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A school as a crucible of change : a case study of restructuring and a faculty's culture.

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A SCHOOL AS A CRUCIBLE OF CHANGE:
A CASE STUDY OF RESTRUCTURING AND A FACULTY'S CULTURE

A Dissertation Presented

by

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To Kathleen Ellen and Jude Joseph

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ABSTRACT

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This case study describes how the culture of a faculty at a junior-senior public high school was influenced by a grass roots initiative of restructuring. The efforts at educational change centered on a move toward detracking their once rigidly grouped classrooms. While a growing body of research literature looks at students in reorganized schools, particularly those that have undergone a process of detracking, this study adds to the relatively little work done regarding how these processes involve the culture teachers share. Utilizing interviewing, participant observation, school based documents and peer review this qualitative research offers perspectives of what change in the structure of a school can mean to those who work in the school. It draws a theoretical framework of understanding from the fields of Education and the Sociology of Education. Changes in the culture of a group of teachers is the focus of this work with the process of

detracking providing an ever present back drop. The dissertation addresses how cultural change redefined personal perspectives and meanings shared by educators in a small school. These new meanings created an going dialogue about the role of those educators in issues such as school-wide leadership, in-school professionalism, serving as professional development specialists for hundreds of other educators and teacher empowerment. Finally this work presents how the work-day world of teacher's became a "crucible of change", forcing many educators to continually redefine what it meant to be a teacher.

PREFACE

The topic of heterogeneous grouping frames this research about how a move toward altering the grouping arrangements in a school impacted the culture shared by the school's faculty. The intent of this research is not to make an argument regarding detracking and student achievement, though there is a growing body of work looking at just that topic. While I am a supporter of detracking, this dissertation focuses on a faculty caught in the processes of restructuring in a school.

What also shapes this dissertation is my experience as researcher and as teacher in the Pioneer Valley Regional School, that serves as the research site. Throughout the time framing this research, as with the years before and after, I have been a teacher. Each day I still work with more than one hundred students from grades seven through twelve. They have always been my primary focus. It will become clear to any reader of this work that I am not only an observer but also a participant in the social scenes that I analyze.

I had no part in Pioneer's initial move toward detracking. In fact, I didn't work in the school at that time. I have been a teacher at Pioneer for the past six years. During the past few years I have been an in-house activist of sorts. At times during this dissertation I

appear a catalyst among the school's faculty in events that not only promoted detracked schools but also questioned models of school leadership. My observations stem from the activity generated by the raw process of day to day events. For example, I suggested that the faculty host and present two conferences on the issue of detracking. I have served as conference chair and visited three school districts as a consultant. Likewise, my work as a teacher often brought questions about what it meant to work at Pioneer from those favoring and opposing detracking.

My work as a researcher has forced me to adopt the unenviable position of self-critic in subjecting my own observations and interpretations to an exacting appraisal. I was forced to define and then adhere to the fine line that separates researcher from participant. I have never received the national attention that a few of my peers accepted after the first conference. I never engaged in or encourage the self-promotion that some others did. Still, there were times when I needed to caution myself that I was merging the two worlds and needed to intellectually step back and reestablish the necessary distance a participant researcher must have. My position as researcher was not tied into the role of activist teacher. In fact, as will be evident throughout this work, the role of researcher strained professional relationships I shared with others at Pioneer, played a part in my refusal to serve as an outside

educational consultant, and, unfortunately, resulted in the loss of close friendships I had with staff members.

In this dissertation it is clear that I am an advocate for detracking. From reading what follows, it is evident that I am a vocal advocate for more professional development by and for teachers. Similarly, I feel educators should work to end the isolation that often separates teachers into classrooms and away from a professional dialogue shared with peers. My support for these issues and my work toward the professional development that took place at Pioneer existed long before I began this research. The dissertation process refined my ideas. It tempered them with words and actions of others. The self critique and peer review built into this project only helped to crystalize my perspectives.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The professional world of a teacher is one of change. Teachers are valued for their expertise as change agents as they spend their careers encouraging and overseeing the intellectual and social growth of the students entrusted to them. At the same time though, for many teachers the concept of professional changes at the classroom level can be very threatening. Teachers work in a world that is very personal as well as professional. They carry a strong sense of moral commitment to doing the best for the children they serve. Teachers also work in a world that can isolate them from their professional peers when they are practicing their craft, yet bind them solidly together as members of a faculty sharing a common culture. It is the culture of the school that contains the meanings created within the organization of the school. It is through the culture of the organization that interpretations of events within and from outside the school are created and shared among teachers.

When faced with the prospects of change, often initiated by those outside the school, teachers may not respond as enthusiastically as some policy makers might expect. Their hesitancy centers on their concerns for the students they teach and on what the change means for them

as professionals. Teachers by their roles are active agents of change and yet at the same time struggle to maintain a sense of permanence and continuity. As Michael Fullan, recognizing Marris (1975), tells us "all real change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle" (Fullan, 1991, p. 31). It should come as no surprise to discover that proposals for educational change may find the greatest support and embedded opposition in the culture of a school's faculty. A new policy intended to better the lives of students might well appear to veteran teachers as invalidating their previous work with children. It is important to note, as Fullan reminds us, that "ultimately the transformation of subjective realities is the essence of change" (Fullan, 1991, p. 36). It's not too difficult to imagine the hostility that one might give to some well intended policy suggesting that what one has been doing for a career was not in the best interests of the clients one was serving.

But change exists in schools today as it always has. Education is not a static process but dynamic and fluid. Many of the standard positions found in education today were once considered radical innovations. Schools, particularly the public schools, have been forced to constantly adjust to the needs of a changing population. In many ways, they are the places where the structure of a changing society is negotiated.

Today, many administrators and teachers have joined with policy makers and seen the need to address pressing issues in education that concern students and teachers. Those issues run the gamut from how schools are organized to classroom pedagogy. Some of the issues deal with the professional relationships that exist in schools and deal with questions about topics such as school decision making and leadership, teacher empowerment, new strategies for professional educator evaluation, and teacher training, to mention a few. Other issues deal with the way students are taught and look at such things as the impact of technology on classroom instruction, advancements in specific subject areas such as reading or social studies, or the use of multi-faceted approaches in the day to day world of teaching and learning. Still other issues involved in the ongoing process of reform focus on the way schools are organized. Topics under discussion can range from the size of schools, to issues of centralization and decentralization, to how students are grouped for classroom instruction. Every side involved in these debates attempts to derive the best possible benefit for and from schools as the advocates of the many positions offer solutions to the problems of educating a population for the twenty first century. Any review of movements in education today clearly shows that there are many realities that often times compete with one another for the attention and control of

our schools. Currently, these suggestions of educational change are considered under the broad rubric of "restructuring" which David T. Conley identifies as "Activities that change fundamental assumptions, practices, and relationships, both within the organization and the outside world in ways that lead to improved student learning outcomes" (Conley, 1991, p. 49).

There are many schools embarking on courses of restructuring. Some are part of larger district wide moves. Others are following the direction of administrators in positions of leadership. Still other efforts at change have come from initiatives that begin with placing more control of a particular school in the hands of teachers. Ultimately, students and teachers must carry out the restructuring in classrooms and then must live with the results. As Kenneth Sirotnick suggests "The renewing school - or restructured school, and its restructured curriculum, if you like - is where educators are empowered to be critical inquirers" (Sirotnick, 1991, p. 259). Such a radical rethinking of the traditional roles of educators and students in a school is inherently tied to symbolic changes in the culture of the school. In all cases, as Sirotnik also reminds us, "Restructuring, clearly, is not for the timid or the tired" (Sirotnik, 1991, p. 257).

The Study

This study is about the changes that have taken place at a small regional public junior-senior high school, the Pioneer Valley Regional School, described in Chapter Two. Change for Pioneer has centered upon the concept of Heterogeneous Grouping. A rigidly tracked school seven years ago, Pioneer has just graduated the first class to be organized in heterogeneous groups for the six years of grades seven through twelve. The issue of heterogeneous grouping remains the paramount catalyst of change at the school. Currently, the Pioneer Valley Regional School finds itself as a model school with a growing national exposure in both the print and electronic media. It has a growing reputation for educational innovation and excellence among educators and policy makers alike. For example, as Jeannie Oakes and Martin Lipton have noted "Pioneer Valley School seems to have brought together the essential ingredients for genuine school change including persistence over time and attention to the beliefs, politics, and technology that seem to make successful heterogeneity possible" (Oakes & Lipton, 1992, p. 15). In further writing about the restructuring at Pioneer as well as at other schools, they add "the primary lesson from these experiences is that if whole institutions can be said to learn new ways, schools themselves must <u>make</u> sense out of their own experiences and learn new ways through their own inquiry and

investigations" (Oakes & Lipton, 1992, p. 15). Clearly, the internal cultural change at Pioneer carries value for many others embarking upon such a mission.

It was essential to follow a methodology which not only incorporated the skills of the researcher but also the perspectives of those who work at the school. In this study of how cultural changes have gone hand in hand with organizational restructuring it is imperative to ground the research in the day to day reality of the school. It is important to understand how the school's staff shared the meanings created by school change. Utilizing qualitative methods of participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis presented in Chapter Four, the research addresses how the faculty has functioned as agents of restructuring to heterogeneous grouping and how they have been affected by those changes. Of significant importance for this study is how the changes that have taken place at Pioneer have altered the cultural meanings of membership in the organization. The qualitative format brought both the individual perspectives existing among the school's faculty together with the shared perspectives found in the faculty culture. The research further investigates how the symbolic meaning of sharing their experiences and products with the greater professional community by the school's faculty propelled the cultural changes taking place at Pioneer to the cutting edge.

The Symbolic Meaning of Change

To understand the processes involved with restructuring it is equally important to understand what restructuring efforts mean to the people who must carry out the restructuring. Those understandings come from a study of the cultures of those particular social collectives and of how the members of those organizations make meaning of and organize change into their working worlds. Chapter Three reviews the tradition of using a cultural approach to understanding organizational life. In schools, where students are most often the targets of change and then the subjects of scrutiny in evaluating changes, the effects of organizational change on teachers are often ignored. Interestingly enough, it is our teachers who remain working in those schools often long after students have left. Students are promoted and graduated. Teachers remain behind to face another year's class. They are the people who must integrate the changes into their professional worlds.

Teachers are the centerpiece of this study which looks at the way a staff of a school initiates and deals with profound professional change. In particular, a focus is on the culture that is shared by this group of veteran teachers and in-house administrators. Chapter Three presents a theoretical framework for understanding how the symbolic meanings that change brings are imbedded in an ever changing process creating and redefining

organizational culture. As Oakes and Lipton (1992) have suggested from reviewing initial reports of schools attempting to do away with "tracked" formats, "the lessons agree that a Culture of Detracking is more important than particular alternatives or implementation strategies" (Oakes & Lipton, 1992, p. 2) in bringing heterogeneous grouping to schools. They go on to suggest that "while the particulars of detracking vary considerably among schools, there appear to be commonalities in the cultures of schools that experience success in their efforts to detrack" (Oakes & Lipton, 1992, p. 2). Important in this group of "commonalities" is the recognition that detracking brings "Alterations in teachers' roles and responsibilities, including changes in the way adults in the school work together" (Oakes & Lipton, 1992, p. 2).

Cultural change may produce competing interpretations among members in the organization of what events that create or are produced by change mean. In such cases alternative meanings and understandings arise and are shared by individuals. These understandings may represent a contra definition of the situation or different solution to an organization's problem. These "latent cultures" (Becker & Geer, 1960), further discussed in Chapter Three, are based upon shared interpretations and meanings, and may reflect latent identities that the individual members carry

into the organization from outside or which are generated by the process of change taking place in the organization.

While not the direct subject of this research, students remain a constant back drop in the scenario of organizational change. After all, it was for the students of Pioneer that the changes in the way the school was organized were initiated. Changes intended to better the educational experience of students have also had an equally tremendous impact on the faculty. Student and faculty lives are linked to events in the school because the meanings that faculty create among themselves and the interpretations they make of their activities and those of others stem from interaction with or about students.

Culture and Change: New Meanings of Faculty Relationships

Restructuring means altering the way relationships in a school are organized. The move to detracking provided the substance and power to restructuring not only student-student relationships or faculty-student relationships but also faculty-faculty relationships at Pioneer. Those alterations in the social fabric of the school produced further cultural change and at the same time were fueled by the on going cultural reformation. New interpretations have been created among the members of the faculty which serve to bring new meanings to the identities that teachers at the school use to describe themselves.

Data Analysis in Chapters Five, Six and Seven presents a powerful view of the changes in the shared working culture and social relationships that have taken place during the past six years of heterogeneous grouping at Pioneer. Each chapter speaks to related, yet, unique redefinitions of social and professional roles. While these changes have been building and percolating through the culture at Pioneer for six years, they remained publicly unacknowledged. It was during the past eighteen months, a time I call the "crucible", that Pioneer's attempts at change became very public. During this time the staff could themselves recognize that deep change in the culture of their school had taken place. As Michael Fullan suggests, "it isn't that people resist change as much as they don't know how to cope with it" (Fullan, 1991, p. xiii). Each of these three chapters presents how the staff of one school struggled to cope with new ways of organizing relationships in their school. They provide the strands which are tied together in the final analysis chapter.

The Changing Metaphor of Family

Pioneer is a small school and as Fowler and Walberg suggest "Small schools differ from large schools in terms staff interaction, may be friendlier institutions, capable of involving staff and students psychologically in their educational purposes" (Fowler & Walberg, 1991, p. 200). The veteran staff are not only experienced educators but

many have a long and ingrained history at the school. There is a sense of familiarity that one would expect among such a group. The close knit feelings have long existed not only between faculty members but also in the connections that link faculty and students. Clearly, the metaphor of "family" applies when describing the relationships in the school. It carries weight and important symbolic meaning. The metaphor presents a background and a means for understanding how members of the faculty view the relationships they share with the people they work with.

While it is important to recognize the importance of the "small school" in creating a sense of familiarity among an educational staff, it is equally important to underscore that familiarity does not insure any lessening of the intensity of cultural change that comes from restructuring. The closeness of the small school may make the process of school change all the more powerful and accentuate internal conflicts. At Pioneer there has been a change in the perspectives shared by many faculty. The argument presented in Chapter Five clearly demonstrates that the once very "social family" which was a driving force that bonded faculty in the security that can come with familiarity has been redefined. The new definition of working relationships at Pioneer is now one of a self described "professional family". Such a redefinition conveys a powerful message and is highly symbolic of the changes that have taken place in

the organization of the school. Not all faculty are comfortable with such a change and a few wish to go back to the past; a time they view as a more "friendly" and "social family" shared by the faculty at the school.

At the same time the relationships that exist in the school between students and teachers have become closer. In fact, many faculty describe a stronger sense of "family" with students than in the past. This on going dialogue, an integral part of the processes that frame the culture of a school, traces a path back to the adopting of heterogeneous grouping as a policy at the school by the Pioneer faculty.

Professional Culture, Manifest and Latent Cultures

While the faculty at Pioneer has moved more toward a self described "professional family" that move has given rise to and been based upon the development of a "professional culture" at the school. Chapter Six addresses the changes in the dialogue of teachers from nonacademic issues to a growing emphasis on classroom strategies and school wide practice. That sense of a "professional culture" has served to encourage many Pioneer faculty to experiment and restructure their own teaching strategies and to share their work with peers through the informal, yet very powerful, dialogue of the "teachers" (faculty) room. The developing concept of "professionalism" among teachers has reached outside the school to the professional world beyond. Pioneer teachers found encouragement to

present their work to a growing and interested audience of educators. Many at Pioneer began to find that they had "ownership" of their professional work. That sense of empowerment continued to include ownership of professional knowledge that, in the eyes of many, was long denied the rank and file teacher working in a small rural public school.

The work in Chapter Six suggests links between the rising professional culture at the school to the necessary readjustment of teaching strategies for heterogeneous classes. Teachers needed to work beyond their own experience of teaching homogeneously grouped classes to creating strategies that involved all students in heterogeneous classes. Many teacher had to effectively deal with altering the frame of their classes from a "teacher centered" format to one that was "student centered". Such changes in teaching strategies often involved individual rethinking and redefining of personal goals and expectations on the part of the teachers regarding the classes they were teaching.

Not all faculty have supported the idea of a professional culture at the school. The events chronicled in Chapter Six also tell about the development of a latent culture among the faculty. The concept of latent culture offers an alternative explanation to the world of the school. It is based in the meanings that are created,

shared and affirmed by those who do not agree with the existing definitions supplied by a culture agreed to by the majority. While there may be more than one latent culture found in an organization (and such cultures may well have strength within the organization to varying degrees) each may well present a contrary view to manifest or publicly accepted "ways of doing things" or of "solving problems" encountered by the organization.

Members of an organization who agree with sets of contrary interpretations provided by and shared with others represent a latent culture. Those who find such an agreement may share "latent identities" that are produced within an organization in change or may well represent common prior life experiences. Examples of situations that help develop latent identities among teachers may include experiences shaped by teacher training and/or long term work in a particular discipline, occupying a social place in a school undergoing change, or a personal commitment to a particular philosophy or perspective.

It is also important to recognize that while an understanding of the manifest and latent cultures found in an organization is integral to analysis of those organizations, there is no value judgement which should be applied to any culture whether termed manifest or latent. As the work of Chapter Six suggests, latent cultures are phenomena of any organization and essential to

understanding any collective of individuals contemplating or participating in the process of reorganization. It is important to acknowledge that members of an organization comprise and advocate alternative explanations of a social reality based on their own interpretations. Meanings which do not follow the "party line" of the organization carry weight within any organization and to any analysis of organizational change.

A Note About Heterogeneous Grouping and a Faculty

The Pioneer faculty's work toward teaching to heterogeneous classes is present throughout this work. Pioneer had gone through a period of detracking and its teachers had been working at altering their teaching styles from ones which met the needs of traditionally grouped homogeneous classes now, in the course of a year, filled with mixed ability students. The changes in faculty culture addressed in Chapters Five through Eight took place after the school began the process of restructuring. Whether directly in view or in the subtle background, the issue of detracking surrounds the events at Pioneer and influences both the individual and shared realities of the faculty.

Originally, the change to heterogeneous grouping at Pioneer was seen as an issue which would affect students. There was no plan for further faculty changes nor was there the expectation that such a restructuring in the meanings created and shared by members of the faculty would occur.

Yet, as the climate in many classrooms began to be altered with the quickening pace of restructuring so did the relationships that framed the dialogue of the teachers in the school.

The Question of Leadership

Pioneer teachers found themselves responsible for creating new approaches to teaching their subject matter. Reality was being constructed by staff members (See for example Anderson, 1990). In a sense, the work at rewriting curriculum offered teachers the opportunity of assuming an expert status. When the interest in the school from educators on the outside began to grow, it was clear that many on the faculty were empowering themselves as experts. That is a title and a position not often publicly given to school teachers. In such an environment models of traditional leadership could not effectively address the needs of the faculty. Chapter Seven looks at the redefinition of leadership and decision making roles. For example, teachers being recognized as experts in their fields by their peers outside of Pioneer brought into question the traditional role of administrator as evaluator when the administrator did not possess such expert status. Similarly, other teachers began to demand a place in the decision making process at the school, trying to gain control over their professional lives. The changes the school's faculty were living through caused many to

question the roles they and others played in the school and to seek some redefinition of those roles in the organization. At times unofficial accommodations were made between faculty and administrators and it was clear which province belonged to whom. At other times the lines blurred.

School leaders are faced with a myriad of demands from those in the organization. Many demands are conflicting. A school in change can magnify and increase the strains placed on an administrative framework. As roles are redefined within the organization new demands are created. Not all teachers, or administrators for that matter, find themselves experiencing change to the same degree. For some individuals, social change moves too fast while for others much too slowly. The deep cultural changes that can come with restructuring efforts in a school can require, as is brought out in Chapter Seven, negotiating and redefining of the meaning of leadership.

The Crucible: A Time of Intense Change

The last data analysis chapter contained in this work presents a view of a small school becoming a "crucible of change". It chronicles a time in which the issues of change addressed in earlier chapters are threaded together in a tapestry of organizational life. This chapter connects perceptions of cultural change with actual day-to-day events. In a sense it comprises a separate volume or

section in the album of this work yet at the same time it is an integral component of the overall manuscript.

The changes that began at Pioneer with restructuring to a format of heterogeneous grouping grew in both actual and symbolic intensity during a period of approximately eighteen months. The issues addressed in Chapter Five, the rise of a professional family, in Chapter Six, the growing professional culture, and in Chapter Seven, leadership and decision making, were magnified during this time. The time of the "crucible" forced the staff to deal and cope with accelerating cultural redefinitions. The divisions between a manifest and latent culture became apparent, public and passionate.

The speed of change and the on rush of events made the environment for the educators at the school a crucible. The focus of Chapter Eight is on how the events that took place at Pioneer during the last year addressed by this research served as powerful reminders of how far the restructuring at the school had come and about how profoundly affected by heterogeneous grouping the staff had been.

It was during this time that the staff at Pioneer not only responded to the growing chorus of requests from other schools seeking assistance with their individual moves toward heterogeneous grouping, but took the initiative and offered their expertise to more than a thousand other educators from around the nation. At the same time Pioneer

faculty progressed from the stage of talking about further restructuring to actively setting up plans for taking the school in new directions.

The isolation that many teachers in many schools live with throughout their careers was being replaced at Pioneer with a celebration of teaching. With the opening of the school to the public audience of national educators, the symbolic message of change was accentuated. Each event brought new and powerful meanings to faculty about who they were as a collective staff and about what it meant at both a personal and professional level to be a teacher.

Change became ingrained in the culture of Pioneer. At times it became difficult to distinguish whether the processes of change were forcing further redefinitions and sweeping the faculty of Pioneer along instead of those same processes being controlled by the school's educators. Chapter Eight also presents the perspectives of those at Pioneer as they reflect upon their professional culture. It offers the view of a small school's close knit staff trying to address issues such as latent identities and latent cultures. This chapter ultimately is about a group of educators coming to grips with the realization that they were now in a world full of new meanings and new realities, as many of their students had also been discovering.

The Personal Meaning of School Restructuring

Throughout this work there is the underlying current of the "humanness" of educational change. Restructuring and altering the organizational arrangements in schools from tracked models to heterogenous groups involves and affects people. It is not an abstract exercise. Neither is it a mechanistic activity. To successfully restructure and detrack schools and to expect those schools to be productive places where learning takes place one must take into account the perceptions of those who live and work in those schools.

The concept of heterogeneous grouping conveys powerful images for many individuals within and outside of education. It is important to recognize that the images held by some may not agree with the viewpoints and conclusions of others. To detrack a school is to enter into new, and at times, highly charged territory. For some detracking is a political issue. For others it is a more profound moral issue. In both cases it can carry important meanings as it does for those at Pioneer.

There is more to this case study than merely a look at detracking. It holds a valid insight into the processes of cultural change in an organization charged and entrusted with a specific mission of importance to the future, as schools are. There is the sense running through this work that one must look deeper, beyond the surface and actual

events that are part of the change process and focus on the tacit and what some may consider the mundane, if one is to understand how a faculty of a small school struggles to make sense of changes in their working worlds. It is essential to acknowledge that there may well be much more to the social reality of an organization than a single vision.

There is also the acknowledgment inherent in this research that to understand the meaning of changes in a school one needs to address the conflict that can come with cultural change. That conflict is grounded in the words, thoughts, and actions of the members of the organization. Only in the most hypothetical of utopian worlds or in the most fictional of totalitarian states would one find descriptions of social collectives that shared a single culture which was based upon the total agreement of the collective's members. If heterogeneity democratizes schools and if the community of a school replicates the larger society one would expect to find visible and essential differences. It is important to recognize that two cultures can and do exist simultaneously in the same organization. The concept of manifest and latent cultures are clear in the voices and observations that frame this research. In the most totalitarian of schools the shared meanings that frame the latent culture and the identities of those who share the latent culture remain in the realm of the tacit.

In the openness of the democratic school in which the process of cultural change is up front and in the open, the symbolic power of alternative cultures can't help but be recognized.

Intrinsic to the concept of a latent culture is the appreciation that there are alternative interpretations of events the members of the organization encounter and that there are alternative solutions to the problems that the members of the organization face. These "anti-theses" are built upon separate constructs of meaning generated and shared by members of the organization. Those meanings may come from the "latent identities" developed in social and/or learning experiences from before entry into the organization or from social life within the organization itself. While it is not in the scope of this work to present a psycho-social analytic profile of those sharing the meanings of the latent culture and of the background factors which might also be included as comprising latent identities (as well as of those sharing the meanings of what is manifest) it is important to acknowledge that such positions are prevalent and essential to any understanding of the cultural change that an organization such as Pioneer has seen.

Toward the Study

This work about Pioneer offers a qualitative case study of a small school in which the faculty has produced

some exceptional achievements. While some aspects of the school due to its size and setting may be considered unique in some circles, it does represent a vast number of schools across the nation. In that sense, it is highly representative. An analysis of the events at Pioneer also offers an opportunity to add to the debate surrounding the restructuring movements toward detracking, teacher empowerment and professional development. There are lessons that come from analysis of the Pioneer experience that can well be appreciated by educators representing the spectrum of public schools. This study of the Pioneer faculty has a lot to offer to those contemplating bringing change to their own educational organizations. The story Pioneer already shared with practicing educators from across the nation has equal impact for those studying school based change. Its experience adds to and complements the knowledge base addressing the process of restructuring schools. As a study of Pioneer offers but one more voice to a growing body of literature, the many voices of those at Pioneer offer words to those contemplating change in their own schools.

CHAPTER II

PIONEER VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL: AN OVERVIEW OF A SCHOOL AND STAFF

The Research Site and Its Population

Pioneer Valley Regional School sits on the top of a hill overlooking an old New England valley. Driving along the main highway, a visitor can quickly miss the nondescript green and white sign that announces "Pioneer Valley Regional School, Next Left". No one has asked for one that is louder. But that in itself is a reflection about the world for teachers and students at Pioneer.

The countryside is what determines life here, or so its possible to imagine. Tall hills ring the valley. Major highways need climbing lanes. The land is covered by trees both hardwood and pine. Occasional farms dot the hillsides while large corn fields line the valley floor. The school's drive is opposite the large and highly visible entrance to a prestigious private school that is world known. Again the small Pioneer sign seems to reflect the differences between the prestige and clout of private education over what our public schools offer.

Pass the gate and the black top drive is painted with a sign that says, "Welcome to Panther Country". On the uphill climb of the road the spacing of large yellow "paw" prints glare up from the asphalt. The buildings that make up the Pioneer campus come into view. They are spread out

and, though looking ten years old, have over thirty years of use. There is no graffiti painted on the walls. There is only a sign in dull silver letters saying "Pioneer Valley Regional School".

The buildings are low with a large amount of glassed space and spread out in a series of wings that fit in with the rustic hillsides. The row of parking spaces in front of the school hold cars and trucks that could belong to either the teachers or the students. All in all, Pioneer Valley Regional School would seem as if it were an all too typical high school in any town, and maybe even a bit below the average. It would be hard to imagine from its outward appearance on the drive in that the staff and students of Pioneer are at the cutting edge of national educational reform and are models for hundreds of other educators. From first impressions it would not be apparent that the staff of this small rural school have taken the roller coaster ride that comes with radical changes in the way a school is organized. What is even more important is that the staff themselves are the impetus behind the changes in the school.

The School

Pioneer Valley Regional School, located in Northfield, Massachusetts is a unique grade 7-12 public school of approximately 400 students. There are four towns that feed students into Pioneer and as of late more than 15 students

from other towns are paying tuition to attend the school. All of the towns are rural without any heavy industry. Farming, logging and agriculture in general provide some jobs. Small businesses and service work offer other employment. A number of people work at the large private school in one of the towns but for many, work means going outside the regional school district.

As one can imagine, funding seems to be a constant source of concern because the school is dependent upon the property tax and its base is residential or agricultural. This is not a rich area. The county the school is located in has a history of high unemployment. Though there are extremes of wealth and poverty, most families fall into the lower end of the economic spectrum. People in the towns did not move to the area for their children to attend Pioneer Valley. There are always voices in the towns complaining about the "high tax rate".

The Students

Pioneer's student population is representative of the towns in which they live. Slightly more than 10 percent are classified as Special Needs and follow an Individual Educational Plan. More than 16 percent receive reduced or free lunches, though not all those eligible take advantage of the opportunity. About four in ten students come from families that contain only one of their original parents.

The students who attend Pioneer complain that "there is always nothing to do" because their "town is so small". Most think that the county seat, located about fifteen miles away and having about 25,000 people, is where "there is something to do". For most Pioneer students, finding "something to do" depends upon how old you are, if you have a driver's license, and if you have a car or a friend who has one.

Because of its size, Pioneer students tend to know everyone in their class, if not the entire school. This year's senior class is representative of the school and yet is unique. It is the first class to have been heterogeneously grouped for all six years of education the school offers. The class of 1991 has 46 graduates, two of whom are foreign exchange students, though two members of the class graduated early. More than eighty five percent of the seniors have been in school together for at least five years and over eighty percent have been together for the full six years (SSRT, 1991). Many were also together in the much smaller elementary schools (for example one school sent four seventh graders to Pioneer one year) for seven years before coming to Pioneer (Nowicki, 1991c). For many students, the move from elementary school to Pioneer is one of monstrous proportions as many students fear "getting lost" in the "big school" among "all those other kids from all those other towns".

The last few years have seen somewhat of a change in that the junior high classes have grown larger and larger. This year's entering seventh grade has more than 90 students, almost doubling the size of the senior class. The students from other towns who are paying tuition to attend Pioneer have brought some new and different faces to the school.

Yet, the school remains a close knit place where both teachers and students know each other. It is a place "to be" for many. The school is a place to socialize, for some it breaks the isolation that can come with rural life (some students catch the school bus at 6:30 am to get to school by 7:50), for others Pioneer is a safe haven from a troubled or impoverished family, and for everyone Pioneer is a place where they are known by their first names. At one point during the past school year, before the number of sports and extracurricular activities were reduced due to budget cuts, Pioneer lead the state in percentage of students involved in after-school sports. More than half of Pioneer students are involved in multiple activities, to the point where many students have seen the need to resort to using appointment books as the only means for keeping their lives organized. I coach a Law Team at the school and can testify to meetings in which twelve students and myself negotiate for what seems like hours with our appointment books in front of us trying to find a common time to hold a

future practice. In this year's senior class of forty-six, all have been involved in some activity during their four years of high school and almost three fourths have been involved in more than one activity. To say that the school is a large part of a student's life would be a gross understatement. For many, Pioneer and what it represents, is their life.

The sense of "closeness" at the school has its trade offs. Privacy is sacrificed at times along with anonymity. A student who states her or his views about politics, worldwide, town-wide or school-wide can easily find themselves at front and center stage. At Pioneer it is not easy to hide.

The last five years have seen changes among Pioneer students. More are now taking the big step and applying to colleges, both two and four year. Many are discovering, while at Pioneer, that there is life after high school. More than 75 percent of the current seniors are planning to continue their education next year. This compares with about 60 percent from six years ago. Many of the 1991 class applied to and were accepted at some of the nation's top ranked public and private colleges and universities. Their career directions span the continuum of scholarship and include the natural and social sciences as well as education and the fine arts. Pioneer students now have a number of their school mates from prior classes at various

colleges. Those students serve as models and as resources for current Pioneer students. There is now a growing tradition that Pioneer students can succeed in college and a continuing and growing list of PVRS students yearly attending top ranked and highly competitive schools.

That tradition has not fully transcended to all those living in the towns that make up the region. For some, the rural tradition is at odds with college educations. For others an opportunity for higher education is second to a job and a wage. As one wag on the Pioneer staff stated, "the way things usually work out is that the kids who go off to college leave for good. The kids who were angry from the start and hated school no matter what we did for them (and Pioneer as in any place where almost four hundred adolescents meet every day has its share of those who are non-believers in schooling) stay around and vote down our budgets."

In general, Pioneer remains a close-knit place for students. It may be closer knit now than it was six years ago. There is a feeling in the school that begins to resemble family. It is a place where students know the chief and veteran custodian as "Uncle Jack". It is a place where the part time school nurse and office secretary care for hurts and sickness that began the night before. Pioneer is a place that is secure and safe for its students. It is a school that may have "too many rules" yet at the same

time has a problem with students not wanting to leave. It is a school that all too often has graduates returning when "back in town" as substitute teachers, assisting with a school activity or even serving a practicum as student teachers. The strong bonds created at Pioneer are hard to break for those who have lived through the experience. It is a community as well as a school.

The Faculty

There are currently 41 full- and part-time professional staff members at Pioneer including title personnel, classroom aides, administrators, library-media staff, guidance services staff, and classroom teachers. The school also employs two full-time secretaries, an office aide, three custodians, and a school nurse whose position is shared with the elementary schools.

The professional staff are for the most part a group of veterans. The thirty-six teachers and administrators interviewed averaged 18.74 years of work in education with 12.73 years spent at Pioneer. Three staff members had been in education for more than thirty years and 9 had spent more than 20 years at Pioneer. These figures compare with state wide figures reporting that "36 percent of Massachusetts teachers had been in education for more than 20 years and an additional 41 percent of the Commonwealth's teachers had worked in schools for more than ten years" (Bay State Teacher, 1991). The Pioneer teachers include 3

people who have spent their entire careers at the school and four who left careers in the world of public education only to begin again at Pioneer. Ten of the 36 staff interviewed live in one of the towns served by the district. All but two of those interviewed are tenured in the Pioneer district though they may have been tenured in another system before coming to the school. It is important to note for the purposes of this study that 14 Pioneer staff members, including teachers and administrators, have been at Pioneer six years or less.

About half of the Pioneer staff have advanced degrees in education or a specific subject area. This compares with "53 percent of the state's teachers holding a master's degree" (Bay State Teacher, 1991). A few members of Pioneer's staff have multiple degrees. Two staff members are currently involved as students in graduate programs though others have recently completed advanced programs. Two other staff members are also instructors in programs of teacher education at the undergraduate and graduate level. Pioneer teachers are not unique in educational background or overall teaching experience. Nor are they different in age. Like their counterparts from around Massachusetts, the median age of a teacher at Pioneer is going up.

Though Pioneer is a highly departmentalized school, it does not have formal department chairs. Instead, head teachers carry out the traditional functions of department

chairs without the responsibility for evaluating individual teacher performance. Head teachers represent all the subject areas of this comprehensive junior-senior high school. The head teachers meet monthly with the principal and some on the staff consider them to be a policy making body, while others would not necessarily agree with that statement. Head Teachers are paid an additional stipend for their titles and duties, and with the exception of one department, have all held their positions for the past six years. It is interesting to note that the actual push toward changes at Pioneer have never been initiated by the formal "head teachers" and at times during the past hectic year, changes have been opposed by that committee.

Pioneer teachers work under a contract that places them at the lower range of teacher salaries. The maximum step in the teachers contract is about four thousand dollars less than an average salary reported for all the state's teachers. There are no formal clauses in the existing contract that are unique or place the faculty at Pioneer at the forefront of educational change and restructuring.

The past two years have seen a loss of five positions due to budget cuts. While two of the cuts in staff have come from teachers retiring and positions not being filled, others in the classroom support staff have not been rehired. The fear among staff for the future is that the

next round of cuts will consume active tenured faculty either through reductions based upon certification and seniority or by the elimination of whole programs. In a small school, with an actual in-classroom staff of about thirty, cuts in staff directly relate to class size. While currently there are small classes of 10 to 15 students, other classes are much larger with 28 to 30 students. The large classes often fill an existing classroom space. The current fiscal problems faced by those at the school (the result of promised state funding being held back after it was budgeted for and the subsequent hesitation of townsfolk to make up the difference through their property taxes) have served, as one teacher commented, to be "a black cloud...just behind everyone's head....it doesn't help to make a relaxed atmosphere". The budget problems have served as a constant back drop to other events at the school.

Administrators

The school is administered by a veteran principal, who was once a teacher in the system, an assistant principal with only a few years experience at Pioneer, and a district superintendent, relatively (in Pioneer terms) new to the job. Previous superintendents had histories of almost twenty years of service to the school district. The administrative style at the school can best be described as low key rather than authoritative and dictatorial though

the administrators are very visible in the school. As they traditionally have, the administrators remain the evaluators and the immediate supervisors of the classroom staff.

The School Committee

The school committee that oversees the operation of the district has a general history of supporting those who work and learn at Pioneer both in policy decisions and as, though not vocal, advocates for financial support for the school. The Pioneer board does not manifest the political infighting that is all-too-common in those overseeing the public sector of education today. Too often the committee's support for the school has been pitted against those detractors from the towns who feel that "teachers are always overpaid" that "teachers don't work hard enough" and "never do a decent job" or that there is "always a sizable amount of waste in any education budget" in spite of evidence to the contrary.

While the school committee has been for the most part supportive of what goes on in the school it has also kept out of the actual internal operation of Pioneer. Its members have, more often than not, been put in the position of reacting to events from outside the school rather than initiating programs and action for Pioneer. The school committee negotiates contracts with the teachers; teachers who often live in the same small towns. It has made

difficult decisions about which sports to eliminate (in a school where participation is extremely high) because of budget cuts, yet it remains generally positive about the school. In past years the superintendent functioned as a de facto committee member, working for the committee and against the teachers. The past few years have seen that attitude replaced with administrators being middle people in a more cooperative relationship between teachers, administrators and committee members.

On the surface, Pioneer Valley Regional school appears common and ordinary. It seems to represent the typical American Public School, with all the associated problems facing educators today. The students, faculty, and others who spend most of their working day in the building or care about what takes place at Pioneer tend to appear ordinary. It is an image of what one might come to expect from a small, rural, public junior senior high school.

Dig beneath the layer of what first comes to view and Pioneer begins to look like a very different place. A deeper look at the history of the school over the past seven years and one can follow the faculty and students on their path of restructuring. Focus on the events of the past year and Pioneer becomes a place that has invited national interest in what has taken place. It has been the site of powerful and important contributions to those interested in the teaching of junior and senior high school

students and in the process of restructuring our schools. Pioneer is also a place of high emotion, drama, and conflict as well as enormous cooperation between a staff that has and is desperately struggling to keep up with the processes and culture of change. It is often a race with what the staff itself has and continues to create.

A Chronology of a School Staff and Change

The descriptions of the physical plant of Pioneer and of the student and staff populations that learn within it do not fully depict the school and its efforts toward restructuring. Beyond the surface facts and figures describing Pioneer are events that underscore and give meaning to the profound cultural changes taking place in the organization. The following chronology of activities provide the social drama and background necessary for any analysis of teachers and change.

During the mid 1970's the staff at Pioneer experimented with a format of "mini courses". These mini courses took place during designated weeks of the fall and spring. The courses were taught by staff members and offered a wide variety of experiential learning experiences, ranging from mountain climbing in the Maine wilderness, to motor cross racing, to any of a number of non-traditional school activities. Pioneer, according to one veteran staff member, "was in a place at the top as far

as innovation went." The teacher went on to add that "the school was probably one of the best around."

The mini course format was dropped due to a district-wide administrative decision concerning the cost of the program and liability protection. Not all staff were in favor of the program because some teachers viewed the activities as "not academic enough and too physical". Teachers left in the years that followed to find other teaching jobs or to leave the profession all together. Some left with the passing of proposition 2 1/2, the tax limiting law that caused major reductions in the staff of schools across the Commonwealth including Pioneer. Restructuring efforts at the school were at a standstill during the next few years.

For the 1985-1986 school year, Pioneer Valley Regional School, which once rigidly tracked students by arbitrary measures of ability, initiated a program of heterogeneously grouping classes. The move was the product of intensive efforts by a small core of staff members and was a truly "bottom up" example of changing a school. For a number of years voices from faculty members had advocated a more equitable way of grouping students. That desire to move away from homogeneously grouped classes brought issues of fairness and learning directly in front of the entire faculty. Advocates of heterogeneous grouping found support on an existing curriculum committee and continued to press

the issue of detracking the school. The more the group focused on the issue of detracking the school, the more interest was generated. Speakers and experts were brought in from a local university and the staff seriously began to grapple with the decision to restructure their school. What they didn't realize was that a change in the way students were grouped was in fact a powerful form of restructuring the entire school.

Not all staff were in favor of a move away from the homogeneous format for such a move threatened the way they had been doing their jobs for many years. Many felt that such a move was harmful to students who "needed the advantages of being grouped by ability". Support for such a move was not coming from administration above the level of building principal. Backing from the school committee was lukewarm at best. There was never vocal and unanimous agreement for detracking the school from any voices outside Pioneer.

Finally a vote was taken by the faculty (although there was some confusion as to the formality of the vote) about whether or not classes at the school should become heterogeneously grouped. The result was in favor of detracking and some educators then went to the parents and school committee with the decision. Though there was some hesitancy and quiet opposition to heterogeneous grouping expressed by a few parents and school committee members the

full school committee agreed that changes could be made in the way students were grouped in classes. Their decision was to try the policy for one year with an evaluation to determine if it was to be continued.

A consultant from a nearby university had recommended that the process of detracking take place one grade level at a time beginning with the seventh grade. A compromise of sorts was worked out with individual departments for that first year. In one case an elective class was guaranteed for students in grades nine to twelve that wanted to "be challenged". The advice of the consultant was rejected and within a year the department which wanted a special elective class had dropped the idea in favor of total heterogeneity. Ready for it or not, the teachers found that their school had been transformed from a tracked school to one that grouped students heterogeneously in the course of a summer. Pioneer teachers had begun a process in their school that would be far ahead of the rest of a nation only just beginning to think about restructuring, school-based change, or heterogeneous grouping.

The teachers at Pioneer had altered the structure of their school. What seemed like a simple decision, in spite of the intensive and complex efforts to adopt a policy of school change, would be put to the test during the next five years as it became obvious that votes do not detrack a school; what takes place in the classrooms does. Pioneer

teachers began to rethink what they did as teachers. That rethinking translated to new practices in their classrooms. There was no source to go to for expert advise. Teachers began to experiment with their own curriculum. If heterogeneous grouping was to work, it was the teachers who had to make it work.

Treated as independent and professional by the current building administration, teachers used the sanctity of their classrooms to redesign what it was they did. The push to improve instruction was not on the surface competitive, but did not follow the teacher-head teacher-principal chain of command. Most often, individual educators were the leaders of restructuring at Pioneer. At Pioneer what some considered "a lack of educational leadership", because it wasn't following the traditional chain of command, turned out to be a blessing. Individual teachers began to blossom.

The faculty at Pioneer had always been a close and social group. It was common to have work relationships in school and recreational relationships outside of school. There was a sense of care and concern by teachers for teachers. That feeling was also extended by the administration to the faculty and from the faculty to the students. For example, the Principal sent birthday cards to new staff while at the same time using the political clout of an office to make sure that new faculty "knew who was in control". The symbolic importance of such a gesture was

magnified because the school was small. It stressed the importance of accomodation and cooperation for all to see. Pioneer does not now and didn't then offer places to hide.

Confrontations were avoided with those faculty members who were termed "closet trackers". Three years after heterogeneous grouping it was estimated by one faculty member that 80 percent of PVRS classes had been detracked. The other 20 percent were homogeneously grouped. In other words, there were faculty against the move to heterogeneous grouping but who silently went along with the move because they were out voted or felt threatened if they expressed their own feelings. The culture at Pioneer allowed the split in philosophy to exist. The administration's line was to encourage those who tried new strategies and techniques while supposedly discouraging those who directly advocated against heterogeneous grouping. That policy lead to the emergence of two philosophically different groups among the faculty and of a subtle change in the social fabric of faculty relationships.

The change to heterogeneous grouping, a policy statement on the surface, seemed to be producing major shifts in the educational perspectives of many staff members and in the way teachers were teaching in their classrooms. It became clear that heterogeneous classes could not be taught in the same way as homogeneous classes had been. The more teachers worked on their professional

performance, the more empowered they became and the more they began to take charge of their lives as educators. Seventh grade core teachers requested a common planning period and formed a "Seventh Grade Team" using their own time. The team then began to develop a procedure which gave every seventh grader an unofficial educational plan which was reviewed weekly. Again using their own time and the philosophy that "home work is a privilege to do at home" created the SOS program (Supervision of Study) which paired students with seventh grade teachers to assist students with completing and understanding work. Other teachers fresh from the constant up-grading, and in some instances overhaul, of their curriculums were encouraged to apply for mini grants which the school began to receive. It would not be long before some teachers began to stretch and finally break some of the professional boundaries that constrain almost every public school teacher.

One Year in Focus

The impetus to further the spirit of restructuring at Pioneer, which had been simmering quietly in classrooms since the shift to heterogeneous grouping, grew to a life of its own during the course of the 1989-1990 school year. After listening to reports from Pioneer teachers who had just returned from a major Northeastern conference, I turned to another teacher and suggested, "We should hold our own conference. It seems we're ahead of most of the

presentations that our teachers go to". The other teacher nodded and said, "That's a good idea. Why don't you tell the superintendent? See what he'd say."

The following September a group of teachers met after school in an empty classroom to discuss their ideas about special projects for the young school year. The results were startling. Events that followed reinforced a message that teachers as well as administrators could be leaders in initiating school-wide programs and policy.

The Parent Teacher Organization and The Educational Fair

That fall a few teachers initiated a fledgling parent-teacher organization. The organization, known now as the Parent-Teacher Partnership, is still slowly growing but is now an active group trying to deal with the immense apathy toward public education among the general public.

Plans were set, under the direction of one teacher in particular, to host an "Educational Fair" in which students and faculty would showcase the process and products of their labors for the townspeople. The "Educational Fair", held in early May 1990, involved everyone in one way or another from the school and from the Parent Teacher Partnership. The Fair was very ambitious and successful at bringing parents into the school by previous Pioneer standards.

The "Derailing the Tracked School" Conference

Two weeks later, in May 1990, the Conference Committee's work from the previous seven months came to fruition with "The Derailing The Tracked School Conference". It was a very special day in which 275 educators from schools in six states came to Pioneer for a day hosted and presented by the Pioneer Valley Regional Staff. Twenty-four Pioneer teachers served as presenters in the professional conference that resulted in calls from ten states and a waiting list of more than 150 educators wanting to attend.

It was an amazing day that celebrated what Pioneer teachers were doing in their classrooms and how teachers and administrators worked together to bring in-house school restructuring. The conference included two representative panels of Pioneer students who reflected on their experiences with heterogeneous grouping. The principal, a member of the conference committee, suggested that business cards be prepared for all Pioneer staff and then wondered aloud if "I might now lose my teachers?"

It became clear that as a school, Pioneer was out in front of the wave of interest in detracking spreading through school districts across the nation. Calls came from as far away as Iowa, Idaho and Washington State wanting more information from the little school on the hill. The evaluations of the conference asked for another in the

fall. Stories began to appear in the statewide press about the conference and the school (see Appendix E for a listing of broadcast and print media features about Pioneer's efforts toward detracking). A national television network featured Pioneer's students and teachers in a three part segment on schooling. A number of Pioneer teachers began to redefine who they were as professionals and what it meant to be a teacher. As one teacher said in the rush of euphoria that came at the conclusion of the conference day, "We can never go back again. This school will never be the same again". He was right. Many of the faculty were now seeing themselves in a different light.

The Journal

Teachers at the school also began publishing a semi annual journal, The Pioneer Practioner which addressed concerns about Heterogeneous Grouping, Cooperative Learning and School Change from a practioner's point of view. The first issue was completed during the summer of 1990 and featured articles written and edited by Pioneer staff members. It was a success for a first time venture with more than 150 subscribers.

Consultations and Visitations

The exposure of the school and staff through the conferences and later press reports brought immediate requests from educators to first visit the school and then to have Pioneer teachers serve as paid consultants to other

school districts during Pioneer school time (a partial listing of schools sending visitors to Pioneer and of schools hosting Pioneer staff as consultants is included in Appendix F). Some Pioneer teachers now had the opportunity to not only serve as consultants but be paid according to professional schedules outside of school. Some Pioneer staff found themselves traveling as far away as Iowa to consult for other school systems. The faculty found itself divided as it grappled with the practice of teacher consultants during school time. Obviously there was no established policy and both teachers and administrators were forced to come to some agreement about what should be done about requests for Pioneer teachers from other schools.

The "Derailing the Tracked School" Conference II

Less than a month after the first conference a decision needed to be made about a second conference. It was clear that any second conference held at Pioneer and hosted by Pioneer staff would be sold out. But for this conference, opposition grew from a small number of staff members voicing concern about issues such as "the problem with working the extra day" (for the first conference, the faculty voted to add a day to the school year) to concern that "some people were overwhelmed" to others who stated "I don't want to have anything to do with this. I didn't really want the first conference and I found myself

assigned to a job. I surely don't want this one." The faculty then voted 28 to 7 to host another conference the following November.

That conference again had Pioneer staff as presenters in addition to students and parents. Once more the school was filled with educators and also students and parents from eight states. The results were similar and included more requests to visit the school and for teacher consultants to serve other schools. The conference also attracted state-wide newspaper and television attention toward the school.

The Staff Development Fund

The surplus monies generated by both conferences were placed in the Staff Development Fund to be applied to by Pioneer faculty for professional development. A committee was elected and later organized to set up guidelines for the dispersal of funds and began to consider requests for funding.

Continuing the Thrust Toward Educational Improvement

During this time period, the Pioneer staff continued to invent and redesign what they did in their classrooms. Teachers continued to be awarded mini grants for the school, to redesign curriculum, and to experiment with new ways of approaching course content, such as Social Studies and English teachers combining to teach a "Shakespeare and the Law" course as a non-paid overload sixth class.

Toward A Cultural Understanding

This chapter has presented an overview of a school in transition. While the staff and the school may initially appear average and rather typical, as a ride up the drive might suggest, the school is home to activities that could easily be considered radical to many educators. Such changes in the meanings that teachers brought to their work and took from their working conditions only begin to suggest that greater symbolic and cultural redefinitions were taking place. In the next chapter this work explores the rich tradition of scholarship advocating a cultural approach to understanding change in organizations such as schools.

CHAPTER III

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE LITERATURE

As earlier chapters have pointed out, this research addresses a number of topics common to those who teach in a school of today. It deals with issues of school based change and restructuring. At the heart of this work is the concept that restructuring efforts in an educational organization are related to important changes within the cultural processes of the organization even if those cultural changes were unintended or unplanned. For example, when a group of educators at the Pioneer Valley Regional School set about to move the school away from a rigidly tracked format based on ability groups, the intent was to improve the educational experience for all children at the school. In this case change, was initially seen as student centered and only impacting students. Faculty were not the central focus. But as this research suggests, students were not the only segment of the Pioneer population to live through the effects of change and to have their experiences at the school altered by it. The restructuring efforts aimed at the lives of students have had powerful effects on the faculty culture at Pioneer.

In the overall scope of this research a number of issues dealing with educational change are discussed. Many are currently being debated by people who work in schools

and by those who wish to further our understandings about the way we organize our schools. This chapter offers perspectives from the literature about the focal points of this research. These subjects include restructuring in schools, a cultural perspective to organizational analysis, and how changes in the structure of an organization relate to changes in the culture shared by the organization's members. The literature review also offers insights into issues such as heterogeneous grouping or detracking, empowering teachers, and of the role leadership plays in fostering school change. Germane to this research, these topics provide a constant background to this study of teachers and change.

There are many items on the educational agenda labeled "restructuring" (Glickman, 1991). Not all express interest in the same areas of education and not all issues discussed under the rubric of restructuring agree with each other. For example, there are some voices calling for student achievement based on a state-wide or even nation-wide curriculum while others argue for curriculum issues to remain with the particular local district or under the control of the individual classroom teacher. In other instances, voices advocate more teacher involvement in decision making while, still others, speak to the need for strong "top down" styles of leadership because teachers don't have the training or the time to deal with school or

district-wide decision making. The background issue of this study, tracking or ability based grouping, is also a heated topic that clearly is in the province of restructuring. Some critics demand "advanced" classes for "high ability" students. Their positions stress the need to separate students into ability based groups. Others reject such a notion and advocate greater heterogeneity in classrooms and for detracked schools.

While efforts at restructuring a school are central to this research, they are not the focal point. This work presents how a group of teachers deal with and make sense of changes and restructuring (that they initiated) in their lives as teachers. It is important to look at the overall processes that take place between and among faculty members in such a school situation.

Teachers are people engaged in a give and take process that includes both social and professional responsibilities. They work in a distinct setting where social relationships are formally and informally organized. Teachers work in a school, a place that occupies an important position in their own social lives. Teachers not only use the organization that is a school to help them "make sense" of their roles as classroom educators or of the larger perspective of being a "teacher" but also to make sense of themselves as working individuals. There is a sharing of definitions about social reality that flow back

and forth between those who work in schools. This process of exchange gives meaning to both an individual teacher and also to groups of teachers.

In a school the realities are multiple and limited only by the number of actors who are members of the school's working social life. Schools are places where numbers of people meet day after day and engage each other in a dialogue that carries meaning to everyone. That dialogue is framed in the socially agreed-to rules and meanings found in the culture of the school.

Changing the way a school is organized (Giaquinta, 1973; Sirotnik, 1989 & 1991; Smith, 1989; David, 1991) involves more than changing a mission statement or implementing a policy. Any change in the structure of a school requires a rethinking of meaning by each member of the school community (Fullan, 1985; Pickle, 1990; Little, 1982; Foster, 1991; Metz, 1988). School change, though similar to changes brought to any organization, is heightened and magnified -- it can take on moral overtones as there are those who view teaching as an essentially moral act -- (for examples see Rossman, et. al., 1988; Corbett, et. al., 1987) because the "serviced" population is so important and valued by not only the larger society but also the professional work force of the organization.

The "products" of our schools -- children -- simply cannot be measured in terms of profit or loss. Because of

the meanings their roles carry to themselves and to others, teachers can be powerfully influenced by changes in their work place (Nowicki, 1990a; Nowicki, 1991b). We entrust our collective future -- children -- to teachers' and administrators' care and expertise for almost two hundred days every year. Children as well as adults look to teachers and hold them accountable to roles that emphasize tougher standards than other professions. Teachers and administrators must deal with powerful expectations of what an educator should be from their students as well as from the general society. They share very public and very powerful identities. Teachers, as do all individuals, draw their identities (Stryker, 1959) to some degree from their working lives. Any changes made to the structure of an organization are important to the individuals that comprise that organization because individuals take some meaning (Sarason, 1982; Waller, 1932) from others in the organization. Changing a school involves changing the culture of that school.

The Research Tradition

A qualitative inquiry about a school and teaching follows a long tradition of educational and social research. Waller (1932), for example, reported about a teacher's (and administrator's) professional life in a school. Becker (1953) spoke about the life of a school teacher. Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss (1961) and

Becker, Geer, and Hughes (1968) utilized a qualitative approach to present and describe the creation of culture by those involved in educational organizations. Recently, Rossman, Corbett, and Firestone (1988) similarly adopted a qualitative approach to study Change and Effectiveness in Schools from a cultural perspective. The work of Metz (1978), Sizer (1985), Dichter (1989), Wolcott (1973) and Jackson (1968), among many others, present the realities of teachers working in classrooms and living part of their lives in schools. Each addresses the professional culture found in schools and what individual teachers face in their work. This tradition of educational research points to teachers, not only as integral actors, but also as audience in the drama that is the process of schooling.

As Erickson states "A basic assumption in interpretative theory of social organization is that the formal and informal social systems operate simultaneously, that is, persons in every day life take action together in terms of status and role" (Erickson, 1986, p. 128). The study of the professional staff in a school, transforming themselves as educators, transcends a mono-dimensional view of social process. As previous research suggests, those who work in schools exist in a complex social world. They practice their craft in a setting of multiple and simultaneous interactions and relationships. They are also tied to their organizations as those organizations are

reflective of them. The meeting ground of educator and organization becomes the on going process of culture.

Qualitative inquiry into and about the day to day life in an organization must be concerned with the cultural processes that take place within the organization; the "subjective, the symbolic, the tacit, and the normative" (Rossman et. al, 1988, p. 5). If the focal point of inquiry is about specific issues or policies or change in general, the inquiry must take into account the culture of the organization. Much the same as individuals reflect the culture that reflects them, any idea of an organization must take into account what constitutes its culture.

Culture

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz proposes two ideas central to an understanding of culture. He states that "culture is best seen as plans, recipes, rules, instructions" (Geertz, 1983, p. 233). For Geertz, the individual is the source of social action. He adds that "The move of social theory toward seeing social action as configuring meaning and conveying it, a move that begins in earnest with Weber and G. H. Mead, opens up a range of possibilities for explaining why we do the things we do in the way we do them far wider than that offered by pulls and pushes imagery of more standard views" (Geertz, 1983, p. 233). Geertz is presenting a view of culture that is grounded in human process. It is a perspective that speaks

directly to a study looking for an understanding of a the people working in a school and how they deal with change.

Sociologist Joel Charon adds to Geertz's view when he states "Culture arises in and is changed in interaction" (Charon, 1989, p. 169). Sheldon Stryker describes the process as resembling a "battle over whose and which conditions prevail as the basis for future interaction" (Stryker, 1980, p. 57). Charon states, "the battle is negotiation and culture is negotiated" (Charon, 1989, p. 169). This view of culture suggests that "Culture then is a shared perspective" (Charon, 1989, p. 166). Culture is constructed by the individual and by the group.

Sociologists Howard Becker and Blanche Geer offer a view of culture as a problematic result of collective action. Becker presents us with Sumner's (1907) idea that "culture is conceived as arising in response to some problem faced by a group" (Becker & Geer, 1960, p. 305). In a later work Becker goes on to describe culture as explaining "how people act in concert when they do share understandings" and that "it is thus a consequence of the existence of a group of acting people" (Becker, 1982, p. 515). The commonly created culture of an organization becomes a "resource people draw on in order to coordinate their activities" (Becker, 1982, p. 515). It is thus a negotiated consequence of the existence of a group of people acting together. Culture arises from and then gives

a frame to collective process. To study culture one must study processes bound in the exchange of symbols. That exchange incorporates the tacit and mundane of social life in an organization such as a school, as well as including the obvious and the dramatic. To study the culture of change in an organization, it is important to come to an understanding of the shared agreements and disputes that frame how culture and change are negotiated.

The "cultural" approach to understanding organizational life is part of an established tradition of scholarship whose current advocates include Bolman and Deal (1988), Birnbaum (1988), Smircich (1983), Erickson (1987), and Rossman et. al. (1988), among many others. Schein (1988) presents a definition of culture found in organizations as being "patterned, potent, and deeply embedded in people's thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. It provides an integrated perspective and meaning to situations; it gives group members a historical perspective and a view of their identity" (Schein, 1988, p. 44). Rossman, Firestone and Corbett suggest that "From a cultural perspective, organizational reality is viewed as pluralistic, subjective, and dynamic" (Rossman et. al, 1988, p. 5). Culture in an organization, such as a school, becomes member driven as well as a source for members to utilize for organizing their own day to day activities. As Rossman, Firestone and Corbett go on to add "Culture

becomes defined, then, as members react to, interpret, shape, and reinterpret the organization, its structure, processes, and events" (Rossman et. al, 1988, p. 5). Schools are vibrant places very much alive with and carrying the energy of many individuals.

Culture and Change

The social mix found in schools, given their mission, clients, and professional staff, creates cultures that are always in a process of change and redefinition as is any culture. Change is inherent in the very meaning of schooling and education. It is the intent of education to change individuals. We demand that our "students" learn and grow in our schools. We want, and expect, that our children not be the same in June as they were in September. Children are not only growing intellectually but also physically. They work their way through a series of educational steps based as much on age, body size and emotional maturity as on measures of educational "achievement" or "ability". At times we overemphasize the developmental importance of those categories.

Teachers find themselves confronting changes in their client population on an almost daily basis (Nowicki, 1991b). The changes brought to an organization, such as a school, through the normal ebb and flow of a school day can be powerful in themselves as teachers attempt to solve the myriad of problems that come with teaching many different

individuals. Change can become even more powerful when teachers begin to problem solve in terms of the mission and meaning of their organization. As Howard Becker states:

> A group finds itself sharing a common situation and common problems. Various members of the group experiment with possible solutions to those problems and report their experiences to their fellows. (1982, p. 521)

Becker's proposition is not unlike the situation Pioneer staff members found themselves confronting when they began to consider the grouping policy at the school as problematic for the organization. Listen further to the words Becker uses to describe the process of cultural change in an organization.

> In the course of their discussion, the members of the group arrive at a definition of the situation, its problems and possibilities, and develop a consensus as to the most appropriate and efficient ways of behaving. (1982, p. 521)

It is import to note that in Becker's view agreement may not be total and complete among all members of the organizational group. Consensus, in this view, is not based upon unanimity. He further states that:

> This consensus thenceforth constrains the activities of individual members of the group, who will probably act on it given the opportunity. In other words, situations provoke new behavior. The beginnings of a new shared culture thus come into play quickly and easily. (1982, p. 521)

Change in the culture of an organization is constant and ongoing. Yet, at the same time culture continues. At first this idea seems a paradox, but Becker continues his

discussion about organizational culture and change by stating:

> On one hand, culture persists and antedates the participation of particular people in it: indeed culture can be said to shape the outlooks of people who participate in it. But cultural understandings on the other hand, have to be reviewed and remade continually and in the remaking they change. This is not a true paradox because the understandings last because they change to deal with new situations. (1982, p. 54)

Becker's insights into organizational culture serve to provide a means to understanding the professional culture that teachers share. Presenting a view of teaching and the professional culture found in schools among educators, Myrna Cooper states that "A professional culture is not built solely out of an environment and tasks. It is also a product of the background of the individuals in the setting, and that background draws much from the communal experiences of the profession" (Cooper, 1988, p. 54). The work of Lieberman (1988) and Miller (1988) also suggests the importance of a professional culture shared by those who work in schools. Professional culture incorporates and defines the working relationships of teachers and administrators. A professional culture in a school is the direct response by a group to a cooperative problem and as such has great bearing on the professional lives of those who teach.

Changes in the professional culture found in a school have a profound effect on the processes of education. As

Fullan (1982) offers, "Educational change depends upon what teachers do and think -- it's as simple and as complex as that" (Fullan, 1982, p. 107). The current moves toward restructuring often are concerned with not only creating change in schools, but also with creating "a culture for change" (Goldman and O'Shea, 1990, p. 41).

The Process of Change:

Manifest and Latent Identities and Culture

A study of cultural change at the organizational level of a school must recognize that movement of a staff in one professional or philosophical direction or another is not a unanimous happening or event. They are not struck by the same bolt of lightning. The staff of any school is made up of people, and, each has a number of identities which she or he makes public to others. As sociologist Alvin Gouldner pointed out "clearly individuals play more than one role as group member" and that "the people in any one group have a variety of social identities" (Gouldner, 1957, p. 283, see also Goffman, 1959 among many others for a discussion on individuals and social roles). Individuals carry their own collections of history and motives into any social situation. Such "personal baggage" brought into an organization can create multiple sets of roles that individuals play.

Social identities are the public side of social roles for they are shaped by the public world the individual

engages in. In the very public world of a school, identities take on tremendous significance. Educators working in a school play multiple roles to many different audiences and they carry a powerful sense of identity about who they are in each social situation. Educators are always in a spotlight. Listen as Gouldner further states that "Social identities have to do with the way in which an individual is in fact perceived and classified by others in terms of a system of culturally standardized categories" (Gouldner, 1957, p. 284).

But social identities do not always agree with the culturally accepted norms of the organization. As Gouldner goes on to state:

> It is necessary to distinguish, then, between those social identities of group members which are consensually regarded as relevant to them in a given setting and those which group members define as being irrelevant, inappropriate to consider, or illegitimate to take into account. The former can be called manifest social identities, the latter, the latent social identities. (1957, p. 284)

In a school, such as Pioneer, it is the identity that goes with the word "teacher" that unites the staff to the public audiences of students and educators alike. Social identities carry expectations not only from others but also from the individual. Gouldner further adds:

> Just as others can be orientated toward an individual's latent identities, so, too, can the individual himself be be orientated to his own latent identity. This is, of course, to be expected in light of Mead's role theory, which stresses that an individual's self conception is

> a function of the judgement and orientations which significant others have toward him. (1957, p. 285)

When one delves just below the surface and grasps the various meanings that teachers and administrators ascribe to the word "restructuring" divisions become clearly apparent. Events of change in the school have an effect on the educational staff.

At Pioneer, the implementation of heterogeneous grouping serves as a major catalyst for various reinterpretations of what being a "teacher" means as have the conferences and other events of the recent past. It is in the process of change that the divisions between staff members, reflected in latent identities, is magnified and becomes public. In a point cogent to the process of this research, Gouldner adds "Thus the concepts of latent identities and roles focus research on those patterns of social interaction, and lines of orientation, which are not prescribed by the group under study" (Gouldner, 1957, p. 286).

Latent identities may be based in the background of an individual, in experience that the individual has had before entry into an organization or in situations outside of the organization. In a school, latent identities displayed by teachers may come from their individual experiences as high school students, whether or not they coach, their own college experiences including the subject

matter of their academic majors to name just a few. The list could continue on as one considers what it takes to "become" a teacher. Clearly, at Pioneer and probably, in most schools, teachers can be identified by the department they are members of and what was their major academic field.

Latent identities may also be traced to activities within the organization itself. Such a view, suggested by Becker and Geer (1960), acknowledges both the power of the processes of organizational culture as well as the personal baggage that the individual carries into organizational membership. A radical change in the grouping policy of a school or a substantial effort of professional outreach by a staff, such as the case at Pioneer, may shift the cultural meanings and foster the growth of latent identities.

It is conceivable that those having similar identities with an organization would come to form informal associations among one another. They become friends. Within these informal groups individuals begin to build new sets of meanings predicated on common interpretations. For example, teachers at Pioneer share in a common set of meanings about what it means to be a "Pioneer teacher". There are understanding that all staff members agree to and which can only make sense to those at Pioneer, as opposed to teachers at another school. Yet, within the culture

shared by Pioneer teachers, there exist many diverse identities which do not always agree with the images projected by the greater faculty culture. This diversity becomes clear when one looks at a particular issue, such as heterogenous grouping.

While heterogeneous grouping enjoys the support of a vast majority of faculty members, there are those on the staff who remain opposed to the entire concept. From the beginning of the process, there were teachers identified as not in favor of the policy. They began to develop an identity that was new in the cultural meanings at the school. As the highly public events of the recent past unfolded at Pioneer, and again enjoyed the support of a vast majority of staff members, the teachers against or having doubts about heterogeneous grouping, found a sense of commonness in their new identities. Events at the school helped create new and informal groups in which there was a common feeling about heterogeneous grouping. That is not to say those common identities are shared on other issues, though, the more intense the group experience the greater a common set of interpretations.

Becker and Geer term these new meanings produced and shared in social groups "Latent Culture". They state that:

> To the degree that group participants share latent social identities (related to their membership in the same "outside" group) they will share these understandings, so that there will be a culture which can be called <u>latent</u>. (1960, p. 306)

Latent culture differs from manifest culture in that manifest culture is found in the organized solutions to common problems of an immediate kind and may include an issue such as heterogeneous grouping because to many teachers there is a pressing need to teach to heterogenous classes. In the acclaimed work about student culture in medical school, Boys In White, Becker et. al. state that "Another way of looking at student culture is to consider it the manifest as opposed to the latent, culture of the group" (Becker et. al. 1984, p. 143). Teacher culture at Pioneer is what can be considered manifest. It is the overall shared set of meanings and social constructs that teachers work with and may include such solutions to perceived problems such as tracked classes. Large support for an issue, such as a detracked school, at the same time provides a meeting ground for small groups not sharing in such a view. Becker and Geer go on to add that:

> What are usually known as "informal" groupings may tend to cluster around a latent culture, the members of these groupings sharing some particular latent identity. The interaction in such groups helps to maintain the person's sense of latent identity and to maintain the latent culture by providing a group which gives social support for the use of that culture as a basis of behavior. This is important because it suggests the mechanisms by which these latent identities are maintained operable in an environment in which they are regarded as irrelevant or improper, and in which they might be expected to die out. (1960, p. 311)

In taking this concept further, one would suspect that the longer the latent culture survives and the stronger the

In taking this concept further, one would suspect that the longer the latent culture survives and the stronger the identities of the members of the group, the more possible for the meanings shared within the latent culture to at one time gain the support and acceptance and become newly redefined manifest culture. Such a process would necessarily take into account not only the strength of the existing culture but also the power of those in positions of control and decision making within the organization.

The Related Issues of Leadership and School Change

The study of leadership is an issue that is tied closely to any study of school change, and this study is no exception. To bring change to a school involves leadership from those who work at the school, both teachers and administrators. The wealth of the literature about school leadership focuses on principals, in particular, and administrators in general. It views them as significant in any change process. This role doesn't change whether the administrators are for or against change. It is also evident that leaders can have a significant impact on the professional culture of a school. They hold a position of superordinate status as Waller (1932), High and Achilles (1986), and Lortie (1975) among many others have suggested. Fauske and Ogawa offer that "evidence indicates that teachers held the principal largely responsible for establishing norms to guide the day-to-day operations and

position that is public and open to view by those in the school and outside of the school.

How we view the principal's role in the way a school is organized and how that position relates to a school's professional culture has changed. Current trends in the literature about leadership in schools points to new perspectives concerning leadership roles. Principals and other educational administrators are not the sole owners of what is termed "educational leadership". Glen Hall states "principals are important. But so are others; principals cannot do it by themselves" (Hall, 1988, p. 47). Tjosvold (1984) spoke about the need for cooperation between superiors and subordinates. Gunn and Holdaway (1986) report that "principals saw leadership as working effectively with people, sharing responsibilities, drawing out the best in people, and establishing close relationships" (Gunn & Holdaway, 1986, p.58). Clearly, the older, often established image of the veteran principal holding total control of a school's teachers and students as portrayed by investigators such as Waller (1932) is undergoing some degree of change itself.

The ongoing move toward empowering teachers (for example Bolin, 1989) and restructuring the professional relationships found in schools (Anderson, 1990; Maxon, 1990; Bredeson, 1989, among many others) clearly present continual change in the processes that describe the way

professionals are led and are expected to be led in schools. If the fate of alternative and refined forms of school leadership that set policy for the entire school are based in the "relationships between principals and their faculties" (Barth, 1988, p. 640) and if those relationships, as is management, are a "cultural form" (Smircich, 1983, p. 355) then any study of an organizations change must include the concept of leadership. As Daniel Duke advocates:

> This new thinking about leadership conveys a considerable distance from the classical conceptions of command and decision. Leadershipis portrayed as a less straight-forward, more subtle phenomenon, involving more than what meets the eye. There is acknowledgement that leadership is a perception. As such, it reflects the structures of meaning of the perceiver and the culture and times in which the perceiver lives. The new scholarship therefore is concerned about those who look at leaders as well as at leaders themselves. (1986, p. 13)

Those new models of leadership stem from and yet are products of school change. Nuances in the leadership of a school may in fact be products of the particular cultural process operating in the school. And any change in the way decisions are made in a school must include the person in the role of principal. It is important to note, as Mary Heywood Metz states, that "the principal has direct responsibility without direct control over the events for which he must answer" (Metz, 1978, p. 189). In a sense, new concepts of leadership may be invented and reinvented in an on-going basis in a school struggling with issues of

concepts of leadership may be invented and reinvented in an on-going basis in a school struggling with issues of change. Such changes carry bring great meaning to the "shared intensity" (Schein, 1984, p. 7) among the professionals of a school.

Redefining the Roles of Teachers

The events at Pioneer have led to a redefinition of what teachers are to themselves and to others. The activities that have taken place at the school have seen teachers take the initiative toward a growing voice in the direction the school takes. Many teachers not only have developed a greater sense of ownership over their work but also have become leading advocates for bringing changes to the school.

Change in an organization is led by people who seek to build a consensus for change. At times they may conflict with those who wish to build consensus against formal changes. Schein (1988) views the change agents and those who are opposed to organizational change as "motivated". In the unique situation of Pioneer, empowerment has encouraged a number of "motivated" faculty members to emerge as professional leaders. The sense of professional leadership has set Pioneer out in front of many schools. In a picture that describes a common condition found in schools today, Heid and Leak state:

> Currently, teachers have little involvement in matters that serve to shape the very essence of

> and principals spend very little time engaging teachers in meaningful issues of school governance. (1991, p. 221)

Oakes and Lipton add that:

> Isolated teachers who do not share responsibilities for school wide and professional decisions will be less responsive to standards for best practice. (1990, p. 26)

The cultural changes that have taken place at Pioneer have led to new meanings about what the role of teachers is. Contributions to the profession have fostered internal growth and struggle as the members of the faculty strive to arrive at a new meaning about what the role for faculty should be. As Shroyer states:

> Effective organizations are innovative and action orientated. They encourage new ideas and informal leadership as ways to generate new knowledge and create new possibilities for the school. (1990, p. 3)

As the data in the analysis chapters of this work suggest, the cultural changes at Pioneer have brought the school recognition as an exemplary school but also see those at Pioneer addressing the issues that many schools attempting to reorganize face.

There are obstacles in the path of teachers becoming leaders. One is a simple fear about teachers as leaders, often expressed in many schools, (Little, 1988). There also are fears about the ambiguity a teacher in the role of leadership produces for those inside and outside a school (Bird, 1985). The reliance on formal roles to shape teacher behavior limit how involved teachers can be in leadership

and school change (Rallis, 1988). Comments heard in schools regarding leadership, as Barth (1990) so appropriately reminds us, often state "let the principal do it. That is what he is paid for" (Barth, 1990, p. 129). Often schools committed to change place leadership in the hands of a few chosen teachers. Again Barth speaks about the "reliance on a few proven teachers for school wide leadership" and how that "also excludes the majority of untried teachers from the community of leaders" (Barth, 1990, p. 136) and the need for "principals to relinquish authority" (Barth, 1990, p. 135). Clearly having an established hierarchy that propagates an old guard of teacher-department chairs working for a long time in concert with school wide administrators does not foster teacher involvement in school leadership or assist the processes inherent in school change.

Despite the internal, from within the school, and the external hostility to teacher leadership of schools and educator cooperation toward school change, there is a body of evidence to suggest that change must come from within and that teachers are equal partners if not initiators of school wide-change. Sirotnik and Clark (1988) speak about the school and those who work within it as a source of change. Barth's (1990) concept of a school as a "community of learners" involves all those who live in a school, particularly teachers and administrators, as involved

members in their own educational worlds. Lieberman, Saxl, Miles, (1988) present evidence of schools engaged in sharing leadership. They offer that

> Teacher-leaders worked hard to maintain a balance between the process of getting people to work on collective problems and providing the content and substance around which they worked. Managing this work required a subtle blend of skills including managing time, setting priorities for work, delegating tasks and authority, taking initiative, monitoring progress, and coordinating the many strands of work taking place in their schools. (1988, p. 158)

Such a description should not be lost in the comparison with the process of change and of teacher innovation at Pioneer during the past and recent period of change.

The work by those at Pioneer coupled with the words of those who serve as educators, critics, and advocates begin to link trends toward teacher leadership in current literature and practice. Teachers have long been credited with having no say or not being involved in controlling the organization of their working worlds. As Sizer's (1985) "Horace" so aptly described, teachers are excluded from control over their own professional world and do not have a say in the major processes of change that set the policy they must work under. Once teachers are integrated into the change process and become agents and leaders of the change process itself, radical and new constructions of social and professional reality can take place. But always, as Barth (1990) cautions, "The lives of teachers and principals are

more closely akin to one definition of a mushroom: "You're kept in the dark most of the time, periodically you're covered with manure, and when you stick your head out it gets chopped off" (Barth, 1990:164). This study of the changes that have taken place at Pioneer offers how staff development and empowerment were unintended but culturally important results of a restructuring policy aimed at students.

The Backdrop of Heterogeneous Grouping

Throughout this research work, the issue of a detracked school has loomed in the background. Since September 1985 the staff and students at Pioneer have found themselves living and learning in a heterogeneously grouped school, at least in most classrooms. While it is not the intent of this work to assess the merits of heterogeneous grouping for the students at Pioneer, the detracking process does enter into every facet of life at the school. As such, it is important to present some basic concepts that apply to the term "heterogeneous grouping". It is also important to note what ability based grouping, and moves away from it, mean to a school.

Ability based grouping, or tracking, was a product of the rise in industrialization in the United States during the latter decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Oakes, 1985). It came during a time that saw immigrant children flooding America's schools and when compulsory

education laws were being enacted. It offered the two-fold promise of easing the burden of the classroom teacher within the school while reinforcing the notion of those outside the school that education offers a promise of shaping society in a particular manner. John Goodlad has offered that:

> Tracking became widely practiced by educators as a device for endeavoring to reduce the range of differences in a class and therefore the difficulty and complexity of the teaching task. The practice has been reinforced from outside the school by those who believe that able students are held back by slower ones when all work together in the same class. (1984, p.151)

Jeannie Oakes, in the important work Keeping Track, furthered an understanding of the history of ability based grouping by suggesting that "tracking was a solution to a social problem and to an educational problem" (Oakes, 1985, p. 15).

As stated earlier, the topic of this research is not to argue the merits of heterogeneously grouped classes over homogeneously grouped ones. But it should be mentioned that a growing body of the research literature (including Goodlad, 1984; Oakes, 1985; Persell, 1977; Oakes, 1986; Slavin, 1987; George, 1987; Glazer, 1990; Slavin, 1990; Slavin, 1988) suggests that there is no significant evidence for maintaining tracking in schools. Goodlad told us in 1984 that "ability grouping and tracking appear not to produce the expected gains in student's achievement" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 151), and Glickman in 1991 states

"Higher-achieving students do not do better when together, and lower-achieving students do much worse when together" (Glickman, 1991, p. 5). Schneider reports that "one of the most persistent challenges within American education is to understand and correct the processes by which schools help to perpetuate academic and social inequality" (Schneider, 1988, p. 11). Tyrell adds that in schools "there is a gap between haves and have nots" (Tyrell, 1990, p. 16). Clearly, there is a growing and powerful movement away from ability based classrooms in junior high and secondary schools grounded in a solid base of research and theory.

This research studies a school in change and in particular the teachers and administrators who work in the school. A move to heterogeneous classes and away from tracking not only affected students but also teachers. As I will demonstrate in following chapters, working lives along with individual and group meaning about being a teacher in the school have been significantly challenged. Individuals and the organization have been forced to confront change. As Goodlad offers:

> Tracking on the surface, is an organizational arrangement by means of which students observed making varied progress in school are grouped so as to reduce the apparent range of achievement and performance in any one group. (1984, p. 150)

Ability-based grouping in schools is a tool which organized the day-to-day life of teachers and students. Goodlad goes on to remind us that "tracking is classified

in the educational literature under school organization" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 151). Tracking is an organizational arrangement for everyone who is part of a school. It offers a way to silently structure lives.

The tracked school influences teachers: how they do their jobs, and what meanings they draw about themselves. Many of those meanings are born (Oakes, 1985) and transmitted in the culture of a school. Professor turned-part-time-educator Larry Cuban, in a report about his return to teaching in a high school classroom, states "Grouping practices that label students as low achievers or slow learners and that place them in separate classes influenced how I taught and how the students in my classes performed" (Cuban, 1990, p. 481). The ability based and tracked school "organizes instruction" (Oakes, 1985, p. 6). It shapes teacher attitudes and the structure of a teachers day (as demonstrated in the original research of Oakes, 1985). Linda McNeil states that "when the school's organization [read ability-based grouping] becomes centered on managing and controlling, teachers and students take school less seriously" (McNeil, 1986, p. 9). Sizer offers an appropriate summation to the issue of school organization when he states

> Learning is a human activity and depends absolutely, (if annoyingly), on human idiosyncracy. We can arrange for schools, classes, and curricula, but the game is won or lost for reasons beyond these arrangements. Run a

> school like a factory and you will get uneven goods. (1985, p. 205)

Is it no wonder that the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, Task force on Education of Young Adolescents (Jackson, 1990) recommends that schools

> Ensure success for all students through elimination of tracking by achievement level and promotion of cooperative learning. (1990, p. 1)

A move away from the homogeneous grouping of students entails altering the relationships in the school. This research focuses on teachers and how a change to heterogenous grouping has influenced their in-school lives. Dennis Evans, a principal describing the process of detracking his high school, suggests that it is wise to consider the feelings teachers hold about changes in structuring the schools they teach in. He states

> Teachers have made an investment of time, energy, and personal and professional pride in their current practices. Because they stand to lose so much in the process of change they will not change merely for the sake of change. (1991, p. 16)

Teachers who make a move, such as "detracking" their school, have committed themselves to a major enterprise that will require reflection and introspection. It is no small endeavor. As a teacher suggested "It's hard to confront a new model or way of teaching...I was forced to rethink what I had been doing for all those years and to all those kids" (Nowicki, 1990a, p. 16).

Change from ability-based grouping is difficult, and may in fact engender a level of hostility and confusion for teachers (Nowicki, 1991b), but it does (Veves, 1989) open up new possibilities for teachers as well as for students. As Nowicki (1990) states "For those teaching in randomly grouped classrooms the move from ability grouping has fostered new thinking" (Nowicki, 1990a, p. 16). This new thinking breaks down the barriers prohibiting participation in the school. Teachers as well as students begin to share in the process that is the culture of their school. Involving everyone in a school promotes learning for "principals, teachers, parents, and students. A community of learners is, above all a heterogeneous community" (Barth, 1990, p. 80).

Cultural change among the Pioneer faculty is caught up in and fueled by the underlying change away from ability based grouping in classes to a more heterogeneous model. It is a school wide issue that has lead to further changes in the processes binding the faculty of a small school together and to keeping them apart.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODS

Design and Methods: A Rationale

This report is a case study of one school. It utilizes qualitative methods of data collection including in-depth interviewing and participant observation. As a style of research, it enabled me to examine changes in the professional culture of a junior-senior high school faculty during and after a change was made from organizing classes in ability based tracks to classes grouped heterogeneously. Such a dramatic restructuring in the way a school is organized placed new and unexpected demands on this school's faculty as the outside educational community became aware of the levels of excellence and innovation taking place at the school. The faculty's push to adopt a policy of heterogeneous grouping six years ago began a process that has forced teachers to rethink and redefine what they do in their classrooms, what it means to be teacher or administrator, and what the meaning of a school should be. It was important to me, the researcher, to employ techniques of data collection, grounded in a research tradition, that provided access to the meanings constructed by those at Pioneer.

The restructuring at Pioneer Valley Regional School altered the social organization of the school and of the

faculty. Sociologist Peter Woods suggests that "The effects on individuals and groups, teachers and pupils, of organizational structures and changes in them such as streaming (tracking), setting, and mixed ability groups" (Woods, 1986, p. 10) comprise a major area of legitimate research interest. As stated in earlier chapters, the professional educators working at Pioneer -- teachers and administrators -- are the focus of this study. I don't mean to suggest that the effects of heterogeneous classes on students aren't important. At some point in the future, research should be directed at the students of the school. But students leave schools. They go on with their lives as the force of time hurries them along.

Faculty, on the other hand, remain behind for the next entering class and the class after that, and so it goes. The faculty get older and remain at the school; the new students are always younger than the class which entered the year before and continue to leave the school after six years. It is the faculty who are not only paid for their expertise but are socially entrusted with educating, preparing, and nurturing the students through the school program and through the difficult time of life that is adolescence.

One critical element in any understanding of the social phenomena found in a school is the culture created and shared by faculty members. As Peter Woods offers

"Teachers are the kinds of people who tie their energies and loyalties to the social system, and often their personalities become identified with the job they do" (Woods, 1986, p. 155). Faculty members, players in a day-in and day-out drama, by their very presence and role in the school carry an impact upon what transpires in the school today, tomorrow, and for many years to come.

To adequately address what change means to teachers and how teachers deal with change, a study should be grounded "with an understanding from the actor's own frame of reference" (Bogan and Taylor, 1975, p. 2). As Michael Quinn Patton advocates, qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to get "close to the sources of data" (Patton, 1980, p. 4). In a sense, this method of study allows the researcher to "get inside the experience of the actor" (Blumer, as quoted by Meltzer et al, 1975, p. 57). The focus is on the subjective experience of the actors (in this case faculty members) as they involve themselves in the processes of professional change as individuals and as members of a group. It is the job for the ethnographic researcher to, as Pollard describes, "identify patterns in the data and to hesitatingly, step by step, attempt to construct a deeper understanding of the events and social relationships in which I [Pollard the researcher] participated in" (Pollard, 1985, p. 232). This style of research, as Woods states:

> is concerned with what people are, how they behave, how they interact together. It aims to uncover their beliefs, values, perspectives, motivations, and how these things develop or change over time. It tries to do all this from within the perspectives of the groups members. It is their meanings and interpretations that count. (1986, p. 4)

The study of organizational and cultural change among a school's faculty demands that the researcher gain access not only to the research site but, more importantly, to the social realities constructed by both the individual and by the group. It means the researcher needs to not only listen to the words of the subjects or observe their behaviors or to simply attach a set of meanings on those words or actions, but that the researcher must first come to understand the meanings the subjects place on their words or on the events happening around them. This process is highly important to educational research. Hitchcock reminds us that a great deal of school based research, "has explicitly ignored the routine, the mundane and the way in which in the most ordinary and commonplace fashion, members make sense of and understand the environments in which they live" (Hitchcock, 1983, p. 9). In this framework, educational research can offer a perspective of how a group of educators adjusts to a shift in an educational policy. It takes into account those who must live and work with the new policy by listening to their reflective words and observing their actions.

Why A Case Study?

The case study approach, which Merriam describes as "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (Merriam, 1988, p. 9), lends itself directly to a qualitative view and can be generalized, as suggested by Kennedy (1979), to other situations and to other schools. A case study tactic in conducting research at a school going through the process of reorganization is appropriate because restructuring a school is a process that begins within a particular school (Geiger, 1991). There are no universal solutions that can apply to every school in a state or the nation. But there are individual schools in which change and innovation and experimentation are taking place. Those "elite" schools (Glickman, 1991) should serve as examples for other schools and districts contemplating or engaged in change. Those schools, such as Pioneer, can model the behavior of educators taking risks to better their students, which is what educational experimentation is all about. They do not offer rigid blueprints that dictate a step by step formula for changing all schools. The case study method provides a description of one school in change and presents an example from which others may derive insight into their own situation.

Applying Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research has roots in a tradition of understanding the subjective, found in the fields of sociology and anthropology, as well as within educational scholarship. Its premises have been advocated by Mead (1969), Weber (1957), Goffman (1967) and Blumer (1969) among many others. Inherent in this frame of social and organizational understanding is the belief that, as Berger and Luckman (1967) present, realities are socially constructed and that more than one reality exists at the same moment. They state that "Among the multiple realities there is one that represents itself as the reality par excellence. It is the reality of everyday life" (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p. 21). They go on to add that "everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world" (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p. 19). The "coherent world" of a working teacher is reflected in the professional culture of any particular school. It serves as a way for the teacher to make sense of what she or he does day in and day out in classrooms. The culture of teachers in a school also serves as a means for a teacher to make sense of her or himself as an individual among others. No school is a social vacuum. No teacher can exist in a world walled off from peers. Interaction is at the heart of what takes place in a school and of what teachers do. Peter Woods tells us that "one can

see one's own behavior from the point of view of specific others" (Woods, 1983, p. 3). Change in the way a school is organized and in the professional culture shared by teachers is tied to individual change.

The qualitative research approach utilized in this dissertation follows the symbolic interactionist tradition of social thought. It provides a view of those engaged in the process of cultural change as creators of the culture they share with each other, for as Peter Woods states "at the heart of symbolic interactionism is the notion of people as constructors of their own meanings" (Woods, 1983, p. 1). His position stems from that advocated by a great many theorists including "symbolic interactionist" sociologist, Herbert Blumer (1976), and pragmatic philosopher George Herbert Mead (1934). Woods to further offers that:

> What enables the construction of meaning is the individual's possession of a 'self'. We can converse with our 'selves', we can stand outside of our 'selves' and look inward with "others' eyes". (1983, p. 2)

It is the individual who must interpret and ascribe meanings to events, words, actions, and all that comprises the total processes of social life. Yet, it is in the process of exchange within the self and with others that symbolic meanings about the world are constructed and shared. The definitions that the individual ascribes to

social events are based in socially constructed symbolic meanings.

Evelyn Jacob further describes the symbolic interactionist approach as "providing models for studying how individuals interpret objects, events, and people in their lives, and for studying how this process of interpretation leads to behavior in specific situations" (Jacob, 1987, p. 31). Jacob goes on to add that from an interactionist perspective, researchers might:

> focus on a group of individuals who share the same position in the social organization, and look at the subjective perceptions and behavior patterns that the group's members develop to adapt to their position. (1987, p. 36)

The teachers at Pioneer Valley Regional School share a working environment with other teachers and thus build interpretations of their socio-professional life from what they give and take with others. Teachers organize their lives in relationships to those around them. Yet each teacher holds to individual perspectives about where they work and whom they work with. Teachers constantly make interpretations about their social worlds of work. For example, classroom practice is based upon interaction and interpretation. The culture that is found in the shared interactions among teachers also requires that interpretations be made among teachers. It is those interpretations and a publicly sanctioned identity that place the teacher in a particular position in the social

organization of the school. Any change in the organization of the school directly impacts the individual. The research methods selected for this study directly access the interpretations teachers make about their position in the cultural environment of a school in change and about how they respond to that change.

A Year in Focus

This research explores a school's faculty engaged in the process of change. The process of change is ongoing, as it is in every school, yet the time line of investigation is based on a five year period and focuses on the heightened events of a little more than a year. During this period, the events -- listed in the chronology at the end of chapter two -- included two major professional conferences held at Pioneer and presented primarily by the Pioneer staff and the publication of a professional journal by staff members for other educators. This was a time of professional ground breaking and intense emotions. Pioneer teachers were accomplishing what very few, if any, schools had attempted before. It was during the time that the school became a "crucible" of change for staff members. The events that took place during this time carried great weight and symbolic meanings for everyone who worked at Pioneer. This was also the time of the greatest research focus.

The events of change that swept through Pioneer during the time of the social and educational "crucible" brought together all the strands of restructuring and school based change that had begun with the introduction of heterogeneous grouping five years earlier. The analysis of those events, contained in Chapter Eight, addresses how the symbolic meaning of the events taking place during that time brought both professional rebirth and discord to a faculty struggling to control and make sense of change. Though observation continued before and during this period, interviews took place just after giving the teachers and administrators of Pioneer a chance to reflect on what they and their school had just been through. They had the opportunity to express what they felt the meaning of all the activity had been.

Methods: The Interviews

Ultimately, as Sevigny states, "the task of the qualitative methodologist is to capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their social world" (Sevigny, 1981, p. 68). Faced with the research problem of gaining access to the individual perspectives that teachers have about themselves in relationship to their changing work place, a two-phased model of data collection was employed. One component consisted of 36 formal in-depth interviews conducted with members of the professional staff at Pioneer. The

interviews lasted an hour or more in length and were audiotaped for future transcription. Members from all subject areas in the school were interviewed along with those in support areas and the administration. The interviews were "open ended" in the sense that, though following an outline as a guide (See appendix A), allowed the participants the latitude to express what they considered essential about their experiences at Pioneer in a conversational manner. At the same time, the interview format allowed me to keep a degree of form and structure to the research. Specifically the interviews fit into Michael Quinn Patton's (1980) category of using an "interview guide" which he defines as:

> An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information from a number of people by covering the same material. An interview provides topics or subject areas with which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style, but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined. (1980, p. 200)

Using the interview guide during the thirty-six formal interviews removed the stiffness and overbearing formality that can disrupt the process of in-depth interviewing. The intent of the interviews was to bring out and establish the perspectives of a group of practioners

about where they worked, about those around them, and about themselves as they and their colleagues pushed into the uncharted waters that come with profound school change. For some the experience was threatening; for others, a professional rebirth. For everyone interviewed the experiences were powerful. All thirty-six teachers had stories to tell. They had impressions about "their" workplace. Those perspectives were, at times, very personal and long thought about. These interviews, directed conversations actually, had the freedom and the latitude to follow a train of thought or stream of consciousness to many different directions. At times the interviews bordered on the therapeutic. As one teacher commented,

> You know, I think about these things we're talking about (the issues of working in a school that is at the forefront of educational restructuring) a lot. Mostly when I'm alone and doing something simple like raking leaves and sometimes I get angry at the way things at school happen. But we don't talk to each other. Maybe we can't without getting frustrated or upset.

In all of the interviews, it was my role as researcher to decide when a tangent should be followed and when to ease the conversation back to a more direct focus. Being a teacher in the school, a co-worker, an adversary or an ally in the internal dynamics of the workplace, and at times a catalyst in the change process, brought a closeness to and with the people I interviewed, if only for the interview. Some of the teachers had never talked about any of the issues dealing with their school with me before. Teachers

who usually reserved their thoughts and feelings for themselves spoke freely and often eloquently about themselves and "their" school during the interview. When the interview ended, their manner changed to the standard presentation they gave to the day-to-day world.

Other teachers saw themselves in a new light. One mentioned that "it was important to think, really think about what all this [working in the school] means". Another teacher echoed the sentiments of many by stating "After this [the interview] I'm beginning to see some of the people I work with in very different ways". One more said "You know, I get up each day come to work and never think about what has taken place in this school in the last year, never mind the past six. Day to day you lose it. This interview gave me the chance to step back and look."

Trust

All the staff interviewed were given a letter explaining the purpose of the research. The letter came as no surprise, because I had worked my way from school board meetings to faculty meetings, always asking for permission to conduct the research and offering to answer any questions about what it was I was doing. All staff members were given a description of the research (appendix B). Four of the thirty-six people interviewed did not sign the form ("it was lost", "thrown out with other papers stuffed into the mailbox" "recycled by mistake") but had read the

note and verbally agreed to do the interview or had asked to be interviewed. Obviously, in every instance anonymity was guaranteed. Pioneer is a small school where it is not often easy to find a private space. To insure confidentiality and anonymity no staff member was identified either by department affiliation or tenure at the school in any of data presented in this report. There were refusals. Of the five staff members who did not take part in the interview process four refused. (A fifth staff member who had agreed to be interviewed left for a planned leave before the interview could be conducted.) It is important to note that two of the teachers who initially agreed to be interviewed decided they didn't want to go through the experience and wrote letters to me explaining their decisions.

What made the interviews so successful and important for me and for those I interviewed came down to the issue of trust. We often use the word "trust" casually, its very essence, trust sums up an essential concept which is necessary to come to grips with in social and educational research. I was "trusted" by the Pioneer teachers; trusted enough to tape record interviews that expressed deep and cogent feelings, because I was a teacher. I was (and am) a fellow member of the school who had shared the incredible experiences of the past few years with them. I taught the same children that they did, oftentimes in a same classroom

which we would exchange during the day. I was (and am) part of the close-knit community that is the school. As teacher and researcher I have the obligation to not only honor that sense of trust but have come to deeply respect it.

The interview procedure was a reflection of the climate in the school. Most faculty were confused by the, as one mentioned to me, "official sound" of the form that needed a signature for an interview. The faculty are close and to a large degree informal. There are channels to go through, but much more education is carried on informally. Most of the interaction between administrators and teachers, as well as among teachers, takes place in informal situations, which is not to diminish the importance of the content of the interactions. In fact, many major decisions have been made either during or as the result of informal conversations at the school. The interviews reflected those informal conversations.

Methods: Participant Observation

As Evertson and Green state "Observation is an everyday event. It is part of the psychology of perception and as such it is a tacit part of the everyday functioning of the individuals as they negotiate the events of everyday life" (Evertson & Green, 1986, p. 163). A qualitative study of a school, with a myriad of interactions taking place between the staff at many locations, would be wise to include observations of behavior. Van Mannen offers that

"In organizational studies, the patterns of interest are typically the various forms in which people manage to do things together in observable and repeated ways" (Van Mannen, 1979, p. 539). Blumer (1969) suggests it is important to understand the meaning that actors give to social action. The meaning of what someone does is interpreted by the actor herself along with the many others in the situation. As Warner states "Interactors interpret each others behaviors" (Warner, 1988, p. 302).

Participant observation was not only an appropriate mode of collecting data but provided a rich source of evidence concerning how people make sense of their position in the organized world of a school. As a research tool, participant observation provides a model for understanding the reflective nature of human behavior. That is to say, it provides the opportunity to explore the process of how both the subjects under study and the researcher himself makes sense of social events happening around them. It is grounded in a tradition that includes the work of Thomas and Thomas (1928), Schutz (1967), Blumer (1969), and Denzin (1978). Participant observation as a research tool is summed up by Jorgensen (1990) who states that "In the course of daily life, people make sense of the world around them; they give it meaning and they interact on the basis of these meanings. If people define a situation as real, it is real in it's consequences" (Jorgensen, 1990, p. 14). He

goes on to add that "the world of everyday life constitutes reality for its inhabitants" (Jorgensen, 1990, p. 14).

The social reality grounded in and changing with the professional culture of the school serves as a meeting ground. It offers a shared set of understandings that can be utilized by those who make up the professional staff of the school in understanding who they are and what it is they do. As Jorgensen points out "Ultimately, the methodology of participant observation aims to generate the practical and theoretical truths about human life grounded in the realities of daily existence" (Jorgensen, 1990, p. 14). Participant observation brought the unique nuances of behavior that take place in the day to day drama of Pioneer to light as a data source.

Willard Waller (1932) urged that teachers be trained to understand the sociology and psychology of the classroom along with methods of teaching and content knowledge. He placed great importance and value on understanding the dynamics that take place around teachers. Such an importance that, as Hansot (1989) commenting on Waller suggests, teachers and students develop a special sense of insight into the social world of the classroom and of the school. That insight comes from the reflective processes of observing and interacting in a school. The insights about the social processes of a school come from living in schools.

Because I am a teacher at Pioneer Valley Regional School, and have been for five full years, I have a history of observations that serve as a backdrop for this research. That history connects me with what takes place at the school in the short run of the day-to-day social life and with what happens over the longer term. For the past year and a half, my observations have become more formalized and recorded either as notes or on audio tape. Part of my earlier observations were used in a research work (Nowicki, 1991a) about the perspectives of veteran and student teachers toward the relationship between teaching and teacher training. Other formal observations stem from academic work concerning administrators in public schools. I should also add that my teaching at Pioneer is only a portion of my career as an educator. That past experience serves to temper and to frame the observations I have from Pioneer.

Participant observation at Pioneer allowed me to focus on what at times might be considered mundane or too simplistic to be of value. It included what took place in both the public areas of the organization and what happened behind the scenes of this work place in a form of study advocated by Goffman (1959; 1967). The use of participant observation not only documented that interaction was taking place, as a behavior exhibited between individual actors, but, more importantly it allowed me to focus on the quality

of those interactions in which social meaning is shared, exchanged and gained by and between many individuals. The role each actor plays in the continuing series of interactions that ground individual and multiple perspectives of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) becomes important in the development of a common definition of the social reality that is Pioneer.

Observations not only focused on social agreements at the school, but also on conflicts. Clearly, in any organization there will be conflict. In a school dealing with minor change one would expect more conflict. Expand the scene to a school in which change is a powerful force and staff appear to be compelled along at times, caught up in a whirlwind of change that they themselves created, and the social drama of Pioneer begins to take shape. Tension is an inherent reality and important force in any organization as Gouldner (1955) suggested. Woods offers that "teacher subcultures form on the basis of ideologies, which are invariably constructed on different models of man and of society, and are inevitably in conflict" (Woods, 1983, p. 65). Becker et al, in the classic study of medical school students, Boys In White, state that:

> If it is true that conflict and tension arise when the expectations governing social relationships are violated or frustrated, then it is clear that study of such instances will reveal just what those expectations are; and the discovery of such expectations is an important part of the analysis of any organization. (1984, p. 21)

Again the issue of trust becomes important as observations focus upon situations that often are filled with the tension born of disagreeing faculty members. Being a member of the staff gave me access to the private side of a school in change that few often glimpse. Being an active participant in some of the school staff's public ventures placed me in a position of reflecting on what I did, and I needed to develop a sense of distance from the role I was playing as teacher and as researcher.

Being a Participant Researcher: The Chameleon Effect

> The most direct route to truth is for the researcher to experience the phenomenon of interest -- to become the phenomenon. (Jorgensen, 1990, p. 28)

> I began my research unwittingly. I spent nearly a year participating in the community as a member without the slightest thought of studying it. (Krieger, 1985, p. 309)

Did I take the job at Pioneer knowing that I would one day use it as a data source for a dissertation? The answer is clearly no. I took the job to teach at Pioneer because as a special needs teacher relegated to teaching one type of student, I longed for the diversity that a heterogeneous classroom can produce. I also took the job because I needed a job and Pioneer would hire me. At the time I began at Pioneer I had no plan to return to graduate school.

As a teacher beginning in a new building and in a new school system, I, a veteran teacher, needed to be an observer. To watch and listen and learn. There are at

Pioneer, as there were at any schools that I've worked in, (not to mention where I've studied in higher education) ways of doing things that meant survival to a teacher. New teachers are often too caught up in the extra work of locating their place in the new school. Most remain oblivious to what goes on around them for a year or two because they are too busy concentrating on their students and the classes they teach. Veteran-yet-new-to-the-school-teachers, on the other hand, know the importance of watching and learning about the system they have begun teaching in. Those observations, not formally recorded as a research protocol, provide a history that serves as a base for this enterprise.

It is required, and should be, that researchers address how they get their data and what those data and what the process of deriving it do to the research subjects. Those are important ethical issues. What we do not require, but perhaps should, is what the research does to the researcher, particularly the participant researcher.

In the previous chapter, a discussion was presented about how "identities" are attributed to individuals through the public processes of organizational life. Those same processes applied to me as a teacher-researcher in the school. During this particular research process in which I was a teacher, advocate for change, and formally announced researcher, the position I occupied in the organization of

the school changed intensely as the research progressed. As a teacher in the school I played many roles. All teachers do. Given the simple nature of a school day I would teach seventh graders, ninth graders and eleventh and twelfth graders. On any given day I might be required to function as a counselor, parent, friend or in one of many other roles. All teachers do. The social psychology of dealing with and teaching students that may range in ages from twelve to nineteen a different mindset and a different role presentation. My classes were all heterogeneous and that requires that the classes be more student-centered than teacher-centered. Again, multiplying roles. I was a co-founder of and worked on the seventh grade teaching team, coached students on a Law Team, wrote and rewrote curriculum and served as the teachers' association vice president. All of those activities require playing different roles. Moreover, students carry expectations of what teachers "should be". Those expectations may change by the teacher, the class, or the age of the student.

Teachers also carry expectations about their peers in a school. These expectations may in fact be stronger than the ones students have. Teachers tend to peg other teachers to roles, particularly when the teachers work together as veterans on a veteran staff. My peers had role expectations for me that they had created and when those expectations were not met by me in their eyes, their concern and, later,

hostility grew. For example, I proposed that Pioneer teachers present their work to other professional educators. Teachers had the opportunity to teach other teachers. I served as chairperson of the resulting two major conferences about heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, and school change held at Pioneer during the past year. Both conferences brought a great deal of attention to the school and staff, all of which concerns this dissertation, and placed me in a certain role in the eyes of my peers. Most people supported the conferences and a few didn't. But there were expectations placed on me by most all my peers.

As an outgrowth of these conferences and Pioneer's increased national visibility, the issue of consulting for other schools became a reality for Pioneer teachers, a role for teachers that in principle I fought extremely hard for. I had a personal agenda that included developing a new model that teaching professionals could follow. I felt that teachers carried an enormous amount of expertise regarding their craft. Teachers have a wealth of skills that range from organizing to understanding. I also saw teachers as highly creative problem solvers when they were given the latitude and freedom to be creative. I felt that teachers, in particular Pioneer teachers, had a lot to offer to the profession. I didn't want to see that talent and expertise go unrecognized.

The two conferences held at the school only reinforced that belief. Not all of the staff wanted to believe that interpretation of teachers, either for themselves or for the entire staff. If some accepted this belief then others were threatened by it. At the same time, as the work in Chapter Eight will address, my worry that control of expertise was at times limited to a few brought me in conflict with others. My role of researcher also dictated that I occupy some "middle ground" in the among the competing positions held by faculty members. I began to feel distance from some of my peers that had supported some of my other suggestions. My "identity" was being redefined by the organization.

The limits placed around my role tightened and seemed to keep me from many of the faculty that I'd been social with in the past. One day I requested that my name be stricken from the list of teachers eager to consult. Most of that decision stemmed from reasons related to this research as I felt the need to step back and not be seen as a "leader". The results of that decision were immediate. Peers I'd been working with to make public what we'd done at the school wondered aloud about "Why is he hurting his career?" The message clearly was "you are not on our team. Why?" There were people who struggled with my seemingly new role and brought a lot of pressure to bear on me to "be like you used to be".

At the same time, my movement away from that position found teachers, some of them opposed to the consulting idea, treating me in a much more welcoming manner. The result was that I found myself in a neutral zone of sorts and like the man without a country, was a teacher living in a professional no-man's land. Interestingly enough, I had a very productive year as a teacher. Among the faculty though, I became a chameleon, not aligned with any one single position.

All of this has helped me remain aware of my own subjectivity, (which all researchers need to remember) as suggested by Peshkin (1988). In fact, the process that took place at Pioneer was extremely beneficial in that it allowed me to take a step back from where I was and, surprisingly, see the world of the school in a more holistic view. Understanding my own subjectivity led me to be more objective in my view of what took place in the social world around me. Becoming a "chameleon" may have been the result of being a participant observer at this one site or it may be required of any participant observer-interviewer who is a member of the organization. Participant observation may "give a first hand account of the situation under study, and when combined with interviewing allow for a holistic interpretation of the data being investigated" (Merriam, 1988, p. 102). Being a teacher and a participant in the vibrant climate of the

school may have brought an insight into the world of this case study that I might have missed otherwise. As Jorgensen states:

> Personal experience derived from direct participation in the insider's world is an extremely valuable source of information, especially if the researcher has performed membership roles and otherwise experienced life as an outsider. (1990, p. 93)

It is not that participant observation is a sole method that a researcher should use in the same light that interviewing should occupy a status as a single means of collecting data. Combining participant observation and interviewing though, links effective methods and provides an understanding about social life. There may be research situations where both can not be used. That is the researcher's decision. It is also the qualitative investigator's mission to capture social reality within a frame of reference that includes an understanding of the perspectives held to by those under study. The nature of qualitative study demands that researchers find access to the world of their subjects. The level of understanding provided by participant observation is important to an understanding of the complexity of organizational life. The subjective levels of understanding, as Peter Woods details, can be very complex.

> Perspectives derive from cultures. They do not exist nor are they created in a vacuum. Cultures, in turn develop when people come together for specific purposes, intentionally, willingly, or unwillingly. People develop between them

> distinctive forms of life -- ways of doing things and not doing things, forms of talk and speech patterns, subjects of conversations, rules and codes of conduct and behaviors, values and beliefs, arguments and understandings (1983, p. 8).

Participant observation, over a long period of time, allows the researcher access to the complexity and wealth of the perspectives found in an organization. To be sure, the union of dual methods, such as participant observation and interviewing, can only serve to deepen and strengthen the research experience. Together they offer distinct and disciplined methods of inquiry and not only involve the research subjects but also the researcher.

The Documents

In a school such as Pioneer, as in any organization, an enormous number of written documents are produced. Often those documents are critical to social and educational research. They add insight into the organization, reflect agreements and conflicts, and point to the style of leadership. Documents produced during the past seven years, and in particular the past eighteen months, are used as a data source that compliments the interviews and participant observation. Forms, notes, reports, questionnaires, and the agendas of various meetings serve as a historical back-drop to the process of a school in change and of teachers in change. For example, parallels can be drawn from a questionnaire completed by the faculty about the impact of heterogeneous grouping on classroom teaching in 1986 and

questionnaires concerned with the school serving as host for two conferences during the 1989-1990 and 1990-1991 school years.

The documents from Pioneer serve as benchmarks of change. They record, in the particular words of the time, the directions and feelings of groups within the faculty (such as departments and the identities shared by members of those departments) toward heterogeneous grouping, and of groups of teachers advocating for or against change to heterogeneous grouping. Other documents reflect the struggle of a faculty to come to grips with the meaning of what it does each day and whether or not that daily work with students is important enough to share with others. At the same time, documents tell a story about a faculty's concern for their students and of concern that public attention would hurt classroom learning. The documents reflect the conflicts facing a faculty confronted with difficult decisions that concern themselves and their students. The teachers of Pioneer were faced with a dilemma, created by themselves and by teachers from outside the school, of protecting the sacredness of their own classrooms or sharing what they had accomplished with others. The Pioneer faculty were forced to rethink what it means to be a teacher in a public school. Their history, reflected in their documents, speaks to their past and on-going struggle with the new meanings brought by change.

The Pioneer papers serve an important purpose in this research. They supply the frames and add the backdrops and colors to the overall story. The essence of many of the documents is replicated in Appendix D though, it is almost impossible to capture the emotion, angst, or power that documents carried at the time in which they were written for a particular school staff.

Documents: Words From Those Outside of Pioneer

While the design of this research relied on two primary methods of data collection, the study also utilized the reflections of others from outside the school. In Appendix E presents a list of reports from the print and broadcast media about Pioneer's experience with restructuring over the past few years. Those reports served as a secondary yet, constant source of outside reflections to apply against and with the primary data generated by interviewing and participant observation. Similarly, just recognizing that these outside voices had taken an interest in Pioneer, and presented those voices to a huge public, was noted by a number of Pioneer staff members as later chapters will indicate.

The Use and Importance of Narrative

Qualitative research, particularly a case study involving a long association between the researcher and the organization, can not be limited to a set of techniques that one applies in a mechanistic fashion. What we learn of

an organization, such as a school, is not limited to what was obtained through a specific set of observations by a researcher. It is not limited to the data collected during the interview process or in the pages of the many documents produced by members of the organization. To understand the research "case", particularly if there exists a long personal and professional history between the researcher and other members, one needs to reflect on one's own actions as well as what is formally and informally observed of others. In participant case studies, it is essential to use personal narrative. The researcher is telling a personal story that is the backdrop against which data from more formal observations, interviews and documents can be applied and measured. If these specific research techniques are the colors that capture life in an organization, then the history and background narrative (see for example Connley & Cladinin, 1990), provide the canvas.

Trustworthiness of the Data

In this qualitative study, as in any study, qualitative or quantitative, questions about the trustworthiness of the data should be asked. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba (1981) feel that validity and reliability can be dealt with in "naturalistic research" but that these terms be replaced with "four new terms that have a better fit with naturalistic epistemology" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219). They suggest that:

> credibility be named (in place of internal validity), transferability (in place of external validity), dependability (in place of reliability), and confirmability (in place of objectivity). (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 219)

Lincoln and Guba state that "the conventional criteria for trustworthiness are internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Now the questions underlying the establishment of these criteria are also appropriate to ask of naturalistic inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 218). They emphasize the importance of issues such as "prolonged involvement", "triangulation", and "peer debriefing" to credible qualitative research.

Patton (1980) also brings the idea of documentation to assessing qualitative research. He advocates for "alternative explanations and consideration of why certain cases do not fall into the main pattern" (1980, p. 328).

Erickson (1986) terms the qualitative study interpretive research. Merriam goes further to add that "appropriate standards need to be used for assessing validity and reliability" (1988, p. 165) which she offers as

> making the familiar strange and interesting again -- everyday life is so familiar that it is invisible.
>
> To achieve specific understanding through documentation of concrete details.
>
> To consider local meanings that happenings have for the people involved in them -- surface similarities in behavior are sometimes misleading in educational research.

> To engage in comparative understanding of different social settings.
>
> To engage in comparative understanding beyond theimmediate circumstances of the local setting. (1988, p. 165)

In meeting the issues of "validity", "credibility", and "trustworthiness," this research has components of peer review (Bloor, 1983), self review (Peshkin, 1988), and offers comparisons with a large body of existing research in the professional literature. The use of multiple modes of data, in addition to peer review, provided for a triangulation of data and a triangulation of review.

Peer Review

It was pointed out earlier in this chapter, and in the documents supplied with Appendices A through D, that Pioneer faculty members were involved in this research process. Those interviewed had the opportunity to reflect on their initial words, and many did. The interview format allowed research subjects the chance to "refocus" and to "redefine" the meanings they created about their working world. Similarly, other members of the Pioneer staff served as reviewers of the observations used in this work. They had the opportunity to offer their own critique and input into my interpretations of the cultural realities at Pioneer. Lastly, one Pioneer staff member, representing a broad set of faculty perspectives, served as a an "unofficial" member of the dissertation committee. That

staff member read and offered valuable critique to each draft of this manuscript in areas of form and content.

Triangulating Data

The design of this research work relies on three separate formal techniques of data collection. This triangulating of data (Patton, 1980; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mathison, 1988; Merriam, 1988) is defined as "the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 146). Interviewing, participant observation and the archival research that comes from documents offer three solid and important methods of collecting data. Each brings a unique perspective to the research process as each involves the researcher as participant to varying degrees. The information obtained through the use of those techniques are weighed against and tempered with the background of history supplied by the narrative. The use of a multidimensional technique of data collection allows more than one voice to be heard and to be shared with a professional audience.

One teacher at Pioneer served as peer reviewers for this work. The teacher offered a final and most poignant critique for my conclusions. The teacher has veteran status at the school and has been part of the change process that has taken place during the past six years, yet is looked upon as someone who represents most of the faculty. The

peer reviewer was an important link that brought continuity to the project. Teachers as peer reviewers are an important stage in a cohesive system of both internal and external review of any educational research that deals with professional life in schools.

Practioner as Researcher

> Quantification is not the touchstone of scientific method. Insight is the touchstone. (Willard Waller, 1934, p. 288)

Being a researcher is in itself a reflective act. Prior research, particularly The Teacher's Room (Nowicki, 1988) an unpublished work about the life of a teacher in a public school, addressed the impact of teaching and then reflecting about what it means to be a teacher. Current educators such as Canning (1991), Evans (1991) and Wellington (1991) among many others, advocate for reflective practioners. I might add that it is similarly important to expand that initiative to teacher-researchers.

In the following four chapters, narrative combines with data gleaned from interviews, from long term participant observation, and from documents to present a case study of the faculty of a school in change. The changes in the educational world of Pioneer are forceful and deal with important issues grounded in cultural changes that faculty members were confronted with and, at the same time created.

CHAPTER V

PROFESSIONAL CULTURE: SCHOOL AS FAMILY

> This place is like an old pair of shoes. It feels comfortable.
>
> Words from a long time Pioneer Teacher.

Overview of Chapter

This chapter is the first of four data analysis chapters incorporated into this work. As I stated in the introduction, each chapter contributes a particular insight into the faculty culture at Pioneer as that culture dealt with changes brought by restructuring.

The past six years have brought many changes to the culture shared by the Pioneer faculty. One of those changes has been in how faculty members view themselves in relationships with peers. In describing what it means to work at Pioneer and to go through the changes that Pioneer faculty have seen, those interviewed very often used the word "family". This chapter initially focuses on what the metaphor of family means for those working at Pioneer. Later headings within this chapter describe "The family of the Past" (before the change to detracking) shared by faculty members, the "Change to a Professional Family" during a time of cultural redefinition encompassed within the past six years, and addresses current views of what the metaphor of family means to faculty members. Each section within this chapter offers an analysis of the meanings

constructed by Pioneer faculty members about their working world and in response to the changes brought by restructuring.

The words of some teachers reflect the older, and socially oriented "family" of the Pioneer faculty. In contrast a more "professional family" has begun to emerge. Pioneer is a school where exceptional things are taking place for students. It is a school where teachers view the classroom as the place to express their creative energies. Many across the nation have taken an interest in what goes on at Pioneer, the "detracked school". The Pioneer faculty has undergone changes as the school has changed. Those changes, created by Pioneer faculty, have also battered them. There are common agreements shared by those who work at the school. "Working together" is one key point to the process of teaching at Pioneer. Learning how to be a teacher and deal with school wide and professional change is another. There are other and important keystones that buttress relationships and give meaning to those working at the school. The meaning deals with the essential and inseparable sense of "what I am" as a teacher and "who I am as a person". Members of a staff take meaning from their social associations at the school. What takes place within the "family" of Pioneer often provides a sense of meaning to members in much the same way that a traditional family provides meaning to its members.

Changes within a culture shared by a faculty do not happen overnight. To be sure, those changes take place over time. The Pioneer experience suggests that changes in the "Metaphor of Family", so frequently used by staff members in describing their school, have been percolating within the cultural realm shared by faculty during the past six years. Also during the past six years there has been a change in the family life at the school that has grown with intensity. As the data that follow indicate, the move to a professional family has broken down the strict adherence to prescribed roles among the faculty. As agendas in the classroom began to change and teachers began to see students as individuals, the older, established order among teachers and administrators began to change. Teachers could be creative individuals and could share the products of their work with other teachers in much the same way they shared their work with students. Teachers began to talk about "what they did in their classrooms". They began to reflect on the way they practiced their craft and in the process opened the sanctity of their classrooms to a greater world.

During this time of a growing professional dialogue, coinciding with the move to heterogeneous grouping, many Pioneer teachers found that the greater outside community of educators had little to offer the classroom teachers at Pioneer in terms of strategies and approached to detracked

teaching. Pioneer teachers began to turn to each other for professional support in a social network that long offered social support. The result was the beginning of a change to a professional family of faculty that built upon and later replaced the historic social one. The "family" change at Pioneer paralleled important cultural shifts and actual changes in the way the school was organized.

The data presented in this chapter describe the change in the definition of "family" at Pioneer. As in any family, not all the members agree with the changes or enjoy the new found professional support. Some, in fact, find such a change threatening and long for the days when the word "family" carried a different meaning to the school's faculty.

The Metaphor of a Family

Walking the halls of Pioneer it is impossible not to feel the closeness that is shared by students and faculty alike. There is also an infectious energy in the school. Students and faculty seem to want to be there. It is necessary to remember that this school is a public junior-senior high school. A number of students secretly admit that they do not look forward to summer vacations; they'd rather continue into the summer. The school is <u>that</u> powerful a force in their lives.

Schools are unique social institutions in that they are extensions or replacements for the "actual families" of

students. Educators in schools are entrusted with the responsibility of being surrogate parents for children. Educators symbolically serve as surrogate parents. The notion of a school faculty -- as family within themselves -- does not exclude the relationships that exist between students and faculty. In fact, the culture shared by the faculty dictates the tenor of faculty-student relationships. Bringing change to the relationships of a school's faculty directly impacts the "adult", "expert", and "parental role" that teachers socially share with students.

There is a confident air displayed by many of the faculty. It is evident in the way teachers and administrators step through the school, it is found in the many animated and excited conversations that take place in the faculty room about teaching, and it certainly is clear in classrooms where many students and teachers are working together toward common goals.

Taking a closer look at the social world of the school one may begin to notice that Pioneer is clearly not a utopia or in perfect harmony. Divisions exist among faculty members for not everyone shares the same philosophical outlook or are in agreement about educational practice. Not everyone is committed to the directions that the "school" has taken in the recent past. Still, in spite of differences, there remains a bond between most Pioneer

faculty members that is not a simple reflection of the togetherness of a small school.

The concept of "family" is inherent in the way numerous Pioneer faculty view the social world of their school. The school's faculty as "family" is one metaphor that helps those who work at the school put the social world they work in and their place within it in a clear perspective. Metaphors help individuals and groups to create and understand the many meanings of social reality. This chapter looks at how the changes that have taken place in the way Pioneer was organized as a school go along with changes in the meanings projected by the idea "family". As the data presented in the chapter indicate, the use of "family" as a descriptive term presents how many on the Pioneer faculty view their working world. It does not imply a "contented" group that shares total agreement of socially constructed meanings.

Families are not static social groups. They are dynamic, vibrant, and the individuals within them are constantly engaged in the process of interpretation and redefinition. Families constantly deal with challenges to their existing definitions of social reality from within and from without. One would not expect to find perfect accord in any large family. Children do not always agree with the interpretations made by parents and parents surely do not agree with the actions of grandparents. Members do

not always agree on the directions family life can take. While some members feel included, others can feel excluded. One need not think past their own "family experiences" to understand the agreements and conflicts inherent in any family. The social agreements that are found in a family are the result of the on-going process of negotiating the meanings of social reality that give a sense of structure to family life.

Why focus a chapter on the metaphor of family? The word itself carries powerful images. It suggests emotional closeness produced by a common experience that goes beyond the boundaries connoted by the word "friendship". "Family" conveys a picture of loyalty, support, and caring. Its use reflects the strong bonds that can exist between people who are related. In the case of Pioneer, while the relationships are based not on blood as one would find in a natural family, relationships are viewed by many of those who work at the school with the emotional intensity and attachment they expect would be found in a family. For many at Pioneer, social life and working life have been interchangeable. Those new to the Pioneer experience have found themselves "adopted" into the family.

The use of the family metaphor provides a basis for understanding the past history of relationships among faculty at the school as well as the current social climate and offers an important starting point in data analysis. It

serves as a backdrop for understanding the cultural changes that have taken place at Pioneer and the struggles of role redefinition that come with restructuring and cultural change in a school that following chapters address. The cultural changes that have swept through Pioneer's faculty have left the distinct mark of change on the concept of "family" at the school.

The term "family" was first suggested by many of the teachers and administrators interviewed as part of this research process. The term was also used by several seniors graduating this spring in describing what their senior class was like. Family membership at Pioneer, for many, brings a sense of belonging and gives them meaning. The People of Pioneer used the term to describe <u>their</u> world. With it the school becomes a place around which both faculty and students can organize their worlds and offers an insight into how the family concept structures social relationships in the school. It also reflects changes in those structures.

The Family of the Past

The faculty family at Pioneer strives for a "common good" for students. That is its mission. At one time that "good" consisted of organizing the school along strictly defined roles. The roles affected both students and faculty. For example, it was "the school" that decided what academic group a student would be placed in on entry into

the seventh grade. Faculty knew who were the "bright groups" and who were the "low groups". The school was acting as "a wise and prudent parent" in deciding what was the greatest benefit for all children. Likewise, suggesting forms of colonial views of child-adult relationships concerned with the "common good" of students, faculty taught in a fashion that kept distances between them and students and at the same time professionally isolated teachers from each other.

The Pioneer "family" did not find its definition in a "professional" approach. They were professionals in the classes they taught. Among themselves, they reflected the standard image of teachers held by those in society. They did not have either the pay or status of "true" professionals. The emphasis of the historical Pioneer "family" focused more on social issues rather than professional ones. Faculty cared for one another, and Pioneer was (and still is) a center for social life for many people. But that life was focused on, as one teacher mentioned, the belief that "we're all teachers working together so let's care about each other as people" rather than "how much can we share as professionals in our classes".

Most public school teachers, from my own experience and from what has been so eloquently described by others, work in a world that isolates them in classrooms yet

demands involvement with others. It is a paradoxical relationship. To have been a teacher at Pioneer in the past meant that one was isolated in a classroom yet had the social family of the faculty, not only to fall back on for support at the end of a teaching day, but in which one had the personal friendships that comprised an out of school social life.

These arrangements spilled over from the classroom and into what was the faculty social life. Clearly, the faculty was close knit in the past. The school was the place where social friends could meet. That family gave support to each other. But the family of the past was more structured, more organized according to a strict set of rules that held individuals to the roles they either were assigned or agreed to. In the "family" of faculty, teachers and administrators were given an identity. If the unstated message was to get along and be friends, that was how roles were structured. Pioneer at the time was administered by long term superintendents and, as later chapters will indicate, often under an autocratic top down rule. That leadership reflected how the teachers viewed themselves and how students were viewed. If the end of the year social event separated faculty members by gender (the long time male only golf tournament) then, simply, that was the way things were. Men had a role and women had a role and a position, just as students had a categorized place in

ability groups. The dialogue of the faculty room related more to social issues and friendships. As one teacher stated,

> compared to the other school I worked in [before], Pioneer was a big change....faculty here wanted to know me. I feel like there are people here who care about me.

Another teacher mentioned that,

> there was a closeness on the staff, I noticed right away...people seemed to work together more here...people here seemed willing to cover for each other and help each other out more often. Other places people are often seen as threats to each other, but that didn't happen as much here.

In describing the faculty, other teachers offered comments such as,

> We have had a good faculty but no hard cliques. We pull together, stick together and care for each other. We care for individuals.
>
> There was an open feeling that faculty can communicate with each other.
>
> There are also no huge distinctions between administration and faculty here. For instance, no one (a teacher) would consider going to see a superintendent in other schools I've worked in unless there was an issue about being 'docked' or a problem. Here, the door is usually open. That is a major change.
>
> I truly love it here. We're quiet...peaceful. I think you can be friends with the people you work with from custodian, to the principal, to the library aide. We all work together.

Finally, as two others offered, "This is a caring place" and, "I fell in love with this school many years ago."

Some of the "special quality" that separates a school from other organizations comes directly from the socially

charged mission of preparing and protecting children. Yet, when compared to each other, schools are also unique. The Pioneer Valley Regional School is no exception.

As suggested earlier, size contributes to Pioneer's distinctive characteristics. Being a small school places the people of Pioneer in a constant social light that is not always easy to escape. It is a place where most everyone knows your first name whether you are a student, a faculty member, one of the kitchen crew in the cafeteria or a custodian. These are constants in both the school of the past and in the school presently. At Pioneer, names go along with faces and have personal histories. One teacher commented, "No one here is invisible, teacher or student."

But small size does not explain why the relationships among the faculty take on the characteristics of a "family" rather than tight adherence to rigid bureaucratic roles often found in a school. The older social family of Pioneer left a legacy upon which new the new metaphor is based. Staff members have traditionally reached out to others in the school community when those others were in need. For example, teachers contribute to a "bank" of sick days. If an individual is seriously ill, that person can request sick days from the "bank" and the faculty would vote on the request. Those benefits have been extended to requests that came from beyond the professional staff and to non-professionals who have been ill. Similarly, issues such as

a death or serious illness in an actual family of a staff member produces a genuine out pouring of assistance. For example, when the child of one staff member suffered a serious illness and needed long term hospitalization in a distant city and demanding the attention of both parents, a number of staff members helped with the day to day operation of that faculty member's family in their absence.

Events such as the annual scholarship dinner, a veteran teacher's retirement, or a call for assistance involve most all the staff in a joint production that finds teachers and administrators working side by side with custodians and the cafeteria crew in nonacademic activities. For many faculty members, social life was intertwined with their workplace life. In fact, the bonds of friendship that many at Pioneer shared with each other were forged in the social world of the school.

Teachers looked to one another as friends. Like some of the students, school was a place to go because it was where your social friends were. At the same time it was not as much a place for the professional support and dialogue that teachers, like many other professionals, need to stay at the top of their fields. The Pioneer of six years ago offered what some teachers have described as,

> a place where you got contact and support...what you get from a family.
>
> it was a very close faculty.
>
> close knit faculty....family type.

> A lot of us did more things together socially back then. We seemed to get along better with one another.
>
> We'd get together more often, often weekly. We were more of one big group.
>
> I worked with my closest friends.
>
> You'd have everyone involved in some faculty event...not like now where there is no unity.

And finally,

> These people I've worked with have really been my family. We helped each other through life and were really close.
>
> Pioneer...this is my family.

The professional history and metaphor of the past family reflected a concern for "staying the course". In my experience as a teacher in a number of school districts such an attitude is not unusual. That is not to say that Pioneer teachers were not professionally active. There was a great deal of achievement by staff and students but often much of what took place in a professional sense remained in the world of the individual classroom and was not shared. Pioneer had a nucleus of creative faculty but a great deal of their creativity remained locked in the isolation of a particular classroom. Teachers followed roles that promoted a social family rather than a professional one. For example, while teachers might very well agree on a social point and share in a solution to a common problem from outside of their classrooms, they might not agree with particular teaching strategies or styles.

Emphasis on professional rather than social issues served to highlight individual differences among staff members, while building the strong sense of social family reinforced ideas such as friendship and solidarity. One example is the teachers' contract. Teachers historically have been rewarded for longevity while only briefly acknowledged for educational level attained. Professional development does not bring large pay increases yet working a long time does. Another is the dialogue exchanged by those at the school. Six years ago it was more common to hear talk in the faculty room about what was happening for the faculty socially than professionally. Now, while there still is a great deal of talk about issues of friendship and social life, there also is a tremendous amount of dialogue about issues related to teaching at Pioneer, about the way the school is organized, and about a restructuring of the teaching profession. Many teachers now see each other not only as friends but as serious professionals. Those changes in self image are incorporated in the changing notion of family.

Pioneer also lives in the shadow of a nationally known prep school that continually siphons away a few Pioneer students, many of which in the past were children of Pioneer staff members. Though there has been greater teacher as parent involvement in sending their own children to Pioneer, children of town members and faculty alike

continue to leave Pioneer to attend the private school for a wide variety of reasons. The meaning of students leaving Pioneer did in the past and continues to send messages not only to Pioneer students but also to Pioneer faculty. Still there have been changes not only for students but also for faculty. I remember the lament of one faculty member, six years ago, as the teacher told me in a depressed voice of how the students who "could make a difference left Pioneer for greener pastures". The contract teachers worked under, placing them at one of the lower state wide positions and the loss of students to elite schools only reinforced the fact that Pioneer was a place for the middle of the road student and likewise for the middle of the road teacher.

In many ways such beliefs are a carry over from a once rigidly tracked school in which <u>both</u> students <u>and</u> teachers were "tracked" in preconceived positions and were expected to follow existing definitions of social and cultural reality. Teachers were expected to act in a certain fashion as were students. These expectations came from the "family" teachers belonged to. The traditional role of a teacher was to do a job and keep out of the public eye. The social family allowed teachers to work as experts in their own classrooms yet, at the same time, encouraged teachers to publicly understate that expertise.

Teachers and Students:

Surrogate Parents Constant in the Metaphor

Walk again through Pioneer. The tension often found in many schools today is missing. Students and faculty constantly share a dialogue that reflects cooperation and concern rather than animosity or antagonism. This doesn't mean that every day and every class are perfect. Pioneer teachers, students and administrators face the dilemmas that people in schools face each and every day across the nation. But clearly, for all those who work at Pioneer, one central issue focuses on students.

In many ways the metaphor of a social family among faculty was grounded in the care provided for fellow faculty family members. That sense of focused concern was also deeply linked to how students were cared for. Students were the reason for the faculty's existence. If the faculty were "friendly" or "parental" or "involved" with student life, that was a cultural directive of the faculty family. Functioning as surrogate parents not only fit with the metaphor of family for faculty, it enhanced it. A teacher stated,

> This is a small school where teachers have good relationships with kids.

Another faculty member mentioned,

> Small school does help but it does not even begin to explain the feeling of teaching at this school.

It is important to listen to the words of the teachers in the school, as they describe their work place and their role in it. Their world is linked to children. In their eyes they believe that they truly responsible for the welfare of Pioneer students. Students are central in what it means to teach at the school for teachers. In the series of thirty-six interviews conducted as a major component of this study, every faculty member expressed some level of concern for the students at the school.

As one teacher offers,

> The kids are what I really enjoy. They want to incorporate you as part of their life.

The teacher goes on to add that,

> So and so called me last night. Someone else the night before. They had questions about what we covered in class that day. In the other school I taught in you had to maintain the distance.

Another teacher stated,

> It's easier here to say "call me at home". I think it is important that kids can do that.

There is a sense of trust that exists between the faculty and students at Pioneer which includes access to students, parents, and faculty. That trust traditionally reduced the distances that often exist between the members of a school's community. It is common, at times inconvenient, to have students or parent call a faculty member's home. That access and incorporation into the school is offered for all students. For many at the school,

teaching and learning are viewed as team efforts. Another teacher says,

> You feel a part of a professional team that is concerned with and for kids.

One more stated,

> "The kids are OK. No problems, no hassles."

A goal in family life is to rear the young through growth years and toward adulthood. The adults in a family share the concern and responsibility for bringing about that goal. The teaching family at Pioneer is no different and at times, exaggerates that emphasis. As one teacher stated, "I'm really here for the kids".

Another added,

> The thing that struck me when I came here was that the kids were so friendly.

Other teachers offered that,

> Kids should be at the center of any agenda in a school.

> You know the kids here and they know you.

> I really believe that most kids find school interesting here and that most faculty keep changing to make it interesting.

The concern for students spills over into extracurricular activities. The high percentage of student participation in school sports (about 80 percent) and the fact that many students are also involved in more than one extra activity, encourages the closeness between faculty and students. Many faculty serve as advisors to clubs and classes or as coaches to teams. Some faculty are deeply

involved in more than one activity. Given the nonexistent or minimal pay that many faculty receive for extra work, the motivation for spending large amounts of time with a club, a group, or a team comes from a sense of care for the students. As one teacher points out,

> For example, the amount of compensation I receive for coaching a team works out to less than two dollars per hour for myself and my co-coach. I don't think we do it for the money.

The commitment of Pioneer teachers to students doesn't resolve all differences between faculty and students. There are still too many angry students, struggling with issues that can be very intense. There are students, particularly those who transfer into Pioneer from other schools who feel the atmosphere is "too protective" and "closed in". They tend to feel that "too often everyone knows what is happening to you". Likewise there are parents that would much rather play the role of school wide critic or no role at all concerning the school rather than the role of supporter. Not all faculty and all students and parents get along or agree on many issues. But the relationships between faculty and students do have an effect on the climate of the school and on how the vast majority of students and teachers view themselves. Those relationships are grounded in issues of nurturing and preparing students for a demanding future. The underlying sense of responsibility that many Pioneer teachers feel toward their students and about themselves as teachers at times borders

on the concerns a parent might have. Those feelings structure the relationships in the school providing a large sense of meaning to what it means to be a member of the school's community.

As one teacher powerfully commented,

> It (Pioneer) is a family in terms of my students. I dream students.

Another added,

> They (students) are the whole reason we are here. The reason the school is here. All of education has to remind itself of that.....and we here have to keep reminding ourselves here at Pioneer of that.

A last teacher, with simple eloquence, stated, "Being a teacher here means relating to kids."

The sense of commitment to students shared by Pioneer teachers is a direct linkage between the social family of the past among faculty and the newer more professional description of faculty life. The issue of concern for students runs so deep in the culture of the school that it served as the primary catalyst for changing the way the school was organized. That sense of concern for students also served to focus those for and against any change at Pioneer. Proponents and opponents of change worried about the well being of Pioneer students. At times, during the past six years, the concern for students have become a driving force for curriculum change and innovation . For example, major subject seventh grade teachers requested a common planning time and on their own built a "seventh

grade team". The teachers found that working together, sharing a common planning time, and being able to exchange ideas about best meeting the specific learning needs of individual students and about meeting the needs of the seventh grade as a group not only brought them together as teachers, but brought the class together. The common planning time the teachers requested took up their free period. There was no question about doing an "extra duty" or about "pay". These teachers were willing to use their time for student and group issues. They had to pressure the administration into scheduling the common time. The result of the experience has been a functioning seventh grade team. Parent contact, already valued at the school, was further increased. Contact with special educators became more profitable. Most importantly, individual students and the class benefitted as the actual learning styles of individual students could now be more easily addressed. All seventh grade students began to have individual educational plans, whether official or unofficial. The emphasis was and continues to be on the student.

The success of the seventh grade team lead to the development of an after school program for those who needed extra help, termed "SOS" or "Supervision of Study". An eighth grade teacher suggested developing "leadership councils" for the two junior high school grades which would

"insure that all students would be involved in their class". Both junior high school classes adopted the model.

At other levels of the school the commitment of teachers to students is clear. For example, senior high students asked for and received a team taught "Shakespeare and the Law" course which brought the Social Studies-Law teacher together with the English-Shakespeare teacher. Both teachers taught the course as a non-paid overload.

The descriptions of teachers working together parallel the changes in the definition of "family" at the school among faculty. The more faculty worked together, the greater the professional support that was shared. Gradually, the old rules of the social family began to be modified and replaced. The powerful belief in the responsibilities teachers held regarding students, which was a staple of the older family metaphor, became a motive for changing the structure of the school and thus forcing a redefinition of family to fit the restructured school. Relationships began to be structured according to issues of teaching rather than social life. Also consistent in the professional dialogue beginning to take place at Pioneer was a realization of how important <u>all</u> students were.

As change evolved, not all faculty members have agreed with the direction their work day "family" is taking. For Pioneer teachers, like members of a traditional family, deep seated disagreements between family members take place

over issues which seem to focus on petty events. At times those disagreements can explode from such mundane conflicts as "who gets to use one room over another" or from such simple issues as "the places a teacher leaves their books in someone else's classroom". As one teacher wondered aloud,

> I don't think there is anyone here who does not truly care about kids.....so I wonder why as a faculty we can be so divided on teacher issues?

Teachers: A Social Family to a Professional Family

Pioneer teachers work in a place that brings them close to one another day after day. A decision made in one part of the building easily impacts what goes on in a different department. Teachers here are linked, like it or not, to the actions of their peers. The school does not have enough places where teachers can "run and hide", and to be sure, no teacher here is an island.

Such closeness leads to a direct dialogue about what takes place at the school. As one teacher suggested "you can't ignore what someone else is doing....good or bad." Pioneer is not a place where some faculty never know others by a last name, never mind first, as happens among large staffs. That closeness was made quite clear to me when I first came to the school and involved me whether or not I liked it. (For example, information about me, going back to my high school days, was made open to all the faculty on my first day of work at the school in a packet published by

the administration for the faculty. It hasn't happened since that year but it did make others aware of my background. Unfortunately it would take me years to learn their histories.) That closeness also makes teachers keenly aware of what is happening around them.

Toward the Professional Family

The school shapes the teachers as much as the teacher can shape the school. There is a constant playing off and against what teachers see around them as they interpret new meanings that they themselves helped to create. Those personal meanings affect the classroom and other teachers across the school.

To work at Pioneer can be an empowering experience. As one teacher stated,

> Teachers are at the core of anything here. They write curriculum, do their own plans.

Other teachers added,

> Here, if you feel that you are getting stale you can do something about it.
>
> Teaching here is an adventure and exciting. The kids, I think are much happier.
>
> I see the majority of people I work with happy with what they are doing. They are now fine tuning rather than struggling.
>
> We have teachers who provide in their uniqueness good experiences for kids.

Another offered,

> The majority of people are working really hard and doing neat things...but there are a few who aren't.

Each of these comments demonstrates changes in the family metaphor of Pioneer. Students remain the centerpiece but now faculty are also talking about their own teaching and about the changes they have made in response to structural changes at the school. Many teachers have discovered that they have control over their lives as teachers. At the same time the professional family provides professional support to the teacher in the classroom which the social family simply could not do. It didn't have that ability.

Teaching at Pioneer has come to mean more than working in a place where kids and adults are linked together in a common situation. That ideal, still strong for teachers, is now enhanced with teachers as professionals. "The atmosphere here has been changing during the past five or so years" as one teacher suggested, "It always was important to develop your own work but now there is much more important support and constructive criticism from the people I work with than there was in the past." That "atmosphere" has led to teachers writing and winning grants for curriculum, teachers presenting curriculum that is at the cutting edge of educational innovation, and a new view about what it means to teach at Pioneer. Other teachers describe the world of the school for teachers as,

> My sense is people are part of a team...and now professionally recognized.
>
> I have a great deal of freedom here.

> Working here is a pleasant emotional experience as a teacher. My colleagues make this school so special and there are some real unique kids here.
>
> In the last two years I've seen amazing things happen. I've seen the finest teachers I've ever met get together and move forward and "come out" with what we have here.
>
> No one's on your back, you do what you want in your class. You can be a teacher.

The empowerment that has taken place at Pioneer has its supporters that come from a wide majority of the faculty. It has fueled their desire to innovate and tempered their fears of rethinking their working world. These changes have happened during a time of negatives in society about education in general, and about teachers in particular.

Unlike six years ago, Pioneer teachers do not consider themselves "middle of the road". They see themselves at the top of their profession. Their expectations for themselves and their classes are higher. The nationally recognized professional achievements of many at Pioneer encourage further professional development while serving as an unwelcome reminder of changes for others who saw the growing emphasis on professional cooperative development threatening.

Some of those teachers lament the changes in the faculty during the past half decade. "I wish we were close, like we were before", one teacher stated. "I think it is unfortunate that we aren't as friendly as we once were."

Another teacher offered,

> I know that we were much more together as a staff in the past. I realize that we've changed. Maybe we've grown older.

For these teachers "togetherness" was equated with social life, rather than a "professionally social life". Teachers were friends and co-workers. "A good staff", a teacher told me when I started at the school six years ago, "lot of friendly people. Not many try to ruffle anyone else's feathers".

The social closeness of the school was continually in front of me. My first year teaching at Pioneer was the first year I'd ever been sent a birthday card by the principal. Other teachers have told me about similar feelings. What is equally important is that the cards continue each year.

But parties and get togethers have faded over the past five years. That in itself has prompted concern from some, worry from others and outright anger from a few. "This place used to be better" one teacher told me. "It was a place I felt comfortable coming to. I'm not so sure about now." Others told me,

> Pioneer has meant social and professional life....this place was a family....there was a closeness...probably still is but in different terms.

> We used to be socially cohesive. Now we disagree quite a bit.

Things at Pioneer clearly have not been the same as they were eight or ten or even six years ago. New staff hired in the past five years (eight during the past five years) and other teachers, veteran and non-veteran, have left the school for reasons that run the gamut from retirement through new teaching opportunities to new professional interests. The staff that has replaced them are relatively younger, by Pioneer standards, yet the new staff are veterans in their own right.

In time the social connections of family have also changed for reasons which no one had planned or even envisioned six years ago. The connections that still make staff members a "family" among themselves as well as with students have been refined and altered by the force of educational change hitting the school. Family in the social sense of the word has become family in a social-professional sense. That in itself has brought extreme pressure to bear on most everyone who works at Pioneer.

The meaning of what it is to be a teacher at the school is in a process of redefinition. Teachers look at the world around them and see change. The changes come in terms of what takes place in classrooms and in what takes place in their school. The closeness that has been a Pioneer tradition remains. It now only magnifies change and what change means for teachers. What one Pioneer teacher did in another part of the school affected what other

teachers did in their classroom. Those classroom changes or changes in school wide policy began to have an impact on other teachers. For the small school staff, long a social family enjoying individuality in their classrooms and working with school wide structures that they were comfortable with, the far sweeping changes overtaking the faculty began to have greater and greater implications. Pioneer is a small school. Change in policy means change for all.

The move to heterogeneous grouping was a catalyst for change in the life of a school and in the professional and personal lives of teachers who work there. Changes in the past six years have battered the images that teachers have held about themselves. Those changes have placed the school in a new light as many others have taken an interest in what takes place at Pioneer. The changes cross the boundaries of roles dictated by school culture. Who teachers are and what they mean to themselves has changed as the school has evolved to a place more student centered and less teacher centered. For the staff, the constant redefinition of roles and of what it means to teach at Pioneer, has been an intense experience.

Changes in the Family of Teachers

The closeness among many Pioneer teachers remains. In such a small school it is impossible to ignore what is taking place next to you or at the other end of the

building. But as the family is redefined Pioneer, as one would find in any family, teachers must symbolically and physically face each other everyday realizing that there are differences between them. In other words, teachers must deal with the knowledge that there are changes going on in their school that will (and do) affect them.

For the faculty, though, there have been paramount changes in what it means to work at the school. Not all are in agreement with the results of change. Slowly evolving away is the image of a social family among teachers. Replacing it is the image of a professional family. The new family culture is a synthesis of the care for students and for other teachers that carried over from the past yet that synthesis tries to incorporate all teachers into membership. Care for students buttresses the beliefs of all those who are members of this professional family and there is still a personal history of teaching together in the same school.

The Changing Dialogue of a Faculty Room

In some schools it is called a "Faculty Lounge"; in others a "Teachers' Room". In all schools the room is a place where teachers, and occasionally administrators, can go to enjoy private space. "Teachers' Rooms" are the places that provide the behind-the-scenes and back stage places for those working in schools. Any study of a teachers' culture in a school must take into account the school's

faculty room. It is where the day begins for teachers. It is also where it ends. It is where they begin to interpret those around them and where they have access to making sense of their world as teachers working with other teachers. Outside of classrooms, it may well be the most powerful and important source of group activity in any school simply because it is the place where the mail box and message board are located (at Pioneer the traditional message is that "Checks are in!) or where a bag lunch is stored. Even those who claim to avoid the room at Pioneer use it for its information distribution or copying machine. As surgical doctors have their "locker" or "after" rooms and lawyers have their special places for gathering as they perform their craft, so do teachers. The teachers' room is to teachers what those back space rooms, backstage from the public, are to any other occupation.

If Teachers' Rooms are where a school's faculty can let down its guard from the outside world, not all Teachers' Rooms are free from the stress of being places where one is forced to deal with peers. In some schools Faculty Rooms are separated by gender (one in particular I worked in had a label of "Hen's" painted on the door jamb and was often referred to by the principal as the "chicken coop"; in another school the principal would on occasion chuckle about how the men's and women's rest rooms both faced "directly into the faculty room" and of how "that

made life embarrassing for teachers"). At Pioneer, the faculty room holds a sense of safe haven for adults. The faculty room at Pioneer is also a place where faculty talk and catch a breath.

My first impressions of the faculty room at Pioneer, being a veteran-yet-new-to-the-school teacher six years ago, were that I wasn't listening to the dialogue of teachers that had so often littered other faculty rooms. Teachers were not lambasting students in character attacking sessions. Much of the dialogue was friendly, with a lot of wry humor about being teachers. For example, one memorable comment from a veteran teacher to a new student teacher was that "teaching was a job that demanded the responsibilities of a job" and was "not some out of body experience".

Most of the talk was about teachers' social life. It took a while to learn that the names exchanged were husbands, wives, and children of teachers. I realized that the people at Pioneer were a strong community. It is also important to note that two teachers came to me during my first year and mentioned that they thought I was doing something valuable by "making my students write and express their ideas" and that "not enough of that was done". Those comments were just about the limit of the "professional dialogue" I encountered. Now it is common to hear a teacher speak to others about an article in a professional journal.

The tiny Pioneer faculty room, with its "cubbies" for mail boxes, was a place of community for me. It was a friendly place. The long out lived furniture, old and erratic bottle dispensing soda machine that took everyone's change, and the equally old (and always breaking down) photo copying unit (bought used years before), only served to give the room a sense of character. It also was a symbolic image of the Pioneer faculty. It was a place where I listened a great deal trying to find out who my peers were. If there was little talk about professional development it was fine with me. I was trying to survive in a new school with a veteran staff.

There have been changes during the past five years in the dialogue of the faculty room in terms of content and in the tenor of the dialogue. If the room is a meeting place and a place in which meaning among working professionals is shared, the room begins to have a great impact as a location for analysis.

Some of the new dialogue in the faculty room has seen heated exchanges between teachers coming from opposing points of perspectives that enjoin philosophy and practice, in particular the issue of heterogeneous grouping. The faculty room has at times seen teachers fighting over how their work place is to be run or about how students are being affected by the public changes (identified by the very public events detailed in Appendix G) faculty are

making or not making to their curriculum. The dialogue that has taken place during the recent past in the Pioneer faculty room has often crossed once acceptable boundaries for teacher behavior. Negotiation about what the reality and meaning of the school is for students and teachers became an ongoing experience.

During the past two years of this study, a quiet faculty has often erupted in passionate exchanges about teacher and student policy. In the sanctity of the faculty room it is easy to see the drawn lines of change among those who work at the school. Some once vocal faculty are now quiet and listening, while other once quiet faculty now voice their piece. A small number of faculty now avoid the room except for checking mail, using the restrooms, or scanning the message board.

Redefining Teaching: A Professional Family

The changes that took place at Pioneer over the past six years and especially during the time of the "Crucible", the focus of the past eighteen months, have brought a redefinition of the idea of "family" to Pioneer staff. It is important to note that the idea of "family" still remains strong among faculty. While student-teacher relationships are still seen in terms of "family" by almost all faculty, relationships among the faculty are not seen in such a unanimous light. There are small segments of the faculty, as one might expect to find in any large family,

in which dismay is expressed about the new directions family "life" has taken. Some members are opposed to the idea of detracking. Others are confused and angry about the change to a more professional dialogue in the facutly room. At times, frustration with those changes has turned to anger.

Similarly, professional relationships are more obvious than they may have been in the past. Symbolic changes continue to take place in the social life of a once "social family of faculty". For example, the all-male teacher end-of-the-year golf tournament withered and died in the course of one year after having a long running history of almost a decade. Last year its numbers were few as it had competed with a coed croquet tournament and party presented by other faculty members who were celebrating their professional accomplishments. Twice as many teachers attended the lawn party as did the golf tournament and six of the ten golfers decided to make an appearance at the lawn party after their golf match. This year the golf tournament was resurrected as a coed contest, though the organizers of the all male tournament and a number of other teachers did not choose to attend.

Recently there has been non-total involvement in faculty social functions. This continues a trend of the past two years of Christmas and end of the year parties not taking place for the faculty because faculty members chose

not to attend. The social family and the social fabric of the faculty is changing as the faculty comes to redefine itself as a group of teaching professionals. For the majority of teachers who accept that definition, Pioneer remains a family of adults working toward the goal of providing a quality education to the children in the eyes of a vast majority of faculty.

In The Words of Teachers:

The Idea of a Family of Professionals

The support of the social family has been shifted to include professional endeavors. This has tightened the professional bonds between a great many faculty members. Many teachers revel in the dialogue that has brought a growing sense of trust and mutual respect for what they do as teachers. As a number of faculty members suggest,

> There is a cohesive atmosphere here, yet, before we were socially closer.
>
> This place has a sense of family with kids, more of a social group. For teachers, now it's more of a professional group.
>
> I really feel that to make the world change is to make people's minds change. Teaching is the way to do that. I hear people here now doing just that.

And,

> In a few years I've seen big changes here. I think it is a cohesive program we put together, unconsciously at first but later it was a conscious effort.

Clearly the impact of change has brought teachers and administrators face to face with redefining what their work place means. Another teacher offers,

> The prevailing characteristic for me is of a family and of a community -- a professional family.

This person goes on to suggest that the "professional family" concept is already strong at Pioneer.

> There is more of this feeling than at any other school I've ever worked at.

Another states,

> You know faculty here. They know you. It's very familial. Now, I enjoy <u>talking about my work</u> to others. I look forward to being here.

Others though see the changes in the once strong social family structure as having brought teachers apart. One teacher offers,

> We have to work toward the cohesiveness in the faculty that we've had. The past four years have brought some differences. We have to pull people back together.

Clearly there are struggles taking place in the internal social and professional framework at the school. It may serve to remind the reader that teaching at the school has been presented in two enormously successful professional conferences and has been portrayed in the statewide and national media as outlined in Chapter Two. It is also clear that not all members of the faculty feel the common social bonds that have come to be associated with

current membership in the school's faculty family, but that in itself is descriptive of the process of change.

Other teachers clearly speak about the change in the family relationships that exist among the faculty. One teacher suggested,

> We are a family here, you know. Much like any other family. Nothing's perfect.

Another adds,

> It is a family. A professional family. Don't you have people who you don't like or don't get along with in terms of your own family? Of course you do. We all do.

Still another offers,

> This staff has a family dialogue that concerns what we do for kids. It's about what goes on in classrooms or what a current policy is for kids. Maybe that is a change from the past.

Teachers are now focusing on issues that speak to classroom teaching, experimentation, and trying new strategies and programs in a greater voice than six years ago. Those issues address how better to serve students now and in the future. In contrast were the older frames of dialogue, often stated in other schools and present a Pioneer of the past, that were concerned with maintaining order, keeping a school and classrooms more teacher and administrator centered, or reinforcing past practice in teaching strategies and methods.

At the same time, working in a school and among a faculty redefining itself to view the world with a much more student centered perspective (much as the

authoritarian parent has been replaced by a more caring image) has also brought the same faculty to begin to view themselves in a more egocentric vein. Some teachers now see themselves as educators with contributions to make to the greater professional world beyond the school. Many took part in the conferences held at the school. A number contribute to the journal. Some have served as presenters at major conferences held in the Northeastern states. Though some faculty members view teachers with their feet in both worlds as paradoxical, others see the two experiences as unifying a professional faculty and encouraging a student centered school.

What is clear at Pioneer is that there is less of a teacher centered dialogue among teachers. It is clear that now students are seen as individuals in many classrooms. Agendas have changed for many teachers and they now talk about meeting the agenda of students. Conversations among faculty still contain critical words about school discipline, student behavior, or administrative policy. Those words are born from the frustrations and stress inherent to teaching in today's world. But at Pioneer one may also hear teachers speaking about a work of educational research dealing with how to teach students or how to organize the students' world of the school. It is not uncommon to find a professional article placed in mailboxes

or a scholarly book dealing with educational practice and/or change passing from hand to hand.

During the past school year, one teacher began a "Teachers' Sharing Network". It is an unofficial group that met on a weekday afternoon, monthly, after school. Any number of teachers would attend and share ideas, strategies, and insights from their classrooms. The workshop has served to reinforce the notion of "professional friendship" along with "social friendship" and many teachers are discovering that friendship and social closeness can include their professional work.

The two major conferences held at the school not only celebrated the concepts of heterogeneous grouping and school change, they also served to thrust the idea of "teachers as professionals" with much to share and to be respected for into the school's center stage.

The images produced by these events have had profound impacts on how the faculty have come to view themselves. While not all faculty share in this dialogue, there are enough faculty involved to give a symbolic sanction that such behavior is all right at Pioneer. That professional dialogue is both an outgrowth and producer of the complimentary professional dialogue that seems to constantly ask "What is best for Pioneer students?" as some teachers offer,

> I see a number of us "out there", out in front of what is happening in education. That means a lot to me.
>
> You realize, here I actually teach across age and ability barriers? I have crossed them. How many teachers can say that?
>
> There is less and less of a "teacher" centered dialogue in terms of how things can only make a teacher's day easier. It seems that what happens now is making a student's class better makes a teacher's workday better.
>
> I think now most of us accept that kids have varying learning styles. That's positive for teachers and students alike.
>
> When I first started teaching I taught as I was taught. In the last couple of years I've become more creative. I keep trying to come up with new ways of doing what I teach. That's what makes this school real happy on a teacher-student level.
>
> It's being part of a family, working with some of these professionals. Was never like this in other schools I've worked in.

And one teacher simply stated,

> Teaching and being a part of this family has made me immortal.

Clearly, for many teachers, Pioneer is a very special place. It is where many of them as teachers and as a staff have professionally flowered. The school and the close knit social family among faculty that Pioneer represented for many teachers served as the bedrock for professionalizing the faculty. Many teachers began to assess their work as professionals as they, the school's staff, began to seriously look at the grouping policy that existed at the school seven years ago. Once changes were made in the

school wide policy, to many teachers it was clear that old methods of teaching would not work any more. It was also clear to many teachers that professional changes were in order for their own classrooms.

Those professional changes translate into very personal ones for teachers. Classrooms are places where teachers work, for the most part, isolated from fellow teachers. They are places that can be seen as personal space. What a teacher does in the classroom is even more a personal activity. As no two human beings are exactly alike, the same is true for teachers. Call it individual or personal styles, approaches, or philosophies, how a teacher approaches her or his task and then carries out that task is a very personal and individual activity. For a teacher to change the way he or she teaches can be a very threatening experience. Change can make the isolated world of the classroom an even more lonely place. But at Pioneer, personal and professional change can be shared with peers going through their own processes of change. The professional family at Pioneer seems to provide the level of support and encouragement that is essential in fostering professional growth. Teachers have become their best supporters as well as their best and most relied upon professional resources. As one teacher stated,

> The feeling is very clear that as a teacher, other teachers are here to help you.

Another added,

> I took a pay cut to come here .... and only because of the students I teach and definitely the majority of teachers I work with. Those teachers are an important part of my life, I'm happier for it now though I'm not sure about the future.

The professional family serves as a nurturing and supportive mechanism for teachers. It is a dynamic and powerful source for the uncountable social webs that bind the collection of Pioneer teachers together. The professional family is always engaged with change, more so than the old perspective of social family, because the dialogue that frames the professional family is one that encourages diversity and experimentation. The older, social family was built around social roles which, for the majority of Pioneer teachers, have now been extended and give support to the professional.

At Pioneer, the professional world extends into the social. Where the social family provided a level of concern for the social well being of the individual teacher it tended to sacrifice individuality for group solidarity. Teachers were encouraged to be "members of the group". They were encouraged by the family to take part in social events. The reality they shared placed restrictions and limits on teachers as the social organization of the school placed restrictions on the positions of students and teachers in the school. The professional family, on the other hand, has encouraged the individuality of both

students and faculty to the point that individuality feeds the identity of the family of faculty. If the classrooms in the school have become more student-centered and brought a new way of looking at students as individuals, the same has taken place in the dialogue shared by the faculty.

For all the Pioneer faculty, the changes manifested in the past few years have been revolutionary, whether or not they agreed with those changes. Those changes have been extremely stressful. Social relationships have been complimented and altered by professional relationships. Some teachers have pushed the processes of change forward while others have adopted a supportive yet watch-and-see attitude. No one Pioneer faculty member could have seen the consequences and impacts of change on the faculty, while there were many who have seen hopes realized or exceeded for students. The impact of change is evident in the words shared by faculty members. As one teacher said,

> There was more closeness, socially a better feeling a few years ago.

Others added,

> We seem more divided now. It puzzles me why.

> There are some people who don't care to change or maybe they can't. Clearly they won't.

But another teacher responded,

> I feel distance between me and a majority of the faculty that I never felt three years ago.

One more voice stated,

> I don't feel like going into the faculty room like I used to. Things are different.

The faculty room has seen the silence of teachers sitting at different tables and not acknowledging one another. That has had a powerful impact on the staff of this small school that prided itself on close faculty-faculty relationships. In trying to make sense of these obvious changes, faculty quietly ask one another "What's wrong?" or "How can we get ourselves back together?" in much the same way that family members question one another during a crisis. The teachers are asking themselves and those around them in literal and symbolic terms "What does all this change mean for the school and what does it all mean for me?"

Those from the two viewpoints disagree as to the changes among the faculty and in the school. The withdrawn minority quietly blames the others for "changing a really social and together group of people". They long for the "days when we were all friends".

Those holding to the more widely held perspective feel a sense of elan and pride that flows directly from the professional family. Just two September's earlier, an opening day speaker brought in by the superintendent urged the Pioneer faculty to,

> Show off what you have done as a teacher. There are some very talented people here but if you

don't let the world know about it no one cares.
Don't be afraid to blow your own horn.

That advice was taken literally by many of the staff, as later chapters will show, and the effects are still being felt by the school's community. Pioneer educators have gone through personal and professional changes in adapting to heterogeneous classrooms. They have seen the structure and the quality of their relationships with each other altered in ways that none had imagined.

Changes in the "family" of the school reflect deeper and more powerful changes in the cultural processes taking place at Pioneer. Changes at the school are also reflected in public events and private interactions that can carry great symbolic meanings for the staff. It is from an understanding of those processes that one can come to appreciate the magnitude of professional and personal change, and the meanings of that change for Pioneer teachers and administrators. The insights into the meaning of Pioneer life, as has been suggested by the metaphor of family, provide a description for analysis of the deeper cultural changes that have taken place. Further chapters address the way the "idea" of leadership has been culturally altered and of how the recent period of intense professional activity has served to magnify and enhance the meaning of these cultural changes. The following chapter presents a view of the cultural changes that, as suggested by the changes brought to the notion of "family", are

direct results that one school encountered, and continues to, because of attempting to change.

CHAPTER VI

HETEROGENEOUS GROUPING AND A FACULTY'S CULTURE

> Change is real frightening to people. Sometimes we limit our visions as teachers and as people because of constraints we have placed on us. But other times our visions are limited because of constraints we place on ourselves.
>
> A Pioneer Teacher.

The Focus of this Chapter

This chapter looks at the changes in the faculty culture at Pioneer since the school-wide change to heterogeneous grouping. Of particular interest is the growth of a "professional culture" among the staff and of how the events since the restructuring have fostered a split in the overall faculty culture.

The Move to Heterogeneous Grouping: An Overview of Cultural Change

At the beginning of the 1985-1986 school year I doubt there were any faculty at Pioneer who could have accurately predicted where the school and faculty would be in professional reputation six years later. Entering school that September, few students were aware of the reorganization that had been accepted just the year before by the faculty. At the same time, no one on the veteran teaching staff realized what a move to heterogeneous grouping would mean for them and how it would effect their professional world at the school.

As outlined in Chapter One, there have been important changes in the professional culture shared by Pioneer educators. Many of those changes stem from the identities created by and among faculty members during the past six years. As this chapter presents, those changes have created both "latent" and "manifest" identities among those who work at Pioneer. The commonality of identities in turn have spawned a Manifest and Latent culture at the school regarding the issues of heterogeneous grouping for students and the professional roles that teachers are expected to follow. The events of the past two years at the school have intensified the definition of manifest and latent identities ascribed or adopted by faculty members and solidified the shared meanings of a Manifest and Latent culture.

The term "teacher" carries meanings that, on the surface, are attributed to all teachers working in the school. At the same time there is a Manifest culture shared by all faculty at the school. That culture carries the surface meanings and symbols about what it means to be a Pioneer teacher. Similarly, the processes of change, which this work seeks to address, have begun to initiate redefinition in the meanings "of what it means to be a Pioneer teacher". Within those redefinitions, as this chapter presents, comes the creation of a viable and organized set of alternative interpretations and subsequent

meanings. These subtle meanings spring from the identities publicly shared by Pioneer educators and present a picture of a Latent and Manifest culture within the organization of the faculty at the school. It is through analysis of the effects of organizational change on a school's faculty that the importance of deeper cultural changes becomes apparent. The work of this chapter addresses some aspects of the changes in the professional culture of Pioneer faculty over the course of the past few years.

A Quick Look Back

In the years previous to September 1985, some faculty at Pioneer had begun to agitate for a change in the grouping policy at the school, as outlined in earlier chapters. There were teachers who had recently completed programs of study at the graduate and post graduate levels of education who, along with other teachers at Pioneer, believed that the existing way students were grouped at the school was iniquitous. Those faculty members began to openly talk about how the school could best reach all students. They were concerned with issues of equity and wanted a dialogue to develop about how Pioneer could be a better place for all students.

Gradually, more teachers began to listen to the words of their peers. As teachers listened, the movement away from the idea of a tracked Pioneer gained more power.

Small and rural Pioneer was a tracked school, not unlike the majority of schools today. Students entered the seventh grade from four surrounding towns and were assigned to one of four groups. Assignment was based upon reading scores and other criteria including, as an astute observer pointed out, "how vocal and aware a seventh grader's parents were". It was assumed by many at Pioneer that students of "lower abilities would hold back those of higher abilities" or that "grouping was the only effective way of organizing classes for teaching".

When the seventh graders came to Pioneer in those years, they were separated into groups. Those groups provided an introduction to the social life at the school because it was in those groups that Pioneer seventh graders found their peers for the next six years. A growing number of teachers at the school believed that such a social separation influenced outcomes at graduation time. Clearly, those who found themselves in the top group would be expected to go on to four year colleges, while others in the lower groups would plan for two year education, the military, or work. The social separation also affected outcomes within the school during the six years' time that lead up to graduation. In a small school such as Pioneer, students placed in one group would spend the day with each other. It wouldn't be long before the students in the lower groups would begin "playing off" one another and found

themselves labeled "discipline problems" thereby justifying the original placement track the student received. The symbolic message was "here is your place in the school" and "here is your place in life".

The students weren't oblivious to what was happening to them and around them. Whether or not they liked the message, they followed along and played the game. Some even learned the rules of the game to perfection. As one past graduate told a session of educators "I kinda liked the lower track. I could sit back and do little and still get good grades. I didn't have to push myself and no one was pushing me".

In such a setting, classes could be "teacher centered" in that the teacher set the class agenda according to what she or he determined as his or her own needs. If a teacher believed that rigid control and a strong sense of discipline were needed to maintain order, then the class was organized in such a fashion. If student behavior was considered an important issue by the teacher then it found its way into how students were taught and how they were evaluated. Teacher centered classes place a great deal of authority with the teacher and take responsibility away from the student. Such situations merely served to invite challenges to the authority of the teacher.

Of course, some teacher expectations were shaped by what teachers perceived the academic levels of their

students to be. Grouping or tracking was a program a teacher couldn't escape. Teachers knew which ones were "bright classes" and who was in the "low groups". As one teacher told me, "Not everyone has a high IQ and not everyone should be taught with everyone else." All faculty, consciously or otherwise, were upholding a process which separated children, not simply academically but socially as well. That separation affected how teachers taught, determined what they taught, and how they evaluated students.

Under the tracked system, with homogeneously grouped classes, teachers were indirectly encouraged to be masters of their own discipline and subject matter while the emphasis was not on the art of teaching. Top groups, the college prep classes, could be expected to handle more material. More material covered meant better prepared students. The top group teacher had to know her or his material in order to challenge those students. The teacher's mission was one of subject matter expert rather than expert and master of a multifaceted approach to teaching all students.

Similarly, for teachers working with the lower groups, neither mastery of subject matter (because the students weren't given that much material to cover) nor a deep knowledge about educational methods was necessary. Very

often, successfully teaching a low group depended on how well the class was kept under control.

In both cases, being a teacher identified strongly with issues of control. The teachers was in control of behavior or control of knowledge. Teachers were the keepers of the flame and were the ones who passed out little shards of fire. The situation was teacher centered.

If schools are places of drama and action and places where a myriad of meanings take place in any one day as situations are acted out and interpreted constantly, then teachers are major players in the symbolic drama. Teachers teaching tracked classes made meaning for themselves and for others in the reflective process of watching what they and others were doing. In this way teachers affirm who they are and what they mean to themselves and others as teachers. In the tracked school, faculty could see themselves as "low track" or "college prep" teachers. Grouping helped establish a social place and standing in the organization, not just for students but for teachers as well. Teachers gained a public identity from their assignment in the school. "I teach advanced level ancient history", one could state with pride, while another could counter, "I teach advanced physics". Those identities were very powerful. One teacher would often finish a thought about an earlier time at Pioneer by using the phrase, "back then I was considered the academician of the faculty". That

teacher, one who taught "advanced" classes, clearly had a particular identity which brought that person status at the school. The teacher was not a "low group teacher".

There were symbolic messages sent about the tracked Pioneer by the faculty and administration that were even more powerful still. Those definitions reflect the low sense of self worth found in much of the teaching profession. For example, a past superintendent is said by many to have offered the towns that fund Pioneer money back because the Pioneer budget "didn't need" the money. When the hard times came back to public education, as they have recently, the school was faced with capital improvements in addition to the necessity to fund an already bare bones day to day operation. One need not think too long to imagine the subtle yet powerful message from the district wide administration at that time to the people working at Pioneer.

Consider also the faculty contract. Most of the six or so teachers who have started working at Pioneer during the past five years have taken a pay cut to work at the school. Most were teaching veterans at other schools who held graduate degrees from major colleges and universities. Pioneer faculty are one of the lowest paid in the region. These discrepancies continue beyond base salary. Pioneer faculty do not benefit as teachers do in other school systems for furthering their education or professional

development. Advanced degrees in a field are still not rewarded as they are in other systems.

What is rewarded is longevity or years at the job and the messages suggest that teachers are simple workers rather than professionals. The longer one works, the more one gets paid, the more secure one is. Long time faculty members will constantly speak in defense of the people in towns and about their tax rate while explaining away salary increases. Again, the message is clear for Pioneer teachers and delivers a powerful note on how they interpret their own social reality. They are not worth very much.

A number of the people working in the tracked school Pioneer was just a few years ago considered themselves second rate in more ways than one. It is important to note that more than a few Pioneer teachers chose to send their children to the very large private school (physically and symbolically located directly across the street) and pay an expensive tuition rather than let their own children attend the school in which they taught.

The symbolic meanings of this are clear. Pioneer was acceptable to teach at but not strong enough to send your child to. And granted, many of the faculty begin their description of the school in past days with, "You should have seen this place when..." that ends in a litany of woes including school-wide discipline, student motivation, and general school climate.

The low self image shared by many at Pioneer was reflected in the sense of family, described in Chapter Five, that encouraged professional detachment while stressing sociability. Pioneer faculty were considered "good" teachers within their own small school and that was about the extent of their professional reputations. They did not envision themselves as "leaders" in their fields. The quiet routine of teaching offered them an in-house sense of security despite the difficulties brought to the job by Pioneer students or by events originating from the world outside of the school.

There were changes made in the way Pioneer staff viewed their school. It took place over time and with a great deal of effort on the part of a great many teachers. More and more staff began to advocate for a way of grouping children that brought students together rather than separating them according to some arbitrary measure. Reasons were as varied as there were individuals pushing for a new way of organizing their school. What did link the faculty together was a concern for the students in the school. It was, and still is, a small school in which it was difficult to hide as a teacher from peers advocating for change in all classes. The more faculty pushed, the more voices came from other parts of the school agreeing to look at the issues of a change to heterogeneous grouping.

It has now been six years since the first heterogeneous class entered the seventh grade at Pioneer. That class has recently graduated. The students in that class do not know what "homogeneous grouping" was, though they are aware of a few classes in which there seems to be some grouping. While college applications and acceptances are up (eighty percent this year as opposed to about sixty five percent from the class six years ago), and the school appears to be much closer together as a whole (the family atmosphere), not all faculty are as serene in their appraisal of Pioneer and what it means to teach there.

Heterogeneous Grouping Six Years Later: Impacting a Faculty

It has been six years since not only the 1986 seventh grade class but, most of the school went to heterogeneous classes. The move was to be a pivotal point in the life of the school and in the lives of the faculty. As one teacher stated,

> The change to heterogeneous grouping has had great impact on faculty members.

The Pioneer tradition of a "family" secured the change in the minds of many that heterogenous grouping was the "right thing to do". It was one more way to care for kids. In the time from a June "goodbye" to a September "welcome" the world of the school was turned on edge.

Heterogeneous grouping has had an impact on the staff at Pioneer, to say the least. For example, as this teacher tells us,

> We are committed to equity and quality in education. It's very professional here, at least most people. I mean, I'm not interested in sitting around complaining.

Another adds,

> I see a whole lot of people more involved, more professional. It (heterogeneous grouping) has forced cooperation among all staff members and all departments.

Other teachers stated,

> People have discovered teaching.
>
> Teachers' self esteem has gone up. They are willing to try something new.
>
> We have some teachers willing to stretch, willing to be a betterment to those kids in their classroom. That is exciting.

The world and family of the school is not the same as it was seven years ago. Most did not, as can be deduced, have more specific outcomes in mind except the ideal of helping the students in the school. It was a program aimed at students but, as these teachers suggest, students weren't the only people detracked. Faculty were also.

New teachers have been hired during the past six years. Teachers have also been let go due to budget cuts that have affected every town in Pioneer's section of the state. Most of the Pioneer staff of veterans remain the same and they have seen a great deal of change to the small school. Many have grown personally and professionally. There is no one at Pioneer who could have envisioned the changes that would effect faculty and students. The

reorganization for students came as the result of the shift to a new grouping policy. Those students moved on. Most are now graduates and a few graduates from college. The students at Pioneer do not have a reference point to the beginning of heterogeneous grouping. But the faculty do. They are the people who have "stayed behind at the school" and they are the people who have the most to share with those who wish to change other schools.

The words used by Pioneer teachers cut to the heart of what it means to teach. The talk by teachers about being "excited" by teaching and about being a "betterment" to students conveys an important message. Concern for the well being of Pioneer students is meshed with redefined perspectives about teaching and learning. One long time teacher offered,

> Kids are doing much better (under heterogeneous grouping). It's not "Well as soon as I get out of high school it's the Army or the Navy". Now more kids are saying "I can go to college", and they're doing just that.

A second veteran stated,

> Kids now are critiquing me. That's great! I've grown a lot.

Another added,

> I hear students talking about teachers on a more personal level now than before. Heterogeneous grouping allows you to do that because you begin to see each student as an individual. I hear that from kids as a very positive sign.

A last states,

> I've seen a big change for the positive in the student body since heterogeneous grouping.

Many at Pioneer speak about a process of redefinition that has taken place among individuals and the staff as a whole. Listen to the words of one teacher in describing the process of personal and professional change that teacher has gone through,

> People looked at their own teaching styles and at student learning styles and realized that there should be changes.

A second teacher said,

> I see more enthusiasm, willingness to share. It used to be your own classroom, your own thing, close the door.

Another said,

> Heterogeneous grouping forced people to take a look at how they teach and what they teach.

Finally, one teacher summed up a thought shared by many in stating,

> Teaching and any aspect of education at Pioneer revolves around the issue of heterogeneous grouping.

It is clear from the words of many Pioneer teachers that detracking a school is not simply a process that has an effect on students only. Restructuring a school away from rigid groups also impacts educators. In dealing with new groups in their classrooms, Pioneer teachers have found it necessary to develop additional strategies and methods. For example, cooperative learning techniques have taken

hold in many classrooms. A number of faculty members continue to experiment with various models of teaching and to rewrite curriculum.

Similarly, as the one time tight knit social web of teacher friends began to evolve into a professional web of educators experimenting with change, other teachers found a gulf growing between them and the majority of their peers. That distance has continued to widen during the past five years until now it separates a little more than ten percent of the faculty from the remaining ninety percent.

Two Cultures: Manifest and Latent

Any mention of the word culture summons many and diverse meanings as clearly described in Chapter Three. As that chapter also suggests, the term culture incorporates the exchange of meanings between members of an organization.

In an organization like Pioneer, there is never total or complete and rigid agreement by all members of a professional staff. Human beings do not agree to such a degree except in the most maddened of societies and groups. But there are those in organizations who, as a majority, share definitions about problems and solutions to problems. It is also important to understand that others, the minority, share a different set of interpretations. They advocate a separate set of solutions for the problems encountered by the organization. Those who hold an "anti-

thesis" of sorts to the prevailing definition of the situation and share their own latent culture.

To understand the differences that exist at Pioneer it is important to view the differences in terms of manifest and latent cultures and at the symbolic representations of the world that are the school that teachers share.

In the cultural milieu of this school, public identities often revolve around one's involvement in the process of detracking. As the number of teachers favoring and vocally supporting heterogeneous grouping continues to grow, efforts have begun to "officially" recognize Pioneer's commitment to the concept. For example, the Philosophy Statement of the school was recently rewritten to acknowledge the fact that classes at Pioneer are heterogeneous and to guarantee that a commitment to detracking will continue.

At the same time there are a small minority of faculty who are not in favor of detracking. Some see it as harmful to students. A few do not like the changes that have taken place among teachers as classes have become more student centered and learning more cooperative. Many are threatened by changes taking place around them.

The division of faculty into two separate cultures had beginnings with the adoption of heterogeneous grouping more than six years ago and has grown with the events of the past two years. One faculty member noted that,

> The staff was separated by heterogeneous grouping six years ago.

Another offered,

> There are still cliques in the faculty about heterogeneous grouping.

And,

> Some of the faculty did not think heterogeneous grouping was going to work.
>
> There tends to have been a polarization of the faculty members during the past five years.
>
> There are those who are committed to heterogeneous grouping and those who are not. That has polarized the faculty.

It is obvious that there is a separation among staff that lies with the policy of heterogeneous grouping. The split goes deeper than a simple difference of professional opinions. The change in grouping at Pioneer has fostered the birth of "new" identities for many of the teachers. While all teachers share the very public identity of "teacher" as stated earlier, they do not share the same identities regarding their support or opposition to detracking.

The majority of faculty members favoring heterogeneous grouping share a dialogue that reflects their interest in the issue. That dialogue is often times formal, written, and officially sanctioned. Their identities publicly acknowledge their position. They are often associated with the school or have the school associated with them by educators and policy makers from a growing national

audience. While these faculty members do have more than one personna at Pioneer, they are known for their beliefs that associate them with a specific philosophy and events of change at the school.

The small minority of Pioneer faculty that do not share in the enthusiasm for the concept of heterogeneous grouping present an added dilemma to social and cultural cohesion in the school. They are identified publicly as a "teacher" and share that identity with the rest of the staff. But they also display other identities within the public and cultural world of the organization, one of which deals with their opposition to heterogeneous grouping. These teachers share similar positions on restructuring. Likewise, they also share a dialogue which reflects their identities. It is less formal than the official dialogue of the school and is not organized. The dialogue takes place when these teachers come together and speak to each other about their similar interpretations about the social realities at Pioneer. Some do not like heterogeneous classes. They may also oppose the philosophical positions underlying the detracking movement. Others see a threat to their own security in the changing definition of a teacher that has taken place during the past few years.

These teachers may still support homogeneous grouping because of a concern for themselves as teachers or out of concern for their students. The meanings that these

teachers exchange come from commonalities in the personal and professional histories of each individual and can range from professional beliefs stemming from experiences in undergraduate education to approaches to teaching reflecting their own experiences as students. The beliefs underlying latent identities also come from reactions to changes in the organization of teaching at Pioneer. In any case, their latent identities serve to focus their common lack of support for detracking at Pioneer.

When those having common latent identities in an organization come together in social life, they share a dialogue in which they interpret social realities in a similar fashion. They arrive at similar solutions to group problems. The language of their dialogue begins to develop common symbols with meanings understood by those others sharing a common identity. In short, those sharing common latent identities begin to develop a latent culture within the overall organization. In the case of Pioneer, those opposed to heterogeneous grouping share such a culture. It is a latent culture because it is based upon identities that are latent within the organization.

The differences between the manifest and latent identities of those at Pioneer has been supported by the process of time and by the highly symbolic events which have taken place during the past two years. In the organizational framework of the school, the latent culture

that hasn't embraced detracking finds itself at odds with what is broadly accepted as institutionalized policy at the school. One observing teacher suggests,

> There are two cultures operating at the same time and they feed on each other. It has been an interesting and very exciting five years. At first there wasn't much but beginning with the junior high team you could really see the changes take hold.

Another added,

> The enthusiasm that certain teachers had for heterogeneous grouping, the amount of difference between those people and the people who didn't want to see it happen at all caused friction and is still causing friction.

A number of teachers participated in a course about models of teaching taught at the school the year the faculty began its push to change the tracking policy. It was the last course taught at the school dealing with issues of professional development and teaching in the heterogeneous classroom. It was just after that class, according to some, that changes in the dialogue among faculty began to be heard and the latent identities of interest to this research began to develop. As one teacher remembered,

> The dialogue in the faculty room began to change with the course. There were about half the faculty taking that course.

Another event that had a direct impact on the splitting of the Pioneer professional culture was the process of deciding whether or not to adopt heterogeneous grouping. Even to this day there is no clear cut

description of that process. Again it depends upon which cultural group one listens to for they continue to define the realities of the historical Pioneer, as with the current Pioneer, according to cultural lines. As one teacher reminisced,

> Heterogeneous grouping was teacher generated but I'm not sure that it was consensus. That point will be argued by both sides.

While another teacher offered,

> Collegiality isn't what it was before the change to heterogeneous grouping. There were some of us saying then "Hey, they're tryin' to ram this down our throats". No one at faculty meetings would listen.

Other teachers stated,

> The change came from teachers. They saw the need to change and did it.
>
> Heterogeneous grouping was a mandate of sorts from teachers for teachers.

And,

> The teachers, curriculum committee members, others, an administrator. There were a great many people who worked very hard to bring this issue to the faculty's attention.

Three long time teachers speaking about the same topic, the final decision to go with heterogeneous grouping, state,

> I remember a final vote where the teachers from a particular department voted yes to try this for one year. That was the faculty vote. The school committee also voted in favor of heterogeneous grouping for a year. Obviously, the policy is non-experimental any more.

> I don't remember there ever being an official vote on the subject by the faculty. Sure we voted but there was never any white or black vote.

And,

> The faculty voted for change.

A last teacher offers,

> Change is very subtle and mysterious here at times.

There are disparate views about how the school's teachers adopted heterogeneous grouping and there are two ongoing views that continue to disagree about using heterogeneous grouping in all classes or about issues such as teachers working within the profession and teacher empowerment. At center stage in the debate and underscoring all other issues is detracking. To teach a heterogeneous class conjures up many images for those who look at it as a factual and concrete entity. "How do you do it?" a teacher visiting from another school asks with baited breath as if expecting me to, in a sentence, offer the quick and easy path to enlightenment. Yet, "not teaching homogeneously" can strike fear into the hearts of many a veteran teacher long used to a particular type of student in a rigid and structured class, especially if that teacher is being confronted with a school in which ninety percent of the faculty are experimenting with some sort of change in their teaching.

It is not a discussion about right or wrong or good or evil, though the dialogue at times takes on very moral

overtones. The differences center upon a particular approach to teaching and, more importantly, on a particular way of viewing the world. The differences speak to the way human beings make sense of the world around them and of what meanings they create and share between themselves. If we gain access to the world through symbols and if we create those symbols ourselves, then the two separate realities operating in the minds of those at Pioneer are cultural differences.

Manifest Culture

What does manifest culture mean in terms of this analysis? An answer is found both in the discussion of the relevant literature presented in Chapter Three and examples of which are evident in the analysis of the practice of education at Pioneer comprising the last four chapters of this work. Manifest culture is defined as the "organized solutions to common problems of the immediate kind" (Becker & Geer, 1960, p. 308). For teachers at Pioneer, such a position describes the response by the majority to what they consider to be problematic issues. In the Pioneer case, the issue was a perceived problem in the delivery of education to students based upon grouping practice. Most of the faculty agreed and a decision was made by staff to alter that policy. Subsequently, many teachers experienced personal and professional changes, and support for the change in the way Pioneer was organized grew in strength.

Let's turn again to the work of Gouldner along with Becker and Geer. In developing a working definition of Manifest culture, we are presented with Manifest Culture as "a culture that grows around the rules and identities relevant to the specific setting rather than those that are irrelevant or inappropriate" (Becker & Geer, 1960, p. 306). In the case of Pioneer, what is considered "relevant and appropriate" by the larger group deals with heterogeneously grouping classes of students. A Manifest culture is based upon the manifest "identities of group members which are consensually regarded as relevant to them in a given setting" (Gouldner, 1957, p. 284). As the four data analysis chapters of this work indicate, there were many discrepancies in what the majority considered "relevant" or "appropriate" by a segment of faculty members. Not the least of which (discussed fully in the narrative of Chapter Eight) speaks to the different responses taken by members of the Pioneer faculty as they hosted the first of two major professional conferences.

As a further note, what is determined as a manifest culture (and likewise a manifest identity as well as a latent culture or latent identity) are organization specific. That is to say a manifest culture may be identifiable within the formal organization of a school, such as Pioneer. It is reflected in the institutionalized language of the organization. It represents a way of doing

things; a response by the majority in addressing and solving problems pertinent to the goals of the majority of organizational members. A manifest culture, based upon manifest identities, describes the current way an organization's members deal with day to day problems. It reflects the way the majority of members organize their social worlds.

The term manifest culture (and latent culture) used in this analysis does not attempt to describe functional components within the organization. The term speaks about the processes which take place between a group of people working together for what, in a very general sense, is a common goal. Earlier, it was suggested that culture is process. The additional terms of manifest and latent to culture also suggest the idea of process. As the following data suggest, what is determined as manifest and a latent identity within an organization is an ongoing decision made by organizational members. Such decisions reflect what might be considered manifest in terms of the culture of the organization. What becomes manifest is what is supported by the majority and is not necessarily the stated or institutionalized roles followed by organization members.

Manifest Culture and Pioneer: Toward a Professional Culture

Pioneer has seen a restructuring process. The teachers and administrators have cooperatively taken on the task of changing their school as well as bringing changes to

themselves. There is a sharing of common approaches to the problems of teaching and learning at the school that those in the majority adhere to. In particular, what can be called the manifest culture reflects the following elements:

1) Teachers as well as students have adopted a "cooperative" frame of teaching and working together as classes for students have become more cooperative. Teachers now value "working together" and with all groups instead of the isolation of the teaching tracked groups in the past.

2) Teachers and administrators view their roles as impacting a profession. They find that they can share knowledge and expertise with others from outside the Pioneer community. In the process, they have gained a new level of self identity and have been identified as"experts" in their fields.

3) The manifest culture is identified with and supports detracking in classrooms and adopting "new" strategies of teaching.

4) Those ascribing to the manifest culture view change and restructuring as non-threatening to themselves as teachers. These faculty look to continue the process of change that they have seen in themselves in their classrooms and across the organizational level of the school.

5) Many teachers now view their classrooms as more "student" centered. All students are more often recognized for achievement in classroom performance in those classrooms.

6) Many teachers are now "celebrating" the experiences of teaching at Pioneer rather than adopting the older image of being faculty members working in a small and academically "middle-of-the-road school". (More Pioneer graduates are moving on to higher education than at any time in the school's past.)

For example, as one Pioneer teacher stated,

Change is what it means to be a teacher.

Others submitted,

> I feel that they (a few teachers) don't know that <u>we're right</u> (emphasis underscored) with our grouping plan and they've got to acknowledge that it takes hard work to look at yourself and at what you do. We have to see what we really are and ....it's scary...like walking out on thin ice.
>
> Heterogeneous grouping has affected faculty because I see faculty working together much more. This is a new experience for them as well as for students. You have to realize that in our minds as teachers we are still tracked because that is the way most of us went to school. To make the heterogeneous format work the way it has, there has to have been a lot of learning and growth on the part of teachers and students.

Many Pioneer teachers speak about their own personal and professional growth. Tied together with those feelings are the overwhelming emotions that come from a belief in what they are doing and a belief that the new changes are "right" for all students. Conversations in the school between some faculty members include phrases such as "educational equity for students" and "we are change agents in society". The people responsible for introducing heterogeneous grouping and those who have taken up the banner lately are committed to what they are doing. Many express the elation that can follow a dramatic and personal change in viewing who they are and what it is they do. They find elation in seeing their students succeed and in watching their own success.

Many teachers take a sense of pride from where they work. For example one teacher reflects,

> This school since its inception has had a major <u>inferiority complex</u> (emphasis dictated by teacher), except for the last three years. Hey, this school has always been the put down of all the schools in the county. I've always felt different. Especially during the past three or four years. I've seen and got to work with some astonishingly high talent and teaching but you have to remember that the inferiority is still at hand too.

The teacher went on to add that,

> The status quo people, the people who want to go back to the bad old days, on the other hand, usually shut up when I am around.

There is more to the dialogue that is shared by those at the school who are supportive of heterogeneous grouping. Many share the information they gain from other sources about new teaching practices or new ways to involve all students in the world of Pioneer. There are teachers, strong supporters of heterogeneous grouping and of the changes that have overtaken the school, who continue to advocate further change, both classroom-wide and school-wide. More than one faculty member has expressed the feeling that "there are still kids out there that we are not reaching." Often times there is a working dialogue (and disagreement) about what is the "best way to reach" individual students.

While teachers show concern for the students they teach, similar feelings continue to be expressed about what it means to be a teacher at Pioneer. It is in the dialogue that is shared by many teachers that one can also come to

understand what teaching at Pioneer has come to mean for these people. As an example many teachers state,

> People are talking about how they teach...that is healthy and unusual.
>
> People -- Teachers talk about education whether it be in faculty room or at other places. That happens here more than at any other place I've worked.
>
> Teachers have ownership in what they do compared to other systems. No one is looking over anyone else's shoulder here. Teachers control curriculum. There is a lot more autonomy here in the classroom.
>
> Teachers here now know that they can change their lives.....the empowerment issues are important.

One more voice adds,

> The culture of the school....people....has people talking more educational talk than.....well, almost too much.

Clearly, the manifest culture of teaching at Pioneer, the new professional culture, has been shaped by heterogeneous grouping. In presenting their definition of Manifest culture, Becker and Geer state that, "Manifest culture is a culture that grows around the roles and identities relevant to the specific setting rather than those that are irrelevant or inappropriate" (Becker & Geer, 1960, p. 306). It should also be noted that, as stated earlier in this chapter, a manifest culture of an organization does not necessarily include the formal institutionalized aspects of the organization, though it may well. Manifest culture, in this perspective, connotes

responses that are organized and shared by a majority of members to an immediate problematic situation. At Pioneer those responses have been framed around the idea of a "profession". Teaching to heterogeneous classes is such a response to a problematic situation. Many of the teachers who share in teaching to detracked classes have also had to deal with issues of teacher empowerment and teachers as initiators of change. The message emanating from these people is that everyone (teacher and student alike) is an individual with specific learning (read teaching) needs. What is also clear is that teachers have the ability to meet the needs of each and every student. When teachers have the ability (an idea which includes notions such as the freedom to experiment and explore, administrative support, being in control of the dissemination of knowledge, and being allowed the professional freedom to work as an individual, to mention only a few issues) to meet the needs of each student then the needs of teachers are being met. The manifest culture shared by many of the faculty has grown around new found professional roles in response to the problems of teaching detracked classes. At the same time, the messages from some Pioneer teachers for their peers at Pioneer, as well as for peers at other schools, is that teachers can also structure their classes to encourage cooperative learning and find the same level of cooperative work with each other. Ultimately, teachers

find themselves in control of their professional lives as teacher to teacher exchange replaces the walls erected by departmentalization and administrative control. Such events require a profound cultural and professional redefinition.

The traditional model of teaching junior and especially senior high school classes has placed an overbearing emphasis on individual achievement and at the same time, neglected what a student could have learned from peers. As one wag on the faculty commented with a wry smile, "we used to call that cheating where I come from....what a mistake that was." The system served to separate students by age, parental input or arbitrary measures such as "a reading score" from an early grade rather than have them work together. In their own way, teachers have been separated and isolated in their work from their peers.

The manifest culture at the school clearly encourages a professional dialogue. That dialogue has lead to the changes in the structure of the school. Being a teaching professional is now celebrated by some. Teachers concerned with issues of experimentation and innovation in their classrooms have a ready audience among teaching peers. Teachers have developed "networks" that assist themselves and others with creating teaching strategies for Pioneer classes. Many teachers look to teacher peers as a source for ideas and encouragement. What is also important is that

ideas mix between teachers of twenty or more years and teachers of five years. The dialogue among these teachers crosses barriers of teaching longevity at the school and of departmental affiliation. The people, the actors engaged in creating and shaping the dominant professional culture at the school, continue to expand their dialogue with each other. The dialogue that has developed between many Pioneer teachers includes those who operate on the fringe of school change and professionalization as well as those who are in the lead.

A Split in Culture

Yet there is a concern felt by those in the majority for others on the staff who do not share in the professional dialogue. Those who have made personal accommodations and individual changes in their philosophy of education question why others can oppose them as they strive to better teaching. Teachers often wonder how the social and professional distinctions have been created between the faculty. They often express worry about the lack of unity among a staff. (For example, when I asked about Pioneer as I was about to visit the school for my first interview six years ago, the words I heard were "great school", "everyone's together", "they all get along real well", "great support for sports", and "it's a good small school.") Teachers offer important reflections about

their professional world. As several teachers took the time to mention,

> A large number of the staff are involved and a small group are sitting back watching.
>
> People are at different levels of progression on the faculty.
>
> The introduction of heterogeneous grouping brought about and was coupled with a change in my perception.

And,

> The majority of people will listen and are willing to change.

One teacher, in thinking back to the changes that have taken place at Pioneer and in the teaching revolution that has flowered in many classes, stated emphatically,

> I can take all this talk about change. I can and have been quietly making changes myself. I'm not out in front or that visible here, but that doesn't mean I'm not in favor of the new grouping and the new teaching strategies. I know there are some opposed to it. I see it helping kids. I can make changes because I am a professional.

It is clear that there is a minority of faculty who not only still oppose heterogeneous grouping and detracking Pioneer but that they also are identified by their opposition among the small staff.

Those who share in the manifest culture at the school reflect the earlier decisions about heterogeneous grouping but they have also continued to push out professionally in equally powerful ways. All faculty, like it or not, now

realize that once major change occurs the world they once knew can never be the same. Though one more teacher said,

> I truly love being a part of all the excitement and change but it pains me to see the division on what I think is a very close faculty.

From another we hear,

> There is a lot of back pedaling on their (those not in favor of heterogeneous grouping) part because they don't feel comfortable about what is going on....and I don't know how we go about changing them.

Another states,

> There is a small group that wish things could go back to what they were ten years ago. They want to go back into their rooms and close their doors. Nobody ever bothered them and they didn't have to change and they do what they do behind their own closed doors.

A third adds,

> I know that not everyone is in favor of what has taken place here during the past five years, but, they have all had to make changes even if they didn't want to during the past 4 years.

The Latent Culture Within the Faculty

While there is a manifest culture shared by a majority of Pioneer teachers concerning detracking and a new found professionalism, there are few staff members who do not share the same interpretations about the realities of working at the school. These teachers have been trying to make sense of all the changes at the school as have the rest of the staff. The dissimilarity between them and the rest of the staff is that they have arrived at different conclusions about what the roles of teachers should be and

what the outcomes of education should mean for students. They have arrived at an alternative solution to the problematic of teaching that the majority of teachers may consider inappropriate. The latent culture at Pioneer represents a culture of "opposition" to heterogeneous grouping. The latent culture is in fact defined by the manifest culture. In the process of advocating their responses, as stated earlier in this chapter, these teachers have gained public identities that are seen as separate and not in agreement with the majority of Pioneer teachers. Some of the elements inherent in the Latent culture shared by faculty members are:

1) An opposition to heterogeneous grouping and detracking a school. This opposition ranges from deep philosophical difference with the "idea of detracking" to personal differences with the effects of heterogeneous grouping.

2) Supporters sharing in the beliefs of the Latent culture among Pioneer faculty do not view the changes in classroom teaching strategies as "positive" to all teachers and to all students.

3) For some in opposition to the detracking movement the issue of heterogeneous grouping is considered as a societal and moral dilemma.

4) Many teachers ascribing to the latent culture feel threatened by the changes taking place at the school in the new roles of teachers and in the organization of the school and classrooms.

5) The small minority of teachers representing the latent culture share a dialogue in response to the manifest culture. That is to say that even though all are not in agreement about the meaning of heterogeneous grouping, they find informal agreement in what it means as a term. Their dialogue remains informal and represents many

perspectives against change at Pioneer as there are individuals.

6) Some faculty members not in favor of detracking feel excluded and isolated from the world they once knew at their school.

There are divisions between Pioneer staff members which represent two antithetical positions that cannot be easily resolved. The cultural separation goes very deep and may stem from roots that grow even deeper. One teacher, in talking about a perceived harm done to the top students because of heterogeneous grouping, and added that,

> Some differences (between students) are genetic and based upon variables that are not and can not be considered in the heterogeneous classroom. Some people can process more information than others, and that is a simple fact of life.

Alvin Gouldner defined "Latent Social Identities" as "those which group members define as irrelevant, inappropriate to consider or illegitimate to take into account" (Gouldner, 1957, p. 284). His words are applicable to the social reality at Pioneer which reflects the "identities" attributed by the group members to those who have not "bought into" or agree with the movement to heterogeneous grouping. These individuals do not share in the common definitions of the majority of teachers about what a teacher should be. With roles in flux, these teachers have held to a view of the school that does not acknowledge the "gains" claimed by others at the school. This group of teachers are a loose collection of faculty who share their own definition of what the school should

be. They lament the death of the social family that was once the Pioneer faculty. They have their own set of beliefs and meanings that distinguish them from their peers. Their common identities join them in a common response to the problem of teaching at Pioneer. Their commonality represents a Latent culture among the faculty.

This analysis uses the term "latent identities" as the producer of a Latent culture presented in the work of Becker and Geer and later by Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss in the classic study Boys In White and extends the work of Alvin Gouldner. The term latent culture describes the common values, beliefs, and definitions of the world that a small minority of Pioneer teachers share. As Becker and Geer state,

> These latent identities are not necessarily based on prior group membership, for Gouldner's example of "cosmopolitan" and "local" identities makes clear that such identities may arise out of the internal "politics" of the organization. (1960, p. 306)

They go on to add that,

> The fact of being an "old timer" in the organization or a member of a group will not affect behavior unless these distinctions are made use of in daily interaction in groups that support and maintain the culture associated with irrelevant identities. (1960, p. 306)

The concept of a latent culture is grounded in the notion that "latent identities will not affect either individual behavior within the group or the collective behavior of the group unless they are in some way mobilized

and brought into play in the daily interaction of group members" (Becker & Geer, 1960, p. 306). To be sure, daily working world of Pioneer both mobilized and brought individuals sharing different identities within the school into play with each other.

The terms manifest and latent are not used in a judgmental fashion. They are not meant to speak about issues of right and wrong. They are used to understand the differences that can unfold as a faculty undergoes a process of change that its own members generated.

Cultural Divisions

Some of these faculty members share feelings of being excluded as participants in the school. Others in the minority share the primary conclusion most of their peers have adopted. They don't agree with the way decisions have been made concerning policy in the school. Those feelings are underscored by a suspicion that the changes brought to education have not been the best for teachers or for students. As with those sharing the manifest culture of the school, words from the minority bring up concern for students in deciding what they view as a "good" or "bad" decision.

The divisions found in the cultural split among the faculty do not reflect age or gender, though they do run along lines of friendship; a friendship that is often times framed around personal philosophy about education, a mutual

feeling of disenfranchisement, or feelings of being identified as an inadequate teacher. They share a common lament about a past when Pioneer was "a better place". As one staff member mentioned, "Some of us don't feel very empowered at this place." Other teachers go on to add,

> Some teachers were very unhappy about heterogeneous grouping.

And,

> This school has changed much during the past five years.

One more adds,

> Not everyone supports heterogeneous grouping.

While others offer,

> Some people seem to go with whatever direction the stream seems to flow.

And,

> Some staff were active. Some weren't in the change.

And finally,

> There are groups here opposed to it (heterogeneous grouping) they've had five years to stay closed off from the rest of what's been goin' on.

A last states with sadness,

> In the old days you'd have twenty, twenty five people getting together, going out together after work. There used to be a deep social friendliness here. Now it's all professional talk and dialogue.

It is clear that one of the unifying perspectives shared by those who ascribe to the positions found within

the Latent culture of the school is a clear opposition to the move to heterogeneous grouping. There are teachers who did not want the policy to change. There are also teachers who contradict the words of those in the majority. These faculty members feel that the process of change was not "universal" and that it was a decision fraught with internal politics and administrative leverage.

There were teachers who offered a different perspective on events at the school. As some stated,

> Some of us still don't buy into heterogeneous grouping.

And another teacher acknowledges and corroborates that,

> There are some people here who haven't bought into it at at all.

> One teacher offered an impression of the change in grouping policy at Pioneer, Heterogenous grouping was a mandate of sorts. It had its roots with people who were not classroom teachers and it was forced on us. There were people who were told to "cool it" by the administration because they (the teachers) were opposed to it. There were some bad times and some bad feelings. No one wants to talk about that though. During the past six years you have seen a lot of division among the faculty. That disturbs me.

When asked if there was such a division among the faculty, before the move to heterogeneous grouping, the teacher answered,

> No ... not to my knowledge.

Another teacher shared similar sentiments by stating,

> One thing, most of these people for heterogeneous grouping were not classroom teachers.

Other teachers spoke about the effects of the move to

heterogeneous grouping by saying,

> Clearly, we have people here in favor and opposed to heterogeneous grouping.
>
> You never had faculty members bitchin' at each other (that takes place now). This has created a lot of problems and it's going to continue to create problems.

Another added,

> I would say that looking at the changes in this school here are more bad feelings now among the faculty here now, than I've ever seen. There is a group of faculty ho are not in favor of heterogeneous grouping. There's nother group of faculty that is very much in favor of it. And, you know what is happening is that these two groups are going at it. They are sort of working with each other and against each other.

The teacher goes on to add,

> I see that as a real change here.

One more voice tells us that,

> There is a lot of "look at these guys ... they don't agree."

The differences that have been outlined create further separations perceived by faculty members on both sides. For example, these teachers state,

> Some people see an elitist group in the school. They see it not effecting what they do in their classes.

And,

> There are some people on this staff who feel that others, more involved with heterogeneous grouping, have some sort of favored status (with the administration).

Other teachers speak about "their curriculum" and how it "can't be taught in heterogeneous classrooms". The

positions that divide the faculty and that represent the two separate cultures can not simply be ignored or shunted away. Their perspectives are very real and represent philosophies (and identities) that express personal and professional positions regarding the process of education and what society's structure should be. Their positions also speak to their fears about the changing definition of a teacher at Pioneer. Though an informal group, those teachers hold very strong beliefs. As Becker and Geer suggest,

> What are known as "informal" groupings may tend to cluster around a Latent culture, the members of these groupings sharing some latent identity. The interaction in such groups helps to maintain the person's sense of his latent identity and to maintain the latent culture by providing a group which gives social support for the use of that culture as a basis for behavior. This is important because it suggests the mechanism by which these latent identities are maintained operable in an environment in which they are regarded as irrelevant or improper, and in which they might be expected to die out. (1960, p. 311)

Six years ago their numbers were far greater. At the time of change at Pioneer there was no clear Manifest culture in support of heterogeneous grouping. In fact, the supporters of detracking once shared latent identities and a similar culture within the organization of the school. But as Becker and Geer add,

> solutions suggested by latent culture could be utilized only at the expense of breaking some very important group rule or threatening the unity and continued existence of the group. (1960, p. 309)

For a number of teachers, the "group rule" typifying the definition of a Pioneer teacher was shattered. To some, the "family" of faculty was ripped apart. The cultural confusion that followed showed a gradual erosion of members sharing the same identity as many teachers began to not only accept the new definitions placed on teachers but advocate such a redefinition and strongly support the heterogeneous grouping concept.

The apparent conflict between the two cultures has been dealt with in a way that only a school struggling to keep its close knit identity alive would adopt. As teachers try to deal with the issues of school and professional change, they must also negotiate ways of dealing with each other.

Dealing With Conflict: How to Disagree

The divisions among the faculty have brought conflicts. Pioneer is a very small school and identities are very public. It is not easy to escape the social light in a world of just over forty adults. If students are known by students and faculty, the teaching staff is known by students and staff alike.

There are alienated factions among the staff and a minority of staff members feel they do not have ownership in the school. Those people speak about being excluded from the decision making processes at the school. The same people, building and sharing a latent culture at the

school, hold beliefs about education that run directly against what binds the majority of teachers into a professional community.

Still, both sides have managed to coexist and have reached a tenuous set of accommodations reflecting the powerful idea of "family" among Pioneer's educators. The standoff between the two groups has built a set of unwritten rules which orchestrate behavior. For example, the teacher generated move toward detracking was never the product of an "official mandate". No one has ever said "You must teach heterogeneous classes." There never has been a suggestion that a teacher "had to teach cooperatively." All teachers respect the freedom and independence to teach in their own classrooms. Yet, that liberty has fostered the cultural separations that continue.

A common belief among many at Pioneer, is that people are free to do what they want as long as it doesn't harm the progress made towards change by the majority. As one teacher comments,

> People can talk against heterogeneous grouping but not undermining the faculty in favor (of it) or the process.

Other teachers add,

> Some people have gotten rejuvenated. There are others that have not made much of any change, but I don't know if they should change.

A third teacher tells us,

> Some of us don't feel comfortable with heterogeneous grouping and even now, in 1991, no

> one says "So and so, you have to teach a heterogeneously grouped class."

But that belief is only on the surface. In allowing for professional individuality and a more cooperative and innovative school, the Pioneer family has also allowed the Latent culture to continue. For example, there have been suggestions made to students to "take" a particular course if they plan to "go to college" while students "not planning a four year college career" were advised "to take other courses". This takes place in a school that does not have any "advanced placement" courses.

Just under the surface is where the tension produced from the conflicting perspectives lies waiting to bubble up. As volcanic action can be attributed to the slow grating of two huge earth plates moving in opposite directions, so can vocal outbursts be understood at Pioneer. One teacher reported a personal strategy to deal with the differences in faculty perspectives,

> The people that I perceive as having a negative impact or attitude toward heterogeneous grouping, I try not to deal with.

A second mentioned that,

> When I walk into the faculty room and there are the people not in favor of some of the things we've been doing, they either leave or I do.

A third added,

> We, as an entire faculty surely don't do much talking about the subjects (heterogeneous grouping and educational change) unless it's with those who tend to think the way we do.

But wouldn't one find disagreement in many a family? Those at Pioneer, no matter what their feelings, long for the world of their past and at the same time struggle with the disagreements that a family might often encounter. As others state,

> The differences in the faculty bother me but I don't see how each side can give an inch. Either you are in favor of equity in education and a student centered model of organizing a class or you aren't. I don't think anyone could convince me that heterogeneous grouping is bad for students or has been bad for teachers here.

A last teacher, though, stated,

> Like all things, these things (heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning techniques, teacher and curriculum change) are just fancy trends. Time will come and they will pass. It happens all the time in education. Someone comes up with an idea and gets people to listen and next thing is that people are jumping on the bandwagon. Who knows? Ten years from now people might realize that tracking was really the best way to teach kids.

The most common approach in dealing with intra-faculty cultural differences is to either ignore or deny that the discrepancy exists and, like in many families, deny publicly that a division exists. Symbolically, if the problem isn't there, then there is no problem. Words such as "everyone is free to make up their own minds" and that "not everyone has to support the heterogenous concept" try to create meanings describing a faculty that is together socially and professionally. At the same time meanings are also being created that only serve to increase the cultural conflict. Because Pioneer is such a small school, it is

quite possible for one scheduling change to affect a number of classes during the day. As long as even two or three percent of the classes remain closet tracked the entire schedule in some ways suffers. What takes place in one class truly can impact what another teacher does.

Similarly, how one teacher's style compares to another is not lost on the most important critics of all; the students. Word travels fast about which class (and which teacher) can be challenging or which is student centered. Those differences are explained away by reasons such as "she or he runs a popularity contest with the kids but doesn't teach much" or "so and so runs their class like a fascist camp." What appears to be lost on the teachers is the significance that the cultural conflict can play in terms of the whole school. It goes directly to the meaning of being an educator.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEM OF SHARED LEADERSHIP

An Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents an analysis of the effects of school change on the decision making process at Pioneer. In particular, it focuses on the struggle of educators in the school to deal with new processes of decision making as their working roles were being redefined around them. Inherent in the discussion of changes in the role and office of leaders is a description of the past history of "educational leadership" at the school and of how that past legacy impacts the current processes of cultural redefinition taking place among Pioneer educators. This chapter also demonstrates that organizational change, and subsequent changes in styles of leadership, can produce contradictory perspectives within the organization's culture. Those alternative interpretations are not exclusively linked to a manifest or latent culture. For example, while support teacher leadership is growing among teaching staff, so too are fears of administrative retribution. Likewise, shared decision making brings both support and fear because there is no definition as to where an administrator's authority begins and where a teacher's ends. In the redefinition of leadership roles and of the

decision making process, contradictory elements are not resolved but exist side by side.

The Process of Change and Effects on Leadership

Schools are complex and dynamic places where interpersonal realities are constantly reaffirmed and renegotiated. Any change in the way a school is organized provides opportunities for those who work in the school to redefine their professional realities. Even subtle changes to the relationships found among a school's faculty can have far reaching and unanticipated effects. Earlier chapters presented examples of how Pioneer faculty members redefined their working world in response to changes in the way their school was organized. Those new definitions cut to heart of the professional culture at the school and came to typify the interpersonal struggles that organizational change can create. As this chapter demonstrates, a style of leadership encouraged school-wide change which then began to redefine leadership.

Intrinsic to understanding the process of cultural change in an organization is the identification of how those changes are revealed through the daily interaction of organization members. In the case of a school's educators, interactions that reflect change often revolve around pedagogical issues or around those of leadership. Any look at school change must recognize how deeply the process of change is wedded to the issue of leadership. This chapter

focuses on how organizational change and leadership are related at Pioneer and presents an analysis of the faculty's continuing struggle to collectively arrive at a definition of "leadership" that can be applied to professional life at Pioneer.

Traditionally, leadership at Pioneer, like the vast majority of schools across the country, was the province of those hired as administrators. But in the course of the past five years and especially during the last two, traditional models of leadership have been at times unofficially modified and at others, simply shoved aside. Many teachers have found themselves asking "What is leadership?" and "What is the role of the empowered teacher?" For some, once used to following orders from above or "top down style" (as many Pioneer teachers term it), this new era of teacher involvement in school policy is frightening.

Administrators and teachers often find themselves trying to make sense of new and different relationships that are constantly springing up. There are those, representing conflicting cultural groups, looking for a style of leadership that favors their positions. Some want more control over school-wide issues. They have tasted bits of empowerment resulting from their own professional development and from their control over curriculum. A number of these teachers have seen their reputations grow

regionally and nationally for their work in the classroom as presented in Appendix F and Appendix G. They now want a say about issues outside of the curriculum that can also have a great effect on their classrooms and their students. These teachers, who want to continue their activist roles in shaping policy for the faculty and students at Pioneer, at times express their sense of alienation and frustration about the ways decisions at the school are made.

On the other hand, there are a minority of faculty members who reject any notion of teachers-as-leaders. They espouse a traditional view of educational leadership in which the administrator's "job is to tell people what to do". For these faculty members, who are dissatisfied with the changes of the past five years at Pioneer, leadership hasn't been delivered by those assigned the task. They feel that administrators have given up a degree of responsibility to teachers in allowing teachers to share in the decision making power. These teachers long for Pioneer to return to the stability of strictly defined roles that order what an administrator and what a teacher should be. It is not uncommon for them to use the "teachers' contract" as a tool for securing their positions. This chapter focuses on the contract because it represents a legal document that outlines the formal roles of teachers and underscores the differences between teachers and administrators.

A Quick Glimpse at the History of Leadership at Pioneer

The Pioneer Valley Regional School, as described in the earlier work of Chapter Two, has a leadership format that is common to the majority of schools across the nation. For the thirty-two years of the school district's existence the structure has been the same. Its official policy making body is an elected school committee comprised of people from the towns the school services.

At the top of the administrative hierarchy, and directly accountable to the committee, is a district-wide superintendent. That person is responsible for the operation of the regional school district, which Pioneer serves, and includes the operation of the elementary schools located in each of the four towns.

The superintendent's office is located within the Pioneer campus and he is commonly seen in the school. It should be noted here that the superintendent does not take part in the yearly routine classroom evaluations of teachers. This policy is a radical change from the previous superintendent who actively engaged in evaluations, especially those of new faculty. The decision not to do classroom evaluations but to leave them with the building principals was a symbolic and powerful signal to the Pioneer staff that the school could set its own agenda for education.

Past superintendents left a dark legacy among many Pioneer teachers. Older teachers speak about "the massacre" -- their description of the year one superintendent fired the entire non-tenured staff as a move to solidify a position of power. That superintendent, like another, lasted two years on the job. For the rest of Pioneer's history, excepting the current superintendent, Pioneer had long-term superintendents. Teachers speak about a superintendent who "was the school committee's agent" and who "worked against teachers". One superintendent was seen as "a business guy who acted as if all teachers were lazy and part time employees." The process of education was seen as a "profit and loss statement" at the end of the year. Profit and loss was not viewed in terms of student or teacher success but, in a view disdained by many on the Pioneer staff, as how much the tax rate could be reduced. Teachers were seen as hourly workers who were held in check by a contract and by superior managers possessing a superior knowledge of pedagogy.

The leadership tradition at Pioneer was to manage the school and help the school committee set policy. Superintendents were concerned with community image and not with teacher initiatives in bringing reform to education. As one long-term veteran stated,

> Trying to suggest ideas to make the school better was like throwing ideas against a brick wall. They never got through. It was very frustrating,

> especially when you knew that you had really no say in the way the school was run.

But another teacher said,

> There were superintendents here who didn't like teachers, didn't have the faintest clue about what a junior and senior high school should be, or were really threatened by anything that even resembled teacher empowerment. Except for their insecurities though, they stayed out of the classrooms.

The teacher- and administrator-led move to heterogeneous grouping was truly an in-house effort. The educators at Pioneer sold their views to the school committee while the superintendent sat back. That official didn't oppose the move but didn't assist it. The message from that person's position, at least to many on the staff, was "if you fail then it is your own doing" and the meaning of that attitude was not lost on the staff.

The current occupant of the office has been on the job since 1988 and began after the school's faculty had made the shift to heterogeneous grouping. This superintendent has shown a dramatic change in his approach to the operation of the school compared to many of his predecessors. His office has been literally open to teachers. Though his role has not been one of "friend"; it has been one of "professional colleague".

In addition to the superintendent, and directly responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school, are a principal and a vice principal. The principal has worked his way up through the ranks a Pioneer from teacher to

assistant principal to principal. Such an experience gives him a history at the school. While not there as long as a number of the faculty, he does have a tradition as a leader among those at Pioneer. During the entire process of moving to heterogeneous grouping the school has had only one principal and that person has been a strong and leading advocate for the move. The principal has also served as an interim superintendent during the recent past.

The assistant principal's position, on the other hand, has seen three separate office holders during the past five years. As in most schools, the assistant principal's position has a greater involvement than the principal's with student discipline, though there is a certain degree of crossover between the two.

The in-school administration has established what the teachers see as an "unwritten" and "informal" tradition that upholds the sacredness of the classroom for teachers, which in many ways, the current superintendent has reinforced. During the past five years, the administration has been visibly supportive of the teaching staff. Teachers have been encouraged to upgrade curriculum and were offered small financial grants as a reward. Symbolically, this has served to reinforce the message that teachers are in control of their own classrooms. Many teachers now feel they have symbolic as well as real ownership of their work.

Teachers in Leadership Roles: The Head Teachers Committee

Teachers also play formal roles in the leadership structure at Pioneer and it is essential to note how their roles have been related to the changes at the school. Currently there is a "Head Teachers Committee" consisting of eight teachers, the principal and assistant principal. The teachers on the committee, which meets monthly, are hired for their positions by the school committee and receive a stipend for their extra duties. The "Head Teachers" represent eight departments in the school. They have been a working unit for the past five years. Before that time the school had been organized into departments with formal department chairpersons. With the exception of one department, the current "Head Teachers" are the same as when the system was first instituted.

There are distinctions between what the "Head Teachers" are and what the earlier "Department Chairs" were. "Head Teachers" do not officially evaluate the teachers in their departments, though it would be foolish to suggest that they do not posses a great deal of clout in deciding the fate of new teachers. "Head Teachers" set budgets, serve as advocates for their departments, deal with policy, and address issues that arise among their teachers. While the "Head Teachers", officially, are intermediaries of sorts between teachers and the administration, the reality is that they hold the symbolic

position of department chairpersons. It is also clear that, during the past several years, restructuring at Pioneer has not been initiated at the level of the Head Teachers Committee but has come from ordinary staff members or from the administration. As a committee, Head Teachers have found themselves responding to changes rather than initiating them.

The Contract as a Reflection of Faculty Culture

A degree of teacher leadership comes through the professional association that teachers belong to. The local association is an affiliate of both a larger state wide and national educator's associations. Although Pioneer staff join with the elementary staff from the region as association members; yet Pioneer staff also negotiate their own contracts.

The negotiation committee, which is responsible for contractual issues, is an elected body from the Pioneer faculty. Anyone has the right to run for a position come contract time, yet the face of the committee has remained almost unchanged for the last two contracts. It is also true that there has been a lack of elective contests for positions on the negotiations board, despite the fact that there are disagreements on contract issues. A look at the negotiation process, and the committee, suggests that Pioneer teachers seem to try to avoid conflict as much as possible. Again the metaphor of the older, structured

"social" family comes into play as the family provides leadership. A cultural norm is that this "social" family does not publicly air dissention, particularly disagreements that speak about the professional worth of members. Contracts are decided by a vote of the teaching staff. The last was by a public show of hands vote, rather than a secret ballot. Those voting against, a small few -- new teachers for the most part, were clearly exposed to the view of the veterans. The lack of unanimity on the part of the staff was met with a high degree of nervousness and an uncomfortably tense feeling in the room when the teachers voting against raised their hands. That action was seen by some as contrary to the supposed solidarity of the Pioneer family.

The last round of contractual negotiations took place during the 1988 school year, virtually three years ago. At that time Pioneer was just beginning the third year of detracking. The symbolically important events of the past three years were yet to happen. The powerful changes in the concept of family and the visible flowering of a professional culture were just beginning.

The contract now in effect in many ways reflects meanings found in the "latent culture" discussed in Chapter Six. Many of those who share in the that culture also served as negotiators. For example, in the contract longevity is rewarded over professional advancement or

achievement. Seniority is what provides the greatest financial gain as well as the most job security. Teachers are not encouraged to continue their professional development. They are encouraged to stay within contractually prescribed roles in which the individuality of a teacher is limited. In many ways, while providing a sense of organization to the workplace, the contract tracks teachers as much as the previous grouping policy at the school tracked students. The current contract, like many artifacts of Pioneer culture, has not kept up with rapid pace of change.

Linkages Between Administrators and Teachers

Unlike many other schools, at Pioneer the line dividing administrators and teachers can be very slim and at times appears to be a conflict of interest. For example, in the Pioneer contract there are not "A" and "B" level contracts. That is to say, those who are administrators are also members of the same teacher's association that negotiates contracts for all faculty. Administrators do not vote separately, but are joined to the teacher association. Their step increases are included in the master teacher contract.

In-house administrators have always shared in the culture of the faculty. Administrators are forced into membership in the faculty culture rather than to some administrative culture because there are only two

administrators at the school. They were members of the "social family" rather than separated from it. They traditionally have found friendship with teachers rather than antagonism. An example of this clearly was the fiftieth birthday of the Principal several years ago. A group of staff came together and planned a complete day which began with pink arm bands, with the numerals "50" written in black, worn by each staff member. The principal himself was given a large pink vest to wear for the day with "50's" and messages from the rest of the faculty written on it. The day also featured the principal's office decorated and filled with artifacts including a coffin and the initials "R.I.P." scrawled across the top, many balloons, a provocative calendar with pictures of lithe models (to remind him of "what he probably forgets about at his age"), and an enormous card drawn with perfect caricatures of him and others and signed by the entire faculty. Other events included a few faculty arranging for all the students in the seventh and eighth grades to suddenly fall silent during junior high lunch (that in itself a major feat as anyone who knows what over one hundred, twelve and thirteen year old's can be like) and on cue began a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" as the principal stood in the middle of the lunch room in his bright pink vest. There were more balloons that day and more cards and wishes from students and faculty alike.

Symbolically, the day demonstrated the affection the school held for its principal; its "paternal leader". It was yet another example of the faculty as a social family. The traditional male principal in any school represents a "father figure" whether that distinction comes from authority and control or from wisdom and expertise. Either way, the Pioneer birthday party was clearly out of the norm one would expect in many public schools. It was a game and the principal not only played along but relished it.

That day also carried other meanings just under the surface. The faculty was in the initial stages of preparing for its first major educational conference. At the time the social and cultural changes, along with the resulting stress, that were about to publicly confront the faculty had yet to break through the surface. The forces of change had been powerfully but subtly at work. As the conference approached, it was becoming clear to many at Pioneer that their once social family was about to be transformed into a professional one. The birthday celebration may well have been one symbolic last grasp at the ring of security that the social family of staff could often be. It was a chance for some to say "We have this one leader whom we can trust" and at the same time begin to acknowledge that "this style of leadership is dying out at Pioneer."

In an analysis of the artifacts that were presented by the faculty for the principal that day, the coffin, the

"R.I.P" on the tombstone, the suggestions about now at fifty being "over the hill", one might see more than the good natured humor and teasing that were clearly evident that jolly day. These were the unintended messages about major changes taking place within the organization's culture. It was an older and more structured Pioneer that was being put to rest. The social family was being rapidly replaced by a professional one.

Likewise, it wasn't the principal as a person who was "over the hill". It was the role of principal as sole leader that had changed and was being replaced in the minds of many teachers. The jocularity of the day allowed fears to be expressed in non-threatening settings. Altering the style of leadership brought out many feelings of insecurity about the future held by Pioneer staff. They were learning about many roles involved in leadership as their professional realities and their organization were being redefined in front of them. Having their principal seemingly caught up in the moves toward school restructuring and change definitely signaled that the old ways were dying.

For some faculty, the changes taking place (described in Chapter Two) were threatening, and clearly, the in-house administrators were a part of the movement toward detracking. They had "let" (actually encouraged) teachers experiment with curriculum. Administrators had never

quashed the movement to heterogeneous grouping but had been part of the group pressing for such a change. Administrators were also working on committees that were chaired by teachers. This providing one more example to the minority opposed to heterogeneous grouping that "leadership" at the school had changed and that the world they knew at the school was being replaced.

The Faculty's View of Leadership

The issue of control is inherent in many definitions of what leadership means. For some, "leadership" is to be told what to do. For others, it is an opportunity to further their own agendas and gain the power to control their own destiny. Others suggest that it means "involving" everyone in participating in the policy setting practices of the school.

At Pioneer, with the changes that have taken place, the issue of leadership becomes even more important. Some changes have cut to the bone of what it means to be a teacher. The reality of the school, for many faculty, has been shaken by events of the past five years. As the common culture of the school has fractured, leadership, once a stabilizing influence (whether or not teachers agreed with the decisions being made), has in itself become a subject for redefinition. The changes that have appeared in the other areas of social and professional life at the school

unquestionably show up when leadership is mentioned. As one teacher stated,

> Leadership now is a good question. Many years ago it was top down. Now, we are being trusted to be professionals and trusted to be teachers.

Another adds,

> The principal has released power to us. More of the older faculty appreciate this. The new faculty is sort of spoiled. They didn't have to work here before.

One more offers,

> I think that some teachers want to be told what to do. I see that coming from older teachers who were told what to do. I think it could be hard for an older teacher to see a younger or newer teacher march into the principal's office and say "Listen, I don't agree with this....we have to talk about this." Because I've heard some older people say "How does he or she say what we've done here for ten years is wrong?" or "that the policy we have on an issue needs to be changed." But those people are in the minority.

Changes in leadership styles bring changes to roles. For many, used to a concrete set of role expectations, changes in what they consider leadership can be intimidating. Just as organizing classrooms in a heterogeneous manner can threaten some, changes in the way the decision making process is organized can seem equally sinister.

The Changing Leadership Style At Pioneer

For many teachers, not only those at Pioneer, to be actively involved and listened to in the making of school wide decisions is a foreign activity. Traditionally, the job has been the sole province of administrators. It is

they who are credited with the expertise and ability to apply that knowledge to the best interest of the school's students. Symbolically, they have been the leaders of schools. Administrators have held the power. In other words, they control.

The view that places administrators at the top of the educational hierarchy does not recognize that administrators are, for the most part, not teachers. They may have been teachers earlier in their career but they left the world of the classroom for reasons that can include greater pay, more prestige, or the power to set their own agendas for a school. Administrators face their own conflicting sets of demands but they are not teachers. They control but do not function in the classrooms yet the very nature of their role can often take power away from teachers. In worst case scenarios, unlike that at Pioneer, an overbearing administrator completely controlling a school diminishes the role of teacher as professional and reduces the teacher to simple worker.

For teachers to become actively involved in decision making can be quite a shock to both teachers and administrators. It demands rethinking not only public roles but also the inner meanings that define what being an educator is. At Pioneer, teachers were not only involved in the decision making process; they began to initiate it. Teachers were the driving force for the change to

heterogeneous grouping and for later events that took place at the school. Most of those moves happened in spite of the lack of enthusiasm shown by the very top levels of the district wide administration.

Leadership and how decisions are made reflect the ongoing processes of professional change at Pioneer. They are at the very heart of how the reality of the school is negotiated. As some teachers offer,

> The way things seem to go here is that someone gets a brainstorm, gets some supporters and takes it to the administration.

Another stated,

> Changes in this school have, so many of them, come from the bottom up with a lot of support from administration.

And,

> The administrators in this school seem to try to give teachers the freedom that they want.

From two others we hear,

> Leadership doesn't come from up above (here). It comes from a few people who are interested....that's how things began with heterogenous grouping and it's how things continue today.

And,

> Leadership, that is a very delicate topic. Certain members of the faculty have taken leadership. I don't really think of administrators as leaders. They do day to day logistical work, like teachers do in their own classrooms, the working stuff. Administrators do more support of the moves of the faculty. The faculty really is the leadership.

A last voice adds,

> The style of leadership here allows things to happen. It is not a voice from the top that says something has to take place.

For teachers at Pioneer the changes in the style of leadership have been important for everyone, whether they are in favor of changes at the school or against, because those changes have affected their working lives.

Toward an Empowered Group of Teachers

As the shift to heterogeneous classes at Pioneer has lead to an emphasis that gives more control to students in shaping their own learning, the same has happened to teachers. Many teachers at the school feel "empowered" as they can see the work of themselves and of peers toward redefining the school come to fruition. The empowerment garnered from working toward school wide change is a direct outgrowth from the experiences that many teachers shared in working toward change in their individual classrooms.

Pioneer teachers have learned that empowerment does not necessarily mean agreement. Individuals experiment and learn, though not all agree as to what the role of a teacher or administrator should be. They have no model to follow and it may serve them well that they shouldn't. As these teachers suggest,

> Leadership comes from teachers and is very critical. We (teachers) take responsibility for what we do.

Another offers,

> Leadership is not telling people what to do. Too often we still do not have control over our school. Empowerment means that we lead ourselves.

A third voice tells us,

> I've seen some incredible things in classrooms here. Because we know best. Teachers are in the classrooms... and administrators leave us alone.

One more stated,

> I don't think it would work any more here....telling people what to do .... That is a sense of respect we now have.

The view that teachers are not only important but essential to keeping a school alive and vibrant speaks to the symbolic worth that teachers see themselves having. As their self image has grown more positive, their desire for greater control in school wide change has also grown. As these teachers suggest,

> It's teachers who make the school run. The teachers in the trenches.

From a second we hear,

> We (teachers) have a license to teach. We are the ones out to maintain <u>our</u> (emphasis underscored) programs for the good of the kids. There were past administrators who wouldn't consider us as important.

The teacher went on to add with a chuckle,

> A past administrator asked two of us from Pioneer when we met at a workshop, "Who are the experts you are bringing in to your school that all those people are paying to see at this big conference I keep hearing about?" That person's mouth dropped a mile when we told him the experts presenting the many sessions were all Pioneer staff.

Two other faculty members clearly said,

> Change comes about from teachers.

And,

> Those teachers who wanted to take power have been empowered. Those who haven't, can only blame themselves.

These voices reflect the feelings of ownership many teachers sense. These attitudes are products of the alterations in the professional fabric of Pioneer. There are many teachers who now speak with a sense of confidence and pride in their work and in their ability as educators. Those feelings may have existed before the recent events at the school, but the feelings were never mentioned as often, if ever, and certainly not with the current enthusiasm. Many Pioneer teachers speak about their professional world with the renewed conviction that as educators they are at the top of their craft. Much of that identity, represented in the manifest culture, has come from seeing themselves as change agents and educational leaders in their school and in the educational world beyond.

Reflections on Shared Decision Making

While many teachers find themselves "empowered", all Pioneer teachers have found themselves forced to reflect on what decision making and leadership mean. Change has produced contradictory perspectives, not always based upon tenure professional culture, and not all teachers agree

with the interpretations of their peers. As one teacher tells us,

> We are not prepared to deal with the aspects of change. We are simply having enough trouble learning some of them.

Others add,

> We have so many different points of view here and I'm not sure of how many agendas. It's all the product of rapid change.

And,

> Changes have come from ideas bouncing between faculty. It almost seems accidental at times.

A fourth stated,

> I think it was threatening to administrators to give up their control. It was like a think tank that they let go.

But one more teacher said,

> I see leadership here probably....I think things are initiated from the staff....but administration makes the final decisions.

Another teacher, as did several, used experiences with decision making and leadership encountered in previous schools as a reference point to understand their Pioneer experience.

> In the school I was in before the principal was a dictator and the superintendent was a dictator. Teachers there were expected to be stand up automatons. What a difference this place is.

Others agreed,

> I've worked in other places for people who were very controlling. They were business types. Here if someone has an idea it can be brought out.

The Pioneer experience is unique. My own experiences as a teacher in other schools compliments the words used by many of those at Pioneer to describe their school. In other schools, very often there was usually only one way to do things, and that was either the principal's way or the superintendent's way. Administrators were often obsessed with controlling teachers, and they were afraid of teacher freedom. All too often, teachers were told what to do and had little voice of their own to initiate action. Administrative edicts were often backed up with threats; some subtle, some overt, all based on some form of political manipulation that would have the teachers do what the administration demanded. There was very little teacher input into those schools.

If administrators wanted clean, quiet, orderly classrooms in which children were sitting in rows and there was never a problem, usually that is what the administrator got. If the administrator wanted to see teachers teaching a specific curriculum that reflected the administrator's agenda, then that is what the teacher did. Several Pioneer teachers shared stories of their past experiences with administrators who wanted to "see" teachers working either at Pioneer many years ago or at other schools. In one memorable aside, a teacher told about a past senior administrator who walked into a classroom that had been organized into cooperative group work (this was just before

the term "cooperative learning" has gained such sweeping acclaim), and quietly surveyed the room. The teacher was available to provide assistance for the students if necessary but the students were preparing group reactions to some material presented by the teacher. The groups of students would later share their conclusions with the rest of the class. The evaluating administrator quietly walked up to the teacher and asked in a whisper, "When are you going to start teaching?" In another incident a 9th grade world studies class was deeply engaged in research at the school library for presentations that were to be delivered to the class the next week. The administrator came into the library and, after looking around, shook his head and told the teacher, "I'll come back when you are teaching." I use these examples to point out that for some teachers, the current Pioneer, in terms of leadership, is a different place than the experiences of a past Pioneer, or other schools, had been.

Too often in the world of a school, there is an obsession with rules, discipline, and order, and there is a similarity in the way students are treated by teachers and teachers are treated by administrators. Often teacher or student involvement in the decision making process is seen as a threat to the existing social climate. In the culture displayed in many a faculty room one can see symbols of distrust of teachers by administrators and of teachers

alienated from their work. Too often in those same schools one can also see angry and alienated students.

At Pioneer, many teachers have recognized that their involvement in the decision making process at the school is unique and valued. The leadership style that encouraged teachers to foster and experiment with change has now been altered itself by the experiences of many of the Pioneer staff. During the last three years, teachers have found themselves gradually taking responsibility for their own professional lives. Many teachers have found themselves as the initiators and leaders of further changes in what is taught at the school, how the material is taught, and in the way the school is organized. They have also found themselves reaching outside of the school to others in the profession. At the same time, leadership and decision making in the school, out of necessity, have had to adjust to the enfranchising of Pioneer teachers in the decision making process. The model of leadership that once encouraged teachers to alter their traditional roles now had to redefine itself in response to the activities, accomplishments, and demands from those same teachers. The process of leadership readjustment is ongoing.

At the same time, there are others who do not feel teachers should be involved in any decisions made outside of their own classrooms; those teachers feel threatened by much of the teacher leadership activity. This smaller group

sees a threat to their working world by allowing teachers who do not share their viewpoints access to the decision making process.

Both sides look at the word leadership and grapple to fit it with a definition that they can apply to their particular agendas. Interestingly enough, there may not be an existing definition with a "perfect fit" for everyone at Pioneer.

Defining Leadership: A Faculty's Search for an Explanation

Those in leadership positions are significant actors in the social drama of a school. Determining what leadership may be is a qualitative interpretation. It involves understanding process and personalities.

Leaders and leadership do not exist in a vacuum. They shape and create the world around them and are influenced by that world. The interaction of leaders, leadership, and change is indistinguishable. Yet watching and participating in that process of interaction is another way Pioneer staff make meanings about themselves and their shared world.

Many teachers offered their reflections about what leadership. One stated,

> Leaders here are encouragers...leadership here is almost a laissez faire attitude...less managing than in the past. Leaders only seem to get involved if there is a problem. Its been "hands off, let's see what happens." You don't discourage anyone here. Everyone is an individual. Formal leadership isn't here. It's from the bottom up.

Other teachers offered,

> There is a more collective role of leadership here, though there are more radical places. Teachers have input here.

And,

> A lot of what happens here is unplanned and spontaneous. That can be very threatening to some here.

A third stated,

> Leaders here try to give teachers the freedom to do what teachers want.

And a fourth said,

> More leadership comes from the administration. I like to call it role model leadership.

There were other teachers who disagreed. Many felt that the administration was struggling with the changes at the school as the teachers were. It is evident that many educators at Pioneer see the meaning of leadership through different perspectives. To be sure, leadership and decision making have been influenced by events that signify change. The differences found in the interpretations of the meanings those events carry clearly follow lines representing the conflicting cultures among the faculty. While there are teachers who press the administration to "take charge" and bring a rigid regime based on role definition to faculty life, there are others who feel the administration's unintentional neglect of staff control hastened the changes the staff has seen. Those who want rigid control of teachers are the faculty who still oppose

the move to heterogeneous grouping, are threatened by the move to a "professionalization" of the teaching staff, and long for a return for the "family atmosphere" they once saw as Pioneer. Their voices represent the "latent" culture that change at the school has produced. They "blame" leaders for the changes that have taken place at Pioneer.

Other voices, supportive of the changes during the past six years, celebrate what they see as the lack of administrative control in the process of empowering teachers at Pioneer. Those voices do not equate leadership with the changes that have taken place. They see school wide change on a more individual level. For them, change is a direct result of what individual teachers have done on their own, without extensive administrative support. Simply put, teachers are professionals who can overachieve when they are in control of and can shape their working world. As one stated,

> The faculty is ahead of administrators. They've lost control. There is a need to control, to follow on a mission. We need to know who we are as a school. We aren't directing where we are going.

Another agreed with the first and said,

> We have no direction or focus that we're going in. The administration are individually supportive.

A third teacher added,

> We need someone to step in and be a strong person and solve the problem rather than getting around it.

And a last suggests,

> I think it got away from them (administrators). They brought up the issue of teacher empowerment. I think that's been the most fun.

But other teachers felt that there was not enough teacher input into how the school was run. One said,

> There are things happening in this building that you feel you feel you have no control over.

A second reflected,

> Topics don't get discussed like they should be.

And a third teacher stated,

> I don't think there is some plan. It's more like a web of ideas.

And, lastly, a teacher states,

> Not one person should be deciding where we are going as a school.

A Not-So-Traditional View of Leadership and Decision Making

Interestingly enough, there are teachers who see benefits to a style of leadership that is "non-leadership". That is to say, positive change can take place within an organization as:

1) Decision making becomes more collaborative
2) The sources of initiating policy renewal more heterogeneous
3) Power is distributed through out the organization
4) Organizational members share ownership in forming the response to the immediate and longer term problems faced by the group.

This model of leadership is non-traditional, to say the least. It does not revolve around the all powerful and

often autocratic administrator found in the past. Rather, it down-plays the importance of one person in favor of recognizing the importance of many people. Control is not centralized in one office or with one individual but is rather a shared and self-directed form of leadership. As one teacher offers,

> Benevolent neglect allowed teachers who were willing to knock themselves out to improve and adapt what they did. I have never sensed a strong administrative push to change.

Another adds,

> I think the people who made the most changes come from personal and professional changes with some collegial support. The administration supports tacitly, but they can't know how to teach in so many innovative ways that you can see here but at the same time they haven't allowed for the systemic change that needs to happen, happen.

To be sure, there has been administrative support and encouragement for teachers to further their work in curriculum development. In better fiscal times, the principal found "R and D" money so that teachers could be paid for improving their curriculum. A number of staff members were awarded summer funding. At the same time, other teachers went quietly about the task of subjecting their curriculum to an intensive summer non-paid review. But there has never been a strong mandate from administrators dictating that teachers adopt a particular classroom strategy or follow a specific educational philosophy.

Networks: Developing Leadership Pockets

A great deal of the motivation that inspires Pioneer faculty to achieve and to bring themselves and their curriculum to new and important levels of self-learning and classroom improvement comes from being self-motivated individuals. Within the manifest culture of the Pioneer experience is a professional reliance upon peers sharing the same professional identities for support and critique. In this sense, leadership comes from the individual and from the advice of supportive peers rather than from the formal offices of administration.

One teacher suggested,

> We have little leadership pockets. They are pockets of power. They have access. They can set their own policy or at least bring a great influence upon the school. To them the administration listens.

There is a legacy at Pioneer from the earliest days of shifting toward heterogeneous grouping as it was educators, including all at the school from administrators to teachers, who brought about change. Gradually, groups of educators came together in response to what they perceived as common problems at the school. They began to not only propose solutions for those problems, but to implement programatic change. The individuals were not from specific departments nor were they officially mandated in the hierarchy of the school.

The chain of command gradually began to be superseded as more and more teachers found that waiting for events and proposals to get an adequate presentation to all the faculty and for all faculty to decide took too long or didn't take place at all. At times the administrative structure was seen to "stonewall" a decision and manipulate the situation for their own agendas. Faculty were now talking, not in the terms of the traditional "bitch sessions" faculty rooms can be notorious for, but now with words that expressed faculty agendas for bettering life at the school for everyone. One teacher said that "The faculty here feels free to speak their minds." Others went on to suggest that,

> So groups of people get together here and generate ideas that make the place better. I see nothing wrong with that. In fact I wish that everyone would get involved.

And,

> We, all of us in this school, have the opportunity to gain a greater say in our school. We are doing that in spite of the bureaucratic structure of the handbook.

One last teacher stated,

> Small groups of people working together here have been very productive. More so than working alone or in formal committees. That should be example enough for where we should be heading as a faculty.

Still, there is no formal structure to include teachers in the decision making or leadership process of the school, except to use the well worn phrase "going

through channels". According to the "official" track, information is passed down through the formal hierarchy that is tied to the governance system put in place more than five years ago. Though teachers are still encouraged to "go through channels" by the handbook, in reality, much more information is passed informally, from teacher to teacher. The development of an "unofficial" network of "leadership pockets" has brought a share of confusion to staff used to traditional models of school decision making.

Contradicting Elements of Leadership in a Changing School

Restructuring at Pioneer has brought about many changes, some anticipated and some not. Changes in the decision making process serve as a backdrop for redefining faculty roles. It has forced many staff members to question their roles in directing the outcomes of their school. For each question there are many answers that cut across cultural lines and identify contradictory elements that can result as the organization of a school is altered. These exist side by side and often feed off each other. In particular, these elements include,

1) Teacher empowerment as a challenge administrative control and lead to fear by teachers of administrative retribution

2) The relationship of "formal" structures in the decision making process to those of "leadership pockets" among the faculty

3) Contradictions as the roles of teachers and administrators are redefined in the school.

4) That shared decision making involves a restructuring of the leadership roles in a school.

These elements involve all aspects of the professional community at the school. For example, the administration is often caught between the demands of two competing professional cultures. They want to encourage the innovation that staff members have become nationally known for while at the same time keep a professionally non-threatening atmosphere, reflected in the older ideal of the "Pioneer social family", for a few staff members. In the years since the change to heterogeneous grouping there has not been a staff development course offered at the school speaking to issues of school change or development of individual teaching strategies. Professional development has been left to the individual and the work that the individual creates. That process has created waves within the faculty.

It is also interesting to note that the work of individuals has been kept separated from other teachers, except when the initiatives have been teacher-generated. All of this has sent a message to teachers. To one culture of the school the meaning is that "those who wish to can achieve while those who don't want to haven't had to." To the other culture the meaning of events has been "some people are rewarded for work done outside of the professional contract." As one teacher emphatically

questioned, "I teach my classes and I do a job. Why should I be out getting grants?" Others quietly wondered if they were now to be "quietly evaluated" by criteria that concern what they do outside of the classroom.

There are questions asked among Pioneer faculty that cut to the heart of leadership and the decision making process. As one teacher asks,

> Who should set the agenda of a meeting? Who should place issues in front of the entire faculty? We talk a lot but we don't agree on specifics.

There are some who feel that information is also passed from administration to teacher on a "favorite person" basis. Those feelings often reflect inter-cultural lines as the minority espousing the "latent" culture feel the decision making process has not involved all teachers. There are teachers who, after "a long time working toward a particular policy in committee meetings that took place with administrator encouragement," have found their work ignored. As one teacher said,

> I'm not sure that a few people should be deciding where this school and my life should be going. I and many others have made quite a commitment to the school and the kids here.

<u>The Teacher Leaders: The Meaning of Formal Roles</u>

Pioneer has a formal structure of teachers who occupy leadership positions and an informal, yet very powerful, hierarchy of leaders. Formally, within the department system that organizes the teachers at the school are the

"Head Teachers" described earlier. They have become, more often than not, figure heads in dealing with anything but yearly department budgets. Some faculty members, even some of those on the committee, view the role of the "Head Teachers'" as an extension of the administration. As one teacher stated,

> I'm not so sure exactly what the head teachers do. It seems all they do is meet and talk about proposals from the administration.

Another teacher added,

> The meetings serve as a rubber stamp for the proposals that the administration wishes. Issues are already decided before the meetings begin.

There were other teachers who added,

> I'm not so sure that they bring up policy issues from the faculty.
>
> The way the system is set up, they could become very powerful and take a lot of leadership away from the teachers. It's a good thing that they are not so strong. It's also clear that the administration wants to keep the control over them. They (administrators) can't do that with all the teachers (in the school). There too many who've gone out and done their own thing and the kids and school have benefitted.

Clearly, the formalized structure of teacher leadership at Pioneer does not hold the symbolic power that one would expect. The instances of teacher leadership during the past five years (and more importantly, during the past three years) have eroded whatever social claims head teachers had on innovation. As one wag suggested, "How can a "head teacher" be superior to someone who does far more in the classroom and within the profession?"

In the case of Pioneer, formal authority does not suggest expertise.

Questions Raised by the Idea of Empowerment

The cultural change at Pioneer is reflected in the changing roles of teachers and administrators. Five years ago, most teachers would have shrugged off any suggestion that they were leaders. But recently, the average teacher at Pioneer has seen her school transformed into a place where teachers have some control of their own individual classroom destinies and also, the collective direction of their school. This process of cultural change has had great symbolic meaning teachers and encouraged others to take an activist role.

Teachers have had the opportunity to propose very important alterations in the fabric of the school. They have watched their efforts come to fruition. There was never any plan of action that the teachers were following; more simply, as one teacher stated quite succinctly, "one event that dealt with school change just kept on leading to another." Each new activity the teachers participated in, the more new ground became broken and the more redefinition of roles took place.

To be sure, the redefinition by faculty of their position brought about new and difficult questions for some faculty long used to a traditional "chain of command". This

cultural repositioning also brought questions to administrators. For example, as one teacher asked,

> How can an administrator not certified in my subject area adequately evaluate my competence as a teacher? It gets really difficult to answer when I realize that my curriculum keeps getting better and my models of teaching are in demand by others.

Another said,

> For years they have to write something under the "needs improvement category" on the evaluation form. I know it is the same almost everywhere. But why be so self critical? A number of us should ask for an explanation to any of the needs improvement comments. Lately, the common words seem to be "curriculum improvement" or "continued work on curriculum". First, that's not a "needs improvement" response. If my curriculum is so innovative then I don't think it needs improvement in a negative sense.

A third teacher stated,

> I'm beginning to think that I'm not simply a low paid worker. I'm a professional and I think that I should be treated as one. You don't see doctors or lawyers having to turn in their plan books and rank books at the end of the year. Do you?

One teacher raised a concern about the chain of command and said,

> If I hear that chain of command phrase used one more time I don't know if I can take it. Chain of command has brought very little improvement to the school. It really is all for show. It seems that it (chain of command) can be used to block something when the powers that be do not like what they see happening or it's usurped when those same powers just make a decision that affects the entire school because that is the power they hold, and they don't bother to listen to anyone else. I think we all should have the right to consider decisions that affect us all.

The decision making process remains at the heart of and is truly symbolic of the cultural change at Pioneer. Individual teachers, sharing common identities as "encouraging heterogeneous grouping," have, as both individuals and a group, kept pushing apart the cultural boundaries that often limit them in their classrooms and in their school.

Rarely is this type of movement smooth or easy for an organization to endure. It has brought faculty clashes when the issue of decision making is brought up. Some teachers can express their sense of frustration when they speak about decision making at Pioneer while others ignore any discussion on the matter. In particular, much of that frustration is reflected in talk about the monthly faculty meeting. It is at the faculty meeting that the staff convene once a month, though there are usually some teachers who manage to miss the event because of other commitments. Many faculty members dread the monthly events because, when issues are discussed, the atmosphere can often grow very tense, to the point of being socially uncomfortable.

The traditional standard of organizing faculty meetings in the past consisted of an administrator reading through an agenda and talking about each items. That tradition lasted through the stay of more than one administrator. Staff would sit and listen waiting for the

meeting to end, fulfilling their contractual obligations for that month, and allowing them to go home. During the past five years, faculty meetings have gradually shifted from an administrator reading from an agenda about dates and deadlines to staff members trying to engage in a discussion of issues. The past two years have seen faculty meetings not dreaded for their boredom but for the cultural combat the gatherings can produce. Disagreements, particularly in policies set for the entire school, abound between the cultural groups of the faculty. Opposing views also exist among those sharing the same cultural/professional identity. It has been common, during the past two years, to see teachers leave a meeting in disgust and on one occasion, tears. As one faculty member describes,

> Our faculty meetings are strange and getting worse. We don't seem to reach closure on issues. I don't know if I'm getting senile or what. I'll go home and I'll say, 'we talked about this' but, thinking about it, I don't know what we decided.

Another teacher expresses,

> I though well, I used to think that things came from the top and filtered down. That was several years ago. Then I thought, certain things could come from the faculty and filter up. That was a year ago. Now to be honest, I don't know where things are coming from.

A third teacher, reflecting back across a recent faculty meeting, stated,

> We seem to say that as teachers, we are not smart enough to make the day to day decisions that run the school.

Contradictions in the Meanings of Empowerment

Often times there may well be agendas directed by the administration, one group of teachers or another from the faculty at any one meeting. Yet, the administration controls the printed agenda and controls the discussions. If a question needs to be moved, it gets moved, oftentimes to the chagrin of one or another of the competing factions on the staff.

There is also a sense of fear that carries over into the decision making process about retribution from administration directed at faculty for having differing opinions. The administrator remains the symbolic leader etched in every teacher's memory. To challenge a principal in public is a daring feat, to say the least. This remains true even if the administrator is a collaborator with the teacher on one of the many projects of school change and restructuring; so deep are the cultural roots of educator roles. As one teacher asked after a recent faculty meeting in which the principal did not attend,

> I think in that meeting we got a great deal accomplished. We still didn't agree but we talked as teachers. That doesn't happen at all our meetings.

The particular meeting was continued to a near by date by faculty acclamation because the faculty felt the discussions had been so productive. But after this second meeting, which administrators attended, the teacher said,

> We did it again. This time we talked about tripe. Nothing got accomplished. Everyone knew the agenda from the last meeting and still things went sour.

That meeting in particular saw simple, yet very symbolic and significant changes, such as a change in the seating arrangement of the meeting. For the first time, that many faculty could remember, seating was arranged in a circle of tables so that all faculty members could see each other. There was no administrator standing at a podium above the seated faculty. It was a symbolic move that conveyed a message of professional equality in decision making. It was a move, equally symbolic, that was suggested by teachers. The administrators had in fact been asking for teachers to suggest changes for meetings during the preceding year. As many teachers noted when I asked them to reflect on that meeting and how conversation was used, teachers to a one mentioned the administration unofficially "chairing" the meeting by the amount of time the teachers spoke and administration spoke. Old ways die very hard.

Toward the Crucible: An Intense Time of Many Issues

The Leadership-decision making process at Pioneer are but two aspects of cultural change that have a bearing on a school. It is clear that changes have been made at Pioneer by those who work there in their own lives and in the lives of the children they teach. The issues of leadership and decision making that confront Pioneer teachers are not uncommon to any public school teacher. Frustration about

decision making and the lack of administrative acknowledgement of teachers as professionals is inherent among many teachers and among uncountable staffs across the gamut of public schools. In all of those schools, those who have control of the decision making processes reflect the stereotypes and images that have been fostered in education, schools, and in every institution that has ever offered input into what being a student, a teacher, or administrator should mean. For teachers, those meanings are hard to escape and equally hard to change.

The process taking place at Pioneer is on going, assuming one shape and then reshaping as time goes on. It does not follow a prescribed course of action. The faculty is constantly engaged in learning and negotiating new meanings about what working at Pioneer means and, at the same time, develop a constantly evolving professional culture. The same can be said about any school. What separates teachers from those in other professions is that effective teaching demands ongoing learning. In many schools that process has been subverted by administrative edicts or internal politics. At Pioneer teachers can celebrate being learners, as those sharing a manifest identity attest. The very important lesson from the Pioneer experience is that leadership and decision making are tied to organizational changes.

As this chapter has indicated, once freed of the constraints placed by the organizational structures of the school, many staff members were renewed as professionals and reinvented models of leadership. Also clear is that change itself became a catalyst that fostered further educational and personal growth. More often than not, the styles of leadership and decision making, marked by a traditional chain of command, blocked teachers growing professionally rather than liberating them. Again the words of Theodore Sizer (1985) serve as an important reminder that attempts to run a school as one would run a factory will turn out "uneven goods". The workers <u>and</u> the goods of the "factory" of the school are teachers and students.

CHAPTER VIII

A SCHOOL AS A CRUCIBLE OF CHANGE

> We can't go back ever again. This has changed us. This school and most of us will never be the same as teachers again.
>
> A Pioneer teacher, ten minutes after the end of the "Derailing the Tracked School Conference."

Linking the Common Threads of Change

The deep changes in the professional world at Pioneer, presented in the earlier chapters of this work, were products of alterations in the way the school was organized for students and for teachers. At the same time, the social effects of that process remained quiet, within individual classroom efforts, focused inside rather than outside the realm of the school. But, as this chapter suggests, during the space of approximately two years, events celebrating change at Pioneer became very public. Many faculty found that they could have an even greater say in shaping education, not only at Pioneer, but as models for teachers and administrators at other schools. A few others found that their in-house disagreement with the change in grouping policies and with resulting "new" definitions of a "professional" and "empowered" staff were highlighted as Pioneer went public with the results and effects of detracking. Underlying this chapter is the idea that a "publicizing" of school based change to the greater

audience of the "profession" served to accentuate the differences in a faculty culture, changes in the meaning of a metaphor of family, and how Pioneer faculty were (and are) forced to redefine their understanding and directions of the leadership and decision making process.

Within the stress generated by events of the past two years, the professional world at Pioneer has become a "crucible" of change. One definition of a crucible is "a severe test". Another is of a container that can bring the greatest "heat to substances". As this chapter demonstrates, the professional world at Pioneer became a crucible. Many faculty members and the culture they shared were put to the severest test. Faculty cultures were subjected to the intense heat of change. Pioneer became a place where the recognition of professional changes by an outside professional public were taking place on an almost daily basis and, where the process of change was seen by many to "control events and people" rather than being under the control of the faculty. The changes discussed in earlier chapters about "the metaphor of family", the recreation of "professional cultures" within the faculty, and the struggle by the professional staff to arrive at a definitive meaning of "leadership and decision making" became intensified and impossible for the staff to ignore. The "crucible of change" added symbolic meaning to internal

events in the organization signifying the realities of a professional rebirth.

The changes that have taken place at Pioneer have had a profound impact on many of the staff. As the evidence discussed in earlier chapters suggests, social and professional relationships have been altered. The way faculty view issues such as leadership, teacher empowerment, and the professionalization of educators has also been transformed.

While it is true that these issues have important links to a past at Pioneer, professional change for faculty members remained quiet and did not visibly intrude upon the public side of the social world at the school. Some faculty were beginning to attract attention from outside interests but that attention was geared to individuals and not toward the entire staff. Pioneer remained a small rural school. Differences in the faculty culture existed but were muted.

The events of the more recent past have brought the differences among Pioneer staff to the forefront. The faculty has experienced rapid change, some of it planned, some of it not. New events served as catalysts and furthered innovation and those products in turn served as catalysts for more and greater change. Recent events have taken place at break neck speeds. Those who work at Pioneer have been forced to both comprehend the meaning of those events and then to find a suitable response. Along

the way they have been forced to face the essential cultural differences that exist between them. The small quiet school, once enjoying the reputation as a middle range place where everyone was a friend suddenly found itself in the national light, recognized for positive change and innovation with a staff growing in the self confidence of professional achievement. Pioneer had, for all staff members, become a crucible where the individual and collective energies generated dramatic and powerful change in an educational program and with the individuals who designed and carried out those programs.

In spite of the forces affecting the faculty, there has been a constant concern for the children of the school. That feeling has been germane to any of the events that have taken place. Ultimately, concern for students has been linked with concern for teachers in the eyes of many. The heat generated in the crucible has brought a holistic view of the school in which events that affect students also affect teachers and administrators. It is clear that a reciprocal relationship exists and underscores the unity of the student body and the faculty in any endeavor of change.

A Catalyst: Working Together

During the spring semester of 1989 a small group of teachers continued their talk about how the school hadn't gone far enough toward reaching all students. Pioneer at this time had been heterogeneously grouped for almost three

years. It was clear to those teachers that, in spite of improvements school and faculty had made toward teaching all students, not all students were being served. The group came to a conclusion that change at Pioneer, in school, was not enough. The feeling was that to effect total change in the school, to find success for as many children as possible not only academically but in life long learning skills, there needed to be a linkage between the school and the families in the four very rural communities they served. The group saw that the quality of communication too often placed parents and teachers in adversarial roles. It was felt that too often parent-teacher interaction centered on student behavior and not academic work. The intent was to develop a more cooperative and sharing relationship with parents and with the community.

The group had the opinion that Pioneer's mission was not to simply "be a school", but that it could be a community-wide resource that would link families from the four towns in a collective effort to improve the quality of life for all students. The teachers, from six separate fields, and from the administration, felt that if issues such as parenting and adult literacy could be addressed, community resources mobilized and utilized, then ultimately students would benefit. Some of the teachers offered, "that very few in the community even knew what Pioneer was all

about" and that "not very many realized what a resource the school was."

In the spring of 1989, an announcement was made by the United States Department of Education offering funding allotted to a grant program which would serve to assist schools planning and carrying out innovative programs. The form went on to list a number of areas of school reform and restructuring which would be considered for eligibility. One of which offered the opportunity to link the in-house restructuring to heterogeneous grouping with an outreach program designed to build a school community partnership.

The superintendent's office received the call for grant proposals from the state Department of Education more than a month after it was announced by the federal government. From there it was passed on to the Pioneer administration which in turn passed it on to the teachers. Immediately there were at least a dozen teachers who showed some interest in submitting an application. Invitations were sent out to parents and a meeting was held at the school one afternoon. From those expressing varying levels of interest a smaller group began to brainstorm ideas and carve out a rough plan of what they would try to do at Pioneer if they were to have their application accepted.

A final group of six were selected by those interested and began to formulate plans to write the grant. I was a member of that group and had assumed a position as one of

the leaders. My five colleagues included an administrator and represented three subject areas beside my own. As I did, fellow faculty taught at both junior and senior high school levels. The writers ranged in seniority from first year staff members to a veteran of more than twenty five years.

It was clear that, with the grant's application deadline less than three weeks away, we would need to block a large amount of time to sit down and have a rough draft to share with our colleagues. In public schools such time is, for the most part, unavailable. The principal had suggested that time been made available for professional group work in the past and we asked if some time could be made available for us to use. A day was selected, substitutes arranged, one teacher volunteered the use of a house, and the grant writers went to work.

To some, it might seem a series of events took place at the school that lacked any real importance. After all, the grant writers had their fifty or so page application rejected six months later and life wasn't radically altered at the school. On the other hand, what may seem like a small and unimportant event can cause great changes to occur within an organization. At Pioneer, educators working together toward the grant using out-of-school professional time arranged for by administration brought a number of important messages. For instance, teachers felt a part of

the leadership process. They were the designers of the grant proposal rather than followers of administrative directives.

Symbolically, awarding teachers professional time away from classes on a school day, said that teachers could do more than just teach. It should be pointed out that earlier district-wide administrators had constantly played down the worth of Pioneer's staff. In those days many teachers not only felt undervalued but also constrained with administrative controls designed to "make sure teachers were doing their jobs". Now teachers were enfranchised in deciding the direction Pioneer would take. We were "trusted" by an administration that watched us take the initiative and then assisted our efforts as much as possible. A number of those who wrote and planned the grant felt a new sense of respect from administrators and peers for their professional efforts. That was a rare experience for people with long histories at Pioneer or those of us who had taught at other schools. In these past situations, teachers were often regarded with professional suspicion at best and open derision at worst by administrators.

If teachers were working as more than "classroom teachers", they were also working in areas not defined by the "contract". The extra work the grant writers were doing did not carry any financial compensation, was not an assigned duty and thus wasn't covered within the contract.

Likewise, the people doing the work were volunteers and highly in favor of detracking. Time and time again Pioneer would see teachers in favor of detracking voluntarily work together in situations beyond the grasp of the contract to turn up the tempo of school-wide change.

A subtle yet very powerful series of events had taken place. The six of us who wrote the rough draft for the grant had worked together. We had shared, critiqued, and modified each other's ideas. We had worked through the process of writing together (which, interestingly enough, would be a title of a teacher presented workshop at both conferences held at the school the following year). The vision for bringing change to the school had come from a group of average educators; not from a policy making group such as the "Head Teachers", nor from a statement outlining an administrator's vision for everyone at Pioneer.

The symbolism of working together across department lines was equally important. We were not as isolated as we once had been. The shared experience was brought back to the larger group interested in the grant. Once the rough draft had been written, others on the faculty stepped forward to offer assistance that included editing the application, bringing in experts from the local university to help with delivering the services the grant promised and evaluating the grant, and assembling all the material in a bound and formidable package. That effort, like that of the

grant writers, cut across many levels at the school. Many teachers were working together toward a common goal for their school. As ownership began to develop around what took place in the classroom with the changes in curriculum brought on by the move to heterogeneous grouping, a number of staff could express a similar sense of ownership in affecting further changes at their school.

A sense of pride also developed, especially among the grant writers, that they could be competitive in the world of professional education. There was a sense that they did have a great deal to offer outside of the work in their classrooms. "Just think", I remember one teacher saying in a voice that was both confident and filled with awe at what was taking place, "We're sending in this grant. We did it. Little Pioneer applying for a grant and going against all kinds of school districts like L.A. and who knows where else."

The grant application's focus was on improving the process of education for all Pioneer students. That was ultimately the driving force but it was also becoming clear that improving the world of the school and its outcomes for students, did have an effect on the world of the school for teachers. The self critique that is part of describing what a group, an organization, or a person is about, forced the grant writers and others to look at heterogeneous grouping and at how far they and the school had come in only four

years. It also showed those same people that they and their school still had further to go. The Pioneer model of "bottom up" leadership was beginning to resurrect itself. This time it would go much further in scope and impact than the change to heterogeneous grouping had been. The seeds for greater changes had been planted.

A Passing Conversation

A few weeks after the grant application had been mailed and with only two weeks of school left, I sat in a meeting the superintendent had scheduled to bring teachers from around the district together. His intent was to increase communication between elementary teachers who taught sixth graders and those who taught junior high school students at Pioneer.

Part of the meeting included reports from a few Pioneer teachers who had recently attended a major regional conference on educating students during the middle school years. (It is interesting to point out that within two years, Pioneer teachers would not only continue to attend this conference, but would in fact be featured presenters.) The teachers had brought back their notes to share with the rest of the staff.

Listening to the reports, which generally were informative, I could also see how further along Pioneer was on the path of developing creative approaches to learning. That impression was not new to me by any means. I'd felt

the same in workshops and conferences I had attended during the past two years. I had heard one or two peers express the same sentiments. What made the Pioneer experience so important was the number of teachers who had rewritten curriculum and altered time-entrenched teaching techniques. Pioneer did not simply have a few innovative classrooms, it had many. I turned and mentioned this to the teacher sitting next to me, who had been one of the grant writers. The teacher nodded in agreement. "So what do we do about it?" the teacher asked.

"Why don't we do our own conference about heterogeneous grouping?" I asked. "Why don't we put together a conference using our own staff as presenters. Invite people from other schools to be here?"

The teacher looked at me as if I was daft and laughed and then turning to the principal seated behind us said, "He says that we should have our own conference here at the school on teaching in the heterogeneous classroom."

The principal looked at me, chuckled and said, "Why don't you tell it to the superintendent?" which we did, and he chuckled too. The subject was left for another time and another place as Pioneer teachers and students began the process of finishing another school year.

Still small groups of teachers continued to talk amongst themselves about some of the issues raised during the grant writing process and about others such as teacher

sharing and professional development. For example, the seventh grade teachers had been working as a team for two years, a team that they asked for and that had been created around them using their free preparation period as a common planning time. I was one of the seventh grade team members and, as each of the others will attest, we found that our classes were stronger and the seventh grade students greatly benefitted from our working together and explaining our work to each other. Again, the common elements of teacher support for detracking combined with a voluntary and teacher originated initiative, taking place outside the limitations of the teacher contract, came together to produce a viable educational program for Pioneer students. Now other teachers were asking for the chance to work together.

A few teachers sat in the faculty room during one of the last days of school that year talking about issues of school change that they considered important. "Let's have a meeting", I suggested, "when we get back together in September to talk about what we see change as being and do some thinking about addressing issues that we feel are important." The others agreed and the year closed out with the annual male-only golf tournament.

My Interests: Self Reflection as a Source of Data

I was interested in pushing the "boundaries" of school change for a variety of reasons. I had been a veteran

teacher working in several public schools in regular and special education before coming to Pioneer. My work in the heterogeneous classroom was exciting. Here I was a "regular education" teacher teaching students of all abilities. In this situation every student is special and each is an individual with particular learning styles. It was exciting to realize that, after working in resource rooms for all those years where often times special needs students are further segregated from a school's population, at Pioneer students did not go to a resource room for a particular subject. They went to a regular classroom. The resource room was being used as a resource. My classes were as heterogeneous as I'd ever expected. I felt what was taking place at Pioneer was important.

My other interests had been in the way schools are organized and not only in the way education was practiced but also in the way teachers and administrators view their professions. My work at Pioneer was beginning to show me just how tied together the intellectual and emotional well-being of students, teachers and administrators actually is.

The year that ended with me as one of the grant writers found me returning to graduate studies at the doctoral level as well as working at Pioneer. The readings I encountered and the discussions I took part in gave me some new insights into how we construct what it means to

teach and administer in our schools. Being a teacher at Pioneer brought my studies to life.

The September Meeting

The first week of school for the 1989-1990 school year signaled a new beginning and a catalyst of change for the Pioneer staff. Though at the time, I'm not sure that anyone had any notion about what the year would be like or about what the experiences at the school would mean for staff, but as is often true, dramatic change can begin with seemingly inauspicious events. Following up on the discussions held the past June about addressing educational and professional issues, I put out a memo to the faculty inviting anyone interested to meet after school one day. We were to discuss issues and directions for the school; the agenda for that meeting listed "community outreach", "parental involvement", "professional development and the idea of a conference", "further grant writing", and "other topics". It was an agenda that came from the teachers I worked with and it served to focus a discussion.

At the end of a warm early September afternoon eight staff members sat in a social studies classroom in a far wing of the school. That meeting was to set the stage for a great many events. Five of the original grant writers were there (one had left Pioneer during the summer). "I hope this doesn't last too long", someone muttered as we arranged a group of desks into a circle.

It was agreed that we, as a staff, needed to continue the initiative toward parent and community involvement. Two teachers proposed that we start a parent-teacher group but that it be much more of a "partnership". With the support of everyone at the meeting, the "Pioneer Parent Teacher Partnership" was born. One teacher immediately offered to serve as coordinator.

On the subject of community involvement, it was clear that Pioneer's rural location and history made it difficult to reach parents from the four feeder communities. One teacher, a veteran remembered that more than a few years earlier, the school, staff and students alike had presented an educational fair. It was decided that a new educational fair, a special day involving the entire school community and the citizens from the four towns would serve as a beginning for a community-school program. As one teacher commented, "Before we can work with them, we've got to get them here." One person volunteered to start the work of bringing an educational fair to Pioneer for the second time.

The subject of grant writing was discussed. We talked about the need to have two or three people who would simply serve as a clearinghouse for information about grants. We also talked about how necessary it was to have collaboration with peers if there was an award worth

applying for. Again people volunteered to investigate the process of setting up resources for grant writers.

Finally discussion turned to my suggestion that we, the teachers at Pioneer, present a conference that offered what we did in our own classrooms to other educators from our school as well as for those from other schools. By brainstorming a fast list of possible presentations, we found that we had more than enough staff to cover a full day of activity. The group decided that the conference would address the subjects of "heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, and school change".

A few of the people at the meeting felt that the conference was a good idea but that it would "take too much work to put it on during this school year." One other teacher disagreed saying that the "interest in heterogeneous grouping is finally growing and many teachers are now looking for help." A second teacher added, "You've got to use the iron while it's still hot." Other teachers agreed.

One other teacher, after sitting back and quietly taking in the discussion taking place around the circle asked, "Why should I do this? What's in it for me? Why should I say yes and commit myself to all this work when I'm already out straight with work for the classes I teach?" The meeting fell silent.

I tried to explain that sharing what a teacher did with other teachers was what professionalism was all about. I also said that ultimately students, teachers, and the school would benefit in many, many ways. Another teacher agreed and said, "Look if you feel so strongly about what you do in the classroom then you should share that with others." One more teacher added, "Thinking about it, that makes what takes place in our classrooms with our kids even more special. We have to be that good in our classes to be that good with other teachers." Someone else added, "This could also benefit the whole school. It would let the world know that this is a special place where good things are happening. I think it would help let the communities know that we're essential."

The doubting teacher paused for a moment and said, "OK. Count me in. What do you want me to do?" At that moment most of us in that room knew there would be a conference at Pioneer that year. At the same time, we didn't have any idea what the first conference and later events would come to symbolize and we surely didn't know how the symbolic meanings from the process of preparing and presenting the conference would come to affect the professional culture shared by administration and teachers. The eight of us who met in that empty social studies classroom certainly had no way of knowing that a year later, to the week, the students and staff of Pioneer would

be featured for three nights on an evening national news broadcast celebrating the products of detracked classes.

A Year of Progress, Change and the Surfacing of Faculty Divisions

The school year of 1989-1990 began with a speaker from a (now defunct) State Regional Education Office advising those of us at Pioneer to "blow your own horn because there is no one out there who is going to blow it for you." Many Pioneer teachers still remember those words when they comment upon the role of the administration and teacher empowerment. One teacher makes sure to say that, "They (administration) gave us the green light to do what we've done, though I'm not sure we wouldn't have done what we did anyway."

For the ideas of the early September meeting to come to fruition there needed to be administrative support and the Pioneer administration didn't discourage any of the work. One teacher organized the "Educational Fair" and, with help from others, the building of a Parent-Teacher Partnership. While these moves grew in staff support over time, they also signaled in a very public way, the cultural changes that had been taking place at Pioneer. For example, the "Educational Fair" was not looked upon with favor by all faculty. In fact the minority of teachers who were opposed to detracking were now confronted by the dilemma of explaining their work to a curious public. Clearly, this

was not to be a typical "parent's night". While that in itself was not necessarily threatening (though for many teachers such an experience can be), the knowledge that many peers were focusing on the heterogeneity of their classes in their presentations certainly was. The day symbolized the differences in teaching tracked and detracked classes and how powerful an idea proposed by teachers could become.

The "Educational Fair" was scheduled for a Wednesday in early May and required a faculty vote because of the changes to the school day schedule. Faculty and students were asked to be attend school from 8:00 am until 11:00 am and then return for the fair from 3:00 pm to approximately 8:00 pm. While the genesis of the "Educational Fair" again represented the common elements of teacher initiative, voluntary action, and an underlying focus on detracking, the schedule for the day brought it within the realm of the contract. It was only through the contract that an attempt to block the day could be made because an overwhelming majority of the faculty favored the fair.

The vote, which was not unanimous, clearly represented the cultural lines in the school. The deeper issue was not the fair but detracking and how that was related to the growing professional culture empowering teachers. The "Educational Fair" was symbolic of the "new" directions in which Pioneer was headed. The few teachers not in favor of

that course could see how the impact of "going public" made their position all the more tenuous. Those teachers quietly blamed the teacher organizing the day for "trying to change the school" and for "ruining a good place to teach". Also interesting, from a look at the documents recording faculty sentiments, the votes for and against the "Educational Fair" are similar to the votes made a few years earlier for and against heterogeneous grouping. It is also interesting that the numbers for and against later events at Pioneer during the time of "the crucible" were the same as the vote for the fair. In the spirit of confidentiality it would not be appropriate to list specific numbers but, suffice it to say, those voting "for" represented more than eighty percent of the Pioneer professional staff.

At the same time, what became known as the "Conference Committee" set about planning a conference featuring the working professionals at Pioneer. I was the chair of the committee. During the fall of 1989 we issued an informational ballot to the Pioneer staff. The results were that an overwhelming majority of Pioneer staff supported the conference idea for the spring of 1990. It is also important to note that there were some members of the faculty who did not bother to return their ballots. As we shall see later, the activity of "ignoring an event of change and hoping that it went away" had an established history at Pioneer for some faculty.

The "Conference Committee" held weekly meetings. I set an agenda which reflected the work of those on the committee. There were teachers and administrators in charge of issues including selecting guest speakers, making publicity and media arrangements, arranging meals and catering, coordinating the publishing necessary for programs, fund raising, and scheduling the individual presentations Pioneer teachers would make. It is honest to say that producing the day required an enormous amount of effort. All of the work was carried out by teachers and administrators. It was difficult for me (and I sincerely believe for the administrators who worked on the committee) to sit and chair meetings. I knew that I was an underling in the official hierarchy of the school's chain of command, but in this situation roles were reversed. I not only set the agenda for the meetings but would ask those who were school administrators (and my superiors) to report. There were times that an administrator might cut me off as I was speaking and likewise, many times that my teacher peers would look to an administrator rather than me for an answer. The mere image of an administrator was that strong.

In one memorable instance, I prepared a memo that was to be presented to the faculty for their discussion. It let the general faculty know what was transpiring on the conference front. I passed the memo to the administrator. A day later the memo came out with that person's name on it

instead of mine. I was upset, feeling that no matter what happened now, I would be a bit worse off for wear. On one hand I could go to the administrator and ask for my due; after all this was my idea. That move could violate the boundary between worker and boss. If I did get some guarantee that the conference issue would be back to my, a teacher's, leadership, I would seem unprofessional to many in the school whose support I needed for the conference to succeed.

A few of my colleagues were more incensed about the symbolic meaning of the memo than I was and they urged me to go the administrator "immediately". In fact, three of my peers on the conference committee did that on their own. The result was a revised memo which came out to the staff in which the administrator apologized for "making it seem the work of the first was his". That revised note said a great deal about the cultural changes taking place at Pioneer. Bounds were being broken and definitions of roles were shifting. Many teachers, myself included, could not recall such an event either at Pioneer or anywhere else in which an administrator was so public in acknowledging the power of a teacher.

There were teachers who were threatened by such action rather than empowered by it. For example, at one of our earlier meetings, a head teacher didn't let me but start the meeting before taking a piece of chalk, stood up and

walked to the chalkboard saying, "Joe, you have no experience in these matters. You don't know a thing about leading people. You don't work in a leadership position. I have had many courses in leadership and in operating successful programs." The teacher went on and on telling the rest of us what to do. The "rest of us" included teachers and administrators on the committee. That teacher could not deal with a rank and file teacher chairing the committee and organizing the meeting. It was clear that what was taking place at Pioneer was beyond the experiences of many of the faculty. The Pioneer faculty was learning by doing.

Other teachers in the quasi-administrative role of "Head Teacher" found criticism with members of the committee because "they were not going through channels" and that the committee members were "not qualified for such leadership positions" as one individual made a point to consistently tell me. Others continued to speak about the "questions of leadership raised by teachers being in such control of events." More than once "Head Teachers" expressed suspicion about what actually was taking place among members of the "Conference Committee". In the end most of the critics found themselves both involved and participating in the conference. They were swept along with the momentum generated by the fact that there would be a

conference taking place at Pioneer in the spring and they needed to decide if they would participate or not.

At times there were negative sentiments expressed about those working on the committee in behind-the-scene comments from a small segment of the faculty. Some voices equated the committee and its work with administrative favoritism shown to and for "special teachers". There were also questions about the "motives" of those involved with the "Conference Committee". Unfortunately, the seventh grade team, now making waves of its own and with members involved in both the conference and with the efforts directed at parents and community, were seen as having "special status". Those claims were difficult for both the teachers and the administrators on the committee to deal with.

The questions of leadership that were asked at Pioneer that fall and spring were based upon the way one or many roles could change and be interchanged. Key questions were asked such as "Is leadership associated with position?" The same was asked about key personnel to the conference and was extended to include the way teachers and administrators came to view each other's roles. For example, some traditional thinking teachers could not fathom how administrators could sit on a committee chaired by teachers not in the administrative hierarchy. It completely upset their social vision. They could not make sense of the

events taking place around them. Events, for some, in which they were soon to be active participants and gain reputations at both the regional and national levels.

The more the "Conference Committee" progressed toward its collective goal for the school, the more it seemed to many members of the committee that what took place in their classrooms was "getting better". As one teacher stated, "Hey, what I'm doing in my classroom better be good. I've got to put myself in the public spotlight. If I'm not doing the best I can for the kids in my classroom, I'm going to look awfully embarrassed." Many other teachers in the school, also about to be presenters, were thinking similar thoughts.

The Growing Tension in a Changing School

As the days of both the "Conference" and the "Educational Fair" came closer, it was clear to all that they would, in fact, take place. The approach used in the past by those who did not agree with the beliefs many shared about detracking and the changing roles of teachers (ignore the change and it will go away), would not work this time. The events about to take place could not be ignored.

Those sharing in the latent culture devised their own words in mockery of what was taking place around them. "Are you hetero or homo?" one asked another just loud enough for other teachers to overhear. More than once a few teachers

raised complaints within the faculty room for all to hear about the "activities of those now setting policy for the rest of the school". As May of 1990 came closer, a few disgruntled faculty members openly questioned the "favoritism shown the seventh grade team", with the feeling that it was the seventh grade team responsible for the events about to occur at the school. Though there were "seventh grade team" members involved in many phases of event planning at Pioneer there were also many other faculty members involved. The entire issue of "special treatment" and of "favoritism" was a reaction by a few increasingly estranged faculty members who realized that their school was changing with or without their participation. There were more than twenty teachers involved in preparing the conference, fully more than seventy-five percent of the faculty. Many of those teachers were now becoming leaders in their own right.

A School Gradually Finding Its Way Into the Public Eye

As the conference drew near, interest in Pioneer from the outside world intensified. The "Conference Committee" had mailed more than two thousand brochures. There was an immediate response. Representatives from some of the largest and smallest school systems in the state called requesting visits along with registering for the conference. Most of those visitors were administrators but all the visitors shared an interest in heterogeneous

grouping. In one instance, an administrator of a large, urban school system currently confronting the issue of detracking stated, after visiting Pioneer for a day with colleagues, "When you have that conference let us know. We'll send a bus load of our people." They did.

More and more teachers and administrators wanted to visit Pioneer and the requests for visitations began to come in with a rapidity that few teachers or administrators could have expected. As one Pioneer administrator reflected a year later,

> It was special to me to have two, maybe three visitors in other schools I worked in. To have someone want (emphasis underscored) to visit our school was important enough. Here we now have many people wishing to visit our school.

Pioneers students and faculty were now being singled out by many in the world of education. To many veteran teachers it was no longer the "small second rate school looked down on by everyone else in the county". People were now interested in what happened in this rural school and a great deal of that interest came about because detracked classrooms.

In the Classrooms

The atmosphere in many of Pioneer's classrooms took on an air of hyperactivity as the excitement felt by many teachers about presenting to peers was carried directly to the students. Students were aware that something important

was about to take place and seemed to respond with a sense of pride.

Almost every student was taking part in the "Educational Fair" and there were some students who joined with the faculty in presenting a panel for the conference. Those students, along with graduates of Pioneer, offered a cross section of the school's population. The panel included those who were attending Pioneer during the change away from homogeneous grouping, those who had known only the heterogeneous system, and students who had attended other tracked schools, and transferred to Pioneer. The panel members also represented the range of academic backgrounds that one would find at Pioneer.

In a small school, where it is virtually impossible to remain outside of the public eye, both the impending "Educational Fair" and "Conference" were having an impact. There was a level of excitement that one could feel building among everyone. The force of what was happening couldn't be escaped, even by the most intentioned neglect shown by some faculty or students. There were students who did not relish the attention shown their classes or their peers. Interestingly enough though, the students who were to complain about heterogeneous grouping were often times the same few students who also complained that they were "being made to work too hard" in their classes or that they

were "being to made to feel too (overly) responsible for their behavior" in school.

Toward the Conference

As the Conference Committee continued its series of weekly meetings, the conference began to take shape. A total of fifteen sessions were to be presented by Pioneer administrators, faculty, students, and intern student teachers. Many sessions ran more than once and a number of presentations were jointly offered by more than one member of the community. More than twenty-five Pioneer teachers and administrators were listed to perform as either session presenters or co-presenters, as speakers, or as panelists. The program also included prominent speakers from the worlds of government and academia.

This activity had a powerful impact on all staff members. The dialogue in the faculty room was becoming more professional. Rather than discussing social activities, many conversations centered on teaching strategies, curriculum reform, school change or the conference itself.

Many faculty found themselves working together toward the larger goal of hosting the conference. For example, when the teachers working on the publications for the conference had brought more than two thousand brochures back to the school for labeling before mailing, the faculty room became a beehive of activity. Many teachers gave up their personal preparation periods to help out.

Such activity only accentuated the differences between faculty members. The people opposed to detracking not only had to listen to talk about heterogeneous classrooms, collaborative learning techniques and the process of school change their school had gone through, they also had to watch the majority of their peers work feverishly toward a celebration of those very issues.

Imagine the setting, a very small faculty room, shared by all staff members. In that room there are individuals representing two groups. In one are a number of people who are working toward the goal of the conference. They are talking as they prepare the brochures for mailing or as they painstakingly scan the conference programs just back from the printer, about how "exciting it is to be doing what we're doing."

There are others, far fewer, sitting in the same faculty room, who can occasionally be heard to talk about "making up the day at the end of the year because of the conference" or that "they (the people in favor of the conference) think they'll get people to pay forty dollars to come here to this conference. No one would want to pay that much to come here."

The scene represents the cultural clash that took place at Pioneer. Both groups knew the opposing views of the other long before there was any thought of a conference. For a long time they could ignore their

differences and maintain a surface and public air of familiarity. But now, events had gone along too far and there was no turning back for those favoring the conference and the ideals it represented. It supported what they were doing in their classrooms while just the opposite was the case for those against the changes that had taken place at Pioneer. The meaning of the conference itself directly pointed to the underlying differences that had existed among and between faculty for the past five years. Those teachers, termed by some as "closet trackers", were faced with a major conference about to be held at their school that was about to celebrate and advocate a way of structuring classes that they were not about to adopt for their own classrooms. Teachers who did not wish to adopt the practices of their peers were confronted daily by the fact that their peers were bringing a powerful and public change to the faculty and to their school.

To cement the message of change at the school, within four weeks of mailing, the May conference had more than one hundred educators registered. By the beginning of April the number of those planning to attend had doubled and by the end of the month registration was closed. There were now more than two hundred and thirty paid registrations, a number that did not include the invited guests for the day from government, higher education, or the press. A waiting

list was kept of those wishing to attend the conference until it reached more than one hundred and fifty.

As the last week before the conference began, the tension that many staff felt began to clearly become evident in the interactions between staff. At a personal level, those presenting found themselves, as one teacher described,

> About to try and explain to adults, professional adults, what I do in my classroom and what my ideas are. I've never done this before as a teacher. After all, this is not any parents night.

Many teachers were now confronting the fact that they were about to change their roles. Teaching students was one thing. Even teaching adults in the time frame of a course was another. Both could be threatening situations but were well within the expertise of many teachers. To offer a presentation for an hour or so to a group of professional strangers was a completely different venture. Those attending the conference were coming to hear expert teaching professionals. Many members of the Pioneer faculty were now becoming aware that they were not only teachers but that they were about to become recognized experts. This was reinforced when the week before the conference began with a phone call from teachers in Iowa asking if there was any room left for six people willing to fly to our school and attend.

If some of the faculty were nervous about their upcoming presentations, there were other members of the faculty who suddenly became aware that there was no stopping the conference. It truly was about to happen. The denial approach wouldn't work. The conference was about to consume everyone and at the small school there was no longer any hiding. Everyone at the school was included, like it or not.

A final challenge was delivered by those opposed to the conference. It came in the form of a threatened grievance as once again those sharing the latent culture used the traditional contract to support their position. One member of the Conference Committee had assumed the role of "volunteer coordinator" and worked up a list of jobs for the day. The list had been placed in the faculty room with the slots that were open for jobs that needed to be filled. When not all faculty signed up for a position, despite the fact that the day was a teacher "workday" and that faculty voted to take the day back in the fall, the teacher in charge of volunteers assigned a position to the few remaining people. The results, by Pioneer standards, were loud and strong. A few teachers began to demand that a grievance be filed and that the "professional contract" was violated. They expressed anger that they were assigned to positions by a teacher. The rumbling went even further to

include the vote about the school day used for the conference as "violating the contract".

Those in the leadership of the teachers association saw the action as teachers grieving the action of teachers. Others saw it as an affront to the efforts to pull together the conference. Still others felt that the actions, at a time of general education-bashing by many in the press, the government, among some of the public, and taking place when Pioneer's star was beginning to shine, was ill-advised and contrary to bringing quality education to all Pioneer students. The grievance did not get far but from then on the divisions among and between staff members were open for all to see.

The Conference: Two Cultures and a Change in the Family

The eighteenth of May, 1990 could be termed as the date that the heat within the crucible of cultural change began to rage at Pioneer. That day saw almost three hundred people attend "The Derailing the Tracked School Conference". Representatives were in attendance from the state-wide press and resulted in stories printed about the school's staff and their efforts to bring change to education (For examples note Appendix E). Newspaper coverage was supplemented by radio reporting and a few of the teachers and administrators at Pioneer found themselves featured in headlines as "leading educators".

The conference went off without a hitch. In fact the presentations of faculty and the work of the panels drew rave reviews from many of those who attended that day. The entire Pioneer staff was singled out by many that day and showered with praise. Those people then left and began to spread the word about Pioneer to others in the local and regional education community.

Even more symbolically important was that Pioneer faculty were throwing off any second-rate reputation that may have existed about the school. They were now the "recognized expert professionals" that many in the audience of participants viewed them as being. There was an awakening that day. It was to continue and give force to the process of two divergent cultures that had been nurturing different interpretations of the reality at the school during the past four years.

The conference and the events leading up to it were also the public focus point in the change of the family in the school. When, at the close of the day, I as chairperson of the conference stood in the lobby of the school waiting for the last of the conference participants to leave, the meaning of the teacher's words that begin this chapter were clear: "We can never go back to being the way we were".

The staff of Pioneer had worked together and taken the initiative to express what they as professional educators had to offer the world. Even now, a year after the first

conference. many at Pioneer have still to grasp the meaning of what that teacher's words truly were and what the meaning brought by the conferences has been for the staff.

While it would be easy for a great many teachers in the United States to list the "stars" of the operation known as "Desert Storm", it would be almost impossible for that many teachers to note a time they were participants in a conference presented by the staff of a school dedicated to the professional improvement of other teachers. It would be even less likely to find teachers who could speak about such a conference taking place at their school, never mind that they were presenters at such an event. Too often teachers do not have the opportunity to become scholars and researchers in their own profession. They are looked upon as only "doing the teaching" but not having much more to contribute to the science and art of education. In this light, the symbolic importance of "The Derailing the Tracked School Conference" can't be ignored. It affected issues of professionalism, deeply altered the symbolic and existing role of leadership at the school, and most importantly offered an opportunity for the role of teacher to change. As an administrator told me seven months before the conference when I first brought the notion across that person's desk, "I think it's a great idea Joe. I just don't think that teachers have the time to commit to such a

task." When I mentioned that comment to a teacher the response was,

> So what if I give the extra hour of concentrated work at ten o'clock. They didn't pay me for the school work I did until after nine. This conference just means committing that extra hour each day and I'm working for something I believe in as a professional. This is not something I'm told to do.

The message is that many educators are extremely competent. They can do many things. They are very valuable assets and can have an impact on their profession when given the opportunity to do so. The reality of "being a teacher" or of "being an administrator" places certain expectations on educators that can limit their professional and personal growth. In much the same way that students can be tracked by expectations, so can educators.

An Interpretation of What Teachers Say

Social phenomenon that we are engaged in provide the impetus for understanding who we are and what it is we do. Teachers and administrators working in schools are constantly involved in the drama of social life that defines who they are at what they do. Ask a teacher "What is it that you do for your work?" and the answer in return is simply "Teacher" or "Principal". Those are words that conjure up many images of what educators are, what it is they do, and what it means to be a "teacher". It's a job, an occupation, and a profession. It gives them a cultural identity. To describe one's occupation as simply "teacher"

is in itself a reflection about the meaning that the word and the job carry. The same holds true for administrators in our schools. The first conference at Pioneer forced the faculty to redefine their own identities as educators.

Meanings come from events. Those events are symbolic and can have great importance for those who live through them. The day-to-day world of any school is composed of such events. Very often the events are in the mundane and every day of life, though no less important. Not often are such events accorded much attention though the events are essential in the process of making meaning by and for everyone in the school. In the case of Pioneer and the conference, the day-to-day world of a school was combined with a powerful and highly public event. As the teacher stated at the beginning of this chapter, the first conference carried such a powerful impact to the Pioneer community that it enhanced the already growing cultural split among the faculty, reinforced the changing atmosphere in the school among faculty from the "social family" to a "professional" one and was a focal point for the way those at the school came to understand "leadership".

The events leading up to and encompassing the conference (see Appendix H), not only brought change to the school but also symbolized a new meaning for the school's teachers and administrators. That meaning dealt with who they were as individuals and as professionals. It redefined

personal and public identities. The Pioneer staff will, for a long time, continue to try and "make sense" of the events that lead to and took place during the conference of May 18th because the day visibly brought the changes experienced by classroom teachers in their move to heterogeneous grouping to the forefront. The interpretation of what took place that day will continue to be reinterpreted as is any history by a group. In particular, the first conference served to:

1) Celebrate the idea of teachers as experts and as professionals sharing a similar culture.

2) Energize the staff of Pioneer and encourage their work in their classroom.

3) Act as a symbolic event that underscored the personal and professional redefinition of roles by Pioneer staff members and accentuated faculty differences.

4) Dramatize a major change point in the organization's history that would destroy the Pioneer myth that teachers could get along by isolating themselves from their peers. The symbolic and long standing myth of "if I ignore it, it will go away" was no longer valid.

Those interpretations reflect how those events have come to alter the identities of Pioneer teachers. As one teacher stated,

> The first conference was a celebration of efforts here toward teaming, rewriting curriculum and working together.

More teachers state,

> There have been some enormous growth opportunities for some teachers. That came from the first conference. It offered enormous

opportunities for staff here and though there was still some grumbling.

And,

Conferences have given a sense of pride to very many people here and credibility to many of us outside the school.

It helped with our own self image.

The Conferences have made us rethink who and what we are.

The first conference energized the staff and most of the staff got a shot in the arm and a greater sense of confidence in themselves and in what they were doing. Unfortunately, it was a catalyst to getting out in the open some of the resentment of teachers who really didn't like what was going on or really didn't like how they fit into their professional world.

Still other teachers assessed the conference and its impact this way,

Those splits in the faculty were there before we ever had conferences. It was there. All we needed to be was silent. We needed only to work in our little rooms. We weren't on public display. Once we became "public" it was not possible to remain silent anymore.

And,

A lot of faculty grew professionally in preparing for the conferences and we grew tremendously in a positive way for the first conference. I think that was one of the best educational journeys I've ever taken. It made me think about what I was doing in the classroom for each and every student. I got to work closely with other faculty and we worked together. What we were doing in the classroom, group process, we were doing at a heightened level with each other.

And,

It (the conference) changed the faculty to some extent. Faculty began to reflect on kids and change.

The process of preparing for and the actual presenting of the conference were important events in the professional lives of many faculty members. It changed the way they have come to view themselves. The realization that they were now experts brought a sense of shock to some and fear to others. The conference experience redefined roles and reinforced the growing sense of a professional culture. Many faculty members found that they could be free to continue to experiment with curriculum and teaching strategies. Publicly they were now "detracked" as professionals. The conference stood as a symbol. It meant something to everyone in the school, even if the meanings were not shared by all faculty. Identities for all had been changed. As the voices of these teachers further offer,

> The first conference tied staff together more and divided them more. The conference forced people to look at heterogeneous grouping in a different light or more in depth.
>
> Instead of being "that little school up there", after the first conference we can say "our work in the past is worth while even though the people in the communities are not aware of what this faculty is about.
>
> The conference gave a new perspective to the faculty itself. It caused a lot of people (faculty and staff) around here to grow up very fast.

And,

> The conferences were essential. The most important part of the conferences was not the conferences. They made us no...it forced us to look at ourselves, who we are and what we do here and where we go in the future. We could or have

> had the opportunity to focus and identify what we need to do for all kids.

The conference was the product of bottom-up initiatives from teachers and later administrators working together. Though the day celebrated what teacher independence had produced in the classroom, it also was a lesson about what teachers could do in terms of their profession. The staff at Pioneer reached out to others. But the words "The Conference" also expressed a symbolic attempt by the Pioneer staff to reach out to itself. In offering their knowledge to others, (see Appendix F), Pioneer staff members were also looking into their own worlds for reassurances about where they and the school were headed. As teachers continued to reflect,

> The conferences have given people the OK to go ahead and experiment, gave others the impetus to push further and gave me the chance to look at who I was as a teacher. I couldn't stand up at the conference and be a liar.
>
> I think the first conference energized everyone and brought us together.
>
> The conferences had a profound impact on some people.
>
> I think the work on the conferences brought people together because it demanded so much work and commitment as a group. That was a good experience for many people.

And,

> The conference truly was the catalyst for further and rapid change for teachers and the school as the move five years ago to heterogeneous grouping was a catalyst of sorts.

Finally, as others interviewed stated,

> The conference helped people grow but there was a price to pay.....the tension and the stress.

And,

> The conferences had a positive effect on the students, for some teachers it magnified the differences.

While the first "conference" drew rave reviews from educators from other schools and had a profound impact on all those who work at Pioneer, not all those interviewed felt the conference was positive for teachers and for the school. If anything, the conference solidified the unofficial and informal opposition to detracking that existed for the past five years. As earlier stated, if a teacher was opposed to heterogeneous grouping as a policy for their classrooms, the conference was not an easy time. A small minority of teachers express not only a sense of dissatisfaction with the day and with the direction the school was taking but also an estrangement from a school that once offered them a pleasant professional world.

Their voices represent the "latent" culture at Pioneer for the meanings they share about Pioneer life. Often times their words contain a sense of anger born of frustration at the way events are proceeding. Other times they express the sense of fear derived from feeling "left out" of what is taking place. They lament the change in faculty culture and the lack of, what they consider, the friendliness and social camaraderie they felt the faculty once shared.

Pioneer is not the close knit family it once was, in their eyes, and the changes of the past two years have been detrimental to the school that was once "theirs". Their interpretations are different than those made by many of their fellow faculty members. As a number of their voices tell us,

> That first conference caused a rift in the faculty because those of us who did not participate felt that we were less important. We were made to feel that way, though it may have been our own fault. We never got involved, fear maybe.

And,

> This conference thing has bothered me.

Other staff members suggest,

> This has split the faculty. That first conference started it.
>
> That (first conference) has split the faculty, divided people between those who did and those who didn't present. There were a few students who were asking why we were doing this.
>
> Conferences divided the school in two. Some teachers, you know, didn't want the first one and didn't realize what was going to take place when they voted for the day. Had they known, they would have voted no.

The split among the faculty was not about a simple or petty issue in the school. The divisions reflect positions embedded in the cultural perspectives shared by different faculty members. Separating the faculty is not a simple disagreement found in the "office politics" of an organization or the result of personality conflicts on a

small staff. The faculty division goes deeper than that. While the discontent of some existed since the initial detracking at Pioneer, it was the conference and what it symbolized that brought the differences between the faculty into the open.

For teachers long used to quietly going about their work in their individual classrooms, such an event had to come as a shock. It changed the meaning of being a teacher by breaking many of the rules, such as, teachers are to be lead by administrators, or they are to quietly follow the chain of command and never draw attention to themselves. After all, administrators are the traditional leaders in schools. They are the people valued, and hired, for their "expertise" in managing and leading those in a school toward educational excellence. School administrators traditionally have held the power in deciding who is competent as a teacher and who is not. They are looked upon as the authority in deciding what consitutes effective education and what does not. The events at Pioneer forced teachers to reflect upon their own worth as educators.

The Post Conference Votes

The "Derailing the Tracked School Conference" was a catalyst that put fire to the change process taking place in the school. Now, what those at Pioneer had accomplished was public and the name of the school itself began to take on symbolic meanings about the heterogeneous grouping issue

as well as conveying images of teacher empowerment and school change. Pioneer faculty were now to the outside public, what one long-time Pioneer veteran terms, "the movers and the shakers".

In the few weeks after the conference and onward into the summer, Pioneer's name would pop up in the state-wide newspaper media. At times the focus was on the school. At others it was about heterogeneous grouping (see Appendix E). Attention was also focused on certain members of the teaching staff and administration. Those events only furthered the image of Pioneer in the eyes of other educators. At times those events almost consumed the school.

In early June of 1990, less than two weeks after the conference, a national news network called and asked permission to spend a day at the school and interview faculty and students. The reporter was preparing a series of stories that would be part of a week long segment about public education and the future of the United States. These stories would air on one of the major evening news shows during the first week of September, as school began for most of country.

The phone call set off a charge of energy that rushed through the school. "National News" could be heard on many lips. Students looked in amazement and asked "Pioneer? Us on TV?" That excitement was fraught with nervous tension as

never before had anyone in the school ever envisioned such an event taking place. The teachers who so essentially handled the "press and publicity" component for the conference served as the contacts and guides for the visit from the network's crew.

On the day of the visit the atmosphere in the school was excited. People were talking about heterogeneous grouping and teaching on camera. The wounds that came from the conflicts brought up by the conference were reopened. If the conference had made it clear to many in the school that Pioneer was in the public eye, the media visit only cemented that knowledge. Pioneer was featured across the country for three nights. Someone called to mentioned that Pioneer was part of the news broadcast on a "transcontinental flight". The small school with the once small reputation was now attracting a lot of attention.

It was evident from the number of requests that continued to come to the school and to the conference committee that many outside educators wanted another conference. Many who had attended the first told others about what they gained from visiting Pioneer. Interestingly enough, many attending the first conference were administrators and they, in a total disregard for the messages about teacher leadership and "bottom up change", ordered staff not totally in favor of heterogeneous grouping to attend a second conference if there was one.

Certainly, many members of the conference committee felt that a second conference was possible. The mechanism that worked so well for the first was already in place. But, any decision about a future conference to be held in the fall would have to be made before school ended for the year.

There were other questions that also needed to be decided. I had proposed earlier that the money raised through the first conference be put into a "Staff Development Fund" to be used by the Pioneer faculty for their own professional development. The money could not take the place of similar funds set aside by the school committee for such a purpose but could be used as an added benefit. A committee needed to be elected to draft regulations for its use and to oversee the dispersal of funds.

In what may have been one more example of common thought, another teacher and myself found ourselves both talking about "putting together a journal" by those who practice for those who are practicing educators. The response to such an idea at the conference had been very positive and more than one hundred educators wished to subscribe. We needed to ask for the faculty's input and agreement.

It was in that spirit that I typed a ballot with questions that asked specifically if we should "Host

another conference in November" and if interested members of the faculty should "be allowed to produce and to publish a professional journal". The results were to be discussed at the final faculty meeting of the year.

A Meeting and the End of a Year

The faculty came together in the heat of June, a week or so before the official "end of school". There were many items on the agenda, but one that everyone waited for and at the same time dreaded was my presentation of the results of the survey.

Since the meeting was taking place in late June when all sports teams were finished for the year, all faculty who had been coaches were expected to attend. It was also evident that the symbolic leader of the school, the principal, was not in school that day. Instead, the meeting was chaired by an assistant principal.

The meeting went along through issues that didn't draw any noticeable excitement until the issue of a future conference came up. I presented the results of the "ballot-survey". Eighty-two percent of the teachers agreed to hosting another conference. Slightly more than ten percent didn't want a conference at all if it was to be held during "school time" or during the school faculty's "professional day". A few faculty decided not to respond to that question. The questions about the "Journal" and the "Staff Development Fund" had almost unanimous support with the

exception of one faculty member on one question and two on the other.

After reading the results I asked if there were "any objections to hosting a conference on the one open Friday during the following November". There was only one vocal objection though, in the unofficial world of the faculty room, charges had been made by a few that a second conference would be against the contract and that a conference day "didn't assist with professional development". The same people would also complain among themselves that to take a day for the conference would "make us go an extra day in June". But now, only one person spoke up against the idea informing me that "the piece of paper was an informational survey rather than a ballot". Immediately two other teachers made motions to the administrator chairing the meeting that a ballot be prepared asking the faculty to "use the professional day during the next school year in November for a conference to be hosted at the school." The results were the same as those of the first survey with a large majority of the staff voting "yes". The results again paralleled the votes about the "Educational Fair" and the decisions about heterogenous grouping discussed earlier in this chapter.

As school ended it was clear that a division existed between many faculty members. It centered on the idea of detracking Pioneer and what new roles for faculty should

be. The differences, now public at the school, followed the lines of the manifest and latent cultures shared by factions of faculty members about heterogeneous grouping.

A symbolic example of how deep the cultural split had become was seen in the end of the year teacher activities. There was still the same "male only" golf tournament that had been a traditional fixture for many years. In fact, at one time it was so popular that it involved teachers from many other schools. New male teachers at Pioneer were pressured into playing and looked down upon if they didn't participate. But this year there was a difference. Support from the faculty was not the same. An alternative faculty get together featured a "Croquet Tournament" and was "open to all" that attracted more than twenty teachers. While there were a few faculty members who tried to attend both activities, everyone knew the message that spoke of deep divisions not only in social lives but in professional philosophies. So deep had the divisions gone, it was to be the last year for the golf tournament.

<u>The New School Year: The Heat of the Crucible Continues</u>

September of 1990, less than three months from the first "Derailing the Tracked School Conference", brought a faculty still reeling from the effects of rapid school wide and individual professional change, together in the same school for another year as described in Appendix G. To be sure, the school had become a "crucible" for most every

staff member. The issues that had been so traumatic for many of the faculty members were now to be even more visible. The once "social family" was now a very professional one. Differences in the cultural perspectives existing between faculty members had become public. Styles of leadership and decision making had been altered. Events brought and accentuated change at the small school. The new year, though, was to be further compounded by new and even more challenging alternatives to choose from. It would be safe to say that the faculty was a very different group of practitioners than had met the previous September.

Work that fall continued toward a second conference. The requests from other educators to visit the school and have Pioneer faculty "consult" persisted and grew. It was now clear that a few of the Pioneer faculty, from conference presentations, national media exposure and the work of the summer visiting process had dramatically increased their exposure. The attention attracted by the school was not about to go away. That same outside attention and interest in Pioneer's organization and teaching was a catalyst for many teachers to continue to refine their curriculums and classroom techniques.

The Consultant Issue: Part One

There was also an added component to the new year's life at Pioneer. In the fallout of the pre- and during-conference activity that had taken place during the year,

many educators became interested in what many Pioneer staff members had to offer. Requests began to come to the school for visits and for Pioneer staff members to visit other schools, described in Appendix F.

Once again the changes in the professional world at Pioneer had expanded into new and unbroken ground. It became clear that Pioneer teachers who took the time to travel to other schools would be compensated for their efforts. For many at Pioneer, the idea that teachers could earn money for their knowledge and their expertise from other schools willing to pay them shattered many definitions about what it meant to "be a teacher". Questions such as "Who would serve as consultants for other schools?" and "Who would make the decisions as far as lining up consultants for other schools?" would have to be addressed. Pioneer staff members also needed to grapple with more practical issues, beyond the imaginations of most teachers in every school district, such as "how much to charge?" and about "Who owns a teacher's work; the school committee or the teacher?"

There were secondary issues involved in the process of selecting who would consult and about setting fees. The calls for specific teachers to serve as consultants or for suggested teachers usually came to administrators and they began to make arrangements. Administrators, who already had a great deal of control over a teacher's career now had a

great say in professionally related earnings and over professional reputations. Administrators, long seen as the "paternal" figures by many and as the "holders of wisdom", were allowed to decide the affairs of the rank-and-file teacher in matters that took place outside of the school. In the same vein, one can see the symbolic relationship that begs the questions asked about when the "role of teacher as expert in field and in methods" overrides and is greater than the role of administrator as educational expert and evaluator. In other words, what is the role of administrators when the teacher is the expert? Many Pioneer faculty would struggle to answer that question.

As the fall of 1991 had moved into its second month, it became apparent that some policy needed to be developed about Pioneer staff members missing a school day for consulting opportunities or visits to other schools. This was a new concept in the role of teachers. The contract had provisions for "professional days" in which a teacher could go to a conference, visit a school, attend a workshop or even write a grant, but it had no provision for teachers to be paid as consultants on days that were also school days for Pioneer.

As the number of schools and organizations calling with requests continued to grow, it was clear that something needed to be done in terms of policy and also in terms of scheduling. The administration, serving as a

clearing house of sorts, had begun to schedule teachers to visit other schools around New England. Many of the visits were for free but the visits did lead to further consultant opportunities. While no teacher was "assigned" an out-of-school visit, teachers were "asked" to go out. Administration also set a precedent by negotiating fees for themselves and the teachers who went out of the school to systems that could afford to pay for professional presentations. The control over the knowledge of the school was passing back from teachers to administration.

There were attempts from administration to involve teachers in developing a policy that could guide the course of events. For example, a "survey" was passed out to Pioneer staffers asking if they were interested in consulting and in what topics they were willing to share their expertise. A vast majority of the teachers responded with interest.

There was disagreement about the consulting issue among faculty members. Initially, the conflict reflected the cultural lines that had publicly emerged. The old image of a teacher trying to remain outside of the limelight and isolated in a classroom was being shattered. Now, not only were educators willing to come to Pioneer and pay money to attend a conference or interested enough to subscribe to a professional journal, but the expertise of the Pioneer staff was economically valuable to other educators. Events

from the outside now forced Pioneer teachers to ask themselves what it meant to "be a teacher".

Now teachers were not simply teachers of children but valued for their knowledge on a par with other professions. The more the pressure to consult came from those outside the school and the greater the offers for financial reward, the greater the division among the Pioneer faculty.

Many Voices: Two Clear Sides

There were an array of opinions expressed that fall about consulting. Some teachers argued vehemently that "consulting was not what teachers were hired for" and that "no work should be allowed outside of school on a school day." Those voices stressed the "damage done to Pioneer students because of substitute teachers in classrooms and not having the regular teacher". "What people wish to do on their own time is one thing" a teacher fumed, "but what takes place on school time is another." A number of times it was mentioned that "some of these people (those going out to consult) will make a lot more money, a lot more than if they were simply teaching." While in reality, there was not much consulting taking place, the image presented by one group of teachers was that the vast majority of the staff "could easily be out of the building and that would cause a crisis finding substitutes for those teachers who were legitimately sick." One teacher stated over and over again that "I've helped cover a class or two when there was

an emergency. Never bothered me. Now, I better not be asked to cover a class if there are people outside consulting."

The family was in the throes of breaking up. As one faculty member stated,

> I detect a few cords of hostility about this issue in this school.

There were others who looked upon the consulting as "one more chance for professional improvement". Those teachers spoke about the importance of what they did in Pioneer classrooms and how serving as a consultant only furthered the drive toward excellence in their work for their students. This strongly said "any teacher has the right to offer to consult" and that "the kids, the faculty, and the school can only benefit from this."

As always at Pioneer, there were faculty members who struggled to find a middle ground between the two camps. They wished to view the problem as an issue which could be resolved in some sort of compromise. But in reality, the group decidedly in favor of consulting and the group directly opposed disagreed in principle, the essence of which was contained in what it meant to be a teacher and a teacher at Pioneer. At the time they could find no compromise.

Once Again the Contract

In response to teacher concerns about consulting, the administration now scheduling certain individuals into outside opportunities as well as for visits to the school,

told the teachers who wanted a policy to come up with one. That task fell to the negotiations team, because the consulting issue, in the eyes of a few, was now a "contractual" issue.

The faculty room once again became the scene of some intense and heated discussions about whether or not teachers should be allowed to consult, how much money they should be able to charge, and who should pay for the substitute teachers for the day the teacher was absent. The anger, just under the surface, would often explode in bitter confrontations as teachers questioned the "professionalism" of their peers while others asked about "commitment to kids."

The members of the negotiations team, responsible for contractual changes, asked for "plans" from the teachers. A number were submitted and they included "allowing teachers three consulting days per year in which they could be paid for their work, though teachers could be sent out to do 'free' visits to other schools at the administration's prerogative." Another proposal stated that "teachers could consult but that the money earned went to a pool for faculty staff development." In each case the faculty found itself divided.

To make matters worse, the teacher representatives responsible for any alterations to the contract were adamantly opposed to the concept of consulting. The

representatives rejected the plans from the teachers yet they could not come up with an alternative proposal. This brought one teacher to comment,

> Can you believe this? Our own negotiating team is ruling against the teachers it is supposed to be representing. Here the administration is giving us the opportunity to come up with our own plan, our most liberal alternative is far more conservative than anything suggested by the administration or school committee. We have the chance to really move toward a new model of teaching and we can't do it.

The Pioneer teachers were grappling with redefining what it meant to be a teacher. The contract negotiators couldn't come up with what they considered a position that they could support. The cultural lines were clearly drawn as Pioneer teacher's professional baggage, including images of just what a teacher should be, was brought into the dialogue. Ultimately, the faculty representatives threw the issue back to the administration, explaining that "the teachers can't come up with an agreement."

This symbolically powerful act gave up teacher control over their own destinies and over their own work place. The action clearly reinforced the notions of a latent culture emphasizing that change could be destructive to a school and that teachers need to be told what to do and, as such, were not the innovative professionals they claimed to be. Pioneer's struggle with change was clearly not over. The consulting issue and its related questions about school

leadership and about the role of teachers would remain alive for a long time ahead.

The Second Conference

While the debate about how Pioneer teachers should respond to the requests from the outside professional educational community, preparations were also continuing toward the second conference, held on November 9, 1991. But it was clear that the processes taking place were tiring many Pioneer teachers. While some continued to work "overtime" struggling to bring the parents organization to a successful life, others worked to write for and produce the journal along with teaching their classes. Often they were the same people who worked to produce the second conference. Their work represented the beliefs of the faculty culture committed toward detracking and as mentioned earlier, their work was as unpaid volunteers and initiated by themselves as faculty members rather than as teachers and administrators. In six short months the faculty had dealt with enormous change. With others on the staff who retained their earlier position and refused to offer any help, the amount of work began to take its toll. The "gee whiz" attitude with the innocent laughs about Pioneer teachers' succeeding in the face of adversity were not found in the time leading up to the second conference. Those earlier feelings were replaced with an

almost business-like professionalism directed toward completing a well-done job.

It should be added that the Pioneer budget, an issue beyond the control off any Pioneer teacher, had been repeatedly dismembered during the past year, resulting in the loss of teaching positions. In fact, there were presenters at the first conference who had not been rehired. Three days before the second conference, a state-wide vote was to take place concerning a tax cutting ballot question which, according to projections, would have forced deep and immediate cuts in the Pioneer budget. Suffice it to say, there was a great deal of worry in the minds of many Pioneer teachers. There were others in the faculty room who publicly favored the budget cutting initiative and, more often than not, cultural lines were clear.

To be sure, there was intense interest from the outside educational community, many of whom from outside Massachusetts were not aware of the crisis teachers faced regarding their jobs. Educators arrived from all the New England and major northeastern states, some driving hundreds of miles to get to Pioneer. One contingent of teachers arrived from Iowa. They were the group I had spoken with the previous spring. They also requested that a specific group of Pioneer teachers visit their school during the winter months at their school district's expense.

The second conference was filled to overflowing with more than three hundred people in attendance. The evaluations were similar to the first conference though it was obvious that the crowd was different than the people at the first. It was clear that a number of people had been "asked" to attend this conference by superiors. Once again, more than thirty Pioneer staff members plus panels including students and parents presented fifteen sessions and workshops addressing issues of heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning techniques, and school change.

The "Derailing the Tracked School II Conference" attracted media attention and again featured Pioneer and some of its staffers on the regional newscasts and on a national radio network. The second conference again reinforced the commitment of many faculty members to the heterogeneous grouping concept. But six months of intense and emotional work had taken a toll. As one teacher stated,

> This conference took up our energy.

Others agreed and offered,

> The contagious excitement of last spring had died down this past fall.

And,

> That second conference saw us disjointed and didn't bring us together during the year.

Other voices agreed with the thoughts expressed by some that the second conference was a missed opportunity for further growth at the school encompassing all Pioneer

teachers and not only eighty-five percent of active faculty. As one teacher suggested,

> The second conference offered a guide post for both sides and only served to estrange those against heterogeneous grouping from the majority of the faculty.

Another faculty member reflected,

> I tried to make it very clear that we shouldn't have done the second conference. I felt that we had a good high from the first, it was such a good experience and another would be a downer. In terms of morale it would be a negative. I was right.

But other voices disagreed,

> I think that the idea of the conference, the concept of it, second one included, was good. Having other people actually coming into your school and asking you and your students how things were and are going is important. It is another example of staff initiated change.
>
> There are divisions on staff and it (the second conference) closed some of those and opened some of those up more.
>
> This conference saw people really venturing beyond the safe confines of this school.

And,

> The second conference ...then you could see divisions really open up. It brought out the best and the worst.

Finally one faculty member stated an opinion that was also shared by many others,

> The second conference, what with everything else going on was a strain. Somehow, the energy of the spring didn't stay with the group for the second conference. It was really for the profession. For all those requesting a second one and it was only good for the profession.

The crucible, that life at Pioneer had become, was only intensified by the events taking place in the outside world. At times the activities at Pioneer served to buffer many at the school from the outside world. As one teacher stated, "Work on the conference or writing the article for the journal only takes that extra hour a night before bed away from worrying if I'm going to lose my job". There were many at Pioneer who wondered about their professional futures.

The second conference also brought out the premier issue of the faculty published journal, "The Pioneering Practitioner". It featured the efforts of more than a dozen staff members in articles that spoke to issues of school change, cooperative learning, and heterogeneous grouping. The response to it was very positive and for a small, first-time semi-annual venture, it had a subscription of now over two hundred. First edition copies were given to all faculty and, for some, the journal was one more part of a continuing effort to celebrate change. To others it was simply one more reminder about how much too far change had gone.

The On-Going Struggle Over Consulting

If the first conference had been a powerful catalyst in creating the crucible of change that the world of Pioneer had become, the second conference simply added more fuel to the fire. Word about Pioneer continued to spread

making Pioneer a nation-wide symbol of educational change and of professional innovation. A television team from a station in the state capital asked to visit the school and featured Pioneer on its prime-time evening editions as described in Appendix E. There were many schools from around the northeastern states wanting to visit and to have Pioneer staff members visit them as listed in Appendix F. Attention was directed at Pioneer by state departments of education from a majority of New England States. Often times administrators from other schools found interest in what Pioneer offered. Whether because of title (such as "Principal" or "Department Chairperson", which some at Pioneer were now being termed), or publicity and exposure to a growing audience, or because of a reputation that spoke about subject area and teaching expertise, a small cadre of Pioneer staff were continually called upon to share their knowledge with those outside of the school. Often times requests came from other administrators, suggesting the importance of the "culture of administrators" who span the gamut of schools and districts.

Yet, how often is it that teachers are able to request consultants or have the time to develop networks that can bring those resources to their schools?

The policy, now adopted by the administration because of teacher inaction, brought growing financial rewards to

the "consultants" and monetary wealth to the school committee. The new policy required interested school systems wanting a Pioneer staff member for a day to pay not only for the teacher's substitute, but also pay the school board for the teacher's services along with paying the individual teacher for the presentation.

A number of the consultants were now openly negotiating for their services. Often talk in the faculty room was about "the big one" (a high paying presentation for one state department of education) or about schedules for up-coming dates. It was obvious when a consulting faculty member was absent for the day. It was also apparent that the faculty was further divided by the issue. As one teacher commented, "You can't escape this consulting thing".

There were attempts at resolving the dispute. For example, immediately after the second conference one teacher suggested and put together with administrative approval a massive questionnaire which tried to address "faculty concerns" about the consulting issue. As one of those interviewed commented, "that experience (filling out the survey) was painful. We voted to follow what the principal suggested anyway, though it was far from unanimous."

The more the consultants were out of the building, the more they were asked to go out. One consultant stated to me

on numerous occasions that "(an administrator) keeps handing me these jobs. I say that I'm out too much but I keep getting these assignments"; although from the administration's perspective, if anyone didn't want to go out, they didn't have to. Clearly the gap between those who were "consultants" and those who were not was growing.

Often the dispute grew according to cultural perspectives. What may have begun as a reflection of a split in the culture of the school and attitudes toward heterogeneous grouping continued to expand. As one Pioneer teacher offered,

> Consulting, the conferences, people not supporting other teachers and being critical are just another way of going after heterogeneous grouping.

Others stated concern for student well-being and with the morality of teachers earning what some perceive as a "double pay". As these voices tell us,

> The kids have too many substitutes.
>
> I don't feel that it's right to earn that money (for consulting) during school time."
>
> You have a segment of the faculty unhappy about others going out. Promoting themselves. Who knows what they are doing.
>
> The consultants were and are selling themselves and the kids suffer.

The same voices felt that there were divisions caused by consulting. As one stated,

> The conferences and the consulting have fractured us.

There were teachers who found both positive and negative sides to the issue. Their voices suggest,

> Consulting is positive for consultants, though not for everyone else. All the visitors have been a problem.

And,

> I think that people going out on a couple of workshops is an educational experience. Going out on ten of them? I think that there is diminishing returns. I think that we are here to serve our kids and I don't feel a substitute can do that.

While some people spoke about differences that have been brought up between individuals such as,

> Those consulting don't communicate with the rest of us. We get the feeling the relationships here aren't equitable.

And,

> There is an attitude here that seems to have one side say "They're jealous of us", and the other side saying "don't go out to speak".

But another voice stated,

> It's been important to all of us that some of us have found they could share outside of the school.

Finally, we hear a last teacher add,

> The disagreements over the conference and consulting among the staff goes right to the root of what it means to be a teacher here.

The process of change that has taken place at Pioneer has lead to issues unthought of a year earlier. Consulting, a journal, the two conferences, all have taken place in an incredibly short time in the life of a school and its veteran staff. The recent history at Pioneer has reflected

the professional and cultural changes that the faculty at the school have lived through. That chronology of events has accentuated the changes discussed in earlier chapters, and how teachers have come to view themselves as professionals and as individuals.

Reflections on a Year Spent in the Crucible of Change

Life in the "crucible" has confronted the members of the organization with the realities of change. Change is an important phenomenon in any organization. It has been suggested by more than a few outside observers that the faculty and, to a lesser degree, the students of Pioneer have been involved in an exceptional year of productivity. Those teachers, students, administrators at Pioneer made an important decision to bring their school into the public domain. Not all were in agreement and surely not anyone could have envisioned what took place once the force of change took control of events. For many at Pioneer that thrust provided by change became stronger than the individual personalities that were members of the school. Change at the school fed upon itself. The power of ideas becomes much stronger than any one individual. Those ideas come from questioning. For example, the questions raised about equity for all students six years ago created a force which brought the impetus for new and further questions to be asked. The questions about hosting a conference at Pioneer or about what direction the school should take in

meeting the needs of all students by faculty writing a grant are significant in the life of the organization but become replaced by new and more pressing questions.

Those questions do not only address the greater concern of those involved in the process of educational and professional life at the school. The focus of change leads to the subtle, yet, very powerful questions that individual actors ask of themselves in a search for the meaning of change. Questions about change are at two levels: how the members of the organization make sense of the collective, and how the members of the organization make sense of themselves from the meanings that they derive from the activities and products of the organization. Pioneer teachers have been in the middle of such a process which has dealt with change in the organization along with those events forcing the same teachers to questions their role as professionals, as educators, and as individuals.

As an observer and a participant in the school, the past year for me has been an incredible stream of events, ideas, emotions, and data of what change means to those who work in a school. The faculty of the school have constantly been called upon to react as well as to act on issues that concern changes that their school has seen. Changes have taken place (and are still taking place) in issues of teacher and administrator roles regarding leadership, professionalism, and in defining the social relationships

that exist within and among those who work in a school. The Pioneer staff has been forced to grapple with what change means for their school and for them. They must confront the fact that they, at least in the frames from before the first conference and to a large degree afterward, were initiators of their own destinies. They have watched their definition of "family" shift as they have been part of a growing "professional culture". An yet they have managed to go to work each day, to their five classrooms, study halls and assorted hall and bathroom duties. They are teachers who work at a school they have become identified with as the school has become linked to them.

It is only in retrospect that change can be assessed. A few at Pioneer still can not comprehend what change has meant to them or for their school, though many are willing to reflect upon their life at Pioneer during the past two years. Often times those retrospective of the past world at the school along with descriptions of the current world once again point to the difference in faculty culture, as the words of many demonstrate. "We were more smoothly functioning six years ago than we are now," one teacher offered in reference to the time before heterogeneous grouping. Others also remarked about the change in social relationships by stating,

> I missed the friendliness (among staff) during the past year.

And,

> I see a lot of conflict on the staff. There is group that wants to go out and does presentations and there is a group that doesn't want that to happen. I think it is somewhat a carry over from the tracking issue.

Another also notes the issue of heterogenous grouping in affecting faculty relationships by telling us,

> The fact that classes are heterogeneous has caused some of the problems. I think much of it comes from the internal frustration of many of the teachers.

And,

> You could see the differences about heterogeneous grouping. The end of the year (1990 -- after the first conference) was an example. People were not talking. Now people had to make a choice.

Some teachers attempted to describe how the internal professional dialogue in the school has been affected by issues of change by offering,

> I was thinking about this the other day. I mean, it bothers me. I think why in this school now is it so popular to disagree, because I feel learning and growth come from disagreement.
>
> The faculty is split. There is an anger from some that we're not focusing on students but on ourselves.
>
> The split is worse than at other times. Remember, the faculty Christmas party had to be rescheduled three times. Other get togethers have been canceled all together. It's all symptomatic of something else...the real crisis of heterogeneous grouping.

Another stated,

> We do still question but now the person questioning is perceived as hostile.

The person went on to add,

> There is a tremendous amount of tension here. Much more than in the past. And I don't know why. I perceive you as hostile so I won't listen is the attitude. Just look at where people sit (when they gather in the school), Twogroups, maybe a few people trying to stay neutral. This school is absolutely not together, yet we are supposed to share common goals.

Others offered,

> Somehow people not in favor of heterogeneous grouping needed to rumble more loudly than in the past.
>
> There are people here who have become estranged from that forward motion.
>
> There has been a definite increase in tension from those who have not bought into heterogeneous grouping. But I'm not sure why they didn't by into it. I...some people don't think that heterogeneous grouping is the way to go. Others think that we've gone too far because we have consultants going out. But the staff members who have bought into this have grown professionally.

And,

> Heterogeneous grouping became the battle line of the conferences and the journal. Maybe it got them all thinking, I don't know. We had to be blunt and to the front. There are problems here that need to be addressed.

The concept and policy of heterogeneous grouping will always be linked with change at Pioneer. The dust made from the change six years ago still hasn't settled. Instead, during the past year, it has constantly been stirred up into the air. The change to heterogeneous grouping is still the separating force in the faculty's culture and there is a carry over to the everyday world of the school. As a few teachers state,

> The last couple of months you can feel a tension between teachers but not...I don't see that tensiontoward students.
>
> We are avoiding the one on one approach in dealing with one another. Now we have to rely on things like questionnaires.
>
> People seem to be stressed out more this year. I think there seems to be an attitude problem. I think it began with the conference and the consulting. I don't know what the root cause of the attitude problem is but there is a lot more whispering in the hallways, more complaining. I didn't see that before.

And an additional series of voices offer,

> Some people were made uncomfortable by the past year.
>
> There are people here who are still tracked in their own minds.
>
> We have some very good teachers going out and promoting strategies they believe in. As there are people defiant and against change.
>
> What has gone on the past year has driven a wedge between some people .... a little professional jealousy...One group sees themselves not advancing at the same rate and it makes them look bad.
>
> Consulting, the conferences, people not supporting the right to think differently are just another way they have been going after heterogeneous grouping.

A last voice suggests,

> Heterogeneous grouping is in fashion, but it may not be in a few years. I'm not saying it's a "fad" but there may be something else coming down the pike and all those teachers here will find something else to advocate. That's how things go in education.

The changes in the role and meaning of being a teacher at Pioneer during the recent past have accentuated the

divisions in philosophy and practice that existed between staff members. It is clear that the past year has been both a time of great celebration and growth and a time of difficulty and strained relationships.

Views of Change

The faculty of Pioneer has been through the trials of changing their own school. They have learned from the process. To be sure, while there are those who continue to foster and encourage change for the school, there are others who wish the school could retrench itself into the world of six years ago. While there are some who wish the administration would "take control" and "tell people what to do" as part of the change process, there are others who feel that giving up control of their world to administrators "diminishes the meaning and value of what it is to be a teacher." There are some faculty who feel that leadership must "be shared" not only between administrators and teachers, but also with students. They are often suspicious of administration moves that involve teachers yet do not include teachers in the decision making process. For so many at Pioneer, the rules and definitions have been altered. Teachers, once having tasted school leadership, are not ones to give up even partial influences in their school that stretch beyond their classrooms.

Many teachers offered their thoughts on changing their school and what changes should follow. As in other areas of

this work, clear-cut differences exist that reflect the issues of heterogeneous grouping and a dual faculty culture.

For many at Pioneer, including those who promoted change, the process has been confusing as much as it has been liberating. As one event has taken place new unexpected situations arise. As one teachers stated,

> Change here has surely been unplanned.

Others agreed but saw the unplanned nature of change a necessary part of a personal and professional learning process. They offer,

> People here are still learning and experimenting. That is a result of heterogeneous grouping and some very unusual people.
>
> This school is alive with ideas. Here most of us don't say this is what you do, we say what do you think or let's try it.
>
> I hope we always continue the search for the right way .....to strive to arrive.

And,

> A fire was started here by teachers. It has the excitement of being out of control. The change has gotten bigger than any one person, bigger than everyone here. Through it all I continue to be overwhelmed with the way this staff cares for kids.

It is clear to many that they had no way of knowing the directions the school would take once an event took place. The event could be impressive as a major conference or as subtle as hiring a new staff member or a group of

teachers getting together to address an issue. As these voices tell us,

> No one knows the ramifications and fallout of a planned educational change.
>
> Things got restarted with six or seven teachers getting together....they generated incredible energy.
>
> New people brought change with them.
>
> The types of people hired during the past six years are very motivated toward change.

There were many others who attributed the events at the school to "teachers leading". Listen as they tell us,

> This place has been running in the recent past with an awful lot of bottom up change. That is interesting because most of the teachers I've worked with have tended to be quiet non threatening people. At the conferences they would say to me "oh we couldn't do that in our classrooms or in our school. They wouldn't let us."
>
> Initiatives that really bring change come from the teachers in any school about 75 percent of the time; the one's from administrators work about 25 percent of the time.
>
> Here, at Pioneer, teachers felt that they had the power to not only publish a journal, and put on two conferences, but to organize their curriculum and strategies that would not only impact this tiny school but, now, thousands of educators.

And,

> Teachers organized those conferences. It was teacher leadership that forced people to look at their curriculum and to their teaching styles because teachers realize that these are all parts of the whole of the school.

The concept of teacher leadership has blossomed with the intensity of the past year to become accepted practice

for many at Pioneer. It is now as important as heterogeneous grouping and an important part of any discussion of educational innovation. The topic remains on the back burner for most of the faculty.

At the beginning of the cycle of change at Pioneer, particularly covered by this work, an administrator expressed feelings that said teachers couldn't put together an event such as the conference. The remark was not meant as a negative comment about teachers or of their ability to produce a major conference. The administrator spoke about the demands of teaching. The conference happened. Less than a year later the same high-level administrator came to the faculty at Pioneer to listen to their feelings about a policy that was put into effect without teacher input. The administrator and teachers talked about issues of concern and the policy was quietly and quickly rescinded. And once again, as has become accepted if not enjoyed at the school, not everyone, teacher or administrator, was in agreement.

If teacher leadership and what has happened in the "fast lane of the past" are issues that are still being digested by Pioneer faculty, where change is to go in the future can be a topic of even more concern. As with other components of life at Pioneer, there are divisions that reflect the two fold structure of faculty culture.

It is interesting to note that those interviewed often spoke about the future and change in words that talked

about the profession, the school, and themselves. Their thoughts also ran the gamut from specific topics to a more general look at the school and their lives there. As one teacher stated,

> The idea of (educational) change is what's frustrating for me. I see it now as comprising everything. Communication between teachers, between teachers and administrators, the decision making that goes on, maybe the conferences brought it all out.

Another offered,

> I'm changing on a personal level but I don't know what others are doing. People tell me about what works for them in the classroom and about what bombed but that's because we're usually friends.

One more states,

> I think that we've done real well dealing with change. I think that we can handle what happens in the future. I'm amazed at the flexibility of our people.

Some teachers spoke about concern for students while others expressed their pride both in the accomplishments of Pioneer students and in the quality of education that Pioneer students are receiving. Four comments that represent the spectrum of Pioneer voices stated,

> Teachers and administrators have been too concerned with themselves .... with their own self image and with their own personal philosophies of education and not with what students really need.

> I haven't seen any kids suffering during the past few years. In fact, I see their success rates way up. I don't feel that what has gone on here has harmed anyone, except those who want to go back to some old idea of educating students.

> The kids have done some special things. One of the things I'll never forget was watching our kids speak on a panel at a conference at our school about what they've learned about themselves and others. Just about everything that has taken place at Pioneer benefits kids. There is a real commitment to that.

And finally,

> We haven't even begun to empower our students. They have no control over their lives. Teachers have more though not all teachers or administrators want to give up that sense of control to students. It makes a lot of people very insecure.

Future change at Pioneer is a delicate issue. Yet many Pioneer faculty have strong beliefs. Many offer their opinions by stating,

> We need more of a professional dialogue. Not the stonewalling we get from some teachers and administrators.
>
> We're not doing enough. Changes haven't gone far enough.
>
> We have lost our perspective of where we are going with heterogeneous grouping. Some of our teachers think they are teaching "heterogeneous classes", and they tell the rest of the world that, but they're not.

Others offer,

> We should aim toward more professional talk...it is clear that relationships have been restructured according to teaching...heterogeneous grouping has the impact of doing that.
>
> Change is continuing. The staff, enough staff, are growing, especially because of the potential the staff development fund has to offer.
>
> The school can not stagnate now. We need to keep pushing for further changes.

And,

> Heterogeneous grouping is still part of the change process here. It is on going -- not a one year deal.

The reflections and expectations from the staff at Pioneer express the fervor of activists along with the concerns of those who look to the past. It is evident that change has yet to run its course. There are, of course, other concerns that confront Pioneer staff members. One teacher reflects,

> I am going to retire here but I worry that the system with its budget cuts and our low pay scale can keep these people here who have been so important for change and for the students at Pioneer.

Another staff member thoughtfully said,

> This is a very special place where I've grown a lot. I wonder if I'm outgrowing it.

A last states,

> What I'm most curious about is the sense of passivity of the staff about the school's budget. Everyone seems to feel that everything on the outside is out of their control. That is what will ultimately decide what this school will be.

In many ways, Pioneer is probably more typical of a rural school than atypical. The future is a matter of concern to faculty, both the internal future and the external forces that will affect the school.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The Many Realities Found in a School

The lives of students, teachers and administrators are intertwined in schools. Their roles not only are shaped by the organization's culture but, at the same time, shape the mosaic of cultural life in a school. School culture is the grounding upon which the dialogue between groups in a school is based. This holistic view of schools recognizes that within a school there are many realities existing simultaneously, yet those realities are linked by common threads. Efforts at restructuring the way a school is organized, intentionally aimed at one group, in one way or another impact others. As this research has presented, altering the way students were grouped at Pioneer was a move developed to benefit students. At the same time, though not a result directly intended by the proponents of heterogeneous grouping six years ago, detracking influenced the faculty culture at the school.

The story of what has taken place at Pioneer represents a single case study, and yet at the same time, offers many insights and examples for those working in other schools considering moves to restructure the way those schools are organized. As we have seen, cultural change among faculty was unintentional and paralleled what

was taking place as an intentional alteration in the way students were organized. This experience has forced the culture to be redefined. It has not been an easy time for all staff members. Cultural redefinition has threatened the personal and professional security of some while catapulting others into the limelight of professional recognition.

Relationships among staff members have been strained as faculty culture has been caught up in the upheavals of organizational change. Faculty have been forced to construct and then to deal with new meanings about what it means to be a teacher at Pioneer in a very short span of time.

Two Views of Restructuring

This research has presented the story of a group of educators struggling to arrive at individual definitions and group definitions about the new arrangements taking place at their school. Pioneer faculty members were trying to decide what restructuring meant to them. Pioneer educators followed two paths to constructing meanings about professional matters and making sense of their workplace. At Pioneer the catalyzing issue was detracking.

Confronted with teaching heterogeneous classes, one group of voices asked the simple question "How do we do it?" For them, constructing a definition of being a teacher at Pioneer focused on classroom practice. They reflected

their support or opposition to detracking in terms of teaching strategies and methods. To a second group, though, heterogeneous grouping was not a matter of practice but represented constructs of ideas. These faculty members view the entire issue surrounding Pioneer's restructuring as a matter of philosophy rather than of practice. The question these educators struggled to answer was not "How do you do it?" but, "Is this the right path to follow?"

It is important to note the distinction between the two approaches in creating meaning. At times the two questions become intertwined and confused as educators try to find an answer. It is also important to note that many at Pioneer began to ask the same questions about other issues, such as leadership and professional development, that were brought on by restructuring to heterogeneous grouping.

Why is the Story of Pioneer Important to Other Schools?

Teachers and administrators work in a volatile world. They are at the center of public attention and are constantly held accountable for what takes place in their schools. Yet, the way school change is viewed can ignore the importance and role of the teachers or administrators in the process of restructuring. Those working in school can lose their say in deciding their professional futures.

What has taken place at Pioneer shows that restructuring in a school grasps all members of the

organization. It gives them a stake in the process of and outcomes of change whether they agree with the process and products or not. The Pioneer experience emphasizes that many professional realities can exist in a school and that bringing alterations to each effects the organization's culture.

There are two approaches to understanding the new arrangements among faculty that have filled Pioneer. As Michael Fullan (1991) suggests, there are "subjective" and "objective" levels of understanding the meanings and process of change in schools. On one hand are understandings that reflect a school's world found in the perspectives and cultural meaning shared by individuals. These understandings are based upon cultural interpretations made by teachers and administrators. This frame of analysis deals with the subjective world of the school and focuses on understanding how the meanings brought by restructuring are constructed through a study of an organization's culture.

A second approach representing an integral section of this research has presented the activities of the educators at Pioneer in terms of their accomplishments. These products display the public side of faculty life. But these are the events and issues, created by Pioneer educators in response to their own needs and to those of others outside the school, that have forced the process of cultural

redefinition to continue. Both approaches, underscored within this work, are interdependent and offer a more complete picture of a restructured school.

Major Points from the Research:

Cultural Change and Programs

Programs directly aimed at impacting students also, and unintentionally, can impact faculty roles and faculty culture. The alterations in the world of faculty life at Pioneer are inherently linked to the new arrangements brought to the world of classroom life for students. Detracking students and rearranging the ways that students were organized forced faculty to rethink what it was that they did in their classrooms and about what their roles were as teachers in the school. Detracking a school not only involves detracking students but also teachers and administrators. It is an organizational change and reflects how holistic schools are.

Restructuring can bring role redefinition to members of the organization. This research has focused on how the roles of teachers and administrators at Pioneer have been altered during the past two years. From the data it is clear that role change in the workplace of the school also can carry the importance of personal redefinition for faculty. This process is two fold. As teachers and administrators are forced by cultural shifts in the organization to personally redefine their roles and identities, they must also watch as their public identities

are redefined in the process of change by their peers within the organization.

The story about what has taken place at Pioneer points to the important links that exist between the formalized social organization of those working in a school and the culture they share. The line separating organization from culture is tenuous at best.

The Fabric of a School

The changes in the cultural fabric of Pioneer during the past two years have been profound. It was from the interviews with Pioneer staff that the metaphor of family was first (and then often) used to describe what it meant to work at the school. That they did not refer to themselves with terms such as "co-workers" or "colleagues" but as a "family" is significant. Also indicative of how profound cultural redefinition has been is that the metaphor of family was used so often to describe and access what change has meant by teachers and administrators. Pioneer's shift to a "professional" family from a "social" one points to the power a subjective view of school wide restructuring can provide.

To bring effective change to a school is not simply to put a new model into practice or to adopt a new policy. It is essential to understand where the impetus for restructuring comes from and what such an alteration in organizational life means for those required to implement it. Such an understanding reflects the perspectives of the

organization's members and offers a direct glimpse of the culture that frames a school. In the Pioneer case, modifications in the definition of what the working family (from social family to professional family) carry greater meaning because those transformations predicate that cultural redefinition come from a majority of staff members.

Organizational Change

Organizational change may not only involve a redefinition of the overall culture shared by members, but can also produce alternative cultural perspectives within the larger culture. Culture in a organization is a process grounded in exchange, definition, and redefinition. Through this process, identities are shaped by both the group and by the individual. Change in the culture leads to change in identities as the perspectives of the group are redefined.

In the process of cultural redefinition within an organization, there exists a tension between the past and the future. That tension is highlighted in the actions of the present. This process may well be the essence of culture. Within a culture one may find solidarity yet at the same time find alternative perspectives. These perspectives, in the case of Pioneer, reflect different beliefs, values, or meanings, and suggest that competing cultures exist within the larger culture of the organization.

This research, using the reference point of earlier work, utilized the terms of manifest and latent cultures

existing within the larger culture of Pioneer. These terms were used to reflect the cultural divisions existing on the Pioneer staff around issues of teachers as leaders, the growth of a professional family and culture, and support for heterogeneous grouping. These internal cultures reflect the differences found at Pioneer.

Both manifest and latent cultures exist in all organizations. They reflect support and opposition. They exist in a relationship that has tension at its heart for while one may advocate change, the other suggests a belief in the status quo. Organizations such as Pioneer are not static though. They are dynamic with dynamism inherent in their cultures.

Manifest culture not only represents the way of doing things accepted by the majority, but also what might be publicly acknowledged. This is not to say that what is manifest culture reflects the official policy and mission statement of the organization. The manifest culture identified at Pioneer reflects a way of doing things that is accepted by a majority of the organization. Often what was celebrated in the manifest culture was in opposition to the more formal organizational frameworks such as chain of command in decision making issues.

Manifest culture also reflected what were termed manifest identities at Pioneer. That is to say the roles and identities ascribed to individuals within the

organization as well as describing a standard by which many at Pioneer were forced to question who and what they were as teachers.

Those sharing in the manifest culture at Pioneer were involved in the activities that publicly celebrated what was taking place at the school in terms of professional development. They saw themselves as sharing a belief which united them in a common cause. Within the manifest culture, groups of teachers began to develop as individuals fought to solve common problems. Yet those groups were never formalized into the hierarchy of governance at Pioneer.

Latent culture, also produced by the changes taking place at Pioneer, is organized only to the extent of private conversations, behind the scenes activities, and the moments when individuals begin to shy away from making a public statement about their disagreement with a particular direction the school was taking. Restructuring at Pioneer created a latent culture, which in the case of Pioneer was a culture of opposition. The opposition from or by a latent culture is not, as demonstrated by the Pioneer case, so pronounced that it becomes the dominant perspective, thus forcing the organization to completely redefine itself.

The opposition from members of latent culture is not as organized as the public presentation of a manifest culture. It is seen as the action of a few individuals

rather than of a group. But latent cultures within organizations are always present because cultures incorporate many individual realities and perspectives about the definitions and solutions to problems faced by members of an organization.

For any school about to undertake the path of restructuring, as has happened at Pioneer, it is essential to recognize that organizational change does not necessarily mean a culture of unanimous support. Changing the structure of an organization may well create latent cultures that impede the implementation of policy decisions or the delivery of services as outlined by policy makers. This is not to say that manifest or latent cultures have a particular value outside of the organization. Both may reflect competing "moral" interpretations about the reality of the organization and its objectives. This is particularly true in organizations such as schools as the Pioneer experience has presented.

Linking Cultural Change With Organizational Restructuring

It is also important to note that while cultural changes are seen in the multiple realities presented in the perspectives of individuals, these changes are, as in the Pioneer case, represented by the products of the faculty. Cultural change and organizational restructuring were reflected in the products shared by the Pioneer faculty with the larger public of educators. The process of

presenting the products of their own labor, as so graphically presented throughout this work, only served to enhance the speed and process of change at Pioneer and to further define the lines of the faculty culture.

Major Points from the Research:

The Products from a Small Staff

A Pattern

From the experiences at Pioneer a pattern emerges that was constantly repeated in on-going events representing change and innovation. The elements of this pattern are that the events were:

A. Voluntary.

B. Initiated by faculty members.

C. Outside of contractual duties.

D. Favoring detracking.

E. Celebrated new models of teacher leadership in designing curriculum and developing strategies for classroom use.

The events during the "crucible" were tied directly to the work of committed faculty leaders willing to take the risks that go along with pushing innovation further and into the public realm. I was an initiator of the process and, as indicated earlier, a major player in the drama that took place at the school. The empowerment of teachers and the creation of the "teacher experts" that Pioneer now claims to have is a direct result of the first conference which publicly announced that a school was in the process of restructuring and willing to share that knowledge with other professionals. As the evidence presented in this work

strongly suggests, it was not simply the issue of detracking that produced the cultural redefinitions at the school during the time of the "Crucible" but more a combination of factors such as the effects of teachers assuming the role of educational leaders from administrators and teachers willing to share expertise with others.

There are important reasons why the events that took place at Pioneer did so. For one, there was a climate existing at the school which allowed the efforts of teachers to blossom. Teachers found or created the opportunity to act not simply as educational leaders in name but in practice. Their rewards were the intrinsic success that the group felt as Pioneer teachers and as individuals. Working together was a hallmark for an ever expanding group of teachers rather than being isolated, as was the case in the past.

A second reward was the realization by many staff members that they now had control of knowledge about their craft. For a time, knowledge was not controlled by administrators. Teachers were the recognized experts. At Pioneer activities were framed and took place from the "bottom up". That is to say curriculum was developed by teachers individually or with peers. New teaching strategies were forged in classrooms by individual teachers. Plans for professional development, initially,

came from the ranks of Pioneer teachers. In each instance the formal and contractually dictated hierarchy of command was either by-passed or didn't apply to what was taking place.

The events at Pioneer suggest a model of educators in control of their school, responding to their own needs and to the needs of the students in their classes. It is an important example of how classroom success and innovation has fostered teacher empowerment. It is a suggestion that when structures limit teacher success in schools are lifted, important changes in the professional lives of teachers can take place.

Still there remains the tension that accompanies an organization engaged in the process of restructuring. Pioneer is not an exception. No matter what the successes of the Pioneer faculty and student body, Pioneer remains a traditional school with a traditional structure dictating formal roles. The changes and the events of the past two years have served to focus a light on the "conflicting elements" related to formal roles and inter-staff relationships. Those distinctions continue to this day.

Staff and Conflict in a Restructuring School

Change at Pioneer has forced staff to question what their roles are. Often times there are questions about issues such as "leadership" and "decision making". These questions can cut right to the heart of what the meaning of

being a teacher or an administrator can be, and these questions can lead to struggle. Administrators vie for power as teachers do the same. Both want to be in control of the events taking place around them in their school which the society at large holds them accountable. For example, the issue of out-of-school consulting saw the control of knowledge pass from teachers back to administration as administrators began to act as the clearing house in scheduling teachers as consultants.

In this regard, Pioneer is not so atypical. Neither teachers or administrators have a definitive model of decision making in mind that can be articulated to the rest of the staff and generate agreement beyond a superficial level. Even though the Pioneer staff has seen it share of success and professional recognition, that recognition has been for the products of individuals in their classrooms rather than for models that stress restructuring beginning at the district wide level or from the "top down".

The lesson from Pioneer to other schools contemplating change is that the process of restructuring involves a great many aspects of organizational life. Rethinking the way classes are organized leads to other issues related to the structure of a school. Each situation has its own share of contradictory elements for educators, and each situation demands that one way or another differences be resolved. The process of changing a school is ongoing and requires

that change be acknowledged and accepted rather than fought because schools reflect an ever changing society. Educators need to have the freedom to recognize and resolve differences in their own school that is essential.

A Model of Change from a Small School

The process of change at Pioneer features many examples of what can happen in a restructured school. But the Pioneer example is truly a "grass roots" effort. Change was initiated by the actions of teachers. The fervor and energy that became the "crucible" originated internally. Unlike many attempts at restructuring, what happened at Pioneer was not spawned by an adherence to a particular model of change. Neither did the staff ascribe to a specific approach for empowering themselves as educators nor were they following a planned outline focusing on issues of professional development. To be sure, in what transpired at Pioneer there are elements found in a great many models advocating change, but those connections are only seen now in retrospect. Simply put, at the time the Pioneer teachers were making their decisions about what direction they wanted their school to take, they were concerned with what they were going to do and not how they were going to do it. A group of teachers created a model of change as they went along. The process fit the needs of Pioneer. Some lessons from this experience are:

1) Restructuring began as an <u>informal</u> process rather than as a formal attempt at reorganizing the school.

2) Change was initiated by a staff who then had ownership in what was about to take place.

3) The educational and professional products of the Pioneer staff are directly linked to teachers working together as professional peers rather than as isolated individuals working in their own classrooms. The greater the group process, the more success.

4) Administration allowed a dialogue to begin at the informal level, later participated in the dialogue, and finally was caught up in the process as were the teachers.

While each of these points draw directly back to the Pioneer experience they may also apply to other schools because Pioneer offers an alternative. Much of what we term "educational change", "school restructuring" or "professional development" does not begin with those who are most impacted. Models are proposed for organizing schooling and teaching by leaders from many areas of society. Often those initiating such efforts do not work in schools and would require others, who do work in schools, to carry out school restructuring. When these efforts at school change do not meet the expectations of the planners, educators in the schools are often blamed for "not doing their jobs" or even worse. Events at Pioneer, on the other hand, show that when teachers have an important stake in deciding the future of their school and when they are in fact designers of the educational policy that they will professionally live with, successful change can take place.

The image of teachers portrayed in society is not highly favorable. The same is true for public schooling in general. Negative images can be found in words ranging from leaders at the national level to local citizens. We forget, as a society, that there are a tremendous number of talented and professional individuals working under often difficult circumstances in our schools. Educators are constrained by the isolation that comes from working in separate classrooms. While they are expected to "act" professionally they are not encouraged to enjoy the benefits accorded "professionals", either in working conditions or in salary.

Teachers are not viewed as experts by wide segments of society. They are not looked upon as having great abilities in leadership or decision making. The traditional path for teachers to become "leaders" was to leave teaching for administrative positions. This builds a stereotype that places limits on teachers. It is a view that is often incorporated in how teachers define themselves.

Pioneer serves as a model that can dispel such a stereotype. This work has described the efforts of educators to improve their teaching and their profession. What has made the Pioneer example so powerful, is that the Pioneer staff initially had to combat the self definitions of teachers based on years of living under the negative stereotype of being "a teacher". But through working

together, faculty members found that they could achieve beyond their expectations. At Pioneer, change brought a sense of hope and an excitement that is necessary and, unfortunately lacking, in many schools.

Likewise in the understandings of change that can be drawn from the Pioneer experience is the important notion that organizational change begins to breed change itself. Change becomes bigger than those who initiated it. The metaphor I used to describe change during the hectic past two years was that of a "crucible". But during that time change loomed larger than any group of individuals at the school. Faculty were carried along with the tide in examples as the "consulting debate" and the "second conference". With change so ingrained in the faculty culture of Pioneer it appeared at times as if the speed of events was out of control. In the case of Pioneer one needs to consider at what point do those who created and control the metaphor become the victims of it as the metaphor itself is now in control.

Not many school faculties have been faced with such issues to consider. There is no answer yet. Those at Pioneer are still sorting through their experiences for an answer. Once again those issues must be decided at the level of the individual school and in the dialogue exchanged by faculty members.

There are other questions created by the process of change that need to be addressed by Pioneer faculty. If there is a meaning in what was accomplished, it is that Pioneer teachers have earned a reputation as innovators and the respect from educators. And while the statewide and national media have featured Pioneer's story as representative of educational excellence, little attention has been directed to the school in the local press outside of the usual interest in sports. That lack of attention is also reflected in the lack of support for Pioneer shown by the local communities concerning matters such as teacher salaries and school funding.

Pioneer staff must also focus on internal issues still unsettled such as determining the faculty's role in the decision making process or designing a contract that encourages teachers to take the risks necessary for continuing to provide quality education. And a very pressing dilemma for the Pioneer staff as it faces the future is deciding a direction for the future given tumultuous past.

A Last Personal Note

I've come to know these people as both a teacher and as a researcher, a peer and an observer, as a leader and a team member. If there is one single observation about my colleagues that I can make it is that they have, through their actions, deeply altered definitions of what it means

to be a teacher. They have done that through their own intensive efforts and putting into practice their own ideas. No one asked them to do what they have done. It was on their own. Not one of the conference committee members nor journal writers and editors earned a wage for their efforts. That was not the intent.

I look at my peers through two sets of eyes. As a colleague I see teachers who go to work each day trying to do the best they can. As a researcher I see them with the insight gleaned from all those interviews and the process of just standing back and watching the incredibly complex social world around me. What I see are some equally incredible people.

APPENDIX A

THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interviews with staff will be conversational in nature to allow for respondents to share their perspectives. Though not in an exact order, questions will touch on topics such as: How long have you taught at Pioneer? Have you taught at other schools? Have you taught in homogeneously grouped classrooms? What perspectives can you bring from your previous experiences as teacher to Pioneer? Teachers will also be asked to reflect upon the changes at Pioneer during the past five years. It is their perspective that I wish to present about areas such as: How did those changes come about? How were staff involved in those changes? What has been the result of these changes for staff?...for them as a teacher?...for their students?..for the school? about how much of the change in the school has been planned? about how much has been unplanned? and is change continuing? What was the catalyst for the initial change and for later changes?

Again addressing the issues of change, those interviewed will be asked to reflect upon leadership at the school...where it has come from in the past and to describe the roles of teachers and administrators as leaders in the school.

Those interviewed will be asked to project where Pioneer, as a school, should be heading? ... Where should it be in say five years?... What needs do the staff at PVRS have to address in the next year?... In the next 5 years?

Questions will also address issues that deal with how Pioneer has represented itself to other professionals from other schools as well as to members of the school committee and to the public at large.

The nature and structure of the interview guide, is designed to allow others to present their perspectives about a school in change rather than to serve an evaluative purpose. It serves to welcome as many important and varied individual perspectives as possible about Pioneer.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONSENT AND INTERVIEW PERMISSION FORM

Dear _____

As most of you know, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, in the School of Education, EPA Division. As you are also aware, I have been working with Dr. Gretchen B. Rossman, the chairperson of my dissertation committee, in a study of organizational culture, change, and leadership specifically geared to the issue of school change. The design of my research includes an interview component. I am asking you to help me and take part in the research experience.

Specifically, I am asking that you contribute your insights about the process of change that has taken place at Pioneer through one interview. The interview will last approximately thirty minutes to an hour. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed and offered for your critique or approval if you so desire. All transcripts of interviews will be kept strictly confidential and all will remain anonymous. The interviews will also follow all University and Department of Education guidelines regarding the use of individuals in research projects.

The interviews will provide one component the data upon which I will base my doctoral dissertation. I will share the results of the dissertation with you.

I strongly feel that the research is important in that it will provide a rare opportunity to listen to those who work in our school and how they deal with change. If you wish to participate in an interview please sign the form at the bottom of this page and return it to my box.

Sincerely,

Joe Nowicki

_____ I agree to participate in an interview to be part of Joseph Nowicki's dissertation research under the guide lines outlined above.

signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION PROVIDED PVRS SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Date: June 26, 1990
From: Joseph Nowicki
To: PVRS School Committee
RE: Proposed Dissertation Research at PVRS.

Topic: The Professionals of PVRS: A Change in Structure, A Change In Culture

Why PVRS?

This presents a unique opportunity to undertake and present a case study of the process of change that has taken place in a public junior-senior high school.

What methods will be used?

Participant observation and interviews with those who work and teach a Pioneer.

What protection concerning confidentiality do those at PVRS have in the study?

Any data obtained from the study and/or used in publications resulting from the study, such as a doctoral dissertation, must conform to a University of Massachusetts at Amherst ethics review committee. In all cases total confidentiality and anonymity for those at PVRS will be guaranteed. All those interviewed can have access to their audio taped conversations and a typed transcript of their interview if desired.

What will PVRS gain from such a study?

The faculty will be offered a final report about what the meaning and effects of a change to heterogeneous grouping are for a small school. The report will seek to place PVRS in a current context and assist the staff, administration, and school committee as they contemplate future change.

What is the cost of such a study to PVRS?

Nothing.

Who are those conducting the study?

Joseph Nowicki supervised by Dr. Gretchen B. Rossman from the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF AT PIONEER

September 1, 1990

Dear PVRS Faculty and Staff,

As some of you already know, I am about to begin work on my doctoral dissertation as I am now a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Department of Education, EPA Division. Dr. Gretchen B. Rossman is serving as chairperson of my dissertation committee. My areas of interest are organizational (particularly school) culture, change, and leadership and I have chosen Pioneer as the site for my qualitative case study. At its June 1990 meeting the Pioneer Valley Regional School Committee voted me permission to conduct my dissertation research at Pioneer.

My research will have two components. One centers on gaining data through interviews with any and all staff members at Pioneer that wish to be interviewed. Please read the attached page describing participation in the one interview. I feel I should state that everyone on this staff has valuable contributions to make and important things to say. I should also add that students will not take part in this process.

A second form of data collection will be participant observation. I will be recording my observations about educational change and the professional culture at Pioneer.

Central to this research is a sense of ethical responsibility to those who are interviewed and to the school staff in general in terms of the observations. In that some part or all of this research my be used for professional publication strict confidentiality and anonymity will be kept. This research also will meet both the Department of Education's research guidelines and those of the University regarding confidentiality and anonymity. I will keep a copy of the dissertation proposal on file at the main office for faculty inspection.

If you have any questions please feel free to ask.

Sincerely,

Joe Nowicki

APPENDIX E

REFERENCES ABOUT THE PIONEER EXPERIENCE

Print Media

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2. Evans, Risa, "Student Caste System", Valley Advocate, Springfield, MA., May 14, 1990.

3. Brunet, Kathleen, "Should Schools End Ability Grouping?" Sunday Republican, Springfield, MA., July 15, 1990.

4. Maycock, Julia, "Educator Urges Derailment of Tracking," Springfield Union News, Springfield, MA., May 19, 1990.

5. Burnet, Kathleen, "Northampton School Forum to Discuss Ability Level Grouping," Springfield Union News, Springfield, MA., May 21, 1990.

6. Walsh, Jacqueline, "Pioneer's Untracked Students Learn to Spread their Wings," The Recorder, Greenfield, MA., May 19, 1990.

7. Power, Jane, "Off Track and Working Well," NEA Today, Washington, D.C., May-June 1990.

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9. Glazier, Sarah, "Why Schools Still Have Tracking," Congressional Quarterly's Editorial Research Reports, Vol. 1, No. 48, Washington, D.C., December 28, 1990.

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11. Moses, Susan, "Schools Cannot Easily Buck Student Tracking," American Psychological Association Journal, Vol. 22, No. 7, July 1991.

12. Caldwell, Jean, "A School on Track Without Tracking," The Boston Globe, Boston, MA., August 5, 1990.

13. Oakes, Jeannie and Lipton, Martin, "Detracking Schools: Early Lessons from the Field", Phi Delta Kappan, February 1992.

Broadcast Media: Television

1. The ABC Network, ABC "World News Tonight," American Agenda segment featuring Pioneer's efforts at detracking, September 5, 1990 and September 6, 1990.

2. WBZ - Channel Four Westinghouse Broadcasting, Boston, "Evening News" segment featuring Pioneer's efforts at detracking, February 13, 1991.

3. The Monitor Channel, Channel 68, Boston, "Evening News" segment featuring the Pioneer experience at detracking, October 24, 1991.

4. WGGB - Channel 40, Springfield, Massachusetts, "Evening News", segment reporting about the "Derailing the Tracked School Conference", at Pioneer, May 18, 1990.

5. WGGB - Channel 40, Springfield, Massachusetts, "Evening News" segment reporting about the "Derailing the Tracked School II Conference, at Pioneer, November 9, 1990.

Broadcast Media: Radio

1. WHMP, Radio 1400, "Forward Northampton", Northampton, MA., December, 1990.

2. WHAI, Radio 1430, "The Pulse of Franklin County", Greenfield, MA., July 1990.

3. WHAI, Radio 1430, "The Pulse of Franklin County", Greenfield, MA., November 1990.

4. National Public Radio - WFCR Amherst, News segment about Pioneer including student interviews, November 9, 1990.

APPENDIX F

SCHOOLS/EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS VISITING PIONEER BETWEEN 4/90 and 6/91*

Massachusetts

South Hadley H.S.
Easthampton H.S.
Wareham Schools
Coolidge Middle School (Reading)
Newburyport H.S.
Gateway Regional
N. Attleboro Schools
Mindness Middle School (Ashland)
Northampton Public Schools
Worcester Public Schools
Turners Falls H.S.
Mt. Evrett Regional School
Bedford Public Schools
Agawam High School
West Boylston Public Schools

Vermont

Vernon Schools
St. Johnsbury Middle School
Mt. Mansfield Union Schools
Castleton Public Schools
Brattleboro Schools
Enosburg Falls H.S.
Fairfax Public Schools
Otter Valley Union High School (Brandon)

New Hampshire

Goreham Public Schools
Interlakes H.S.
Pembroke Academy

Schools Outside of New England

Brevard, North Carolina Public Schools
Fort Dodge, Iowa, High School

Schools/Organizations Pioneer Valley Staff Have On Site Assisted/Conducted Workshops For

Massachusetts

Essex County Principal's Group
Massachusetts Department of Education
Gateway Regional School
Chicopee High School
Granby Public Schools
Citizens Educational Resource Center
Worcester Public Schools
Mattapoisett Public Schools
Ludlow High School
West Springfield Junior High School
Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association
Fitchburg High School
NAACP Amherst
Milford Middle School
Hopkins Academy (Hadley)
Small & Rural School Association
Oakmont Regional School District
Holyoke High School
Cape Ann Collaborative
Norton High School
Hampshire Educational Collaborative
Connecticut Valley Superintendents Round Table
Scituate Schools
Maynard High School

Vermont

Rutland Public Schools
Vermont Department of Education
Caanan High School
Vermont Headmasters Association
Otter Valley Union Schools
Mount Abraham Union Schools
DKG-Beta Chapter
Mount Anthony Union Schools
Burlington High School
Burlington Public Schools

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Department of Education
Fall Mountain Regional School
Claremont Middle School
Lancaster Public Schools
Interlakes Regional High School

Milford Public Schools
Hudson Public Schools

Rhode Island

Middletown Public Schools

Connecticut

Connecticut Principal's Association
Bloomfield Public Schools
Deep River Public Schools

Schools Outside of New England

Brevard North Carolina Public Schools
Fort Dodge Iowa Public Schools
Queensbury, New York Middle School

Other Organizations

New England School Development Council
Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development -- National Convention
Albany, New York Advocacy Council
NEASC Annual Meeting
Massachusetts Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development

* Is not a complete list.

APPENDIX G

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS AT PIONEER VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL

1985	Teachers adopt heterogeneous grouping for a one year trial.
1985	School Committee and Parents accept PVRS Faculty Recommendations.
1985 - 1989	Ongoing curriculum development and self study by many Pioneer teachers.
1989 (May)	A Group of Pioneer Teachers Work Together to Write a Grant.
1989 (June)	Seventh Grade Teachers form a "team" and request a common planning period.
1989 (September)	A Small Group of Pioneer Faculty Meet to Discuss Projects They are Interested in. (Community and parent involvement in the school & Professional development are key issues).
	Conference Committee formed to plan a conference concerning strategies for use in the heterogeneously grouped classroom and about school change.
	Formation of a teacher initiated Parents Teacher Group.
1989 (November)	Seventh Grade Team begins S.O.S. Program
1990 (April)	Mailing of Flyers announcing the "Derailing the Tracked School Conference" to one thousand schools. Mailing effort involves more than 2/3 of the staff.
	First request to visit from Worcester Public Schools.
1990 (May)	Education Fair is presented by Pioneer Staff and students for local

communities. Parent Teacher group gains strength and is now a viable organization.

The Derailing the Tracked School Conference is held at Pioneer, attracting more than two hundred fifty educators from five states. All presenters are Pioneer faculty or students. Participants want a second conference hosted and presented by Pioneer staff.

Requests begin to arrive at Pioneer for staff members to serve as consultants for educators from other schools. Some staff begin to struggle with the issue.

Requests begin to arrive at Pioneer from many other educators to visit the school.

1990 (June) Pioneer staff struggle with the idea of a second conference. A decision is made to host and present "The Derailing The Tracked School Two Conference" in November.

Decision is reached to produce a professional journal.

The Staff Development Fund is formed to profit Pioneer Staff development from the proceeds of the conference.

Conference II committee formed.

Media attention on Pioneer increases including National presentations.

1990 (September) Pioneer staff begin to struggle with the issue of staff members also being paid as outside consultants.

Many outside educators continue to request a visit to Pioneer classes.

1990 (November)	The Derailing the Tracked School II Conference is hosted and presented by Pioneer Faculty.
	More local, regional, and national media attention is focused on the school's efforts at restructuring.
	Faculty continue to struggle with issue of consulting.
1990 (December)	Faculty continues to struggle with issues of consulting and visitors.
1991 (May)	Administration enacts policy for consulting and hosting visitors.

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