, the only time we ever get together are for the formal staff meetings, on the first day of every month. Yet, I know I need someone to bounce ideas off, and I really miss the sharing of information.

Intensifying her initial feeling of isolation, Teresa indicated that her class population was very different from the other Grade 1 class. As a result, she felt that she was faced with unique problems, and problems over which she had little control,

As I already told you, there is another Grade 1 teacher, but she has a totally different program. Moreover, our classes are also totally different, it's day and night. I've had four marriage breakups since the beginning of the school year and she doesn't have any. I have three kids who are hyperactive, and she has none, and I also have a kid who takes uppers during the day and downers at night time. So, it's a totally different situation and it's a totally different curriculum, and it's very hard to work together. At her noisiest, her class is quieter than mine, and mine isn't the quietest to begin with. In fact, a parent has complained to the principal that I yelled at a kid, and that did bother me because I was not yelling, I was just trying to speak above the noise.

Teresa went on describing a week in her class,

I have a kid, Andrew¹⁶, who takes uppers and downers. He refuses to participate in things like discussions and experiments. When we have discussions, he comes to the back and discusses with us, except that he talks about anything and everything, but the topic at hand, and when he runs out of things to talk about, he sits down and says, "peanuts, peanuts, peanuts, peanuts," getting louder and louder all the time. He is also verbally and physically abusive... Let me give you an example. Last Monday, Andrew was very difficult, but that was nothing compared to how he was later in the week. On Tuesday, he turned around, hit a child, and started to swear at the teacher who was there. The principal had to come and get him, and he was sent back home. On Wednesday, he did a few things, but nothing really major. On Thursday, he hit the same child he had hit on Tuesday. At recess time, he was swearing again, and he hit another child. I buzzed the

¹⁵ At that time, Teresa taught a Grade 1 English class.

¹⁶ The name of the student has been changed.

office, and the principal came and took him to his office. His nanny took him home. He was gone for 20 minutes. His nanny brought him back because he wouldn't get out the car. I didn't know exactly what the principal had told the nanny when he was sent home, so, I buzzed the office again, and the kid started swearing at me, screaming, and kicking. The principal literally carried him down to his office kicking and screaming, and there was a meeting with the kid's mom, his nanny, the principal, and the behaviour specialist. However, I was not a party to this meeting. On Friday, Andrew did not come, and I felt like an idiot because I didn't know if he was out of school out of choice or whether he had been suspended.

Teresa further explained what a day in class with Andrew was like,

When Andrew is in class, I'm just waiting for him to blow, and I don't know when it's going to happen, or who it's going to be directed at, but I do know it's coming. All the signs are there, he gets more and more aggressive, louder and louder.... Moreover, when he is in class, I just can't spend quality time with any one kid. Even Andrew is not getting quality time, he is getting a lot of time, but he isn't getting quality time. As for the other kids, I occasionally pat their backs or hug them, but I have very little time to spend with them. I can't do that because I have to be within three feet of Andrew and try and guess when the next blow is going to come.... A good day for me is a day when Andrew isn't in class.

Teresa went on,

I am very stressed. For the last two months, I have spent 90 percent of my time and energy on this kid. Sometimes, I just feel like an elastic band that has been wrapped and wrapped and wrapped around something and is just ready to pop.

Deprived of support and of evidence that she had a positive influence on Andrew and the other students in the class, Teresa experienced a sense of meaninglessness,

There are days when I am really wondering why I am doing this [teaching].

Further aggravating her stress and anxiety, as well as her sense of loneliness, Teresa learned that discriminatory remarks or doubts regarding her competency had started to spread in her school,

Another teacher told me the secretary had told him that she didn't think there was anything wrong with the kid, and that really bothered me. I couldn't help thinking, "if she is thinking that, who else is?" And I am not sure where these comments originated from. It could be the secretary, but it could also be the principal, I really don't know, and that also worries me.

As a result of her difficulties with Andrew, the fact that she was an unknown entity in her school, and her awareness of discriminatory remarks about her competency, Teresa also distanced herself from her colleagues, except for one,

I also distanced myself from the staff. My class was so noisy, there was so much screaming going on, that everybody sort of wonders what is going on, and that bothers me. Moreover, I am new in this school and with these rumours, I really wonder what people think about me... I feel a little bit reserved or guarded around them [the school teachers] because I don't really know them and I don't really know what they think... These people at my other school, they were my friends, and I still see some of them regularly. I feel these people here are more sort of my colleagues, except for Barbara because she has helped me clean my class when I arrived,...., and I also feel for her because she might very well be among the ones about to lose their jobs because of the cuts.

Teresa added,

I don't socialize too much with them [the other school teachers]. The staff went to the horse races in the fall, but I didn't go. I didn't feel it was a good time. I didn't think I would be comfortable with this group socially because I don't really feel comfortable with them at school... Teachers around here also go to the bar once a month, but I have gone out with them only once or twice [over an 8 month period].

Teresa's sense of alienation and helplessness was also aggravated by her principal's leadership style, and her comparisons with her previous work environment,

There was a kid who was even worse in my other school, but the behaviour specialist was immediately involved. Meetings were immediately set up with the parents, the teachers, the principal, and the behaviour specialist. And the teacher got an a half-time teacher aide within weeks of when the school started. Also, all the other teachers were involved with this kid, so that we would know what to do if we saw him acting up at recess for example. In this school, as far as I know, the behaviour specialist only came for the first time in March. There had been phone calls and e-mails sent to him, but he only came into the school for the first time in March... This whole situation is bizarre. It doesn't even make any sense to me. I really don't understand what's going on. He [the behaviour specialist] has never been in my classroom with the child. He has never even met the child. All he has heard is second-hand stuff from the principal.

Teresa was further angered by the fact that she was not involved in the discussions and meetings about Andrew's behavioural difficulties. She felt devalued, invisible, and started to doubt herself,

When I heard about these meetings, my first response was shock. There were meetings about one of my students and I was not invited. I felt like I had been slapped in the face. I thought, "do you think that little of me that I cannot be part of this?" I was really frustrated... I feel I am being shut out of the school decisions. I am told what to do rather than being part of a decision. It seems like I am in a single blind situation where everybody else knows what's going on because they are talking to each other, but I am not part of that. I am the only one not knowing what's going on with the other four¹⁷... I don't feel I have a place in the overall scheme of things, and I feel very unsure of myself, which is pretty bizarre considering I've got 20 years of experience.

Teresa further suggested that her lack of involvement or participation in the school's decisions regarding Andrew affected her commitment to the principal, the school, and possibly her profession. Regarding the school, she said,

This situation has definitely affected my commitment. It is very difficult to stay in a school when you don't know what to expect and where you don't feel valued.... When you don't feel part of a whole, that also definitely influences your commitment, and here, I don't feel I am a part of the school, there is no sense of community... It would be very difficult for me to stay in this school if I wasn't taking a year deferred salary. I have one year left in this school. In actual fact, I have 264 days left, and now, I think about my deferred plan every day.

As far as her principal was concerned, Teresa suggested,

There is definitely some distancing from the principal... If I need to go and see him, I will go and see him, but I have to make an effort to do that... otherwise, I try to stay clear of him. My previous principal made me believe that I was a wonderful teacher, whereas with this principal, I feel I am an unknown and I don't feel my opinion and my experience are very valued.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Teresa's frequent comparisons with her previous work environment might have further aggravated her sense of cultural estrangement and alienation. She also tended to generalize her feeling of isolation to other teachers,

This school is so different from the other one. There is no sense of community here. People don't share. In fact, they don't even speak to each other very much. You feel very alone here... In the other school, we sort of knew where we were going, we were part of the decision-making processes, we worked together, we learned together, we enjoyed each other, and we enjoyed what we were doing. In fact, we were excited about

¹⁷ These are: the principal, the behaviour specialist, Andrew's mom and his nanny.

what we were doing, and we also genuinely cared not only for the children but for each other... Here, I am told what to do, when I am told anything at all... and if the principal think I am competent, he certainly doesn't verbalize it... I don't really feel I am part of this school... In fact, I am not sure that anyone feel integrated in this school.

To further aggravate matters, Teresa pointed out that the above events unfolded at a time when her work community, including her principal, was already very "tense." The school staff who had already been reduced in October had been told there would be further cuts during the next few weeks,

Basically, this staff is going to be torn apart. The principal has already announced that 2.7 teachers have to go. So, it's pretty tense around here... the timing is really upsetting... I don't think that anybody who puts in a 12 hour day deserves to be told in the middle of the year, "you are going to be either laid off or moved to another school." And because I already know that with my 20 years of experience I will stay, I don't really feel I can say to others, "I'm staying, what are you doing?" And I guess other teachers feel the same because nobody is talking about it [the staff cuts]... The morale is really low in this school. This situation with the cuts is really affecting the whole school's morale.

This, in turn, affected Teresa's morale and her attitude towards her job,

The fastest way to bring you down is when everybody else is down, and this year has been a very poor year for us. In fact, I have never been at a school where there's sometimes more subs than teachers, and that has happened numerous times... And once you start this down spiral, it's just spinning like a snow ball, and it become exceedingly hard to stay enthusiastic about your job.

Teresa suggested that her commitment to teaching was no longer as intense as it used to be,

There used to be a time when my world was around teaching. However, this is no longer the case... I am already putting 10 hours a day. There is a lot more I could do, but why should I? Where is my payoff? Before, my payoff was how I felt about myself. In the other school, I believed I was competent. All those caring, concerned professionals around me thought I was good and they made me believe in myself. In this school, I need some support and I am not getting it. Here, I feel like I have to prove myself to the principal, and I don't really feel good about myself. So, where is my payoff?... The excitement I used to feel in this profession is gone. I guess it's the difference between joy and okay. It's sort of like a low grade depression.

Concurrently, her interest and enthusiasm in trying out new things faded also,

I used to wake up or go to bed thinking, "what shall I try? Or, I'll try this or that." But, I don't have that excitement anymore, I don't really want to try something different anymore... I used to be very enthusiastic, but I somehow seem to have lost that.

Teresa also suggested she put things off,

It also seems to me that I need more time to do things, it takes me longer to do school stuff... I have put things off for so long that it takes longer to do them, and it's a lot more tiring. Before, I used to do five report cards at a time per day till I was done, but now, I just can't do that anymore. I've brought home my briefcase with good intentions of doing school work for the past several nights, but I haven't gotten around it, and I think it's just that I don't want to think about school. I put things off for as long as I can... Now, I am a lot less apt to phone parents from home, and I certainly don't want them to call me at home, even though it never bothered me before. I no longer phone for positive things now. When I call a parent, it's usually for something negative, and even then, I do tend to push these phone calls off as much as possible. I push them to the back of my mind, and when it is 10:00 PM and I say, "well, I can't phone now."

Moreover, as a result of the school tensions and of her own difficulties, Teresa reported she stayed more and more confined to her class,

I am spending more time in my classroom and much less in the staffroom...In fact, I don't want to get involved with other people here, except another teacher. I am probably feeling closer to her now, but overall, I have become more closed door. My class is my world now, and I'm not extending the boundaries outside of it.

Withdrawal from school activities, confinement to her own classroom, and putting things off were Teresa's attempts to deal with her stress,

I don't want to be involved with other school staff, it's just too tense around here... I guess it's a whole chain of thinking. Once you start thinking about report cards, you have to think about school, and when you think about school, that depresses you. I just don't want to think about school.

In a further attempt to decrease her anxieties and tensions, and to rationalize her increasing dissatisfaction with her work, Teresa also tended to depreciate her job,

Nobody else wants my job, especially this year. If you put it on public auction at that school, everybody would say, "I'd rather quit than do this..."

No one wants my job.

When asked why she did not ask for a transfer, Teresa's answer indicated how hopeless she felt at the time of the interviews,

I think it may be more of the same. I also do not want to leave feeling like I do right now. I feel that if I were to leave and ask for a letter of reference, I'd get a letter saying, "yes, Teresa is a teacher," and that's it... In two years, my name goes in the hat again, and who knows what I'll get? In the worst case scenario it's going to be a school like this or worse, and if that is the case, I only have a few years left.

Teresa also recognized being tired, depressed, as well as physically ill,

I am very tired. In fact, I feel exhausted... I feel like I am on a low grade depression... I certainly am not the happy person I used to be... My ulcer is going high gear now. Ordinarily, I am on medication for it, and if I don't take my medicine, I'll notice it. However, for the past few weeks, even with the medicine, it was still acting up... My sleeping patterns have also become very irregular, and I often wake up at night and can't go back to sleep.

Concurrently, Teresa admitted being ashamed of the consequences of her new attitude,

There is that shame as well. I do feel it, even more so when I speak with committed teachers... I am quite ashamed that I don't have the same sense of commitment I used to, and I don't want to think about that... I look at other teachers now, and I envy them... I do feel guilty that the commitment is not there. I look at other teachers and see that they are giving so much more than I am willing to. I don't want to give as much as them. It's strange because it's a very conscious decision, it's my decision, and yet, I still feel guilty about it. I feel especially guilty towards the children and the parents. I know I should make more of an effort, but I just don't.

Teresa's exhaustion had repercussions not only on her professional life, but also on her personal life,

This is definitely affecting my personal life. I am exhausted. My husband and I used to be very busy on Friday and Saturday nights, but lately, I am just too exhausted to do anything, and if somebody phones, I just say I am not feeling really good. I just don't want to get involved with people anymore.

When asked if she would choose this profession again, Teresa pointed out,

I had such a nice week last week with Andrew not being there, that I have to say, "yes, I would." But on days when he is around and the tension is so

great, I do think, "this is ridiculous, why do I do this? I gave all I could to this kid and I got slapped in the face. So, I'd say it depends on my mood swings... On a good day, I wouldn't hesitate to say, "yes," but, on a bad day, the good things don't outweigh the bad, and there are a lot of jobs where you can get more pay for less demanding work and at least be acknowledged for your work, whether it is by a performance evaluation or something else.

At the end of our interviews, Teresa concluded,

I still feel committed to the children, but it certainly not all-encompassing as it used to be... I'd say the majority of my commitment is to the kids right now. I also feel committed to the parents, but to a lesser extent, and I feel very little commitment to the principal or the school.

Appendix G

A Quick Update on the Storytellers' Commitments and Lives

Mary

You asked how I was doing with teaching these days.... I feel I may need a major career change or perhaps some other focus in the field of education.

One of the possibilities is to be trained as a reading recovery teacher. The concept comes from New Zealand. An educational researcher by the name of Marie Clay studied reading behaviour and success rates in young children. One of her findings is that the methods in which most schools address the needs of ineffectual readers does not in fact increase student achievement. She suggests that children in reading crisis need one on one instruction from a qualified and experienced teacher.

Anyway, the district has hooked on to this idea and is presently studying whether or not this type of intervention would be feasible in our school district. I sense the district will find the money for this type of program and we can finally help the underachieving readers learn to read. In my Grade three classroom, I have nine students who read at the Grade one reading level. How I am expected to help those children achieve reading at the grade three level by the end of the year is really incomprehensible to me. There are twenty-six children in the classroom and I am unable to find one on one instructional time for them. So, I intend to be trained if this program is approved by the board. The work would be very rewarding, helping children to read.

You are probably surprised to hear that I am less enamored with my teaching career. I have been thinking seriously about my life in general. I suppose I am going through the phase that we all go through as we approach forty and that is a complete examination of where we have been, where we are and where we are going. The conclusion I came to is that I would love to stay in teaching if I had more control over the subjects I teach. What I particularly enjoy teaching is language learning and social studies. What I particularly do not enjoy is being responsible to teach several subjects and expected to be an expert in each one of them. I feel defeated as I know I cannot master all there is to know about on each subject area. Perhaps I could if I were given the time to adequately prepare for each lesson.

I am uncertain if you are aware of my experience at school last year. On the last day of classes, one of the parents warned me that another parent was upset that I would be taking my class on to the next grade the following year. She decided to call all the parents of my students and asked them to protest my assignment to teach the same students for two years. Apparently, she made some very damaging comments to the parents about me and asked them to phone the school to protest my assignment. The principal told me that the upset parent had been in to persuade him to not allow this to happen and that he [the principal] would be hearing from ten other parents that felt the same way. If he was not willing to make the

change, then the school would lose many students.

That night I cried for six hours. Never in fifteen years of teaching had I ever been faced with such a situation. I felt so hurt that someone would do such a terrible thing. I had dedicated my life to teaching. I realized this person and I had differences, but I did not understand she hated me that much to spread lies throughout the community and slander my good name. The next day, while giving report cards, several students asked me if I was going to be their teacher next year because Mrs. X had called their mother and told them to call the school to make certain I would not be their teacher.

The first two weeks of the summer holidays, I could not stop thinking about the incident. I was not confident that I wanted to teach that same group of children again as I was not positive how the parents felt about me. That last day in June as I lay sobbing across the principal's desk, he told me that it was ultimately my decision to teach the same class the next school year. He assured me he would support me no matter what my decision was. He encouraged me to give the matter consideration. I did teach that class last year, but I always felt uncomfortable.... I do not ever want to go through that experience again.

Jane

Last year, I got two temporary contract. One of them was with an administrator who was a difficult person, and one was with an administrator who was very supportive. The first contract, the one with the difficult administrator ended in January, and it was in Junior High, and the second contract ended at the end of the year, and it was in elementary.... At the end of the year, the principal phoned the supervisor downtown and asked him if I could have a full time position at her school starting in September. Unfortunately, the supervisor said he could not do that because he had other contracts to fulfill, he first had to place people with continuous contracts.... But anyway, I still like teaching and this administrator was a good person, an easy person to work with... However, I am very upset with the district. I don't know what they want me to do, and I am very upset with them.

Substitute teaching is not very satisfactory and it does not make me very happy.... It's very difficult because it's like a roller-coaster. When I get hired on, I am very happy, I work very hard, I prove myself, and then the contract comes to the end, and I am expecting something more, and I am very disappointed at the end of it when I don't get hired on [in a more permanent capacity]. And time goes by, and I am down, and then someone calls me, and I am up again. So, it's quite difficult and I would really like to get a continuing contract, although I guess I have been very fortunate because I keep getting temporary contracts....

I have put my application with the Edmonton Catholic Board this year and with the Calgary School Board because now I don't really believe that Edmonton Public will ever give me a continuing contract...

However, on the positive side of things, this situation has forced me to generate something else in my life, it has forced me to do something inventive and creative, and that's my dance teaching. I do get a lot of satisfaction out of it. It also really helps me in between my contracts, I thoroughly enjoy it, and I can generate some money.

Larry

This year, I have a class of grade four children and share it with another teacher half time. I also have eight classes of physical education, so this is going to get me more into shape or else it will burn me out.

Jeremy

I still am at the same school, but we got a new principal two years ago, and there has been a number of changes that were quite interesting. There has been a real emphasis on technology at our school, and it was good to be there. Our school is now leading the field in some areas, using computers for the students and for the teachers, for report cards and things like that. Actually, there was an article about the school in the Edmonton journal describing how we work with computers in all the classrooms and the office, and so on. So, it has been interesting to find out about computers and how we could work with them in the class. It gives you sort of a first hand knowledge of what that's like, and of the benefits of computers, and maybe also some of the problems.

With respect to the future, I have been thinking of changing to another school perhaps, but it would have to be a school that would be beneficial for me, and it's not always that easy to find.... I am now about eight years or so from retirement, and I really would like to try one more school before I retire. I am thinking of changing grade as well. I have been teaching Grade six now for a number of years, and I would like to teach Grade four. I would like to get students with a really different attitude and a different level too. It would be probably a good thing for me to do something a little different.

David

I went to a new school in 95 and I am still at the same school. My first year there was quite difficult. The staff had been there for many years, and all I heard was, "At this school, we do this, or we do that." My voice was not heard at staff meetings. The principal would hear my concerns out but he would not act on them. Basically, I was at a school that made decisions on what made the old staff happy when I wanted decisions to be based on what was good for the children. It was a year filled with conflict, a very difficult year for me.

We had a new principal in September 96 and some new staff as well. Because of our principal, the old staff is slowly changing his attitudes. The principal is a wonderful, caring man. His decisions are truly based on what is

best for the children.... I also feel that he trusts me, supports me, and believes in me. He has encouraged me to get my wings and celebrate my successes as I fly. After twenty-eight years of teaching, I have the excitement, hopes, and dreams of a new teacher, and I know that this is directly related to him.

Barbara

Last year, I moved out of Grade one, and I started teaching Junior High half time, ..., and the other half time, I was teaching resource room. It's a pull-out program where you work with kids who have trouble reading. So, I worked with both the little kids and the big kids until March, and in March the vice-principal went on sick leave, and I took over his position till the end of the year.... And this year, I am going to teach resource room again half time, and the other half, I am going to be the counselor. And that's really good, that's really leading me right where I wanted to go.... When I talked to my principal yesterday, he told me he wanted me to stay in a leadership role, and because this is a brand new school, we need to build a whole school climate, to define where we want the school to go, to get the parents involved, and to get some community liaison going.... So, my commitment to teaching is really high, and it's the same with my commitment to my principal.... I think this is going to work great, and I am really looking forward to the new year.

Teresa

After my year from Hell, last year was sheer delight. I got "the class from Heaven." I don't think a day went by that I wasn't told, "you're beautiful," or "I love you."

I had a great summer, I travelled around the world, it was just a fantastic experience.... And this year, I got a new school and I believe it's the world's best school. It's just a few blocks from home, and it is filled with these wonderful, caring, and concerned professionals. I really wanted to go there because they [the school staff] are into early intervention. When every other school dropped this program for budgetary reasons, they continued it... And every one I have met has something nice to say about this school, or the staff.... In fact, I have already met the staff. I was invited at a small party to meet them, and at the end, four people just grabbed me, hugged me, and told me, "This is the best school I have ever been at, you'll like it." So I am delighted, really delighted to have a job there. It looks like this is a really wonderful school.

Natalie

I taught grade three last year and grade four the year before that, and I'll teach again grade three this year.... I think I have rediscovered the joy of teaching because I have had two very nice years. Starting a new grade level is always difficult in terms of the amount of work, but I certainly did not

have the frustration of trying to do too many things at once, which was the situation I was in two years ago. I feel more positive about my job situation, and it makes a big difference on my outlook towards other things as well.... I certainly feel more positive toward my administrator. I think I finally did get through to her.

Beth

It might be too soon to say it with finality, but I think I have fallen in love with my job. I am still too busy, I still have too much to do, too many ideas, but I feel I could not be in a better career.... I am feeling that teaching is more than just a work. It is providing me with an outlet I call "my art." So, I am not learning about becoming an art-aholic, who ever heard of an art-aholic? I am more and more learning to teach my way, (the way it works for me without comparing myself to others), I have worked out many school-related problem areas, I am loving and enjoying the children more and more, and again, I am taking on a leadership role in a quiet behind the scene way with both the staff and the student.

I am also learning to find time for myself. I now meditate, exercise fairly regularly, enjoy a monthly massage, and do other self-caring things. My life is becoming more balanced and certainly blessed. I am very grateful for what has happened to me lately.

Tim

As you know, I got a vice principalship two years ago. I have observed myself feeling more committed after becoming an administrator. I think this may be the feeling that I have more ability and authority commensurate with the title to make decisions on behalf of the students and carry them out. In other words, I like being a part of the administrator team and feel that I am making more of a change than I was able to when I was a teacher. The route as administrator is different, just as long in another way however, I am thoroughly enjoying it as tiring as such positions are. There is a "buzz" about the school leadership positions that is enthralling.

I have finished defending my thesis for the Master's Degree in Educational Administration. In fact, I convoked last week and we had a grand time, the culmination of a lifetime of work one might say. I am continuing as a vice-principal right now and am anticipating applying for either a principalship or perhaps a Ph. D. program or Ed. D. program sometime. I think there may not be time for both with my children. I will hopefully be a principal in the next 3-5 year period. I would perhaps one day also enjoy being a sessional lecturer at a university or college although I do not think my long term plans include becoming a professor. Who knows?

My personal goals include wanting to be a better daddy and husband with my children and my wife. They have sacrificed a lot of time for me in the last couple of years.

Caroline

There is nothing really new with me. I still really like what I am doing. I am still at the same school, with the special needs children, except that there is a lot more integration in our school, and I have a Science class with both special needs kids and main stream students, and I find that very interesting.

Natasha

In 1995, I was seconded with Alberta Education (Department of Education), and my secondment has recently been renewed for another three years. My work with Alberta Education is serious, challenging, demanding, intense, and stressful, but I enjoy it. I do miss the children though. When I am with children, I feel that I can be myself, and I feel invigorated.

I also taught two different courses at the Faculte St. Jean (administration scolaire 401 and valuation des apprentissages en milieu scolaire). I have just declined to teach the evaluation course again in the Fall and in the Winter (7 weeks for 1.5 credits each course). I didn't enjoy teaching this course last winter for some of the following reasons: The preparation and marking of assignments were taking too much of my time and energies, especially given the salary of 1600.00 per course/term. I was assigned to a group of 50 students, way over the quota, and no special consideration or acknowledgment was made for this. Also, partly because of the size of the group, and me being tired and getting increasingly preoccupied with my responsibilities with Alberta Education, I found it harder to create the personal/intimate ambiance I like to create in the classes that I teach. If I feel far away, emotionally not connected to my students on some level, I do not enjoy teaching as much. . . . and this goes for anything else I do in my life.

I am trying to have a more balanced and healthier life. I make a point to eat healthier foods. At noon hour and/or after work, I have been doing steps once a week and swimming three or four times a week in the last few months.

Relationships are still very important to me (not in quantity, but in quality of being real/honest, accepting and caring). I have been meeting a few of my friends at least a couple times a week, and making sure my husband and I keep in touch with one another's state of being, and we are trying to decide if we would like to try to have a child.

I was unable to contact Tina and Corinne. However, I know that Corinne went to Australia to teach for a year, which was something that she really wanted to do.

Appendix H

Table 2¹⁸

Commitment To Teaching: The Result Of Multiple Facilitators

The Storytellers' commitment to teaching increased when:	The factors in the previous column were facilitated by:
Storytellers felt that they contributed to the students' growth.	The community members' attribution of the children's progress to the storytellers, recognition, and feedback. Feedback on the children's progress had to be relevant, specific, and immediate whenever possible. Community members had to be available, visible, able, willing to communicate, and credible. Credibility depended on the community members' involvement in the school activities and the quality of their feedback.
Teachers met their internal sense of mission, and internal standards.	The storytellers' felt ability to influence the children's growth. This was influenced by the informants' feelings of efficacy at the time, their experience, their knowledge of the curricula they had to teach, their workload, the community members' ability or willingness to help, support, and collaborate with the storytellers, and the storytellers' willingness to ask for help. Environments that emphasized continuous learning, voluntary collaboration, innovativeness, creativity, and in which storytellers felt safe to open a dialogue with the community members and share their uncertainties, thereby, opening a space to address them.

¹⁸ This table summarizes only part of the information given by the participants. For more information, the reader should read the entire chapter.

Continuous socialization of the community members to the school values and goals (via role-modelling, frequent discussions and reminders of the school values and goals). This was facilitated by specific hiring practices by the school district and principals, and the community involvement in the definition and implementation of the school mission and goals.

The school's focus on innovation, collaboration, instructional support, and continuous professional development, provided that it was congruent with the school mission and goals. Again, the story tellers' perception that they worked in an environment where they were accepted for who they were, that is, that was safe. As well, value congruency between the participants and other community members tended to increase the participants' willingness to collaborate and share professional information with the rest of the community. Participants' personal characteristics (e.g. experience with collaboration, high feelings of efficacy) further facilitated their willingness to engage in communal work.

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Teachers felt that they did something that was creative and challenging, provided that they could meet the challenges they were faced with. They also felt that teaching provided them with opportunities to grow and learn, and offered a certain amount of task variety.

They had warm and nurturing relationships with their students.

They had fulfilling relationships with their colleagues.

Orderly class environment and deemed 'reasonable' workloads. Orderly environments were facilitated by agreed-upon school wide policies on behaviours, a felt adequate training or experience in classroom management behaviours, and, in specific situations, teacher-aides.

Collaboration (provided that it is voluntary), empathy, recognition, exemplar role-modelling, and attitudinal transformations. Collaboration, support, and recognition tended to increase when community members had similar values and goals. This was affected by the school administrators' hiring practices, the continuous socialization of community members to the school goals and values, participative decision making with respect to the school goals and values, professional development, instructional matters, and specific school wide policies, and the administrators' willingness to promote and role-model collaboration, support, and recognition, as well as hard-work. Again, informants specified that personal characteristics could influence the above processes (shyness, lack of experience, feelings of efficacy, previous experiences with these processes,

etc.).

They had fulfilling relationships with the students' parents.

Parental involvement, empathy, support and recognition, and the participants' own experiences as parents. Participants specified that parental support and involvement could, in turn, be facilitated by the respondents' availability, visibility, and approachability, their willingness to communicate with the parents, their openness, their willingness to listen to the parents' goals and desires with respect to the children's education, their exemplar working, diverse personal characteristics (feelings of efficacy, previous experiences with parents, etc.) and organizational characteristics.

They had satisfying relationships with the school administrators.

The principal's ability and willingness to communicate genuine empathy, acceptance, support, and recognition. The principals' visibility, approachability, their willingness to listen to and act on others' concerns, their exemplar role-modelling, their willingness to trust the respondents' expertise, and to involve them in participative decision making. The principals' willingness to promote collaboration, to facilitate the community's learning and growth, to hire new community members with similar values and goals, and/or to socialize the new community members to the school values and goals through role-modelling, frequent discussions, and regular assessment of the school values and goals, provided that the school values and goals are not only professed but also reflected in the community daily routines, and that the school values and goals are achievable, relevant to the children's learning, and consensually agreed-upon.

Appendix I

Table 3¹⁹

Consequences Of The Participants' Felt Successes With Respect To Their Teaching Performance And Their Relationships With The Other Community Members

Emotional	Behavioural	Attitudinal	On Commitments
Increased feelings of affiliation with the community members.	Increased collaboration with other community members.	Positive attitudes toward the community members.	Increased commitment to community members and to schools.
	Increased involvement in specific school activities.	Internalization of some of the community members' values.	
	Imitation of other community members' behaviours.	Strengthening of some of the participants' former values.	
		Increased willingness to assimilate others' specific behaviours.	
		Increased flexibility.	
		Increased willingness to maintain open dialogue with other community members.	
		Willingness to become more visible and approachable.	

19 This table only describes part of the information given by the participants. For more details, read chapter four.

Feelings of enthusiasm about teaching.	No voluntary absenteeism increased innovations, collaboration, and increased involvement in discussions about professional matters. Teachers exert extra efforts, and take on additional school activities.	Increased willingness to support others. Positive attitude toward teaching young children.	Increased commitment to teaching.
Increased feelings of motivations.	Same as above.	Same as above..	Same as above.
A sense of fun, joy fulfillment, happiness	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.
Increased feelings of efficacy and improved concept of feelings of professional enrichment.	Same as above.	Same as above and self.	Same as above.
Increased sense of worth.	Increased willingness to engage in various activities.	Positive attitude toward self.	

Appendix J

Table 4

Factors That Influenced The Fall And Shifts Of The Storytellers' Commitments

Participants' commitments fell and shifted when:	These factors were facilitated by:
The participants were unable to influence the children's learning.	Inadequate training, experience, or knowledge of specific curricula, age-specific students, specific types of students, and classroom managements techniques. The above was influenced by the participants' tolerance to frustrations and often aggravated by little or no feedback (due to the community members' invisibility and lack of availability), feelings of helplessness, and inexistent school-wide policies with respect to the children's behaviours.
	Felt role conflict and role overload often aggravated by felt helplessness, poor communication between the community members, and the participants' comparisons between their previous and latter workloads, and influenced by the respondents' tolerance level.
	Relentless interferences from minorities, facilitated by their history of involvement into the school affairs, the invisibility of principals and superordinates, the weak and silent support of the other community members, and other intraorganizational conflicts, and again by the participants' level of tolerance.
	Storytellers' personal characteristics (e.g., low feelings of self-worth, low feelings of efficacy, or 'unreasonable' expectations).
The informants could not live up to their ideal of service, their internal values, or their sense of mission.	The lack of value congruency between respondents and community members. This facilitated by the careless hiring of new staff, the nomination of a new principal, the departure of a large number of staff, the de-solidarization of old colleagues, the emergence of new countercultures, the staff's lack of involvement in the decision making processes, the fact that

community members were not socialized to the changing or new community values, and the storytellers' ability and/or willingness to tolerate frustrations.

The storytellers experienced increasing feelings of boredom. This was generated by the teachers' lack of professional growth, a growing sense of task routinization due to lack of lateral or upward mobility, and/or a decreasing interest in children. Again, these factors were facilitated by organizational and personal characteristics.

Lack of recognition and support from the community members.

The storytellers' experienced normlessness regarding the obtaining of permanent contracts or other valued rewards (e.g., principalship).

The storytellers' feelings of role conflict and role overload.

The storytellers' feelings of helplessness, lack of support, their felt lack of training and/or experience, and their inability and/or unwillingness to ask for help (social fear, shyness, low feelings of efficacy, etc.).

Interferences from other community members (e.g., parents).

Lack of familiarity and contacts with colleagues. Value incongruence.

Colleagues were unsupportive, unappreciative of others' efforts.

Role overload and conflict.

Storytellers' personal characteristics (e.g., low feelings of efficacy, social fear, etc.) and specific organizational characteristics (e.g., the community' lack of emphasis on collaboration, careless recruitment processes, and the absence of socialization processes).

Parental invisibility, parental aggressiveness and interferences. Lack of parental support. Value incongruence between storytellers and parents.

Storytellers' feelings of role conflict and role overload, which, again, was

Teaching became increasingly meaningless to the storytellers.

Lack of nurturing relationships with the children.

Lack of fulfilling relationships with the storytellers' colleagues.

Lack of fulfilling relationships with parents.

facilitated by specific social and personal characteristics and processes.

Principal's invisibility, lack of support, and lack of recognition.

Value incongruence between the respondents and the principals.

Storytellers' felt normlessness regarding the school discipline, the school values and goals, the means to achieve the school schools, and various criteria to achieve valued goals (e.g., recommendation for a permanent contract or a principalship).

Perceived overly directive leadership style (lack of trust).

The storytellers' felt lack of organizational justice (distributive justice and interactional justice).

Lack of fulfilling relationships with the school administrators.

Appendix K

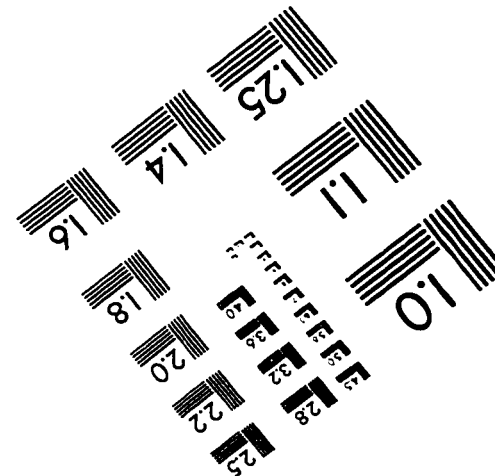
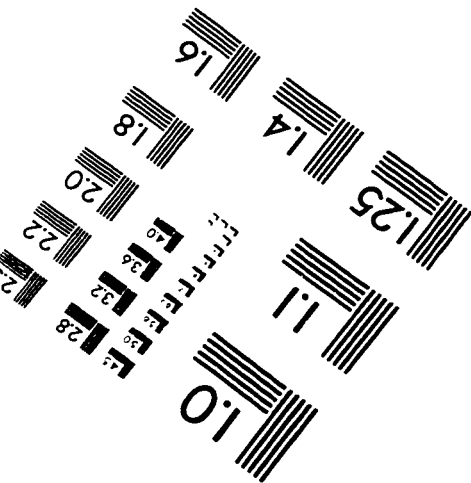
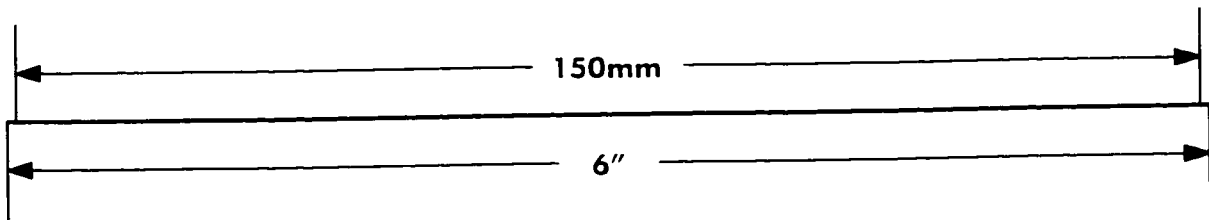
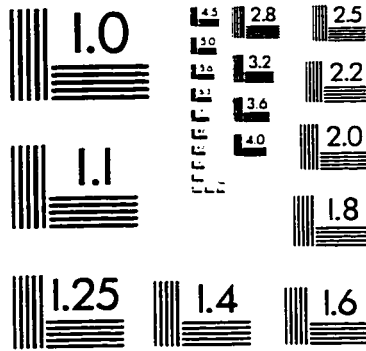
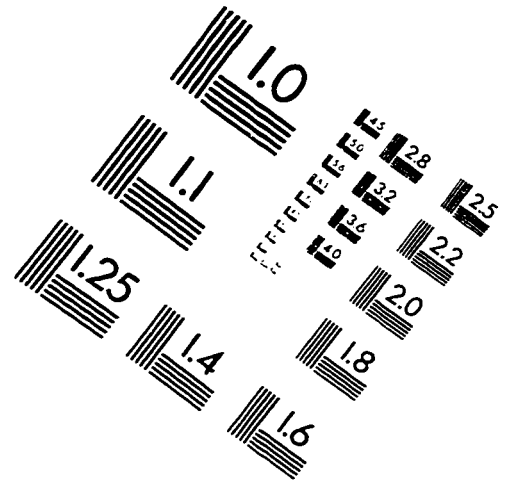
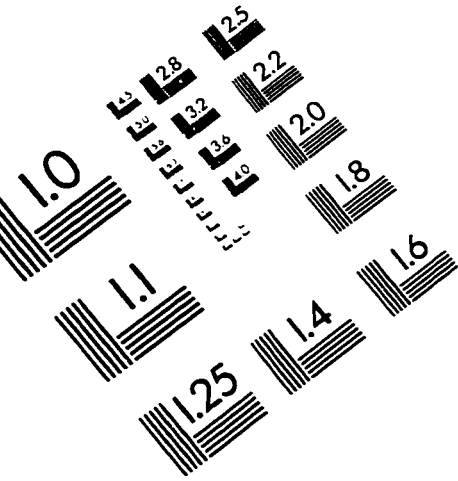
Table 5

Consequences Of The Storytellers' Experienced Lack of Success

Emotional	Behavioural	Attitudinal	On Commitments
Feelings of cultural alienation.	Distancing from specific specific community members.	Development of negative attitudes toward specific community members.	Commitment falls and shifts depended on the storytellers' understanding of their experienced lack of success.
	Increased blaming of specific others.	Increased focus on specific negative aspects of the work community and teaching.	
	Increased intra-organizational organizational conflicts.	Increased closeness with specific others.	
	Communication breakdown. Decreased collaboration with specific others.		
	Increased comparisons with previous positive environments.		
	Disengagement from school-wide and/or class activities. Increased involvement in outside of school activities.		
Feelings of social alienation.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.
Feelings of powerlessness.	Same as above.	Same as above. Increased focus on specific	Same as above.

		negative aspects of teaching.	
Feelings of self-estrangement.	Same as above.	Same as above. Increasingly poor concept of self.	Same as above.
Feelings of meaninglessness.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.
Feelings of hopelessness.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Participants' commitments fell, including their commitment to teaching.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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