

Teacher-to-Teacher Communication and Conceptions of Helping:

A First Naturalistic Inquiry

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“When collaborative norms undergird achievement-oriented groups, they bring new ideas, fresh ways of looking at things, and a stock of collective knowledge that is more fruitful than any one person’s working alone” (Rosenholtz, 1991, p.41). As the organizational constraints of a traditional school serve to sustain the image of teacher as independent artisan, research on teaching and learning strives to change this image to teacher as active member of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). At the heart of this conceptual shift is teacher-to-teacher communication.

Much of the research in the area of teacher communication has focused on specific instances within a school, rather than looking at the overarching community of teachers without imposing a narrow area of focus, which might preclude important general findings. For example, several studies have focused on the communication that accompanies the implementation of a new program such as a new curriculum (Dorsch, 1995). Other studies have narrowed foci that examine only the communication occurring among teachers and staff in relational roles to one another, such as experienced teachers and beginning teachers (Harden, 1993). Still other studies have focused on the communication occurring under certain circumstances in a school, such as decision-making, conflict resolution, and the use of various information technologies. While these studies provide important insights into certain types of communication occurring in schools, their foci stem from specific constructs within a teacher’s context and seem to me to be

overlooking some general patterns and themes in teacher-to-teacher communication. To get at these general patterns and themes, I designed my research to focus on how, when, and why high school teachers talk about their practice when not required to do so.

### Naturalistic Inquiry in the Constructivist Paradigm

I chose to do my research using strategies of naturalistic inquiry in the constructivist paradigm which carry several assumptions:

- There are multiple realities with differences among them that cannot be resolved through rational processes or increased data.
  - Tacit knowledge . . . is treated differently but on an equal basis with propositional knowledge.
  - The primary research instrument is the researcher.
  - Realizing the impossibility of generalizing [context-specific interrelationships among data, researchers must] settle for a deep understanding and explication of social phenomena as they are observed in their own contexts.
  - Qualitative methods are generally preferred, primarily because they allow for thick data to be collected that demonstrate their interrelationships with their context.
  - Grounded, emergent theory is preferred to a priori theory.
- (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1991, p. 14-16)

I made the choice to study this focus using this paradigm because I wanted to bring the multiple realities of teacher communication to light from the vantage point of each person I talked to during the study. Furthermore, I believe that teacher communication is an extremely context-based phenomenon and that “all subjects of such an inquiry are bound together by a complex web of unique interrelationships that results in the mutual simultaneous shaping” (Erlandson, et al., 1991, p. 16). As a researcher, my job is to work with my informants to co-construct their realities, while understanding the context in which they exist. Specifically, I must lead you through the complex web of teacher communication that I found via two teachers at Central High School.

### Purposive Sample

The sample for this study consisted of two teachers from the same public high school site. These teachers both hold primary teaching positions in the same academic department, computer technology, thus providing potentially similar perspectives on collegial communication. One of the two teachers has at least five years of experience at this school while the other is new. Additionally, one of the teachers is male and the other is female.

### Data Generation

To investigate the nature of teacher communication, I used several methods for data generation. My primary data was generated through emergent interviews (see Appendix B for a partial transcript). This style of interviewing happens without a predetermined series of questions and by exploring only those topics introduced by the informant. Emergent interviewing is the best illuminator of an informant's reality. Each informant participated individually in two face-to-face emergent interviews, which were audiotaped. Following each initial interview, I created a summary of the data generated, organized by the themes that were beginning to emerge from that interview. This summary was presented to the informant at the opening of the second interview for member checking, and it also provided information from which I developed follow-up questions to better understand the emerging data. The summary from the second interview was sent, along with follow-up questions, to the informant via e-mail. Receipt of the second summaries was confirmed on the phone. Each informant's participation in two interviews allowed each an equitable chance to express his or her perspective, thus accounting for the fairness criterion of authenticity.

Additional data was generated through incident journals (see Appendix B for sample journal entries) kept by the informants. Each informant recorded information about his or her conversations with others at

school over the course of one work week. Information recorded in the journals included, but was not limited to, whom they talked to, what they talked about, and how long they engaged in the conversation. Each informant was given a choice of method by which to keep their journal, and both chose to use a small notebook.

Data was also generated through processes of member checking (see Appendix D). “Member checking provides for credibility by allowing members of stakeholding groups to test categories, interpretations, and conclusions. . . . It is in this step that the members of the setting being studied have a chance to indicate whether the reconstruction of the inquirer are recognizable” (Erlandson, 1993, p. 142). I verified the data that had been generated by my informants at three different stages of my research with clarifying questions during interviews, summaries following all interviews, and final checks of all data to be used in the final report. As with the interviews, the data recorded in the journals was also member checked by direct questions posed to my informants during the second interview to further my understanding of their journal notes. I have only direct evidence from one informant that this study reached ontological authenticity and that was through the use of the incident journal as a tool that helped her come to understand worthwhile things about her communication patterns. She told me that as she kept her journal, “I dealt more with not the subject area that I was teaching but with the personalities and with student needs.”

## Data Analysis

To determine my findings about teacher communication I analyzed my data using open, axial, and selective coding to help bring out themes and patterns emerging from interviews and incident journals (see Appendix C for a coded interview transcript). I kept a record of the codes used in a codebook (see Appendix D for my codebook) and recorded my findings as they emerged in a reflexive journal (see Appendix E for sample reflexive journal entries). In addition to these methods, which I enacted on my own, I used two key supports to assist me in my data analysis process. The primary support came from my peer-debriefing group which met at least three hours per week and communicated through emails when needed (see appendix F for peer-debriefing group minutes). My peer-debriefing group served as a “risk-free forum to test ideas about emerging themes in data” (Spall, 1998, p. 281). They also helped by showing me new ways of looking at my data. Ultimately, I could count on my peer-debriefing group to ask questions to help me “understand how [my] personal perspectives and values affect the findings. Such a questioning approach serves to minimize bias within the inquiry” (Spall, 1998, p. 280). My secondary support came from my peers with whom I attended class weekly and who, like me, were in the process of learning how to conduct a naturalistic inquiry.

### Trustworthiness

In order to establish the trustworthiness of my data and findings, I maintained an audit trail in the wake of my research. To insure credibility, the legitimacy of my data, I conducted three levels of member checks and worked closely with my peer-debriefing group in analyzing my original data. My “obligation for demonstrating transferability belongs to those who would apply it to the receiving context” (Guba & Lincoln as cited in Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 33). Therefore, I will supply you with rich description as well as areas for potential transfer which should make your transferability obligation easy. Another assurance of trustworthiness is the dependability that, if this study were repeated at the same point in time given the same context, the results would be the same. I can only address this fact through the careful notes of my peer-debriefing group and the record of methodological decisions made and emerging analysis that I kept in my reflexive journal. Finally, my peer-debriefing group, reflexive journal, and transcripts of data all provide confirmability. “This means that data (constructions, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit” (Guba & Lincoln as cited in Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 34).



### Central High School\*

Central High School is located in a city of approximately 600,000 that is also home to a large research university. Central is a large inner-city school that serves predominantly Hispanic students in grades nine through twelve, approximately 50% of who are considered economically disadvantaged. Additionally, the school has an approximately 40% mobility rate meaning that a little less than half of the student body transfers to or from this school during the year.

The Career and Technology Education program at Central High School serves approximately 40% of its students. This program is especially known throughout the district for its student achievement in the upper level computer technology courses such as multimedia production, networking, and programming. The Career and Technology Education program receives some outside financial support from a sponsor who routinely donates computers purchased for student use. Recently the school added a new facility, funded by grant monies, for the multimedia production classes. Although one computer technology teacher moved from his previous classroom into the new facility, the computer technology department still works in close proximity to one another.

### Helen

This year marks many firsts for Helen: her first year teaching at Central High School, her first year running a computer lab, and her first year

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\* All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the confidentiality of all informants.

teaching computer technology. Prior to coming to Central, Helen had taught for approximately seven years. Her previous teaching positions included a small, elite, religious, high school and a small private college. Classes that she previously taught include French, Spanish, art, economics, and marketing. Helen is active in volunteer work, paints abstract art, and is in the process of writing a book on cultural economics. She is also deeply religious and is active in her church. She says, "I am a devout Christian. . . . I am where I am because I feel like God wants me to be there."

Helen feels that one of Central High School's main functions is to be a "safe haven" for kids. It is not surprising then that although she does not run Saturday labs at Central, she often goes to be with her students while they work. She believes in being a facilitator for her students as they learn, puts great stock in the intuitive nature of kids, and feels comfortable not having all of the answers in the classroom. She asserts,

Generally one does not have to know it all. . . . If one can have the self-confidence to be a facilitator and not be threatened by people that know more than me [sic] . . . to incorporate their knowledge to everybody's benefit, that's my philosophy.

She is always thinking of her students' well being and has been known to bring in clothing for students in need. When she reflects on how she solves problems at Central High School, Helen says, "I don't think it is fair to compare anybody to me because I just do things differently."

As a teacher new to both the school and her subject area, Helen has identified areas in which she needs some specific support. For example, she feels she struggles to get accustomed to the procedures she should follow: "I'm used to getting similar things done, just the details are different so I'm just trying to figure out what those little details are." She often consults colleagues, administrators, and support staff in her quest to follow the correct procedures.

One of the challenges facing Helen at Central High School is the high population of special needs students that she works with everyday--students with learning disabilities, dysfunctional families, and other problems like alcoholism and prostitution. "The amount of people who have special needs is just incredible." Many of her students work 35-40 hours per week on top of coming to school and are living out on their own by themselves or with a roommate. At first she contacted the special education staff on campus for support in working with these students. Helen sent them a note and then spoke with one woman there who wanted her to fill out a lot of paperwork that Helen did not have time to complete. "I have asked for help from the special ed people but I have not gotten it--everybody is just so overworked." As in this instance, sometimes when Helen goes through the appropriate channels to find a solution to a problem, she does not get the answers she is looking for. She realizes, "Everybody just works [very hard] and so I have to rely on my ingenuity and do the very best I can and that's the only way I can

do anything.” Helen insists that while she has to “think ‘well, what’s going to do it to solve the problem,’ ” she admits, “I don’t just rely on myself.”

Helen is extremely dedicated to her students and she encourages them to “[give] it a try every day - [get] up and go.” Her dedication has led her to work with these special needs students as well as she can on her own, while seeking out other official avenues of help for them. She constantly refers students to Communities in Schools (CIS), a national agency that offers individual and group counseling.

I mean every kid could be in the CIS program. . . . I refer them. So I talk to [CIS] a lot about “Well, this is their situation: that kid – they’re working all the time.” They need to check with them and see if they need some help.

When Helen first began searching for help on behalf of her students, she talked with an assistant principal who advised her about students with special needs, “It’s just very political. . . . [You] have to be very careful . . . if the kids are not doing their work, document it. So that you document everything.” Thus Helen continues to work through various channels to help her students, “I get [help] wherever I can get it.” She documents everything she encounters. Meanwhile Helen encourages her kids, “I’ll help you, but you need to help yourself first. You need to meet me half way.”

One particular student that Helen is spending her time helping is a fifteen-year-old girl who is pregnant. Helen thinks that the same girl was

pregnant last year, but that she might have lost the child. While Helen thinks that she is a “beautiful, wonderful girl,” as a teacher Helen is bothered that “she wants to sleep in class and she wants my attention all the time.” This girl was also “causing distractions” in Helen’s class. As a result, Helen exchanged notes with and talked to the nurse about this student’s potential for completing her class work. Helen knows that this student is capable of doing the work, but that continual her sleeping will not permit her to pass the class. The nurse advised Helen to write a referral to the administration for this student, since the girl will not do what Helen expects of her in class.

After Helen showed this initial concern, the girl’s friends told Helen that she was involved in prostitution at night. Helen said, “I’m not trying to get them to give me details about their lives, and absolutely if I can help them . . . safety is the top priority.” She then approached an assistant principal because “I was just trying to figure out what I needed to do for that child.” Helen did not disclose the girl’s name because she was concerned that sharing this information would impact the girl, who already has a probation officer. The assistant principal suggested that the best course of action would be to refer the student to CIS. After talking with the assistant principal, Helen talked to her department head because she felt that he needed to know what actions she was taking. He advised her that it was okay to break a confidence if a student’s health and safety were on the line. He suggested Helen talk to the school’s head counselor. Since she respects the head

counselor, “she’s a real good lady--she really cares,” Helen consulted her. They talked about how teachers and staff are limited in what they can do to help and about the emotional impact that these kinds of student issues can have on teachers who want to help them. Armed with the information that she has gathered from various sources, Helen is continuing to help this girl.

As dedicated as she is to helping her students, Helen is also dedicated to doing the best instructional job in the classroom that she can. She and her colleagues in the department share resources often. William Robert has given her good advice about the effectiveness and efficiency of various software applications. He also let Helen use some assignments that he had developed for his students. “He had developed this neat assignment that I used to use. It was just beautiful. . . . He put all this painstaking effort to do this beautiful assignment.” Helen talks about going to William Robert to ask for something better for her lab and his response to her requests when she says,

He gets excited because, “Hey, this lady wants to do some better stuff.”

I can bring her some of this stuff. He loves new toys and “So I can pass some stuff down to her. I can keep going on into new stuff, but get this class in good enough shape to get the kids more excited and it can work out for everybody.”

Other members of Helen’s department recognize, like she and William Robert do, that their courses build upon each other. If they work together to improve the instruction and curriculum for each of the courses then their

courses can prepare students to achieve even more in subsequent courses. Thus they work together to improve the curriculum for each of the courses they teach. Helen points out to her department

How so much can be done with this course. This is such a cool course.

We can improve on this course, and this is a course that leads up to [your] area. So we can all cooperate well together so that I can mention the kinds of cool things that [you] do in your course and the kids can take off from this course to [subsequent courses]. What we can improve--that there's better software in here; that the lab runs well.

Besides working with the colleagues in her department, Helen has found that a former teacher, whose position she filled upon his retirement, has been very helpful to her. She calls on him when the department head is too busy to help her. This retired teacher "did a beautiful job of organizing these lessons" that are a part of the curriculum for the course Helen teaches and had raised money by means of "a little bitty grant after another little bitty grant until he slowly put together this whole classroom of computers." He shares Helen's philosophy of doing anything for the students: "I know he loves kids and . . . I told him, 'I'm there for the kids.'" Helen says, "He's come out and helped me several times to set up the lab and get the hardware working." For example, she called him to help her before she began teaching computer-assisted drafting (CAD) since she had never done CAD before.

Helen specifically asked him for help in showing her how to set up the plotter, and he came to her lab to do this.

Since this is Helen's first year of teaching in a computer lab, she has encountered technical problems and issues of general equipment maintenance. When she has a problem with a computer, she reports it to the district technology support person, but Helen wants to learn as much as she can about the hardware in her lab so that she can solve some of her technical problems on her own. "I'm not as intuitive as I'd like to be on the computers . . . but the more I play with the computers and software applications, the more intuitive I become." Her department head has supported her in this because he agrees with Helen that her increased knowledge can only help her with the students. In addition to taking charge of her own learning in this endeavor, Helen takes advantage of students as resources to help her in maintaining her computer lab. She talks about the department head who teaches the networking and programming classes, "He lets me borrow some of the brains to come and help me do some troubleshooting in my classroom." Besides troubleshooting, his students have helped set up her equipment and erase old files that her students have saved on the computers.

As a teacher new to the district, Helen attended training on the state evaluation process for teachers. At the beginning of the year she had to write down her goals and objectives. Then Helen met with her evaluator to talk about what she saw as major concerns. The evaluator told her that the



solution “had to do with trying to improve attendance.” From there Helen worked out a plan to offer tangible rewards to her students for improving attendance, such as gift certificates to the used bookstore or coupons for free ice cream. Since she has to use her own money but is committed to improving attendance, she went looking for additional funding and applied for a grant from the Junior League. “I thought if I had more money, then I could do more little things . . . it’s just something that’s physical. They can appreciate it a lot more than an intangible item.” Although she did not receive any money, Helen is still following through with her plan on a more limited scale still using her own money. She would have liked the opportunity to reward more students, but recognizes the real limitations that she faces.

Helen helps the school community by serving on the Campus Advisory Committee (CAC). This committee is made up of “groups that run the school”: community members, teachers and others, all of whom have received special training. Helen “had done a lot of volunteer work so [she] know[s] a lot of people in the city” and that has prepared her for the kind of work done by this committee. She retains many of her community contacts and she emphasizes, “I don’t mind asking anybody for anything if I feel like it will be beneficial to the people in the community.” According to Helen, a lot of the work that the committee is able to do depends on the leadership of the administrator and how she facilitates their group. Helen feels that “the administrator here is fabulous. I like her a lot. She’s mission-driven. She

loves--she has a real heart for the kids” and she is sure that this committee will be able to make a real difference.

The CAC held an open meeting for all faculty and staff members who wanted to discuss what they saw as the main problems in the school. This open meeting was designed for “people who wanted to talk about stuff in a constructive manner and not just complain.” One of the counselors led a discussion in which participants brainstormed and then “prioritized concerns” by each voting for a number one concern. Some of the issues that came up were attendance, discipline, and an emphasis on class time as “sacred time” in which kids should be able to learn without interruptions. For Helen, the main concern is the special needs students. The people who serve on the committee and who chose to attend the open meeting are people who really care about the students and the school. Helen, as well as the other committee members and participants, feels her role at the school goes “beyond ‘Okay, I’ve done my job now I’m going home.’ It’s like we’re very interested in ‘How can we do the very best we can?’ ”

Helen spends much of her free time during the school day with colleagues. She typically eats lunch with the math teachers and very much enjoys this time as part of a “wonderful community of professionals with great hearts sitting around.” This group of teachers is just a “nice group helping each other out” and they spend their time at lunch relaxing and sometimes problem solving. “If somebody’s having some problems in a certain

situation [we] just . . . try to problem solve. 'This is my situation. Now what are you doing about this kind of thing?' " Their problem solving serves "to kind of support each other or help each other out, being there to listen or to help out."

"When we get to visit [at lunch] it's just being--supporting each other--a network, support system for each other." The lunch group supports each other in school matters. For example, one teacher needed to discipline a student and "we were all there to support . . . we were all there ready to go through the motions of doing the right thing." They supported the fact that the student needed to respect the teacher, and that if he chose not to behave properly, he should receive appropriate consequences. As a community, they also support each other in personal matters. For example, one young teacher had just gotten some new furniture but needed new sheets. Helen shared her philosophy with her that teaching is "missionary work" and that "if you need something you ought to just say something, and if somebody can help, there's nothing wrong in that. There's no shame."

Every once in a while, Helen will opt to eat lunch with another group of teachers--the "journalism ladies." Their lunchtime conversations are "more family focused" and Helen shares her ideas on financial planning with them. She feels, "Those [journalism] ladies are very caring. They're good ladies, good people. They are very professional. They're great. This group of people is

one of the best groups, highest quality of human beings, I mean they're just real nice people, of groups I've ever worked with."

### William Robert

William Robert is a self-proclaimed "techno-weenie" and "Mac-head," but he began his teaching career as a photography teacher. In 1989, he came to Central High School from another school in the district. At that time he taught photography and found himself using computers in his classroom for simple uses, such as students scanning and manipulating images. When he saw his students' interest in computers, he knew that he needed money for more equipment. In 1994, he was awarded the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship for the state and other grants totaling over \$100,000. Also in 1994, William Robert began teaching the multimedia production classes that he continues to teach today. Since his entrance into computer education, William Robert has been named an Apple Distinguished Educator, has designed the new multimedia facility, and is currently a doctoral student at the local university. You can usually find William Robert in his lab with his students where student and teacher alike are happy to use their time before and after school to work together on projects.

William Robert's philosophy of technology integration into the classroom is that

it should be a constructivist environment where children are constructing these wonderful representations using multimedia or whatever presentation software, like PowerPoint or whatever--where they create these visual representations of knowledge, working in groups and there is a real dynamism and dynamic to it.

It bothers him when teachers “think that a great use of technology is to just surf the web and word process.” According to William Robert, their students should be creating “a CD about Poe’s life that’s interactive” instead of, “Oh, I’m going to get on the web and find out about Poe.”

Last year, William Robert delivered an inservice presentation about how he was using technology in his multimedia production class. “Then I had teachers afterwards come up and say informally, ‘That was really neat stuff you showed me.’ . . . and so from that other stuff is initiated.” For example, an elective teacher approached William Robert when she wanted to find out how she could integrate technology into her classroom. What followed was a one-on-one collaboration as William Robert worked with the elective teacher and her students. She brought her students to his classroom “once or twice a week for almost six weeks.” During this time William Robert showed the students how to search the web for information on famous people. Then he showed them how to put pictures of and information about Alfred Hitchcock, or whichever person they had chosen, into HyperStudio to create presentations. The results were “very simplistic, but the exciting thing was to see [the

students] get more and more interested.” While the students were working, the elective teacher and William Robert “sat around and watched as each week progressed,” talking about the fact that more of the students were on task during this activity. As a result of this collaborative experience, the elective teacher was able to see a demonstration of technology use in the classroom and after that William Robert “would sit down and talk with her and encourage her and work with her to get her up to speed a little bit on it.”

Similarly, a math teacher, who teaches next door to William Robert, approached him but was interested in observing his class. The math teacher “asked if he could just watch [William Robert] teach something--sit in [his] class and watch what was going on.” William Robert agreed and taught that class like he always does. The math teacher was “surprised and amazed with the engagement that [his] students had” and, after the class, he asked William Robert, “Can I have a teacher show me how to do the stuff you were teaching?” Oftentimes, this same discussion will occur within William Robert’s department. “Our department is very small, but usually that’s when some real conversation goes on - about where do you need help or what are you working on?”

William Robert also helps teachers when they encounter technical problems with their Macintosh computers. “[My role as tech support is] totally informal. . . . I just simply . . . fix them myself.” At the beginning of the year he helped Helen to repair the computers in her lab. “I just realized she

was kind of miserable, so I said, ‘Okay, I’m going to help you get your lab up and running.’ ” Another time, Helen approached him when many of her computers stopped working. She had tried to solve the problem herself by checking the power strips but was unsuccessful. He knew that the solution lay in the breaker switch and also knew where the breaker box was located so he “managed to flip the breaker and then get her stuff back up.” According to William Robert, Helen was very thankful for his assistance, “And she’s just freakin’ – she’s so happy and excited. But I’m going ‘No big deal.’ I just turned the power back on.”

The conversations that William Robert engages in with a colleague are often helpful for both of them. For example, he had helped one of the English teachers on staff to get hired at Central High School from out of town. She is an avid technology integrator with her writing students. He spends time with her talking about the students they have in common. For example, they “are both teaching a very autistic child and that is a very interesting experience” about which they talk. They also talk about their students who are especially gifted in their subject areas and how they can be preparing these students for the future through the types of opportunities that they can help make available to the students.

Often William Robert’s conversations with his colleagues will move from being instructionally based to being more personally based. For example, following the Columbine incident, students and non-students began

calling in bomb threats to the school so that classes would be cancelled. The elective teacher with whom William Robert had worked previously shared that she was upset. As a result, he took on the new role of supporter and encourager beyond the scope of curriculum and instruction as their “conversation developed to more of a personal nature and more of an encouragement nature.” They would “just chat and see how we were doing . . . she was kind of upset about some of this stuff.”

William Robert’s service to the school happens in the area of technology acquisition. He has been writing a grant with other teachers to help get the school “technologically up-to-date.” Because all members of this group are all busy, he planned for their next meeting to be very focused: “It’s not like I’m going to present them a big lecture or anything or listen to them talk a long time.” He expects that this meeting will be “very valuable, short and sweet . . . speaking to our specific needs.”

He continues his conversations about technology and education with his Apple Distinguished Educator (ADE) group; “a group of about 150 [educators] from across the country.” They have attended conferences, trainings, and casual events together. William Robert enjoys his time with that group. They now use a listserv to communicate. He says, “I’ll get ten to twenty messages a day just from the listserv alone. It’s very active and everybody’s talking about how to use technology in an innovative way in the



classroom.” He thinks that the listserv experience is “just too cool” and “really a lot of fun.”

William Robert seems to prefer concise, businesslike communication for many reasons, one of which is his attention span. He says that sometimes when communication gets long, he “snap[s] off” because he has “[slight] Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and is dyslexic.” While he talks about the inattention of some teachers like when “you’re sitting in an inservice and doing the typical not paying attention to the principal,” he notes that he tries hard to keep his attention focused during inservice meetings. He does admit that when he thinks about communicating with an individual, he considers, “Do [I] want to talk to that person or not?” William Robert considers many factors, including his attention span, and then he adjusts accordingly the type of conversation that he will engage in with that person. For example,

we have this one sweet math teacher, bless her heart, but you talk to her and it’s like she’s on No-Doz or something. She’s so slow with her words and it’s excruciating because she has a lot to say and it’s just, “Oh boy!” I love talking to her but its got to be a short one because it just drives me nuts otherwise.

Similar considerations enter William Robert’s mind when collaborating with a group. He prefers “if it’s a meeting it’s like wham, bam, thank you, let’s get it over with.” Again, he admits to having a short attention span when conversations turn away from being concise and businesslike. “We’ve got

some people . . . who will just drone on for hours and it's like we're trying to come to group consensus and but they write an encyclopedia and you're just like - oh, please, my brain is hurting now, let's stop." In fact, "five minutes later they can be talking about climbing Mount Everest and my mind can be somewhere else."

### Connections

What emerged in my conversations with both Helen and William Robert is that each of them has a very different conception of what it means to help others. These conceptions appear to drive their actions including their communications with their colleagues.

On the one hand, Helen is very mission-driven. Her mission is to serve her students and do the best job that she can as a teacher. She does this by helping resolve issues that trouble her or her students. She helps herself and others through collaboration. This does not mean that every time she needs help she forms a committee. Rather, she facilitates collaborative problem solving by drawing on numerous human resources, such as colleagues, when grappling with an issue. "If I feel like something needs to get done I'll get a strategy . . . and let's take care of it now. . . . I'm not going to pull anything unless I feel like [it]--if I see some unfairness going on I'll pounce on it." She chooses her sources carefully, based on what needs she has at that time. For example, if she needs a quick technical fix, she will approach a person who

has strong technical support abilities. When she is trying to get help or help others on a school or student-centered problem, she will approach people who share her philosophy of teaching (to serve kids, to do her best), with whom she feels a personal connection, and whom she respects. When she encounters a roadblock in her collaborative process (busy people, extra paperwork, large class size, etc.), she acknowledges the roadblock and then takes a turn down a new avenue.

On the other hand, William Robert enjoys sharing his strengths with his colleagues when they ask him to provide solutions to their problems. He prefers to sit down with a colleague one on one to encourage and support them or transfer his knowledge to them in a manner which will improve their practice or answer their technical questions. He works most comfortably with people who share his technology philosophy and those who share his preference for short, sweet, and to the point communications. He prefers to work one-to-one or in a group which fits with his businesslike communication style.

What the data about Helen and William Robert suggests is that a person's conception of helping influences that individual's patterns of communication. Additionally, one possible way to determine how people view themselves as helpers is by looking closely at how they communicate with others. If this is the case, there is the potential to improve communication among people by taking into account these personal conceptions of helping.

Personally, I found this to be true when working with Helen and William Robert at the end of my research. My telephone calls to each, in order to set up a meeting for the grand member check, were very different. Knowing William Robert's preference for concise and direct communication, I did not initiate any small talk and began instead with times and places we could meet. Our conversation was finished in under a minute and my problem, as it were, was solved. My conversation with Helen was very different. With Helen I had realized that every conversation and every issue she works to resolve emerge her talking about her day and her students. I began by asking Helen about these subjects. After a general discussion of these matters, we began to talk about a time and place for a meeting. The business side of our conversation was peppered with stories about Helen's students which she wanted me to hear. Our conversation lasted close to thirty minutes and, like the conversation with William Robert, my problem was solved. It was not until I completed these calls back-to-back that I realized I had adapted to each person's preferences when working with them. My awareness of their different preferences, coupled with my lack of value judgment, allowed me to accomplish the same business effectively with two very different people. Perhaps if the awareness that I used in my phone conversations were used by colleagues on a face-to-face basis, communication among teachers could be improved through the understanding that all teachers' conceptions of helping have value.

An additional implication of this study rests in the individuals themselves. Helen and William Robert have the potential to have learned more about their own conceptions of helping and ways of communicating with colleagues. This information could prove valuable in the event that each is faced with situations that are outside of their preferred realm of communication at school. While my data suggests that Helen has a preference for working more collaboratively than William Robert, both have shown that they cannot rely only on their preferred conceptions of helping and as a result, must participate in all types of communication. For example, Helen faces situations in which she is unable to investigate her many channels of information before moving into action with one of her students. Similarly, William Robert faces faculty meetings and inservices in which the group norms consist of collaboratively working through problems over a matter of weeks. Should Helen and William Robert be able to see both of their very different conceptions as valuable, they might find it easier and more pleasant to work according to the other person's.

#### Areas for Future Study

I see one point of contention which I hope could be dealt with in a very different but carefully constructed study. My opening statement affirmed that collaborative norms are more powerful than individual norms. This idea seems to make a value judgment on an individual's way of communicating. In

the case of Helen and William Robert, that judgment would also be cast on their personal conceptions of helping. I would hope that a larger and carefully constructed study could look at these two points and try to reconcile them.

I would also be interested to see what might emerge from a larger study with the same focus as this one. Would it be possible to determine all conceptions of helping by examining communication patterns or not? With more informants would I find the same conceptions of helping repeated, or would others emerge? Would increased findings fall along the same gender line, as did Helen and William Robert?

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## Appendix A

### Researcher as Instrument Statement

As a child I knew I was an individual, but I had many characteristics that I expected to be universal in all people. While I understand as an adult that there are no universal personality traits, I sometimes expect that to be the case. I am a very reflective person. I spend much of my time carefully observing what is happening in my reality – including my own behavior. I then find myself constantly reflecting in an objective way on this reality. I see this as a good thing resulting in knowing myself very well. Because of my objectivity I am honest and straightforward about the things I choose to, knowing full well that I have chosen to fool myself about other things. Unfortunately I couple this objective reflection with strong judgments, but I subject myself to the same strong judgments as I do the rest of my reality. I say unfortunately because being judgmental has the connotation of one who judges and stands true to that judgment as she lives her life. The judgments that I make are strong but not binding since I constantly revise and adjust them as my reality expands. Back to my aforementioned contradiction – since this objective reflection-judgment-action cycle is such a constant and strong part of my existence I could only assume that it was hardwired into all people. I know this not to be true and that my reliance on such a cycle is the anomaly, but occasionally I forget and expect the behavior of others to follow my pattern. In other words I expect motorists, colleagues, and family



members to acknowledge the impact of their emotions on decision making, to review their past experiences, to brainstorm many options and to weigh all of them carefully, and to explore the impact of their decisions on others before they act.

My patterns have allowed me to develop a keen and objective lens through which I view my reality and find it very difficult to express exactly why I see things the way I do when I know that my lens is constantly being reshaped and cleaned. For this reason I will try to isolate my experiences which pertain to the context of this study, knowing that I have been influenced by an infinite amount of other factors, only being conscious of some, all of which make me the instrument of research that I am for this study.

My first job as a classroom teacher was as one member of a two-person team which was responsible for teaching British literature to high school seniors. My teammate Peg had recently been named Teacher of the Year by both peers and students and had about eighteen years of experience in the classroom. She also had been teaching this particular class for more than five years. I was armed with good instincts, a vivid memory of my senior British literature class only five years before, and strong content knowledge.

Although my confidence in most areas of my life was very high, I easily forgot it when challenged by a student. When Annie wondered in front of the whole class why we had to study something like Beowulf, my stomach dropped into

my shoes and remained there for the rest of the day. Because of Peg's strengths and my weaknesses, I found myself communicating on a constant basis with my new teammate. We developed a strong bond through informal conversations in the hall between classes, more formal planning meetings after school, last minute cram or pep sessions before school, and our darting back and forth between our classrooms during each of our conference periods. We both initiated these conversations, but I think that I ran for help much more often in the beginning. Peg and I talked about our subject matter and instruction as well as school and parent issues. I will never know if I held a predilection for communicating with colleagues or if that grew out of the context of my initial teaching position. Whatever the explanation, I found myself committed to communicating with other teachers about my content and practice.

Peg and I worked together in this highly communicative way and about four months into our collegial relationship we began to develop a close personal relationship. Eventually, I left my position at that school and began working at a middle school in the same district while Peg moved into a different teaching position. While our friendship remained the same, our communication as teachers changed. I had found new colleagues in my new school with whom I began to communicate about teaching, but Peg was still calling me to talk about what was going on in her practice. I suppose I was

still able to be helpful to Peg because of my familiarity with her context, but she would have been unable to offer such help to me.

As my network of colleagues with whom I communicated grew, I found myself turning to different people for different needs. For class management and administrative concerns I turned to teachers of the same grade level whose classrooms were in close proximity to my own. For subject matter information I hunted down two other teachers in my grade and general subject area. While I was teaching primarily literature, my position was that of the sole humanities teacher for ninth-grade, gifted students. Since I found myself without a team for planning purposes, I worked with, Sam, the other teacher of the gifted students in our building for curricular and instructional needs.

My new school was wired for technology and we all had telephones and laptops with email capabilities on our desks. Additionally, my network of colleagues was very tech savvy, but we chose to communicate primarily face-to-face or occasionally on the phone. Looking back, I think we aimed for efficiency of communication and the real-time nature of our communications as well as the use of paper and gestures assisted us in explaining things back and forth.

In all of my experiences communicating with colleagues, I found that I modified my ideas and my practice for the better. One specific example comes to mind regarding a field trip for my students as a part of an

entrepreneurship unit. Since this was my first year in this assignment I drew from previous teachers' unit plans. In the past students had participated in a young inventors contest and then toured a company such as J.C. Penney to add a real world focus. This did not seem to me the most effective way to incorporate the real world into their learning so I met with Sam for a brainstorming session. What emerged was a design for a wonderfully rewarding project in which the students would present original inventions to a marketing team from Perot Systems in addition to touring that facility. I can honestly say that I would not have arrived at that plan on my own. Once again I saw the power of communication with colleagues.

After leaving the classroom I took a master's level course about conceptions of teaching. The professor introduced us to several standard, concrete conceptions such as executive and midwife as well as more abstract conceptions like liberationist and provisioner. Toward the end of our study we were challenged to select the conception of teaching which expressed what we felt was the best way to teach students. Invariably we all selected a conception of teaching in which, as teachers, our behaviors and practices were embedded. For me that meant being a completely transformative teacher. The transformative teacher is student centered rather than subject matter centered. She believes that all students are open to change in various ways and that her purpose is to help students to become better people. One of my key practices that clued me into my transformative nature is my constant

modeling for others. For some it might be easier to grab hold of this conception as a potter. The clay that the potter works with has its own characteristics; these characteristics, along with the potter, shape the final product; and, as an artist, the potter is pleased when no two pots are the same.

What I did not realize until after this class is that I approach every part of my life as that transformative potter. I have joked in the past that it would take a twelve-step program to get me to stop being a teacher. Even though I am no longer in the classroom on a daily basis I find myself behaving as a teacher in every thing that I do. When I am engaged in a conversation with friends and they are not agreeing about what movie to see, I begin to facilitate the conversation as I once did those among bickering ninth grade collaborative team members. When I play with my nieces and nephews I find myself hanging back so that they can discover exactly what they can build with their new Zoob blocks in the same way I watched my seniors arrive at original conclusions based on literature we were studying. I might also show my mother how I send email in the hopes that she will watch and learn to do it on her own like I demonstrated appropriate writing styles for all of my students.

I think that my conception of teaching strongly reflects my conception of self and is very important to note as I begin my research. It is clear to me that aside from valuing objective reflection, I am driven to transform through

this study. I hope that my informants will feel transformed through the process and that my audience will feel transformed after looking at the results of my work. I do, however, hope to drop some of the behaviors that may be wrapped up in the idea of being a potter at work on the clay that is my context. The fact that the potter is in control, has a picture of what she would like her work to look like, and limits her craft to the clay before her seems limiting and defeatist in this context of naturalistic inquiry. In the classroom I was paid to be ultimately in charge and knowledgeable, but in the research arena I am happily at the mercy of what I discover. I think it is important to know that I see this somewhat subtle distinction between my everyday behaviors and practices and those that I will display as a researcher. While I might continue my time-honored practice of modeling for those around me, in this instance it would be to model the process of conducting a naturalistic inquiry.

In looking at my area of inquiry I realize that I was part of two strong networks of teacher communication, I acknowledge that this is probably not the status quo for all teachers in all schools. I admit that working collaboratively seems to open up possibilities that might not appear in solo instructional planning. I fear that many teachers may be more isolated within their school than I was. I hope that this study will benefit currently practicing teachers, and perhaps even pre-service teachers who will be looking to build their own communication networks when they begin their

practice. I believe that my audience will be able to read this study and apply it to their personal situations to consider what role teacher-to-teacher communication plays in their experience. Also I hope that this study will give my audience pause to think reflectively on their practices and behaviors with their colleagues. Hopefully this will validate many people's reflections and the time that they spend engaged in communication with colleagues.

## Appendix B

### Sample Data

The following is an excerpt from the first interview with Helen, which occurred before school over breakfast at Denny's. All names and other identifying characteristics have been changed to protect confidentiality.

COURT: Could you tell me about your experiences talking with your colleagues informally in your building?

HELEN: Informally I basically talk to a lot of people about problems that you encounter in a large inner city school such as, trends, such as there are a lot of students that have special needs. Because of legislation that has been passed there are students that we used to call special ed. I find it a very challenging situation because I have a class of 30 and I have several what used to be called special ed, let's see they call them, I can't remember what they call them. They have this special educational program that's designed and you get a copy of it. So you get, I've gotten all these special educational programs for lots of students and it can be overwhelming and I feel like the area I'm teaching in, in computers, I think it's an area where students who have special needs might be able to excel in them because it involves so many different skills. It's not reading, writing, arithmetic – it's working according to how good the software applications that you get are. If you are intuitive, they lend to intuitive responses which can be really good because you don't



have to think in the regular academic – the way people used to think that the excellent academic student would be. We're really going into a new age and I think there are a lot of opportunities opening up in education for students so that they can actually excel so that they can be more self-paced. But what I'm doing, this is unusual for me, and I've taught a lot of things, I've taught French and Spanish and art, economics, marketing, helped to teach statistics and art of education courses. In my philosophy of teaching, generally one does not have to know it all, that if one can have the self-confidence to be a facilitator and not be threatened by people that know more than me but to incorporate their knowledge to everybody's benefit that's my philosophy. Of course in the high school the more you know the better because it comes into use so much but if students can feel comfortable with you maybe not knowing everything, the kids that are more gifted can just fly high and the kids that can't, that need a lot of hands on, one-to-one help, that's where my problem is. I'm trying to figure out what to do. One thing I've done is that I have resorted to – no, I wouldn't say resorted to cause I feel like that's actually, it's a real good thing to do - [waitress arrives with food] one of the strategies that I'm using is I'm doing peer tutoring and they . . . [brief interaction with waitress] When kids explain things to other people they not only are, have increased confidence in themselves but they also are going through the intellectual process of having to explain it. It's going up the critical thinking scale, levels, where you're not just responding to visual stimuli but you are

having to apply, application, synthesis, conclusion, all the higher critical thinking levels. So when they do some peer tutoring they come out of it understanding much more themselves. That's what I'm saying, how I don't mean to say resort, but I am, I asked for help from the special ed people but I have not gotten – everybody is just so overworked. The population that we are working with is so needy that everybody just works out the caboose and so I have to rely on my ingenuity and do the very best I can and that's the only way I can do anything. I can't – I do the very best that I can. I was saying, peer tutoring where the students feels comfortable with the material, fast learner, can help other people out – I don't want to burden them with that stuff if they don't feel comfortable. If they aren't fast learners and if they don't have well-developed social skills they don't really – cause computers sometimes tend to, their like for people who are very shy, people that are prefer to work with the machine rather than work with somebody. They don't really want to do that they just want to do, I give them opportunities to [unintelligible due to tray of dishes crashing] they've put together the assignment and finished I do not want them to just do some other activity, but what I'll say is if you want to get on the web you can do Internet searches like for colleges for information, get on standard sites. I don't want anybody to get on things that have objectionable material on them. So what was the question?

COURT: My original was what kind of conversations do you have with . . .

HELEN: Ooh! Primarily it's about that. "Hey I know that there's lots of special ed students" or this kids needs a jacket. That's where I was today. I refer people. A lot of kids are out on their own. They work for 35-40 hours and they live by themselves or have a roommate. So if I find out that someone's - it's like so many. I mean every kid could be in the CIS program -

Communities in Schools – I refer them. So I talk to them a lot about well, this is their situation. That kid – they're working all the time. They need to check with them and see if they need some help. And then I have lunch with the math people. They're wonderful. They're very fair and independent thinkers. They don't mind stating their opinions because sometimes it gets them in trouble. When we have lunch it's primarily for relaxing. "Nope, we need to relax. We need to take some time off." We put a lot of time towards kids - we need to spend some time just being with your friends, taking a break. I am a devout Christian. I feel like God wants - I am where I am because I feel like God wants me to be there. So, I, there's a lady, one of my professionals is a Christian and so we talk to each other about how we feel like we are serving God by doing what we're doing and we just encourage each other. There's a lot of that - there's a lot of encouragement for each other. The faculty that I work with is just so committed - just incredible. They help each other out a lot and I know people . . . [side discussion about the extent of confidentiality] He has a great reputation within certain circles but in the school itself they

don't like him. They say he's greedy. He's scrounging the students out of their classes for his classes. That he's using a lot - getting a lot of money into the school but using just for his students. And he, I have to stand on my own, so if I need help great, if I don't then I don't care. But he has been very helpful to me. I love the arts - I'm an artist. And I do all kinds of other stuff. I've done . . . [waitress returns] He's interested in . . . he's been very nice to me. I don't think he's nice to everybody, but I think he feels like it's important for our department, and I do anything I can to encourage him to help out the department, but I told him "I don't care if people like me - if kids don't like me I don't care, if they think that I'm unfair - because I'm here to do a job, as long as I feel good about what I'm doing, that's okay." He's probably the same way. It's just that a lot of people don't like him because they think that he's got too many resources just for a few kids. And he's basically out for number one, that's what they feel. But, he's helped me a lot and by him helping me I'm doing a better job. If I'm serving kids, I'm going to do whatever it takes to best serve the kids. Now I told [William Robert], I said, - cause there's all this animosity, it's territorialistic. It's not that bad here, the other school, I taught at [Woody Creek] last year - boy were they territorial. Every place has its political routine. I find that people here are more compassionate and committed and caring. The chair of the [math] department, he would take the shirt off his back and give it to somebody if he felt that they needed it. We talk about sharing resources. We have certain resources and we share them.

[William Robert] has been really sweet about that. We use certain software applications – he'll say, "oh that one's really slow" – he had developed this neat assignment that I used to use. It was just beautiful. And so I'm handing these out - you need to develop those assignments, that's just great, that's beautiful. It took me, takes kids about 5 minutes to run through it – some kids. He put all this painstaking effort to do this beautiful assignment. Of course technology changes so much by the time he has spent developing one deal, there's faster, cooler toys. But it all costs a lot of money so . . . I guess we talk about sharing resources a lot. There are capital resources we have available – how we're going to be using them. [William Robert] always wanted to take, try to give you his resources that he can share with you, which is good, it's smart, it's smart. I have certain things for maintenance in my class, but he has had some really good ideas about getting some software packages that help to take care of the equipment, to diagnose problems, to do housekeeping. I told him, "Why are you so greedy? Every time I talk to you - software, software, software." So I listen to him. There's some software that's good for maintenance of equipment and semester to semester. "Oh yeah, it's a great idea." I try not to be, have that attitude when I'm stressing someone about all these preconceived things, like whatever. It's real hard. But he's been very helpful. What do we talk about? We talk about resources a lot and students, and we cheer on students. We're excited about students getting . . . [waitress tops off the coffee] and talked about, well like I've had students that

really, they watch out for the school. They watch out for the students, they all watch out for each other. So if I have a student who is doing something punishable, and I know they can act up, I just like to reward nice behavior because I think that's important.

COURT: Can you give me some examples, you said that you do a lot of talking about resources and things like that, you mentioned the software, are there other areas of help that you got?

HELEN: Resources? Well they asked me to serve on the nomination committee, the campus advisory committee. So I meet with all these professionals and talk about problems on campus. Like yesterday, we talked; there was a lunch on Thursday for anybody who was interested in talking about the problems on campus. It had to be constructive. So I went to that.

The following is an excerpt from the transcription of William Robert's incident journal. All names and other identifying characteristics have been changed to protect confidentiality.

10/20/99

8:40 2m. [Helen]

about graduate research

8:45 1m. Mr. [Francis]

about time for grant writing meeting

8:49 2m. [Helen]  
over copy machine  
about my PhD

9:25 [R. Petersen]  
came by to talk with a visitor

9:26 [B. Adams]  
drop phone number off

9:27 [Helen]  
to pick up scanner

9:35 40m. [R. Petersen] and visitor [Ms. Perez]  
show student work

10:30 1m. [D'Amico]  
when classes change  
(sub for math)

12:15 30m. 3 teachers and 3 Apple reps  
grant writing meeting

1:15 [Winger]  
hi to teacher in hall  
asked how it was going in passing

2:04 talk with special ed teachers about grant meeting  
at [Collins]

## Appendix C

### Sample Summary with Coded Interview Transcript

\*Member Check - William Robert

\*based on Interview #1

\*1 November 1999, Guero's, ~4:30 p.m.

Overall I find that I share my strengths with my colleagues. I help out as the “Mac guy” in the building (assisting teachers when “her machines weren’t working”); I share my knowledge about integrating multimedia into the classroom with colleagues in non-tech subject areas (when they “come up and asked me about how could they apply it to their classes”); and I am happy to share my secrets on shmoozing (“on trips where the principal’s sent us to technology conferences . . . some of our conversation was how I was doing that”).

The people with whom I tend to communicate on more than a superficial level all have things in common with me. These commonalities make conversations more valuable for me. These commonalities are:

- friendship- “that’s not with all teachers cause you don’t know all teachers like that” subject matter – “you have all of the same department meeting which is very important”
- proximity to one another in the building – “there’s teachers that, like across the hall, that I associate a lot with”



- religion – “there’s kind of a subgroup of teachers that are all . . . believers”
- shared students – “we’re both teaching a very autistic child . . . so we converse about him”
- shared lunch period – “one way [teacher communication forms] is a lot of teachers tend to eat lunch together”

I find myself participating in various levels of conversations. A superficial level occurs with anyone with a "Hi. How's it going?" With friends, the conversations are more meaningful and most times are characterized by caring and encouragement. I seek out conversations on this level with friends every few days. I also see a gossip level of conversation happening around me, but I choose not to participate in it. Finally, I see a level of conversation that deals with teaching. This level includes conversations about teacher collaborations or neat things going on in a classroom. It also includes conversations about students (not gossip) such as the ones I have with the [English] teacher. This level also includes conversations centering on administrative requirements handed down by a department head or by central administration. I also consider conversations about technology to fall under this last category.

When talking with colleagues I find one-on-one or small group conversations richer. I also think that any conversation that occurs "because

you want to" is more powerful than others. I think that relationship-based communications are "more valuable."

I have experienced curricular conversations that have sprung out of an inservice. These conversations can come from the groups I am assigned to and participate with during inservice. Curricular conversations have also come from a presentation that I gave at inservice. One example of that turned into a series of conversations and a collaboration with the [science] teacher and her students integrating multimedia into their class.

## coding

\*Interviewer: Courtney Glazer  
 \*Interview #1 with William Robert  
 \*10/19/99  
 \*Gueros Restaurant  
 \*5:07 pm

COURT: What I want to know from you - what I'm interested in - are your experiences talking informally with colleagues that are in your building,

WM ROBT: Okay

COURT: So that would be [Central (all names have been changed)] colleagues about teaching

WM ROBT: Okay. Can you define what you mean about teaching - you mean conversations with teachers about the idea of, I mean that can be kind of broad.

COURT: My pat answer about teaching is that I always think in terms of beliefs and practices

WM ROBT: Okay, well that can cover pretty much anything. Okay, I would say when it comes to talking about teaching you'll have informal conversations with teachers - and it's as if there's several levels. You've got the superficial "Hi how are you doing?" level and then you've got the "HI, HOW are YOU doing?" you pat em on the back cause you see they're having a tough day or they're having a great day or something, you know and usually that has to - that can be with a - that's not with all teachers cause you don't know all the teachers like that. I think most communication in the school, if we want to talk about communication that goes on in the school is, it's informal. Studies probably have shown that or something, but - but - so the - the communication would be on multiple levels as I'm talking about, "how are you doing?" "how are you doing with these kids?" You talk about a kid or something and want to see how that kid is doing. Maybe you have the same student. And then some of the students - some of the teachers are my friends and I just go up and I always try to visit them every couple of days and I just go over there and I just chat with em or something - something like that. Let's see what else? But there's - there's always discussion that go on with - - about various issues that are coming up. For example if we've got the TAAS to do or if we get an extra

superficial

encouragement  
friendship

informal  
amount

students

levels

friendship

issue-driven

2

heavy load of stuff to do from central which of course gets poured down on us, it's usually like "when are you going to do it?" - "I'm going to do it once I get my third notice to turn it in" kind of thing. (pause) I guess there gonna also be times where this can actually be formal. "How have you been teaching this, you've been so successful." or something - that kind of thing where you start talking about actually curricular issues. (pause)

issue driven

trade secrets  
curricular

COURT: So tell me more about that formal side of it.

WM ROBT: Formal side of it? Ok, one thing that we've done is, - see I've gotten so much at the school you've got to be careful politically. I mean I've raised all this money. I've gotten all these different perks and all and so I don't want to have any kind of resentment like I'm some kind of super-teacher and all. But I'm using technology in a pretty unique way and, so like when we have inservices, I will have, I've done where I've taught classes to other teachers and then the teachers have come up and asked me about how could they apply it to their classes - how would they use multimedia in a dance class or use it in a science class or something. So we've had conversations over that. (pause)

politics

showing unique ideas  
unique ideas

inservice

COURT: Can you recount for me one of those specifics. . .

WM ROBT: Okay.

COURT: Where you helped a teacher?

B: Well last year I had [a science teacher] come in. In the spring semester, the students came in about once or twice a week for, almost six weeks, and I showed [them] how to, I showed em how to search the web and what they did is they did searches on famous [scientists] - like [Marie Curie] was a very favorite one. Then I showed em how to put [Marie] - information about [Marie Curie] or whoever the [scientist] was plus the pictures and all that stuff into HyperStudio and [they] made little presentations about them. And they were very simplistic, but the exciting thing was to see the - the [students] - get more and more interested and then I had conversations with the teacher - cause you're really asking about that, you're not asking about the multimedia. I had - I had the students - the teachers - we sat around and watched as each week progressed how more and more of the

collaboration

work on one  
one on one  
ex.

3

[students] were on task which we found to be very interesting. So she started seeing how technology could be used in any class. And so I would sit down and talk with her and encourage her and work with her to get her up to speed a little bit on it. So it would have been conversation in a formal nature - informal nature about both the technical aspects of the computer and the how you use it kind of thing. Also that dev - we developed kind of a friendship and she had - she was very - she was a fairly new teacher and she was kind of scared. Now you're gonna have to conceal that she was the [science] teacher when you do this but, she was - cause this was somewhat personal - but she was scared when we had the Columbine mess that went on last year because we started getting bomb threats at the school cause the kids wanted to get out of class so they were calling in bomb threats which was the stupidest thing you ever saw.

collab

transfer of knowledge

teacher learning  
one on onetech support  
informal  
curricular

friendship

fear  
support

over one

share  
strength

COURT: (laughs)

WM ROBT: And so I was I started, we started developing this relationship where we would, just chat and see how we were doing, kind of thing, cause she was kind of upset about some of this stuff. So from talking about more of an academic subject, informally the conversation developed to more of a personal nature and more of an encouragement nature. That's personally a - I mean that's part of my personality - is to be an encourager.

friendship

curric / friend.  
informal

encouragement

COURT: hmm

WM ROBT: And so there's just a group of teacher that I just see that are working so hard and they need to be - you need to go by and say "Hey, you're doing a great job, let me help you with this or that" kind of thing and I just do it.

encouragement

COURT: So it sounds like with this [science] teacher things went from almost a business like conversations about practice and then moved into more of friendship kind of relationship type conversation. Would you say that most of your relationships go from that, go that direction or ...

WM ROBT: I would say ...

COURT: would they stem more from a friendship and then begin to talk about practice?

4

WM ROBT: Gosh I wouldn't know. I think it could go either way.

[The respondent discussed a personal motive for working with the [science] teacher off tape.]

COURT: Going back to the [science] teacher, I'm liking this example, are we (pause) did she come to you based on you had mentioned that sometimes this would stem out of a formal, planned inservice, is that what got this . . .

WM ROBT: That happens sometimes cause what we did is - we did some presentations, where we showed off what our kids were doing. We had a thing about [my class] where we presented to teachers and said - and then I had teachers afterwards come up and say informally, "that was really neat stuff you showed me," kind of thing, and that was just more like a PowerPoint plus some other stuff showing off what the kids had done. And so, from that, other stuff is initiated. The other thing that happens is when you are in an inservice, they have these times when they form these groups and you do these projects together - you know the old inservice grind. So, a lot of times when you - you're forming those groups you sit with teachers you didn't know and you get to learn a lot about them during the regimented time because a lot of times you finish what's supposed to be done fast and then you jump into more cool stuff like you start learning about - you say - you hear little snippets - you go boy this happens - this teacher had a good idea about this or that and you see this teacher has got it together and you start talking to him more and so it becomes, the relationship starts to develop there.

inservice

unique  
trade

initiating

inservice  
heterogeneous groups  
trade secrets

relationship

H  
one 2 one  
group

We have a very close faculty. I would say we have a very friendly faculty at the school and I would say most conversation that goes through the school is on - initially on - the informal nature. We don't have too many faculty meetings where we get official stuff given to us or the official stuff we get goes this way: it goes from the principal to the department chairs and then the department chairs give it to us. (pause)

faculty

amount  
informal

distributed  
formal  
issue driven  
principal

COURT: So these inservice groups that end up forming - do those turn into, sort of relationships? Do they continue out of there?



5

WM ROBT: Sometimes it can because a lot of times they form the groups, I think deliberately. Well there are two ways, either in your area – so you have like all of the same department meeting which is very important. Or you have the groups, are deliberately chosen by the administration to mix up the – so that you meet other people you don't know – to get a different perspective. Now, the one other area, we were talking – thinking – about, teacher communication and how it forms. One way is a lot of teachers tend to eat lunch together and these tend to be localized in different areas of the school. So, like the ~~math~~ teachers and the technology teachers all tend to – try to – tend to eat lunch together. We just all go in this one room and just kind of eat, and it's a lot of fun. I do it sometimes but sometimes I don't because – I haven't done it as much this year cause I've got a temporary room that I go back to watch my kids cause I'll have as many as 15 kids in my lunch – my classroom during lunch, just cause they want extra time to work. But, those are things where a lot of conversation goes on. I don't like to participate with them too much, because – well at times – I'll just get up and leave because that's when gossip starts or people start complaining and I hate negativity and I hate gossip and so I just get up and leave when something like that happens because I just don't – I refuse to participate in that. So you can see there's different levels. There's the levels of formal. There's levels of – where you're talking about teaching. There's levels where you're – there's levels where you're, you're talking about somebody – like "What's going on?" "How are you doing?" or "How was your weekend?" or "How" – "How's your teaching going?" stuff like that. And then there's the griping, the complaining, the gossip – that kind of thing.

inservice  
groups  
department

heterogeneous group  
various perspectives

lunch  
proximity  
lunch  
department  
fun

*lunch*

gossip

levels

COURT: When you are talking with teachers, when you choose to go to somebody – or I guess when you choose to associate with a group – you talked about groups that are associated by geographic area in the school or subject area or things like that – which groups do you tend to find yourself in more often?

WM ROBT: Geographic area which is also subject area.

proximity  
department

COURT: You're guessing my follow-up question. Let me jump back – way back – to when you were talking about your friends who you just go in and chat with every couple

6

of days. What kinds of things do you chat about – obviously not gossip – cause you said that's not big on your list.

WM ROBT: I would say - well, I'm always wheeling and dealing and trying to get more money. So, you know, I talk to em about funding. I talk to em about - here's ideas - how can we get our classes - like one of the [English] teachers especially - I'm responsible for her being hired in the first place. She emailed me from out of the - out of the country almost - you know I mean she was up in [Detroit] which is Yankee land . . .

funding  
need

collaboration

relationship

COURT: (laughs)

WM ROBT: so, she emails me and

[confusion ensues over the placement of the salsa on the table]

WM ROBT: And so I got her the position - she's teaching [writing] but she's using computers like crazy in the [English] classroom. And, we have similar students. For example, we are both teaching a very autistic child and that is a very interesting experience. So we converse about him or we converse about - we're always looking about kids - taking our really sharp kids - the ones that are especially, especially wonderful as [a writer] or as a computer programmer or something like that and seeing how can we get them an internship or how can we prepare them for the future because so many of these kids are - so many of these kids are not, not really ready for the real world yet. They're thinking about McDonald's when they got such talents they could be pulling in 30 a year just right out of high school. So a lot of the conversations will be about that. I mean, [Debbie] and I have - now you'll have to change that name

tech integration

students

engagement

COURT: (laughs) The metacognitive interviewee.

WM ROBT: Uh huh. She and I both have some students that are just hot stuff and I've got one kid that's - several of them - that have really got the potential to be part of a multi-million dollar thing that I can't talk about yet, but it'll be a major new cartoon show and I'm under non-disclosure so I can't talk about it yet but. . . I mean it's stuff like that

students

overw/Eng teacher

H  
one 2 one



7

where we're going "how do we get these kids involved" or something and I think I get tire - bored during lunch or something so I go visit her or something. We're pretty good buds though too. So there's a relationsh - there's a friendship there. We've done multiple things together.

students

lunch

friendship

COURT: So when you're talking about these kids that, should be getting out in the real world and thinking about that, what kinds of specific things . . .

WM ROBT: I think we talk about what they need. And we also talk about what they should be working on. I guess there could be conversation on how are you reaching them - here's what I'm doing. So we don't duplicate our efforts. so we can give them a different flavor or so we can coordinate and say, "hey, you're doing this in this class and I'm doing the same thing." We can really maximize our time.

engagement  
students

coordinate efforts

[discusses tortilla chip that has fallen on the tape recorder]

COURT: So is that the type of content that comes out of most of your discussions?

WM ROBT: Well, discussions are a lot of times student-oriented. I would say student-oriented, a little bit curriculum-oriented, and a lot of times technologically-oriented because I am the Mac guy at the school. And so I am the guy that somebody has a problem, like that other teacher you saw today,

student

curricular

tech support

COURT: um hmm

WM ROBT: she's freakin' out cause half of her - a third of her machines aren't working and she's trying to flip the power strips on. Well, she's a new teacher. I knew that the - I knew that the - if you have a power surge or something it'll switch those little switches on the surge boxes, but if it's flipped, switched, or turned off the main breaker, I don't care if you flip the boxes the breaker's off. So I knew where the breaker was, she didn't know where it was. You have to go in this other room unlock the door and flip a breaker. So I managed to flip the breaker and then get her stuff back up. And she's just freakin' - she's so happy and excited. But I'm going "no big deal" I just turned the power back on. I have people come up to me and ask me pc

new teacher

tech support

fix  
comps  
for  
Helen

H  
refriger

8

questions – “I’ve just lost these files” – “My computer’s crashed” or something. I go “Welcome to the wonderful world of windows, I can’t help you.” And I enjoy that.

tech support

COURT: (laughs) Give me a second to look over my stuff. . . So you mentioned your friendship with the art teacher – are there other people that you see somewhat regularly?

WM ROBT: Sure. There’s teachers that – like across the hall that I associate a lot with. We’re both on the technology committee and stuff like that. But he goes to the dark side though, but . . .

proximity

tech committee

COURT: What do you mean, “Goes to the dark side”?

WM ROBT: Microsoft and windows 95.

COURT: (laughs)

WM ROBT: We’ve gone on trips where the principal’s sent us to technology conferences. I think that what happens is there’s a lot of meetings that are planned that force us to interact and out of those meetings some natural relationships develop. I think that most conversation in school is informal and that the formal conversation comes through the idea of memos and the idea of - when you have to have that – that each semester appointment and meeting with your evaluator. That old thing to stay on the [tenure track] and all that garbage. You’ve also got the formal part of when there’s the principal communicates to all the teachers at once in a faculty meeting.

conference

meetings  
relationshipsformal  
principal

COURT: But you said that a lot of the conversations will continue beyond that . . .

WM ROBT: That can be - tends to be – it can be efficient to let you know about things you need to know about but I don’t think the content is all that great – deep or anything. The richness of the conversation or something is more in the one on one or small group thing.

formal  
not deeprichness  
one on one  
sm group

COURT: So this teacher that you were traveling with . . . where you talking about what you guys do while you were traveling?

conference

9

WM ROBT: We went to Denver and we're both photographers so we took some extra time at the conference to go to Rocky Mountain National Park to take some pictures. It's just a fun place to go. But we're at this national technology conference and I start shmoozing with people and he's freaking out cause he couldn't believe the way I could shmooze and basically before I even left the conference I had an invite to present at MacWorld - my way paid completely. I'm meeting with the Apple reps at this big conference and from there all kinds of contacts have happened - developed. So some of our conversation was how I was doing that. We're both technoweenies - so

hobby  
conference  
conference  
shmoozing

[waiter returns to refill drinks]

COURT: That'll be a nice aside to the transcripts - waiter returns to refill drinks. (laughs) Let's see. Can you tell me more about your role as, I don't want to say technoweenie, but your role as tech support?

WM ROBT: It's totally informal, but the district tech support is so lousy and so slow that I just simply - and the macs are so easy to fix for the most part - I just fix them myself. I know how to pop the machine. I know how to take it apart and do all the good stuff to it. And other teachers know that I - my kids - are doing incredible stuff so that naturally means that the teacher's an expert too - when the kids know much more than I do. So they go - they just come up to me - that sort of thing.

tech support  
students  
approached

COURT: In these conversations, do you - that was going to be leading you - I'm not going to go there.

WM ROBT: You've been doing well.

COURT: Thank you.

WM ROBT: You haven't really given any leading questions.

COURT: I know - it's killing me. . . You talked about certain issues that will sometimes spark these conversations and maybe something - you said sometimes it will come in memos, sometimes an inservice - what kinds of issues specifically have really gotten you going?

10

WM ROBT: Most of the issues are driven by central administration and they'll tell you you've got to spend time together to do this and that. I don't specifically remember any of the exact ones. I think some of the issues are when we got, boy. . . We have a [sponsor], a [company that] helps us greatly – setting up a non-profit for our school and all that. But, [they] will absolutely refuse to buy macs and there is some resentment there – or issues we have to – that gets me fired up. When [they'll] spend thousands of dollars on what [they consider] state of the art pc's and not a penny on macs when the pc's [they're] buying are already obsolete. I mean they're not that great. And [they] just – I get really agitated when I see people that are not really – they're using technology – they think a great use of technology is to surf the web and word process. Now for [Central] that might be unique because we have been so technologically deficient in the past, but that's far, far from what really could happen. Not near – I mean it should be constructivist environment where children are constructing these wonderful representations using multimedia or whatever presentation software like PowerPoint or whatever – where they create these visual representations of knowledge, working in groups and there is a real dynamism and dynamic to it instead of oh I'm going to get on the web and find out about Poe. No, they create a cd about Poe's life that's interactive.

issue driven

\$ \$  
diff +  
tech  
Phil.

funding

tech  
tech integration  
other teacher practice  
Phil.

COURT: Have you had opportunities to enact these things .

WM ROBT: A little bit . . .

COURT: outside of your own classroom?

WM ROBT: the main problem is the limitations of technology – we don't have enough equipment in certain areas.

tech  
limitations

COURT: What other things do you find yourself talking to colleagues about besides technology, if any?

WM ROBT: It depends – I've got – talking about things we have to get done, talking about – if it's somebody who's a real close friend, just friendship level – really caring about what's going on in their life. And then we've got some

friendship

11

teachers – there's kind of a subgroup of teachers that are all fellow – we're believers – Christians and so we're fellows. We always talk about spiritual things. "How can I pray for you?" "What can I do?" "It's a new day, how are you doing?" And that's a real deep personal type thing that's usually not heavy discussion but a real – very powerful, very short but to the point kind of thing.

Christian  
powerful

COURT: You talked about your work with the [English] teacher – how long did that go on?

WM ROBT: That was part of a semester – I guess it went about eight weeks total.

COURT: And when was it?

WM ROBT: Last spring.

COURT: Have you seen any changes in what you're doing when you're talking with other colleagues based on that experience?

WM ROBT: No, not really, but I've seen . . .

[respondent comments that the previous question was leading and not appropriate for an emergent interview]

WM ROBT: I think that – I don't know. Most of the conversations – most of the ones that are valuable – are ones that informally happen and it's not even school related. It's more relationship related. "Hey, we're all in the same boat." We're encouraging each other kind of thing and it's what makes things a little funner.

informal  
encouragement

COURT: Hmmm . . . Do you have any other thoughts about your experiences – going back to the original question about talking informally with your colleagues?

WM ROBT: I just – the main thing to emphasize would be – well, when you say informally – there's informal, but there's formal and informal. There's the conversation when you need to talk to someone to get something done or get something or interact on a somewhat official – in other words it is something that is specifically demanded by the district or the school or something like that. That's on a different level – quote unquote professional kind of thing

formal  
official  
admin



12

versus the idea of conversation which is conversation – oh here you go – because you want to. There's a difference – conversation because you're supposed to or it's kind of official or you have to or something versus conversations with individuals because, hey, I want to, I enjoy it, or I'm interested, or there's – I can help this person or they can help me.

want

required

enjoy

support

one zone  
fixer  
#

COURT: So I hear you saying that the "because you want to" is more powerful?

WM ROBT: Oh, far more. Or because they can help me – I need some help on something or something. I can go to an administrator having the biggest problem with a certain student – that's semi – that's official but you're going in there for "Hey, HELP ME" kind of thing.

need assist

assist

admin

#

COURT: Hmmm. I think I've gotten a good feel for sort of where you're at and you've sort of categorized for me which is nice – the different kinds of communication which you . . .

WM ROBT: Um hmm, no charge.

COURT: participate in. I was going to say you've coded my data for me – I love it. (laughs) Thank you for taking time.

## Appendix D

## Codebook with Definitions

<i>code</i>	<i>working definition</i>
<b>admin</b>	drives official, formal, can be source of help
authority	can cause formality, stronger as go higher up
evaluation	performance review, scary, formal
principal	passes along formal stuff, informal when just looking for you, works on comfortable rapport
<b>amount</b>	how much is which type, mostly informal, more than would have thought, "huge" amount
<b>casual events</b>	off the clock, socialize, establishes relationships, useful for curricular talk, getting to know one another
down time	chill out time during school
lunch	time for teachers to get together or go visiting
<b>Christian</b>	powerful communication with same
<b>collaboration</b>	co-teaching opportunities, classes working together
classes together	ways to transfer and exchange trade secrets
coordinate efforts	work together to an ends
<b>commonality</b>	academic or not
hobby	shared interest with colleague, non-academic
same boat	working on similar goals, a feeling, commonalities, adds richness
<b>curricular</b>	instructional practices, academic subjects
<b>daily business</b>	usually administrative tasks done by teachers
<b>department</b>	group of teachers by subject area
<b>distributed</b>	materials & information passed from principal to dept chair to faculty
<b>faculty</b>	close, friendly, committed
fear	impetus for teacher communication
<b>formal</b>	evokes fear, memos, meetings, evaluations, principal in faculty meeting, efficient, shallow content, need to get something done, official interactions
required	admin driven, opposite of "because you want to"
<b>formal to informal</b>	relaxed conversation following on heels of meeting
<b>fun</b>	lunch with tech and [math] teachers, casual events, listserv
enjoy	stems from wanted conversation
<b>funding</b>	includes grant writing, [corporate sponsorship]
grant writing	subject of formal meetings
<b>goals</b>	like project goals, different from philosophy

<b>groups</b>	where real communication happens
one-on-one	individual teacher learning
heterogeneous groups	teachers you don't know at inservice, commonalities will arise, assigned, non-departmental, non-proximal
<b>informal</b>	ordinary conversation with other teachers, most communication, not always school related
<b>initiation</b>	something leading to other types of communication, usually formal leading to informal
need assist	usually goes to admin, in dept meeting stems from formal business
want	not required, fills own needs
during need	conversation that happens while accomplishing another need, a secondary act
approached	asked for assistance by others
issue driven / issue	from stimulus outside of both people, faculty meetings, from principal or central admin, delivered by dept chair sometimes
<b>interference</b>	elements restricting value of communication
attn span	high expectations in others, low personal, tunes out conversations, short & sweet valuable, interference in communication
busy / busy schedules	interferes with casual events, makes meetings inconvenient, high number of students in class
politics	awareness of how others see you, knowing how individuals are viewed by the group, reaction to those opinions and attitudes
<i>gossip</i>	also complaining, negativity, non-productive
<i>prob with colleagues</i>	causes communication, go to admin
rebuffed	getting no help when asking
<b>levels</b>	different kinds of communication
<b>listserv</b>	communication with ADE's, fun, valuable
<b>mac talk</b>	general mention of computer features, Apple events, ways Apple does business
<b>meetings</b>	formal communication among faculty, called by principal or other figure in authority over group that meets
tech committee	builds associations, formal group meeting
CAC	campus advisory committee
inservice	planned professional development, participation, presentation, not always attentive, sometimes in groups (hetero, homo), sometimes teacher choice involved in activities
conference	travel with colleagues from building
<b>mingle</b>	initiating informal conversation, get out of room, human touch
superficial	courteous
shmoozing	making contacts outside of building



<b>new</b>	to subject matter, to building, reason for needing help
<b>outside help</b>	agency, former teacher
former teacher	previous teacher of same class, no longer in building
<b>personality</b>	factor involved in good communication
<b>perspectives</b>	from people you don't know
<b>philosophy</b>	underlying principles that guide, for Helen - commitment, kids
committed	spending time on work, kids; shares philosophy with Helen
<b>problem solving</b>	in dept meetings, build on each others' ideas
<b>proximity</b>	communication among those whose rooms are close, tech and [math] teachers
<b>relationship</b>	develops from talk with someone you don't know, can exist prior to teaching together
personal	issues outside academics, family life, other stresses, among teachers - commonalities, among students - problems that teachers work on together
friendship	marked by caring, regularity
family	source of help and support when part of the same department
<b>resources</b>	shared equipment, people, software, etc.; provided for teachers or students
<b>respect</b>	for ideas, ways of doing business, Helen's toward lunch bunch
<b>second bid</b>	a second try to get help for a problem
<b>self-reliance</b>	one reaction to being rebuffed, rely on self for plan - not solving probs alone
<b>special ed</b>	refers to students, program, support people, etc around special needs
<b>students</b>	usually about students in common, similar types of students, issues re. how to motivate students, personal issues
student help	source of tech support
<b>support</b>	impetus for teacher communication, help
encouragement	offering support, really caring, aimed at hard workers, complimenting
<b>tech</b>	general conversation re. Technology
tech limitations	practicalness
tech support	hardware and software assistance
<b>this research</b>	talk regarding participation in this study
<b>trade secrets</b>	how one person is successful in their classroom
methods	ways of teaching
practice	open for comment and judgment, supported by others
engagement	engaging kids through practice

unique ideas	new techniques used with class, light bulb over your head - sometimes reached at same time leading to collaboration
tech integration	use of computers in other classes, judgments as to best use, finding use for cool new stuff
<b>transfer of knowledge</b>	indirectly seeing value in another's practice
teacher learning	receiving direct instruction
<b>value</b>	informal offers more, short and sweet offers more
powerful	strong, deep, rich conversations, personal
not deep	communication in meetings because of formality
richness	communication in small groups or one-on-one, result of simpatico

## Appendix D

### Member Checking

The following is an example of the first stage of member checking occurring during an interview with William Robert.

WM ROBT: Sure. There's teachers that – like across the hall that I associate a lot with. We're both on the technology committee and stuff like that. But he goes to the dark side though, but . . .

COURT: What do you mean, "Goes to the dark side"?

WM ROBT: Microsoft and Windows 95.

The following is a transcription of the conversation with William Robert as he read a summary of his first interview in stage two of member checking.

[Interviewer explains the member checking summary and how it was derived and what purpose it serves.]

COURT: I don't know if you want to read and comment as you go or if you want to read it through once or whatever works for you.

WM ROBT: The first paragraph I agree with. [pause while reading] Okay.

COURT: And any word choice or anything that sounds a little off, let me know.

WM ROBT: Yup this is all correct.

COURT: Pretty good?

WM ROBT: The second paragraph is good. The commonalities . . .

COURT: Yeah, that kept coming up over and over. I like . . .

WM ROBT: [pause while reading] Yup, third paragraph's fine. [pause while reading] Yep, now the fourth one I really like. I mean I didn't realize that . . .

COURT: yeah

WM ROBT: but it's a good, good . . . that's really nice.

COURT: You came back to that a lot. That was basically, that was almost how you ranked everything . . .

WM ROBT: right

COURT: as far as . . . what was important.

WM ROBT: Yup, it's fine.

COURT: cool . . . you just want to get out of here, huh?

WM ROBT: No, no I just don't see any real corrections.

For the final stage of member checking, the grand member check, I presented each informant with all of the data generated from him or her that would appear in the final report. We met and I gave them a copy of their case study as it appeared in a draft of my final report. They read through the information making corrections and offering clarifying information that, in one case, led to my making a substantial change in my draft.

## Appendix E

## Sample Reflexive Journal Writing

The Nature of Informal Talk Between Two High School Teachers

1. Participate in approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours of interviews and follow-up discussions with the researcher.  
 These interviews and discussions will be conducted one-on-one at your convenience. At least one of these conversations will occur face-to-face at a mutually agreed upon location. Other conversations may be held face-to-face or may be via email or telephone, again at a time that is convenient for all parties. All conversations will occur during the period between October 21, 1999 and November 17, 1999. Face-to-face and telephone conversations will be audiotaped.
2. Maintain a reflexive journal regarding your communication with other teachers for at least 1 work week during the study.  
 You may keep the journal by a method with which you are most comfortable. Suggestions include tape recordings, notebooks, or index cards. All materials for journaling will be provided for you. The number of journal entries needed will depend upon the chosen method of journaling. This process will assist in understanding how and why informal teacher communication occurs.

*Handwritten notes:*

Keep # of interviews open  
 may be > chat  
 one day...

10.6.99  
 Departmental  
 Review Paperwork

let resp.  
 choose journal  
 method

don't limit  
 # entries  
 plan to  
 negotiate  
 after choose  
 method

the detail  
 needed to get  
 consent form  
 passed helped me focus  
 & make decisions re. methods

plan on 1 face to face  
 meeting  
 easy enough to meet  
 may help w/ trust

Is there validity in my reading  
between the lines in analysis or am I  
constrained by what informant says and  
must avoid what he/she neglected to say?

11.6.99

can go in  
"comments"

11.7.99

"such dichotomies rarely work"

Ely, et al.

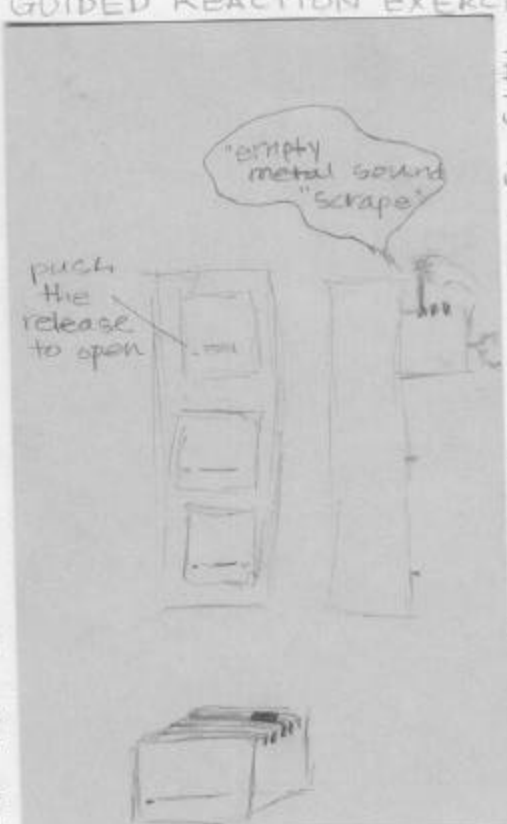
I was struck by this quotation &  
chose to take it out of the context of  
writing and place it in that of my  
research findings. I placed the  
dichotomy of formal & informal before  
Wm Robt and he expressed discomfort  
at only these choices & that something  
could seem to be both. I now  
believe that this dichotomy emerged  
from the wording of my focus -  
using the term informal which  
implies formal as the opposite thus  
setting up the dichotomy. I am  
considering trying to avoid these  
terms in order to focus on the shades  
& variations found in each. Now  
axial coding scares me because I  
still see formal & informal at the  
roots of my tree of codes.

11.8.99

How much  
variety will  
I have in  
narrative form  
when my  
data comes strictly  
from  
interview &  
incident  
journals?

try writing up  
description of  
individ from  
interview -  
does it  
say anything?

GUIDED REACTION EXERCISE IN CLASS 11.17.99



THIS IS THE FIRST IMAGE THAT ENTERED

latch <sup>takes effort to access anyone</sup>

folders w/in folders <sup>diff. levels w/ 1 person</sup>

green, recycled hanging folders <sup>empty - no depth</sup>

brownish/grey <sup>structure fades away, not as much as contents</sup>

metal <sup>strong</sup>

placed in classroom <sup>when you need it?</sup>

cabinet represents the teacher talk - hanging folders are all the same (communalized) but what they contain is very diff.

a just in time piece of equipment

good stuff kept in top drawer

other two empty & hollow

quality not quantity b/c of low # of folders & contents

a very 3d sensory image w/ touch, sound, etc. perhaps a reminder to look at all aspects

storage like a memory if have one exp. w/ person - file it away & remember for later ref.

avoid dichotomies?

MY MIND WHEN "FINDINGS"

11.23.99  
 So, about this theory of yours...  
 it definitely rings true with Helen  
 but are there too many assumptions  
 & stretches for it to fit w/ WR?  
 & how much does 'plain ol'  
 personality account for this?

how will  
 I work  
 around  
 WR's passive  
 aggressiveness



consider  
 incentive &  
 disincentive

depends on  
 perception of  
 self as  
 "helper"

fixer  
 solution-giver  
 listening not part  
 of the process

listening  
 understanding  
 prob - solving  
 together

As the teacher's  
nature coming  
 across in class,  
 w/ colleagues, etc.  
 Can I say that  
 this is their  
 true self?



11.28.99

actions are a reflection  
of conception of self  
+ idea of helping

evidence  
seen in +  
out of classroom

how they view the task  
at hand will lead  
to certain interferences  
taking hold  
+ to different incentives  
for each

role/value of  
collaboration in the  
helping process is diff.

re-examine transcripts for  
evidence of the above → add codes

(H)

H evidence:

keys to her role as seen in classroom  
"going through the interpersonal process of  
having to separate it"  
"can't just sit w/ 1 student at the time"  
safe haven/crit th/ comfort level / veterans  
service oriented / shared spirit or etc.  
"feel like we are serving them"  
"serving under"  
helping makes her feel good - seen in  
wanting to reward others  
"reward nice behavior"  
sharing / going outside for help  
"know some of the brain"  
shared spirit  
"people that really care"  
implies  
"conditions"  
"sharing, working  
together"

WR evidence:

people come to him w/ directly for him  
"you know you..."  
teachers come for collaboration w/class  
"I showed them how to..."  
talks about groups but in terms of each  
individual's characteristics  
"this teacher had a good idea.... this  
teacher has got it together."  
talks about going for help as looking  
for another fixer