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# The Fables of Superintendent Don Paolo: Object Lessons on Community Upheaval, Community Efficacy, Heritage Knowledge, and Education

Orlando Villella

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THE FABLES OF SUPERINTENDENT DON PAOLO: OBJECT LESSONS ON  
COMMUNITY UPHEAVAL, COMMUNITY EFFICACY, HERITAGE  
KNOWLEDGE, AND EDUCATION

by

Orlando Villella

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree

Doctor of Education

Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders

School of Education

Duquesne University

December, 2000

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  
**INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL PROGRAM FOR**  
**EDUCATIONAL LEADERS**

*Dissertation*

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

*Presented by:*

Orlando Villella  
B.S. Penn State University, 1971  
M.S. Robert Morris College, 1981

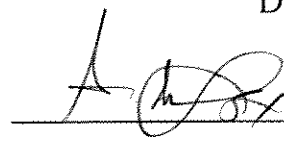
*August 29, 2000*

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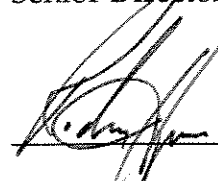
*Approved by:*

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Chair  
Gary D. Shank, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Educational Foundations & Leadership,  
Duquesne University

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Andrea Lex, Ph.D.

Senior Director, Student and Academic Support Services  
Washington University

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Rodney Hopson, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Foundations & Leadership,  
Duquesne University

*Program Director*  
Helen C. Sobehart, D.A.  
Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for  
Educational Leaders and Leadership Institute

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## **Abstract**

In order to understand the economically, and academically distressed community, we must understand it on its own terms. This study used the narrative form as the source of inquiry using the fabulistic form as methodology. The novelist Calvino has served as a guide to this narrative method. Narrative is employed to gain knowledge of the community and this study examines how the community expresses shared values through fabulistic narratives. The problem examined in this study is discovery of narratives and fables of past and present successes. The research examines how the community views itself, its role in the educational process, the way education and knowledge are used, and how education is viewed within the community and in the family unit in an economically distressed community. The data was gathered by conducting interviews with a former superintendent of a distressed district. These 10 fables provide us with insight into finding wisdom in place and how it is used in the world. Findings indicate that the values of the community have changed. Educational reforms should recognize those changes. The fables clearly indicate the importance of the work ethic, discipline and commitment, and respect for authority within the community. Implications for educational reforms and suggestions for future research topics are identified.

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*“No one remembers what need or command or desire drove Zenobia’s founders to give their city this form, and so there is no telling whether it was satisfied by the city we see today, which has grown through successive superimpositions from the first, now undecipherable plan. But what is certain is that if you ask an inhabitant of Zenobia to describe his vision of a happy life, it is always a city like Zenobia that he imagines, with its pilings and its suspended stairways, a Zenobia perhaps quite different, a-flutter with banners and ribbons, but always derived by combining elements of that first model.*

*This said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give form to their desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.”*

*Italo Calvino – Invisible Cities, p. 35.*



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND SOURCES OF INQUIRY

There are several sources of inquiry for this research, the personal, and the socio-political-economic. A third source results from the emergence of literature and the writings of Italo Calvino as epistemology and will be examined first. Calvino has served as a guide to narrative as a search for knowledge. Literature as a source of inquiry has formed the foundation for the methodology utilized in this research. While the work of Italo Calvino emerged as a guide to the narrative form, the participant created the narrative motif with the introduction of the fables themselves.

#### Literature as a source of inquiry - the Emergence of Calvino

The use of literature as a source of inquiry into meaning is both useful and well known. Calvino himself asserts, "I am accustomed to consider literature as a search for knowledge" (Calvino, 1988, p. 26). Calvino has provided a perspective to "inform the art and practice of "scientific" research in his writings" (Pajares, F. <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/cal.html> , available). Writing links form, especially the narrative form, as human intention to the great crises in history (Re, 1990, p. 1).

From Invisible Cities, Calvino offers a perspective where the city becomes a single symbol for inquiry. Each inquiry provides multiple routes and ultimately multiple conclusions as Marco Polo attempts to describe to Kublai Khan the cities he has visited in his journey across the Khan's vast empire. As Marco Polo attempts to describe the city

of Zenobia to Khan, this research attempts to describe Aliquippa, an economically distressed city and a city in crisis, and the focal point of this research.

In Six Memos for the Next Millennium, Calvino wrote speeches for the Charles Eliot Norton lecture series to situate six literary concepts or values within the perspective of the next millennium as a foundation for communication of an exchange of experience. It is that exchange of experience that both Calvino as writer, and the researcher simultaneously as both researcher and writer, attempt to achieve. Within that exchange of experiences, the writer and researcher attempt to describe an experience as reality. Calvino, searching for knowledge and hence understanding, poses the exchange of experience as a possibility, a potentiality that something could be another way. That way perhaps is a way that we have never contemplated. Thus, for this research, Calvino has emerged as fundamental to defining and illustrating the role of narrative and human experience. It is from this perspective of literature as a search for knowledge, in particular narrative literature in the form of fable, that this research is based.

#### The personal source of inquiry

Another source of inquiry for this research is personal, resulting from a single question asked by my son at the time of the Olympic Games in Atlanta. “Why doesn’t Pittsburgh try to get the Olympics?” My answer at the time was quite inadequate, but caused me to ask a number of other questions regarding the nature of the culture of our region. What was it about us that made us different from other regions? Some parts of our region continue to experience economic failure while others parts enjoy relative

prosperity. Are we condemned to live lives of diminished expectations, lives determined by some unknown others, or can we gain control over our own desires and destinies?

The socio-political-economic source of inquiry; the context of the problem

The socio-political-economic forces shaping the region provided the third source of inquiry. The nature of the problem to be studied can be found within the context of these socio-political-economic-political forces. The problem to be examined in this research is the problem of discovering how community efficacy is revealed within an economically distressed community. According to the research of Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1997, p. 80), mastery experience is one of the stronger means of building efficacy. The research will examine how mastery experience and consequently, community efficacy, is revealed through narratives expressed as fables.

The meaning, consistency, and coherency of home life, industrial life, and educational life in the community is expressed within the fables. The fables will reveal how the community views itself, its role in the educational process, the way education and knowledge are viewed in the community and the family unit in this economically distressed community.

Pittsburgh and the surrounding counties have gone through severe economic decline and a transition from an industrial based to a service-based economy in the region. Once the largest steel producing region in the world and heavily industrialized, by 1990 there were no operating steel mills left in the city of Pittsburgh. According to the Department of Labor and Industry as cited in The state of black youth in Pittsburgh, (p. 314), only 7 manufacturers remain in the top fifty employers in the Pittsburgh

Metropolitan Statistical Area in 1998. Employment declines in manufacturing occupations are predicted to range from twenty nine percent to forty one percent in Allegheny County between 1990 - 2000 ( The state of black youth in Pittsburgh, p. 316). The largest gains in employment between 1990 -2000 are all in service industry and service related occupations.

Dealing with sudden and massive economic upheaval that resulted from the mill closings of the 1980s and the deep recession of the 1990s has been challenging enough for the region, but an overhaul of the economic base was not the only problem that needed to be addressed. The most populated county, Allegheny County, had an outmoded system of government that needed to be overhauled as well. The area has just voted to change its two-hundred-year-old system of county government in Allegheny County. According to the Committee to Prepare Allegheny County for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (ComPAC 21 Study p.4), “with one hundred thirty municipalities, one hundred sixteen police departments, fifty eight public safety dispatching points, one hundred comprehensive land use plans, and forty three school districts, Allegheny County is the most fragmented county in the United States.”

#### Inter-disciplinary research and synthesis

What emerged from these three sources of inquiry were the notions that research must be both inter-disciplinary and must not be restricted by simplification. Consider the argument advanced by Levi-Strauss in The Savage Mind (Levi-Strauss, p.23). Here Levi-Strauss notes that “primitive” cultures are not primitive, but they recognize a different order of their universe. Plants, rather than ordered by genus and species, might be ordered

by taste or by benefit or detriment to humans in the minds of others. This new ordering of plants, a different taxonomy, reveals a complexity that we might not have thought of before. Similarly, Levi-Strauss gives another example of the scientist attempting to understand an object in its totality by understanding the various parts. In science, the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, creating events by means of structures or testable hypotheses in contrast to the *bricoleur* (in French, someone who works with his hands, yet is not a craftsman) who creates structures by means of events (Levi-Strauss, p.22). These scientific structures tend to break an object down into its parts and by gaining understanding of the parts, we gain understanding or derive meaning of the whole. The *bricoleur*, on the other hand, like an artist considers the object in its totality, perhaps changing scale or perspective to derive meaning and to make the object(s) manageable or homologous to the subject. While scientists attempt to simplify, we would try to synthesize to derive meaning from the relationship of events to each other. Calvino explains the importance of relationships between events and things as a source of knowledge in that knowledge of things is “seen as the convergence of infinite relationships, past and future, real or possible” (Calvino, 1988, p. 107).

To return to the advantage of an inter-disciplinary view, such a view will gain the advantage of understanding the context of the issue being researched. Rather than simplification, I have looked to synthesis to gain understanding through the experiences of a single superintendent of a single distressed school district related as fables. The use of fable as a narrative form again supports the concept of synthesis. Calvino provides a “grand challenge for literature... to weave together the various branches of knowledge, the

various ‘codes’ into a manifold and multifaceted vision of the world since science distrusts general explanations and solutions that are not sectional and specialized” (Calvino, 1988, p. 112).

### A map of the research

For that reason it is proposed that my interest in educational leadership begin its journey into community efficacy with the examination of school reform and community narrative. This research does not reflect a choice to exclude the other areas of efficacy research, but provides a logical starting point for this research. It will then be possible to conduct future research in community efficacy by building upon this research foundation.

I have attempted to provide within this chapter an introduction to narrative as a useful source of empirical inquiry into meaning. In addition, I have attempted to situate this research between the insight provided by Calvino and the narrative method of inquiry, the personal sources of inquiry, and the socio-political-economic forces which define the experience of being in the distressed community. Similarly, I have attempted to define the problem as part of an evolutionary process, identifying the various versions of the problem and the conceptual methodological approaches to study the problem. Hopefully, by revealing this evolutionary sequence, the reader will be able to further understand how the problem, methodology, participant finally emerged as part of the research process.

The second chapter is a review of prior knowledge and attempts to situate Aliquippa and the distressed districts within a relationship to historical events, psychological theory, sociology, economics and educational reform. This chapter is, without apology, a jeremiad in its message and its tone. The Pittsburgh Metropolitan

Region has a remarkable industrial heritage, a commitment to learning, and a culture of ethnic traditions. However, rather than being grounded in this heritage and these traditions, the area has become bounded by them, not yet learning that it is possible to move forward without betraying the past. The region has missed countless opportunities to regain former economic prominence. The adherence to old traditions and ways of discerning meaning from significant events has trapped parts of the region in mediocrity. Regretfully, some of the milltown communities in the region have not yet begun to move forward as they often lack the leadership and resources of the larger city and more affluent suburbs.

The theoretical framework provided by Paul Krause in the discussion of the events at Homestead in 1892 and the work of Michael Weber and others help provide that historical reference. I have chosen Homestead and the labor struggle against the steel corporation in 1892 as a focal point, a defining moment in the region's history, and a defining event in the shaping and experiencing of the socio-political-economic culture of the region and in particular the milltowns like Aliquippa. Homestead situated within the concepts of the 'life's narrative' as provided by Richard Sennett, the relationship between the individual and society as discussed by Emile Durkheim. The economic analysis then employs John Kenneth Galbraith and his concept of the contented culture and Kevin Phillips for a frame of reference and gaining understanding of the rules of the changing economy. The framework and foundation for educational reform theory is situated within the study of the Caswell School provided by Vinessa Siddle-Walker and Booker T.

Washington's experience in establishing the Tuskegee Institute. In addition, educational reform is discussed as it pertains to the roles of both education and democracy.

The third chapter contains a discussion of narrative as a methodology, and epistemological framework, a way of knowing. Within this framework, we are provided a means of obtaining knowledge, finding wisdom in the empirical universe, gaining understanding and finally putting wisdom to use within the world.

The fourth chapter consists of the fables, grouped thematically. These themes include fables of uncaring, the garden, discipline and commitment, heritage knowledge, and the education profession. Topics within each of these fables are identified.

The fifth chapter includes the interpretations of the fables included in chapter four. While chapter four includes the data in the form of fables, the interpretations have been separated into a separate chapter for two reasons. First, by separating the fables from their interpretations, the reader is given the opportunity to form their own interpretation and to construct their own meaning. Secondly, there may exist a reinforcing, grouping effect of the interpretations to permit the reader to view the relationships between the interpretations more easily than perhaps if the interpretations followed the fables.

The sixth chapter concludes the research and provides a world view of the data, situating the fables within the framework of prior knowledge. Included within this chapter are the limitations of the study. The implications and areas of future research are also identified.

In addition, I have included as an appendix, the data in chronological form from the first interview to the last. These data include data other than the fables and provide



additional sources for the reader. At the risk of simply adding weight to the study, it is intended that the chronological view may provide the reader with additional insight into both the researcher and the participant and the evolving relationship between both parties. Hopefully, this additional view of the data provides the reader with an opportunity to examine these data from yet another perspective.

### **Growth and Evolution / Versions of the Problem Statement**

In the original examination of this problem, I viewed the problem as one of examining the efficacy of the region and the relationship that efficacy had to the performance of organizations in the region. While this was a lofty and ambitious goal, it did not seem to be a practical undertaking because of the time and expense involved in conducting this research. The vast number of confounding variables such as the individual, behavior, environment as it relates to the self and as it relates to groups as well as organization, management, culture and the market, would have required that a design methodology compare two similar organizations as matched samples. One organization could have acted as the control group and the other as a treatment group. The difficulty in such a design is finding two organizations similar enough to consider as matched samples. The other problem with this approach is that collecting data would have been virtually impossible. Aside from these problems with the research design, I concluded that even if I should have found some significant correlation between efficacy and performance at the large organizational level it may not have been relevant in regard to cause and effect.

Other versions of the problem viewed the problem of poor community efficacy as a function of lack of leadership or poor leadership in the area. While lack of leadership or

poor leadership may be a contributing factor toward the development or erosion of efficacy at the community level, it assumes that efficacy in the region is poor without proving or measuring that efficacy.

Initially, it appeared that the factors that impacted efficacy had to be examined at a group level. It was curious, as the region struggled to deal with the rebuilding its economic base in the 1990s, how vulnerable we appeared. At times, when we unsuccessfully competed against other regions for new plants and factories, it seemed that we could not do anything successfully. We appeared to be weak and vulnerable, not invincible. This sense of vulnerability, that one is not in control of their own destiny, caused me to question why one region felt vulnerable and another felt invincible.

Was our perception of weakness and vulnerability a matter of local culture and local leadership? Was our sense of vulnerability and weakness rooted in our history of labor struggles against powerful corporations who ruled the area? Since the area had a pro-union base, perhaps the union members regarded corporations as an adversary, an organization that had to be opposed. Perhaps cooperation with the corporations was viewed as a betrayal of the union struggles of the past.

Was this perception of vulnerability and weakness simply a lack of leadership or lack of coordinated leadership from the politicians, business, and educational leaders in the area? After all, a case could be made that the local politicians failed to demonstrate leadership by failing to attract new businesses into the area in anticipation of the changing economy. The ComPAC 21 study suggested strongly that “the county has not adjusted to important shifts in population and business activity and, therefore, is not competing

effectively with other regions that are experiencing vibrant growth” (ComPAC 21 Study, p.2) and that the county’s form of government was part of the problem. Business leaders could be cited as failing to anticipate changes in the economy from an industrial economic base to a service based economy. As business leaders, they were responsible for the economic decline of their own firms. Educational leaders could be accused of not anticipating the needs of the new economy and for failing to provide the numbers and types of skilled workers required in the new economy. There appeared to be more than enough blame to be shared for the region’s troubles. Failure to discover any satisfactory explanations lead to an examination of the concept of efficacy.

However, an examination of efficacy did not provide any satisfactory answers either. That is because efficacy is not an issue that appears to act unilaterally. The review of the literature on efficacy indicates the complexity of the issue. Efficacy is related to motivation and performance and is influenced by the self, the environment and behavioral factors. Bandura (1977: 1982: 1977) refers to this interaction of factors as bi-lateral triadic reciprocity.

Bandura reasoned that self-doubting individuals do not become social reformers, leaders, or innovators. Similarly, inveterate self-doubters are not likely to be molded into a collectively efficacious group. Bandura (Bandura, 1997, p. 33) concludes that “a collectivist society, populated with members who are consumed by self-doubts about their capabilities and anticipate the futility of any effort to shape their future, would be condemned to a dismal existence.” From this conclusion, we may reason that students who are self-doubting as members of a self-doubting community, may find themselves

similarly condemned to a dismal existence. If the students of a distressed school district doubt their capabilities, and the community does not eliminate that self - doubt, they and the community may be similarly be condemned to a dismal existence.

Earley found that efficacy beliefs attribute to the productivity of members of both individualist and collectivist cultures (Earley, 1993:1994) and that the way the society is structured does not say much about a member's performance when perceived efficacy is factored out. In other words, efficacy contributes more to performance than cultural factors. Earley's research then suggests that the fact that because the region has a significant eastern European ethnic culture and that culture is rooted in collectivism, does not mean as much to the performance of the community as the efficacy of the community.

When efficacy is examined at the group level, problems of measurement, prediction, and accuracy are introduced. Group level analysis introduces confounding variables as one must analyze the impact of individual efficacy on the group and group efficacy on individual efficacy. "An assessment focus at the individual level is steeped in processes operating within the group" (Bandura, 1997, p. 478). The number and type of these group processes introduce problems of identification of the processes, identification of how these processes work and the measurement of the individual process, and how these processes act upon each other. All of these factors introduce problems of measurement, prediction, and accuracy into the measurement instruments to be employed. Examination and measurement of efficacy are complicated by the confounding variables within small groups or teams. To measure efficacy at the community level increases the complexity of the measurement so much that it may not be practical to measure at the

community level. “The greatest progress can be made in explaining the development, decline, and restoration of collective efficacy, and how it affects group functioning ... “ (Bandura, 1997, p. 478).

Certainly, community efficacy is a worthwhile topic of research and is an area of great personal interest. Nevertheless, in spite of the complications, community efficacy must begin to be researched, but it cannot be studied all at once. The many facets of community efficacy must be researched, but the research must be inter-disciplinary and molded into a more comprehensive view. In fact, the result of a view from the perspective of a singular discipline is to simplify and almost trivialize a complex issue. Simplification does not necessarily help to gain understanding of a complex issue. Rather, simplification causes us to gain understanding of a false reality.

### **The Revised Problem and Purpose**

As I began to collect the data for this research, I learned that the participant was the one who would provide me with what I needed to know. What I needed to know was not what I sought. As the interviews were conducted and I began to transcribe the audio tapes, I realized that what I was asking myself was a simple set of questions. What is it to be in this world of a distressed district? How do we know what we can and are to become as a community? What wisdom exists to illuminate the path toward understanding of the experience and the situation of the district? From where did we come?

What was needed, was an examination of the factors which impacted efficacy and how those factors were reified in the environment. How to examine those factors remained in flux as other methodologies were examined. In the final version of the

problem, community efficacy was examined in terms of narratives relevant to the community. After data collection began, the narrative motif was demonstrated by the participant. These narratives were actually expressed as fables, or narratives used to enforce a useful truth.

The interviews with the superintendent began as a search for an understanding of community efficacy and the answers to the research questions. What was discovered was an understanding of community efficacy and meaning of experiences provided in the form of fables. These fables told me about what it was to be a community that was successful and what was missing today from that community. These fables also told me about test scores and their meaning to the district, but more importantly, they told me about how to increase learning. It provided me with wisdom and ways to put that wisdom to work in the world of the distressed district. These fables also provided ways to develop educational reform within the district. These new ways would provide meaningful reform and lasting benefit to the students so they could develop their own fables.

The interview data has been obtained in ten interviews from January through May of 2000, about twenty five hours of interview time, with a former superintendent of the Aliquippa school district. We share a considerable amount of heritage knowledge in the form of ethnic traditions and customs. For example, I am quite familiar with the old neighborhood where the participant grew up since I had several relatives who lived in the area and I spent a considerable amount of time myself in the neighborhood. The parental guidance of most of the people in the area was quite similar to my own since we shared common religious, ethnic, and working class backgrounds.

As part of that background, we shared common experiences in spite of our age differences. For example, it was understood that the father was at home and worked a regular job, even if that regular job included shift work. [Since the mills worked around the clock, some workers had to work from 8:00 AM- 4:00 PM, the daylight shift, some worked from 4:00 PM to 12:00 midnight, the 4 to 12 shift, and still others worked from 12:00 midnight to 8:00 AM, the midnight or graveyard shift. Some of the mills in the area modified the work hours for the shifts from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM, 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM, and 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM.] Children were expected to be home on time for dinner every night. It was understood that children were expected to do well in school and recognize the absolute authority of the teachers and the parents. People grew gardens almost without exception and children were expected to help in that work. Children were expected to help in all other kinds of work as well. Among the various ethnic groups, children were expected to help with the cooking, the manual labor including pouring concrete, painting, or what ever work needed to be done. The parents worked hard and the children, too, were expected to work hard. Punishments for transgressions of the law of the house were sometimes severe, but you were expected to accept the consequences of your actions. Children were held accountable and responsible for their actions. In any case, the environment appeared to be harsh sometimes in the view of the outside world, but for those inside this culture, it could be secure, consistent, and value laden. There were few grey areas, and you knew the shared value set of the community. The line of demarcation between right and wrong was clearly marked and enforced throughout the community. This was a culture which did not permit much of a dissenting view. If a

dissenting or alternative view began to grow, like a weed in the garden, it would simply be removed or choked out.

For the former superintendent, he lived all of his childhood including his high school and college years in that environment and he prospered. Since I was younger and did not live there, I spent less time in that environment, but the shared values of his environment were carried over to my environment and enforced as vigorously. By the time I had reached my teen age years in the 1960s, most of the families, including my own, had moved from that neighborhood as that neighborhood was experiencing a transition.

Aliquippa, like Wilkinsburg, New Castle, and the other milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region has not been able to reverse its economic fortunes. Unless a community believes that it can change its circumstances by its actions, it has little incentive or reason to act. A community's belief in their own efficacy is a basis for social change. According to Albert Bandura, "perceived self- efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." (Bandura, 1982, p. 3). I have extended this definition to "community efficacy" which accepts Bandura's definition for self-efficacy and extends it to communities. Again Bandura states, "*perceived collective [community] efficacy is defined as a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments.*" (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). So "community efficacy" then refers to a community's belief that it is both empowered and enabled to act to change their situation, that they can rebuild and direct their future.



### **The Final Version of the Problem**

The problem to be examined in this research is the problem of discovering how community efficacy is revealed within an economically distressed community. According to the research of Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1997, p. 80), mastery experience is one of the stronger means of building efficacy. The research will examine how mastery experience and consequently, community efficacy, is revealed through narratives expressed as fables. In addition, the research will examine the conflicts between the way a community views itself contrasted with the way it is viewed by the larger educational community through the identification of such narratives and will examine how those narratives have changed over time. The fables will reveal how the community views itself, its role in the educational process, the way education and knowledge are viewed in the community and the family unit in this economically distressed community.

In an attempt to narrow the focus of my study, I restricted my research area to one milltown community, Aliquippa. Aliquippa was one of the milltowns suffering economic upheaval since the 1980s. To study the entire Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region would have required resources beyond the scope of this effort. In addition, not all of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region suffered equally in the economic upheaval. Some areas, such as the northern suburbs of Allegheny County including Pine Township, Richland Township, Wexford, Ross and McCandless Townships and sections of Washington County like Upper St. Clair and Peters Township and Butler County in Cranberry and Mars remain prosperous and are experiencing growth. Other areas, particularly the milltowns like Aliquippa, Duquesne, Clairton, Wilkinsburg, and New Castle have continued to decline.

Aliquippa and six other milltown communities who have suffered economic upheaval in the 1980s formed a group called the Distressed Seven. The Distressed Seven was comprised of the Aliquippa, Farrell, Duquesne, Sto-Rox, New Castle, Clairton, and Steel Valley school districts with the Wilkinsburg school district joining later. These once solidly working class districts are now experiencing high rates of poverty for children ages 5 - 17. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as recently as 1995 - 1996 the poverty rates for these districts are Farrell 43.2%, Aliquippa 43.2%, Sto-Rox 42.7%, Duquesne 36.2%, Clairton 36.2%, Wilkinsburg 29.1%, New Castle 29.0%, and Steel Valley 22.2%.

### **Community Upheaval / the Context of the Problem**

Aliquippa, an economically distressed milltown in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region is an industrial town resembling the Third World. According to US Census data obtained from the *Census of Population and Housing 1990*, Aliquippa's population decreased from 17,094 in 1980 to 13,374 in 1990, a 21.8 percent decrease. The median age increased from 35.3 years to 39.2 years in that time period reflecting the changing demographics of the milltown resulting from the loss of jobs in the town and the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region in the 1980s. Median household income decreased by 40% in the same time period.

The number of school age students, age 5 - 17, decreased by nearly one-third, a loss of 964 students in that ten-year period. The loss of students represents a significant loss in revenue and a significant loss in reimbursement from the state. Similar losses in population, especially younger age groups, have reduced the tax payer base. While the area lost taxpayers, median household income decreased by 40% and median family

incomes decreased by 38%. The average value of housing units reflected a similar decrease. An average housing unit in Aliquippa lost nearly one-third of its value from 1980 - 1990. This precipitous drop in housing values caused a corresponding drop in revenue for the district leaving it in a distressed status. The following table compares other selected socioeconomic and demographic data about Aliquippa from 1980 to 1990.

**Table 1****Comparison of Demographic data 1980 - 1990 (Aliquippa)**

	1980	1990	Change amount	Change %
Total persons	17,094	13,374	(3,720)	-21.8%
<b>Persons by Age</b>				
Under 5	1,056	1,014	(42)	-4.0%
5 - 17	3,102	2,138	(964)	-31.1%
18 - 24	2,114	969	(1,145)	-54.2%
25 - 44	3,600	3,364	(236)	-6.6%
45 - 64	4,512	2,986	(1,526)	-33.8%
65 and over	2,710	2,903	193	7.1%
under 18 (0 - 17)	4,158	3,152	(1,006)	-24.2%
40 and over	7,903	6,561	(1,342)	-17.0%
median age	35.3	39.2	3.9	11.1%
<b>Median income</b>				
household	\$ 28,129	\$ 16,804	\$ (11,325)	-40.3%
family	\$ 35,002	\$ 21,870	\$ (13,132)	-37.5%
per capita	\$ 11,961	\$ 8,892	\$ (3,069)	-25.7%
<b>Education, population over 25 years</b>				
high school	4,131	3,513	(618)	-15.0%
college degree	647	685	38	5.9%
Employed	6,109	4,038	(2,071)	-33.9%
<b>Housing units</b>				
total	6,643	6,118	(525)	-7.9%
(occupied)	6,383	5,575	(808)	-12.7%
Average value	\$53,893	\$37,397	\$(16,496)	-30.6%
Median Year built	1939.3	1941	1.7	

Wilkinsburg, another of the Distressed Seven suffered a similar fate. According to US Census data obtained from the *Census of Population and Housing 1990*, Wilkinsburg's population decreased from 23,669 in 1980 to 21,080 in 1990, a 10.9 percent decrease. The median age increased from 32.6 years to 35.6 years in that time period reflecting changing demographics similar to the changes in Aliquippa. Median household income remained nearly flat, decreasing by 1% in the same time period.

The number of school age students, age 5 - 17, decreased by nearly 15%, a loss of 554 students in that ten-year period. The loss of students represents a significant loss in revenue and a significant loss in reimbursement from the state. Similar losses in population, especially younger age groups, have reduced the tax payer base. While the area lost taxpayers, median household income decreased by 1.4% and median family incomes decreased by 4.7%. The average value of housing units reflected decreases as well. An average housing unit in Wilkinsburg lost 16% of its value from 1980 - 1990. This precipitous drop in housing values caused a corresponding drop in revenue for the district leaving it in a distressed status. The following table compares other selected socioeconomic and demographic data about Wilkinsburg from 1980 to 1990.

**Table 2****Comparison of Demographic data 1980 - 1990 (Wilkinsburg)**

	1980	1990	Change amount	Change %
Total persons	23,669	21,080	(2,589)	-10.9%
<b>Persons by Age</b>				
Under 5	1,489	1,421	(68)	-4.6%
5 - 17	3,557	3,003	(554)	-15.6%
18 - 24	2,835	1,865	(970)	-34.2%
25 - 44	6,973	7,358	385	5.5%
45 - 64	4,687	3,893	(794)	-16.9%
65 and over	4,128	3,540	(588)	-14.2%
under 18 (0 - 17)	5,046	4,424	(622)	-12.3%
40 and over	9,889	8,805	(1,084)	-11.0%
median age	32.6	35.6	3.0	9.1%
<b>Median income</b>				
household	\$ 23,032	\$ 22,709	\$ (323)	-1.4%
family	\$ 29,559	\$ 28,158	\$ (1,401)	-4.7%
per capita	\$ 12,569	\$ 13,000	\$ 431	3.4%
<b>Education, population over 25 years</b>				
high school	5,952	4,794	(1,158)	-5.3%
college degree	2,989	3,418	429	4.2%
Employed	10,419	9,768	(651)	-0.2%
<b>Housing units</b>				
total	11,400	11,354	213	1.9%
(occupied)	10,500	9,829	(671)	-6.4%
Average value	\$54,941	\$46,168	\$(8,773)	-16.0%
Median Year built	1938.4	1941	2.6	

This pattern of misfortune was repeated in New Castle, another of the Distressed Seven. According to US Census data obtained from the *Census of Population and Housing 1990*, New Castle's population decreased from 33,621 in 1980 to 28,334 in 1990, a 15.7 percent decrease. The median age increased from 34.6 years to 38.5 years in that time period reflecting changing demographics similar to the changes in Aliquippa and Wilkinsburg. Median household income decreased by 24% in the same time period.

The number of school age students, age 5 - 17, decreased by 27%, a loss of 1,632 students in that ten-year period. The loss of students represents a significant loss in revenue and a significant loss in reimbursement from the state. Similar losses in population, especially younger age groups, have reduced the tax payer base. While the area lost taxpayers, median household income decreased by 24% and median family incomes decreased by 20.5%. The average value of housing units reflected decreases as well. An average housing unit in New Castle lost 28% of its value from 1980 - 1990. This precipitous drop in housing values caused a corresponding drop in revenue for the district leaving it in a distressed status. The following table compares other selected socioeconomic and demographic data about New Castle from 1980 to 1990.

**Table 3****Comparison of Demographic data 1980 - 1990 (New Castle)**

	1980	1990	Change amount	Change %
Total persons	33,621	28,334	(5,287)	-15.7%
<b>Persons by Age</b>				
Under 5	2,238	1,916	(322)	-14.4%
5 - 17	5,964	4,332	(1,632)	-27.4%
18 - 24	4,069	2,480	(1,589)	-39.1%
25 - 44	7,621	7,629	8	0.1%
45 - 64	7,961	5,539	(2,422)	-30.4%
65 and over	5,768	6,438	670	11.6%
under 18 (0 - 17)	8,202	6,248	(1,954)	-23.8%
40 and over	15,201	13,563	(1,638)	-10.8%
median age	34.6	38.5	3.9	11.3%
<b>Median income</b>				
household	\$ 22,593	\$ 17,103	\$ (5,490)	-24.3%
family	\$ 29,195	\$ 23,220	\$ (5,975)	-20.5%
per capita	\$ 10,192	\$ 9,298	\$ (894)	-8.8%
<b>Education, population over 25 years</b>				
high school	8,600	8,432	(168)	-2.0%
college degree	1,824	1,685	(139)	-7.6%
Employed	11,889	9,906	(1,983)	-16.7%
<b>Housing units</b>				
total	13,325	11,053	(2,327)	-17.4%
(occupied)	12,581	11,374	(1,207)	-9.6%
Average value	\$ 44,384	\$31,869	\$(12,514)	-28.2%
Median Year built	1933.5	1939	5.5	



Jobs, population, housing values and consequently, the tax bases for the school district were swept away. More tragically, what was also swept away was an inter-generational way of life that provided a sense of continuity, security, family cohesion, and communality. Swept away also was a commitment to others through a shared trust and dependence upon others because of the economic failure. The capitalist view with its celebration of individualism would treat such dependence as a shameful condition, rather than a celebration of bonds of caring and solidarity as a community.

The milltowns had been created for the single purpose of producing steel. Nora Faires observed, “Rather than workers bending the job to their will, industry typically dominated the lives of immigrants and their children.” (Faires, p.4) Around that function, the workers had created an encompassing social system. This social system consisted of extended family, the church, the ethnic clubs, the neighborhood, the community and the mill. These organizational units allowed the community a strong sense of anchorage and continuity as the sons followed their fathers and others in their extended family and community into the mill. The loss of this social system and community defined the real cost of deindustrialization. (Lubove, 1996, p. 8). The social tragedy brought about by the new capitalism of the 1980s was “one version of Schumpeter’s ‘creative destruction,’ except that what is destroyed are often plants of ,the company and the towns where they are located . . .” (Bell, p. 325).

Deindustrialization of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region produced such a social tragedy. Whole communities of stable, independent, hard working families dissolved in the 1980s. Little had been done to restore the economic vitality of these communities.

These communities lost an industry with the jobs and tax base that came with it, but the loss of the social system, a way of life, a community culture and spirit were more tragic. In nearly two decades since the disaster, nothing has been created out of the destruction. What had been devastated was more than the economy and milltowns, but a century old entire way of life (Lubove, 1996, p. 22). This economic apocalypse was accomplished with complete disregard for the social and economic implications for the community.

Economic collapse has left the community of Aliquippa downwardly mobile and the public school system distressed. The ensuing socioeconomic problems are typical and expected for a community in economic decline. Socioeconomic changes, demographic changes, population and tax base losses, have left the public school district financially strapped. There is little or no hope of relief from outside the community. The national shifts toward political conservatism, reduced state and national budget funding for social and economic development projects relevant to the needs of the area, and local racial bias will continue to exclude the community from the economic development mainstream.

The community and the public school system are caught in a decreasing spiral of reduced population, tax base losses, changing demographics from taxpayers to populations requiring more services, declining public school system, lower skilled graduates, higher dropout rates, and continued population losses.

Just what type of city is Aliquippa? Is it a city that through the years and the changes continues to give form to its desires, or one in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it? The fable of Zenobia could serve as a metaphor for Aliquippa and like Calvino's Zenobia, we are asked, in which of the two types of cities does Aliquippa

reside? Is it a city which is control of its destiny and gives form to its desires, or is it a city where desires erase the city or the city erases desires? Is it a city whose destiny is beyond its control?

Aliquippa and the other milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region have not been able to reverse their economic fortunes. Consequently, these towns have become distressed school districts. This study will examine this community through a series of interviews with its former superintendent who is both a member of the Aliquippa community and a member of the educational administration professional community. What does it mean to serve as a superintendent of such a district and how is it different from when the district was prosperous? There is only a single person who could tell us about the district and the changes to the district, the superintendent. Additionally, the superintendent is able to provide the perspective of an educator who has a life long familiarity with the community. For these reasons, the former superintendent was selected as the participant.

In order to understand the economically distressed community and its relationship to education, we must understand it on its own terms, through its own lens and with its own set of values. Educational reform measures should not be devised until we understand the values and virtues of those who are perceived as needing of reform. As in many communities, but especially in the economically distressed communities, educational reforms are presented to alleviate the problems in a school district associated with economic decline.

Since educational reform is viewed as necessary for districts like Aliquippa, some

model for educational reform must be followed. Most educational reform models are "top down", or off the rack educational models. In fact, D. W. Miller (1999) refers to "whole - school or comprehensive reforms, the off-the-shelf programs that provide principals and teachers in low performing schools with a ready-made plan for teaching methods and curricula." The American Institute for Research examined 24 such reform programs and found that only three, Direct Instruction, Success for All, and High Schools that Work, were based upon a strong research base (Miller, p.A17). These programs are popular not because of the strong research supporting the reforms, but because they can be purchased with Title I subsidies. It would appear that school reform measures are not selected upon sound research, but because they fit some preconceived notion of what a dominant culture seeks to impose on those perceived to be in need of reform.

The *Catalog of School Reform Models* was developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) at the request of the U.S. Department of Education and includes sixty four models of educational reform. About one-half are entire school reform models and the other half are curriculum-based reform models. All of these models focus on the engineering solution of the how and what people learn. However, none of these models focus on why people learn.

As well as being generally poorly researched (Miller, 1999), these models do not address how the community views itself, its role in the educational process, the way education and knowledge are used in the community, or how education is viewed in the community and in the family unit. It would seem that it would be necessary for these criteria to be recognized if the community is to embrace any reform process and take

ownership and responsibility for the education of the students in the community. These educational reforms are for the most part, top down driven or at best engineering solutions. That is to say that these solutions focus on the delivery of instruction economically and efficiently. These reforms “trivialize learning, to reduce it to a mechanical skill” (Postman, p. 3).

For educational reforms to have meaning, that is for them to alter the world of communities like Aliquippa, such reforms must have a reason for reform that represents relevance to the community. If educational reforms are to have meaning for a community, these reforms must serve a purpose and reinforce values endorsed by the community. When a community understands or devises the *why* of an educational reform, it can endure the *how* imposed by the reforms because these reforms now provide a purpose and clarity to learning. A connection between the reform and relevance to the experience of the learner’s reality has been established.

Postman advances the notion that this meaning is derived from the gods that are served in education and learning. With conviction, Postman uses the term narrative as a synonym for god. He posits that four gods (narratives) underlie our conception of public education:

the god (narrative) of economic utility - This god (narrative) requires that the purpose of education is to produce employable citizens. You are what you do. This is the god served by the Calvinist and explained by Max Weber, as discussed in the next chapter. The Calvinist as defined in Max Weber’s Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, the success in a calling, a business or a profession, demanded that one accumulate goods and

prosper. Success in that calling and the consequent prosperity defined one as saved.

the god (narrative) of consumerism - This god (narrative) requires that we accumulate.

You are what you own. This is the god served by the capitalist as discussed by Daniel

Bell in the next chapter. Bell defines in the Capital contradictions of capitalism that

capitalism is now based, not upon delayed gratification as the Calvinist practiced, but that

capitalism is now based upon deficit spending and the accumulation of goods based upon

credit to serve an immediate gratification.

the god (narrative) of technology - This god (narrative) relies on technical solutions for

virtually everything. This technological god is the god of Alexander L. Holley and Hewitt.

Their role in the development of capitalism and the role of industry in the communities of

the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region is discussed as part of the Battle for Homestead in the

next chapter. Holley was considered the preeminent architect of the new steel industry

who sought to create a new civilization and that technology, in the form of engineers were

the vehicle, the power of that civilization. They believed that “self-interest and

accumulation of wealth constituted the good” (Krause, p. 57). Abram S. Hewitt was the

pioneer of open hearth steelmaking and defender of the reorientation of the political

culture of Pittsburgh and the nation. Hewitt advocated for securing the position of capital

and the creation of a “governing class ... of engineers and conductors of industry”

(Krause, p. 63).

the god (narrative) of separatism - this god (narrative) advocates that we split off groups

from a unifying whole. This god (narrative) demands separatism rather than cultural

pluralism where cultures are examined for what they are, both good and bad. We begin to

serve this god when we tolerate or endorse public education policies that permit different educational opportunities for students. As demonstrated by Galbraith in the next chapter, this god is the god of the culture of the contented.

By narrative, Postman means a story that tells of origins and a future, constructing ideals in the process, identifying rules of conduct and sources of authority, and providing a sense of continuity and purpose. The purposes of such narratives are to provide people with a sense of identity, a sense of community life, a basis for moral conduct and explanations of that which cannot be known. (Postman, p. 7). These narratives, while providing purpose and continuity, also provide the individual and the community with a mastery experience. As stated by Bandura (Bandura, 1997, p. 80), mastery experience is one of the stronger means of building efficacy. Mastery experience builds knowledge and perception of oneself and one's community. Such self-knowledge, and its parallel, community knowledge can be expressed through narrative. Narrative (Merriam, p.157; Stake, p.40), expressed through fable, would provide us with experiential understanding of Aliquippa.

In addition, central to the understanding of Postman's narratives is the history of the narrative and the people forming the narrative. An examination of prior knowledge will identify the history of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region through the events of the Homestead strike and how that event helped form the origin and future of the area and in particular, Aliquippa.

Narrative helps construct ideals through the expression of shared values, identifying rules of conduct and sources of authority. Narratives also form a basis of

mastery experience by relating experiences of control as well as membership in the community. Mastery experience, according to Bandura cited earlier, is one of the most powerful mechanisms in the development of efficacy. Bandura's research in the Self - Efficacy component of Social Learning Theory is a significant theoretical basis for this study. The narratives of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region including milltowns like Aliquippa were formed by the ideals of the Protestant ethic and the division of labor. In the literature review, these works and others will be discussed in the context of their contribution to the ideals of the industry which dominated towns such as Aliquippa and how they can help us to understand community efficacy.

The review of economic literature will help identify the changes to the economy in the transition period from 1980 to 1990. An understanding of changes to the economy will provide an understanding of changes in continuity and sense of purpose of a community.

### **Purpose and Historical Framework of the Research**

#### Guiding purposes of the research

There are two essential purposes to this research. The first purpose of this research is to examine the theme of community efficacy within a larger context, to integrate the research of various other disciplines into a broader view. The second purpose of this research is to address the larger more fundamental research questions identified below.



### Research Questions

1. What are the narratives of the Aliquippa school district as stated by its long time superintendent?
2. How has the narrative changed in Aliquippa?
3. How have the participant's values evolved over time to deal with the changing values of the community in that time period?
4. How might the community of Aliquippa view its own narrative, its role in the educational process, the way education and knowledge is viewed in the educational process? How does the superintendent's narrative pave the way for our search for those larger narratives?

### Historical Background of the Problem

The historical framework of this research seeks to situate the current economic difficulties of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and in particular, Aliquippa, within a historical context, particularly with the events at Homestead in 1892. It will examine the change in the economy of the region and the nation from 1980 to the present and to compare this new capitalism with the capitalism of the 1890s, America's Gilded Age. The purpose is to establish the theoretical basis for the concept of community efficacy from psychological, historical, economic, social and community and cultural perspectives. A larger objective is to illuminate how a school builds efficacy with its students as expressed in these narratives in the community. These perspectives are complementary and would be molded into a comprehensive view.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this multi-disciplinary understanding relies on several main bodies of research. These bodies of research include Bandura's work on the self-efficacy component of social learning theory, Durkheim's concept of the division of labor, Max Weber's understanding of the Protestant ethic, Bell's argument regarding the cultural contradictions inherent in the capitalist system, Bodnar, Simon, and Weber's urban history of Pittsburgh, Krause's account of the events of the Homestead steelworker's strike in 1892, and Sennett's account of character and narrative in the new economy. For economic analysis, Galbraith's analysis of a contented culture and Phillip's assessment of political influences on poverty will prove useful. Finally, I have relied on Siddle-Walker's research into the educational accomplishments of a black school in North Carolina for understanding of why an economically disadvantaged school experienced success.

### **Need for the Research / Significance of the Study**

The need for this research is significant, particularly at this time. Under this extended period of economic expansion at the time of this writing, we may have forgotten that all is not well in some communities. The economic problems in communities like Aliquippa have affected the families, organizations, and social fabric of these communities. Bandura states that "the strength of families, communities, organizations, social institutions, and even nations lies partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort." (Bandura, 1997, p. 477).

The needs of communities experiencing massive social and economic upheaval have only been viewed from singular perspectives. There is a need to examine these views and to establish the theoretical basis for community efficacy from a perspective that integrates other disciplines. While helpful, views from a single perspective are simply one-dimensional views of a multi-dimensional problem. There is a need to validate the data from each of these disciplines and to integrate them into a multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary concept of community behavior. Social policy and particular educational reform policy developed from a single perspective, including but not limited to social, economic, or psychological perspectives tends to be ineffective, incomplete, or misapplied. For example, educational reform policy developed from a purely economic perspective would ignore the sociological and cultural implications of such a policy. Similarly, educational reforms developed purely from a social perspective tend to ignore the effects of economics and as argued on the current political scene, ignores the cost of such social programs. Educational reforms based upon psychological theories such as efficacy theory link efficacy to performance and would seek to enhance efficacy thereby enhancing performance. However, efficacy is not the only source of performance and such a singular perspective could ignore educational theory. To develop educational reforms from solely a political perspective could create solutions based upon hegemony, ignoring the needs and wants of the community it purports to serve. Educational solutions based solely upon religious perspectives would likely be unsuccessful in the public education arena in the United States. Similarly, to ignore the religious perspectives of a community in developing educational reforms would likely be met with great resistance.

Without an inter-disciplinary view to problems such as community efficacy, we might not develop effective or efficient solutions. Rather, as in the case of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and communities like Aliquippa, we will continue to study the problem from a number of single perspectives without integrating these perspectives into a comprehensive view. Each of these perspectives attempts to gain knowledge without enhancing understanding. The result is that educational reform policies are fragmented and ineffective, recommending treatment of the solution rather than the treatment of the core problem. Educational reform focuses on technological solutions without consideration of how the community would integrate that policy into their narrative.

Economic issues will likely also be integrated into the community narrative. The effects of the new capitalism are polarizing, particularly in regard to the accumulation of wealth and distribution of income. The effects of the new economy on the creation and sustainability of communities are so destructive in some cases, that these communities may remain long time blights on the social landscape. Perhaps these communities will remain as visible reminders of the social and economic failures of capitalism in an economy that has favored other communities with so much success. School districts such as Aliquippa may be offered technological based educational reform solutions that might not be effective in their community. Postman warns us of false devotion to the gods of technology and economic utility, which are gods who do not serve. This research will examine if these gods serve the community or not.

There is much that we know, but much more that we do not know. Richard Sennett, in The corrosion of character, warns us, “. . . I do know a regime which provides

human beings with no deep reasons to care about one another cannot long preserve its legitimacy.” (Sennett, p. 148). It is intended that this research will identify realistic opportunities to change public policy toward education in the distressed school districts. This research will provide opportunities for these districts to develop solutions that are consistent with their own narratives. It will provide additional insight and provide communities with reasons to care, to preserve their legitimacy, character and efficacy. It can provide them with opportunities to provide their own reasons for education as expressed through fables in their community narratives.

## CHAPTER II

### PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

A review of the literature of community efficacy is based upon the foundation of psychology, history, and socio-economics. Each discipline contributes to the understanding of the concept of community efficacy and will be discussed in the following sections. It is necessary for this review of the literature to be a multi-disciplinary review, because if we are to gain experiential understanding into the phenomena of community efficacy, we must recognize that each discipline offers insight into this understanding in different ways. Similarly, these insights are complementary and provide textural background for our own understanding.

Although this review of prior knowledge is lengthy and at times detailed, it is necessary to establish the historical background in order to understand how the values of the people of the region were formed. The data obtained in the interviews with the superintendent confirms that the history of the area provided a value set founded upon hard work. This ethic of hard and regular work produced a milltown culture which held work in high esteem and was reinforced both in the home and the local school system. Similarly, a considerable amount of economic data has been presented which speaks at times unfavorably about the economic changes which have taken place in the economy both locally and nationally. While avoiding completely whether or not these changes were necessary from an economic view, it is important to understand that the changes took place and they had significant implications for the residents of the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. These economic effects had considerable impact upon

the school district and the performance of the students as confirmed by my interview data. A considerable amount of this exposition on prior knowledge is devoted to a sociological review which establishes a framework for understanding the experience of a milltown in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. This considerable amount of material is presented, but this experience is not an experience based upon a single source of prior knowledge. This experience has been formed and continues to be formed by sociological factors, economic factors, historical factors, and cultural factors including a substantial amount of heritage knowledge which was a legacy of the inhabitants of the area. The impact of these factors is again confirmed within my interview data.

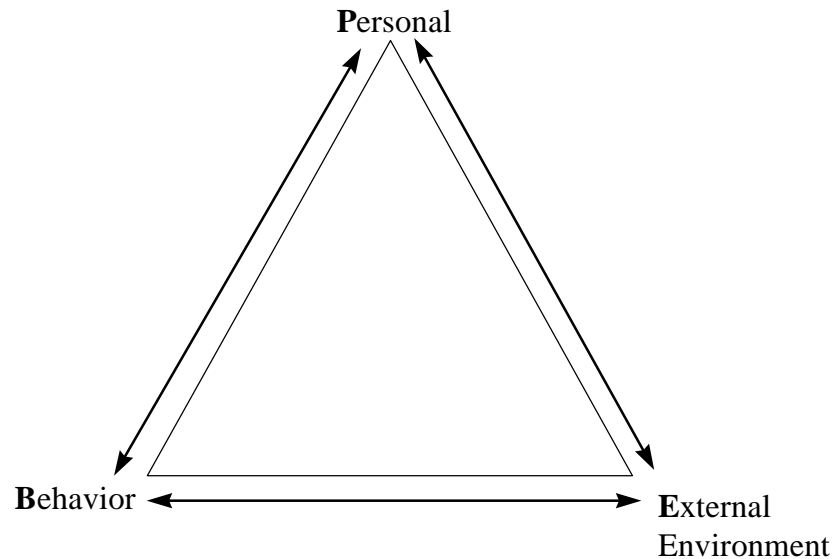
#### **Psychology / Self-efficacy / Community Efficacy - Generally and Locally**

Research on self-efficacy and its extension, community efficacy, is primarily based upon the research done by Albert Bandura regarding social learning theory. In 1986 with the publication of Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory, Bandura advanced the concept that individual beliefs enable one to control thoughts, feelings, and actions, “what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave.” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). Behavior and actions are not the result of randomness or even rationality; people can exercise influence over what they do. Their actions are intentional and humans act as the agents of their intentions. Pajares in an Overview of self-efficacy (Pajares, (<http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/eff.html>) p. 3) writes that “Of all beliefs, self-efficacy, . . . is the most influential arbiter in human agency and plays a powerful role in determining the choices people make, the effort they will expend, how long they will persevere in the face of a challenge, and the degree of anxiety or confidence

they will bring to the task at hand.” Collective efficacy helps explain why the behavior of certain groups, communities, or even regions differs widely even when they have similar knowledge and skills. So efficacy is a generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral subskills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes (Bandura, 1997, p. 37). At a collective level, these subskills could be identified and organized for the purposes of regional socioeconomic development and organizational performance in regard to achievement of desired outcomes. According to Bandura, although perceived collective efficacy is widely recognized to be highly important to a full understanding of organizational functioning, it has been the subject of little research (Bandura, 1997, p. 468).

Bandura’s model shows human agencies within an interdependent social structure of bi-directional determinants acting in triadic reciprocal causation, reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). This social structure can impose constraints and provide resources for action. Industrialists such as Carnegie eliminated opportunities for enablement or overpowered any attempts to circumvent the constraints by controlling the mills and the milltowns. Enabling opportunities of the social system are taken advantage of by efficacious people or they circumvent the constraints. Whereas inefficacious people are less apt to take advantage of the enabling opportunities and are more discouraged by the constraints (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). These behaviors are determined by the interaction of an individual’s personal attributes, previous patterns of behavior, and the external environment. The concept of humans acting as causal agents of change is illustrated in Figure 1.





**Figure 1 Triadic Reciprocity.** The relationships between the three major classes of determinants in triadic reciprocal causation, behavior, internal personal factors, and external environmental factors.

In this manner Bandura begins to define a framework where behavior is affected by self-beliefs which in turn, affect motivation and performance.

Self-beliefs affect individual behavior in four ways, 1) the choice of behavior, 2) the effort expended and their perseverance, 3) by influencing their thought patterns and actions, and 4) by recognizing humans as producers of behavior. “People actively use these beliefs to influence how they behave, the foundation of Bandura’s concept of reciprocal determinism.” (Pajares, (<http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/eff.html>) p.3).

Self-efficacy beliefs can be altered by the integration of information about self-beliefs. According to Bandura, there are four principal sources of self-belief information:

enactive mastery experiences that serve as indicators of capability; vicarious experiences that alter efficacy beliefs through transmission of competencies and comparison with the attainments of others; verbal persuasion and allied types of social influences that one possesses certain capabilities; physiological and affective states from which people partly judge their capableness, strength and vulnerability to dysfunction (Bandura, 1997, p. 79).

#### Sources of self - belief information: Enactive Mastery Experience

Enactive mastery experiences are important and influential indicators of efficacy. Successes build belief in one's capability to succeed and consequently, failures erode one's belief in their capability to succeed. Mastery experiences in overcoming adversity help to reinforce these beliefs in one's ability to exercise control over outcomes. For example, women who had some adaptive resources and endured hard times during the Great Depression emerged more resourceful and self - assured. For those who were not as well equipped to deal with adversity, they emerged from this experience with a sense of ineffectualness and resignation (Elder & Liker, 1982, p. 241-269). Those who emerged from the trials of the Great Depression more resourceful and self - assured would be better prepared to endure a similar experience; those who felt ineffectual and resigned to their fate would be less able to deal with the experience a second time. Effort is an important factor in eroding self-efficacy (Trope, 1983, p. 93-121). Failure at an easy task could have a crushing effect on perceived self-efficacy. Even success obtained at the price of laborious effort can erode belief in one's ability to exert the same level of effort again (Bandura & Cervone, 1986). It is likely that many in the labor movement simply gave up after difficult struggles. However, the commitment to community solidarity with the

workers at Homestead perhaps allowed them to persist in the face of overwhelming obstacles. In Homestead the Carnegie Steel Company overwhelmed the workers so powerfully that unionization remained effectively sidetracked for thirty years (Greenwald, p. 50). In fact, forty five years after the Homestead Strike, on April 12, 1937, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the National Labor Relations Act. The court ordered Jones and Laughlin (J&L) Steel Company to reinstate 58 workers at the company's Aliquippa plant who had been fired for union activity. The ruling established workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. Krause argues that "the workers' movement in Gilded Age Pittsburgh strikes us now as all the more remarkable for its resilience than for its weaknesses." (Krause, p. 201).

These observations are particularly relevant for understanding collective efficacy. Although the Great Depression was deeper and longer than the recent economic tragedy, there were some striking contrasts within the communities and social fabric of the region. Communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region were perhaps better equipped to deal with the adversity of the Great Depression because of the support of the community. Community support often consisted of the support of the larger extended network of family, friends and ethnic clubs. Bodnar, Simon and Weber found that Polish, Italian and Black migrants to the Pittsburgh region relied upon networks of relatives and friends to identify employment opportunities and housing (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 56). Italians in particular almost totally relied on these networks to obtain initial employment. "From the 1890s to the 1930s, repeated instances surfaced of men from the village [Ateleta, Abruzzi] bringing 'paesano' to the pipeline construction department of the

Equitable Gas Company. This entire process was structured around the Ateleta Beneficial Association which provided for the ‘welfare and mutual assistance’ of its members.” (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 58). Faires noted that Pittsburgh Germans founded arrays of churches, social organizations, labor unions and reading societies. The Poles, Finns, Czechs, Hungarians, Serbs, Croatians, Italians, Slovaks, and other immigrants “established organizations to protect themselves and their families from the dire financial consequences of illness or industrial accidents.” (Faires, p. 12). Similarly, Bodnar, Simon, and Weber found that immigrants resided with those responsible for their immigration to the city (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 69). The creation of these mutual benefit societies and close association with networks of extended families and friends helped to shield these communities from feelings of hopelessness about their situation during the Great Depression. With the exercise of some control or mastery experience, however little, over their circumstances, the sense of community efficacy remained which served these people well during the Great Depression. Bodnar, Simon, and Weber found that in Bloomfield during the Great Depression, an Italian taxicab company only hired Italian taxicab drivers, and residents of Cedarville Street held community dinners for nearly all the families on the street (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 218). As America and Pittsburgh became more affluent in the next 50 years, these mutual benefit societies declined in importance to these ethnic groups. Ethnic identity declined as the children of immigrants became Americanized. These children identified with their new country and lost identity with the “old country.” The lack of such a sense of identity, the decline in continuity between the old country and the new, the decreasing sense of community left the towns and people of

the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region not as well equipped to deal with economic tragedy as an earlier generation.

Since these towns had been built for the sole purpose of producing steel and entire social systems were constructed around the steel mill, the community had identified only with the production of steel. As the Great Depression ended and World War II began, these communities simply returned to their original purpose, that of producing steel. Lubove writes of such a conviction and of such an identity with steel production. “As late as 1988, many in the Mon Valley refused to abandon the conviction that steel production would return.” (Lubove, p. 39). An American Institute of Architects design team conceived of a steel mill property in Homestead converted to a “glass enclosed international garden festival (with restaurants and theater) as well as a factory outlet flea market and auto racetrack in McKeesport” (Lubove, p. 39). This design aroused considerable resentment, and a spokesman for the Rainbow Kitchen in Homestead responded “that it was sad for America that this is the idea - to build flower festivals for the unemployed” (Lubove, p. 39).

The chairman of the design team was surprised at the stubbornness of the community to admit that their steelmaking days had concluded and that the design team did not understand the economic hardships of the mill closings. He said, “but, we do understand that. The question is, where do we go from here?” As recently as the 1990s, the Mon Valley communities had troubles understanding that when you would hear people “bristle at the memory of the talk of major floral gardens and similar projects. . . espoused by architects and planners” (Lubove, p. 40). The problem for the members of the

community is that the solutions offered solved the problem by displacing them from their own community. They would be replaced by those more fortunate.

Since the communities of the Mon Valley had not mastered any experience with transforming or rebuilding themselves, not at least since the Great Depression 50 years earlier, the efficacy of the community eroded. The City of Pittsburgh understood the vision more clearly, they pursued an economic transformation to a post-industrial world. As the fortunes of the Mon Valley communities continued to decline, the City of Pittsburgh began to change again. The result of the pursuit of these different paths is a polarized region. The Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region is a polarized region with a rebuilt center city, prosperous suburbs, and milltowns still in squalor; a region reflecting the polarization in economic fortunes of the new capitalism.

Sources of self - belief information: Vicarious Experience

Vicarious experience is an important means of influencing self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk & Hanson, 1989a: 1989b) and persuading people to raise their performance by modeling the behavior of others (Bandura, 1982; Schunk, Hanson, & Cox, 1987). People can and often do make normative comparisons of their own attainments against the attainments of others in similar circumstances. Perceived self-efficacy can be altered through modeling of appropriate behavior. If a behavior produced desired results, then by modeling that behavior under similar circumstances, the same or similar desired outcome should be attained.

The importance of vicarious experience is demonstrated in the ComPAC 21 study. In this report to the Allegheny County Board of Commissioners prepared in January 1996

by The Committee to Prepare Allegheny County for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (ComPAC 21), Allegheny County was compared to six other counties nationwide. These six counties, Davidson County, Tennessee, Hennepin County, Minnesota, King County, Washington, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and Montgomery County, Maryland served as benchmarks, communities which would serve as models for Allegheny County (ComPAC 21, Preparing Allegheny County for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, p.22).

Vicarious experience in the case of the ComPAC 21 report was an essential basis for the proposed transformation of the county government to a more efficient model based upon the governments in the benchmarked counties. At this time the citizens of Allegheny County have elected the first County Executive, acting upon the collective belief that they can and must change their government to become more successful, to become more like the benchmarked counties. To the extent that this transformation to a new form of county government is successful will either erode or build efficacy within the region.

Sources of self - belief information: Verbal Persuasion

People do not act in isolation; people interact as part of their community, and their actions are interdependent producing desired results. The interaction of the individual as part of the community emphasizes the importance of extending the concept of an individual human agency to a collective human agency. The shared belief of individuals creates a new emergent group level attribute of collective or community efficacy. Verbal persuasion can help build efficacy beliefs if the persuasion comes from credible sources and is realistic. “Persuasive efficacy attributions have their greatest impact on people who have some reason to believe that they can produce effects through their actions.”

(Chambliss & Murray, p. 349-354). Encouraging words from local leaders would ring hollow without these efficacy beliefs.

Sources of self - belief information: Physiological and Affective States

In developing judgements of their capabilities, people rely on information obtained from their assessment of their physiological and emotional states. People are more inclined to expect successful results if they are not tense, agitated, and / or under stress. Stress reactions to inefficacious control generate further stress. Bandura found that heightened beliefs in coping efficacy with corresponding improvements in performance were obtained with treatments which eliminated emotional reactions to subjective threats through mastery experiences (Bandura, p. 106). The mastery experience eliminated the negative mood states. This research becomes particularly relevant when assessed by indicators of community health such as infant mortality, anxiety levels and frequency of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and heart disease. These indicators of community health may correspond to efficacy beliefs in the community and changes in these indicators could correspond with changes in community efficacy. Eliminating these stressors through mastery experiences at the community level could heighten mood states, efficacy beliefs and contribute to improvements in performance.

A connection between socioeconomic factors, health and efficacy beliefs was determined by Marmot, Bosma, Hemingway, Brunner, and Stansfeld (1997, p. 235) in their study of the contribution of job control to coronary heart disease. In this study of British civil servants, the researchers found a higher rate of coronary heart disease in men of lower employment grades. They state that “the largest contribution to the



socioeconomic gradient in coronary heart disease frequency was from low control at work.” Socioeconomic factors correspond to low job control or efficacy beliefs which contribute to coronary heart disease in this study. The study concludes that “greater attention to the design of work environments may be one important way to reduce inequalities in health.” (Marmot, M.G., Bosma, H., Hemingway, H., Brunner, E., Stansfeld, S., p. 239). While increased job control may reduce inequalities in health, how that job control is obtained and utilized is a central issue in the growth or erosion of collective efficacy.

In another study of the relationship between perceived control benefits and cardiovascular reactivity, enhanced control may not always be beneficial. Gerin, Litt, Deigh, and Pickering (1995) found that situations of low control:

- seem to generally more stressful for the group as a whole, compared with high control;
- elevate blood pressure and heart rate more than a corresponding high control condition; and,
- are unrelated to varying levels of self- efficacy to cope with that particular stressor.

The data suggest that under conditions of high control, certain individuals may be no better off than under conditions of low control because their self-efficacy for the task is low. Only individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy seemed to be “protected” from the blood pressure and heart rate elevations due to the stressfulness of the task (Gerin, et al., p. 396). In summary, higher control will only benefit those with enhanced efficacy beliefs.

It would seem that some of these improvements in efficacy beliefs at the community level would be indicated in corresponding improvements in community health indicators and performance. If a community senses that its future is hopeless, such as the mill communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region or in the former Soviet Union, then it may experience heightened anxiety and depression, and consequently reduced efficacy beliefs. It is perhaps easy to conclude that the states of the former Soviet Union are sensing a future which seems hopeless. As a result they appear to be experiencing heightened levels of alcoholism, suicide and perhaps even heightened anxiety and depression. According to a Rand Corporation report, Russia's Demographic Crisis, standardized death rates in 1993 for males ages 15-64 caused by:

- non-natural causes nearly doubled since 1963;
- circulatory diseases were slightly more than three times the US rate;
- alcoholism was 20 percent higher than the US rate, but the ratio compared to the US rate more than doubled from one-half the US rate in 1965 to 1.2 times the US rate in 1993;
- suicides were nearly four times the US rate, as were deaths due to homicide.

The entire geographic region may be experiencing reduced efficacy beliefs which may be influencing their performance economically as well. Russians are used to receiving free health care and many are unwilling and frequently unable to pay for health services. Reforms in Russia have failed to produce noticeable results as far as health care is

concerned. Lack of control over their own health may contribute to eroding efficacy in that country.

The affect of mood on self-efficacy beliefs is significant in the treatment of coronary disease. Jensen, et al. (1993), found that with recovering coronary angioplasty patients, a positive mood was related to enhanced self-efficacy beliefs and the greater their engagement on activities that help in their recovery and help prevent future coronary disease.

Perceived inability to exercise control over life events breeds despondency (Marshall & Lang, 1990). Similarly, Kavanaugh tested the effect of mood states on self-efficacy beliefs and found that efficacy beliefs were related to mood states, beliefs were raised in a positive mood state and lowered in a reduced mood state (Kavanaugh, 1983, p. 113). Despondency lowers efficacy beliefs, weakens motivation and erodes performance. Poor performance further increases despondency creating a mood state, self-efficacy belief, motivation and performance cycle.

The positive self-efficacy belief, performance relationship has been shown by Bandura (1977) and Wood and Bandura (1989a: 1989b). An efficacy - performance cycle has been proposed by Lindsley, Brass, and Thomas (1995, p. 645). The relationship between perceived efficacy and performance is both positive and cyclical. Efficacy affects performance which in turn affects efficacy beliefs. The reciprocal causation between efficacy and performance results in what Henshel (1976), Masuch (1985) define as “deviation amplifying” loops. Deviations in self-efficacy lead to similar deviations in performance which in turn continue to amplify deviations in self-efficacy. Masuch (1985)

identifies a self - correcting spiral where counteractions reverse or adjust the cycle where there exists no discernible pattern of mutual causation.

Bandura (1977), and Bandura and Jourden (1991) found evidence of such spirals with some subjects experiencing progressive deterioration in both self-efficacy and performance. Sutton (1990) and Hambrick and D'Aveni (1988) found evidence of deviation amplifying relationships in research on organizational failure although efficacy was not explored at this level of analysis. Hackman (1990) found a tendency for groups to be trapped in “self - fueling spirals” and found “considerable evidence that supports the dictum, that, over time, the rich get rich and the poor get poorer.” This observation by Hackman supports the notion of a spiral of economic performance in groups. As recent economic data shown later indicate, polarization of incomes may be a reflection of an efficacy - performance cycle among the lower income percentiles.

Organizational performance, and ultimately its survival is dependent upon accurate and timely feedback of information at all times, especially during efficacy - performance cycles, even positive cycles. Organizational decline can be related to misinterpreted or ignored feedback from the environment; misreading the market or the consumer environment can be fatal in some cases. The steel mills which dominated the communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region seemed to become victims of having ignored this feedback. Examples of the steel mill operations ignoring feedback from the environment are cited by Lubove (1996, p. 17). Global overcapacity and technologically superior foreign competition which competed with regional producers were likely anticipated by bank directors who participated in the bank’s investment (or disinvestment) policies.

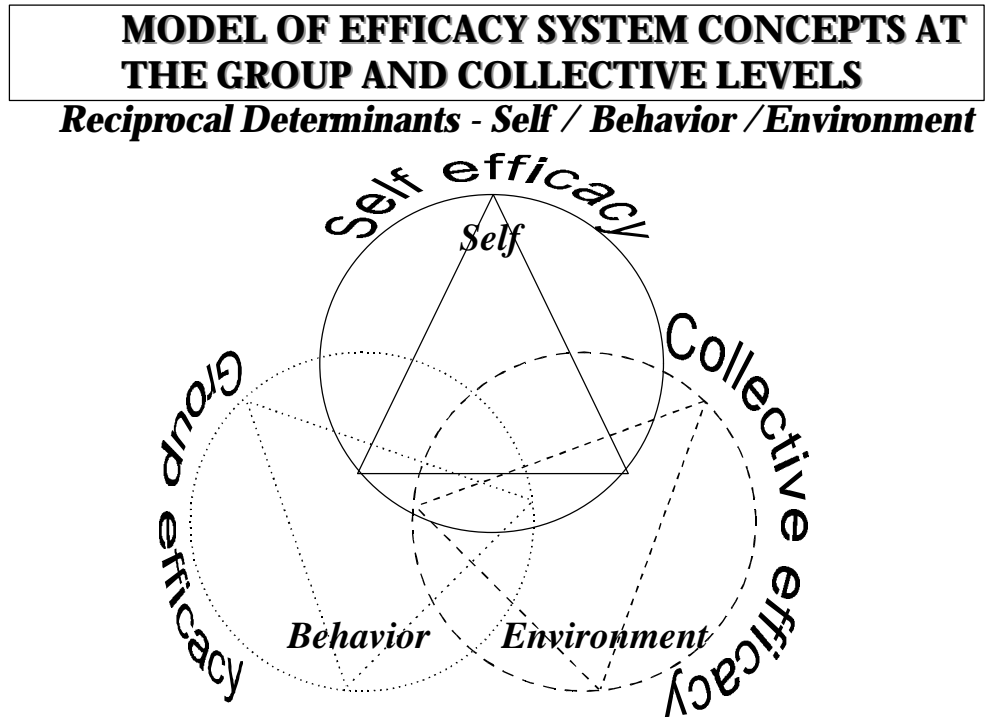
These investment policies ignored the feedback that would have forced the shareholders to invest in making the regional steel mills more competitive. At the same time, these bank directors were financing the modernization of foreign steel companies. In an even more sinister tone, the Tri-State Conference report accused U. S. Steel of being content to rake off the profits while foreign competitors modernized (Lubove, 1996, p. 22). A labor historian, David L. Rosenberg raises the issue that the disinvestment policy was devised by a narrow corporate and financial elite that anticipated the decline of union power as a fringe benefit (Lubove, 1996, p. 17). Unions attempted to provide workers with some control over their work lives. The decline of union power must have been perceived by union members as a decline in control over their economic lives with a corresponding erosion of the collective efficacy of that group. Since the unions were a substantial part of the communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region including Aliquippa, eroding efficacy in that group may have contributed to an erosion of efficacy for the entire community.

#### Research on Collective Efficacy

Perceived collective efficacy exists as a group attribute and collective efficacy beliefs predict levels of group performance (Bandura, 1993; Hodges & Carron, 1992; and Little & Madigan, 1994). Measurements of collective efficacy have been performed at the group level with teams and small groups as either the sum of individual efficacies or as the group's assessment of their efficacy as a whole. However, since any assessment of efficacy must reflect the processes operating within and upon the group creating numerous confounding variables, this assessment may become unmanageable with large groups like a

community or region. Perhaps then it is most useful to explain the factors which erode or restore collective efficacy or how this collective efficacy affects the functioning of the group. These factors would be expressed in the community through their narratives.

There appears to be at least a theoretical relationship between efficacy and socioeconomic factors at both the individual and collective levels, although empirical evidence seems only to exist at the individual level. Indirect evidence shows that this relationship between efficacy and performance exists at a group level as well. Eulau (1969) emphasized that there is a simultaneity of individual and collective action. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that individuals act and influence the group and help to shape the collective efficacy of the group. We may attempt to model these influences by extending Bandura's previously illustrated model to the group level as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** Model of Efficacy System Concepts at the Group and Collective Levels

This model builds upon Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism between self, environment, and behavior and theorizes that these reciprocal relationships exist within the individual, and simultaneously between the individual and the group, between groups (the collective or the community), and between the individual and groups (the collective or community). The existence of these relationships has been shown. Extending these relationships to the corresponding relationship between efficacy and performance at both the individual and group levels, it becomes possible to theorize that community efficacy exists and is influenced, either eroded or reinforced, by community performance. That is to say, community performance refers to how well the community is able to achieve its

goals. Community performance is in turn influenced by the cyclical relationship between efficacy and performance. Moreover, community efficacy is formed not only by psychological factors, but by historical, and socioeconomic factors as well.

Not surprisingly, Bandura (1997) and Bandura and Wood (1989) found that efficacy beliefs are shaped by people's beliefs about the extent to which their environment can be influenced or controlled. It is logical to suspect that these beliefs would then be expressed through narrative. In a simulation of organizations, those who operated their organization under belief that organizations are not easily changeable quickly lost faith in their decision making capabilities even when performance goals were easily attainable. With lowered aspirations, their performance deteriorated. Others operated under the belief that organizations are controllable, exhibited high self-efficacy, set challenging goals and performed at a high level, even performing better over time.

As evidenced by low voter turnout at election time, it is likely that individuals or groups who do not vote do not view political systems or organizations as capable of being influenced or controllable. In fact, Kerr found that the larger the collectivity, the less significant the individual effort may appear (1996). This type of behavior would correspond with reduced efficacy beliefs in regard to political systems or political organizations. Similarly, in a community which has experienced economic tragedy, the view that local organizations or corporations are capable of being influenced or controllable could correspond to reduced efficacy beliefs in the community. This reduced efficacy belief might be particularly prevalent in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region which



was dominated by steel mills. This notion was previously voiced by Frick at Homestead in 1892 and was identified by Lubove (Lubove, 1996, p. 12):

“The [steel] companies fiercely defended managerial prerogatives and made every effort to discourage initiative on the part of workers or unions. Rules, regulations, and an elaborate hierarchal bureaucracy typified U. S. Steel labor policy. Throughout its history, U. S. Steel ‘regarded hourly workers as an undifferentiated horde, incapable of doing anything more than following orders and collecting the paycheck.’ . . . the workers and unions ‘had no concern for competitiveness and rejected the idea that [they] bore any responsibility for seeing that the plant operated efficiently.’”

The environment from the view of the workers was one of low job control in an organization which was not influenced or controlled by them. Bandura and Wood (1989) noted that viewing an organization as changeable increases one’s perceived efficacy to manage it, whereas regarding it as relatively unchangeable undermines one’s beliefs of managerial efficacy. Managers have greater capacity to change organizations than workers, so if reduced efficacy beliefs existed with managers, these reduced efficacy beliefs logically had to exist in regard to the steel worker and the steel company as well. This reduced efficacy belief likely influenced the performance of the organization and ultimately the communities which were dominated by those organizations.

## **General Community Upheaval and Community Efficacy**

### The Lessons of History

“Most history is guessing and the rest is prejudice” (Durant, W., & Durant, A., 1968, p. 12). With that warning we proceed to attempt to explain the historical factors which helped shape the communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and their efficacy beliefs. Hopefully, our interpretation of that history will be as true as possible to the meaning of those historical facts and that neither the significance nor the meanings of those facts will be misinterpreted.

In these sections we will demonstrate the development of capitalism and the relationship it had to the economic and community development in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. This exploration is essential to an understanding of community efficacy because capitalism and the capitalist spirit were central to the formation of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region as much as the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region was central to the formation of capitalism in America. The Industrial Revolution and the social conflicts which resulted were played out in the communities in this region and helped to shape how these communities perceived their control over life’s events, particularly their economic lives. The formation of capitalism shaped, altered, and continued to shape the efficacy beliefs of the communities where industries were dominant forces.

Capitalism has been previously defined as a free market economic system characterized by private, not state ownership of capital and capital goods characterized by the rational organization of formally free labor. So capitalism requires then two things, a disciplined labor force and the reinvestment of capital into the enterprise.

It is sufficient to say that capitalism has been proven to be the most efficient method of production and of allocating resources. At this time, communist systems have either fallen apart or are so weakened that they are beginning to abandon strict collectivist principles and are moving toward establishing market economies. In the most capitalistic of all nations, America, we have experienced economic growth for the better part of the last 10 years, and the details of this expansion will be discussed later.

However, as Burtless (1998), Phillips (1990), and Mishel, Bernstein and Schmitt (1999) have found, not all have shared equally in this prosperity. Even Alan Greenspan in his commencement address at Harvard University admits that “regrettably the gains have not been as widely spread across households as I would like.” He warns that a free market system cannot operate effectively unless all can participate (Greenspan, Commencement Address, Harvard University, June 10, 1999.

<http://www.commencement.harvard.edu/speeches/greenspan.html> ).

Disparities of income and wealth are larger now than at any time in our history, perhaps larger than at any time in history. Durant and Durant found historical precedent in income and wealth disparities and claim that the “concentration of wealth is a natural result of the concentration of ability, and regularly occurs in history.” Equality of income and wealth has been overwhelmed by economic differentiation so that the gap between the rich and poor is greater now than at any time since Imperial Rome (Durant, W. & Durant, A., 1968, p.55). In Athens, 594 B.C., Plutarch found that “the disparity of fortune between the rich and poor had reached its height, so that the city seemed to be in a dangerous condition, and no other means of freeing it from disturbances . . . seemed

possible but despotic power.” With the election of Solon, reforms were instituted which provided relief for the poor and redistributed income and wealth. The rich protested that reforms were simply confiscation of wealth, but within a generation almost all agreed that the reforms saved Athens from revolution. The Roman Senate was not so inclined when the concentration of wealth reached an explosive point. One hundred years of class and civil war followed until the reign of Octavius established the Principate which maintained the Pax Romana for 210 years (30 B.C. to 180 A.D.). In America in 1933-1952 and in 1960-1965, a moderate redistribution of wealth was enacted. The rich protested, then resumed the concentration of wealth (Durant, W. & Durant, A., 1968 p. 56).

The new political economy in America after 1933 emerged more clearly, completely, and enduringly in Pittsburgh than in the rest of the United States. Three things happened that helped establish this new political economy: unionization, political realignment, and sustained prosperity after 1940. Where Pittsburgh, prior to that time was a non-union Republican stronghold, with the Great Depression and the collapse of the local Republican party, the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region became one hundred percent unionized in the mass production industries. Local politics became strongly Democratic. In the working class neighborhoods, transience was replaced by stability and little upward mobility (Oerstreicher, p. 139). Upward mobility was so restricted, that by 1960, in Bodnar, Simon, and Weber’s study, less than one quarter of the Italians and almost none of the Poles had entered the non-working class occupations by the second generation (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 252). Ethnic based loyalties and community life in the

milltowns was as solid in the mid twentieth century as it had been one hundred years earlier.

The Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region reflected a stable economy with limited upwardly mobile job opportunities, less opportunities for expansion, less in migration, and less white flight until the 1970s. The milltowns reflected an aging population as young people left, and the community aged overall. There were enough mill jobs available for young workers as the older workers retired. During most of the post-War era, the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region had an exceptionally low proportion of high school seniors who went on to college (Oerstreicher, p. 142). The Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region became symbolic of an earlier industrial culture, distinctive in the endurance of cultural patterns that took roots in the beginnings of the industrial age. The milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region were reluctant to recognize the demise of the mills and the towns were they were located since they were such powerful symbols in the local culture.

These historical circumstances are very similar to the economic disparities experienced by the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and virtually all of America in the 1980s to the present day. These economic disparities result in a belief of reduced control over one's situations and one's ability to achieve desired economic goals for either the individual or the community. The effect of income and wealth disparities is an erosion of the collective efficacy of the community.

The issues of income distribution and concentration of wealth are not historically unique. However, to ignore such disparities or to trivialize the effect of such disparities becomes a tacit endorsement of such conditions and is regarded as a value of that

community. Tolerance of such conditions by the community forces some to reject that value and ultimately brings about discord within the community. The discord or lack of cohesion in society is a state where expectations regarding behaviors are unclear or not present, a state of anomie, or normlessness.

### **Sociological Review**

#### Division of Labor

Durkheim referred to this normlessness as anomie and attributed deviant behavior to this lack of norms (Durkheim, p. xxxi). A common faith, common values, a collective conscience within a community were necessary conditions for a society unless it is to deteriorate into a conglomeration of self - seeking individuals with no purpose beyond their own agenda according to Durkheim; they then become amoral. “Industrial activities need a reason for their existence; they correspond to needs, but these needs are not moral ones” (Durkheim, p. 13). The purpose of industrial activity as described by Durkheim in 1893 and later, Max Weber, was acquisitiveness, which Durkheim thought to be a pathological affliction of organic solidarity. The division of labor was not restricted as economists would have it, to simply economic action, but would become a vehicle for social cohesion.

The division of labor or specialization brought about by the industrial economy evolved society and people from a simple form of solidarity of purpose, mechanical solidarity, to a highly complex, specialized form of solidarity, organic solidarity. In simple societies without much specialization, people essentially perform the same set of tasks. They are solidified by their likeness. As tasks became more complex and specialized,

people became more differentiated or individualistic. In this differentiation, people are not bound to each other by their likeness, but by their interdependence upon each other, the associations with others in the community. It is this division of labor that becomes a principle source of cohesion or division within a society in Durkheim's view.

Division of labor produced individualism and independence which conflicted with the dependence upon others in the community; interdependent relationships which necessarily result from specialization result in a tension between the individual and the community. In advanced societies, these tensions produce anomie which would require the creation of new norms and values in the new industrial society to overcome tension and social division.

Durkheim further explains that we observe social solidarity through the law, although the law is an incomplete mirror of social life in a society. The law reflects the values of society and defines an act as a crime if society condemns the act as harmful to society; the rejection of the act by society classifies the act as socially evil (Durkheim, p.40). Homicide is cited as a particularly egregious example of a socially condemned act (Durkheim, p.40). Yet for all its evil, Durkheim points out that homicide is not the greatest evil charging that economic crisis or a bankruptcy as more disruptive to the body social than an isolated homicide. An interesting paradox and disproportion result from this example. While homicide is severely punished, it does not always harm all of the society or necessarily endanger all the common good. Where economic crisis may be disastrous for society, it may occur without the least repression. Durkheim argues that "an act most disastrous for society will not only be capable of being tolerated, but honored

and held up as an example” (Durkheim. p. 41). Crimes harmful to the government are punished severely, while other more serious crimes for example the crimes of the savings and loan crisis in the 1990s, inflicted on other bodies of society are only redressed, if at all, civilly. Our society severely punishes injury to an individual because we view individual rights as vital to the functioning of our system of laws and government, our culture and our society. The community, the functioning of which is equally vital to our society as the individual and government, is not protected in the same manner. Perhaps that is because society finds it difficult to determine who actually has committed the crime, if society decides that a crime has even been committed or perhaps society has not chosen to condemn these acts as harmful. We will punish that which has harmed us, if an act goes unpunished, then our society declares that no harm has been done or that the act is honorable. At the very least, the lack of condemnation of the act is society’s tacit endorsement of it. Alan Greenspan recognized the seriousness of these offenses to society and he urged Harvard’s graduating class to succeed “without leaving a trail of casualties in your wake” (Greenspan, <http://www.commencement.harvard.edu/speeches/greespan.html>).

With the economic crisis that occurred in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region including Aliquippa during the 1980s, all of the community was severely harmed and suffers yet today. In terms of harm to society, a great offense with tremendous social cost had been committed, yet there would not be any punishment. The decision makers who chose to take the profits from the enterprise and chose not to reinvest in the mills simply cut their losses and moved on to reinvest elsewhere. The communities were left to bear



the consequences of these decisions. Paradoxically, the costs of closing the mills reduced or eliminated the tax liability of the corporations. The members of the community were required to make up the difference or reduce essential services, such as education.

There are other recent examples of such offensive economic action on a national scale. Galbraith cites specifically three such examples, the merger and acquisition mania in the form of corporate raiding and leveraged buyouts, the real estate speculation, and the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s. In the case of the merger and acquisition mania, he warns us that “It would be hard to imagine an economically and socially more damaging design” (Galbraith, p.56).

Corporate raiding at RJR Nabisco, at the Federated Department Stores, and Bloomingdale’s left them either with huge losses immediately after the buyout in the case of the former, or in bankruptcy in the case of the latter. Corporate raiding and leveraged buyouts combined with deregulation resulted in heavy debt and the bankruptcy of Eastern Airlines and Pan Am Airlines. Many of these leveraged buyouts were financed by high-risk, high-interest junk bonds. When the acquisitions began to collapse, the bonds went into default or at a discount. These losses further reduced productive investment in the economy. The communities who suffered through the bankruptcies, the plant closings, the loss of jobs, and the ensuing erosion of efficacy were left to deal with the problems created by these economic actions.

The real estate speculation of that period extended to the banking industry which made massive loans with virtually no scrutiny. Acres of communities were now occupied with vacant buildings. Failure of the loans brought the solvency of some of the nation’s

largest and most prestigious banks into question. Lending curtailed sharply and the construction industry became severely constrained. Unemployment and a general recession ensued. Communities suffered high unemployment and severe reductions in revenue. Eventually, the benign markets and laissez faire economics gave way to a government bailout. The stockholders of the banks had their investments protected and the bailout was financed by the taxpayers and the members of the communities.

The greatest of all of these offenses perhaps was the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s. In Galbraith's words, "the largest and costliest venture in public misfeasance, malfeasance, and larceny of all time" cost nearly \$ 2,000 for each American citizen (Galbraith, p. 61). Mismanagement by the owners of the savings and loans brought about the insolvency. The government bailout was required to protect the depositors and the owners of the savings and loan since the government only insured deposits up to \$100,000. The stockholders and depositors bore the benefit, while the public, the communities, bore the risk and the consequences of this economic action. The owners of the savings and loan made risky investments with federally guaranteed deposits. The owners would enjoy any gains and the public bore the risk of failure.

Others cite similar inequities. Kevin Phillips charges that favored billionaires got to purchase bankrupt savings and loans under lucrative terms while taxpayers, in general, bear the cost of the bailout. Other mechanisms to harness the World Bank, partly supported by the U.S. taxpayers, ensured the repayment of the roughly \$100 billion of Latin American loans made by major U. S. banks (Phillips, p. 115).

As Durkheim concluded, such economic crises were disastrous for society in

general, but few who caused the suffering suffered any penalties. Oddly enough, in some instances, they may have actually been rewarded or at least their risk has been mitigated for their misdeeds. This economic crisis certainly brought about anomie in the communities where it occurred since there were no rules or regulations to deal with the crisis.

Durkheim charged in his time, 1893, that “Greed is aroused [and] nothing can calm it, since its goal is far beyond all it can attain.” He claimed that industrial society offered no solution for anomie since they believed that increased production was the answer to everything. Durkheim was convinced that the economy and not morality had become the reason for society. Similar claims would be made for the economies of America in the 1920s and 1980s. As conservative policies become more favorable to policymakers, society faces the unique paradox described by Durkheim. With the continued division of labor and the resultant dependence on others, how can the individual exist? Some maintain that everything in society and in particular the economy is individual because society is made up of individuals. While that is certainly true, and individuals form our society, with the increasing division of labor, individuals are increasingly dependent upon their association with others in the community which react upon them. So as observed by Bandura and asserted by Durkheim, we are more the product of society than the author. Even as individuals we share in and are impacted by the collective sense of enablement to achieve our individual and collective goals. As active members of society, we can help to shape that society and its’ values. However, lacking power, individuals and groups often assume a role of acquiescence to society and its policies. Joel Handler examined these

empowering relationships in institutions, particularly schools. These relationships will be discussed later.

### The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism

Capitalism and economic exchange are viewed by classical economists as voluntary arrangements among free individuals. Durkheim would argue that this view is far too limiting because economic exchange involves a whole structure of norms and regulations that surround it and make it possible for that exchange to exist. Max Weber would extend the arguments of Durkheim to include that economic actions are social rather than individual exchanges, that such exchanges have meaning, and involve power. Often these exchanges involve the unequal power distribution between the employer and employee. Economic exchanges are rarely exchanges among equals, but involve compromises.

Classical economic thought is based upon assumptions of utility, maximizing profits or minimizing costs, and rationality. Economic action reflects rational decision making toward the efficient use of scarce resources. Sociologists such as Durkheim and Weber argue that rationality is not an *assumption* as the economists would have it, but that rationality is a *variable*. In fact, economic actions can be either rational, irrational, or even traditional (Smelser & Swedberg, p.5). Some actions and individuals may be more rational than others. Talcott Parsons argued that economic rationality was a system of norms - not a psychological universal - and was shaped by society and culture (Smelser & Swedberg, p. 5).

Max Weber's notion that economic processes have meaning and should be characterized by the meaning they have for social action is important when viewed from

the aspect of community efficacy. Social facts are value laden and these values can be expressed in the narratives of the community. What may be viewed as a rational economic action with no meaning beyond economic utility in the case of plant closings, could be viewed as a pronouncement of value of the community. If the plant is closed, society views the plant and the community, since it is so closely associated with the economic actions of the plant within the community, as valueless. The economic view regards this action as one of utility or perhaps even as creative destruction. The communities often take a totally different view. The economic misconception purports to replace old economic entities with new, but the reality for the milltowns is that the old economy was destroyed and replaced with nothing. Lubove speaks of community beautification in the Mon Valley as a moral issue involved in transforming the Mon Valley into bedroom communities with condos, marinas and museums. While community beautification is not a negative endeavor, it does not “address the needs of the people devastated by the job holocaust (Lubove, 1996, p. 39).” The needs of the people who currently live in the community are not being addressed, but are being pushed aside in favor of individuals who will move in later, displacing those already there. A spokesman for the Rainbow Kitchen in Homestead responded that it was “sad for America that this is the idea - to build flower festivals for the unemployed” (Lubove, 1996, p. 39). The community imparted meaning to the proposed economic action such that their needs and their community were without value, the needs of some undetermined future set of individuals who may or may not even have a common purpose and a commitment to each other as a community being deemed more important. Those who proposed the community beautification project felt that they

were responding to a need to rebuild and improve the community physically. While the community would have been rebuilt, it would have been done at the expense of the spirit of the existing community. The spirit of the existing community would have been crushed in order for the community to have been rebuilt.

The moral and ethical implications of economic actions were explored by Durkheim, Daniel Bell, and Max Weber. Durkheim in the Preface to the second edition of Division of Labor is both critical and prophetic when describing the state of legal and moral anomie regarding the professions. The sum total of ethical consciousness of the professions consist of vague statements about employee loyalty to the employer, condemnation of unfair competition, and exploitation of the consumer (Durkheim, p. xxxii). For Durkheim, the entire sphere of collective life is for the most part unmoderated by any rules or norms. Economic action is amoral and market forces described as benign. Since most economic life is pursued in an environment without any moral tincture, economic life is pursued without any moral framework. Laws must then take the place of the moral framework. The capitalist would argue that millions of economic transactions take place daily without any moral or legal violations. Brian Anderson, in his summary of Michael Novak's work, Business as a Calling, supports that position pushing the issue even further describing businessmen as "among the most religious" compared to the elites of American society, journalists, artists, lawyers, humanists, social scientists, and others. Durkheim would emphasize that laws continue to take the place of a moral framework as evidenced by the number of laws pertaining to business transactions. One might speculate that Durkheim would cite the amount of capital devoted to lobbying our lawmakers as

evidence of laws taking the place of the moral framework; he might further question why the “religious” businessmen devote so much effort and resources consorting with the corrupt politician. This cultural contradiction of capitalism was explored by Daniel Bell and its significance will be discussed later.

Max Weber, on the other hand, explored the moral and ethical basis for capitalism in The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. While Durkheim describes economic activity as lacking in a moral foundation, Weber found that foundation in religious forces, particularly the Calvinist and later the Presbyterian branches of Protestantism. What is distinctive about Pittsburgh was that its early patrician families were mainly Scotch - Irish and Presbyterian, they often intermarried (Kleppner, p. 154) and the Presbyterians were “more successful in this region than anywhere else in the country” (Pritchard, p. 329). Marriage patterns of the city’s elite differed markedly from the practice of the broader national upper class in the respect that Pittsburgh’s elite married within Pittsburgh upper class families. The provinciality which was to become a distinctive trademark of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region was deeply rooted in prudish Calvinism. Hays notes as well that the Scotch - Irish Presbyterian values, beliefs, and behaviors did not include a varied range of practices (Hays, S., p. 394). This environment was to dominate the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region in the rapidly approaching Gilded Age. Ingham suggests the following:

“Pittsburgh’s renown in early years came not from the nature of its manufacture but from the heritage of its citizens - it was the heart of the Presbyterian Scots - Irish culture which in so many ways characterized the

American frontier. It was this group that gave the city its earlier moral fibre of strict no-nonsense Calvinism; they set the cultural tone in the early years” (Ingham, p. 267-285).

In Weber’s view, the Calvinist believed in the doctrine of predestination which advocated that some are chosen by God to be saved and others condemned by God to damnation. Weber comments that, “In its extreme inhumanity, this doctrine must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency . . . a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness” (Weber, 1930, p.104). This inner loneliness of which Weber speaks, must have for the Calvinist meant a fearful torment and a crushing of the spirit; how the poor condemned Calvinist must have felt that life was beyond control. Either as one of the chosen or one of the damned, life was beyond the control of the Calvinist. From this torment and a crushed spirit, the capitalist spirit was born.

In the Calvinists’ need to be regarded by oneself and others as one of the chosen, one had to demonstrate sufficient faith and to perform good works in a calling. Success in this calling came to be regarded as a sign of being one of the chosen. For the Calvinist, whether saved or damned, was called upon to do the will of God. In this case the will of God was through a calling focused on economic activity. The usefulness of a calling and success in that calling brought favor in the eyes of God because it is important in moral terms for the goods it produced for the community. As God’s chosen people, the Calvinist thanked God for their own perfection as it penetrated every part of their character and attitude toward life.



Curiously enough, with almost all Christian denominations, faithful labor even at low wages for those with no other opportunity, is pleasing to God. Willingness to work to support the employer's calling no doubt increased the productivity of labor in a true capitalist sense of the word. This view in effect legalized the exploitation of labor because for labor, it represented the only means of attaining certainty of grace (Weber, 1930, p. 178). So, as Sir William Petty expressed it, "[Calvinists and Baptists] believe that Labour and Industry is their duty towards God" (Weber, 1930, p. 179).

John Wesley summed up the role of economics in the life of the Protestant when he said, "we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich" (Weber, 1930, p. 175). The urging of the Protestant Church for private gain, for profit, for reduced consumption through savings, for the pursuit of wealth, could only result in the accumulation of capital and storing of grace in the eyes of God.

While the Puritan wanted to work in a calling, we are forced to do so. The Puritan believed that man is a trustee of his possessions given to him through the grace of God. An account of every penny entrusted to him must eventually be given to God (Weber, 1930, p. 170). Man therefore becomes subordinate to his possessions, eventually becoming a machine engaged in acquisition as its sole purpose. Richard Baxter, a writer on Puritan ethics viewed that the care for external goods should lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." Weber however reasoned that the light cloak became an iron cage (Weber, 1930, p. 181).

Today, Weber continues, religion has escaped from the cage and capitalism no

longer needs the foundation of religion for support. The spirit of capitalism has become the making of money, man is dominated by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life (Weber, 1930, p. 53). In the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with the purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport (Weber, 1930, p. 182). Having lost its religious and ethical meaning, Weber speaks of a capitalism now devoid of spirit or norms. He adds a quotation from Goethe which speaks to the cultural contradictions of capitalism. From the pursuit of a calling to show faith and attain the grace of God to a culture devoid of religious spirit, Weber and Goethe speak of “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved” (Weber, 1930, p. 182). The Puritan [Protestant] ethic observed by Weber and the lack of ethics observed by Durkheim both were central issues with the largely Presbyterian capitalist leaders of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Pittsburgh. Their stern outlook toward a calling, their self-confidence as one of the saved, their views of labor at low wages as pleasing to God were viewed by those laboring as exploitive actions. Calvin himself had made the statement that only when the people, i.e. the mass of laborers and craftsmen, were poor, did they remain obedient to God (Weber, 1930, p.177). Exploitation of the laborer’s willingness to work had become legitimate. The ‘humble sinner’ of the earlier Christian world was now shoved aside by the ‘self-confident saint’ of the capitalist world. These saints had the “comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of the goods of this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence, which in these differences, as in particular grace, pursued secret ends unknown to men”

(Weber, 1930, p. 177). These views helped shape the spirit and form the foundations of capitalism in America in both the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This capitalist spirit dominated the communities of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and shaped the spirit of the communities themselves. It helped to form the perceptions of control over their own lives that the members of the community perceived that they had. Ingham found substantial evidence of the continuity of the region's elite in spite of the profound change in the region's industrial base. In studies of the iron and steel elite between 1874 and 1901, Ingham found that there was little change in the management of iron and steel firms. In fact, Ingham describes these new aspirants for power and prestige as largely replicas of the city's older elite. They shared identical ethnic and religious origins, even arriving in America at the same time. Even those who may be described as "self-made" were carbon copies of the older elite in many respects. Just as the older merchants were able to use their financial resources to enter the fledgling iron industry, the iron manufacturers were able to retain a firm hold on the steel industry, allowing them to retain hegemony over the city's social system (Ingham, p. 271-276).

Couvares comments upon the "dour provinciality" of Pittsburgh's iron elite, to whom luxury was a sin and recreation distracted them from their proper business and religious pursuits (Ingham, p. 278). The Calvinists stern self-confidence, the division of labor and the Protestant ethic were about to take a center stage in Pittsburgh and Homestead in 1892.

The Battle for Homestead 1880 -1892

“I am of the opinion, on the whole, that the manufacturing aristocracy which is growing up under our eyes is one of the harshest that ever existed in the world; but at the same time it is one of the most confined and least dangerous. Nevertheless, the friends of democracy should keep their eyes anxiously fixed in this direction; for if ever a permanent inequality of conditions and aristocracy again penetrates in the world, it may be predicted that this is the gate by which they will enter.”

- Alexis de Tocqueville

*Democracy in America, 1840, ch. XX*

Although the events at Homestead are important to the development of the labor movement in the United States, it would be a grievous error if they were viewed solely in the context of economics or labor relations. The economic environment surrounding the labor movement in Pittsburgh during the last half of the nineteenth century is important because it provided the foundation for the relationships between those who were both powerful and controlling and those who were both powerless and controlled, the relationships between the classes, and the socio-cultural values and expectations of the members of the communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. It is necessary to examine the events at Homestead during the late nineteenth century as they relate in a larger context to the erosion of community efficacy in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region from the Gilded Age to the present time. Herrick Chapman substantiates that “For workers in Pittsburgh [and the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region], it is hard to overestimate the importance of patterns set by the 1890s . . . Pittsburgh’s workers were held hostage to the local elite” (Chapman, p. 416). The events at Homestead helped

to shape the culture and efficacy of the milltowns in the region for many decades into the future.

Bandura frames the issue succinctly when discussing efficacy. “The strength of families, communities, organizations, social institutions, and even nations lies partly in people’s sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). For labor in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region at the turn of the nineteenth century, that collective efficacy, the “*group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments*” could only be obtained through the unified effort of a union movement. If they could organize, then they might be able to execute the desired courses of action. The events at Homestead and their legacy for American society must then be examined in the context of community efficacy, which could then lead to community enablement, eventually leading to community empowerment.

Establishing community efficacy enables the community, by providing a firm belief that they can produce valued effects by their collective action and providing them the means to do so. Having established a sense of community efficacy, the community would be enabled so that they can take advantage of opportunities and to remove environmental constraints guarded by those whose interests are served by them (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). Carnegie and the industrialists established and reinforced these environmental constraints by preventing organization and unionization. They fought organization and eroded efficacy in the community in three basic ways: technological innovation, political and

economic power, and working conditions. In the recent era, there evolved two more tools to erode efficacy, the culture of contentment and transience and fragmentation in society.

Bandura, cited earlier in this chapter, established that sources of efficacy beliefs included mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological or affective states. Carnegie and the industrialists thwarted mastery experience by the introduction of technology, minimized vicarious experience by eliminating unions at other mill sites in the area, reduced any effect of verbal persuasion through their political and economic power, and held psychological and affective states in check through their political and economic power and through extremely hazardous conditions and long working hours in the mills. The experience of labor at Homestead and throughout the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region was such that any potential sources of building efficacy beliefs were eliminated or reduced such that community efficacy was substantially eroded or made non-existent.

### *Background*

The labor movement in Pittsburgh meant more than a struggle over wages and working conditions, the two factors that labor are legally permitted to bargain. These struggles were about social values, identity and worth as human beings for labor and about power and control for the industrialist. Homestead became and still is a symbol of these yet unresolved questions. Who would control the factories? Who would control the seats of government, locally, nationally, and internationally, and who would shape the cultural values of modern society? (Krause, p. 239). Even today, the effect of the labor losses at Homestead reverberate throughout the region. One of the effects of this domination of a

powerful group over the powerless remains in the regions economic development agencies. Ralph Bangs and S. Laurel Weldon (1999), in a study of Board membership of 41 general economic development organizations in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region found that 93 percent of the board members of these organizations were white and only 16 percent of the membership were women. Only 6 percent of the membership of these organizations is African - American. These statistics are particularly striking when compared to the demographics of the region, where 30 percent of the city's population, 15 percent of the county's population, and 10 percent of the region's population are African - American. This is representative of the unchanging distribution of power and influence between the powerful and the remainder of the region (Bangs & Weldon, p. 4).

These issues of social control were contested through endless conflicts between the pursuit of private interests and the defense of the common good. Homestead vivified the question explored by Comte, Saint - Simon, and Durkheim. What were the consequences of a complex and advanced system of the division of labor on the cohesion and solidarity of societies? (Durkheim, xiii). As stated by Krause, "Can - or how can - the new land of industry and technological innovation continue to be the "land of the free" (Krause, p. 6)?

So labor was faced with two challenges. Primarily, labor was faced with the challenge posed by technological innovation over control of the workplace and second, how to wrest the reins of government from the supporters of "organized capital" (Krause, p. 8). Homestead was soon to represent the transformation of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and the milltowns in the region from a region of workers and engaged citizens into

a region ruled by steelmakers and industrialists. Carnegie the industrialist, Abram Hewitt the pioneer of open hearth steelmaking, and Alexander Holley the engineer who created the Bessemer steel industry and paved the way to scientific management, enthusiastically supported technological innovation. Workers, not surprisingly, viewed such technological innovations as signs of displacement and disenfranchisement.

The industrialist and the laborer contested the meaning of republican values. While labor supported classical republican values, not the “communistic and naturalistic Utopia” of Plato (Durant, W., & Durant, A., 1939, p. 509), but more like the republic described by Cicero in *De legibus*, i. 7, “All men are brothers, and the whole world is to be considered as the common city of gods and men.” The most perfect morality would be a conscientious loyalty to the whole. Man must establish a sound economic basis to his life and then fulfill his duties as a citizen (Durant, W., & Durant, A., 1944, p. 165). Amitai Etzioni in 1996 posited that a new golden rule is required: “Respect and uphold society’s moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy.” (Etzioni, p. xviii.).

Labor did not reject material prosperity or interests of private property, but held to classic republican values that:

- ! the goal of society is to promote the common good,
- ! the virtuous citizen subordinates private wants to the public good,
- ! the virtue of citizens is contingent upon their independence from the control of others,
- ! to guard against tyrants, all citizens should participate in public life, and,



! all citizens are entitled to natural, inalienable rights under a representative form of government.

The capitalist viewed republican values differently. For the capitalist, republican values both defined and legitimized the sanctity of property and the virtue of accumulation. The goal of society is to preserve the right to unchecked accumulation and that the public good is best preserved by pursuit of the private interests.

The pursuit of unchecked accumulation, however in accordance with the Protestant Ethic, denied the workers, in their view, a degree of comfort and happiness. Workers desired to obtain a “competence”, a sufficiency of means of living comfortably. A competence was a means to an end, and the end was a dignified life. However, if the goal of labor was to achieve a “competence” as a means to a dignified life, then that dignity had to include some measure of control over that life. Labor maintained that labor was the property of the laborer, not a commodity to be purchased and used by capital. In other words, a competence meant some control over their work process and the life of the worker. This perceived control over desired outcomes meant that the worker and the community desired to achieve some degree of efficacy within their work, society and their community. In opposition, the ironmasters of Pittsburgh, “who saw profit making as the chief purpose of labor; labor for them, was but a factor of production whose market value they were entitled to determine” (Krause, p. 104).

In order to understand how efficacy in the community was eroded or created, it is necessary to understand the historical events which helped shape the region and its organizations. In particular the most historical event that determined how the region

would be formed socially, economically, politically and culturally was the Homestead strike of 1892. The factors which impacted these formation of the region socially, economically, politically and culturally and their relationship to the factors which create or erode efficacy must now be examined.

### *Technological Innovation and Mastery Experience*

The riot at Homestead in 1892 was the culmination of a slow and steady erosion of the rights of workers and their power and, consequently, an erosion of their efficacy. As a group, blue collar workers experienced a gradual but continuous weakening of economic and social condition in the last half of the nineteenth century (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 16). Steelmaking and the labor traditions were deeply rooted in the practices of ironmaking after the Civil War. The focal point of the ironmaking process at that time was the puddler, a skilled worker much like a baker, worked the material until the knowledge obtained through years in their craft revealed what was required to maintain production and quality and when the process was completed. These relatively small iron manufacturers employed “highly skilled and handsomely paid puddlers” who “exercised . . . a remarkable degree of control over the conditions of their labor” (Krause, p. 48). This degree of control included flexibility in setting schedules and the control over the quantity of iron produced. Richard Oestreicher in examining working class formation in Pittsburgh reminds us that “Visions of workers’ control in earlier versions of artisanal republicanism, . . . had their roots in workers actual experiences - the ways in which, for example, iron puddlers and glassblowers already did supervise and control so much of the labor process” (Oestreicher, p. 137). Control over the work process, which comprised the

efficacy of the puddlers, was soon to be challenged by the steelmakers. Their chief weapon to gain control of the work process from the puddlers was to be the introduction of technology. By gaining control over the work process, the steelmakers were able to “define the public culture and the public interpretation of reality” (Krause, p. 10).

Technological innovation in the form of Bessemer steelmaking and the introduction of the open hearth furnace helped shift metal production from iron to the stronger more versatile steel. This shift from iron to steelmaking, in the twenty years from 1880 to 1900, helped undermine the skills of craftsmen such as puddlers, hachers, and rollers. By 1900 the skills of puddlers were obsolete, declining from 1,400 to less than 200 in that twenty-year period. Hachers, catchers, and rollers decreased in number by 50 percent in the decade from 1890 to 1900. So steady and precipitous was the decline in craftsmen due to technological innovations, that by 1907 nearly 75 percent of the men employed in basic steel in Pittsburgh held only semi-skilled or unskilled jobs (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 16). The erosion of control of the skilled craftsman over the work process, coupled with the corresponding reduction in their economic and social condition represented more than an economic adjustment. In the strike of 1866, when Carnegie imported puddlers from Belgium to work in his mills, the workers viewed this not as a business strategy to keep the mill running, but a symbolic gesture to “crush out the very manhood of the honest toiler” (Krause, p. 95). Although the puddlers were to win this strike and Carnegie recognized the Sons of Vulcan, union workers throughout the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region would have their power challenged and rendered impotent by the steelmakers until the 1930s. The *National Tribune*, when reporting on a labor

dispute in 1879 in Homestead, used such words as the “manhood” and “honor” of both union and nonunion labor in describing what was at stake (Krause, p. 145). In 1880, John Jarrett warned that the introduction of Bessemer steelmaking had resulted in “the complete subjugation of labor to the will of the employers” (Krause, p. 145).

Technological innovations that were introduced at the end of the nineteenth century and the ensuing division of labor were preeminent in the steel mills of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. These technological processes were driven by two factors, the desire to increase and speed up production and consequently increase profits, and to alter the relations between workers and employers. The necessity to speed up production was illustrated by Tom Crockett, a charger at the Duquesne Works. “Twice a year the Carnegie mills have a record month. Any month of 31 days is selected, and the mills do not stop from end to end of the month. Sundays and Saturday nights they run full blast. The best material is saved for this month, and an attempt is made to break the [output] record. If wages are changed at the end of the year, the new scale is based on the output of the record month” (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 18).

With Bessemer steelmaking the knowledge of the steelmaking process belongs to the owners, not the workers. This control over the steelmaking process was reinforced in the fragmenting of the collective force within a mill by Robert Hunt at the Cambria Iron works in Johnstown. Hunt trained workers in only the limited aspects of production to which they were assigned. The total picture of the steelmaking process, was available only to a select few managers (Krause, p. 75). The division of labor in this case produced specialization and the fragmentation of labor caused problems which would surface as

quality issues nearly one hundred years later. Similarly, Krause reports that a judicious ethnic mix of workers was used to create a tractable work force (Krause, p. 76). From Bandura's perspective, even if the division of labor produced efficacious specialists, lacking shared imperatives, collective efficacy is undermined through mutual immobilization (Bandura, 1997, p. 524). Lacking the mastery experience of their craft, the efficacy of the worker and the working community was eroded. What was taking place at Homestead and the other mills in the region was taking place in Aliquippa.

The significance of this mutual immobilization has been identified by Bodnar, Simon and Weber in the conclusion of their work. "Indeed, the expansion of industrial capitalism that drew them [specifically Poles, Blacks, and Italians and the immigrant worker in general] from disparate backgrounds molded them not into a unified working class but into a segmented mass with deep fissures running along occupational, neighborhood, racial, and cultural lines"(Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 263).

The distinctive geography of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region helped isolate and immobilize its residents. Bodnar, Simon and Weber, studied land use patterns in the area and found that the unique topography and geography of the area shaped the patterns of land use from the very beginning of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. "From an early date, factories clustered along the river banks. The flood plain also served as a convenient and economical route for railroad lines" (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 21). Oestreicher argues that the "ecology of these industries, combined with the natural terrain of the steep hills surrounding narrow valleys bisected by the three rivers, similarly promoted the development of densely packed and self-contained milltowns, and working

class neighborhoods” (Oestreicher, p. 120).

*Political and economic power and verbal persuasion*

The hopelessness of the situation of a steel mill worker in a company town, the loss of the exercise of control over their lives was described by a steelworker when speaking of Aliquippa as “What can he do? The company owns his house, the company owns every other damn thing in town. . . . That’s why nobody does anything” (Walker, 1990, p. 67). Remarkably, the steelworkers were evicted from the company owned homes during the times of the strikes (Krause, p. 179). The political power of the industrialist was demonstrated emphatically in their use of the Pennsylvania militia to contain the riots in the railroad strike of 1877 and the riots at Homestead in 1892. By overhauling the militia through a series of legislative acts between 1878 and 1891, Pennsylvania developed a well-trained militia which had remained an ardent supporter of corporate rule and had been used against the citizens of the state to defeat unionism for forty years (Krause, p. 134). The state militia was indeed an ardent supporter of corporate rule. When hearing of the assassination attempt on Frick’s life, W. L. Iams a young state militia man shouted his approval. At the command of General Snowden, Iams was placed in the stockade and then hung by the thumbs. Iams refused to apologize and, after thirty minutes passed out. Snowden ordered that Iams be dishonorably discharged. “His crime is that of treason. His conduct was aiding, abetting, and giving comfort to our enemy” (Krause, p. 355).

The government of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania used the laws as an instrument of violence and oppression against its own people. Labor viewed the use of the state militia against the strikers as a violation of the social contract. To use

Durkheim's terms, the misuse of the state militia was a violation of social norms which created anomie, pointing to the deep conflicts that were to accompany America's transition to industrial capitalism.

Carnegie was able to use men such as Philander Knox, his corporate counsel to establish the first military industrial complex. The city poor farm property was secured for Carnegie with the help of Knox. Carnegie won a \$ 4 million contract to supply armor plate for the U.S. Navy and shortly afterwards was fined \$ 140,000 for deliberately defrauding the Navy by supplying defective armor plate. When the opportunity arose, Frick and Carnegie requested of President McKinley that Knox be appointed Attorney General. The Department of Justice would now be in safer hands (Krause, p. 272). Carnegie never hesitated to use his contacts in government, including one of Knox's predecessors, Secretary of State James G. Blaine to virtually deliver to him enormous foreign naval contracts (Krause, p. 281). The power of Carnegie and the industrialists had extended beyond the local towns that they controlled, to the city of Pittsburgh which they dominated, to the very seat of government in Washington and beyond. Knox, between 1908 and 1911 negotiated clandestine schemes with the Honduran government and effectively brought Honduras under American control. Knox also used the U. S. troops to uphold a friendly government he personally installed, setting the stage for the forty-five-year dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza. It is inconceivable that a political and economic force so great as that of Carnegie and the industrialists of the region could be matched by the fragmented union loyalists of the time. There is little doubt that the persuasion of such forces would have eroded whatever efficacy the members of the community may have had

at that time.

It was well known that Carnegie and J&L and U. S. Steel, used a secret service to keep themselves informed (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 19) as well as private detectives to gather intelligence on the workers at Homestead (Krause, p. 242). Fitch found that the real labor policy of the U. S. Steel Corporation was expressed in the “secret service department which monitored any expression of union sentiment” (Lubove, 1989, p. 317). Workers were advised to keep their thoughts to themselves. By the 1890s, Carnegie had developed a sophisticated espionage system to monitor the work and leisure habits of its employees. Homestead was a place where it was said that “If you want to talk, . . . you must talk to yourself” (Krause, p. 358).

By the end of the century market conditions and the decisions of the industrialists controlled the wages, hours, and working conditions of the men in the Pittsburgh steel industry. Workers unwilling to accept the terms of employment could seek work elsewhere. The lives of the workers were in control of their employers; the lives of those in the region were in the control of the industrialists. The region was prosperous, yet that prosperity had not been shared with those who had helped create the wealth. The wealth of the economy and the poverty of the producers was in startling contrast. The Pittsburgh survey condemned these contrasts:

“the prosperity on the one hand, the most prosperous of all communities of our western civilization, with its vast natural resources. . . the human energy, the technical development, the gigantic tonnage of the mines and mills, the enormous capital, . . . ; and on the other hand the neglect of life, of health, of physical vigor,



often of the industrial efficiency of the individual. Certainly no community before in America or Europe applied what it had so meagerly to the rational purposes of human life. Not by gifts of libraries, galleries, technical schools, and parks, but by the cessation of toil one day in seven and sixteen hours in twenty-four, by the increase in wages, by the sparing of lives,. . . and by raising the standards of domestic life should the surplus come back to the people of the community in which it is created” (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 25).

In fact, the size of the steelmaking corporations and the size of the mills themselves were symbols of power and control which served to erode the efficacy of the worker community. Bodnar, Simon, and Weber found that in Pittsburgh in 1870, 167 iron and steel firms employed an average of 90 workers each. By 1899 the number of metal firms fell to forty-seven, employing an average work force of 1,600; thirty-two firms employed between 1,000 and 10,000, and four firms in the district employed more than 10,000 workers. Carnegie Steel, the city’s largest company, employed 23,000 workers. Philadelphia County, in contrast, with one-third more people, had no firm with more than 10,000 workers and only twenty five with more than 1,000 (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 16). “The huge J&L Steel works occupied nearly 30 blocks along the river and employed nearly 8,000 people” (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 21). The Aliquippa Works of J&L was six miles long and occupied 779 acres (Lubove, 1996, p. 7). The Carnegie Steel Company represented the gigantism of steel in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and the gigantism of the U. S. steel industry. In July 1892, the Carnegie Steel Company operated works in Homestead and Braddock, a Bessemer facility in Duquesne,

vast iron and bridge works in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and mining and coking concerns in Western Pennsylvania. “With a capacity equal to more than half that of all the steel mills in Great Britain, the Carnegie Steel Company, which employed thirteen thousand men, was the world’s largest steelmaker” (Krause, p. 286). The mills were physically imposing because of the technology employed and the seemingly insatiable demand for their products at the end of the nineteenth century. The size of the mills dwarfed the men who worked there and dominated the communities where they were located. Their physical size was symbolic of their economic power and control over the workers, the community and the nation, in fact, over all of society in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region.

The division of labor maximized profits and signaled the “new morality” of Western political culture. Acquisitiveness was no longer condemned for taking advantage over another’s necessity, but glorified. It was now legitimate to organize every facet of life toward the maximization of profit, production and productivity. The steelmaker of the late nineteenth century viewed himself as a cultural authority and the prophet of progress, a self - governing individual in the exercise of this pursuit, one embarked upon not in the name of self - interest but in the service of all mankind (Krause, p. 58). The cultural authority claimed by the steelmaker found institutional expression in both the AIME (American Institute of Mining Engineers) and ASME (American Society of Mechanical Engineers). Both societies represented not only the interests of business but represented the best ambitions of American culture and society (Krause, p. 58). In the period of managerial reform from 1915 - 1935, corporations extended their control of society and

their workers through a cluster of policies known as “corporate welfarism.” These policies for the steel mills in this area included personnel policies, promotion ladders, shortened work days, profit sharing and fringe benefit programs. Corporations rarely denied the social control motive (Oestreicher, p. 138).

Profits and the concentration of economic power in the steel industry in the late nineteenth century were formidable. Krause found that the Edgar Thompson works cost \$1.2 million to build in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1870s, which by 1880 was generating \$ 1.6 million in annual profits (Krause, p. 85). Growth in the mills was similarly incredible. Again Krause found that capital investment rose 300 percent and sales 500 percent during the 1860s; at the same time between 1856 and 1870 the labor component of steel sales was reduced from \$ 2.9 million in wages on \$ 10.7 million in sales, or 27 percent of sales, to \$ 4.5 million in wages on \$20 million in sales, or about 22 percent of sales. In the 14 years between 1856 and 1870, the average worker’s salary remained the same at about \$ 630 per year (Krause, p. 93). Bodnar, Simon, and Weber found that even during the depression of the 1890s the Carnegie mills remained profitable, producing \$ 3 million in profits in 1893 and \$ 4 million in profits in 1894. Production and profit records were set almost monthly. In 1891 Homestead set a record of 8,000 tons of steel per month. Eight years later, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street mill set a record of 20,501 tons per month and the district norm was over 16,000 tons per month. The region produced 64 percent of the nation’s structural steel, 57 percent of the crucible steel, half of the nation’s coking coal, almost half of the Bessemer steel, and 26 percent of the steel rails (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 15).

The effects of the introduction of new steelmaking technology, the construction of massive new works for the production of ever larger quantities of steel, and the control of those facilities and the lives of their workers served to reorient the political culture in Pittsburgh and the nation by reorganizing the relations of capital and labor. Carnegie was convinced that Braddock and its steelworks were the majestic harbingers of the harmonious social order which Spencer, his philosophical mentor, had promised. Spencer, for his part, after visiting Braddock said that six months there would justify suicide (Krause, p. 231).

The workers in the Homestead area lacked verbal persuasion to help create or sustain the efficacy of the community. Bandura warns that “devaluative feedback not only creates social estrangement but undermines people’s belief in themselves. It is more difficult to instill enduringly high beliefs of personal efficacy by persuasory means alone than it is to undermine such beliefs” (Bandura, 1997, p. 103-104). People such as Abram Hewitt proposed to secure the position of capital, to create a governing class of engineers and industrialists. So deeply ingrained was their opposition to unions and labor that Hewitt, a steelmaker and member of the House of Representatives, envisioned a higher civilization where the steelmakers “could employ less intelligent men” for it was indeed up to the master to do the thinking (Krause, p. 67). Both Holley and Hewitt viewed puddlers as hack laborers and “the grimy workmen” and the puddlers organization as a principal obstacle to overcome (Krause, p. 71).

This differentiation between the craftsmen and the craft, the worker and the employer, was identified by Oestreicher. He maintains that the continued growth of the

industrial economy and growth in the size of the firms required specialization of labor and organizational hierarchy to manage. The effect of size and hierarchy then further separated the worker from the employer (Oestreicher, p. 122).

*Working conditions, economic power and physiological and affective states*

Abandon all hope, you who enter here!

**Dante Alighieri** (1265–1321), Italian poet. The inscription at the entrance to Hell, in *The Divine Comedy*, “The Inferno,” canto. 3.

In accordance with the ideals of republicanism, the virtue of citizens is contingent upon their independence and control of others. For the laborers, no one who depended upon another for his livelihood, and did not command his own productive property could be considered free. The security in employment of the laborer had become dependent upon the needs and wants of the employers. In the view of labor, the competitive wage system had trapped them in wage slavery. Oestreicher points out that in the period from 1815 to 1860 there was a distinctive tendency in Pittsburgh for firms in the region to increase in size, concentrate manufacturing employees in larger, more highly capitalized industries, and to transform all manual workers, even artisans into wage laborers (Oestreicher, p. 116). The wage slavery in the 1890s was repeated in the 1980s and 1990s and had spread to the managerial ranks as well. In the current economy virtually every employee is viewed as a “day laborer”, a temporary worker, and in the words of the laborer in 1890, a wage slave.

Labor held to the qualitative view of a “fair days wages for a fair days work.”

However, fairness in the view of labor had little meaning in private enterprise where maximizing one's net comparative advantage was done typically at the expense of someone else. As partner's in the process of steel and iron making, labor, in this instance with the puddlers in the strike of 1867, pursued permanent employment in the spirit of equity, not the highest wage. The puddlers viewed themselves not as commodities, but producers who earned in accord with quantity and quality of the product; the iron industry was their trade (Krause, p. 109). When the manufacturers unilaterally decided to reduce the base of the sliding scale, they set a new standard for fairness. The puddlers felt that their partnership, their sense of justice, their sense of themselves as producers not hiring laborers or wage slaves, were all under attack (Krause, p. 109). The reality of the situation was that they were not partners, or equals, or even producers, they were wage slaves. The attack on the puddlers values reduced their control over the work process and correspondingly eroded their efficacy. Labor reformers in Pittsburgh believed that "The competitive system of labor disregards all rules. . . It compels [all] men to become industrial slaves" (Krause, p. 120).

Working conditions in the mills were so harsh, that the efficacy of the workers was severely eroded or non-existent. Again Bandura states that "the fourth major way of altering efficacy beliefs is to enhance physical status, reduce stress levels and [reduce] negative proclivities." Long hours and dangerous work did not enhance, but diminished physical status, increased stress levels, and reinforced any negative proclivities. In the journal of Charles Rumford Walker, a Yale graduate who worked in the steel mills of Bouton (Aliquippa) in 1919, nearly thirty years after Homestead, he describes the effects

of the steelmaking business on the esteem and efficacy of the steelworker. Walker, after only a few months in the mill remarked, "I sometimes feel like a worm, . . . , with no right to be living any way, or so mad I want to lick the bosses and the president" (Walker, 1990, p. 54). When observing the shift change at the mill, Walker described the faces of the men as carrying "yesterday's fatigue and last years." He thought "strongly of a man holding himself from falling over a cliff, with fingers that paralyzed slowly" (Walker, 1990, p. 55). After the twenty-four-hour shift, Walker observed, "Everyone's face looks grave from fatigue - eyes dead" (Walker, 1990, p. 89).

The work schedule in the mills at that time was lengthy and done under conditions that were by any definition inhuman and dangerous. In 1877 Carnegie abandoned its experiment with the eight-hour day. By 1895 the twelve-hour day was established in most steel mills and had become the standard in the entire industry by 1910 (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 17). In Walker's journal, during one of the long twenty-four-hour shifts at J&L Aliquippa works, one of his co-workers remarked, "It's twenty-four hours [off] sandwiched between two work-days. You finish your night-week at 7:00 Sunday morning, having just done a week of one twenty-four-hour shift and six fourteens" (Walker, 1990, p. 65). After a work week of 108 hours in a week with the long shift and 84 hours in the normal week, it is not surprising that one of Walker's co-workers remarked that "There aren't any goddam Sundays in this place" (Walker, 1990, p. 65). It is interesting to note that in 1919, American steel mills required their workers to work the long twenty-four hour shift and six 14 hour days. A steelworker remarked, "What can a man do here? We work eight hours in Scotland. They work eight hours in France, in

Italy, in Germany - all the steel mills work eight hours, except in this bloody free country” (Walker, 1990, p. 80). The workers’ sense of control over the work place, their efficacy had been eroded. They felt nearly powerless to do anything.

Sometimes Walker observed the frustration of quitting mad, describing it as the “irrepressible desire that gets piled up sometimes in the ranks of the army to ‘tell ‘em to go to hell’ and take the consequences. It’s the result of accumulated poisons of overfatigue, long hours, overwrought nerves, ‘the military discipline of the mills’ (Walker, 1990, p. 66).

Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, Krause and others documented the conditions in the mill and the toll it took on the workers. This environment of intense cost cutting, mechanization, an influx of immigrants and emigrants providing a seemingly endless supply of labor, and ever increasing demands by management to increase the pace and amount of output left workers feeling powerless. One British visitor to Pittsburgh reported: “The bosses drive the men to an extent that employers would never dream of in this country [England] getting the maximum work out of them, and the men do not have the inclination or the power to resist the pressure” (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 18). The complete failure of the 1892 Homestead Steel strike and the resulting collapse of the union for forty years contributed further to this sense of impotence.

Even Walker, a Yale graduate who was only in the mill for a few short months, expressed his frustrations with the unrelenting push for greater production and profits. This push for production and profits was embodied in Mr. Lever, the efficiency man. During the twenty-four-hour shift, Mr. Lever watched Walker shovel dolomite for three-



quarters of an hour, “I thought about him. I wanted to go up to him, and give him my shovel. I had to struggle against that impulse - to go up to him and give him my shovel” (Walker, 1990, p. 84).

Even the lure of more pay could not compensate for the agony of the twenty-four-hour shift. As one worker questioned Walker, “What’s the good money, kill yourself?” (Walker, 1990, p. 85). Others confirmed the futility of the situation, “To hell with the money, no can live.” The words sank into Walker’s memory for a lifetime (Walker, 1990, p. 87). Similarly, Fitch reported in about the Homestead plant in 1907 that “In all of the [U. S. Steel] corporation mills, the men are kept down just as much as possible, but for oppression there is no mill like the one where this man [a heater’s helper interviewed by Fitch] is employed (Krause, p. 298).

It was not an easy life. The mills offered long hours and low pay. Conn Strott, a soaking pit heater, explained the deteriorating wage condition of the skilled workers: “Before 1892, I made \$10 and \$12 a day. After the strike wages went down to \$7 and by 1903 they were \$3. At the same time, the work load increased and my hours of work were increased.” The cost of living in the same period increased by 12 percent (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 17).

Long hours and low pay were accompanied by exposure to extremely hazardous conditions in the mills. In a study by Crystal Eastman, the Pittsburgh region annually produced “45 one-legged men, 100 hopeless cripples; . . . 45 men with a twisted useless arm; 30 men with an empty sleeve; 20 men with but one hand; . . . 70 one-eyed men-500 such wrecks in all.” In the first such survey of industrial deaths in Pittsburgh, Eastman

recorded 526 fatalities between July 1, 1906 and June 30, 1907. Nearly 40 percent of these deaths occurred in the steel industry, although Pittsburgh firms refused to release accurate data on serious accidents. In prosperous years, work in the mills was steady, although the hourly rate was not significantly higher than in other sectors. For that reason, many men took the risk of working in the mills (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 18).

Pittsburgh, because of its vast quantities of coking coal a major component of the steel production process, enjoyed a significant cost advantage over other regions. The mills in the area, primarily lead by Andrew Carnegie, were also quick to adopt new technologies which increased productivity and reduced costs. This technology was quickly adopted by other competitors and intense cost cutting measures were enforced to remain competitive. These cost cutting measures were magnified by the massive influx of immigrants from the less industrialized countries intensifying the competition for the jobs in the mills. In the eight years following the unsuccessful strike in 1892, the Carnegie Works reduced its work force by 25 percent. The pace of work within the industry also changed, intensifying dramatically by 1900 as cited earlier by Bodnar, Simon and Weber (p. 18).

The conditions in the mill were not only fast paced, brutal and dangerous, but they caused illness and tensions beyond the mill itself. Joel Tarr notes that “in working class immigrant neighborhoods the quality of life was undesirable, polluted water, inadequate sewage, unpaved streets, unsanitary housing, extremely high morbidity and mortality rates. Pittsburgh had the highest death rate from typhoid fever from 1883 - 1907 (Tarr, p. 236).

Bodnar, Simon and Weber found that immigrant steel workers, faced with constant extremes of heat and cold [extreme heat in the mill and extreme cold in the homes during the winter], contracted pneumonia continuously. Industrial accidents, especially before World War I, were widespread. Illness, injury, and pressures emanating from the workplace and the urban milieu manifested themselves repeatedly in domestic tensions (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 90). The reduced physical state of the worker, the high stress levels, and the negative proclivities arising from the work and urban environment served to continually erode or eliminate the establishment of efficacy beliefs in the workers. Workers were unable to exert any mastery over their work lives. The mills so dominated the lives of the workers, that they were unable to extend any mastery over their lives outside of the mill as well.

The negative proclivities of the work of steelmaking were also expressed in the act of gift giving. Marcel Mauss argues that gifts “are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested. . . .the accompanying behavior is formal pretense and social deception . . . the transaction is based on obligation and economic self - interest” that reflect “nothing less than the division of labor” (Krause, p. 239).

In December 1881, William Clark, the general manager and co-owner of the Pittsburgh Bessemer Steel Works in Homestead received a “beautiful. . . meerschaum pipe and a fine gold headed cane, appropriately inscribed” (Krause, p. 171). While it was not unusual for steelworkers to provide gifts to their supervisors, these gifts were not common. Rather than having an association with the world of work, the only world the

steelworkers knew, these gifts were more associated with the world of leisure. One interpretation of the meaning of this particular act of gift giving was simply a “bond of solidarity with Capital . . . and respect for those in charge,” as one steel industry analyst has interpreted the act (Krause, p. 171). Another interpretation of the meaning of giving these particular gifts is based upon the relationship between Clark and his workers. To his workers Clark was anything but good, benevolent, and refined; he was a bitter opponent of labor. Clark employed blacksheep workers, blacklisted his opponents, lowered wages, and utilized ironclad contracts. While his rule over the Homestead works was considered tyrannical by the workers, Clark likely interpreted the gifts as a symbol of making peace, a sentiment associated with smoking of the peace pipe. The workers likely had a different interpretation of the meaning of these gifts. Since these gifts were more associated with the world of leisure than the world of work, perhaps the workers were implying that Clark should remove himself from their world. In less polite terms, the workers may have been telling Clark to “take a hike” and to “put that in his pipe and smoke it” (Krause, p. 176).

The meaning of gift giving is well associated with Carnegie. The paradox of Carnegie was that he was as well known as a philanthropist as he was a ruthless robber baron, but his gifts exacted a price. Carnegie built many libraries in the towns such as Braddock and Homestead where he celebrated victories over labor, calling them “monuments to his partnership with them” (Krause, p. 237). Carnegie brazenly asked the people of Homestead to accept the library as a “gift of one workingman to another” (Krause, p. 360). For Carnegie, the libraries and other gifts would wipe out the details of his accumulation of wealth and allow him to “simultaneously be a kind employer and “a

good man” (Krause, p. 232).

The workers naturally held a different view of Carnegie’s gifts. In keeping with Mauss’s analysis that gifts are based on obligation and economic self - interest, the only condition attached to the gifts was a “minimal tax assessment” (Krause, p. 238). Workers would comment that “I would rather enter a building built with the dirty silver Judas received for betraying Christ than enter a Carnegie library” (Krause, p. 238).

So hated was Carnegie after the events at Homestead that thousands in Pittsburgh initially refused to accept a substantial gift of money for the institute and library in Schenley Park which now bears his name. In 33 years of bestowing libraries, 225 communities turned him down, 20 of the 46 towns solicited in Pennsylvania rejected his offer. One Homestead steelworker expressed the sentiments of the towns simply: “Carnegie builds libraries for the working men, but what good are libraries to me, working practically 18 hours a day?” (Krause, p. 239).

Carnegie’s extraordinary philanthropy was interpreted as extracting a price from the workers which far exceeded the value of his gift. He gained fortune at the expense of the poor and according to the *Commoner*, “the world is no richer by such gifts, but immeasurably poorer.” The workers knew that when Carnegie was about to bestow a gift, they were about to pay a heavy fine (Krause, p. 239). The *Homestead Local News* reported that there seemed to be a “grin and bear it” feeling prevailing as if the library counted one for the people and a half dozen for Mr. Carnegie (Krause, p. 237). The people of Homestead, Pittsburgh and many communities in the region experienced that “grin and bear it” feeling as time after time they faced the wrath of the industrialist and

were powerless to oppose it. The workers had no mastery over the communities in which they lived.

One of the more alarming examples of the political and economic power of the industrialist was the purchase of the city poor farm in 1892. As revealed by Krause, the political affiliates of Carnegie and Frick, city power brokers Magee and Flinn, and Carnegie's corporate counsel Philander Knox conspired with others to purchase the city poor farm, valued at about \$ 1 million, for \$ 496,000. The local papers referred to the deal as "Plundering the people" and an "outrageous swindle" (Krause, p. 281) and the people were powerless to resist it or prevent it.

The full demonstration of the political power of the industrialist was evident in the Magee-Flinn political ring which Carnegie employed in the purchase of the city poor farm and with Philander Knox, Carnegie's corporate counsel. Magee's idea was not to corrupt city government, but to be it; not to hire votes in councils, but to own councilmen. Lincoln Steffens remarked that "I know of nothing like it in any other city. Tammany [referring to the Tammany Hall corruption scandal in New York] in comparison is a plaything" (Krause, p.137).

#### *Union losses and vicarious experience*

Krause reported that between 1882 and 1885, the union was defeated in all but one of the eleven strikes in steel mills and with the defeat at Homestead, the union movement was dead for forty years (Krause, p. 200). According to Krause, the workers retreated from insurgency as much in a spirit of resignation as an embrace of the corporate order (Krause, p. 201).

Steelworkers could not look to other unions for a vicarious experience to build efficacy. The coal miners, for example, were subjected to a number of initiatives to cut costs and increase the owners' profits. Mine owners habitually short-weighted their daily output, penalized them for any slate or clay mined with the coal, withheld payment for "dead" maintenance work in the mines, price gouged at the ubiquitous company store while regularly paying scrip redeemable only at the company store, and charged astonishingly high rents for company owned tenements (Krause, p. 96). The coal miners were equally powerless to resist the demands of the mine owners.

Efforts to resist the corporations were punished. Many participants in the Homestead strike were fired by the Carnegie Corporation. Blacklists of labor agitators circulated among the owners throughout the region and elsewhere (Bodnar, Simon, & Weber, p.18). All the steel companies had effective methods of learning what is going on among the workmen. The J&L Steel Company had some organization that kept it sufficiently informed as to the likelihood of sedition breaking out, and the U.S. Steel Corporation had regular secret service departments (Bodnar, Simon, & Weber, p. 19). Greenwald also noted that "the Westinghouse strikers [in a strike of 1916] could not match the power of the coal and iron police, company guards, railroad detectives, infantry and calvary soldiers brought into the Turtle Creek Valley at Westinghouse's behest" (Greenwald, p. 51). Workers throughout the region were effectively rendered completely powerless against the organizations, the agents, the state, and the industrialists.

In those few times where labor won a victory over the industrialist, such as the Homestead strike in 1882, their victory was hollow. The industrialist submitted to the

demands of labor because of the backlog of profitable contracts that had to be met. With skilled union men working at all turns, production and profits could reach unprecedented heights. The workers had won a victory to produce more steel and to generate more profits for the very people who had tyrannized them from the beginning (Krause, p. 192).

John Fitch, an author of the volume on the steelworkers in the Pittsburgh Survey argued that “to make employees acquiescent is undemocratic even under good employers, because it stifles an independent spirit.” What is important to understand about the labor policies of the steel industry was the spirit of arrogance and contempt of the rights both of their employees and of the public (Lubove, 1989, p. 317). Without any serious vicarious experience to build upon, efficacy was difficult to establish. This spirit of resignation, the feelings of grin and bear it, the arrogance and contempt of the steel industry to the workers, the public and their rights, signify the erosion of efficacy resulting from the workers’ loss of control over their lives. The spirit of the milltown communities would suffer greatly.

### The Spirit of Community

Pittsburgh in the early nineteenth century still functioned as a community despite its economic and cultural divisions. By 1840, Pittsburgh was still a small city of about 21,000 inhabitants. The city was bounded by two rivers and extended barely two miles eastward from the Point. Patrician landowner, laborer and mechanic, rich and poor resided in close proximity to each other. The sense of community was “maintained and reinforced by daily commercial and social interactions” (Kleppner, p. 153). Early on, in the 1800s, there was a sense of a single community; as Pittsburgh grew and expanded, it



specialized. The city had not yet experienced the geographical and social separateness that would dominate the latter part of the nineteenth century through the present time. By 1833, the city had abandoned at large elections in favor of a ward system which Kleppner notes (Kleppner, p. 155), signaled a shift from the older sense of a single community to territorial distinctiveness.

Subareas like the milltowns became distinct, reflecting a geographical and social separateness. Both Kleppner (Kleppner, p. 165) and Bodnar, Simon, and Weber (cited earlier) showed that people lived in areas based upon attachments to networks of relationships. The factory worker had to live where they worked because they had no income or time to live elsewhere. The mining industry, for example, produced a scattering of isolated, barren villages in various counties . . . and a comparatively immobile labor force tied to the mines (Lubove, 1989, p. 296). Counterparts to the mining town were the milltowns having a concentration of population, existing for the sole purpose of producing steel, and created around a single manufacturing plant. Self-sustaining towns like Aliquippa, ruled by steel mill management, were isolated and fragmented within the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region.

The population of these towns was dispersed by the topography of the region and further fragmented by ethnic allegiances. New immigrants lived near their fellow countrymen and established fraternal, social and religious organizations that reinforced group identities and group consciousness. Hays suggests that the extensive role that ethnic cultures played in Pittsburgh made the region more conservative because these cultures honored older, conservative traditions. He also notes that the persistence of

tradition throughout the community was reinforced through the city's topography of hills and valleys which isolated the communities. In addition, the milltowns were separate, distinct communities, separated from each other and the larger metropolitan area. This isolation was reinforced by the domination of the towns by steel management (Hays, p. 386).

As the Pittsburgh economy began to shift to manufacturing and entrepreneurship from merchants, the new upper class was not a part of the patrician establishment. This establishment, sensed the threat to their cultural and social hegemony (Kleppner, p. 161).

Relationships between the new and old upper classes deteriorated significantly as evidenced by the confrontations in the Sewickley Presbyterian Church. The salient properties of the Pittsburgh upper class, both old and new, was Scotch - Irish and Presbyterian. Confrontations between the old upper class and new upper class persisted and Ingham found that after 1851, every elder in the Sewickley Presbyterian Church was from the new upper class. In 1864, the old upper class broke away to form the United Presbyterian Church of Sewickley and another group of old upper class founded the Leetsdale Presbyterian Church (Ingham, p. 279).

Kleppner found additional evidence of erosion of community by 1840. The new political party, the Republican Party, represented an anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic movement. This movement revealed larger conflicts of values and interests between pietist modernizers as Republicans, and ritualist traditionalists as Democrats. For the most part, pietists were modern, future oriented, guided by reason and efficiency their ideal. Education was their remedy for all social ills. Ritualists espoused traditional values,

married within, followed orthodox beliefs, and followed the leadership for their pastors. Education, for them, was a means to pass on their beliefs to the next generation, rather than as an opportunity to expand human consciousness. This conflict in values contributed to the racial, class, economic and spatial divisions of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. As a result, contact across economic levels within groups eroded, and so did the group's sense of cohesion (Kleppner, p. 176).

The region experienced simultaneous rather than sequential development. Milltowns were self-sufficient protecting their political independence (Tarr, p. 217) and often function independently or at odds with each other. Mistrust, jealousy and antagonism existed, and still exist. People residing outside the metropolitan area do not accept the city's name because of geographical remoteness, resentment at neglect or exploitation of their interests or alienation from its urban lifestyle (Muller, p. 182-201).

Transportation to Pittsburgh from surrounding communities peaked in the 1920s. The Depression followed the 1920s and later, with the election of President Roosevelt and the passage of New Deal policies, unions began to grow in strength. The 1940s brought sustained prosperity which lasted through the 1960s. However, each succeeding event decreased transportation between the outlying communities such as Aliquippa and the metropolitan region. As transportation decreased, so did business transactions and social interaction which led to increased isolation and fragmentation.

Communities were politically fragmented. They jealously protected their political autonomy and the relationships between the city and suburb were ambivalent, characterized by mistrust. The professional elite pushed for centralization, while the

neighborhoods pushed for decentralization and localization. Regional consolidation was attempted in the first one-third of the Twentieth Century. Pittsburgh eventually annexed Allegheny, known as the rape of Allegheny. In 1910 other municipalities formed the League of Boroughs. The League by the next year had prevented passage of a bill which would have consolidated forty boroughs. Strong localisms of county communities impeded cooperation in important areas such as sewage treatment and pollution control. In 1929 a plan for a weak, federated consolidation of city and county reached the ballot. The affluent, white collar suburbs joined with the city to favor the change, but the milltowns and outlying county districts opposed it. Teaford notes the conflict in interests and values between business and professional communities and the evolving class towns. Efficiency, economy, or metropolitan grandeur might have been the values [of the former] but those values were not shared [by the latter] with a more localistic and parochial focus (Tarr, p. 213-241).

“The city at the turn of the century lacked social cohesion, reflected in “archaic social institutions, . . . still surviving after the conditions to which they were adapted disappeared.” Nearly one hundred years later, the COMPAC 21 report addressed this very problem (COMPAC21, 1996).

The Pittsburgh Survey emphasized the social pathologies of the community and its fragmented civic institutions. However, in contrast to the community, the pervasive fraternal lodges endeavored to arouse a sense of common interest. Rather than view the fraternal organization as supportive of community interests, the social values and authors of the Pittsburgh Survey viewed them as parochial obstacles to civic cohesion (Lubove,

1989, p. 303).

Pittsburgh's fragmented civic and governmental institutions were distinctive in several aspects. Hays observes that Pittsburgh displays distinctive characteristics in patterns of change and responses to change. The city was a more extreme case in regard to organizational tendencies. "Based on the high degree of centralization in iron and steel manufacturing, the entire city displayed a similarly persistent tendency toward centralization in government and institutions" (Hays, p. 386-391). Organizational, government, and institutional centralization were most extreme in Pittsburgh. The city was one of the few to fully replace the ward system with city wide elections. This is a particularly important observation because it suggests that the managerial style of the iron and steel manufacturing firms became the managerial norm for government and other organizations in the area. The vicarious experience of the success of the steel manufacturers caused other organizations in the area to mimic their organizational and managerial style hoping to imitate the spectacular financial success of these firms. The centralized managerial style of Pittsburgh organizations persisted within government until 1998 when the revisions to county government were approved by public referendum in Allegheny County as a result of the COMPAC 21 study.

In the Twentieth Century, two decentralizing tendencies emerged to partially offset the movement toward centralization. Outlying communities vigorously resisted consolidation. Since the outlying communities derived their autonomy and authority from the state, they were effectively able to resist consolidation. The limited opportunities for upward mobility and the relative stability of the social classes must have served to erode

efficacy in these towns by reinforcing the notion that desired outcomes, i.e. upward mobility was not possible or likely (Hays, p. 391-398). Limited opportunities for upward mobility would be reflected in increasing disparities of income and wealth, reduced income and wealth shares for the lower income percentiles and a minimization of educational benefit for all but those with advanced degrees. As was shown earlier in the demographic data comparing the 1980s and 1990s, milltowns like Aliquippa were not composed of residents with college degrees and advanced degrees. Their share of the economic recovery could only be measured in terms of lessened decline and not upwardly mobile residents especially in terms of accumulation of wealth.

Mishel, Bernstein and Schmitt report that the distribution of wealth is considerably less equal than the distribution of income (Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, p. 258), which we have already shown to be widely variant. While wealth was widely concentrated in the Gilded Age and Pittsburgh was no exception, wealth was more concentrated in the 1920s and 1930s than in any period after World War II (Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, p. 260). However, as the data indicate, wealth continues to be redistributed upward since the 1980s. Between 1983 and 1989, no other group increased its share of wealth other than the wealthiest 1 percent. However, that 3.6% increase in wealth for the top 1 percent between 1983 and 1989 represents nearly the total value of wealth holdings for the bottom sixty percent in that time period. Wealth actually eroded for the bottom forty percent of families in that same period as indicated in Table 8.

**Table 4****Changes in the distribution of wealth\*, 1962-1997\*\***

Wealth class	Share of wealth*					Change			
	1962	1983	1989	1995	1997**	1962-83	1983-89	1989-95	1989-97**
<b>Top fifth</b>	81.0%	81.3%	83.5%	83.7%	84.3%	0.4	2.2	0.2	0.8
Top 1%	33.4%	33.8%	37.4%	37.6%	39.1%	0.3	<b>3.6</b>	0.2	1.8
Next 4%	21.2%	22.3%	21.6%	22.3%	22.3%	1.2	-0.8	0.7	0.7
Next 5%	12.4%	12.1%	11.6%	11.7%	11.4%	-0.2	-0.5	0.1	-0.2
Next 10%	14.0%	13.1%	13.0%	12.1%	11.5%	-0.9	-0.1	-0.8	-1.5
Bottom four-									
fifths	19.0%	18.7%	16.5%	16.3%	15.7%	-0.4	-2.2	-0.2	-0.8
Fourth	13.4%	12.6%	12.3%	11.5%	10.8%	-0.8	-0.2	-0.8	-1.5
Middle	5.4%	5.2%	4.8%	4.5%	4.4%	-0.2	-0.4	-0.3	-0.4
Second	0.9%	1.2%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	0.2	-0.3	0	0.1
Lowest	-0.7%	-0.3%	-1.5%	-0.7%	-0.5%	0.4	-1.2	0.8	1
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%				

\* Wealth defined as net worth (household assets minus debts)

\*\*1997 figures are estimates

Source: Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, p. 262.

This economic system appears to produce a distribution of wealth with a wide variance, perhaps even a system moving toward inversion of the distribution. This inversion is often described as the “two Americas” or a bi-polar economy with few in the middle of the distribution, reflecting the diminishing middle class, and growing populations of outliers, the poor and the affluent. In the least, income and wealth distribution reflects a notable skew to the right distributed toward the wealthy and away from the lower 80% of the population.

Similarly, the redistribution of income and wealth toward the upper income levels indicates clearly that even though greater wealth is being produced by the economy, fewer are sharing in that wealth. Convention attributes increasing mean income and a growing economy, particularly an economy where employment is decreasing, stock market indices are rising, and increasing a gross domestic product as economic progress. While certainly none of those indicators are undesirable and they are certainly preferable to their opposites, they are not necessarily a reflection of progress, even economic progress. As referred to earlier with the Ancient Greeks, Romans, with the French aristocracies of Louis XV and XVI and Marie Antoinette, in Britain after World War I and in America after the Great Depression, economic progress does not always equate to social progress or even economic satisfaction. As income and wealth distributions reached the extremes in these societies, some intervention was required to prevent social upheaval and to temporarily suspend the accumulation of wealth. These interventions reduced the pressure on the social system, restored hope of upward mobility and participation in the system of economic rewards. After this temporary calming period, accumulation of wealth by the favored resumed and often accelerated.

What is required is a redefinition of economic and social progress. Redefining social



and economic progress in terms, which have relevant meaning to those affected by economic cycles, at least those whose abilities to provide the basic necessities of life are affected. This redefinition aligns with the notions of Michael Weber suggested earlier that an alternative view, that of the workers as being more relevant to the assessment of their progress. “What is important is not how we judge workers, but how they judge themselves” (Weber, M.P., 1989, p. 379). It is hypothesized that these workers may redefine progress, both social and economic, in terms and meanings which address the degree of control they have over their futures, or perhaps even the degree of control their children would be given over their futures. In such a case, it would be likely that while not unimportant, material progress would begin to matter less than control over how they as individuals and as communities define themselves, recognize and gather the meaning to control their lives.

In regard to performance of educational systems, it is unlikely that one could conclude that educational systems are performing optimally or even efficiently because of the wide variance in performance of these systems. That observation would lead to the conclusion that the educational system could be improved regarding the design and implementation of educational reforms. However, since so much of the education system is local, national reforms may not be effective. Reforms that are successful in one district may not succeed in another. It is then logical to conclude that each district would need to define the reform to suit itself and to suit its local culture.

Educational reforms and national socio-economic-political policy were soon to be defined by a majority of the voting public, and not the majority of the public. These policies would leave the disadvantaged virtually unrepresented and without an effective voice. They

could not master their own experience as we will soon discover. Rather the interests of the residents of milltowns like Aliquippa became inconsequential relative to the interests of the economically advantaged, the contented and the culture they represented.

### A Contented Culture

There is another controlling factor regarding the socio-political-economics of our time, that of the social character of the majority of those who vote. Consider the data published by the US Bureau of the Census reflected in the Table 5.

**Table 5**

**Voting and Registration of Family members, by age and family income: for all  
ages 18 and over**

**November 1994 (released June 4, 1996)**

Income level	All Persons	Number	Number reported	Percent voted
		Registered	voted	
under \$5,000	4,510	1,830	901	20.0%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	8,086	3,493	1,904	23.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	11,477	5,851	3,784	33.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	20,267	11,748	8,182	40.4%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	21,837	13,773	9,808	44.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	25,902	17,633	12,969	50.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	25,496	19,068	14,868	58.3%
\$75,000 and over	19,034	15,141	12,134	63.7%
Income not reported	10,788	5,894	4,452	41.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147,396</b>	<b>94,430</b>	<b>69,003</b>	<b>46.8%</b>

Galbraith advances the notion that the culture of the contended is a culture of the majority of those who vote, basically those in the upper 20% of the income and wealth brackets. Based upon 1994 census data, that would include persons with family incomes over \$35,000 per year although those who vote with incomes over \$50,000 represent nearly 40 percent of the voting public. That percentage increases to nearly 42 percent if those whose income was not reported are excluded from the data.

Those that vote wield the social and political power and the elected serve that constituency, a constituency which increasingly holds to four basic beliefs (Galbraith, p. 18 - 26):

- ! the expression that the wealthy and contented majority and those who compose it, the majority of the voting public, are receiving just what they deserve, and for that matter, so are the poor,
- ! the doctrine of laissez faire holds inviolate, that public inaction is always preferred,
- ! the state is to play a selective role favoring the favored, contented majority,
- ! that great differences in income and wealth are to be tolerated.

Social and economic policy, favoring the short run and directed to immediate comfort and contentment, is directed according to the beliefs of the culture of the contented and continues to favor them. What is new in capitalist countries is that contentment and their resulting belief is now that of the electoral majority. These countries, including America, are now a democracy of those who go to the polls resulting in a government of the beliefs of the contented and not a government addressing the common good. In contrast to the contentment of the electoral majority, there are growing numbers of very poor concentrated in inner cities and in declining mining, manufacturing and agricultural areas, especially in the Appalachian plateau region. According to the 1994 census data shown earlier, 10% of those with family incomes of less than \$15,000 per year participate in elections, although they comprise over 16% of the voter population. Those with annual family incomes over \$35,000 comprise nearly 45% of the voter population and 58% of the voters.

What is distinctive about the contented and what defines this culture is that their

income and position are made relatively secure by both public and private reinforcements including private pension funds, social security, publicly and privately sponsored medical care, farm income supports, and the savings and loan supports (Galbraith, p. 14). These supports are in notable contrast to the condition of the impoverished where government support and subsidies are suspect because such supports destroy the morals and the work ethics of the impoverished. “The affluent can withstand the adverse moral effect of being subsidized and supported by the government, not so the poor” (Galbraith, p. 15). A similar sentiment was expressed by Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor of New York City in the keynote address at the Livable Cities Conference in 1999. When addressing welfare and dependency, Mayor Giuliani stated “Whatever you believe about welfare, whatever you believe about the necessity for it, the charitable nature of it, the importance of dealing with people’s problems, you cannot call welfare progressive because it does not create progress in people’s lives. . . . There is nothing compassionate about keeping people dependent” (Manhattan Institute, p.4).

Characteristic of the social values of this contented culture is that in Galbraith’s words, “There is no self-doubt in their present situation. The future for the contented majority is thought effectively within their personal command” (Galbraith, p. 16). By any definition, this contented culture is a most efficacious group.

However, the social value of the culture of the contented resists public expenditure and new investment, especially taxation. There are specific reasons for that opposition considering that cost and taxation are specific and immediate, benefit is delayed until some time in the future. The selective role of the state is revealed in the social value of the contented. For example, social expenditures for welfare, low cost housing, health care, public

education and the needs of the urban slums are opposed because they are a burden on government, although social expenditure for financial rescues, military spending, and interest payments on debt, are supported.

America has often been referred to as a society absent of social classes. However, there are ever increasing numbers of poor concentrated in inner cities, deprived farms, rural migrant labor and in mining communities forming what has been referred to an underclass and in Galbraith's estimation performs a significant service to the contented in industrialized countries (Galbraith, p. 32).

The service performed by this group is to perform work found to be undesirable for others. While work may be defined as something economically rewarding and spiritually fulfilling, and socially reputable, for others, particularly the underclass, work is dreary, socially demeaning and something to be suffered and endured. A continual supply of these workers is then needed to serve the needs of society. At the turn of the century in Pittsburgh Eastern Europeans were hired as immigrants to work in the mills. Blacks emigrating from the South were hired to perform the low paying service jobs in the city. America has its groups of migrant workers permitted entry to assist in the harvest, Turks and Yugoslavs labor in Germany, and Algerians in France are available as needed. When these groups are no longer needed, they can be sent home or denied entry to the country. As an additional benefit, as aliens, they do not vote and do not participate as citizens.

Even now, as at the turn of the century, there is a role in America for the underclass. The distinctive difference with this underclass is the potential for relative permanence in society. As low paying, socially undesirable jobs limit them to residence in school districts

with low quality school systems, not only are their opportunities for upward mobility restricted, but the opportunities for controlling their own lives are diminished. Prospects for the children are diminished as well. The contented, however, live in school districts where the schools are better funded or they can afford private schools.

To be sure, there is merit in work even in undesirable jobs; any work which is honest is meritorious. Giuliani speaks of work as elevating “you as a human being much more than becoming dependent and having someone else take care of you” (Manhattan Institute, p. 7). If work is demeaning, then it is demeaning because we view it to be demeaning or that the circumstances surrounding the work are demeaning, but the work itself, if it is honest is not demeaning.

Education, however, is intended as the means to a more comfortable, dignified life, away from demeaning circumstances toward work and circumstances which are more rewarding. From the education and advancement of the underclass comes “the need for the resupply or . . . for keeping some part of the underclass in continued and deferential subjection. The normal upward movement that was long the solvent for discontent has been arrested” (Galbraith, p. 34 - 36). The underclass can now become semipermanent. It is the lack of authenticity of the performance and reward system which leads to skepticism and distrust of the economic system itself. With the restriction of the normal upward movement comes the erosion and over time the elimination of efficacy for both the individual and the community to which the individual belongs.

Galbraith notes those minority communities in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and elsewhere, once poor but benign and culturally engaging are now centers of despair

(Galbraith, p.39). These communities were once like Pittsburgh's Hill District, poor but with cultural vitality. In fact, Claude McKay, the leading poet of the Harlem Renaissance, labeled the intersection of Wylie and Fullerton Avenues in the heart of the Hill - "Crossroads of the World" (Glasco, p. 76). These communities which were once favored upward steps in economic life are becoming a "hopeless enthrallment" (Galbraith, p. 39). He goes further to note that with legal provisions for importing migrant workers to harvest fruits and vegetables, there now exists a "clear, legal perception of the role of the underclass." So for many, the comparison is not with the more fortunate, but with the life they left behind for the prospect of escape for a future generation. The escape route usually led directly through the education system. The community of Aliquippa and its school system would not be exempt from this comparison.

Current political thought disapproves of spending for good educational opportunities for the underclass, good public housing and health care, competent attention to drug addiction, family counseling, adequate welfare payments, or in the extreme, any welfare payments. In the vernacular of the contented, what is required is accountability. Each of us, in the belief of the contented are the source of our own well-being and are accountable to only ourselves. Accordingly, the underclass is the source of their own problem and they only require the "spur of their own poverty" (Galbraith, p. 41). Any social assistance and support would only serve to damage them and would interfere with the bootstrap mechanism which would allow them to raise themselves above their own circumstances. The culture of the contented is immune from the damage inflicted by social assistance and support payments. Only the poor are damaged by this charity. As mentioned earlier, the contented have a



selective view regarding the purposes of government, and this view is what shapes current economic and political policy.

Government, in the view of the contented, is inefficient, corrupt, incompetent, and assaults the private, well-being of the individual. Lacking social, economic and political power to redress their grievances, the poor turn to the state. As shown earlier, the government was elected to serve the voting constituency and not the greater populace. The electorate serves the contented.

Taxation is the common enemy of the contented and macroeconomic policy has centered on control of interest rates. Higher interest rates are thought to curb inflation by slowing or accelerating the economy. In any case, higher interest rates cannot harm the well off since they are lenders and not borrowers.

Our capitalist system advances the notion of the pursuit of self-interest to promote the public good. Pursuit of that goal is accepted and is often widely celebrated. However, the pursuit of self-interest today as well as in the Gilded Age and in the Roaring Twenties has not been without significant social effects. Among those effects are the powerful tendency of capitalism to be self-destructive.

The doctrine of *laissez faire* is the foundation of the economics of the contented. Within that doctrine is the notion that state intervention is to be avoided, barring certain exceptions which have been mentioned earlier. It is well known that the free market does not always produce socially optimal results. For example, the free market produces an unequal distribution of income and an unequal distribution of power between the employer and the employed. The social character of the contented tolerates these inequities.

Public programs have often mitigated the inequities and lessened the cruelties and vagaries of the market. It is widely accepted that these public programs have saved capitalism in Britain after World War II and in America after the Great Depression with the New Deal. As a benign doctrine, laissez faire restricts nothing including the destruction of the institutions of the economic system, in this case the corporation or the communities where the corporations conduct their affairs.

Within the corporation, voting rights belong to the stockholders, but individual stockholders are widely dispersed and their votes count for little. Galbraith recalls that the euthanasia of stockholder power and the dominance of managerial power has been noted by scholars, particularly Berle, Means and Burnham since the 1930s and 1940s (Galbraith, p. 54). While economic doctrine maintains that firms seek to maximize profits for the benefit of the stockholders and so doing, they maximize the public good, management has the power. Stockholders have lost control over management and management has sought to maximize their own return, more specifically compensation. In 1980, CEO compensation was 29 times the average manufacturing worker. By 1990, CEO compensation was 93 times greater and the wages of the average manufacturing worker had fallen in that same period.

In order to preserve their position and to garner more power, management in the 1980s and 1990s embarked on a merger and acquisition frenzy. These ventures, in particular the RJR Nabisco merger, the Federated Department store mergers, and the numerous airline mergers, were both socially and economically damaging as heavy debt was imposed upon the firm, interest on these debts diverted funds from new products and research and development, as well as new plant and equipment. The result of these actions was to further weaken the

corporation, all under the benign doctrine of laissez faire and the market. “The free enterprise system fully embraces the right to inflict limitless damage on itself” (Galbraith, p. 59). Many observers cited the Justice Department for turning away from investigating these mergers.

The self-destruction of the merger mania was repeated in the real estate speculation crisis of the 1980s. Large, highly speculative loans were made which eventually went into default. The resulting economic impact was far reaching and deep as the banks risked collapse. The construction industry was severely restricted and a recession soon followed. Government intervention in a preventive role was undesirable for the contented, but government rescue of the failing banks was vigorously pursued.

The most blatant evidence of the self - destructive nature of the new capitalism is the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s and 1990s, brought about by the deregulation of the industry. This scandal is characterized by Galbraith as the “largest and costliest venture in public misfeasance, malfeasance and larceny of all time. . . by the most feckless and felonious disposition of what, essentially, were public funds in the nation’s history, perhaps in any modern nation’s history” (Galbraith, p. 61-63). Galbraith places the cost of this scandal at \$2,000 for each American citizen. Firmly adhering to their beliefs, the culture of the contented was convinced that the responsibility to find a solution for the collapse of the savings and loan industry remained firmly with the state.

Continuing the paradox of the culture of contentment is their belief toward bureaucracy. The bureaucracy of the private organization is depicted as efficient while the bureaucracy of the public organization is viewed as incompetent. It was their willingness to believe, the faith in the private enterprise system by the culture of contentment that offered

much of the impetus to privatization of government functions. Joel F. Handler states in the conclusion of his work Down from bureaucracy, that the “world of power and politics does not favor the ordinary citizen or parent or dependent clients, and as we have seen, whatever labels, whatever slogans or symbols, decentralization, deregulation, and privatization are contests over the allocation of power” (Handler, p. 216). As such, the culture of contentment uses the belief of bureaucracy within the public organization as incompetent as a means of consolidating power over government functions. The ordinary citizen, the citizen of the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region, feels that the world of power and politics does not favor them. As a result, they feel they are politically and economically powerless, that outcomes are strictly beyond their control. The ordinary citizen, individually and collectively, lacks efficacy. With the powerful economic forces unfolding before them, the citizens of Aliquippa found that they had no control over the situation and were unable to initiate a recovery from their own economic collapse.

Within the private organization, cooperation is essential. According to Galbraith, what completes acceptance in the culture of contentment is the diminishing role of thought and that management is immune from criticism. In large organizations, thought is inconvenient and difficult and as such is delegated downward. Rather than to be committed to problem solving, the problem is passed downward in the organization. Since we behave that way in organizations, it becomes that way in public life (Galbraith, p. 68). It was the same in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region since the 1890s. The organization of the large mining, railroad, and steel companies and their bureaucracies dictated the ways we behaved in organizations and that behavioral model extended to public life. These steel companies

dictated the ways in which people behaved in the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and dictated public life there as well. Galbraith remarks that the “mental sclerosis” of the bureaucracy of the large organization as greatly evident. “That condition in the coal and steel industries, and particularly in the once industrially dominant United States Steel Corporation, is a well-read chapter in American economic history” (Galbraith, p. 73). It is this “mental sclerosis” which dominated the region’s large organizations and also permeated the region’s communities. So thoroughly was this cultural “mental sclerosis” ingrained in the region’s organizations that their management style remained the same through the 1980s and 1990s. The failure of these organizations to change their management style helped to accelerate their decline and exacerbated the difficulties they had in responding to adversity. This condition of “mental sclerosis” is associated primarily with resistance to change which is characteristic of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and is related to the lack of efficacy within the region. The culture of the contented was firmly implanted in the region within the large portion of the elderly and retired, as well as the structures of the corporate organization. Even the structure of the Allegheny County government remained unchanged. In the last half of the last century, the age of burgeoning capitalism, Ricardo and Malthus, “saw an industrial world in which a handful of exceedingly well maintained and powerful capitalists dominated society from the dark, satanic mills,. . . thousands not excluding small children labored without power” (Galbraith, p. 78). After the mill closings, the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region remained resistant to change, hoping for the revival of the steel industry or advocating the preservation of their towns as monuments to the past; these residents of those towns were unable to gain control of their own destiny, just as their fathers had failed to

control their destiny.

Dogma plays a significant role in the culture of the contented and their view of economic policy. Faith in God and faith in the system are to some extent identical in the sense that, like faith in God, no evidence to the contrary is adequate to shake their faith or no evidence is required to confirm their faith in the system. The faith of the contented has been a sustaining force, supporting their commitment to the short run and the rejection of policies which benefit the long-run view. This is yet another selective application of faith, at least from a Catholic perspective. In Catholicism, faith and commitment are aimed at the long run, the eternity. In the Calvinist view, as the caretaker of worldly goods, one's perspective is to focus on the short term and the doctrine of laissez faire. After all, pre-destination is one of the primary tenets of Calvinism and the Protestant ethic. So the culture of the contented reflects the views of the world one hundred years earlier, the powerful Protestant contented, protecting and controlling short term interests against the disadvantaged poor.

There are instances where the faith of the contented supports government intervention. In fact in certain instances it is encouraged by the contented, especially in cases of rescuing failing financial institutions, service of the contented through social security payments and medicare, but no other intervention is supported as much as support to the military - industrial establishment. The contented view intervention generally as a threat to their well being. No intervention to support and restore the disadvantaged of the milltowns like Aliquippa could be tolerated.

There is however a more serious threat, the threat of capitalism to tend toward instability. Capitalism tends to be cyclical, moving through periods of boom and bust, bull and

bear markets, periods of expansion and recession. The effects on income and profit in the down cycles and the threat of inflation in the boom cycles are not desirable to the contented so they turn to the government to mitigate or control these periods of instability through fiscal policy. The principle tenet of contentment is to avoid intervention unless intervention protects the contented from discomfort.

So, for the contented, the first line of government intervention involves the adjustment of government spending to affect aggregate demand. This intervention presents a paradox for the contented. The adjustment of aggregate demand through the intervention of the government represents a direct conflict with the culture of contentment because it requires an expanding role of government which is often accompanied by an increase in taxes. Similarly, adjustment of aggregate demand is unacceptable unless it services the military. Another line of intervention in the age of contentment would be for the direct control of costs through wage controls. This intervention is an especially egregious violation of the principle of contentment because this intervention represents an extension of government authority. The third and accepted intervention by the contented is what is known as monetary policy, or control of economic expenditure and consequently demand and ultimately inflation through interest rates. This policy is highly acceptable to the contented because, to the contented, inflation is a greater enemy to their culture and well being than unemployment. That much is understandable because the contented are more threatened by inflation than unemployment.

What is curious however, are their attitudes regarding central bank policy which is generally viewed as neutral, when it actually favors the upper classes who are lenders rather than borrowers. Personal income from interest payments increased from \$272 billion to \$681

billion in the 1980s or by 150%, income from wages in that period increased only 97% (Galbraith, p. 92). In the 1980s, budget deficits were large and continual, yet higher interest rates kept inflation under control. The interventions of the government in imposing higher interest rates were not opposed by the contented since they were the beneficiaries of these higher interest rates as lenders. Neither were large deficits were opposed by the contented since they were the beneficiaries of these deficits as lenders. However, payments for higher interest rates simply went against debt service and not for productive investment in the infrastructure. The effect of these higher interest rates was to discourage investment for economic improvement. This short run view led to less efficient and competitive industry in the long run.

While such economic policies were economically acceptable to the contented, the impact of such a policy was devastating to the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and the milltowns in that region because lack of investment in basic industries such as steel led to a collapse of investment in the local steel industries which contributed to the closing of the mills. Members of the communities of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region found their perceived ability to achieve desired outcomes simply beyond their control. They were powerless to do anything about the situation.

One of the characteristic features of the contented culture is its consistency regarding certain beliefs, including economic beliefs. “Mainstream economics has for some centuries given grace and acceptability to convenient belief - to what the socially and economically favored most wish or need to have believed” (Galbraith, p. 95). Galbraith cites three specific requirements for contentment:



- ! limitations on government and adherence to the doctrine of laissez faire
- ! social justification for the uninhibited pursuit of wealth which is a belief wholly consistent with the Protestant ethic
- ! a reduced sense of public responsibility for the poor which now is posing as the justifiable doctrine of compassionate conservatism.

Galbraith makes the case that for the contented culture to be satisfied, there must be a justifying doctrine. In the 1980s that doctrine took the form of the misuse of Adam Smith and The wealth of nations (Galbraith, p. 101), but this was not enough. A new, original work had to be invented. This work came from George Gilder called Wealth and Poverty acquired near biblical standing in the 1980s as a justifying doctrine for the culture of the contented. In this work, Gilder calls for the “necessity of faith.” He warns that “material progress is inimical to scientific economics: It cannot be explained or foreseen in mechanistic or mathematical terms” (Galbraith, p. 101). What is required is not evidence or data, but faith in the espoused doctrine.

Gilder, for example, has no reservations about the distinctions between the motivators between the rich and the poor. The difficulty of material progress requires among other things, “devotion and risk that are only elicited by high rewards” (Galbraith, p. 101). In opposition to regressive taxes which help the poor, Gilder further advises, “In order to succeed, the poor need most of all the spur of their poverty.” The dogma of the new capitalist and the culture of the contented has been thus expressly stated. Rather, this dogma has been restated from the 1920s and the Gilded Age. The rich were noble men motivated by a system of meritocracies. The poor were simply beasts of burden motivated only by the spur of their

own poverty.

A powerful culture, this time a contented culture comprising the majority of the voters, adopted a contemptuous attitude toward a significant segment of the population, the poor. Many in the milltowns including Aliquippa now joined that segment of the population. The contented buttressed their faith in an economic system. It aligned itself with Calvinist centered religious groups who focused on gathering political influence. These religious groups, to the satisfaction of the contented, focused that influence on the political community to establish or change policies to those which favored the contented.

Clearly, each of these factors prevented the poor, particularly the milltown poor from gaining any mastery over the economic and political environment. Lacking or thwarting any mastery experience, and reinforced by policies which favored those already favored at the expense of the defenseless prevented the growth of any community efficacy which may have sustained the community earlier.

A further extension of the justifying doctrine of the culture of the contented was known as the Laffer curve. This “exercise in imagination” maintained that taxes in America had passed some optimal peak. In order to return to that optimal peak, the contented advocated tax reductions which favored themselves. “The statistics are decisive. The average after-tax annual income of those in the upper 20 percent of the income distribution increased in constant dollars from \$73,700 in 1981 to \$92,000 in 1990. As earlier noted, the income of the average manufacturing worker declined in those same years” (Galbraith, p. 105). Mishel, Bernstein and Schmitt (p. 117) conclude that between 1977 and 1989, “the tax system shifted to the advantage of the wealthiest 1% of families, who received large tax cuts at the expense

of the poor and middle class.” They further state that “the most dramatic growth occurred among the wealthiest families: the average income of the top 1% of the income distribution grew 102.2 % after taxes during 1977-89. This increase exceeds the growth in pre-tax income (78%) by 24.2 percentage points, suggesting that the reduced taxation substantially boosted the after-tax incomes of the wealthiest 1% of families in the 1977-89 period. . . . A closer look reveals that it was the poorest families who bore the brunt of these [after tax income] declines” (Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, p. 94). These declines would have been even worse if it were not for the income generated by longer hours, working wives, and increased educational levels.

The final problem, the problem of the poor, was yet to be addressed by the culture of the contented. In accordance with a now well established pattern, a justifying doctrine was required to prevent the transfer of income from the comfortable and contented to the poor. The great number of impoverished, those with incomes less than 50% of the poverty level increased from 29.9% in 1975 to 38.5 % in 1983 (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt. p. 291). If social forces could focus attention on this problem, it could create a larger role for the state to correct this problem. The problem of the poor created a need for some justifying doctrine, a doctrine that would provide the foundation for a policy to protect the interests of the contented.

That doctrine was found in the writings of Dr. Charles Murray. In Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950 -1980, Murray basically states that “the poor are impoverished and are kept in poverty by the public measures, particularly welfare payments, that are meant to rescue them from their plight” (Galbraith, p. 106). Welfare restrains their personal initiative

and therefore, blocks their escape. Murray advocated “scrapping the entire federal welfare and income support structure for working aged persons, including AFDC (Aid for Families with Dependent Children), Medicaid, Food Stamps, Unemployment Insurance, Worker’s Compensation, subsidized housing, disability insurance, and the rest.” The value of such a doctrine is that it takes the poor off of the federal budget and tax system. Galbraith notes that “the number of Americans living below the poverty level increased by 28% in 10 years from 24.5 million in 1978 to 32 million in 1988. . . 1 in every 5 children was born in poverty in the US” (Galbraith, p. 107). It is evident that a system that serves the contented and their interests so well was treating the poor, the disadvantaged, very roughly. Those in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region milltowns who were affected by such policies in those years would have been hard pressed to feel that they were in control of their lives as they saw their circumstances continue to worsen. In fact, their circumstances continued to worsen under the auspices of the very system which they had labored and paid taxes to support for so many years.

A distortion of the reward system, a system which now provided a carrot of sweet rewards for the wealthy and the spur of poverty for the poor, has been established and given endorsement by the government. Many of those living in the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region were now poor and certainly could not be numbered among the culture of the contented. Their state of efficacy could only be eroded further by these socio-economic-political policies.

In the 1980s, President Reagan insisted that “government is the problem” (Galbraith, p. 122) and the values of the contented are most closely represented by the Republican party.

These values include commitment to the short run, a diminished role of government except for the military, and financial support and rescue of failing financial institutions and social security. Tax reduction is their mantra, and it is believed that the well off are motivated by higher incomes and rewards. The poor are motivated by threats of punishments.

The culture of the contented represents a majority of the voting public. Those who do not vote consider it “an idle exercise for the eligible poverty ridden citizen. . . the difference between the two parties.. is inconsequential.” “The comfortable monopolize the political franchise; the uncomfortable. . . do not have candidates who represent their needs and so they do not vote” (Galbraith, p. 151-155). Without faith in the system and by not voting, the underclass is rendered collectively powerless.

By not voting, the underclass pose no threat to the contented. However, recession or depression is the first threat to the contented culture. The resulting unemployment from a recession or depression can conveniently be ignored by the contented since they are largely unaffected. A second threat to the contented is an angry, mobilized underclass. Since this group does not vote, although they may be angry, they do not have political influence over elected representatives. The third and more serious threat to the contented is the threat of inflation since it threatens those who are lenders and not borrowers.

State intervention is heartily and thoroughly condemned by the contented, but it is quite comprehensive where their benefits are concerned. However, it is limited when addressing the concerns of the poor. In the 1980s, as in the 1930s, “the only declared therapy to relieve the hardship was oratory . . . a promise that the recession would be shallow and short” (Galbraith, p. 163).

Finally, the result of several decades of policies in support of the contented, inequalities of income and wealth have been exacerbated. However, the only effective mechanism for reducing income inequality is a progressive income tax. That possibility, the possibility of reducing inequalities through changes in the tax structure, is clearly beyond the realm of comprehension for the contented.

The policies of the contented have continued to exacerbate problems for the needy and the uncomfortable. There is no desire on the part of the contented to enlarge the role of government to spend more on education at the federal level; that would be an extension of the role of government and might lead to an increase in federal taxes. Any increase in educational spending at the local level would lead to an increase in taxes at the local level which would be similarly undesirable. Since there is no desire to spend public funds to equitably fund education, the underclass in milltowns like Aliquippa, in the central cities and rural America are losing the traditional route to upward mobility. These and other shortcomings of the educational system have weakened the American economic position. With a weakened economic position, opportunities for upward mobility become more restricted; with restricted access to educational opportunities, upward mobility is likewise limited. With these traditional avenues for advancement cut off, the uncomfortable are not in control of their own destiny.

The result of the establishment and empowerment of the culture of the contented is to force public policy to conform to their interests. Unfortunately, these interests represent the interests of the contented and not necessarily the interests of the majority of the populace. The policy of the contented is to promote their own comfort and contentment. Characteristic

of the contented is their security in their position and their belief that the future is within their control. Lacking membership in the contented group, the uncomfortable have no control over their own future. Their efficacy has been eroded, or perhaps the former illusion of their own efficacy has been eroded, and they are powerless to do anything about it. The contented and their policies had a profound impact on capitalism and social policies in the 1980s and 1990s cleaving the nation into two Americas, an America for the rich and a quite different America for the poor. Aliquippa could now view itself from the perspective of that latter America. The political policies for the rich and the poor would prevent milltowns like Aliquippa from enjoying the full benefits of economic recovery.

#### The Rich and Poor

“Previous Republican and laissez-faire eras, periods of competitive, capitalist resurgence, have *always* produced broad ranks of losers as well as winners. And by Reagan’s last year in office, . . . *Money* magazine’s midyear polls, those in which 60 percent of Americans described the U. S. economy as ‘not so good’ or ‘poor,’ reflected popular disillusionments that extended far beyond much publicized Farm Belt foreclosures or shut-down factory towns” (Phillips, p. 16). The Reagan administration and its aftermath have been described as the “best of times and the worst of times,” there was “new wealth in profusion for the bright, the bold, the educated and politically favored; economic carnage among the less fortunate” (Phillips, p. 8). Aliquippa’s portion, and the portion for those in similar milltowns has been economic carnage.

Like previous Republican administrations, the Reagan years followed the historical precedence of transference of income from the poor to the wealthy as set by the Republican

administrations of the Gilded Ages, the Roaring Twenties and now the 1980s. Phillips states that “Accelerated economic inequality under the Republicans was more often a policy objective rather than a coincidence” (Phillips, p. 52).

What the Reagan administration had recognized was that the members of Galbraith’s “contented culture” were the majority of voters and it was this group that they chose to represent. This transformation of the American political and social landscape in the years following the Reagan presidency was revealed by the following statistics:

- ! Among major Western nations, America had the largest differences between the rich and poor
- ! Wages had stagnated while the return on capital, income producing assets, was escalating
- ! Income shares for the top 20 percent and especially the top 1 percent of Americans had dramatically increased;
- ! Since 1977, the average after tax family income of the lower 10 percent fell by 10.5 percent while the income of the top 10 percent increased by 24 percent; incomes of the top 1 percent increased by 74 percent
- ! In milltowns like Aliquippa where factory jobs helped two generations of Americans climb into the middle class, economic carnage erased any such opportunities for upward mobility; cultural and economic ladders to middle class status had been lost for millions of Americans; an American class system began to re-emerge
- ! Leisure time decreased and downward mobility emerged to replace the American dream of home ownership and upward mobility. As observed by Peter Drucker, “the



cynicism out there is frightening. Middle managers have become insecure, and they feel unbelievably hurt. They feel like slaves on the auction block” (Phillips, p. 9 - 21).

! Non-voters had become America’s fastest growing party.

This watershed period in American politics and socio-economics had served the culture of the contented well, at the expense of the remainder of the nation. White collar as well as blue collar workers became a part of the “unfortunate reductions in force” that plagued America. If Americans had ever felt that upward mobility to middle class status or a managerial position gained through increased education spared them the trauma of force reductions, or that they were somehow in control of their own destiny, those illusions were quickly dispelled. The wealthy and politically powerful were in charge as there emerged a “pervasive national uncertainty about the shape of the American dream - and suspicion that the Republicans were administering it on behalf of the few, not of the many. There was a general fear that America is no longer in control of its own destiny” (Phillips, p. 23-29). The social economic policies of the new capitalism were eroding efficacy for a large part of America.

Many of the political and economic policies implemented during the Reagan years to benefit the contented and well off were simply taken from previous conservative administrations. Taxes were reduced or eliminated for the wealthy, expenditures for low income or Democratic constituencies were eliminated, federal regulatory agencies were restrained, merger law enforcement was relaxed, real interest rates were raised to benefit creditors over debtors. To this mix was added a tolerance for debt to support political and constituency purposes, such as funding for the military and supports for the wealthy and

contented. Tax policy was not the only source of upward redistribution, but it contributed greatly to the polarization of U. S. wealth and the inequality of income. Tax cuts for the rich increased their income, as income upward from the poor and eroded their purchasing power and hence their efficacy. The estimated cost of the 1981 tax cuts over the next five years from individual rate cuts, capital formation and corporate depreciation allowances reached half-trillion dollars. For the first time since the New Deal, federal tax policy was fundamentally rearranging its class, sector and income group loyalties (Phillips, p. 75-78).

The level of overall federal spending remained high, funded by an alarming amount of debt which served to reward the lenders well. The interest on the debt further realigned the nation's wealth and income as payments for interest benefitted the wealthy. How those funds were spent had greatly changed during the Reagan years also. Federal funds were redirected to fund the military - industrial establishment for the benefit of the contented. This reallocation of funding was done at the expense of domestic programs which served to exacerbate the plight of the needy whose incomes deteriorated under the new capitalism, thereby contributing to increasing polarization of incomes.

Another policy approach to the realignment of income and wealth was based upon deregulation. Deregulation, while benefitting the capitalist, left a trail of casualties. "Deregulation contributed to reckless financial speculation, marginal airline maintenance practices, bank failures, truck highway accidents and corporate sacrifice of long term goals to deal with raiders. Other concerns included equity and fairness. Deregulation helped some groups and regions and hurt others" (Phillips, p. 94). The losers were the politically unfavored, the winners the politically favored wealthy.

A fourth and a final policy mechanism for realigning income was the use of money and debt. As the Reagan administration pursued policies to benefit the wealthy through tax cuts for the wealthy, keeping real interest rates high to benefit the creditors, deficit spending to benefit the favored constituencies, they combined these follies with a tight monetary policy which restricted the supply of money, making the deep recession of 1982 - 1986 longer and worse, the country was in a depression with a “ghoulish context.” The weakest in society suffered while the privileged and well off enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. As banks and savings and loans failed, and real estate speculation brought ruin to many, government policy allowed yet another cruel twist to the socio-economic policy mix, the bail out of the financial institutions would be financed by the American taxpayer. The taxpayer would bear the costs and the risks while the wealthy would enjoy the benefits of the bail out and financial rescue.

Lester Thurow, in 1987, prophesied that the epitaph of the Reagan presidency would be: ‘When Ronald Reagan became President, the United States would be the world’s largest *creditor* nation.’ When he left the presidency, we were the world’s largest *debtor* nation. Within the United States, the rich got richer, but at the cost of a major decline in comparative U. S. world assets and purchasing power and a squandering of the nation’s future” (Phillips, p. 122). The Republican party recognized the downside of the new capitalism, and George Bush, in his presidential bid in 1991 called for a “kinder, gentler America.” His son in his own presidential campaign today pleads for “compassionate conservatism.” At a national level, efficacy was being eroded at a frightening pace for much of the nation as America seems adrift in the transition. The recognition by Bush and his son, by Greenspan and others that the new capitalism “left others behind” acknowledges the downside of capitalism. The much

celebrated rising tide did not float all boats and is an accommodation to the realities of today's economics. What is not recognized or at least discussed is the sociological impact on our communities and the Americans who reside in the areas left behind.

Communities like Aliquippa suffered under the political policies of the 1980s and economic collapse of the period. The "economic carnage" remains today and many of the milltowns are struggling to survive. Their school systems are economically distressed and suffering from limited resources at a time when they are most in need of a strong educational system. The effects of income transfer, merger and acquisition, the real estate speculation scandal and the ensuing recessions have been felt throughout the nation, but the disadvantaged suffered a disproportionate share of the pain. Aliquippa was now included among the economically disadvantaged and would suffer the same fate as other economically disadvantaged areas. What made this fate even more painful for the milltown was the fact that the economic decline had come so suddenly and so thoroughly. As in the 1890s, the milltowns were unable to prevent powerful economic and political forces from overwhelming them. These towns, including Aliquippa, had no mastery over their own destiny. These new economic and political forces would have significant sociological impact on character and community as Sennett has discovered.

### The Corrosion of Character and Community

The new capitalism as discussed by Galbraith and Phillips is a flexible capitalism where careers are defined by pieces of work, by jobs and projects rather than a long, continuous channel for one's life work. Bennett Harrison believes that change is caused by "impatient capital, the desire for rapid return; for instance, the average lengths of time stocks have been held on British and American exchanges has dropped 60 percent in the last fifteen years" (Sennett, p. 22). The new capitalism espouses values of independence, entrepreneurship and freedom. In reality, people have become less flexible in shaping and controlling their lives because of the unpredictability of change. The new capitalism and its espoused "revulsion against bureaucratic routine and pursuit of flexibility has produced new structures of power and control, rather than the conditions which set us free" (Sennett, p. 47). Strong domination still comes from the top of the organization, either the management of the firm or the directors. However, now the concentration of power while still strong has become shapeless and undefinable, it is concentration of power without a centralized bureaucracy.

Prior to the 1980s before the advent of the new capitalism, it was conceivable, even preferable for us to measure our progress in our work as linear and cumulative. Since there exist no long term work or workers, uncertainty and change are now woven into the very fabric of our personal and professional lives. We advanced based upon our experience and our experience added value to our jobs; experience was reflected in our compensation. Today, experience is a liability because of the rapid changes to required skill sets.

The attributes required to produce good work in the new capitalism are flexibility, mobility and transience, and pursuit of short term goals for a given task or project. However,

these traits are not often the traits which we associate with good character. Character is expressed by loyalty and mutual commitment, or through the pursuit of long term goals, or by the practice of delayed gratification for the sake of some future end (Sennett, p. 10).

These characteristics represented the values shared by those in the milltowns and Aliquippa was no exception. These values are no longer shared in the workplace of the new capitalism. As identified by Galbraith earlier, the contented require adherence to other values as evidence of good work. In particular, the contented do not delay gratification for the pursuit of long term goals. How can loyalty and mutual commitment be expressed in organizations which are continually transforming into other organizations, or are acquired by others and then broken apart, or are continually fragmented into networks and then reassembled into new organets? Organets are the new organizations which result from the assembling of existing smaller networks into newer temporary organizations.

As character or the qualities of character corrode in the individual under the new capitalism, so does the character of the community. The qualities which are now valued under the rules of the new capitalism, transience, flexibility, fragmentation and discontinuity are not the qualities which fostered community spirit and gave it at least the illusion of control over its own future. Qualities which were shared in the milltowns like Aliquippa included stability, loyalty, and continuity. Qualities such as loyalty, mutual commitment and pursuit of long term goals are no longer meaningful to a community and its residents who must continually move to seek new employment, are struggling for survival in an unpredictable economic environment, and whose loyalty to organizations and a way of life are no longer valued. The community spirit and community efficacy in towns like Aliquippa erode because the qualities

which build community spirit or efficacy erode.

Sennett contrasted the life of a janitor, Enrico, with the life of his son, Rico, an educated electrical engineer who has his own consulting firm. Enrico's life was predictable; when life became unpredictable, it was because of some impending historical disaster. Such predictability is not so today. Uncertainty is woven into everyday life and life is unpredictable without some looming historical disaster. Enrico the janitor, although he performed work which he detested and found demeaning, was the author of his own life. Enrico's life narrative gave him some measure of self-respect. Likewise, as the author of his own life's narrative and because people knew his life's narrative, Enrico earned a measure of respect in his old neighborhood. In the suburbs where Enrico lived, he earned respect by living without incident among neighbors who knew nothing of his life's story; respect was earned by not disturbing the contentment of his neighbors.

In contrast, the son Rico, was educated and he and his wife are an upwardly mobile couple. However, "both husband and wife often fear that they are on the edge of losing control over their lives" (Sennett, p. 19).

This lack of control is a function of continuity, a function of time as continuous. Flexible change of the sort brought about by the new capitalism is disruptive. It reinvents our lives, institutions and communities, continually and irrevocably. Such disruption renders the past meaningless so that the present and even the future are no longer connected to the past, time has now become discontinuous and fragmented. Time now has no meaning for Rico since he is in a constant state of movement and change, fragmentation and discontinuity.

Loss of control for Rico is more than losing control over power in his job or career.

The actions that he takes in order to survive under the rules of the new capitalism conflict with the qualities that he feels built his character. The conflict between actions necessary for survival and the traits which he values, has wrenched his character from those qualities and set his emotional life adrift. In order to survive, Rico has had to establish networks of connections, but he has not developed a community of trusted friends.

Rico's experience has become a microcosm of the experience of communities within the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region without the economic successes. Rico came from a family and a community which shared similar values with the milltowns of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. Just as Rico has experienced, continual transfers and the pursuit of jobs, and movement from job to job has damaged the family unit, the basic unit of the communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. While neighbors and neighborhoods may remain sociable, they do not foster relationships among people where they can become long term witnesses to another's life. People in these communities no longer know their own life's narrative let alone the narrative of another. There is no opportunity to develop a commitment to another person since relationships are in a continual state of flux. Trust cannot be developed since trust requires time and relationships based upon trust are forged under the heat of adversity. While adversity abounds, there is no time to forge relationships since lives are transient and mobile.

Even in the wealthier communities, community efficacy cannot be established because transience prevents commitment to others, trust cannot be earned and deep relationships do not develop because no one can serve as a witness to another's life narrative. Social bonds such as trust and respect require time to develop. The flexibility and continual change brought



about by the new capitalism weaken social bonds. Community efficacy is a social bond which is especially eroded or weakened.

As it affects Sennett's Rico, "short term capitalism threatens to corrode his character, particularly those qualities of character which bind human beings to one another and furnishes each with a sense of sustainable self" (Sennett, p. 27). While such a dilemma threatened individuals with a corrosion of character, it destroyed communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region by eroding their spirit. Efficacy within such communities is eroded or eliminated.

Just as communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region continue to struggle with holding themselves accountable in some way for their plight, Rico struggled with accountability for being downsized. Sennett realized that to question "How could you be held accountable?" would be insulting. How could Rico be accountable, he does not matter in the new capitalism. So it is with the communities like Aliquippa in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region after the mills closed. These circumstances were beyond their control, yet they struggled to find meaning and to accept some measure of accountability. To whom would these people complain? How could they fight back? Who could be held accountable for the distress such events caused their community and their families? No one in the hierarchy or labyrinth of the corporate organization would, or perhaps even could accept accountability for the actions. The community had to accept the accountability themselves since no one else was willing to accept any part of the responsibility for the actions which caused them so much harm. As Lubove noted earlier, the attempts to rebuild the communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region were often simply plans to replace members of the

existing communities with others lacking their own narratives or history in the community. Like Rico, the members of the milltown communities in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region learned that as individuals or as communities, they simply did not matter.

As our experiences become disjointed, we find our life's narrative disjointed. We cannot as individuals or as communities form our characters into life's narratives revealing linear and continuous progress. We cannot be held accountable as individuals for misfortunes such as downsizing or as communities for misfortunes such as mill closings. Our lives are now effectively beyond our control, efficacy within our communities and even the illusions of efficacy have eroded.

Sennett identifies three forces causing change: the reinvention of bureaucracy, flexible specialization of production, and concentration of power without centralization (Sennett, p. 59). Time is now unleashed from continuity with the past and flexibility promises freedom, but delivers disorder and new restraints. These qualities of the new capitalist Sennett found in the power brokers attending a meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Sennett found in Davos man a capacity to relinquish one's past and to accept fragmentation, traits nearly completely absent in the milltown communities of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region.. These traits of character, while rewarding for the masters of the new capitalism are "self - destructive for those who work lower down in the flexible regime. The three elements of the system of flexible power corrode the characters of more ordinary employees who try to play by these rules" (Sennett, p. 63). Those who cannot play by the new rules or those who cannot be employed under the old rules and values are set adrift. To play by the new rules corrodes their character; to play by the old rules eliminates them from

the game.

Sennett examined the workplace under the old rules in a case study of bakery workers in Boston. These bakery workers practiced an ancient craft and eventually mastered that craft after many years of hard labor and hard earned experience. This attachment to their craft and to the work process gave them pride in their labor and a certain amount of status, respect and identity with their work. Like the puddlers in Pittsburgh at the turn of the century, these bakers had acquired a competence in the practice of their craft. Their work had meaning for them and they exercised a degree of control over the work process.

Through a series of buy outs and modernizations, the older highly skilled bakers were replaced by lower skilled operators of user friendly baking machines. Under a flexible organization and baking process, these workers did not develop an attachment or commitment to their craft. They wanted to know how to bake, but realized that they did not know how. They knew how to operate the machines which made the bread. The understanding of the work process for these new bakers was superficial, they had no identity with the work process or their craft. The superficiality of their knowledge of the work process gave them a weak identity with their craft, and consequently a weak self identity. Lack of control over the work process had eroded the efficacy of these workers. The process of baking bread had become easy and superficial. The difficulty no longer was resident in the work process, what people had learned about themselves through accomplishment of a difficult task was now simply too little and as superficial as the work itself.

The flexible organization is an organization where unpredictability is the currency of the realm. Unpredictability centers around risk and risk in the world of the 1890s was the

domain of the capitalist. In the 1990s, as stated by Sennett and declared by Ulrich Beck, “Risk is to become a daily necessity shouldered by the masses . . . the social production of wealth is accompanied by the social production of risks” (Sennett, p. 80). The inherent risk in the flexible organization requires that the employee be exposed to a continual state of vulnerability. Experience and seniority cannot help one overcome vulnerability since experience is no longer additive. Past experience provides no insight into the present; one’s narrative cannot be built on the same foundation. Without a life narrative to overcome constant vulnerability and with continual exposure to risk, one’s character erodes. Apprehension is omnipresent, “diluting self - worth, splintering families, fragmenting communities, altering the chemistry of workplaces” (Sennett, p. 97). This apprehension was prevalent in the milltowns of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. Their experience, the experience of Aliquippa, was rendered irrelevant and a shameful citation of failure in the community and the nation. Even their work ethic was brought in to question.

Work ethics, in particular the oddly named strong work ethic for no one has ever laid claim to any other kind, is a curious thing in the flexible economy. Work ethics of the kind practiced by the members of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region is an ethic based upon hard work and the discipline of time. Work hard and wait, delay gratification for the long term, even if the long term view means waiting for a future generation of children to enjoy the gratification. This work ethic requires stable institutions, institutions stable enough at least to permit the practice of delayed gratification. Suddenly, delayed gratification seems completely absurd in an environment composed of organizations who frequently and quickly, sell out and move away.

The flexible organization depends upon teamwork. Teamwork is based upon trust and respect, two qualities which require continuity and time to develop. Lacking the stability in organizations to permit continuity or stability, teamwork has become an ethos of work which has no depth or meaning, it has become the practice of superficiality. Sennett goes so far as to describe teamwork as the domain of demeaning superficiality which “exits the realm of tragedy to enact human relations as a farce” (Sennett, p. 106). Although few may be willing to push the argument as far as Sennett, he is accurate when identifying that teamwork and the flexible organizations brought about by the new capitalism espouse one set of values, yet establishing conditions which make adherence to that set of values impossible. Loyalty and commitment, trust and respect, continuity and steadfastness are qualities we associate with good character and good work. In the flexible organization, disjointed time prevents loyalty and commitment. Trust and respect cannot be earned over the years, and because time is now fragmented, continuity and steadfastness are meaningless.

Employees in the flexible organization are required to cooperate as team players. Their reward for cooperation is reintegration into the group. As members of the team, they can be called upon to increase productivity and production without, as Eileen Appelbaum and Rosemary Batt believe, changing the “fundamental nature of the production system or threaten the basic organization of the power structure of the firms” (Sennett, p. 113). Galbraith would heartily concur that the contented are not threatened under the flexible organization practicing teamwork.

The misconception of teamwork presents itself as shared responsibility and accountability in the organization. The realities of teamwork and flexible organizations are

that they free those in control to shift, reorganize and adapt without justification and without acting authoritarian. Power is exercised without legitimate authority. Control is maintained because the good team player doesn't whine or complain. The legitimate and constructive contesting of views is circumvented. Shared commitments, loyalty, respect and trust are avoided because these qualities take time to nurture and are not easily dominated. For these reasons, Sennett makes clear the value of flexibility and teamwork to the contented in preserving their position of dominance.

How does the individual, much less the community, develop a life narrative in the new capitalism which is structured toward aimless, uncontrollable drifting? Our communities and their individual members are in an ironic state. Sennett finds that people are "never quite able to take themselves seriously because they are always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of themselves" (Sennett, p. 116). Efficacy will certainly be eroded as this sense of self will not make "you better able to conquer the forces which are marshaled against you" (Sennett, p. 116). Nothing for the individual or the community is fixed any longer, no one or no thing is a testimony to their worth as individuals or as communities. No one or no thing is a testimony to their life's narrative as the steel mills had been. Aliquippa, like the mills, simply no longer existed in their narrative as they had in the past.

To be certain, the new flexible capitalism has produced successes. In a winner take all kind of economy where market windows are open only for a very short time and those that are there first dominate. Those that are in the next wave are left with nothing. This is an

economy that produces spectacular successes, but many failures. The failures are those who exist in a state of continual vulnerability, living in constant fear of being dealt out of the game simply because of chance. Living at risk begets failure. Those that know that their life and decisions affecting their lives are beyond their control are part of those failures. Certainly a community like Aliquippa which has little economic power and control has to consider itself an economic failure because it cannot control its economic fortunes.

The new flexible capitalism seems to preclude defining a life narrative. Yet to simply accept that situation without attempting some definition is to fail ourselves. Lippman, in his book, Drift and Mastery found a way of producing a life's narrative to be through a career, a career in the sense of inner development which unfolds through skill and struggle (Sennett, p. 120). Lippman's view closely correlates the view of the puddlers in Pittsburgh in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, that view of finding a competence as a way to a dignified life.

This need to form a life's narrative was examined by Sennett in a case study of downsized IBM programmers in the 1990s. As IBM downsized, the previously paternalistic corporation withdrew support from the communities where it operated. The communities were reluctant to protest the cutbacks which would devastate the work lives of their citizens because of their fear that IBM would relocate to another community. One official admitted that there was "much more stress, domestic violence, and need for mental services - directly linked to the layoffs" (Sennett, p. 125). Sennett found that IBM was a very inconsistent company, publicly espousing respect, sincerity, and sensitivity while practicing quite something else in regard to their employees. Highly skilled professionals were regarded with no more regard than clerks or janitors in a company that was formerly known for treating its

employees with dignity, respect and paternalism.

In any climate of downsizing, whether in a milltown or in IBM, there exists a climate of fear and vulnerability. The programmers at IBM actually evolved through three stages of their own narrative before their sense of integrity as a programmer was restored. The programmers initially felt betrayed by the corporation to which they had cast their fate and dedicated their lives. They sought to blame outsiders for their circumstances as intruders, in particular, lower paid programmers from India. Finally, they examined their career choices and their failure to take control of their own careers and making the move to smaller start up firms when they had the opportunity. This narrative clearly is in accordance Lippmann's view except that it is a narrative of failure rather than mastery. The research proposed in this study will hopefully reveal whether the narrative of Aliquippa is one of failure or of mastery.

Lack of mastery experience over their own lives, their careers, served to erode the efficacy of these programmers and consequently, their communities. If these highly skilled programmers suffered from such an erosion of efficacy, how much more so must the efficacy of the milltowns and the inhabitants of these towns been eroded? Erosion of community efficacy might have been best demonstrated by the observation that these people dropped out of civic affairs. Programmers, who formerly participated in the community as school board members or alderman, after experiencing such failure, simply lost interest in civic affairs. Perhaps their lack of interest in civic affairs is a result of their confrontation with such complete failure. These people perceived that they were somehow not as good as they thought that they were and now confronted the situation where they were not even sure who or what they were.



Sennett concludes his study by advancing the thought that while confronting their failures, these programmers found no way to go forward. While a flexible, fragmented present may allow us to construct meaningful narratives about the past, we are prevented from constructing meaningful narratives about the future. Our characters may now be in a constant state of recovery, never recovered, never moving forward. “While we should admire their individual strength, their turn inward and to intimate relations shows the limits of the coherence they achieved. A larger sense of community, and a fuller sense of character, is required by the increasing number of people who, in modern capitalism, are doomed to fail” (Sennett, p. 135).

As in the 1890s and the 1930s before, the questions arise again as to the relationship between the private and public interest. What value is the corporation to the community? How are civic interests served rather than just the pursuit of profits? How can corporations make work more engaging and strengthen the work identities of its employees thereby becoming better corporate citizens? How do these questions find resolution in the narrative of the community?

Sennett offers no solution to the problem, but does help our understanding by illuminating the impact of corporate decisions on the community. Primarily, we must recognize that a place becomes a community when its members practice shared values daily over extended periods of time. Flexible capitalism seems to have strengthened our desire for place and community. Everything about the flexible capitalism, uncertainty, vulnerability, lack of trust, respect, and commitment strengthens that desire almost as a defense mechanism against the hostile institutions which employ us.

Again, as the new capitalism professes the values of independence and individualism and treats dependence as shameful, the specialist becomes more dependent upon others and others upon the specialist. Nothing about the new capitalism promotes strong social bonds or sentiments of caring in a community. Sennett advises that “Organizations which celebrate independence and autonomy, far from inspiring their employees, can arouse that sense of vulnerability. And social structures which do not positively promote reliance on others in a crisis instill the more neutral, empty absence of trust” (Sennett, p. 142). Without trust, social bonds cannot grow or fully develop, the ability of groups to share beliefs and form bonds and collectively pursue given expectations are severely hampered. As a result efficacy within the community never develops and organizations are able to employ a successful means of social control. It is a contradiction that capitalism which espouses the values of freedom for all can be employed as a means of social control.

#### The Cultural contradictions of capitalism

When Bell wrote the Cultural contradictions of capitalism in 1976, he described an unstable America. Twenty years later he described America as uneasy and insecure, the vulnerable America described by Sennett. Bell recognized the unraveling of the middle class, a polarized society, polarized on social, political, and economic lines. Aliquippa would not escape this polarization.

With the continuing distrust of politicians, and the political process, the moral justification for authority is lacking. This distrust of politics in America resulted in a loss of *civitas*. Civic responsibility in regard to the collective eroded significantly as responsibility to the individual increased. Capitalism consequently seems to have established itself as the

mechanism of moral merit.

Bell advances the notion that capitalism as it relates to the market as a moral mechanism, and the arbiter of justice contains a contradiction. The capitalistic system accepts the praise for abundance, but the nature of abundance is prodigality rather than prudence. Max Weber's capitalist was a capitalist who accumulated by saving and delayed gratification, but capitalism is not driven by prudence. In fact, prudence and delayed gratification is probably the greatest danger to a capitalism driven by the consumer and instant gratification fueled by credit. Here is where Durkheim, Weber, Bell, and others claim that capitalism has lost its moral base because its survival depends upon constant growth and constant growth depends upon another's vice, expanding credit and debt. The engine of expanding capitalism is credit, instant gratification through assumption of debt. Expanding debt is the very trait despised by the Puritan founders of capitalism.

Bell states in his introduction that the contradictions in capitalism are the unraveling of the threads which once held it together. Prudence has been replaced by hedonism, and hedonism has become the prevailing value in our society. The Puritan and his calling have now become disjoined. In a description of the public household, defined by the needs and wants of the public expressed through what they consume, class struggles now take place over the state budget. Galbraith describes these struggles as the prevalence of the culture of the contented voting majority over the needs and wants of the remainder of the no-voting populace. Difficulty arises in that Western society lacks the *civitas*, the commitment to the collective good, to make sacrifices as well as a commitment to a political philosophy that justifies the normative rules of priorities and allocations in the society. Society has established

the individual and individual rights as the *civitas* and the market as the mechanism that establishes the rules for priorities and allocations of resources.

There have been three major socio-economic disasters which have plagued the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region, the 1890s with the Homestead strike, the Great Depression, and the 1980s. As with other calamities that have besieged humanity, we have been prepared by certain anchorages that were rooted in our experience yet “provided some transtemporal conception of reality” (Bell, p. 28). Religion provided this anchorage, but society has substituted a utopia of hedonism achieved through history, progress, rationality and science.

Now, for the milltowns, the moral and ethical roots are gone and so has utopia. This utopia is based on a history, progress, rationality and science that are linear, continuous, and above all, predictable. Society is no longer “long term”, continuous or predictable. Progress and time are no longer linear or cumulative. For Bell, religion can restore these anchorages and religion has been a strong anchorage of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and especially the milltowns.

Religion can restore the “continuity of generations, returning us to the existential predicaments which is the ground of humility and care for others” (Bell, p. 30). Religion would restore the moral foundation of capitalism, restoring the balance between economics and culture. The position of delayed gratification over consumerism, prudence over instant gratification and the avant garde position that anything goes would be reasserted.

Capitalism was based upon the concept of work and reward, but consumerism while contributing to the growth of capital markets has also broken the connection in the ethic of work and reward. Without a commitment to growth, capitalism has no purpose.

Paradoxically, the free market has eroded the moral and ethical foundation of capitalism and came to be the source of the contradiction of capitalism. Capitalism lacks a new ethic to replace the old ethic which is responsible for disorientation and dismay that mark the public mood today.

This new ethic would then have to be based on some shared value system. Such systems are organized into codes and dogmas which mobilize or demobilize a community. In this manner, the value system becomes a set of social controls. While the rhetoric and symbols of the value system remain the same, their meaning and content are often altered, redefined to justify the social controls of the predominant class.

This new ethic is the phenomenon described by Galbraith as the culture of the contented. Capitalism practiced along class lines which vie for control of the state budget are no longer the views of the predominant majority, but the view of the predominant voting class. The capitalist society advances the notion of laissez faire, while shifting the state budget to its will to accommodate lucrative defense contracts, financial bail outs, and preservation of the position of the culture of the contented. Capitalism has clearly lost its moral purpose. How are capitalistic society and hedonism to be legitimized? Capitalistic society is based upon work and reward, a society largely created by the commitment of the milltowns to that particular value system. With the closing of the mills and the collapse of their inter-generational way of life, the work and reward cycle was broken. Faith and trust in the system have been lost. The ethic has now shifted from work and reward with the corresponding upward social and economic mobility to capital ownership and reward. This shifting ethic has been revealed in the distribution of income sources found in the research done by Mishel,

Bernstein, and Schmitt and shown in Table 6. As the income group increased from the lower to the upper fifth quintile, reliance on capital as a source of income increased, while reliance on government transfers decreased. Reliance on labor increased to the fourth quintile, while reliance on labor as a source of income decreased for the fifth quintile. Milltowns like Aliquippa who are largely composed of income earners in the lower income percentiles are more dependent upon labor to provide their income and not capital.

**Table 6****Source of family income for each family income group, 1989**

Income group	Government				Total
	Labor	Capital*	transfer	Other	
<b>All</b>	75.30%	12.90%	6.70%	5.10%	100.00%
<b>Bottom four-fifths</b>					
First	46.30%	4.60%	39.90%	9.10%	100.00%
Second	69.60%	7.70%	14.30%	8.40%	100.00%
Middle	79.10%	8.00%	6.70%	6.20%	100.00%
Fourth	83.40%	8.00%	3.90%	4.70%	100.00%
<b>Top fifth</b>	80.00%	13.80%	2.00%	4.20%	100.00%
81-90%	83.60%	9.60%	2.40%	4.30%	100.00%
91-95%	81.80%	12.30%	1.90%	4.00%	100.00%
96-99%	74.30%	19.40%	1.60%	4.60%	100.00%
Top 1%	57.60%	41.00%	0.40%	1.10%	100.00%

\* Includes rent, dividend, interest income, and realized capital gains.

Source: Authors' analysis p.58

Table 7 analyzes the impact of demographic change on household income, education generally was the largest demographic factor impacting change on income. Education offset losses in other demographic categories.



Table 7

**The impact of demographic change on household income, 1969 - 96, by income fifth**

	<b>Lowest fifth</b>	<b>Second fifth</b>	<b>Middle fifth</b>	<b>Fourth fifth</b>	<b>Top fifth</b>	<b>Average</b>
Income change (%),						
actual, 1969 - 79	8.10%	8.00%	4.80%	10.00%	10.40%	8.10%
Change due to:						
Age	-1.00%	-1.60%	-1.80%	-1.80%	-1.80%	-1.70%
Education	5.60%	5.90%	5.40%	4.50%	4.60%	4.90%
Family type	-15.40%	-12.00%	-8.80%	-5.90%	-3.60%	-6.50%
Race	-1.30%	-1.10%	-0.80%	-0.50%	-0.40%	-0.60%
Total demographic						
effect*	-8.90%	-7.50%	-5.40%	-2.60%	0.50%	-2.60%
Income change (%),						
demographics						
constant**	17.00%	8.30%	10.00%	12.60%	9.90%	10.80%
Income change (%),						
actual, 1979 - 89	2.20%	3.30%	4.30%	7.80%	16.50%	10.30%
Change due to:						
Age	1.30%	0.60%	0.60%	0.50%	-0.10%	0.30%
Education	4.90%	5.30%	4.70%	4.50%	4.60%	4.70%
Family type	-5.60%	-5.40%	-4.10%	-3.00%	-2.10%	-3.20%
Race	-1.50%	-1.30%	-0.90%	-0.50%	-0.40%	-0.60%
Total demographic						
effect*	-1.10%	-0.20%	0.60%	1.40%	2.60%	1.50%
Income change (%),						
demographics						
constant**	3.40%	3.60%	3.70%	6.40%	13.90%	8.70%

Table 7

**The impact of demographic change on household income, 1969 - 96, by income fifth**

	<b>Lowest fifth</b>	<b>Second fifth</b>	<b>Middle fifth</b>	<b>Fourth fifth</b>	<b>Top fifth</b>	<b>Average</b>
Income change (%),						
actual, 1989 - 96***	-2.60%	-5.30%	-3.60%	-0.60%	18.00%	6.70%
Change due to:						
Age	-0.10%	0.50%	1.00%	1.10%	1.20%	1.00%
Education	5.80%	6.70%	6.20%	5.10%	4.80%	5.30%
Family type	-4.80%	-4.50%	-3.50%	-2.50%	-2.10%	-2.80%
Race	-2.20%	-1.60%	-0.90%	-0.50%	-0.50%	-0.80%
Total demographic effect*	0.20%	1.70%	2.50%	2.90%	4.20%	3.20%
Income change (%), demographics constant**	-2.70%	-7.00%	-6.10%	-3.50%	13.80%	3.50%
Addendum: household income levels by fifth, 1969-96 (1996 dollars)						
1969	\$ 8,289	\$ 21,229	\$ 33,493	\$ 46,742	\$ 80,193	\$ 37,989
1979	\$ 8,964	\$ 21,390	\$ 35,109	\$ 51,415	\$ 88,497	\$ 41,075
1989	\$ 9,165	\$ 22,103	\$ 36,626	\$ 55,442	\$ 103,105	\$ 45,288
1996	\$ 9,000	\$ 21,284	\$ 35,689	\$ 55,193	\$ 115,801	\$ 47,393

\* Components do not sum to the aggregate effect due to interactions between the groups

\*\* This row- the actual change minus the demographic effect- shows the impact of income changes within each demographic group

\*\*\* Percent changes are given as 10-year rates so as to be comparable with above panels.

Source: Authors' analysis of March CPS data p.63

For most of the population, educational attainment is the most important demographic characteristic. As identified earlier, the attainment of a college degree was an assurance of upward mobility and stability. Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt examined the change in real hourly wages for all groups by education from 1973 to 1997 and found that “the primary reason for an increased wage gap between the college educated and other workers is the precipitous decline of wages among the non-college educated workforce and not any strong growth of the college wage” (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, p. 157). For those with less than a high school education, and many of the milltown workers and much of Aliquippa had less than a high school education, real hourly wages fell 26.2 percent between 1979 and 1997. These decreases are reflected in the decrease in median household income between 1980 and 1990 in Aliquippa as shown earlier. In that same period, 1979-1997, those with a college education experienced only a 5.6 percent increase in wages, and those with an advanced degree found their wages increased 12.4 percent in that same period. While a college degree is no longer the assurance of success that it once was, it appears that it is now a minimum educational level for maintaining socio-income status. An advanced degree is now becoming the minimal requirement for attainment of even minimal wage growth. Recent trends in growth of income shares shifting from labor to capital will continue to emphasize the importance of educational attainment as educational levels correlate to increased hourly wage levels and ultimately, access to capital income sources.

Social mobility and educational attainment are somewhat disjointed in capitalism and the culture. As Sennett and Galbraith indicated, educational attainment is not a protection from down sizing or corporate restructuring. The flexibility of the new organizations has now

begun to disjoint the relationship between educational attainment and employment as in the last recession, even college educated middle management experienced reductions in force. As indicated in Table 8, during the period from 1979-1997, hourly wages fell for all educational categories except those with a college education. It is also important to note that the share of employment for the college educated and those with advanced degrees increased from about 12% in 1973 to nearly 20% in 1997 while those with no more than a high school education decreased from about 70 % to 54 % in the same period. Economic prospects for towns like Aliquippa continue to decline because of the importance of college education and advanced degrees.

**Table 8****Change in real hourly wage for all by education, 1973 - 97**

Year	Less than		Some		Advanced		Memo: Non-
	high school	High school	college	College	degree	college	educated*
<b>Hourly wage (\$1997)</b>							
1973	\$ 11.21	\$ 12.82	\$ 14.16	\$ 18.60	\$ 22.67	\$ 12.52	
1979	\$ 11.15	\$ 12.49	\$ 13.61	\$ 17.43	\$ 21.42	\$ 12.42	
1989	\$ 9.38	\$ 11.36	\$ 13.19	\$ 17.88	\$ 23.24	\$ 11.54	
1997	\$ 8.23	\$ 11.03	\$ 12.44	\$ 18.41	\$ 24.09	\$ 10.94	
<b>Percent change</b>							
1973-79	-0.60%	-2.60%	-3.90%	-6.30%	-5.50%	-0.80%	
1979-89	-15.90%	-9.00%	-3.10%	2.60%	8.50%	-7.10%	
1989-97	-12.30%	-2.90%	-5.70%	2.90%	3.60%	-5.20%	
1979-97	-26.20%	-11.70%	-8.60%	5.60%	12.40%	-12.00%	
<b>Share of employment**</b>							
1973	28.50%	41.70%	15.10%	8.80%	3.60%	85.40%	
1979	20.10%	42.10%	19.20%	11.00%	5.00%	81.30%	
1989	13.70%	40.50%	22.30%	14.00%	5.90%	76.50%	
* Those with less than four years of college							
** Since the shares of those with one year of schooling beyond college are not shown, the presented shares do not sum to 100. There are no reliable data for 1997 using the same definitions.							

As educational level and income level are becoming disjointed, similarly, identity and reality are disjointed in the milltowns. As identified by Sennett and Bell, identity comes from some sign of recognition, of belonging, such as the bar mitzvah in the Jewish community, the “life narrative” known to one’s neighbors, graduation from school or joining one’s neighbors

in the mill as a steelworker. Without these ceremonies or experiences, reality and identity break down for both the individual and the community.

With specialization comes the fragmentation of roles and the fragmentation of the self. In bureaucracies as in our organizations, the role defines the person, you are what you do. As the roles become specialized and fragmented the person becomes fragmented. For Max Weber and Durkheim, this experience becomes exacerbated as bureaucracy and specialization increased separation of the individual from control of the work. When a large segment of the community becomes separated from the control of their work, then the efficacy of the community erodes.

Social relations have become so complex and differentiated that it is difficult to find common symbols to relate experiences. Society creates meanings and symbols as the mechanisms through which people relate to the world. These meanings become embodied in religion, culture, narrative and work in the society. Bell argues that without these meanings anchored in religion, only nihilism remains. “Our ancestors had a religious anchorage which gave them roots no matter how far they may seek to wander” (Bell, p. 119).

Bell further describes work as modalities of social relations, so work is grouped into pre-industrial, industrial, and post industrial phases of work. In the pre-industrial stage work and social relations could be described as man against nature where hunting, gathering and extracting where one works with muscle against nature. In the industrial society, work and relations are described as man against fabricated nature, or man against the machine. In the post industrial or service society, work relations are defined as man versus man. Society then has become a consciousness, an imagined world where the rules are undefined and now,

continually redefined. How do we define the rules? How do we define ourselves? How do we relate to one another and what will bind one to another? For a community to form then there must be a shared value system, a shared moral order.

The focus in America for the last 200 years has been on the individual and individual rights. It is believed that individual rights asserted above those of the community, and the resulting economic growth would resolve all social problems. However, a community must be based upon group membership, not individual values or attributes. In the “new capitalism” since the 1980s, the private gain is the public interest. The resulting loss of *civitas* has resulted in public anomie.

For Bell, the United States has never mastered the “art of collective solutions, or of readily accepting the idea of public interest as against private gain” (Bell, p. 219). An example would be the fragmentation of our ineffective and expensive transportation system, especially in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. Jobs are created, as in the example of the SONY plant in Westmoreland county, and the public often has no access to them because of the lack of access to public transportation across the region. At a recent Town Meeting on November 22, 1999 at Carnegie Lecture Hall in Pittsburgh, transportation was cited as of “paramount importance” by Jim Palmer of the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development and a “most serious problem” by Catherine D’Loughrey of the Pennsylvania Economy League. David Miller of the University of Pittsburgh advised in that meeting that transportation should be benchmarked against other regions. In a comparison to Stuttgart, Germany, Miller showed that while their highly effective transportation system is decentralized over the region, the transportation system in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region

is fragmented.

Our challenge is to define a new ethic, a new public philosophy which protects the rights and creativity of the individual while still retaining the values and spirit of community. How is this new ethic to be defined? What are the values of the community, how do the values of the community become defined and not overly influenced by individuals in positions of power and control, much like the influence of the culture of the contented? Regarding issues of equity and social welfare, economists have held to some version of Pareto-optimality where some are better off and no one is worse off. John Rawls proposes a maximin criterion where all persons receive a minimal share of the benefit (Bell, p. 271). This proposal is receiving considerable attention, but is not without critics. This criterion assumes that people are risk adverse and would wish to minimize their losses over maximizing their gain. It also assumes that the greatest expected benefit should accrue to the least advantaged in society. Critics argue that the definitions of benefit and least advantage are too ambiguous to make maximin practical. The criterion also assumes that the economy is in a stationary state and does not address the balance between redistribution and economic growth.

The research of Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt cited earlier has shown that educational attainment, particularly college education, is an important indicator of social mobility and income. Education and the university are sources of knowledge and means of transfer of knowledge to the public, although certainly not the only means. Education then is the method of access to skill and power. As the US economy, and the economy of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region shifts from manufacturing to a service economy, access to lifelong education becomes the lifeblood of the economy and the means of access to skills and



power, both political and economic. Without the benefits of lifelong education and a sound educational system, access to skills and power are severely restricted in towns like Aliquippa.

Yet the role and administration of education must change. As evidenced by the experience of the Italian - Americans, as cited in La Storia by Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale, in 1975 the professorate of American colleges was about 75 percent British or Northern European origin, about the same as it was in 1900. A state university college in New York in 1989 had a student body about 25 percent Italian American origins, but only about 2 percent of the professorate was Italian American. Rudolph Vecoli pointed out in 1989 that “The schools did fail generations of immigrant youth because of their middle-class bias; immigrant kids were tracked into the industrial arts . . . and from there to the factories” (Mangione & Morreale, p. 461). The Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region certainly was no exception and our educational system runs the risk of continuing the failure, not only to immigrant children, but to children of Americans who now occupy the permanent underclass. Where the practice of the educational system before was a function of racial and ethnic prejudice, the practice now has become a structural deficiency. School districts in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region as in much of the country have a wide disparity in funding and performance. Aliquippa and other districts in the region have formed a group called the Distressed Seven to address the disparities in funding and performance in the region. The practical effect of such disparities in funding and educational opportunity is the condemnation of many students to the role of a permanent underclass with little or no hope of social mobility in the two tiered America or two tiered Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region.

Faith in American institutions had reached crisis proportions. With a crisis of belief in

the US system of politics as evidenced by the continuing low voter turnout rates, the public lost confidence in its ability to control the future. Such loss of faith occurred in the milltowns. The residents lost confidence in their future and their ability to influence that future. A change in community narrative may likely reflect changes in a communities confidence in the future and their ability to influence that future.

### Crisis in American Institutions

In 1995, after a decade or more of corporate downsizing and mergers, a savings and loan crisis, real estate speculations and collapse, skyrocketing executive compensation, stagnant hourly wages, worker vulnerability, and cries of welfare reform, the budget of the United States included nearly 150 examples of corporate welfare totaling \$167 billion. The result of such mockery is the crisis of confidence and faith in our government and institutions. Perhaps our reluctance or because, as Shields states, our failure “to control and shrink corporate welfare makes a mockery of the current debate over welfare reform for the neediest in our society” (Shields, p. 28).

The 1980s found states bidding against each other for jobs. Alabama paid approximately \$ 150 thousand per job for a Mercedes Benz plant, Kentucky paid \$ 350 thousand per job for Dofasco Steel, Minnesota paid \$558 thousand per job for Northwest Airlines (Shields, p. 25). While some areas may have been able to buy jobs and facilities, the simple truth is that the milltowns in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region cannot afford to bid for jobs.

As economic development policy, bidding for jobs may not be particularly effective. States have used federal funds as an incentive to relocate jobs and facilities from other states

producing a curious situation where taxpayers are paying for their own unemployment. At best, there is a net effect of utilizing scarce capital to provide a zero increase in employment as jobs are simply transferred from one area to another. In the egregious example of bidding for jobs in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, the town offered Intel a package of \$114 million in incentives and tax breaks to locate a facility there. Intel at that time had annual profits of \$2.3 billion. Unfortunately, in the climate of affluence and economic expansion, education suffered. Rio Rancho found that they could not afford schools, high school students are bused to overcrowded schools in Albuquerque. Local and middle schools are crowded to twice their capacity. By engaging in a bidding war for jobs, the children of Rio Rancho suffered and ironically, because their schools and educational opportunities have been sacrificed, may not have the educational opportunities to develop the skills necessary to work in the very facility for which their parents have paid.

The bidding for jobs gives the impression of an auction where communities are willing to pay whatever is necessary for jobs, often any jobs. Communities have explored gambling, tax incentives, enterprise zones, and almost any other tactic to attract employers to their area. Jobs, or the promise of jobs, have become just another asset to be employed in maximizing profits and return to the shareholder. Often, communities have placed political pressure on their elected representatives to exert influence to locate government facilities or to obtain funding for projects in their district. It seems that representatives get elected on their ability to return tax dollars and projects to their district.

A terse description of the contention over the federal budget was provided by William Greider as he described our nation's capital as a Grand Bazaar where "two staples of trade are

claims on the federal treasury [Bell referred to this as the state budget and Galbraith described it as one of the primary tenets of the culture of the contented] and the commercial rights and privileges that only the government can bestow” (Greider, p. 39).

Dividing the spoils of the federal treasury amongst the influential representatives and those representatives skilled in negotiation pales in significance to the concern over the enforcement of the law itself. Will the federal government enforce the law? Often public objectives are regularly subverted or diverted to different purposes. The desires of citizens are effectively rendered meaningless. The public recognizes that their ability to influence desired outcomes is minimal and an erosion of efficacy results.

This is not to claim that America is a lawless society, but that the lawlessness is arbitrary and often capricious. Regulations are regularly contested and applied with what appears to be randomness, or at least applied in proportion to one’s ability to obtain legal talent. Real political power is then defined by one’s power to decide whether to obey the law or not. Curtis Moore, a lawyer who served in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and a Republican counsel for 15 years, described the struggle to make laws both reliable and meaningful against corporate tenacity.

“Twenty years ago, we set out to eliminate sulfur dioxide from the air.

Here we are twenty years later and more than 100 million Americans are still breathing air with unhealthful levels of sulfur dioxide. Why? Because the companies fight you when you try to pass a law. They fight you when you try to pass a second law. They fight you when you try to write the regulations, they fight you when you try to enforce the regulations.

Nowhere do they ever stop and say: “Let’s obey the law” (Greider, p. 44).

Similarly, it took 25 years and 28 postponements before the FDA decided to restrict the use of cancer - causing red dyes in food products. The result of such machinations in the Grand Bazaar of Washington is that the government and the law are no longer “for the people, and by the people,” but for the influential and by the influential.

When reliability of the law is brought into question, all of the institutions in the society are under suspicion. Our faith in the institutions which are the foundation of our society has been eroded. One of the principles of a free society is the freedom of the press. The concentration of the media in the hands of a relatively few corporations raise our suspicions regarding the reliability and objectivity of the media. In 1982, 50 corporations had one half or more of all the business in the major media of the US. Today, 25 corporations control that amount and that number continues to shrink. About a dozen corporations control one half the circulation of daily newspapers in the US (Bagdikian, p. 50).

The control of the media in the hands of so few corporations brings with it the danger of control and filtering of the news and opinions which are detrimental to the predominant power group. This control of the news becomes even more significant when we recognize that rarely is news covered in depth and that much of society gets its news and opinions from sound bites and visual images. Time is rarely allocated or devoted to balanced discussion and reporting of opposing opinions. Even the panel discussion format portrayed as balanced opinion is nothing more than entertainment as the participants often degrade the discussion to shouting matches where their opinions can only be expressed in

short phrases. Depth of discussion is rarely tolerated.

“When masses of people are bedeviled by problems, but see no possibility of significant change, the result is hopelessness and apathy. . . . each year since 1960, the percentage of eligible voters who go to the polls has declined” (Badikian, p. 55). One of the tenets of faith in our institutions is reality, the fair, honest, and complete reporting of the news regarding the whole of society. Without such reality, faith is lost as the institution is found to be unreliable and inaccurate. We question our ability to influence desired outcomes and often give up on the governing process as evidenced by continued low voter turnout rates. Efficacy in the nation and especially in the milltowns of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region continues to erode.

In the milltowns of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region, no institution was more constant in the lives of the people there than the steel mill. Although it was a constant source of danger, degradation and exploitation, and struggles for the mill workers, it was at least a constant and a source of employment. Eventually, the mills became less dangerous and union representation gave the workers some sense of dignity and protection from exploitation from the corporation. The mill came to provide a steady source of employment for the fathers and sons of the milltowns. Membership in the union and the identification with other mill workers provided a sense of identity for the workers and a place in America’s middle class. For those so motivated, the mills provided a route to upward mobility, if not for the worker, then for the children of the worker.

As an institution, like the US government and the law, the mills were considered a reliable source of employment. With the 1980s and the mill closings and massive

unemployment that resulted, faith in another institution was shaken. The mill closings and the chronic unemployment took a human toll as its victims.

It is one thing to be bitter about one's circumstances and quite another to be indulgent in self-pity. Thomas Cottle studied unemployed men and his visits with them revealed that although they could probably be diagnosed as depressed, they felt no self-pity. What Cottle found actually was worse, the men described themselves as dying. "When you stop [working] you die" (Cottle, p. 71). These men were existing with what they felt to be a terminal illness, unemployment. Since the illness was terminal, their very lives were now beyond their control. They felt that they had no control or impact on events in their lives. Their efficacy had completely eroded.

Initially, the men expressed anger and the irony of the government bailout of the savings and loans with the money they had paid in taxes and the governments refusal to bail them out when they needed it. Their anger in time turned to intense shame, as if they had lacked the strength to even be angry anymore. The unemployed became invisible and reclusive. When they lost their jobs, they lost their status in the community and even in their home. They felt that they had no right to be there.

In a tragic description of the human toll of unemployment Cottle relates the painful words of Rosemary Mullen as she desperately tried to vent her frustration with her husband:

"He should have taken me somewhere, thrown me down, slapped me if that was the only thing that would have quieted me, and made love to me. I mean pull my clothes off and rape me, if he had to. Anything to show me he wasn't scared, that he was alive,

that he had some energy left; something, some bit of life. I mean it. I wanted to be roughed up that night and feel that he was really a man. But he was dead” (Cottle, p. 74).

This pattern of high unemployment in the community and the victims being left completely powerless, spiritually impotent, is a tragedy that suffers from benign neglect. It is easier for us as a society to believe in our misconception of laissez faire and benign capitalism, our belief that “all will be well” and that in the long term we will be better off if we do nothing. We have left a trail of casualties in our wake, exactly what Alan Greenspan cautioned us to avoid in his address to the graduates of Harvard.

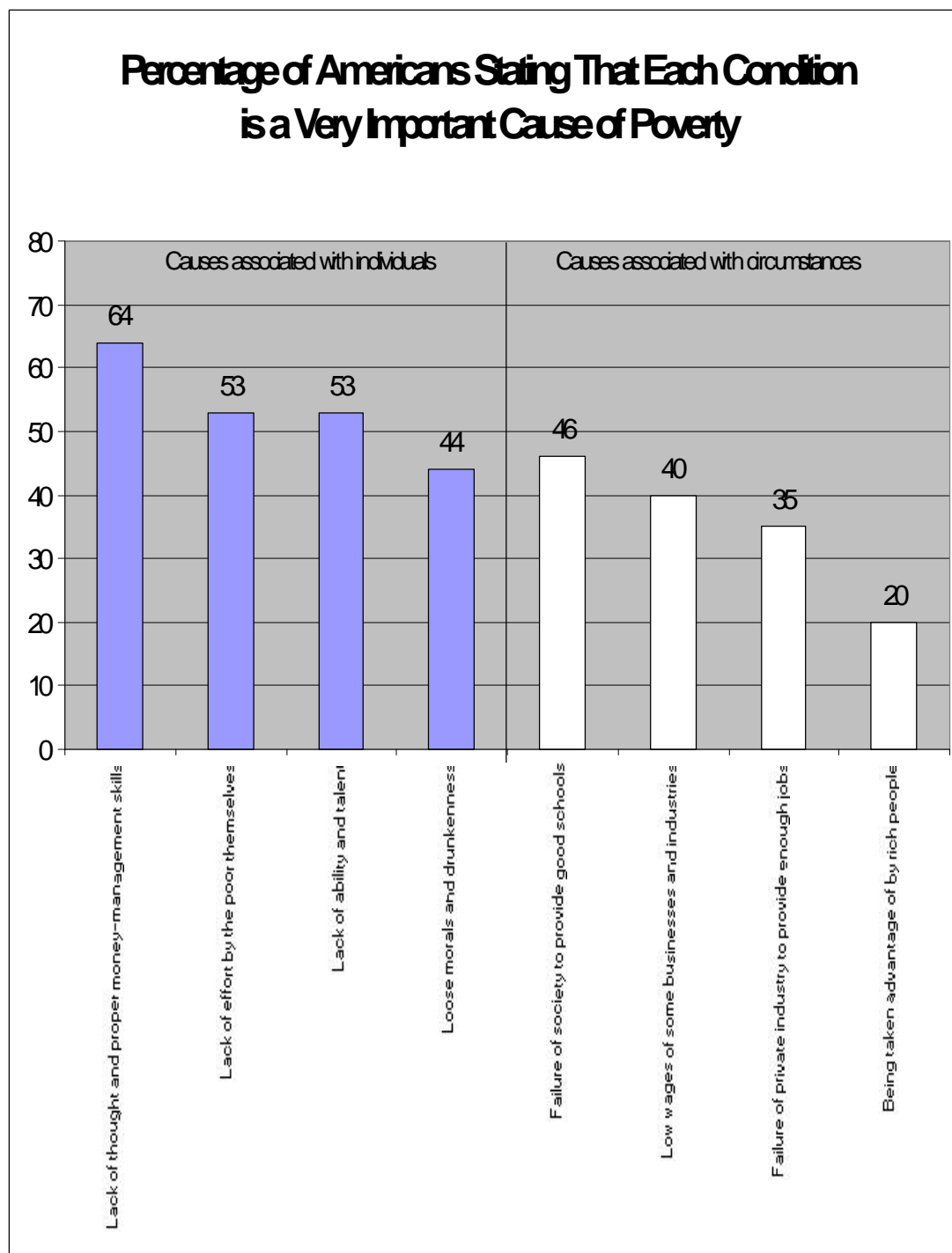
These men clearly subscribed to the misconception of individual efficacy in America, the belief that an individual is largely responsible for their own fate, successes or failures, wealth or poverty. The rags to riches, Horatio Alger stories are recurrent misconceptions in American society. No doubt there are examples of rags to riches stories in America, and we can point to many freedoms which permit individuals to rise to their fullest potential in our society. However, poverty is quite a different story. Poverty and unemployment are often involuntary and beyond the control of the individual.

That Americans are willing to accept the misconception of individual efficacy regarding poverty is clear. Evidence from James Kluegel and Eliot Smith report that in 1980, “most Americans assumed that the *individual* was largely responsible if he or she became poor - despite years of media coverage indicating that American poverty is often a result of involuntary unemployment, substandard wages, medical emergencies, family crises, or other circumstances beyond individual control (Berliner & Biddle, p. 153).

As indicated in Figure 3, belief in the misconception of individual efficacy



regarding poverty is strong in the US. Four of the top five indicators are from causes related to individuals and the top three individual causes were related to lack of forethought, lack of effort, and lack of ability and talent. Comparisons to other western countries were reported in 1972 by Joe R. Feagin and two years later Norman Feather published comparative findings which indicated that Australians are less likely to blame the poor for their poverty (Berliner & Biddle, p. 155). Not surprisingly, Biddle and Berliner report that belief in the misconception is stronger among Americans who are rich and powerful. Belief in the misconception is perpetuated by politicians who compose public policy which, as Galbraith states, leaves the poor to the spur of their own poverty.



**Figure 3** Percentage of Americans Stating That Each Condition is a Very Important Cause of Poverty

Americans also attribute poverty to the failure of society to provide good schools, the fourth highest cause indicated in the Kluegel and Smith study. Americans hold schools responsible for helping students accomplish many goals in life. Katherine Bennett de Marrais and Margaret LeCompte suggest that American schools are expected to accomplish four basic sets of instructional tasks - intellectual, political, economic, and social (Berliner & Biddle, p. 156). Americans generally hold schools to unlimited instructional responsibility, including sex education, day care and feeding of students two meals a day, driver's education, and character education. Many of these tasks were considered to be parental responsibility in the past, but now the parents are either too busy to undertake that responsibility or they have abdicated that responsibility to the schools.

These issues speak to the very basic issue of the purpose of education in America. Is the purpose of education to create responsible citizens with a common vocabulary and means of communication, or is it to satisfy the individual needs and wants of the families of the students, or is it the purpose of education to prepare people for occupations and careers? Education is expected to be all of those and at times more. Education and the schools are often expected to resolve the social problems which students bring to school. We, as a society, have forgotten that the problems of violence and lowered moral standards are not taught in the schools, but rather taught in our society. These traits are brought to schools with the students. As the schools are forced to deal with these problems, such as school security, it takes already limited resources away from the learning process. We have placed the cart before the horse. If the school must improve, then the community around it must improve. If we have a problem with the schools in the

community, then the problem is with us because the schools reflect our shared values, the values we share between ourselves and our community.

When schools do not meet our expectations, reforms are suggested. These reforms originate from the top down, the empowered and imposed on the powerless through initiatives like vouchers and incentive programs. They are reforms based upon technological solutions of delivering education. None of these reforms focus on the whys of education, the very reasons that distressed communities need to create and embrace their own educational reforms.

#### Down from Bureaucracy

The new capitalism has established school reform as a major tenet since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. School reforms since then have focused on student achievement, accountability, local control, and technological solutions. How those things are to be accomplished and how they are defined has become a major point of contention of educational reform.

School reform has not or perhaps never was about learning as much as it has been about status, politics, ideology, identity, legitimacy, national security, professionalism, and community (Handler, p. 169). Reform and the current reform movement have attempted to focus on centralized bureaucracy as a cause of poor performance in schools and as a target for reform. The solution, in their view, lies in decentralization with localized control of the school. Site based management programs have been advocated to reduce bureaucracy in schools, and increasing morale and motivation. School systems, like any other organization, have become adept at deflecting reforms by incorporating the symbols

of reform, while not changing the practice of reform. For example, David Tyack refers to these practices as institutional deposits noting that with “ritualistic regularity, Americans create and then bemoan democracy” (Handler, p. 172). Chubb and Moe are opposed to reforms such as teacher empowerment because only the symbols of reform are incorporated, while the practice remains the same. Since teachers still report to an upper level bureaucracy, “They propose a radical anti-bureaucratic structure - virtually no higher level political control - and allow parental choice alone to determine individual school governance” (Handler, p. 182). Other reforms focus on school choice issues such as vouchers. These reforms stress that school choice permits a school to develop strong core values that are shared by the school community and the larger community, fostering strong leadership, and strong ties to school culture. Advocates of school choice support a strong culture.

Schein in his study of organizational cultures found that actions which appear to work become embedded as part of the culture of organizations. Certainly this occurred in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region, in companies, in political and government organizations, and in schools. In the changing political climate and the changing economy, new leadership is required. John P. Kotter and James L. Heskett, in their study of 200 companies concluded that in order to continue to prosper, cultures must be more than just strong. They concluded that cultures need to be strong, yet adaptive, anchored in unchanging core values. “If our organizations are going to live up to their potential, we must find, develop and encourage more people to lead in the service of others. . . . But if leaders do not have the hearts of servants, there is only the potential for tyranny” (Kotter

& Heskett, p. 150).

Advocates for the free market often gloss over the imperfections of the market and critics of Chubb and Moe cite this as a failing in their work. Critics claim that access to information is not equal among all who would choose and some have less ability to exercise choice than others primarily because of geographic location particularly with access to transportation. Elmore found that geographical location is “the single most important factor in parental choice, although with vouchers, the importance of location did decrease over time” (Handler, p. 185).

There are however two issues central to school reform which cut across all reform proposals. Those are the issues of race and redistribution of resources. Since schools receive most of their funds from local property taxes, residential segregation produces enormous differences in access to resources in school districts. For example, Richard Briffault reports that “in 1986, the tax base in Westchester County, NY was \$221,000 per pupil, while in eight other districts, the tax base was less than \$50,000. In Texas, the tax base in the wealthiest district was over \$14 million of property wealth per student, while approximately \$20,000 per student in the poorest district” (Handler, p. 173). In his 1993 State of the Commonwealth address, Robert Casey, the late governor of Pennsylvania stated that per pupil expenditures ranged from \$3,400 to \$10,900 for instructional services in schools across the state. Cooley and Pomponio also found that wealthy districts decreased their tax effort between 1986-1992 while poorer districts had to increase their tax effort (Cooley & Pomponio, p. 191). These inequalities are accepted at the local level. Poorer districts have to spend more for services, crime, public health, safety and have less

to spend on schools than the wealthier communities. In Pennsylvania, the funding for special education affects the poorer districts disproportionately as these districts run a deficit in special education funding and wealthier districts often break even or run a surplus. Consequently, the poorer districts impose a greater burden on supporting the local schools on local taxpayers who are less able to provide that support. While “process reforms can help, they do not substitute for resources” (Handler, p. 173).

Advocates of vouchers and school choice suggest the notion that imbalances due to issues of racism and redistribution of resources are alleviated by school choice. In Minnesota’s pure choice program, after two years of operation, less than 500 students out of 700,000 participated in the program. Less than six percent of the eligible students chose another district by 1993 (Handler, p. 185). Given this evidence, it seems unlikely that school choice would be of much help to the schools in the milltowns.

Conroy in fact believes that free choice would actually hurt low choice families because most families would choose to send their children to local schools, not necessarily better ones. The better schools would recruit and select better students, demanding more parental support in the process. The problem then, according to Conroy is not one of supply of better schools, but a problem of demand for better schools. There simply is not enough demand to drive up the supply of quality, local schools. As a result, the quality schools would continue to increase in quality exacerbating the inequalities between the best and worse schools (Handler, p. 185-186).

Still others point to controlled choice magnet schools as the best hope for school reform, citing District 4 in New York City as an example of how well magnet schools

work. However, Harrington and Cooke say that “School reform is too closely tied to particular individuals rather than being institutionalized” (Handler, p. 189). While choice requires parents to choose, it cannot require or guarantee that they become engaged in the schools that they choose.

Parental engagement is a major component of Comer schools which utilize governance teams consisting of the principal, parents, and teachers who collectively decide the goals of the program. Within Comer schools, if parents need support, even support for parenting or adult literacy skills, they can get help through the parenting communities.

One important facet of the Comer school is the sensitivity to a student’s individual gifts and the student’s self-efficacy. In order to learn, a Comer school student must believe that they can succeed. Comer schools believe that they can enhance a student’s self-efficacy through the school environment. A school must be sensitive to everyone’s individual gifts to create that sense of efficacy within students. Competency and self-efficacy become part of one’s identity as the schools respond to student strengths, rather than weaknesses. Comer schools recognize the need for a nurturing environment and that self - efficacy is related to performance. What is remarkable is the recognition of the importance of acts of mercy and caring toward their students. Children must feel that at least one mainstream institution cares about them (Handler, p. 196). The school must serve the student and leaders in the community must adopt the role of servant if reforms are to be successful. The caring of the community and the institution should be reflected in the community narratives.



### Educational Leadership in Difficult Times

Any discussion of educational leadership in difficult times should surely cite the experience of Booker T. Washington and the formation of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In his autobiographical recount of the days of his educational development, he speaks of the support of the black community in providing for his education. “Some of these older people would give me a nickel, others a quarter, or a handkerchief.” (Washington, p. 32). Later as he would solicit support for the needs of the Tuskegee Institute, he met similar generosity. He recalls (Washington, p.93) an elderly ex-slave woman providing him with six eggs to assist in the education of his students. Clearly, these people were committed to education and educational leadership.

As difficult as fund raising was for Washington in the post Civil War era, it was not as difficult as perhaps the difficult decisions he needed to make regarding what would be taught at the Institute. He understood that the students had come from homes where they had no opportunities or lessons which would teach them how to care for themselves. He states that:

“We wanted to teach the students how to bathe; how to care for their teeth and clothing. We wanted to teach them what to eat, and how to eat it properly, and how to care for their rooms. Aside from this, we wanted to give them such a practical knowledge of some one industry, together with the spirit of industry, thrift, and economy, that they would be sure of knowing how to make a living after they left us.”

As an educational leader, Washington has proven that he could make difficult, sometimes

unpopular decisions in order to provide his students with what they needed to succeed in the long term. He often reminded his students that people would excuse them for their poverty, but they would not excuse them for their dirt. This educational leadership which Washington provided at the Institute, is required today in Aliquippa and the districts of the Distressed Seven as confirmed by the interview data. Moreover, a boarding school where such practices would be taught is still required in these districts. This teaching, which a mere thirty years ago would have been considered ridiculous, is required today because as in Washington's time it is not being taught in the home. The students of the Tuskegee Institute had little heritage knowledge and Washington and the Tuskegee would provide that knowledge for them. Washington sums up his educational philosophy (Washington, p. 53) by stating "without regard to pay and with little thought of it, I taught any one who wanted to learn, anything I could teach him. I was supremely happy in the opportunity of being able to assist somebody else."

Vanessa Siddle Walker's study of a segregated school in the South revealed many opportunities for educational reform, but because of racial bias and segregation, successful measures at these schools were not used as exemplary or even studied for what they could offer as educational reform measures. However, examination of the research indicated many examples of educational leadership in difficult times.

As a "Negro" school, the Caswell County Training School (CCTS) was grossly under funded. Located in a poor, rural area of North Carolina, only 13.01% of the parents graduated from high school in 1953 (Siddle Walker, p. 66). Yet, this school succeeded and apparently met the needs of the community quite well. It offered a full curriculum,

qualified, certified instructors, extra-curricular activities for the students, and was fully accredited.

In 1940 –1941, CCTS offered their students courses in French and Physics, reflecting the requirements of the state (Siddle Walker, p. 115). CCTS was fully accredited by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges in 1955, after that agency began accrediting Negro schools. Fourteen years later, it was still the only high school in the county accredited by that association. When segregation ended, black students left their accredited high school to be desegregated into a white school that was not accredited (Siddle Walker, p. 8). A comparison of certification levels of 95 white teachers and 94 Negro teachers in the county in 1957 found that 19 Negro teachers held graduate level certifications compared to four white teachers. All but one Negro teacher held an “A” level certification while 25 white teachers held a B level certification or lower. CCTS offered many opportunities for participation in non-athletic extra curricular activities as well. In the 1966-1967 school year 88.5% of the students at CCTS participated in clubs and other non-athletic activities.

Siddle Walker studied the events in the school, the meaning that those events had for the members of the community, and attempted to understand the meaning that school life held for the members of the community. She found that the community valued education and the parents supported the school and the teachers in whatever ways they could. This ways may have included donating lumber to the school for a building project, or donating time to assist in extracurricular activities, or raising money to provide a bus for the students, or even providing transportation to school and activities for the students.

These parents, while lacking in formal education themselves, clearly indicated to the community and their children the importance of education and the school.

The need for this type of support for the school and education is desperately needed if the students and the distressed school districts are to succeed. As indicated in the interview data, parental support is one of the key ingredients for student success.

While parental support is important and even necessary for the success of a district and its students, it is not alone a sufficient condition for the success of the school. A successful school requires parental support, ready, willing, and able students, and some type of financial support. William Julius Wilson, in his study of the new urban poor titled When Work Disappears, found that like educational problems, problems of poverty cannot be treated in isolation. For example, he found that when people experience chronic subordination over long periods of time and to develop modes of adaption that take aberrant forms. These forms of behavior destroy the individual, the family, and the community. He found that when children were removed from a school system which was failing and placed in schools which supported them, and provided them with mentors, they were successful. They felt they had a future directly associated with their educational experience.

The interview data confirms these findings and supports grouping the students where behavioral problems are removed from the school and placed in their own groups. By homogeneous grouping, the school then demonstrates support of the students trying to learn. Parents are considered to be the primary mentors of their children, but where the parents are incapable of acting as mentors, the superintendent was found to claim that his

students were better off with him in after school programs than they were at home. He was dismayed that such a sad statement could be true.

In the review of prior knowledge, it can be seen that certain values such as work, discipline, commitment, respect for authority, and obedience were values that were important to the industrial lives of those in the community and the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region. The interview data will show how those values which were so essential to the industrial life of the region were reinforced in the home life and the educational lives of the community.

#### Education and Democracy

The central purpose of democracy has a multitude of contradictory meanings for a society. Democracy is an idea central to the objective of individual freedoms, yet it is an idea central to the objective of pursuit of the common good. Once the goal of education was a democratic goal, which is to produce an informed citizenry capable of living a democratic way of life, an idea central to the common good. Now the goals of education are the goals of business and industry, ideas central to the objective of individual freedoms and the development of employable citizens. The potential conflict between the educational goals of producing an informed citizenry or an employable citizenry is a viable possibility. The conflict between the democratic goals of individual freedoms, such as local controls, and the common good, as expressed through national standards, is a possibility as well. For example, educational reformers while calling for national standards, curricula and tests that emphasize common objectives and common measures, simultaneously glorify local control and decision making that emphasize individuality.

Business and industry stakeholders exert influence on the goals of education and the curricula in order to obtain access to qualified employees. The influence of business and industry, often coinciding with the interests and influence of parents who desire financial security for their children, seeks to reform education with the objective of producing employable graduates. W. E. B. DuBois warns that “The ideals of education, whether men are taught to plow, to weave or to write, must not be allowed to sink into sordid utilitarianism. Education must keep broad ideals before it, and not forget that it is dealing with Souls and not with dollars” (DuBois, p. 82).

Although the development of employable graduates is not an undesirable objective of education, we must ask if it is to be the sole objective of education. When discussing educational reform we must first define education and its purpose. We must address the fundamental function that the educational is now to perform. Then we might seek agreement on the mechanics of reform. Most stakeholders in the educational process, and especially those who advocate educational reforms focus on the mechanics of educational reform. These reformers identify test scores, as defined by the politically entrenched dominant culture, as the barometer for educational reform. If test scores are the sole barometers of educational success or failure, then indeed, we should advocate for improvement in test scores, even to the extent of limiting education to teaching of the test material. If test scores indicate educational failure, then improving test scores should indicate educational success.

Many educational reforms focus on the mechanics of reform or how an educational system is to be reformed, a mechanical solution. Democratic schools focus on the reason

for reform, a solution that demands relevance to the students' existence. It is doubtful that many members of a community would advocate a position of teaching solely to improve test scores. Schools do not exist to serve a democratic society simply through the production of adequate test scores. As a society, we still seem to recognize that democratic schools create democratic structures and curriculum to create democratic experiences for students. Democratic structures, including democratic schools, rest on the consent of the community that it governs. Democracy then empowers the community to change the conditions that create social inequities such as inequitable educational funding. A democratic curriculum is a participatory curriculum based upon questioning and providing access to a wide range of opinions and information. Paulo Freire defines the educator's role as proposing "problems about the codified existential situations in order to help the learners arrive at a more and more critical view of their reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 17).

Ideally we maintain that education has other purposes beyond improving test scores, otherwise, it is a utilitarian activity, sterile and lifeless. Linda Darling – Hammond, citing more lofty ideals, speaks of education as "central to the promise of democracy ... it provides a vehicle for all citizens, regardless of wealth or circumstances of birth, to aspire to the rights and benefits of this society and to create a community of shared values" (Darling-Hammond, p. 42). However, Dewey (p.97) addresses the importance of shared values stating that "In order to have a large number of values in common, all the members of the group must have an equable opportunity to receive and to take from others." Dewey (p. 98), further cautions that without this equable opportunity for shared

opportunities and experiences, “the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves.” Nearly sixty years later, João da Viegua Coutinho advocated the same position as he wrote, “education is either for domestication or for freedom” (Freire, 1970, p. vi).

It is this unequal access to educational opportunity that serves to create social dysfunction and an undemocratic life in society. For some, to extend the promise of democracy is to threaten the status and power of the dominant group. Apple and Beane (p. 6) point to the “startling contradiction between the movement for great school achievement on the one hand and the resistance to equitable spending for all schools on the other.”

The arguments regarding democratic educational reforms deal principally with three inter-related issues, the tolerance of unequal educational opportunity, the preservation of the dominant class or Galbraith’s contented culture, and the role of utilitarianism in the educational process.

The tolerance for unequal educational opportunity is largely situated in the argument regarding wide disparity in funding between public schools. Wealthy school districts can provide better facilities, attract better teachers and administrators with higher salaries and a better teaching environment, and can provide more and better courses and teaching materials to their students. Opponents of more equitable educational funding often cite the democratic freedom of local control of taxation maintaining that a wealthy school district can choose to spend whatever its residents want on local schools. Poorer school districts cannot afford the same type of facilities as wealthy schools, nor can they



afford to maintain or renovate the facilities they already have; these districts do not have the same choice as wealthy school districts. Poor school districts, particularly poor urban or poor rural districts, have difficulty in attracting teachers and administrators. Without the revenue to develop new curriculum and course offerings, poor school districts often cannot offer the same types of courses or access to technology as the wealthier school districts. In the most egregious examples of inequitable funding, poor school districts cite the lack of funds to purchase enough textbooks or to purchase up to date textbooks for their students. Poorer school districts often are composed of a disproportionate number of special needs students whose need for resources is even greater than that of other students. Proponents of more equitable educational funding cite the democratic objective of equal educational opportunity for public education and maintain that inequitable funding for public schools denies students equal access to educational opportunity.

The fact that such inequitable funding exists between districts is not disputed. In Pennsylvania, according to the Annual Financial Report 1997-1998 (PDE-2057) per pupil expenditures in the state range from a high of \$13,114.50 to a low of \$4,352.83, a range of over three hundred percent. What is startling, as previously stated by Apple and Beane, is that educational reformers resist equitable funding. While acknowledging that inequitable funding exists, the connection between educational funding and academic achievement is overlooked. In order to maintain the status quo, inequitable funding is to be tolerated. The contented culture would consider that inequitable funding is to be tolerated because to minimize or to eliminate inequitable funding would require government intervention or call for a greater role of government. Both of these to

interventions violate the principle of laissez faire. The contented support laissez faire and oppose government intervention. Without government intervention of some sort, there cannot be a change to educational funding.

The dominant culture, as shown by Galbraith, is the contented culture. Since knowledge is socially structured, the meaning of events is the meaning endorsed by the dominant culture. A democratic curriculum with a free flow of information and ideas promoting critical analysis may bring the dominant culture into question. Dewey (p. 112) advances the notion that “The conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind.”

The kind of society that the dominant culture, the contented culture, has in mind is a society that maintains the status quo. Such a society preserves the contentment of the dominant culture, their status and power are not threatened. It is a society where government intervention is undesirable unless such intervention protects the interests of the dominant and contented culture. By maintaining the status quo, inequitable funding for education is tolerated. Denying some groups access to equal educational opportunity prevents those groups from challenging the dominant culture. Paulo Freire (Shor & Freire, p. 130) notes that education can make students more curious and more aware of contradictions in society. The contented culture declares itself democratic while constructing and reproducing inequality through unequal access to educational experience. This conclusion does not say that poor people cannot learn. It only recognizes the fact that learning is considerably more difficult under socio-economic upheaval and distress and that denying equal access to educational opportunity is undemocratic.

The role of utilitarianism in education is not unimportant since society still needs people to produce goods and services that it considers valuable. “One of the historic problems of many progressive [democratic] curriculum ideas (and one reason they have often lacked support in non-privileged communities) is that they appear to de-emphasize the kind of official knowledge of skills that young people need to negotiate their way past the gatekeepers of socioeconomic access (Delpit, p. 280-298). A progressive democratic curriculum is directed toward rigorous reflection and consideration of events and experiences that connect to the shared experience of a community. Students need to become knowledgeable and skilled in many ways. These needs create a tension between providing an education that challenges anti-democratic conditions in society while providing the knowledge and skills expected by powerful stakeholders whose objectives are sometimes quite undemocratic.

Such utilitarianism in education represents a structured descent into wage slavery. Like the coal miners and steel workers in western Pennsylvania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these wage slaves, even if they are highly paid wage slaves are still not in control of their own destiny, but remain under the control of the dominant culture. These wage slaves pose no threat to the dominant, contented culture because they do not possess the democratic educational experience that questions undemocratic conditions. Similarly, the rising standard of living fueled by consumer debt leaves many of these relatively highly paid workers as subject to those who hold the debt, the dominant and contented culture.

Serious, meaningful educational reforms must be democratic reforms. These

reforms must recognize the shared values of the local community and reflect democratic experiences. This type of democratic curriculum permits the risks of the dominant culture and undemocratic ways of life to be questioned. By calling into question undemocratic practices, the democratic society is strengthened and the school district begins to reflect the democratic values of the local community, the values of the governed.

### CHAPTER III

#### NARRATIVE AS METHODOLOGY

One powerful way in which humans exchange experiences is through the use of narrative. Italo Calvino has served as a guide to the role of narrative as methodology. In Six Memos for the Next Millennium, Calvino relates his view of the novel as a method of obtaining knowledge, “ a network of connections between the events, the people, and the things of this world” (Calvino, 1988, p.105). The narrative form is a natural and very human method of sharing and exchanging experiences, based upon the tradition of oral storytelling. For Calvino, this fact is so natural as to be inescapable. In the preface to The Path, “the world of extra-literary elements stood there so massive and so indisputable that they seemed a fact of nature” (Re, p.74).

As a natural form of expression and means of exchanging experiences, the narrative form provides a connection between a literary operation and an anthropological need, the precarious existence of life itself. “Literature as a search for knowledge ... perpetuates in an anthropological need” (Calvino, 1988, p. 27). In the case of ethnography, in emphasizing the roles of culture and behavior, as anthropological inquiry, Michael Agar (Agar, 1996, p.122 - 128) argues that ethnography is both a process and a product of language and its usage. To ignore either process or product, or to separate the process from the product does disservice to both. The process of ethnography is the process of gathering data and the product of ethnography is the text that is produced to explain the data obtained in the process. That text often takes the form of narratives or fable.

In one of Calvino's notes dated 1943, he wrote: "One writes fables in periods of oppression. When a man cannot give clear form to his thinking, he expresses it in fables. These little stories correspond to a young man's political and social experiences during the death throes of Fascism" (Calvino, 1995. p. 2). The anthropological need expressed through the precarious existence of life, brought to the surface again during World War II, served as a focal point for Calvino and others. According to Lucia Re, a flood of narrative occurred in Italy after World War II. Calvino began at that time to tell his own story to bear witness to the events of the recent past (Re, p. 157).

All Italians, and virtually all Europeans, participated in some way in World War II. The collective experience of World War II provided a common frame of reference for all. Re suggests that the Italian Liberation after World War II provided a focal point of narrative closure, a sense of ending (Re, p. 38). The Italian Liberation provided a denouement, allowing people to look back in retrospect in order to start retelling what had happened so that they may obtain meaning and understanding from the events.

Narrative is firmly rooted in the oral storytelling tradition. In his 1936 essay "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov", Walter Benjamin notes that the art of storytelling is coming to an end in the modern age. Benjamin suggests that it is as if it were something inalienable to us [the story], "the securest of our possessions were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences" ("The Storyteller, p. 83, as cited in Re, p. 49-50).

The loss of the storytelling tradition, a temporary loss as evidenced by Re, Benjamin attributes to the changes in social experience initiated by the new capitalist

modes of production. He cites World War I as the event which brought awareness to these changes. The precarious existence of life, for a “generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn street car, now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath the clouds, in a field of force, of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body (“The Storyteller”, p. 84, cited in Re, p. 50). So narrative, while both natural and inalienable to humans, can be grounded in the anthropological need for existence. Common experience and the need to exchange those experiences, gaining knowledge, understanding and obtaining meaning from that common experience which may culminate in a denouement such as war or the struggles of daily life, are often expressed through narrative.

Calvino offers other examples of narrative as a way of knowing. Citing Carlo Emilio Gadda, Calvin offers the view of the world as a system of systems (Calvino, 1988, p. 105-106). Reflecting Bandura’s concept of bi-lateral reciprocity, Gadda’s view states that ‘each system conditions the other and is conditioned by them.’ Calling Gian Carlo Roscioni’s “La disarmonia prestabilita” (“Deliberate Disharmony”) “the most critical essay on the epistemology implicit in Gadda’s writing, Roscioni explains that “knowledge of things is seen as the convergence of infinite relationships, past and future, real or possible” (Calvino, 1988, p. 107). Narrative then can provide a systematic, empirical means of inquiry, illuminating the real as well as the perceived.

The relationship of events in history is a narrative, a story of experiences, both individual and communal, such as Krause’s narrative of the events at Homestead. Re notes that the sequence of events representing the life of nations is not apart from the

narrative of the individual, not external or superior to it. The individual stories and sequence of events brought into focus at Homestead in 1892 were foreshadowed in Giovanni Verga's novel "I Malvaglia" ("The House by the Medlar Tree) in 1881.

Verga tells the story of a family of fishermen who live in a small coastal village called Aci Trezza in eastern Sicily. The family's life together and the very fabric of the community to which they belong, are shown to disintegrate progressively under the pressure of the new modes of capitalist production and of the increasing alienation of individuals from the product of their labor, from each other, and from the community" (Re, p. 46). Once separate and distinct, here we see the coherency between the values of home life and the industrial life of these fishermen begin to merge as the industrial life begins to take dominate the home lives of the community members.

The parallels between Verga's fishermen, the puddlers at Homestead, and the steelworkers in the milltowns after Homestead in regard to the separation of the individuals from the product of their labor are notable. The alienation between these fishermen and their community and the alienation between Durkheim's specialized individual and the community are striking for their parallelism and their similarity. Like Krause's account of Homestead in 1892, Sennett's studies of the janitor Rico and his son Enrico, the bakery workers in Boston, the downsized workers at IBM in the 1990s and the residents of Aliquippa in the 1980s and 1990s, the themes are of the emergence of the isolated, alienated individual, apart from the community.

We should not be deceived in thinking that narrative is a contemporary phenomenon. The use of narrative as methodology is well founded and has been in use for



centuries. The Greek word for “parable” is *parabole*. Literally, parable means juxtaposition, to juxtapose, in Greek *parabollein*, to put side by side (Mussner, 1965). In explaining the use of parables as metaphors, Bernard Brandon Scott explains that “Parable as metaphor is generated from the experiential world of the teller.” (Scott, p.13). Using Jesus’ parables as examples, Scott notes that parables express the incomprehensible in terms of the comprehensible. “By its very nature metaphor creates new meaning. Meaning is contained in neither A or B [the parable or the metaphorical narrative], but is effected in their juxtaposition.” (Scott, p.13).

The use of stories to convey moral meaning was used in Aesop’s Fables and in the Old Testament Psalms. Parables to convey a moral lesson were used by monks and “commonly applied in their discourses from the pulpit” and appeared in print as early as 1473 (Gesta Romanorum, p.viii).

Michael Quinn Patton uses narrative in the preface of Utilization - focused evaluation. Patton asserts that the use of qualitative methods has a place in the advancement of evaluation and assessment. In the preface Patton employs Sufi stories, tales used to pass on ancient wisdom which were used as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Patton begins to make his case for narrative as methodology with the following narrative:

Sufi stories are tales used to pass on ancient wisdom. One such story is about a noted Sufi teacher, Mulla Nasrudin. Nasrudin was once asked to return to his home village to share his wisdom with the people there. He mounted a platform in the village square and asked rhetorically, “O my people, do you know what I am about to tell you?”

Some local rowdies, deciding to amuse themselves, shouted rhythmically, “NO ...! NO ...! NO ...!”

“In that case,” said Mulla Nasrudin with dignity, “I shall abstain from trying to instruct such an ignorant community,” and he stepped down from the platform.

The following week, having obtained an assurance from the hooligans that they would not repeat their harassment, the elders of the village again prevailed upon Nasrudin to address them, “O my people,” he began again, “do you know what I am about to say to you?”

Some of the people, uncertain as to how to react, for he was gazing at them fiercely, muttered, “Yes.”

“In that case,” retorted Nasrudin, “there is no need for me to say more”. He then left the village square.

On the third occasion, after a deputation of elders had again invited him and implored him to take one further effort, he stood before the people: ‘O my people! Do you know what I am about to say?’

Since he seemed to demand a reply, the villagers shouted, “Some of us do, and some of us do not.”

“In that case,” said Nasrudin as he withdrew, “let those who know teach those who do not.”

By the use of narrative, Patton begins to establish a case for the use of qualitative research in evaluation and assessment. In selecting this particular narrative, Patton begins a

foundation for the use of narrative in teaching, evaluation and assessment, previously the domain of the scientific and quantitative.

“Narrative is quintessential to the understanding and communication of the sociological (Richardson, p. 199). Richardson argues that tapes and notes constitute the “data” of our research, but the tapes and notes do not constitute our findings (Richardson, pp. 198-221). Narrative, then, is the process that transforms our data (fables) into findings (interpretations).

While narrative is quintessential, it is also ubiquitous. Narrative has been present throughout history, in all societies, in all cultures and narrative performs significant functions (Polkinghorne, p. 14). At the individual level, people have personal narratives that enable them to construe where they are and where they are headed. At the cultural level, they give cohesion to shared beliefs and transmit values. Narratives act as compasses both at the individual and cultural levels, enabling people and cultures to assess where they are and where they are headed through shared beliefs and the transmission of values.

Scientific writing has attempted to be plain and objective, reporting only the facts, and reporting those facts dispassionately. Science has adopted the metaphor of a window in its writing. That metaphor views scientific writing as transparent, framing an objective reality. The use of a purely objective style becomes problematic for scientific writing because, as Richardson states, “literary devices are unavoidable for the communication of cognitive content” (Richardson, p. 204) and as such narrative must be taken seriously for its relevance to empirical inquiry.

Again, according to Richardson, narrative provides access to the human experience in five significant ways: the everyday, the autobiographical, the biographical, the cultural, and the collective story (Richardson, p. 208). In everyday life, the narrative describes how and what the participants in the research do on a daily basis.

Autobiographical narrative relates the past to the present for the participants which is how people organize their own personal biographies. Since narratives work within our own lives, the potential arises for narrative to provide understanding of the lives of others, a biographical understanding. As cultural story, narrative creates and supports a social world. “Morality and cautionary tales instruct the young and control the adult” (Richardson, p. 212). To a great degree, the fables of Don Paolo attempt to “instruct the young and control the adult” and as we will see, rejection, ignorance, or failure to construct new narratives to replace the old, is displayed by the failure of the adult to control themselves. Finally, the collective story provides a voice for those of a similar view, a collective conscience linking a sociological community and providing a means of civic discourse. Richardson succinctly states the “Narrative is the best way to understand the human experience because it is the way humans understand their own lives” (Richardson, p. 218).

Polkinghorne asserts that “Narrative meaning is a cognitive process that organizes human experiences into temporarily meaningful episodes” (Polkinghorne, p.1). These episodes contain meaning in regard to the relationship between events as opposed to scientific or logical inquiry which seeks to establish cause and effect relationships through universal truths (Richardson, p. 201). To establish these meanings through connected

events expressed as a fabulistic narratives is, in the words of Agar, “about what these people do with their knowledge” (Agar, 1995). In this research, the fables provide us with insight into finding wisdom in place in the world and how that wisdom is used in the community.

### **The Fables and How They are Used**

During the course of these interviews, Paul provided me with a number of fables and I have chosen about ten to include in this research. These fables have been grouped into several categories basically in the order in which they were introduced. I have chosen to identify these categories as Fables of the Uncaring, Fables of the Garden, Fables of Discipline and Commitment, and Fables of Heritage Knowledge. Within each of these categories, the fables are identified in order of importance.

The Fable of the Uncaring is titled the Patient and the Doctor and is a fable about the relationship about the distressed districts and those that have the power to help. The Fables of the Garden include fables about the grandfather, the community garden, and Joe's garden as well as fables about the plot of land and free rent. These fables are about hard work, community effort, and values. In the Fables of Discipline and Commitment, the largest category of fables, there are fables titled no excuses; no excuses, no fear; smoking in the boy's room; drinking beer; late for dinner and my father's name as well as others.

These fables were selected and used as data in the fourth chapter, although the complete text of each individual interview is included in the appendix. These fables were selected because of their significance to Don Paolo and their importance to the understanding of what the district was and is. I intend to use these fables as they were provided to me, to enforce a useful truth about what it means to be a superintendent and a member of the community of a distressed district.

### **The Discovery of Paul and The Emergence of Don Paolo**

I concluded that these data could be best obtained in a series of interviews with Paul, a former superintendent of the district. The former superintendent was selected because:

- ! He has been a member of the community since his childhood. As a long time member of the community, the participant is intimately familiar with the community, its shared values, and the changes in the values and meanings for the community over time.
- ! Paul has experienced community life during its periods of both prosperity and decline. This is important to gain understanding of the culture of the community in the past periods of prosperity. It is just as important to understand how the culture has evolved since that time to its current period of decline. The participant is uniquely situated and possesses an important view of the community through its transition.
- ! Paul has served as superintendent of the district and is very familiar with the community and its views regarding education. As the superintendent, Paul is quite familiar with the community” views regarding education during its periods of prosperity. Similarly, Paul is familiar with the views of the community in its period of decline. Paul also would provide insight into the values and culture of the community as a young person growing up in the area.
- ! As superintendent, Paul possesses a terminal degree and has “a foot in both

camps”, the theoretical and the experiential. This is an important factor in the selection of the participant in this study because he is familiar with the socio-cultural traits of the community as it was and as it is currently. Paul is able to provide insight into the impact and meaning of educational reforms as they are introduced into the community.

- ! As superintendent, Paul is uniquely suited to view the community from within as a community member, and from without, as a member of the larger academic community. Paul is uniquely situated as an individual who has evolved as a community member, a member of the Aliquippa academic community, and a member of the general academic community. Paul would be able to provide information about how the community has evolved as he has evolved.
- ! Paul is uniquely situated to provide insight on how and where the Aliquippa school district or any economically disadvantaged school district could contribute to educational reform measures.

The data was collected in a series of ten interviews, about twenty five hours of recorded data, from January through May of this year. During the first interview with Paul when it became apparent that the data would present itself through narratives in the form of fables. Discovery of narrative is important because those narratives provide a sense of personal identity, a sense of the community life and shared values, are reflective of a basis for moral conduct and explains that which cannot otherwise be known



(Postman, p. 7). The use of narrative is reflective of and can provide a community with mastery experience, a powerful means of building community efficacy.

Building efficacy through mastery experience involves creating the cognitive and self-regulating facilities for executing courses of action. “Knowledge of the rules and strategies for constructing effective courses of behavior provides people with the tools to manage the demands of everyday life” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). The construction of self-knowledge structures would logically be expressed through narrative, reflecting and corresponding to mastery experience. The purpose of the study is to understand the meanings of these narratives for the community both as they existed in the prosperous days of the community, and to understand how those narratives or meanings may have changed with the changing economic fortunes of the town. The culture of the community as it existed prior to the economic collapse no longer exists, and has to be recreated for study through these narratives.

The methodology of utilizing narratives expressed as fables seemed appropriate for the following reasons:

- ! How the community’s views toward education are expressed in narratives are of interest. Postman’s definition of narratives (Postman, p. 5) as telling of origins, envisioning a future, construction of ideals, prescribing rules of conduct, providing sources of authority, and providing a sense of purpose and continuity has been accepted. If a community has formed those narratives, then they should be reflective of their mastery experience, and consequently their sense of efficacy.

- ! Has the narrative changed in Aliquippa? Narrative data will permit discovery of the original narrative and how that narrative has changed. How that narrative was viewed and how the narrative reflects the community's views toward education should be explored.
- ! How have these narratives changed? These data would reveal the socioeconomic and cultural factors that have impacted the change in narrative. The relationship between these socioeconomic and cultural factors and the formation of community narratives would be discovered.
- ! What meaning does the narrative have for the community? Data reflecting the use of narrative as mastery experience, either actual or symbolic mastery experience is important. How the narrative data is situated within the context of historical, sociological, economic or psychological perspectives and how the community uses that narrative to construct meaning is also of interest.

The research design consists of a number of informally structured interviews with the participant. These interviews are informally structured because we have no way of knowing or discovering these narratives or their role in the community. Formal structure would prevent the narrative from revealing itself in the interview process. It is my intent to allow the participant share his knowledge of the community without leading the participant toward any specific narrative or conclusion.

Aliquippa, a school community that has endured a catastrophic economic upheaval is the unit of analysis of this research. A qualitative research design was chosen to avoid

the manageability problems associated with a quantitative design and also because “qualitative methods that rely on interviews and on-site observations provide essential insights for inductive theorizing” (Bandura, 1997, p. 475). “Even if a group judgement provided a sound index of collective efficacy, this assessment procedure would be unmanageable with large groups.” (Bandura, 1997, p. 479) The experience of the superintendent would illuminate the process by which a community builds community efficacy through the use of and construction of narratives.

I have been acquainted with the participant informally through the participant’s familiarity with my brother. This familiarity with family members to gain formal access to the participant is a familiar method for gaining access to both the participant and the community. My brother could “vouch for me” which would allow access to the participant. The participant and I are familiar with each others families which has permitted a degree of trust to be obtained quickly and easily. Without gaining access through the auspices of the families of the participant and researcher, access would be limited and the participant’s willingness to speak openly and frankly would be curtailed significantly. In addition, without this familiarity it would take a considerable amount of time for me to earn the participant’s trust and respect. The participant may not be willing to speak frankly and openly without that trust.

The participant was contacted and the purpose of the study explained. He was interviewed in his kitchen in his home, as the participant requested. The location is familiar to him and should allowed for a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Such an atmosphere would allow the participant to speak “from the heart” in a more

conversational tone rather than providing formal structured responses to interview questions. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. The participant was informed prior to the interview that the interview will be audio recorded. Permission to audio record the interviews was obtained. My notes supplemented the interviews. The interviews will then be transcribed and reviewed by the researcher to identify emergent themes and narratives to express those themes.

The research questions include:

- ! What are the narratives of the Aliquippa school district?
- ! How has the narrative changed in Aliquippa?
- ! How have the participant's values evolved over time to deal with changing values of the community in that time period?
- ! How does the community of Aliquippa view its own narrative, its role in the educational process, the way education and knowledge are viewed in the educational process?

The answers to the research questions presented themselves in various ways, but also that answers to questions not asked also presented themselves. Often, it is the answers to the unasked questions that are the most significant. As a researcher, I had to be willing to follow where the data leads. I also found it necessary to let the participant lead me to wisdom without intruding upon, or being slavishly devoted to the process.

Fortunately for me, the participant has a unique experience and has expressed a willingness to share that experience with me. His experience is unique because he has known the community in its glorious past, its failures of the present, and because he is

currently a resident, will come to know the community in the uncertain future. He possesses the academic and administrative background to match the temporal ties he has to the community. His view has been formed by an association and attachment to the larger community, its educational community and its students. Few individuals have been positioned to experience the transition of a community in a few years from a solid, middle class community to a downwardly mobile community with few prospects. There is little new to be learned from documenting further the extent of the economic decline in these communities. However, the impact of the economic decline on the efficacy of these communities has not been examined. Similarly, the notion of such communities as agents for educational reform has not often been considered. A study in community narrative based upon the experience of the former superintendent of such a district allows us to gain insight into these communities. We perhaps have much to learn about educational reforms if we can discover what they have experienced through the expression of their narratives.

My relationship with the participant naturally changed over the course of these interviews. While attempting to remain a benign observer of the data he provided, the way he treated me began to change as the interviews progressed. This is not to say that Paul treated me poorly in any way at any time. As the interviews progressed, he assumed the role of teacher and eventually the role of the older brother.

This change in his role became noticeable when as the ultimate teacher he began to provide not what was wanted, but what was needed. The participant had become as an older brother to me, instructing me in the ways of the world, his world, a superintendent in a distressed district. He took great care to unselfishly make himself available to me and to

provide detailed accounts of his experience. It was then I realized that like don Juan Matus instructing Carlos Castaneda, Paul had become Don Paolo instructing me.

### **Researching the Problem / Various Research Plans**

The development of the research plan was an evolutionary process originating with the concept of community efficacy including the development of an index of community efficacy using community surveys. This quantitative research design quickly changed to a qualitative design using focus group interviews. The evolution continued as the interviews changed from focus groups to interviews with selective participants. The final research design consists of a series of interviews with a single participant.

The initial research plan of measuring community efficacy through the development of a community efficacy index appeared to place the theoretical cart before the horse. Before any community efficacy index could be developed, there had to be some theoretical basis for the concept of community efficacy. Bandura and others wrote about efficacy within small groups and teams and Bandura has even examined the concept of political efficacy, but the concept of efficacy within large groups or communities has not been explored thoroughly or even conceptually. Once the concept of community efficacy could be established on at least a theoretical basis, a community efficacy index could be developed.

However, the development of a community efficacy index would require resources beyond the scope of this effort. Yet, the need to establish community efficacy as a valid concept remained. In order to establish community efficacy as a valid concept, self-efficacy and group efficacy theory had to be examined.

Although it was relatively simple to extend the concept of self-efficacy from the individual to groups and teams, the extension to communities became plausible. Whether efficacy is established in the same ways at the group and community levels as it does at the individual level is still under examination. However, most of this research is being conducted at the small group and team level.

One of the larger problems with measurement of community efficacy is the effect of confounding variables. Naturally, before these variables could be isolated at the community level, I found it necessary to first establish what these variables might be. A review of prior knowledge of self-efficacy required that I examine the psychology of self-efficacy. Having examined self-efficacy from a psychological view, it became necessary to consider organizational cultural factors which would impact efficacy.

Because of the work done by Bandura and others in self-efficacy, it became readily apparent that self-efficacy would be impacted by socio-economic factors as well. It then became necessary for me to examine the socio-economic upheaval that took place in America since the 1980s and in particular, the impact of that socio-economic upheaval upon the distressed areas of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region.

To understand the impact of the economic upheaval in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region, it became imperative that I gain at least some understanding of the history of the region. The history of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region converged in a single defining event, the Homestead Strike of 1892. This event is of paramount importance to understanding the history of the region as well as its modern history because it defined how the region would conduct its civic affairs, economic affairs and social affairs for the

next fifty years.

Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region essentially defined modern capitalism for the rest of the world from 1892 forward. No region became as successful as Pittsburgh in the industrial age of the late nineteenth century and the economic power of the corporations helped form capitalistic thought and action for most of this century, particularly as it related to labor relations.

To gain an understanding of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and the Homestead Strike of 1892, it was necessary to understand the development of capitalistic thought, the role of the division of labor, and the specialization of labor in society. Max Weber and Durkheim provided the insight into that knowledge base. The capitalism of the 1890s had returned to the 1980s and had affected the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region with a vengeance. Galbraith and Phillips provided insight into the workings of the economy during that time period and the impact of such economic change.

Finally, it was necessary to understand what impact this economic change had on the individual. Sennett provided a basis for understanding the impact of these changes in the economy on individuals and how their character had been affected by the change.

This review of prior knowledge brought us to an understanding of some of the confounding variables that would impact the efficacy of a community but had undergone some form of upheaval. I had originally selected focus groups from Good Samaritan Parish in Ambridge because it was a parish located in a town which experienced economic upheaval, B'nai Israel Synagogue in East Liberty which was at one time prosperous and because of changing demographics was forced to close, and Bethel AME Church in



Pittsburgh's Hill District which was once a part of a vibrant, though poor neighborhood. Urban planning wiped out the lower Hill where Bethel AME was located and fragmented the community after the church was torn down.

The difficulty of establishing contact with these groups and eventually forming focus groups simply took too long to accomplish and that methodology was soon abandoned. In order to maintain the concept of comparing and contrasting the insights from different communities, I designed a research method which consisted of interviews of five individuals from a single community which had undergone economic upheaval. This method, I surmised, would provide the insight that I sought while providing opportunities to validate data.

This methodology still proved to be difficult because of the time frame required to obtain data from individuals who had left the region after the 1980s and could not be located. More importantly, I concluded that I was unnecessarily concerned about issues of validity and reliability. That is not to say that validity and reliability are not important, but for this study, they were not relevant.

The accuracy of the data presented is a question of the consistency of the data. If the data are consistently presented and recorded, then it is more likely that the data are accurate. Even if the data are accurately presented and recorded, the question of truth remains.

Validity addresses the notion of truth, but the truth must be addressed in two areas. The first issue of truth is whether or not the data observed is what has actually occurred. Is the participant relating things as they actually occurred? Unless the

participant consistently and completely falsifies the data and the experiences, any falsehoods would quickly reveal themselves. False data would appear as inconsistencies or incongruence in the record, and would invite more serious investigation. The second issue of truth is resolved in the interpretation and analysis of the data. Interpretation is a function of the filtering and processing of the data through my own experiences and views.

My own experiences and familiarity with the town and the neighborhood under study would offer the opportunity to romanticize the experience or to blindly accept the data as the only view. These experiences, rather than a disadvantage, actually are an advantage in interpreting the data and understanding meaning rather than accepting the data and making a literal interpretation.

Illumination was a much greater concern than predictability or inference from the specific to the general. Viewed in that frame of reference, validity and reliability became irrelevant. Gaining insight into what it meant to live and function in the world of a distressed district which had undergone economic upheaval was essential. Establishing a methodology which would permit replication of the results of the study became meaningless.

Still, the necessity of methodology which would be appropriate, and even scientific needed to be addressed. An examination of The Handbook of Qualitative Research by Denzin and Lincoln found that their prescribed methodologies were also inappropriate. It appeared that they had gone to great lengths to justify the lack of quantification and a testable hypothesis in their methodology. This justification was grounded in approaches which attempted to adhere to scientific methods. In a consolation to lack of

quantification, they took refuge that their prescribed methodologies at least followed scientific method.

This approach appeared to miss the point. Scientific method, while an important tool for empirical inquiry, was not the only method of empirical inquiry. Qualitative research is a “systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (Shank, 1994). Research can be systematic and empirical without being scientific. Systematic, empirical observation which provides insight into meaning can be no less important than inquiry employing the scientific method. This type of inquiry can provide contextual meaning, perspective and proportion beyond anything possible with scientific inquiry.

An example can be provided by the action of a wink of an eye (Geertz, p. 4). With the scientific method, one may examine the mechanical structure of the wink and the muscles and signals transmitted from the brain to these muscles to accomplish the wink. One might even investigate the electro-chemical reactions taking place to allow the wink to be accomplished. The scientific method would permit us, even require us, to take the wink and dissect it into its various parts. We might take each of these parts and analyze them into sub-parts, subdividing until we have reached the atomic equivalent of the indivisible units which make up a wink. We can examine each of those units, attempting to reassemble them such that the whole is equal to the sum of the parts, these parts being the individual units studied.

With our scientific analysis, we have taken the wink and attempted to simplify the wink to gain understanding. What we have accomplished is to do violence to the concept of the wink, destroying its very meaning and reason for existence. The qualitative

researcher who avoids this attempt to simplify by accepting the study of the wink under its own terms preserves the sanctity and meaning of the wink. The qualitative researcher who examines the wink under the context and meaning of the wink does not erroneously conclude that the wink exists on its own, but exists in relationship to other phenomena in the world. The wink cannot be taken out of context, because if it is, then it has no meaning other than moistening the eye. As humans, we know that winks comprise an effective means of communication and convey meaning beyond the mechanical. To illuminate our understanding of the wink as a means of communication, is to preserve its complexity and to enhance our understanding of the wink. So it is with many phenomena which would be studied using structured, empirical inquiries into meaning.

Another danger of over concern with predictability, reliability, and validity is to pursue an agenda which conforms to our preconceived notions of the phenomena being studied. This concern with predictability, reliability, and validity could force us to overlook important insights simply because they were not what we are looking for. It was not my purpose so much to provide assertions about the lived experience of a superintendent and a community as it was to illuminate that lived experience.

Satisfied that predictability, reliability and validity, were no longer concerns, a timely method of obtaining data which would provide insight into the phenomenon of community efficacy could become the next area of focus. A methodology which would provide those data through a series of interviews with a former superintendent of the district was chosen.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**THE FABLES OF DON PAOLO**

**INTRODUCTION**

The title of *Don* is a title of respect and affection in both the Spanish and Italian cultures. In Carlos Castaneda's novel, *Journey to Ixtlan: the Lessons of Don Juan*, Castaneda tells of the teachings of Don Juan Matus a self - described Yaqui Indian sorcerer. Castaneda (p. ix.) describes the teachings of don Juan in this way: 'the reality of our day-to-day life consists of an endless flow of perceptual interpretations which we, the individuals who share a specific membership, have learned to make in common.' Don Paolo has provided me with these perceptual interpretations about the Aliquippa school district and its inhabitants. By providing me with access to these interpretations he has invited me to share in a specific membership with him and others like him. He, like Don Juan in his instruction of Carlos Castaneda, would instruct me so that I could acquire membership in his knowledge, wisdom and understanding.

Don Paolo proceeded to instruct me in this knowledge which would lead to my own understanding and the understanding of the inhabitants of Aliquippa in the interpretations of the day-to-day life in that community, yesterday and today. His pedagogical method was the use of fable defined as a narration intended to enforce a useful truth. What follows are the fables of Don Paolo and their interpretations as they were derived from the interview data shown in the appendix.

Twenty five fables were selected for analysis and interpretation in this research. Only a few fables were not selected because they either were incomplete, or were

contained as part of other fables. These twenty five fables were selected because they were complete, augmented other fables, and represented a body of themes supporting the interview data provided by Don Paolo. A brief sketch of the fables grouped by theme is provided in the table below. The interpretations of these fables are included in Chapter 5 because the fables represent the data collected. Chapter 5 represents the results and analysis of those data. In addition, the fables themselves are grouped thematically. This grouping allows the fables to be presented without interruption to demonstrate the development of a particular theme. The presentation of the interpretations in a separate chapter also helps to demonstrate the development of themes in the interpretation and understanding of the fables.

**Table 9**  
**The Fables of Don Paolo**

<b>The Fable</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Interview</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
<b>Fables of the Uncaring</b>			
the Patient and the Doctor	disillusion / disappointment / indifference / acceptance	first interview	January 7, 2000
<b>Fables of the Garden</b>			
Grandfather and the garden / community garden / Joe's garden	work / thrift / pride / order	fifth interview	March 25, 2000
the Plot of Land	parental care / responsibility / work	first interview	January 7, 2000
the Garden and Free Rent	discipline / work / high expectations / high demands	fifth interview	March 25, 2000
<b>Fables of Discipline and Commitment</b>			
Smoking in the Boy's Room	parental authority / accountability / discipline / commitment	first interview	January 7, 2000
No Excuses	authority / obedience	first interview	January 7, 2000
No Excuses, no fear	parental authority / teacher - school relationships	first interview	January 7, 2000
Drinking Beer	authority / accountability / responsibility	first interview	January 7, 2000
Late for Dinner	consequences / respect / commitment	second interview	January 13, 2000
My father's name	respect / pride	fourth interview	March 17, 2000
White wash the cellar	obedience / discipline	fourth interview	March 17, 2000

**Table 9**  
**The Fables of Don Paolo**

<b>The Fable</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Interview</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
Killing the hog	obedience / discipline	fourth interview	March 17, 2000
Washing Clothes	leadership / responsibility / accountability	fifth interview	March 25, 2000
<b>Fables of Heritage Knowledge</b>			
The Banana Split	work ethic / parental instruction	second interview	January 13, 2000
Making Prosciutto	work ethic / respect for learning	third interview	March 7, 2000
Accountability	work ethic / responsibility / accountability	second interview	January 13, 2000
The Athletes	work ethic / instruction / high expectations	third interview	March 7, 2000
The Construction of the Wall	work ethic / instruction	third interview	March 7, 2000
The Amish	work ethic / instruction	fourth interview	March 17, 2000
Pepper and Eggs	work ethic / respect / caring / nurturing	fifth interview	March 25, 2000
Pillars of the House	work ethic / pride / stability	seventh interview	May 4, 2000
The Refrigerator	work ethic / pride / parental care	eighth interview	May 10, 2000
The Hot Water Tank	trust / commitment / community	eighth interview	May 10, 2000
Crime and Punishment	knowledge / wisdom / understanding / shared values	tenth interview	June 9, 2000



**Table 9**  
**The Fables of Don Paolo**

<b>The Fable</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Interview</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
Fable of the Education Profession			
Certification	professionalism / honor / respect	fourth interview	March 17, 2000

The fables will illustrate the values (topics) Don Paolo and the community held in high esteem and the virtues they attempted to exemplify in their daily life experiences.

### **Fable of the Uncaring**

#### The Fable - The Patient and the Doctor (first interview)

In the first interview Don Paolo recalled the inability of the superintendents of the Distressed Seven to persuade the superintendents in adjacent districts to pursue mergers with them. Don Paolo and the other superintendents began to realize that they were not going to be part of a merger with any adjacent district because of the political implications of such a position. So they appealed to their colleagues for assistance of any kind. “It’s obvious that you don’t want to be a part of us ... we go to the superintendents’ meetings and say, fellows I need help, and everybody just puts their heads down.”

The frustration was evident in his voice as he explained the indifference or perhaps the lack of courage of his colleagues. “We’ve got to do something here. I need help. I’ve got 2,000 students. I can’t educate them the way they are supposed to be educated. I need money and I’m sinking fast. Not only do they not want to give me help financially, they don’t even want to give you help verbally, like ‘hey Paul, maybe you ought to try this; hey Paul, maybe you ought to try that.’ ” I shared his surprise at having access to the

intellectual resources of the other superintendents from the neighboring districts and their lack of response to his pleas for help. It was evident in the tone of his voice that he had become disillusioned with educators and disappointed in politicians and their roles in education.

Don Paolo elaborated on the situation. “See, if I’m a poor person and have no money, and you are a medical doctor and I have been infested with illness. And I come to you and say Doc, I’m sick. I need your help and you ask me for my Blue Cross card and I say I don’t have one. You ask me, do you have money? I don’t have any. Now what’s the next thing to do? You’ve got to say somewhere along the line, let me give this guy a couple Bufferins. Let me give him a shot of penicillin; let me see what I have in my bag. Let me go to my cupboard to do something to help out this sick man. But when you turn your head and give no answer whatsoever, means that you just don’t care, because you have your own problem. So now you ask the question, what does the Governor of Pennsylvania, and what does a guy named Hickock [the state Secretary of Education] have against me at Aliquippa? Duquesne, Clairton, Farrell, New Castle [the other schools of the Distressed Seven], what does he have against us?”

### **Fables of the Garden**

#### The fable - grandfather and the garden / community garden / Joe's garden (fifth interview)

In several interviews, Don Paolo recalled fables of gardens. In these fables, Don Paolo spoke of work, thrift, pride, and order out of chaos. He spoke of community effort to transform something useless into something useful. The lessons in Aliquippa were taught by the parents and grandparents in Don Paolo's youth and these lessons were reinforced daily. He provides me with another story of a garden. "When my grandfather found out that we have some property [four lots at the end of the street in a residential neighborhood], he grabbed his hoe, his shovels and put them on his back and we started up there." His grandfather set the corners for the garden and started to dig the garden by hand. Don Paolo and his father helped his grandfather and father dig up the garden every night, put manure in the garden and planted the garden. They found a stream nearby and carried the water to the garden and watered the plants. Then when the crops grew, they picked the crops. "People just don't know what is to get up and do what has to be done." I asked Don Paolo what was so important about the gardens. He told me that there were three things that were important about the garden, "pride, food, ... and we're saving money." The pride from that garden planted years ago with his father and grandfather was still in his voice as he said, "Look how beautiful my garden is! I did that!" He had learned that through work, he could master his environment. Referring to the area where he grew up and thinking of the beautiful gardens that everyone had when he was young, he lamented, "Go up there now. I wouldn't eat a tomato out of there if it was the last tomato on earth! ... There is garbage everywhere. It is a disgrace." He talked about the gardens

on an island in the river. His parents and others like them turned that island into “one big garden” and the community worked on it together. They had bucket brigades to take the water from the river to water the plants. “Are we that type of society to do that today? I don’t think so. That’s what gives the Chinese and Japanese the advantage, they are disciplined people.”

I heard of a similar story and asked if Don Paolo knew my brother’s neighbor Joe. He said that he did, “he lives next door to the idiot,” referring to a man who lived in the neighborhood but did not have a reputation as a worker or as a decent man. I told Don Paolo that Joe told me the story of when he bought the house in that neighborhood. He brought in topsoil and rolled it, planted grass seed, fertilized the lawn, spread straw over it to protect the young grass plants, watered the grass, cut it when it grew and raked the clippings. When he was done, Joe’s father asked him to sit down on the porch and share a beer with him. Joe’s father told his son what he had observed about the hard work his son had done on the lawn. Joe was glad that his father had recognized his hard work and took some pride in his lawn. Joe’s father had only one question for him when he was all done. He asked his son. “how much of this can you eat?” Joe and his father realized that values were already changing from the generation of immigrants to the first generation born in America. Where his father would have planted a garden in the front and the back, Joe planted grass. Don Paolo agreed that Joe’s father had a point. “Those days will never come back. Those were very enriching days. There was a structure being created. A new society was being born and value systems were being created.”

The Fable - The Plot of Land (first interview)

In the first interview, Don Paolo explained parental concern for their children with a fable about a plot of land. “Let’s take you for an example, in your situation, let’s say you have two children. Things are really, really tight, we are just making it, we are going down hill very rapidly. And there’s other families the same way, so they’ll get together and say, these are our kids, we got to do what we can for our kids. We’ve got to do this, we’ve got to do that. Over here, there’s a piece of land, we can plow that field and grow crops and over here, we can do this, and over here we can do this.”

It was not a matter of being poor, it was a matter of not taking care of and instructing their children that concerned Don Paolo. For him, these parents were committing the unthinkable, they were turning their back on their families and their children. “They don’t read to their kids, they don’t supervise their kids, they don’t instruct their kids, and most importantly, they don’t love their kids.”

The fable - the garden and free rent (fifth interview)

This lack of discipline, the absence of a work ethic, and the lack of respect for teachers all contribute to the problems in the school district today. Don Paolo compared these young parents with the parents like his own and noted that they, young parents today, are not equipped to handle a depression. “We don’t know how to survive [like they did].” People in Don Paolo’s generation may not have been the equal of the people like Don Paolo’s parent’s generation.

He illustrated the last comment with another story. Don Paolo’s professor in

college owned twenty two houses and offered free rent for four years to anyone who would live in the house and plant a garden in the front and back yards of the house. “They can live off of those two pieces of property and no one did it. That means no rent. That money goes into my pocket. What I grow, I can eat. What I don’t eat, I can sell.” He stated as a matter of fact, “Are our young people equipped to go to work and bring home some money? I say No.” I asked why he became a superintendent and he responded,” it was better to be on top than on the bottom ... and I know how to get kids into school [college].”

### **Fables of Discipline and Commitment**

Considering that Don Paolo knew well that discipline and commitment were values held in high esteem in his father's house, these same values were reinforced in the Catholic church where he served as an altar boy, and were solidified under the tutelage of Carl Aschman, his high school football coach. It is no surprise then that he should relate fables of discipline and commitment.

#### The fable - smoking in the boy's room (first interview)

Parental authority was unquestioned and no matter how tough you were, you feared the wrath of your father. Don Paolo offered an example of absolute parental authority.

“And, you know, let me give you a typical example. My father isn't a very educated person. When I went to Aliquippa High School we had very large restrooms. I was a football player and I didn't smoke. So you go in there, and when that bell rings, you go in there and they are all lighting up these cigarettes. Well, that didn't bother me, I didn't smoke. Going to the bathroom, here comes the principal and he pulls everybody out. [The principal said,] You have two choices here, home for three days or take six swats (with a paddle). [Paul thought] Wait a minute, I don't smoke. Home for three days or take six swats. Well, I go, I'm on the football team, I got [a big football game] New Castle coming up, whatever you do, don't let Coach [Aschman] know that I'm getting swatted, because I'll take the six swats, but I don't smoke. I get five swats, on the sixth swat here comes Coach [Aschman]. He catches the guy with me. [Coach Aschman asked] What did he do? [The principal replied] Well, he was in there Coach and they were smoking. Now,

not only did I get the six swats for something I didn't do, now I'm going to get blasted by him, [Aschman, the football coach]. Now when my father finds out, that's going to be curtains. Now here's what the final outcome was, I missed three days of practice. I was severely mentally harassed, and when I went back to practice there was a pack of Winstons on my dressing hook. There was a pack of empty Winstons on the seven man Carothers machine that I used to hit, and every time I did something, [Aschman cried out] 'let's all light up folks let's take a cigarette break.' And my father said, look I believe you. But from now on, you're never to go into that bathroom again for the rest of the year. [Paul asked] But what if I have to go to the bathroom? [His father replied] Wait until you come home. I don't want you in that bathroom at all." As a result Don Paolo simply waited until he got home or had football practice to go to the bathroom. He was guilty by association and in order to avoid any possible association with wrong doing, he was simply ordered not to go to the bathroom. Without question, Don Paolo obeyed his father's orders. After all rules were rules, and there were no excuses for not following the rules.

#### The fable - No Excuses (first interview)

“What happened was when I went school in Aliquippa , Aliquippa was a booming, booming town. Everyone worked, all fathers worked. A large variety of ethnic peoples, Italians, Serbians, Croatians, Lebanese, African Americans, Polish, Slovak, we had it all. Everybody went to work at 8:00 in the morning and at 4:00 in the afternoon the father was home. And that's the key, the father was home. And pretty much basically it was,



your father must have told you once, twice, three times, you get into trouble at that school, then we'll take care of it right here. But the fact of the matter is, when the school called up your house, and said, "your son has caused complications in his Problems of Democracy class." And then you said, "What? What's he doing?" [speaking] real loud. [The school might say] "Well he told the teacher he wasn't going to do none of that damn work." [Your father would shout] "My son?" "Yeah." [the school replied]. "I'll take care of it" [your father shouted]. Boom [he slammed the phone down]. There was no more discussion. So, the son would come home, the door would open up, and your father would be waiting there with that strap, smack him across his face, knock him down the cellar steps, and he never had an opportunity to open up his mouth whether he did it, right or wrong. So you say, "God Almighty, you know, it's come to an end."

The fable - no excuses, no fear (first interview)

Emphasizing that there were no excuses offered or accepted, Don Paolo offered no apologies for what would now be considered unconscionable and even illegal conduct on the part of the parents. The children simply accepted such conduct. Virtually every child had parents who reacted in the same ways and placed the same demands on their children. If there were values that were shared throughout the community at that time, they were the absolute values of parental authority and that there would be no trouble at school; the teachers reigned supreme. In fact Don Paolo remarked that even the toughest guys he knew, guys who had no fears, were afraid of their fathers and the threat that the teacher would call home. He spoke of a friend who played football at a major college and finished

the game, playing three quarters of the game with a broken leg. He could not quit because his father, who had never seen him play football in college before, called off work to see him play. The father commented that it was not the best game he ever played.

#### The fable - drinking beer (first interview)

The parents were the rulers in the house and the concept of innocent until proven guilty was lost under this authoritarian rule. Don Paolo told me about the time he and his friends went to drink beer, but he changed his mind and did not drink any. [Paul worried] “I sure hope we don’t get caught because Coach [Aschman] will make us run laps until our tongues fall out.” As luck would have it, he and his friends were caught. It mattered little if you did anything or not. “I don’t care, you’re guilty. You see you’re guilty.”

#### The fable - late for dinner (second interview)

The rule of the parents was absolute when he grew up and there were consequences for running afoul of your parents. Don Paolo told me that “even the toughest guys had to be home at 4:15 to eat.” He told me the story of a friend of his who was late for dinner. This is the friend who asked him to come home with him, “If I’m late, my father is going to kill me” [his friend said]. When he [Paul’s friend] came home late for dinner, there were six people sitting at the table. The mother and sister were cooking. Don Paolo and his friend entered the kitchen. His friend sat down next to the father. Without a sound, the father hit him across the face and said, “Get out, if you don’t want to come here at 4:15, then you don’t eat. Get out.” It was not that the conduct of the father

was unusual, it happened to everybody in the whole town. The parents loved their children dearly, but they ran their house in a particular way, and if you lived there, you had to abide by the rules of the house.

The fable - my father's name (fourth interview)

Reiterating that a school is a community within a community, Don Paolo told about children bringing their parent's values into the school. All types of parents and all types of values sometimes cause conflicts in public education. Different parental values regarding the behavior of children, discipline, or education itself are often a source of conflict in public schools. However, in private schools, Don Paolo stated that "you are following my rules and no other rules. There are no rights here."

He advised me that education and educators have now become the problem. Previously, educational philosophy could be summed up as, "The teacher teaches, the student learns." There was no room for much else. Don Paolo reminded me that "When I go to school, I carry my father's name. Within that name there is some pride. Whatever I do in that school, my father's name is being used. When I put my name on a piece of paper to take a test, my father's name is being used. My behavior in that school, my father's name is being used. I was taught that at home." I commented that then there was severe consequences for bringing shame to the family name. Now there appears to be no shame, no consequences for bringing disgrace to the family, Don Paolo observed.

The Fable - Whitewash the cellar (fourth interview)

Don Paolo told me a story told to him by an employee of the school. The employee grew up with six other brothers. One time the employee's father told him to whitewash the cellar before he came home from work. The father only told one son to whitewash the cellar, not all seven of them. We might ask why the father did that, but "it was none of our business." The son wanted to play ball after school and planned to whitewash the cellar after he played ball. The father came home from work, found the cellar was not whitewashed, and left to find his son. He found his son playing ball and "beat the living hell out of that kid. [The father] drug him home and made him whitewash that cellar." Fear of consequences for being disobedient to the father provided the discipline that the son needed. "From that point on, ever since my old man told me to do something, I did it first. Everything [else] came last" the employee remarked.

The Fable - Killing the hog (fourth interview)

One time Don Paolo asked a friend of his, if he wanted to roast a pig. His friend got upset and told him that he could never roast a pig. When asked why, the friend told a story of his father. When he was eight years old, the father told Don Paolo's friend and his ten year old brother to kill and gut a 400 pound hog kept by the family before he came home from work. Don Paolo's friend could not kill the hog because he was afraid. When his father came home, the pig was not killed and the father naturally was upset. The punishment for the two boys was to sleep with the hog all night long. The next day he and his brother helped his father kill the hog.

“... because of that discipline. So whether it was right or wrong, there had to be something there that was right that made this good generation. This generation of guys that came out are good guys.” That discipline does not seem to exist today. Rigid discipline, demands and high expectations have to be there according to Don Paolo.

The Fable - Washing clothes (fifth interview)

He told me of when he was a student in college and he called home. His father told him that it “better be quick and important” because it was expensive to call home. Don Paolo told his mother that his clothes were dirty and he did not know what to do. Crying, his mother told him to put the dirty clothes in a box and send them home. His father told him to get down to the laundry and wash them himself. “You are the captain of your ship,” his father told him. “You’ve got to have control.” Accept responsibility for yourself. That was the way it was in Aliquippa when Don Paolo was growing up, accept

responsibility for yourself. Don Paolo went to the laundry and washed his clothes. In an attempt to save money, he washed all the clothes together and ruined some of them. He wore them anyway and eventually learned how to wash clothes properly.

### **Fables of Heritage Knowledge**

#### The Fable - The banana split (second interview)

Heritage knowledge is knowledge transmitted through the teachings of parents and guardians. As I was about to leave after the second interview, Don Paolo told me a story about when he was young. He always wanted a banana split from Isaly's, a local store. Don Paolo's friends all stopped at Isaly's with their fathers after Little League games, and got banana splits. Don Paolo's father bought him an ice cream cone. He begged his father, worked hard and asked his father if he could have a banana split. His father kept telling him, "some day Paulie, some day." Don Paolo quit asking since he knew what the answer would be. Finally, years later on his 13th birthday, his father told him to put on his coat they were going for a walk. Don Paolo got dressed reluctantly since it was below zero that day in February and went outside with his father. They walked to the local Isaly's and went inside. The furnace was broken that day, and the lady behind the counter wore a coat and stood there shivering. Don Paolo's father ordered a banana split and requested two spoons. Don Paolo asked why he ordered a banana split and his father told him because it was his birthday and he knew that he always wanted that banana split. So now it was his time to get the banana split. His father had kept his word to his son. Don Paolo had forgotten about wanting the banana split and said thank you. His teeth were chattering so badly from the cold that he couldn't even eat it. His father ate the whole banana split and was upset with Don Paolo because he didn't eat any of the banana split. His father thought that Don Paolo was ungrateful for what the father had tried to do for his son.

The fable - making prosciutto (Interview three)

Searching for another explanation of the respect for learning, Don Paolo stopped to tell me that he made his own prosciutto [a cured ham made in Italy]. Many Italian people in Paul's old neighborhood learned to make wine or sausage from their parents. Only a few knew how to make prosciutto. Paul wants to learn as much as possible about his culture, the culture of Italy and he would take the effort to learn something. After seeing his grandfather attempt to make prosciutto and observing his occasional successes and frequent failures, Don Paolo wanted to know the proper procedure. "Who knows the truth, who has the real knowledge?" Don Paolo asked his relatives, his friends, his neighbors, any one who could possibly know and he found out that they all gave him different answers to the question. Don Paolo gathered his data and checked it against the literature. He experimented with different methods to see which would work; no method was successful. He asked himself again and again, "what happened to the bone? How do I take out the bone?" Don Paolo called the Parma ham company, and they put him in touch with Luigi, in Pittsburgh's Strip District. "I want to know about how to make a prosciutto [and] he told me about when and how to take a bone out. I felt as if I had done another Ph.D. The fact of the matter is that it's knowledge, I have it and you don't." Proud of his accomplishment, Don Paolo enlightened me since I truly did not know the sequence of the process. "The bone must be in when you cure the ham. When you take it out, you need knives and clamps, put it together and press it." He noted that knowledge is a matter of persistence. "That's been the way my whole life; now I can speak from authority." Don Paolo used the analogy of the mountain, "study the mountain [thoroughly] and learn and



you can conquer the mountain,” he advised.

Returning to the problems of the distressed districts, Don Paolo cautioned that 15,000 children at risk is a great jeopardy. It is dangerous to our communities and a danger to society. Young children “are going to be strapped with these non-productive kids.” He warned me again that if we do not choose to pay to educate these children, then we will pay for the criminal system to incarcerate them.

Returning to the story of the prosciutto, Don Paolo spoke of his passion for knowledge, he had to know how the process was done and how it worked. I reminded him that many of our parents had such knowledge. Perhaps that knowledge was not perfect knowledge, but at least they could pass on the knowledge that they had. We cited examples of people of all ethnic groups passing on such knowledge to their children, making stuffed cabbages, making bread, learning to manage the small family business, or tending the garden.

#### The Fable - Accountability (second interview)

Parents held children accountable for things 35 years ago. When he was 5, Don Paolo passed out catalogs for his fathers business. When he was 8 years old, he could make change for a \$20 bill. When he was 16, he ran his fathers whole sales operation. His father told him, “if you don’t collect the money, I can’t pay for food, electric, and water.” Don Paolo explained how he learned that lesson from his father. One day he was supposed to collect the payments on his father’s route and he failed to do it. He came home and told his father that he had a bad day today and nobody could pay him. Then he

asked his father for his wages, \$2.25 for 8 hours work. His father asked how he could pay him if he failed to collect any money. Don Paolo nodded his head, excused himself from the table and went back out to collect the money. He came home just before midnight after collecting all the money owed to his father. Don Paolo quickly calculated that his hourly rate was cut in half since it took him 16 hours to earn what he would normally in 8 hours. Don Paolo vowed, "I'll never do that again."

#### The fable - the athletes (third interview)

Once again, Don Paolo met me at the door of his house and immediately started to speak. "We have always had championship teams in Aliquippa. When is the talent going to come to an end? The fact of the matter is it isn't going to come to an end." Before I could collect my thoughts, I tried to keep up with the conversation. I wanted to know the secret of the success of these teams and asked Don Paolo. "There is nothing there for them [the athletes]. There is no one talking to them about life." He emphasized that no one is teaching values to these children. The only people they are learning from are famous athletes.

Practices are rough on the athletes and coaches tolerate no verbal or physical abuse from the athletes. The athletes are used to high expectations and demands from the coaches. These athletes are used to being verbally abused and treated roughly in their environment and they do not want to put up with more abuse from the coaches.

Other schools produce top athletes too, Don Paolo noted. Some of the wealthier schools are very successful, producing top of the line athletes. Don Paolo was convinced

that one's environment makes you what you are, and the tough environment has produced successful athletes at Aliquippa. Some of the wealthier schools in the area [Upper St. Clair and Mt. Lebanon] have successful teams as well. The parents and environment are "pumping success into these kids heads." In Aliquippa success is expected only in athletics, not in the academic arena. "In their heads, they want to be a winner" whether it's Aliquippa or any of the wealthier schools [Mt. Lebanon, Upper St. Clair, Blackhawk]. Attaining success in athletics is the result of the success of a relative few number of students. Success in academics require all to be successful. For all students to succeed academically enthusiastic and capable teachers, parental support, and the necessary resources are required. He would soon address the lack of resources in the district again.

Referring to the disparity in funding within the state and the area, Don Paolo asked, "Don't you think that we can take a peek through that telescope [at Pine-Richland]?" He continued to question whether all schools should have the same facilities, the same teachers, the same opportunities for learning. He emphasized again that public school means for everyone. "Why does one school have the best and another school the worst?" This is a basic question about the disparity in school funding that haunted Don Paolo throughout his academic career and haunts him still. After 38 years, he has found no solution.

#### The fable - the construction of a wall (Interview three)

One time he had been invited to watch the football playoffs at a stadium in the center of the state. A beautiful masonry wall surrounded the stadium property. Don

Paolo stopped to admire the construction of the wall and the care that was taken to prepare the mortar joints between the blocks. The joints and the mortar were new, only a few years old. The wall appeared to surround the property and lead up to a wrought iron gate entrance flanked by two huge pillars at the stadium. The area where he was invited to watch the game was an elaborate press box heated and air-conditioned, with a private bathroom. A local caterer provided food to assure an enjoyable time for all in attendance.

The superintendent of the district, entered and introduced himself as Doctor. Don Paolo introduced himself as Dr. Don Paolo and remarked that he was very impressed by the surroundings and thought that Three Rivers [Stadium in Pittsburgh] could not be as luxurious. Don Paolo asked how they could afford such a luxury and the superintendent replied that each year they took a portion of their budget and allocated it to a fund for the construction of the wall. The superintendent then asked Don Paolo about his district. He explained that his district had about 85% of the students on the free and reduced lunch program. The superintendent looked at Don Paolo and “ten minutes later, he wasn’t there.” Don Paolo was left to watch the game with his friend. “You see, I didn’t even fit in. What are we going to talk about? Curriculum, AP Math, how many kids you got into Harvard last year? What the hell are we going to talk about? Am I going to tell you about my problems and you are going to tell me about your success stories? They don’t want to hear it.”

Don Paolo spoke of the challenge of solving this problem and the toll it took on him. “The magnitude of this problem is unbelievable... every night you come home you got a dynamic headache. Where do I go next? What’s going to happen when I go to

work on Monday morning? How many kids saw their mothers get stabbed? How many kids saw somebody get shot? Now how are we supposed to teach these kids?"

The Fable - The Amish (fourth interview)

"There's no one turning over the dirt for the garden. There's no one spreading the manure. There's no one going to the farm to pick up the manure in bushels and dumping it so we have crops to eat. There's no one putting up peppers. There's no one tying up the grape vines. ... That's where the teaching and training comes in right there."

He pointed to the Amish and their farming and craft traditions as important examples of heritage knowledge that was passed from one generation to the next. Amish parents were teaching their children about their religion, their traditions, their craftsmanship, and their value system. Unfortunately, alcohol and the drug problem has even invaded this society, he noted.

When speaking of the Amish, Don Paolo noted that they were exceptional craftsmen using only hand tools to erect barns and houses or to craft furniture. He contrasted the training of an Amish carpenter with the industrial arts training that our children received in schools today. Students today are often exposed to computer aided design and drafting programs which are connected to wind tunnels or numerically controlled lathes to produce a product. Don Paolo was firmly opposed to such training, particularly when students lacked the basic mathematical training to add fractions or to even read a rule. They were not learning how to craft a simple project from a piece of wood using the basic tools. "Make these kids make a bird house and be proud to take

something home to their mother.”

Don Paolo gave me some examples of his students that were now fine craftsmen because they were given individual instruction in the basics of their craft. “I think that the problem is that we want to get to the top too fast.” Aliquippa has not escaped the culture of instant gratification either. He noted that people are no longer willing to make the commitment in time or effort to learn a craft from the “bottom to the top.” The traditional method of learning a craft is in keeping with Don Paolo’s philosophy that “anything worth doing is worth doing poorly until you learn to do it well.”

The fable - peppers and eggs (fifth interview)

Don Paolo did not know that lunches were served in his high school in the cafeteria when he went to school there. Students who brought their lunches ate in the gymnasium. “Who ate in the cafeteria? What do they serve? I went to school with some guys who had heavy duty lunches. You could always tell the Italian kids in school from the oil at the bottom of their lunch bags from the peppers and eggs sandwiches.”

Everyone in Don Paolo’s neighborhood brought their lunches to school and all the Italians brought peppers and egg sandwiches on home made bread. The sandwiches were cheap, the bread was home made and the lunches were nutritious and delicious. Don Paolo noted that in some restaurants they are now serving peppers and egg sandwiches at a very high price, what was once described as “depression food” is now prized by a new generation as a new discovery.

He told me of another story of peppers and egg sandwiches. He was building his

mother's house and the workmen stopped work for lunch. As they sat down and rested, an old Italian woman, a mother of one of the workers came up the street with lunch for her son. She asked what these other men were eating. Don Paolo noted that they did not bring any lunches and was about to leave to get them lunch. The old woman told him not to go and that she would be right back. A short time later the woman came back with thirty six peppers and egg sandwiches on home made bread for the workers. She told Don Paolo that the eggs were cheap, she had made the bread that morning, and that the peppers were about to be thrown out of the fruit market because they had a few spots on them. The old woman bought the peppers and cut off the bad spots, saving the good parts for peppers and egg sandwiches. She then asked Don Paolo how much he paid these workers and Don Paolo told her that they were paid about \$100 a day. The old woman was startled and replied that her husband never made more than \$50 a day and she raised a family on that. "These men made \$100 a day and their wives could not even get up to make them lunch." The workmen hung their heads when the old woman commented about their wives. They were ashamed of the way they were living. With that story, Don Paolo suggested that we go outside and enjoy the evening air.

#### The fable - pillars of the house (seventh interview)

Don Paolo explained his dismay with another story. "Every year or so, I have 2 pillars on my house that need to be painted. Go look at my pillars, they are perfect. All we are talking about are a few gallons of paint, a few brushes, and a few hours of labor. Where are the people who will tell these people to clean up their act?" He asked me if I

remember my aunt's house in the old neighborhood. I said I did and he asked me if I had seen it lately. I told him I had been up there in January of this year and saw the house. "I remember my aunt and uncle's house, he was a cabinet maker and built a house [in the old neighborhood] and it is now destroyed [virtually unlivable]. Why did they not take care of what they had?" I understood that it was not important to express my opinion about the condition of the old neighborhood. Don Paolo's question to me was not to get my opinion, but to confirm what he already knew about the condition of the old neighborhood.

The fable - the refrigerator (eighth interview)

Don Paolo spoke of the importance of structure and discipline and proudly pointed to the Success for All reading program in place in the district. The students are making progress and will continue to progress in this program, but they are hampered by the home environment where reading and learning are not important.

Programs other than reading programs are required by Don Paolo's students. His students have needs that are more basic than developing reading skills. Aliquippa has a program in place that feeds 1,000 kids per day in the summer. Eighty five percent of the students in the district are on free and reduced lunch and in the summer these children eat for free. The program is government funded and Don Paolo finds it tragic that these families do not have enough pride and responsibility to feed their own children.

He illustrated this situation with a story of a refrigerator in a nearby community. "What do we have in there?" He ran down the list of the variety of foods that were stored



in a typical refrigerator in that community and noted the quantity and quality of food available. He pointed out that there was also something in the refrigerator to prepare for the evening meal. There were also leftovers in the refrigerator and food in the freezer. He now asks us to compare this refrigerator with a refrigerator in Aliquippa. He tells me to push aside the 'roaches'. The refrigerator is empty "there is no nothing in that God damned refrigerator. The kitchen is filthy, God damned dirty, bugs are everywhere." The food stamps that these people receive they cash in for "booze and crack cocaine"... "If the parents aren't at fault, then why aren't your kids there?" He referred to the government food program during the 1980s in Aliquippa after the mills had closed. "Remember those five pound blocks of cheese the government was giving away to the unemployed?" he asked. I did remember and he replied that these unemployed steelworkers had too much pride to accept the government food that was offered to them. That pride in being able to work to support their families was the difference between the people who left to seek employment elsewhere and those who stayed remaining unemployed.

Don Paolo noted that these parents just do not care. In the cafeteria lines at school, he noted that the children gorge themselves on Friday afternoon and Monday morning because they probably will not have anything to eat on the weekend.

Don Paolo had described earlier that these parents had not provided for their children's social needs and learning readiness by not teaching them anything. These parents also failed to provide for their children's physical needs by failing to feed them properly. The parents failed to provide for the children's basic needs of decent, clean housing when he described the run down houses, and now he described how the parents

failed to provide for their children's basic clothing needs when the children would come to school in the winter without hats, scarves, gloves, boots, or jackets. The teachers in the school would often provide clothes for these children from their own funds or from clothes that their own children out grew. "Now we're going to take the national test [and compare] scores. Come on, give me a god damned break!"

The fable - the hot water tank (eighth interview)

Don Paolo told me of a friend of his from the old neighborhood who became a very wealthy businessman on the east coast. His friend told him that his best friend now was his wallet. If he needed anything, he could not go to anyone he could trust, he could only go to people he could pay. In the old neighborhood, if he needed something he could go to friends in the neighborhood and they would do what was needed to help each other. Don Paolo gave me the example of a family who needed a new hot water tank in their house. They did not have the money for a new hot water tank, and did not know how to install a new tank. So they would call one of their friends who would help them solve the problem. Someone would lend money or credit at the hardware store, someone else would provide the fittings, someone else would get some pipe from the local mill, someone else would provide the labor to install the hot water tank. Before long the problem was solved and the family in need would provide a meal for those who helped. There were people you could rely on in the old neighborhood in time of need and you knew that sometime you would be needed to provide for your friends when they needed help. Now, his friend says, "my friend is my wallet." His friend had people who would

help as long as he had money to pay. The people in the old neighborhood were close and committed to each other. They relied upon each other in time of need. Don Paolo and his friend remembered that if you were making a salad and your garden produced many tomatoes and few onions, you went to your friend's garden and took the onions that you needed and your friend took tomatoes when he needed them. No one kept score, it all would even out in the end.

Now, Don Paolo said, there is no one "pushing back anyone's hair." No one telling these children that they were loved. No one showing these children that they were loved. There was no guidance from the fathers, even if fathers were present.

#### The fable - crime and punishment (tenth interview)

In this short interview, Don Paolo wanted to make a short statement about crime and punishment. He called me at home the night before, as was his practice and suggested that we get together the next night. I rushed home and changed clothes. Don Paolo met me outside, as usual, and began to talk about the Amish. He praised their skills as carpenters and craftsmen and offered them as an example of an efficacious community. They had shared values and knew what they needed to accomplish their objectives which generally included being a good spouse, a good craftsman or to be a good housekeeper, and to be close to God. The Amish had little formal education only completing the sixth or seventh grade he said. What these people had, he noted, was wisdom and understanding. They could pass this wisdom and understanding on to their children and teach them the ways of their society. Through the transmission of this heritage

knowledge, the Amish were able to retain order and control in their society and the society would prosper in an environment hostile to their non-materialistic ways.

Contrasting the heritage knowledge of the Amish with the parents in Aliquippa, Don Paolo noted that these parents never had that knowledge and wisdom. They had nothing to pass on to their children, even in the form of accepted social behavior.

“Is what we are doing to these kids a crime?” Don Paolo asked. “And whose law are we breaking? ... The laws of the house or the laws of God.” He noted that the family forms the first social organization for the child and the laws of the house are the first laws that a child encounters. Without the proper rules of the house, the child is raised in a virtually lawless society, Don Paolo reasoned.

“Now consider the perfect meal” Don Paolo asked. The perfect meal he advised me consisted of perfect presentation, perfect color, perfect flavor, a perfect wine, and perfect conversation. All of those things were required to make a perfect meal. The wine was present to enhance conversation, but without conversation, the meal was incomplete and less than perfect. Without conversation, the meal was simply food, albeit food which may have been presented, prepared and perfectly flavorful. It may have even been accompanied with a perfect wine, but without conversation, it could not rise above the status of food. With conversation, it became a meal.

“You know how to make pizzelles,” Don Paolo asked. Pizzelles are flat, circular, anise flavored pieces of dough, baked much like a thin cookie in the shape of a small pizza. As an Italian from the area, I have seen many people make pizzelles and even helped my mother make them before the holidays. Don Paolo talked about how the act of

making pizzelles included a dialogue between the mother and the children, and the mother and the father. It included dialogue between the father and the children. He commented that the making of pizzelles often turned into a family affair, culminating in eating the pizzelles as they were packed into tins to store for the Christmas holidays. The important fact about the process of making pizzelles was the dialogue and the common act done by the family. It was that way with the preparation of any meal. The preparation of any meal was a nurturing process. As Don Paolo pointed out, it was also a teaching process.

Many of Don Paolo's students have not had the opportunity to learn how to prepare a meal. They had not had the opportunity to function as a family unit since so many of them came from single parent and greatly dysfunctional households. "So," Don Paolo questioned, "is what we are doing to these kids not a crime?"

## **Fables of the Education Profession**

### The Fable - Certification (fourth interview)

In the House report cited earlier, the section titled Parents Involved in their Children's Education begins with a quote from a parent in Napa, California:

“I think there is an arrogance on the part of the school bureaucracy that assumes that they know best what is for everybody's children.

I assume the opposite. I don't think anybody can make a better decision for their children than the parent.” (Committee on Education and the Workforce, p.32).

With thoughts like this in mind, Don Paolo began our next interview.

“We are dealing with some heavy issues here. In every profession you have to be certified.” Referring to the engineering and medical professions, Don Paolo noted that one needed to be trained, certified and credentialed in order to make decisions in that field. Only professionals were permitted a voice regarding the means and methods to be used in the profession. Those outside the profession were not permitted a voice. In some professions such as architecture, non-credentialed people can be denied ownership of the firm. In medicine, architecture or law outsiders can be fined or jailed for practicing without a license.

“Only in education, only in our profession people have the right to speak and criticize and tell you what you're doing wrong ... and they don't know what the hell they're talking about.” In other professions there is an accumulation of base knowledge. Demonstration of mastery of this base knowledge is the credential, the access for

participation in the profession. In education, however, every body is permitted an opinion. Don Paolo told me about his recent experience in Italy, where a teacher is highly regarded. “Teachers are honored in Italy, [and] especially in Germany.”

“When the hell did your firm ever bring people in off the street to tell you how to design a building? ... Never!” Engineering, architecture, medicine, legal, or business professions do not permit or invite outsiders to tell them how to conduct their profession. “Only in education do we bring in everybody off the street.”

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETATIONS

#### FABLES OF UNCARING

##### The Interpretation - The Patient and the Doctor

From the beginning of the interviews, one could tell that Don Paolo was going to use parables as metaphors for education and for experiencing the values of his world. Don Paolo utilized parable and fables as devices to allow us to comprehend his world and his experience. It is not possible for us to understand the value system of his world as a young student and to contrast it with the value system of his students or their parents without these narratives.

In the first of these interviews, Don Paolo makes it very clear that the distressed districts kept getting rejected in their pleas for help. They viewed their situation as punishment for being poor or on the wrong side of the political tracks or for being African - American. He noted the futility of incentives and test scores as a cure for the districts' ills when he asked "Now what have you proved?" It was, as stated earlier by Galbraith, that the wealthy needed incentives while the poor were to rely on the spur of their own poverty. This causes us to question how these districts can ever rise far above their current status since the fall downward seems to be quick and deep, while the climb upward is steep and slow. Any upward pace at all, particularly when relying on incentives which would comprise a very minor portion of the distressed district's budget, would be at a glacial pace for these districts. Improvements at such a slow rate would only serve to prolong their status as poorer performing districts as their improvements are outpaced by



other districts' performance.

The stories of the nonproductive efforts with the state representatives are particularly meaningful. The efforts of the superintendents were frustrating and not fruitful which would confirm Bandura's notion that one simply gives up after a series of continual failures. Failing to master this experience, the superintendents failed to build efficacy within themselves or their communities. None of the Distressed Seven districts has turned themselves around either academically or economically.

Solzhenitsyn in the *Gulag Archipelago* (Solzhenitsyn, 1997) tells of a zek, a prisoner in the Gulag. The zek notices an ant in the bottom of his teacup. The ant tries to crawl out so the zek continually pushes the ant down to the bottom of the teacup. The zek begins to count the number of tries and notices that after 182 tries and 182 failures, the ant simply huddles at the bottom of the teacup. It never again tries to escape. The ant has given up any attempt to get free.

Solzhenitsyn saw the ant as a metaphor for the Russian people, the Soviet Union as the massive teacup and the Russian people huddled at the bottom, passively accepting the rule of the Communists. We might view the story of the superintendents' failures with the political representatives as Solzhenitsyn's ants. The teacup represents the political and economic forces thwarting the efforts of the distressed districts forcing them into continual failure. The ants are the superintendents who finally give up and accept the fate that they will not be able to turn their districts around.

Another view of the story of the superintendents' failures and Solzhenitsyn's story is from the view of the students. Failing to get what they need to succeed or not even

knowing that they need anything else in their lives causes them to even fail to try to succeed academically. They and their children now become like Solzhenitsyn's ants huddling at the bottom of the academic and socio-economic teacup.

The community similarly may provide a metaphor for the ants. Failing in their attempts to attract new businesses and jobs, failing to keep the younger people employed and involved positively in their community, the community becomes Solzhenitsyn's ant, accepting of its' fate. The only escape from the teacup is to leave and abandon attempts at recovery and transformation. In Solzhenitsyn's Soviet Union, the Ukraine votes the Communists into power with each election.

While in the pre-Soviet Union days, the Ukraine was known as the "bread basket of Europe," today it has sunk into an economic black hole. In Don Paolo's community like the Ukraine's voting pattern, the community votes for incompetent school board members in each election. Don Paolo spoke of the incompetent school board members who were only interested in socializing and the perks of the position, such as trips to conventions or tickets to sporting events, without caring about the needs of education, the students, or the community. The school board members would close meetings before business or discussions were finished to go to a local bar to watch football games on television rather than spend the time discussing educational issues. Like the Ukraine, the distressed districts once productive taxpaying communities, have sunken into their own economic black holes.

Galbraith cited earlier spoke of the culture of the contented and their desire to maintain their contentment. Sennett told of the people living in the suburbs having

defined a good neighbor as one who lived without incident, one who did not disturb their contentment. The superintendents of the distressed districts could not be described as good neighbors because they disturbed the contentment of their more prosperous neighbors. These superintendents brought their problems to the doorstep of their representatives and their neighbors and consequently, were not living without incident. It is not surprising then that the superintendents were told, “This is your problem, go back and solve it.”

Don Paolo related the story of the Doctor and the poor patient. He spoke of the Doctor’s compassion for the poor patient, ‘let me try to do something to help out this sick man.’ The Doctor, in the view of Don Paolo, was a metaphor for the state representatives and the superintendents in the neighboring districts, the poor patient who was infested with illness was the Distressed Seven districts. When the Doctor turns their back on the sick patient, they are showing that they just do not care about their problem. When the state representatives and neighboring superintendents turn their backs on the Distressed Seven districts, like the Doctor, they are showing that they just do not care either. These superintendents even refused to give him suggestions of things he and the other superintendents of the distressed districts could try.

There may be another view of the narrative, one that Don Paolo never contemplated or perhaps never intended. In this view, the Doctor is a Banker. The Banker never refuses a loan to someone who is well off enough financially and those who do not need a loan, those who can pay for the Doctor’s services. On the other hand, those in need, the patients infested with illness are turned away. Now it is appropriate to argue

that the Banker, unlike the Doctor, takes no Hippocratic oath, but only makes an oath with the investors or with capitalist dogma to gather more profits and to grow more wealth. There is no oath to share that wealth with those most in need. That much is certainly true and in fact is the way the economic game is played. This view is in keeping with the Protestant ethic. John Wesley (Weber, p. 175) summed up the role of economics in the life of the Protestant when he said, “we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich.” One does not accumulate riches in the eyes of such a God by giving riches away. The act of giving is in fact inappropriate because it causes others to lack industry. Sir William Petty (Weber, p. 179) said that Calvinists and Baptists believe that Labor and Industry is their duty towards God. This is the conservative argument being made today and Don Paolo makes the argument that welfare teaches the recipient to not work. Hewitt, a steelmaker and member of the House of Representatives (Krause, p. 67), envisioned a higher civilization where the steelmakers “could employ less intelligent men” for it was indeed up to the master to do the thinking. Perhaps now the superintendents of the wealthier districts and the state representatives view a similar civilization. A civilization where the less fortunate, that is the less intelligent, who are no longer required as Hewitt and Holley’s ‘hack laborers’ and can now be ignored or rejected through indifference. Durkheim (Durkheim, p. 41) noted that the law reflects the values of society and defines an act as a crime if society condemns the act as harmful to society; the rejection of the act by society classifies the act as socially evil. By ignoring the pleas of the superintendents for help, the society of the state and the society of the local superintendents have condemned the act of economic misfortune as

socially evil and have clearly shown their rejection of this act. The act of economic collapse Don Paolo viewed as beyond the control of his community, but none the less, ‘you are guilty.’ Don Paolo referred to the plight of the homeless and compared it to the conditions of the criminal. Perhaps he is correct in concluding that the act of homelessness is a more serious crime than crimes that result in incarceration of the criminal and is consequently rejected by society more seriously.

Yet another interpretation of the parable of the Doctor is possible. The Doctor is the parent in the community who tries to do something to cure the patient infested with illness, the children. The caring parent searches for something to help the child, to cure the child and protect them from the illness that infests them. The illness might be the environment that sickens the children under the parents’ care or in Don Paolo’s view, the illness was more likely the parents themselves who weaken their own children by failing to nurture and provide for them. Don Paolo continued to emphasize, in this first interview, the importance to the patient of the participation of the caring Doctor.

#### FABLES OF THE GARDEN - THE INTERPRETATIONS

The interpretation - grandfather and the garden / community garden / Joe’s garden (fifth interview)

Again, in Aliquippa, gardens figured prominently in the lives of the families. Don Paolo’s stories of the gardens that were in his old neighborhood spoke of the hard work of the people who lived there. No plot of ground was left idle as everything was used to produce food for the family. Food produced in the garden saved money for the family.

Don Paolo spoke of the pride people displayed in their gardens and the order that they represented in their lives. It was an act of gaining control over the environment and a measure of control over your life.

The example of the community garden might be seen as an example of community spirit and the shared values of the community. The community worked together to convert an island into a garden, a useless piece of ground into a valued productive asset to the community. It required hard work and long hours after working in the mills, but with the efforts of the community, they were able to clear the ground, plant the gardens, and water the gardens. The bucket brigades were visible symbols of community support transforming something quite useless into something valued by the entire community. Similarly, the community garden might be interpreted through the community's view of the educational process. It took an effort of the community focused on a single shared goal, that of the transformation of something underdeveloped into something valuable, something prized by the community, something which provided something that the community needed. The labors of the parents and the community represented the educational process which would transform this underdeveloped asset into something valuable.

The narrative of Joe and his garden is important in confirming the notion of changing values between generations. In asking the question, "How much of this can you eat?", Joe's father did not question the labor expended in creating a lawn, but questioned whether that labor would not have been better spent on something much more practical, providing food and saving money for his family. Don Paolo's comments about those

being “very enriching days”, about “structure being created” and “value systems being created” sum up the essence of Don Paolo’s lessons. The society needs structure and structure was provided through the church, the family, and work. The value system that was being created was a value system that reinforced that structure, it was a value system that provided order in society and self - control. While parents were strict and even tough on their children, the children were provided with the lessons they needed to master their life. The success of such structure was evident in Joe’s own family. His family produced three children, two of the children became nurses with advanced degrees in nursing and the other child became a successful psychiatrist. While this type of success story is evident throughout Aliquippa in previous generations, such success stories are not common today. Don Paolo would attribute this decline in success in the district to the change in values in the community.

The interpretation - The fable of the plot of land

Don Paolo referred to gardens in the first interview and many times in subsequent interviews. In this interview, Don Paolo spoke of the plot of land and plowing the land to grow crops. The gardener a metaphor for parents, either separately or together, tries to do something to take care of their children. “And there’s other families the same way, so they’ll get together and say, these are our kids, we got to do what we can for our kids.” These gardeners are acting as a community with shared values that their children are prized possessions and are to be cared for and nurtured. Don Paolo once referred to the section of town where he was raised and spoke of the fine gardens that were there in his

youth. “Now I wouldn’t eat a tomato out of one of those gardens, if there are any, if it was the last damn tomato on earth.” These new parents are not tending their gardens in the view of Don Paolo and there are no excuses for not tending your metaphoric garden. There could be no economic rescue of the community and consequently the district in his eyes. There could be no turn around of the community because the members of the community did not know how to turn such a thing around with parents who let it get out of control in the first place. These parents do not know how to plant or tend the garden, they had never been taught to do so.

Don Paolo spoke often of his relationship with his parents and especially his father. One may conclude that the relationship that Don Paolo has with his father is similar to the relationship he had with his students. He cared for his students after school because it was better that they be there with him. He would protect them, he would try to care for them as his father cared for and protected him. Don Paolo’s career in education after a troubled start as a student is his way of honoring his parents. He alone would still speak for the values that they ingrained in him, even if the parents of his students did not subscribe to those same values or did not know how to implement those values in their children.

Don Paolo’s relationship with his students was similar to his relationship with his father. That is not unusual. What is unusual is how similar Don Paolo’s relationship with his students was to the relationship his football coach had with the players, including Don Paolo. The coach, Carl Aschman, called King Carl in Armen Keteyian’s book , *Ditka Monster of the Midway*, Aschman was described as “a ruthless tyrant one minute, he played the benevolent dictator the next. For sixteen- and seventeen -year-old kids he was



a combination father figure and supreme being, God as coach” (Keteyian, p.43). Aschman held complete power over his players. Many of his players went on to very successful careers in college and professional football, yet all they thought of and all they feared, was Aschman. “You could be eighteen years old, a thousand miles away from Aliquippa, and have the world at your fingertips, yet all you thought of was Aschman. What would he think? What if he found out?” A former player and college All-American recalls “I’m afraid to death if something were to happen and it got back to Aschman, he would run me out of town.” This same tyrant who struck fear into the hearts of his football players, players who struck fear into the hearts of their opponents, tucked these same players “his boys” into bed each night. He regularly went to their homes to do a personal bed check asking “How are you son? Did you study tonight?” Aschman was sensitive, emotional, and deeply religious. This was a man who demanded discipline and commitment, reinforcing the values taught at home and in the local Catholic church. Aschman had coached his athletes well and Don Paolo learned from the King.

The interpretation - the garden and free rent (fifth interview)

In the community of Aliquippa, work was simply a way of life. Everyone worked, whether you worked at the local mill which nearly everyone did, or you worked someplace else, people worked. The work at the mill was difficult and dangerous. The men leaving the mill often walked to work and walked home, the toil of the day and the injuries they sustained working in the mill were symbols of what needed to be endured if one was to achieve something for themselves and their families. They left the house in the morning to

go to work, came home and worked at home. They worked in the garden, they worked repairing and maintaining their modest houses, they worked with their children practicing sports, but they worked.

Many of people of Don Paolo's age started working in the mills after high school, but went to college at night when they found out that the work in the mill was not to their liking. They worked at their studies and pursued new careers and many of them pursued advanced degrees after they left the mill. They worked during the day and went to school at night. If there was something that you wanted, if you had a goal, then you committed yourself to that goal and did not stop until that goal was attained. There are numerous examples in the community like Don Paolo. He went to college, started teaching after college, worked on his masters degrees at night, and continued to work while he pursued his doctorate degree at night. Other examples include a millwright in the mill who went to school at night until he attained a doctorate degree. Others worked in the mill, studied until they could become teachers and then continued to study at night until they passed the bar exam and became successful lawyers in the area. If you want to achieve a goal, commit yourself, then work until you reach your goal. Demands and high expectations were placed on the children and they were expected to meet those demands. No excuses were considered. The vicarious experience of others helped them to believe that they too could accomplish their goal if they worked. That was the way they were taught to live.

Even the students of Don Paolo's generation at the university he attended as an undergraduate did not share the same values as Don Paolo. When offered free rent in exchange for planting gardens in the front and back yards of the house by a professor, no

one accepted the offer. This offer was not available to Don Paolo since he was an athlete, but it was available to any other student. What was amazing to Don Paolo was that no one understood the opportunity presented to them, an opportunity to live for free, to eat for free, and to gain income from selling the excess crops from the gardens. It was almost impossible for Don Paolo to believe.

## FABLES OF DISCIPLINE AND COMMITMENT

The interpretations

The fables are not simply fables of tough people who provide interesting characters for discussion. With the fables of no excuses offered or accepted, the fable of no excuses, no fear, the fable of smoking in the boy's room, or the fable of the beer, we learn of a community of parents who set absolute rules and demanded that their children be disciplined and committed to following those rules. There was simply no room for anything other than respect for parental authority, the rules of the school, or the rules of the Coach, expectations were set and the children were simply told to meet those expectations. They were expected to "get the job done." These were disciplined children who knew not to "step out of line" whether in school or out of school. The educational philosophy of the parents was a simple one, the teacher teaches, the child learns. There really was no need to go beyond that level because the parents, the children as students, and the teachers knew their roles and were ready, willing, and able to meet the obligations of those roles.

When speaking of a school as a gathering place, a community within a community,

Don Paolo addresses the role of education. Are we to educate people to make a living or are we to educate people to make a life? Don Paolo seems to believe that the purpose of education, particularly the education provided by the parents outside of school is to instruct their children in the making of a life. William Sloan Coffin, Jr. asks, "How many educators of all kinds consider the great implacabilities of human life, death and suffering, fate and sin, worthy of study? Why, most are paid to avoid these issues, as we educate not to make a life but to make a living." (Coffin, p. 4). Don Paolo's students' parents, by not instructing their children, are educating them in a way to make a living, that living happens to be welfare and unemployment. By tolerating behavior and even advocating behavior that for Don Paolo's parents would be incomprehensible, the parents in the district are instructing their children in a different set of values. These values are clearly in conflict with the values lived by earlier generations in the district. Unless these differences in values can be reconciled, then the building of community cannot begin. These conflicting values are reflected most often in the narratives provided by the community and its' members, narratives expressed as fables in the fables of the gardens, the hot water tank, and the banana split.

Don Paolo remarked that many of his students made no connection of the relationship between education and reward at all. Noting that he had lost a number of students to the prisons and even death, one imagines a group of lost souls. Here the danger is no longer that the students in the district have lost their academic souls, but that one-day they may have no souls to lose. Coffin states that it is "Small wonder that higher education paradoxically has never enjoyed a level of performance so high and a level of

influence so low, influence on students of a nation which as a whole knows even less than its educators where to look for meaning.” (Coffin, p. 5). If students in higher education happen to know less than the educators about where to look for meaning, how much less do the students in a distressed district know about where to find meaning in education or in their lives? Nietzsche stated that “if a man has a why for his life, then he can bear with almost any how.” (Coffin, p. 3). In order to provide Don Paolo’s students with a why for their lives to bear the hows of a third world environment, the meaning of education and learning must be made clear to them. Don Paolo urges the parents to provide their children with learning experiences so they can lead meaningful lives. These meaningful lives should be modeled after meaningful lives lived by the parents. A meaningful life may be reflected in something as simple as the tending of a garden and transferring that teaching onto the children so they can tend their own gardens. A meaningful life led by the parents becomes a necessary but not sufficient condition for the proper education of the children. Coupled with the proper financial resources and proper facilities, in the words of Don Paolo, ‘then you’ve really got something.’”

The interpretation - late for dinner (second interview)

Don Paolo wanted to speak to me of the role of education in this interview and he began by explaining the idea of development. As a community of parents, the district was failing to provide the education and development of their children. In the stories of disciplining parents, discipline that by contemporary standards would be considered severe and even illegal, Don Paolo told of parents who were concerned with the development of

their children.

In something as simple as being on time for dinner, these parents were telling their children that they needed to be respectful of others, to be accountable, to do what you were expected to do. The meal is a very symbolic event in the family. It is a communal celebration of togetherness and solidarity. The meal represents the nurturing act. In many ways, in ethnic families and especially in Don Paolo's Italian family, the preparation and sharing of the meal is an act of profound intimacy. It is an ultimate act of love. The act of sharing the meal and the preparation of that meal are ways for the mother to say to the family that they are loved and nurtured. The father who has worked to provide the food for the preparation of the meal says that he also loves and nurtures his family. To share the meal together with the family is an act of the sharing of the love and commitment that the family members have for each other. To be late for dinner is to reject the love and nurturing of the family. It is an act that says that their love is not accepted or required; it is an act of rejection and disrespect not to be tolerated. In the ethnic families of the milltowns of the Pittsburgh area, one loved God and their family in that order. That was the rule. There would be no excuse for failing to comply with the rules. The final result was that there would be no difficulties with the children, order was established in the household because children were taught respect for the family, respect for their parents, respect for others and respect for themselves.

Contrast this example with the perceptions that Don Paolo had of school boards. Rather than acting like the parents who would set down absolute rules and standards of conduct, the school boards often act like unruly children who do not view themselves as

accountable to the community or students. No order results in this community and respect is diminished. The end of self-respect brings the death of self-restraint. The community suffers, as individuals cannot conduct themselves according to the rules of the community. Without self-restraint, chaos results.

Perhaps the school boards act like parents who fail to set exemplary standards for their children. It is not important to be respectful of the mother and daughters who toiled to prepare the meal, it was not important to show love and respect for the community. What was important now is self-indulgence, the perks of the position, and using the position on the school board to move to another position of political power. Again, the result is chaos for the community family.

Don Paolo views it as incredible and untenable that educators have such limited input to the educational process. Citing as an example the story of the surgeon and the transfer of experiential knowledge about surgical techniques, Don Paolo spoke of a standard of authority and credentials. These credentials are without dispute in the professional community and in the community at large. No one other than a professional with the appropriate credentials is qualified to speak regarding matters of professional procedure.

He contrasts that standard of professional practice with the educational community. Politicians decide policy without input from educators and often when educators provide input regarding the educational process, the public overrules them. Don Paolo laments this unfortunate circumstance and cites this practice as one of the reason why educational policy is unfocused and seems to vacillate all over the

philosophical map. Lacking a base knowledge, the door is then open for the public to enter the educational policy arena with simplistic solutions to complicated problems. In their frustration with perceived failures of public education, the public is willing to try almost anything else. Research and scholarship have little or no value in the face of public opinion which states, ‘What the hell I care about your dissertation? I don’t want my kid to learn that garbage.’”

The interpretation - My father’s name / Whitewash the cellar / killing the hog (fourth interview)

Don Paolo statement about his father’s name is a very important example of the value of God in the life of this generation. “When I go to school, I carry my father’s name. Within that name there is some pride. Whatever I do in that school, my father’s name is being used. When I put my name on a piece of paper to take a test, my father’s name is being used. My behavior in that school, my father’s name is being used. I was taught that at home.” It is certain that he was taught respect for himself and his father’s name in this example. What is also apparent is the deep religious conviction that was part of the values shared in the community during his youth. I understood his statement to refer to his father, but perhaps he was referring at the same time to his Father, God.

“When I go to school, I carry my Father’s name. Within that name there is some pride. Whatever I do in that school, my Father’s name is being used. When I put my name on a piece of paper to take a test, my Father’s name is being used. My behavior in that school, my Father’s name is being used. I was taught that at home.” To not succeed, to not give



your best was not only a disgrace to your father's name, it was a sin against your Father as well. This value was similar to the argument advanced by the Puritans, that success in a calling honored God.

Discipline is one of the values which Don Paolo's parents valued and instilled in him. He makes note of such discipline in the narrative of the son neglecting to whitewash the cellar and of the narrative of the two boys told to kill the hog. While the punishment of the characters in the narratives may have been extreme, for the time, and for the environment, it was not extreme. The message to the sons was "you have a job to do, see that it gets done." There are no excuses.

Don Paolo maintains that the reason that his students lack discipline is because the parents have not shown them how to live a disciplined life. The parents lack discipline because the parents do not work and have not shown the children how to work. In the example of the Amish, Don Paolo shows the importance of work in their culture and the heritage knowledge passed from generation to generation. In his example of the garden, Don Paolo demonstrates the importance of the dignity of labor. Through the discipline of planting the garden, one is able to nurture and sustain the family and the children. It is a disciplined act of love and caring. Love of the family and responsibility toward them is a basic value in the narratives of Don Paolo. The narratives expressed today, in the view of Don Paolo, are not narratives of discipline, love or caring, but narratives of sloth and indifference.

The interpretation - Washing clothes (fifth interview)

In this interview as in other interviews, Don Paolo speaks of work and the lessons learned through hard labor. Although he had parents who cared deeply about him and a mother who would be happy to wash his clothes even though he was miles away, Don Paolo's father knew that if his son was to succeed, he must work and be responsible for his actions.

A direct view of this narrative might be, if your clothes are dirty, then wash them. The dirty clothes might represent any problem that a student faces. The desired outcome in this case is represented by the clean clothes. If you want clean clothes, then do what you need to do to get clean clothes. Only you can accomplish that goal, accept responsibility for the fact that if your clothes are dirty, you are the one who made the choice out of free will to let them stay dirty.

Another view of this narrative is that of the educational and learning process. If you are to become an educated person, then you must wash away your ignorance as one washes dirty clothes. Clean clothes represent the value of presenting yourself in the best possible way, as the best that you can become. The process of washing the clothes is representative of the educational process. There are to be certain failures, as Don Paolo failed in his first attempt at washing clothes, but out of necessity, he tried again until he learned how to wash clothes properly. In the educational process, we will fail also. Out of necessity, we need to continue to try to educate ourselves to wash away the dirt of ignorance until like our clothes, our mind represents the best that we can become.

## FABLES OF HERITAGE KNOWLEDGE

### The interpretation - the banana split (second interview)

The narrative of the banana split was one of the more remarkable of the narratives told by Don Paolo. In the narrative of the banana split, we are told of a tale of delayed gratification, for Don Paolo did not receive the banana split for some time. Delayed gratification likely was a value held highly by Don Paolo's father. As soon as Don Paolo received payment from his father for helping in the father's business, Don Paolo's father took him to a local bank to start a savings account. Perhaps the father thought that the reward would even appear sweeter if you had to wait longer to receive it. Don Paolo, on the other hand, appears to have lost all hope for attaining the banana split, and when it finally was obtained, it had little value or interest for him.

The banana split narrative also tells us of changing values between generations. Don Paolo felt that it was not unreasonable to have a banana split where his father may have felt that it was an unnecessary luxury. Why is it necessary to have a banana split when an ice cream cone would have been just as good? Perhaps to Don Paolo's father, the banana split may have represented a luxury that was too extravagant for a family of his income level. The banana split may have represented living beyond their modest means.

It is curious that Don Paolo's father ordered the banana split with two spoons. The two spoons represented sharing the rewards between father and son, a family splitting the sweet rewards of their success after many years. No wonder the father viewed Don Paolo's inability to eat the banana split as the act of an ungrateful son. Don Paolo could not eat it simply because it was too cold for banana splits.

There are other interpretations of this story. These interpretations concern the Protestant ethic as described earlier by Max Weber and the cultural contradictions of capitalism as argued by Daniel Bell. In the Protestant ethic, we are encouraged to carefully guard our material possessions and to save and invest our monetary possessions. This is a view likely shared by Don Paolo's father. Don Paolo, on the other hand, is a product of Daniel Bell's capitalism. The capitalism of a young Don Paolo is capitalism fueled not by investment, but by consumerism. The Protestant ethic advances the notion that success in an undertaking is a sign of being favored by God, the capitalism of consumerism is quite the opposite and is evidenced by the violation of the commandment to honor one's father. By not eating the banana split, Don Paolo's father may have viewed his son as violating a commandment and saw him as ungrateful. Ungrateful sons do no honor to their fathers. A similar theme was repeated in the fable of my father's name.

In yet another view, Don Paolo's desired outcome, the banana split, is unattainable. Failing to achieve that outcome since it was perceived as beyond his control reduced the efficacy of Don Paolo and he abandoned the goal. He had completely forgotten about the banana split. So thoroughly was this goal abandoned that, even at the age of 13 when he could have purchased the banana split with money earned from helping his father, Don Paolo did not pursue that goal. The banana split no longer mattered and he had quit trying. One might expect that Sennett's father and son, Rico and Enrico, in his book *The Corrosion of Character* would view the narrative of the banana split in a similar fashion; father and son having different views and interpretations (Sennett, 1998).

This narrative has relevance to Don Paolo's students as well. If a desired outcome such as the banana split or academic success is not attained, after a period of time, the students give up trying even though the goals are attainable. The students view the goal as attainable by others, such as Don Paolo's Little League friends, the goal is just not attainable by them. A more sinister view is that which views the parents as preventing the child from attaining the desired goal. While it may be correctly argued that the parents may just be preventing the child from attaining a goal that has little or no value in the development of the child, the child may not be making a connection between performance and reward. In fact, since Don Paolo had commented about how hard he worked and often stated that he had to work harder than his friends, Don Paolo may have viewed the system as prejudicial, with no connection between performance and reward in this case. He worked hard and got no reward while his friends who worked less hard got the ultimate prize, a banana split. Another view is that Don Paolo's father was preparing his son for the ultimate lesson in life, that life is not fair, and that often the reward comes very late in the game, if it comes at all. This lesson is the lesson that has defined the career of Don Paolo as a superintendent. He was to encounter unfair situations throughout his career and would often prevail in the face of adversity. As educators, we need to remember that the banana split would one day be forthcoming. We just don't know when.

The interpretation - making prosciutto (interview three)

According to a July 1998 subcommittee report prepared by the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations for the House of Representatives Committee on Education

and The Workforce titled Education at a Crossroads: What Works and What's Wasted in Education Today, parental involvement in the education of their children is one of the characteristics of a successful school and school system. This report found that 64 percent of eighth graders in urban districts and 42% of eighth graders in non-urban districts attend schools where school officials report that lack of parent involvement is a moderate or serious problem (p. 5). The report cites an example of a private school, Our Lady of the Gardens located in the south side of Chicago, which defied the socio-economic and environmental factors to perform at exceptionally high levels. One of the reasons for success, according to the principal of the school was strong parental involvement (p. 9).

Aliquippa has a large number of single parent households. The House report cites research that reveals the relationship between single parent households and student failures. Citing the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, The Condition of Education 1997 report (p. 205), the House report states that:

- ! Children in single parent families are more likely to experience early school problems than children in two parent families.
- ! In 1995, 3 to 5 year olds living with two biological or adoptive parents were more likely to have been read to three or more times a week, to have been told a story once a week, or to have visited the library in the previous month than 3 to 5 year olds living with one biological or adoptive parent.
- ! First and second graders aged 6 to 8 living with one biological or adoptive parent were more likely to experience academic problems and to have their parents report that they were academically below the middle of their class than those students

living with two biological or adoptive parents.

- ! Citing from Debra Dawson's research (1991), twenty-two percent of children living with divorced mothers must repeat a grade and 30 percent of children born to a single parent must repeat a grade. Only 12 percent of children from two - parent families have to repeat a grade in school.

It seems that Don Paolo had that report in mind when he stated that the real problem, even though the district was poor, was the parents and their lack of, in his opinion, proper values. That foundation, which provides the respect for learning, is illustrated in the narrative of deboning and preparing the prosciutto.

Preparation of prosciutto represents a significant amount of skill and heritage knowledge passed from one generation to the next. Don Paolo's parents and his environment provided respect for knowledge and respect for himself and his culture. The environment provided teachers to guide him on the journey to acquire the necessary knowledge. While some of the knowledge passed on to Don Paolo was inaccurate, this knowledge still represented a link to a cultural foundation. This cultural foundation was steeped in values that were constant in the life of Don Paolo. Since prosciutto is an expensive delicacy, the proper preparation of the prosciutto represents a special act of love and nurturing toward the family. The special care taken to prepare such a delicacy reflects the special care given to the members of the family. When Don Paolo spoke of his quest for this particular piece of knowledge, he spoke with intensity and passion. It was important for him to understand this process. After having gained that knowledge, he spoke with pride of having completed another Ph.D. "The fact of the matter is that it's

knowledge, I have it and you don't." Statements such as these reflect the pride that he had in his accomplishment. This was a pride, not borne out of self-aggrandizement, but a pride borne out of order and control. Without this knowledge, there could be only a ham at best and at worst a ruined ham. With this knowledge, you can prepare a delicacy. It is the knowledge that allows you to gain control over the outcome of your effort. Without the knowledge, it is futile even to try to prepare the prosciutto, but with the knowledge that Don Paolo had acquired, he could not only make a prosciutto, he could fashion a life. This life would be based upon values and knowledge deeply rooted in generations past. By gaining the knowledge of the preparation of the prosciutto, Don Paolo was able to correctly align himself with his origins.

If a ham is a good thing, then a prosciutto is the ultimate state of development of a ham. In another view of the narrative of the prosciutto, Don Paolo acts as a caring, loving, stern parent. The prosciutto represents a child. The quest for knowledge about how to properly prepare the prosciutto represents the quest for knowledge of how to prepare a child for life. Luigi represents the grandparents and parents of Don Paolo, people who would teach him the proper way to prepare for a larger role in life. Without preparation, the child may grow up to be something good, but ordinary. Without the care of the parent, the child could be ruined. However, with the proper preparation, the child can grow to be something extraordinary, something rare, a delicacy. The process represents the process of preparing the child for a significant role in life. Exposure to spices and the curing process represents the lessons and time that it takes for a child to mature to its full potential. It is necessary to follow the process closely because of the



level of expectation of the preparer. When one prepares prosciutto, the standards for the final product are extremely high. Similarly, the rules in the household of Don Paolo's generation were strict and the level of expectation for the children were extremely high. The pressure that a prosciutto is exposed to in the process of preparation represents the pressure and demands that a parent places on their child. At times the pressure can be intense and maybe even painful, but like the life of Don Paolo and his peers, the pressure ultimately transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary.

The role of Don Paolo as parent and the ham as the child can be extended to the community, the parents and their children. Just as Don Paolo had no knowledge of how to prepare the prosciutto, the parents in the community have no knowledge of how to raise their children to assume larger roles in life. Since these children are not exposed to any particular value system, a curing process, their development is limited. While the prosciutto is carefully watched and kept in the proper environment to cure properly, the children in Aliquippa are exposed to an extremely harsh environment, often with parents who do not care. There will be a few children who make it through, but many more will be ruined in the process.

Don Paolo's continual references to the local superintendents, the legislature, the Governor, and the Secretary of Education as not caring, indicate the level of frustration that he has experienced in his attempts to solve the problems in the distressed districts. An examination of the demographic and income data cited earlier, reveal the extent of the economic damage done to the district and its inhabitants during the 1980s. This district and others like Aliquippa are similar both demographically and economically. Aliquippa

and other districts cannot support the public education process financially. While there is no doubt that the district, like any other district, is not perfect in its administration of financial affairs, even if it were to perform at an extremely high level of financial administration, it would still not be on a par financially with other districts. The district, and the districts surrounding Aliquippa, are placed in a difficult situation. While neighboring districts may want to help, a notion disputed by Don Paolo, they have no reason to help other than altruism. To divert resources to Aliquippa, or to share resources with Aliquippa would be viewed as diverting resources from the children of the taxpayers in the neighboring districts. Any proposal to divert any resources away from the district raising the funds would be viewed as an unconscionable act. Some of the neighboring districts examined a merger with Aliquippa on at least a cursory level, but none felt that their district would benefit from such an arrangement, so the notion of a merger was rejected. Aliquippa would have to stand on its own and solve its own problems. The fact that the district lacked the financial resources to solve its problems was of no concern to neighboring districts except to the extent that Aliquippa disturbed their contentment. Don Paolo recognized that his district and his students disturbed the contentment of those in neighboring districts. He had accepted their rejection by stating “We don’t want to go anyplace where we are not wanted. But give me the resources to keep these kids contained and I can educate them in the proper way.” Neighboring districts may not want his students, but Don Paolo wanted to care for them and to nurture them. He lacked the proper financial resources and parental support to accomplish the task.

Failing in his attempts to rebuild the district, Don Paolo never the less succeeded

with certain individual students. These successful students represented evidence to Don Paolo that, even though the district was poor, they could have much better success academically if parents would support the educational process. Parents of successful students shared the same values as Don Paolo's parents and the parent's of a previous generation. They demanded that their students go to school to learn and the parents would accept nothing less than children with a serious of purpose toward the learning process. Even in a difficult environment, students could be successful with caring, loving parents and teachers who care about them. These students made it through the process to become rare delicacies.

#### The interpretation - Accountability (second interview)

In this fable, Don Paolo learned that there were consequences for your actions and that he needed to be responsible and accountable. He also learned that there would be no excuses for not getting the job done. Responsibility and accountability and consequences for your actions are values that Don Paolo felt are lacking in the community today and that the parents were failing to pass on these values to their children. These parents were failing to educate their children in these values and consequently were failing to develop their children as responsible citizens. By failing to pass on the heritage knowledge of hard work and accountability to their children, the parents are not teaching their children. The children have consequently been deprived of their inheritance.

An interpretation of this fable might be that Don Paolo represents his students, the failure to do his job is the same as any other student who fails to apply himself in the pursuit of his studies. As the time comes to receive the reward for the efforts of learning,

Don Paolo, like his students finds to their consternation that there is no reward forthcoming. In order to gain any reward, these students must work harder and longer to gain what would have been theirs in the beginning. By not acquiescing to the demands of the student, Don Paolo's father acts as the teacher who must teach the student a difficult lesson. Don Paolo, again like many of his students, perhaps has learned more from his failure than he would have learned from any successes.

The interpretation - the athletes (interview three)

The narrative about athletics at Aliquippa is a narrative about efficacy. When Don Paolo describes the athletes at Aliquippa, he describes athletes who know that they are in control of the outcome of the game. They have had a history of success or mastery experience, in the view of Bandura. They also know that those that have preceded them and others like them have succeeded in athletics, sharing in that vicarious experience. The verbal persuasion from the coaches is often rough and demanding. The athletes respond because they know that they are capable of producing results at a high level of proficiency.

The experiences of the athletes at Aliquippa and successful athletes at wealthier schools are similar in several ways. Successful athletes know that they can succeed, that they perceive that they are in control of the desired outcome. Athletes at Aliquippa draw their vicarious experiences and mastery experiences from athletics. In fact, athletics may be their only positive source of these types of experiences. Athletes at the wealthier districts can also draw upon mastery and vicarious experiences as well as the verbal persuasion of coaches, peers, and parents. However, these athletes may also be able to draw upon mastery and vicarious experiences in fields other than athletics. These types of

athletes may also be successful academically, or at least it is likely that their school district is more successful academically than Aliquippa. Since these athletes are from wealthier districts, they are also sharing with the economic success of their parents, an experience missing with the athletes from Aliquippa. In fact, the athletes in a wealthier district most likely have seen success many times in their lives. Their lives may be virtually surrounded by the symbols of success, at least materially. The houses they live in, the presence of parents, the cars they drive, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the school they go to, the vacations they enjoy, the professions of the parents, and the neighborhood they live in all provide ample symbols of success for these athletes. They are part of a successful community. There is no reason why they should not share in and add to that success. As stated by Don Paolo, the parents and the environment are “pumping success into these kids heads. In their heads, they want to be a winner.”

The interpretation - the construction of the wall (interview three)

Don Paolo’s references to making a life and building upon knowledge were values which were reflected in his affection for construction. The story of the well constructed wall and the lavish athletic facility revealed the values of hard work, perseverance and working to achieve a goal. The admiration shown for the workmanship shown in the joints in the mortar showed his appreciation for the workmen showing pride in themselves, their work product and their craft. These workmen showed respect for the knowledge they possessed and showed respect for the craftsmen who taught them how to perform such highly skilled work. Don Paolo clearly subscribed to the same value set as the workmen and respected them for the skills they developed and the knowledge they

possessed.

Yet, Don Paolo felt that he had little in common with the superintendent, a fellow educator with a terminal degree. The superintendent claimed some credit for his role in building the facility, but Don Paolo felt that they had little in common. More importantly, Don Paolo had little respect for the superintendent because the superintendent merely helped to finance the project by setting some of the annual budget aside for the wall fund. The superintendent did not assist in the building by working on the project. Unlike former athletes who share a certain comradery based upon shared experiences, Don Paolo and the superintendent of this district had no shared experiences. Since the superintendent had not been through the same or similar difficulties as Don Paolo, they had little in common. In Don Paolo's view, there would be little common ground between him and the superintendent. Although they were both educators who served a common god, Don Paolo felt that they had few values which they held in common. The superintendent did not want to hear about the problems of educating in districts with circumstances like Don Paolo's. Don Paolo, perhaps after years of rejection and failure to interest others in his problem, did not try or did not expect to establish a relationship with the superintendent. In fact, he lacked the efficacy to attempt to achieve a relationship.

The importance of construction in the life of Don Paolo was evident when he gave me a tour of his home. Don Paolo's neighborhood is a neighborhood that one might expect in a wealthier district. The homes are large, well maintained, landscaped nicely, with manicured lawns. It is a neighborhood that might be mistaken for a neighborhood in a prosperous community. Like Don Paolo's students, his home represents a success story

surrounded by failures. His home reflects his pride and hard work, it reflects how he has built his life.

While Don Paolo has obviously had opportunities to leave Aliquippa to reside in one of the wealthier districts, he chose to stay. Staying in Aliquippa when the community has collapsed has cost Don Paolo a tremendous amount in housing value. He has suggested that he would not even be able to “give his house away” although if it were located elsewhere, it would be a prime piece of property. Selling the property at greatly reduced prices would be a financial burden for Don Paolo, costing him tens of thousands of dollars. Selling the property at a loss would not be the worst loss Don Paolo would have to incur however. The home is a symbol of his life, his values reified. By remaining in Aliquippa, Don Paolo continues to affirm those values, to defy the forces around him, forces which seek to destroy those values. He is resolute in his purpose, but the damage caused by this constant assault is clear, he is growing tired of the fight. Don Paolo is a warrior who knows that the odds are overwhelmingly against him and those like him. This is a battle which cannot be won, but is a battle which he refuses to lose.

The interpretation - The Amish (fourth interview)

Don Paolo maintains that the reason that his students lack discipline is because the parents have not shown them how to live a disciplined life. The parents lack discipline because the parents do not work and have not shown the children how to work. In the example of the Amish, Don Paolo shows the importance of work in their culture and the heritage knowledge passed from generation to generation. In his example of the garden,

Don Paolo demonstrates the importance of the dignity of labor. Through the discipline of planting the garden, one is able to nurture and sustain the family and the children. It is a disciplined act of love and caring. Love of the family and responsibility toward them is a basic value in the narratives of Don Paolo. The narratives expressed today, in the view of Don Paolo, are not narratives of discipline, love or caring, but narratives of sloth and indifference.

The interpretation - peppers and eggs (fifth interview)

The narratives of lunches of peppers and egg sandwiches is not a narrative of a quaint cultural or ethnic custom. Peppers and egg sandwiches on home made bread are not prized by people of Don Paolo's generation as a delicacy, but as symbols of love and nurturing through the act of baking of bread, and symbols fortification of the family and hope in the bread and the eggs. It is the symbolism that makes a rather mundane sandwich enjoyable. The old woman understood that the act of making sandwiches for her son and the workmen was more than an act of providing nutritious food, but an act of nurturing and respect for their labor. Her respect for their labor was clearly shown as she spoke of raising a family on \$50 a day, about one half what these men were paid. By raising a family on what her husband made, she showed respect for his labor and what he was trying to accomplish for the family. The old woman was startled at the disrespect shown to these men by their wives and the disrespect shown by these men to themselves. The workmen did not show respect for their work because they did not have their lunch made, even by themselves. The men hung their heads because they did not show respect for their



labor and neither did their wives

The Interpretation - pillars of the house (seventh interview)

The vignette of the pillars of the house contains more depth and meaning regarding his attitude toward the parents in the district. Don Paolo's house is unusual in that it was built in the style of many houses in Europe. The exterior walls are two feet thick and that dimension is reflected in the size of the exterior pillars at the addition he built. The pillars are solid, stable supports for that end of the house and although they required considerable work to put in place, require little work to maintain their appearance and strength. With some paint, some brushes, and a few hours labor, the pillars remain strong and continually look new. His pillars "are perfect." Contrast his pillars with the pillars of the newer residents in Aliquippa whose "porch[es] are caved in." The pillars of their houses were solid and strong, "plumb, level and square" in the words of Don Paolo. Yet, they let these strong pillars decline until they could not support anything. The pillars are like the values of Don Paolo and his parents. They are strong values, sturdy and solid, with enough strength to build a structure that will be of lasting beauty. Structures with strong pillars would support the structure which would protect and nurture the occupants for generations. His reference to the Jones School is no less significant for its importance as a pillar of the old neighborhood, "the finest school in the county." The school represented a strong pillar for the community since it was the first school that the children of the residents attended. Jones School reinforced the values that the children were taught at home and nurtured and protected those students as they grew and learned. Like the

pillars of the houses in the old neighborhood, it was not maintained and had to be torn down. "They destroyed it." Don Paolo's comments that the old neighborhood where he grew up was a poor, but nice place to live like West Aliquippa is perhaps the most revealing about what he views as wrong with the district. These poor communities consisted of small, well maintained houses and most had meticulous gardens. Many had only two bedrooms but the people who built these houses raised families, some of them quite large, in these small houses. The children eventually grew and raised families of their own. Since many of these children were better educated than their parents, and had larger incomes, they moved out of the old neighborhoods to live closer to where they worked or to move into a bigger house. As the families left the old neighborhood, they left the small but well maintained houses behind, almost as a legacy to the families that followed. If the families that followed maintained themselves and the houses as well as they did, these new families too could prosper and become upwardly mobile. It would require work, but these new families had what they needed to live comfortably.

However, the houses were not maintained. Like the lives of the residents, they fell into disrepair. The beauty of the community faded. What seems to anger most of the former residents of the old neighborhood most is that the new families destroyed what they and their parents had built. That senseless destruction was more than a destruction of property. When the property was destroyed, it represented a destruction and rejection of the values which they and their parents had worked so hard to establish. For many former residents, the destruction of the old neighborhood represented nothing less than an attempt to destruct the virtues of them and their parents. These former residents would

have little sympathy for the current residents and would want "nothing to do with that nonsense." They viewed the new residents of the old neighborhood as people without virtues. A racial and cultural void began to reinforce itself between the two groups.

The interpretation - the refrigerator (eighth interview)

The narrative of the refrigerators represented more than material accumulation of food. What the refrigerators represented was a symbolic storehouse of pride, caring, and love. The food represented the nurturing of life, and respect for life, your own life and the life of those in the family. Having a full refrigerator indicated that you had your priorities in order. You may not be wealthy, but you are surviving and giving your family what they needed to grow stronger and to be nurtured so they might exceed your own accomplishments. Many people from the old neighborhood often reminded younger people that you might be poor, but with hard work, you could always eat well and stay clean. Many of the women in the old neighborhood became excellent cooks, preparing all sorts of delicious meals with ingredients and produce from the gardens. They might have been poor, but they would not have a poverty of skill in their kitchen. They would build wealth with their skill as cooks and demonstrate that skill to their family daily. Don Paolo pointed out almost venomously that the kitchens were now filthy, "God damned dirty, bugs are everywhere." The filth in the kitchen spoke directly to the children about how the parents did not care. There would be no clean proper place to display their love and caring for their children. There would be no love or caring to display, at least not enough to be willing to work to show your love for and your pride in your children.

For ethnic families, the kitchen is the heart and soul of the home, the spirit of the family lives in the kitchen. A dirty kitchen becomes like a soul in a state of sin, it lacks grace and the perfect love of a parent to the child. The kitchen constantly in use becomes soiled and then cleaned as love and spirit emerges from the effort that soiled it. The love of a parent is not always perfect in its demonstration daily, but there is effort to produce something from that soul daily and it often becomes soiled in the process. The love and spirit that emerges from those acts of love restore the cleanliness of the kitchen and the state of the soul as the parent repents from the imperfection of the act and promises to try to remain without imperfections. Cleaning the kitchen becomes like the act of reconciliation, the kitchen and the soul have been restored to a perfect state.

This does not mean that a clean kitchen which remains clean from lack of use is much better than a dirty kitchen. If a kitchen remains clean because it has not been used, it becomes like a soul which has not grown in grace and love, it is a soul which has become sterile and lifeless. There may be no sin in that soul, but there is no spirit there either.

Similarly, as the parents fail to provide for the other needs of their children, the needs for proper clothing, and proper housing, they show how they do not care for their children. It is not the amount of clothing or the magnificence of the house that demonstrates caring and love, it is how the parents care for and maintain what they have, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of their children that matters.

The interpretation - the hot water tank (eighth interview)

In the description of his friend, the successful businessman whose only friend was his wallet is a description of changing community spirit, changing values. It is also about caring as the object of that caring has changed from people to money. His best friend was not a person at all, but was the money in his wallet. In the narrative of the hot water tank, Don Paolo spoke of shared experience and shared values. The need to provide a hot water tank for a neighborhood was a result of a collective effort to achieve a desired outcome. In this case, the outcome benefitted only one member of the community, but all would eventually benefit because they would soon be in need at some time. The acts of individuals, however small, would accomplish nothing in isolation but when combined with the efforts of others, they were able to accomplish something that would not have been possible. The individual acts were demonstrations that individuals cared about the person in need, but the collective act was a demonstration that the person in need mattered to the community. No matter what their financial state, the person in need was treated individually and collectively as a person of value. By providing a meal to those who were there to help, the person in need showed that their friends were important and the person in need was there to provide the nurturing, love and caring that their friends would need because they were important to the person in need and to the community as well.

The simple practice of sharing the produce from the individual gardens without asking for an accounting or questioning is a demonstration of trust. It was also a practice which reinforced the importance of the individual to the collective community and to the individuals in the community. The hard work and pride that these people displayed through their gardens showed how valuable they felt their gardens were to them. By

allowing someone to share from something so valuable without asking or without accounting for it is a profound act of trust in that individual. To allow open and virtually free access to something so valuable to a person as his garden is a demonstration of trust and security in the community. Oddly enough, neither Don Paolo nor any other individual that I knew who lived in or was familiar with his old neighborhood could remember any act of vandalism to any garden. It would seem that their trust in each other was virtually absolute.

Contrasting that feeling with Don Paolo's near contempt that he would not eat a tomato out of their gardens is not a statement of contempt for their gardens or perhaps even these people as individuals, but a statement of contempt for their values and work ethic. The growing of tomatoes was an act of pride for in the old neighborhood because tomatoes were valued for their flavor, and their beauty. To let someone take a tomato from your garden is to let them have free access to something of yours which is valuable. You had trust in them and knew that they would not violate that trust. Perhaps Don Paolo felt that these people in their current state could not provide nurturing to anyone, perhaps they could not be trusted since they could not be trusted to care for their own children. As a result, he would not eat a tomato out of their gardens, if they even had a garden.

The interpretation - crime and punishment (tenth interview)

Durkheim noted that the law reflects the values of society and defines an act as a crime if society condemns the act as harmful to society; the rejection of the act by society

classifies the act as socially evil. However, we have not rejected the act of incompetent parenting as socially evil, even though we may acknowledge that it is harmful to society. Only in the most egregious cases of parental neglect does the law interfere with the parenting process and declare a parent as incompetent and incapable.

Don Paolo's question about whether we are breaking the laws of God or the laws of man is an important question. While we may not be breaking the laws of man, it would seem logical that children are provided to us as a gift from God. If we choose not to care for and love these children, regardless of the law of man, it would appear to be a logical conclusion that we have broken the law of God. If we fail to educate these children as a society, then we do not care for or love them, similarly, we would have broken the law of God.

In an earlier interview, Don Paolo spoke of taking his father's name into the school. As parent's we take our Father's name into our homes and should provide for our children in the same manner as our Father provided for us. Without the love and guidance provided by a parent for a child, Don Paolo's position that what we are doing is a crime against God is inescapable.

The parents of a former generation would provide for their children as their fathers and their Father provided for them. In the ubiquitous stories of the gardens, Don Paolo reflects back to the garden of Eden and perhaps our gardens reflect our desire to recreate that perfect garden in our lives once again. We could try to recreate that time of perfect order in the human life with the recreation of a garden with perfect rows, in perfect order. Like our lives, the garden would reflect the perfect order of the garden of Eden.

## FABLES OF THE EDUCATION PROFESSION

### The Interpretation - Certification (fourth interview)

In this interview, Don Paolo directly addressed the problems of education as a profession. In his examples of the medical and engineering professions, he speaks of the problems with those outside the profession over ruling educational professionals. He laments the fact that such a practice could never in professions like medicine, law, accounting, and architecture because their certifications are protected by the law.

The story of the engineer is a direct analogy. As an engineer is trained to design a facility or a solution to fit the needs of the client, the superintendent is trained to design an educational program to fit the needs of the students. As the engineer has the directives of the profession to determine professional practice and conduct, similarly, the educator has educational training and research to determine professional practice and conduct. The uninformed 'jag off', however, is allowed no voice in the engineering profession. While, like anyone else, they might have an opinion and perhaps even an opportunity to express that opinion, their opinion is simply that, it is opinion and given no credence within the engineering profession. In contrast, the educational professional has to give credence to the opinion of the uninformed and those lacking professional credential.

### Summary of the Fables / Interpretations

A number of themes resonate within the fables of Don Paolo. Among those themes, work and the work ethic, themes of accountability, responsibility, recognizing that there are consequences for one's actions, authority, pride, respect, discipline and



commitment are the most prevalent. These are values which will build and sustain community, but also build and sustain efficacy within that community. “The greatest progress can be made in explaining the development, decline, and restoration of collective efficacy, and how it affects group functioning ... “ (Bandura, 1997, p. 478).

It can be seen within the fables that these values help explain the development of efficacy within a community. When a community shares these values, that sharing helps to sustain the community and sustains the efficacy of the community as a means of order and control. It can also be seen that the absence of these values within a community can contribute to the decline of the community and the efficacy of that same community because no other means of order and control has taken their place.

It is the firm belief of Don Paolo that the restoration of these shared values would help restore the community and as a result restore the efficacy of that community. While the restoration of these values would appear to be a very positive thing for the community, how those values are to be restored is another question. If those values are held in high esteem among the community residents, then it seems unlikely that they as individuals or as a community would abandon those values. Yet, such a thing appears to have occurred.

Within the literature review and within the fables, we can see that there was a whole system of group and community functioning that permitted it to sustain those shared values and sustain their efficacy as a community. When the community experienced economic upheaval and, as shown by the changing demographics of the last census, the members of the community changed. These members perhaps did not share the values of Don Paolo or his parents. Their community was to be and is different.

When work disappeared, it seems that pride and responsibility, accountability, respect for authority, discipline and commitment disappeared with it. Perhaps these values were not driven out by other values, but what we have witnessed is the absence of values. Lacking order and control through the creation and sustaining of fables, the community experiences anomie as suggested by Durkheim. Aliquippa has not become immoral as much as it, as a community, has become amoral.

The fables and their interpretations address the culture of a community and the shared values of that culture. With the community in decline, we see a decline in the culture and the shared values of that culture. The values that made the culture and community prosperous and efficacious no longer exist in the community, or at least they do not exist in the form that they existed previously. It also appears that these old values have been replaced by other values, or at least these old values have not been honored as much in the new community as they have in the old community.

The relevance of economic upheaval can be understood only in relation to the context of the nearly complete disappearance of work from the community. In the decade of the 1980s, according to the census data presented earlier, the total number of employed people decreased by nearly thirty four percent in the community. The total percentage of people between the ages of 18 and 64 decreased only 4 percent, from nearly sixty percent to fifty six percent in that decade, but household income decreased by forty percent. Fewer people worked in that decade, and the compensation from that work decreased dramatically as indicated by the forty percent decrease in household income.

The fables show how a community perceives itself to be in control of its own

destiny through its mastery experiences. The fables of the garden, discipline and commitment, and heritage knowledge all demonstrate mastery. If one masters some part of their experiences, then one can master other experiences. In each of these fables, the community and the individual exercised some control over their experience, even if that control was over themselves.

As indicated by the fables, the parents were able to establish order and control in the family and rarely wavered from those rigid principles. Order and control in the school began with order and control within the family. Similarly, the church served to reinforce that same order and control and the school reinforced the order and control established at home and in the church.

Any school reform measure must address the issue of order and control in the school and why that order and control does not now exist. The role of the parents is essential and a principle tenet of the fables is that the parents have failed their children. The parents have failed their children by not providing for their physical, emotional, or spiritual needs.

In these fables we see a coherent theme of the reinforcement of values. These values are reinforced and repeated in the home life, the industrial life and the educational life of the community. Within the fables of the garden we see the values of hard work and caring established in the home. The first social and organizational unit that the student would encounter would emphasize that work was a highly prized attribute, valued and rewarded in the community. Students and children were made aware of the dignity of work in their lives and the lives of the community.

The values of work, discipline and commitment, respect for authority and accountability are shown in the fables of discipline and commitment. These fables show how the values that were established in the home life were reinforced in the educational life and in the industrial life of the community. Parental authority and accountability were values established in the home and reinforced in the school in the fable of ‘Smoking in the Boy’s Room.’ With the fables of No Excuses and No Excuses / No Fear, the values of respect for authority and obedience were valued in the home and reinforced in the school. Such values were doubly reinforced when they were enforced in the school and then reinforced in the home.

Similarly, the values of work which was certainly enforced in the industrial life and was reinforced in the home life and then repeated in the educational life of the community, were shown in the fables of my father’s name, white wash the cellar, killing the hog, and washing clothes. The fables tell of a community where a strong work ethic was established at home and in the industrial life and transferred to the educational life of the community. This work ethic was then reinforced continually throughout each of the separate lives of the community, the home life, the industrial life and the educational life.

In the fables of heritage knowledge we see the continual reinforcement of values within the separate home life, industrial life and educational life of the community. Values of the work ethic, respect for learning, responsibility, instruction, caring and nurturing, pride, commitment and community are established in the home life in the fables of the banana split, the athletes, peppers and eggs, the refrigerator, reinforced in the educational life of making prosciutto and the Amish, and in the industrial life in the fables of the hot

water tank, the pillars of the house, the banana split, and making prosciutto. Through these fables we see that many aspects of the lives of the community serve to reinforce the values desired by the community.

## CHAPTER VI

### A WORLD VIEW

It was important that an historical and theoretical framework be established prior to the research if we are to understand and impart meaning to the narratives of Don Paolo. As stated earlier, narrative helps a community derive meaning from their past and to give meaning to their future. In order to derive meaning from the past, we must understand the historical events that helped form the community.

Likewise, we must establish a theoretical framework of prior knowledge for the narrative if we are to impart meaning to the narratives juxtaposed against that frame. We have attempted to do that within the psychological framework of the self-efficacy component of social learning theory, particularly mastery experience. As Bandura (Bandura, 1977. p. 80) has shown, mastery experience is one of the best ways to create efficacy.

The decline of the Distressed Seven communities and Aliquippa in particular, can be related to economic upheaval. Knowledge of the formation of capitalism during the Industrial Era and Gilded Age of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will allow us to understand the economic upheaval of the 1980s. That understanding requires a theoretical knowledge of the forces which helped to shape capitalism at that time. It is necessary as well to understand the sociological forces and the cultural forces which shaped the Pittsburgh region. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the historical framework, the sociological framework, the economic and psychological framework are useful tools to assist in imparting meaning to the narratives.

### **Psychology, History and Homestead / Discipline And Commitment**

Within the psychological framework and primarily based upon the theoretical framework of self-efficacy provided by Bandura, we see that the best source of self-belief information is mastery experience. Of particular interest is the research of Elder and Liker (1982) on women who lived through the Great Depression. Those who had some adaptive resources emerged more resourceful and self-assured, those who lacked those adaptive resources emerged with a sense of ineffectualness and resignation. This research is relevant to the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and the community of Aliquippa, in particular, since these areas were devastated in the Great Depression.

However, because of the adaptive resources available to the members of the community, they were able to survive and perhaps emerge more resourceful and self-assured. Some of the adaptive resources available to the people of this region included the people themselves as evidenced by Bodnar, Simon, and Weber's account of the residents on Cedarville Street in Bloomfield blocking off the street and serving community dinners so everyone had something to eat (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, p. 218). Other adaptive resources included the communal and private gardens created by the residents of the area. Evidence of this adaptive resource was shown in Don Paolo's fables of the gardens, the communal gardens, and Joe's garden. Joe's father summed up the necessity of the adaptive resources when he questioned his son. His father asked "How much of this can you eat?"

The necessity of adaptive resources and commitment to community was shown in the historical data, particularly the events at Homestead in 1892. Greenwald, *Women and*

*Class, City at the Point*, stated that the Carnegie Steel Company overwhelmed the workers so powerfully that unionization was sidetracked for thirty years (Greenwald, *Women and Class, City at the Point*. p. 250). In fact, it was forty-five years after Homestead, in 1937, that workers from the J&L works in Aliquippa won a Supreme Court case that established their right to organize and bargain collectively. The people who struggled for forty-five years against the powerful corporations, laboring under inhuman conditions as shown in Bodnar, Simon, and Weber (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, 1982) and shown in Walker's account (Walker, C. R., 1990) of a steelworker in Aliquippa, were the same people who became the parents of people like Don Paolo.

It is then no surprise that people who survived Big Steel and the Great Depression understood and valued the work ethic so highly. These were tough people who accepted no excuses for failure, even if it took forty five years to get the job done. The fables of Don Paolo titled no excuses, and no excuses, no failure bear evidence to this particular value.

The working conditions in the steel mills were shown in the Pittsburgh Survey, shown in the research of Bodnar, Simon, and Weber (Bodnar, Simon, and Weber, 1982), and the accounts of Krause (Krause, 1992) in his research of Homestead and Walker's account (Walker, C. R., 1990). Although these conditions were tough, they produced a group of people who understood hard work. They also understood that after winning the right to collective bargain, that they could employ that ethic of hard and constant work to their own benefit. This value was passed on to their children through the cultivation of the garden, the baking of bread, making stuffed cabbages, whitewashing the cellar, or killing a



hog. There was work to be done and the children were expected to contribute.

These people kept their houses and gardens in order. The fables of Don Paolo provided ample evidence of the value these people placed on the ethic of hard and constant work. The fables of the pillars of the house, the gardens, white washing the cellar / killing the hog, the construction of the wall, the plot of land, and free rent, all bear evidence to that fact. Don Paolo himself offers testimony to the value of the hard work ethic when he points to the addition on his already sturdy house, his hard work as a student at Fork Union Military Academy and his hard work as a student and athlete in college. He lived that value as a student working toward a masters degree and his doctorate.

The best source of adaptive resources within the community are shown in the fables of heritage knowledge. Within the fable of the banana split, we see the value of delayed gratification, a valuable object lesson for a father to pass on to the son. The fable of accountability is another adaptive resource demonstrating heritage knowledge. This heritage knowledge is not restricted to the knowledge of a craft or a particular cultural learning, but is knowledge of accountability for one's actions or inactions. It is also a valuable object lesson when combined with the lesson of the banana split. While gratification can be delayed, hard work should never be delayed, but pursued with all urgency.

Other examples of adaptive resources shown in the community are revealed in the fables of making prosciutto, peppers and eggs, and the hot water tank. In these fables, Don Paolo illustrates that through hard work, and sharing of knowledge in the community,

one can take something ordinary like ham and transform it into something rare and delicious. Something as mundane as peppers and eggs are bland and even unappealing to some people when eaten separately, but when combined with home made bread, they become a symbol of something nurturing, sustaining and even achievement. Peppers and eggs were a reward and an offering of respect to the workers for their hard work from the old Italian woman.

Adaptive resources made the workers resilient. Krause suggested that “the workers’ movement in Gilded Age Pittsburgh strikes us now as all the more remarkable for its resilience than its weaknesses” (Krause, p. 201). These resilient people who were defeated at Homestead passed on the values and ideals of workers’ rights and collective bargaining to their children who carried on the struggle after them. The children of these defeated workers won the right to collective bargain in the Supreme Court and fifty eight workers who had been fired for union activity at J&L’s Aliquippa works were reinstated. It was obvious that in order for these people to emerge victorious after a crushing defeat at Homestead, and the devastation of the Great Depression, they had to be disciplined and committed. They passed on the value of that discipline and commitment to their children. Discipline and commitment was taught in the home, reinforced at school, and was absolute on the football field. The rewards of such discipline and commitment were shown everywhere, but most visibly in the successful athletic teams in Aliquippa. Other examples of the rewards of discipline and commitment abounded in the scores of successful professionals produced by the educational system in the town. Don Paolo helped illustrate the importance of these values in the fables of discipline and commitment.

The fable of the refrigerator is a complex one, incorporating the value set of an entire community. The full refrigerator shows the value of hard work, discipline and commitment to the family, an individual's first community and social unit. It shows the value of delayed gratification by its physical presence, one had to save some money to be able to afford the refrigerator. The food in the refrigerator was a product of the hard work of the parents and the product of the gardens. The food itself was a symbol of a father's (Father's) love for his children. The food was also a symbol of pride for a job well done. Hard work at the local mills earned a decent wage and the benefits of that decent wage appeared initially in food for the family and eventually in college degrees for the children of the workers.

The American legal tradition of innocent until proven guilty was lost on the parents in Aliquippa. The home was certainly no democracy, but a dictatorship run by the parents. The unfair treatment afforded Don Paolo in the fables of smoking in the boy's room and drinking beer attest to that fact that you were guilty without trial. You were expected to have enough discipline not to get caught in compromising circumstances where you could be guilty by association. As I was told the story of smoking in the boy's room, I wondered how much discipline was required to restrain using the toilet facilities until you went home for lunch or to football practice. How much commitment was required to play football with a broken leg to show respect for your father? How much respect must a son have for the hard work of the father who gives up a "day's pay" to come to see you play football?

Other fables of discipline and commitment, such as the fables of late for dinner, my

father's name, and washing clothes show the discipline instilled in the children. With children, it takes discipline to return home on time when there are many other distractions and shows a commitment to the family to be where you were expected to be, on time.

### **The Division of Labor, Capitalism, Economics, Culture and the Banana Split**

The historical formation of capitalistic thought was played out in the events at Homestead and shaped by the industrial titans of the steel industry in Pittsburgh. A capitalistic society dominated by the ruling class was one of the products of the Industrial Era and Gilded Age, but another product in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region was social cohesion. Allegheny County was shown to be one of the most fragmented counties in the country and the surrounding counties were no less fragmented. Aliquippa is part of Beaver County, with a population of approximately 186,000 according to the 1990 census (source: <http://ctcoas01.state.pa.us/dced/> available ), and that county is fragmented enough to have created fifteen separate school districts. It is not important to determine that such fragmentation was caused by tight social cohesion within the small communities like Aliquippa, or whether fragmentation caused social cohesion within the communities. What is important though is that fragmentation existed among the communities and still exists today; more importantly, the social cohesion that once existed is now replaced with fragmentation within a distressed community like Aliquippa. The local school districts continue to resist mergers as evidenced by the comments of Don Paolo.

Within Aliquippa, social cohesion of the type that existed when Don Paolo was

growing up no longer exists. This lack of social cohesion as evidenced by a rejection of values, the values expressed in the fables, is what Durkheim meant by anomie (Durkheim, 1984). Rejection of community values, and the failure to replace those values with other positive values, brings about discord within the community. Discord, or lack of social cohesion, is a state where expectations regarding behaviors are unclear or not present; it is a state of anomie or normlessness.

Don Paolo offered evidence of social cohesion and acceptance of community values in many fables. Virtually all of the fables address values common to the community. Yet, anomie is a symbol of the problems facing this community today. It is one of the frustrations of Don Paolo that social cohesion is lacking and that the values of the old Aliquippa are being rejected, or at least not recognized by the current residents of Aliquippa. A common faith, common values, a collective conscience within a community were necessary conditions for a society and the fables clearly show the commonality of faith, values, and collective conscience in the community of old Aliquippa. Present day Aliquippa lacks those characteristics. According to Durkheim (Durkheim, 1984), lacking those characteristics society would deteriorate into a conglomeration of self-seeking individuals with no purpose beyond their own agenda; they have become amoral. While the fables show an Aliquippa of social cohesion, present day Aliquippa is lacking that cohesion. In the interview data, Don Paolo often talks about the politically powerful refusing or unable to provide the community with the adaptive resources it needed to emerge from economic upheaval with a sense of efficacy. The other superintendents of neighboring school districts similarly refused or were unable to assist districts like

Aliquippa. The resulting loss of efficacy and lack of social cohesion between communities and within distressed communities, however, remains.

Whether these people have deteriorated into a conglomeration of self-seeking individuals with no purpose beyond their own agenda is a separate accusation. Don Paolo provided evidence in the interview data that would cause us to suspect that the local politicians were self-seeking as they protected their political re-election chances, the superintendents likewise may be pursuing their own agenda to protect their jobs by not advocating a merger with Aliquippa. Finally, and perhaps most strongly, one might suspect by the interview data, that the school board had deteriorated into a group of self-seeking individuals with no purpose beyond their own agenda, whether that agenda became a few perks of the position, access to power, or a stepping stone to higher political office. No matter what one might suspect, anomie likely had been the result of the lack of social cohesion brought about by the rejection of values and the failure of the newer inhabitants to provide their own set of positive values to replace the old.

Durkheim noticed a paradox in the Division of Labor (Durkheim, 1984), that as labor became more specialized, the individual relied more upon the community for its needs. The fables of the community garden and the hot water tank support this observation. In fact, Don Paolo's friend who maintains that his best friend is now his wallet, points to the creation of another community. It is a community formed by selfish interests, a temporary community whose shared value is the value shown by remuneration. As long as one can recompense community members for their services, they can assist members of the community. When one can no longer pay for services rendered,

membership in the community ends. As Don Paolo's friend became more specialized and successful as a businessman, the more removed he became from the old community with the old values. He had taken his place within a new community, a community with different values, but one upon which he is no less dependent.

Max Weber's (Weber, 1930) exploration of the Protestant ethic and capitalism is made personal in the fable of the banana split. Weber maintained that the Calvinist, and later the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of Pittsburgh caused capitalism to flourish. While Durkheim (Durkheim, 1984) thought that economic activity lacked a moral foundation, Weber found that moral foundation in the religious forces of Calvinism and later Presbyterianism. Historical data from Hays (Hays, 1989) found that provinciality became a distinctive trademark of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region and was deeply rooted in prudish Calvinism. Ingham suggested that Pittsburgh's renown in early years came not from manufacturing but from the strict no nonsense Calvinism of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who comprised the city's elite.

In Weber's view, the capitalist spirit was born out of the Calvinist's need to be one of God's chosen. The evidence of being one of the chosen was seen in the usefulness and success in a calling which brought favor in the eyes of God. One of the precepts of this Calvinism became the accumulation of worldly goods as a symbol of one's accumulation of grace in the eyes of God. Success in a calling, prudent living, and thrift became a way of accumulating worldly goods. The Calvinist and later the Presbyterian believed in the virtue of delayed gratification which became the basis for the accumulation of capital and investment in a growing economy. Delayed gratification, savings and investment

compounded growth and the practitioners grew richer. They grew richer, not only in the eyes of their fellow men, but as they believed, in the eyes of God. The ‘humble sinner’ of the earlier Christian world and in particular the Catholic world, was now shoved aside by the ‘self-confident saint’ of the capitalistic world. Max Weber asserts that these saints had the “comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of the goods of this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence” (Weber, 1930, p. 177).

In the fable of the banana split we see an example of the value of delayed gratification. By delaying gratification in the form of a banana split, perhaps Paul’s father was teaching his son that what had seemed so valuable and necessary in the past was really not that valuable or necessary now. It was not necessary because Paul himself had actually forgotten about the banana split and his desire for one ceased even after Paul could afford to buy one himself. What was the usefulness of surrendering your hard earned money for a banana split when years later you would not even want one? By delaying gratification, one could purchase a banana split if you desired, but your desires could and likely would change. In any case, years later, if gratification is delayed, you would still have the accumulated wealth.

Another aspect of the fable of the banana split is hidden in the number of years that transpired from the time Paul first wanted the banana split and the time he finally got one. Since a number of years had passed, Paul’s father was demonstrating to Paul that one needed to continue to work, to accumulate capital, not just for a short period of time, but for an extended period of time. Rewards are often a long time in coming and if we focus on the work, the rewards will eventually come to us. There would be dignity and grace in



hard work. However, no dignity or grace could be found in a boy leaving a warm house, walking some distance with his father in the cold, sitting on his hands on a cold winter's day, freezing in an Isaly's with a broken furnace, watching his father eat a banana split, then walking back in the cold. The lessons of capitalism became embodied in the object lesson of the fable of the banana split.

The Protestant ethic also advocates a change in values as capital now becomes more important as a means of garnering wealth than labor. The examination of the economic data of Aliquippa in the 1990s and the larger United States economy during that period shows a significant decline and a change in values. While labor earned wages which became the primary source of income for the residents of Aliquippa, in the 1980s and 1990s, income from wages became less important and was rewarded less by the economy. Real wages stagnated or declined in that time period. The value of labor was reduced while the value of capital had increased. This change in values marked a significant change from the values of the community where labor, hard and regular labor, was rewarded.

As the mills closed and the economic base of the community collapsed, the community found itself lacking in any adaptive resources to cope with the situation. In another time hard work was rewarded eventually and the community's adherence to the work ethic would help them through this difficulty. However, the hard labor to which the community was accustomed no longer existed because the mills no longer existed. A powerful and self-renewing adaptive resource was no longer available to the community. In order for their labor to earn wages, they were forced to leave the community. Where

for many, their ancestors were immigrants to the community, these people now were forced to emigrate from the community. For those who worked and stayed, they found that their labor did not earn the same reward as it had previously. They were not as valued as they had been prior to the economic collapse. Postman's god of economic utility no longer smiled upon the community. Economic utility was no longer a god which served the community.

In the economic data and in the Protestant ethic, we see a change in values from the value appointed to labor to the value appointed to capital. A similar analogy is made in the fable of the banana split. It was through delayed gratification and the accumulation of capital that Paul's father was able to purchase the banana split for his son. Although that purchase may seem small and insignificant by almost any standards, it has great symbolic importance. It was the labor that made the purchase of a single banana split possible. It was the accumulation of capital through delayed gratification that made something as frivolous as the purchase of a banana split in the winter time possible. This was an object lesson that was available to serve the community years after Paul had learned it, if the community would continue to accept that set of values.

Daniel Bell argued at length that capitalism brought with it several cultural contradictions. Among those contradictions was the contradiction of delayed gratification. Capitalism was based upon the accumulation of capital and acquisition of labor. In order to accumulate capital, often labor was exploited at low wages, but a greater good would be served. Capital was accumulated which spurred greater investment. Greater investment produced more goods and in order for the accumulation

of capital to be protected, demand for these goods had to increase. A way for demand for goods to increase was for people to no longer delay gratification. Delayed gratification through prudent saving was replaced by credit spending. Rather than protect one's savings, the capitalist urged the buyer to assume debt to satiate their need for gratification now.

This change in values, the cultural contradiction of capitalism was shown in the fable of the banana split. While Paul wanted the banana split years ago, his father wanted to delay gratification until later. Others may purchase their banana splits now, and later they would purchase larger more expensive symbolic banana splits through the assumption of debt. When the time came to pay for these symbolic banana splits, without capital acquired through hard labor, they were not able to pay. People of Aliquippa who adhered to the cultural contradiction identified by Bell found themselves liquidating their capital by selling their homes in a market that had seen housing prices fall dramatically in the decade of 1980 - 1990.

Within the fables, we see a consistency in the role of the parents, particularly regarding the absolute authority of the parents. Other figures of authority, the teacher, the football coach, and the school administration had absolute, unquestioned authority. The hypocrisy between the contempt that the parents had for authority figures like Carnegie and other wealthy and powerful industrialists, and the similarity between the practices of the industrialist and the parents within their own families, is remarkable. It is interesting to compare the parents and their absolute authority over the children and the absolute authority of Carnegie and the industrialist over the worker. While Carnegie was often

despised by the workers, Carnegie addressed himself as a workmen in solidarity with them. Carnegie's philanthropic ways might also be viewed similar to the philanthropy of the parent. Carnegie held absolute, unquestioned authority over the lives of the workers and the communities where they lived. The parents held absolute unquestioned authority over the lives of their children and over the household where they lived. Carnegie was often perceived as cruel and absolute in the demands he made of his workers, there simply were no excuses to be made for failing to perform exactly as Carnegie desired. As shown in the fables, there were no excuses for not performing exactly as the parents and other authority figures demanded in Don Paolo's world. Similarly, as Carnegie made generous philanthropic gestures to the working class towns where he ruled with absolute authority, the parents often made relatively generous gestures to their families, such as purchasing banana splits for their children. Like the workmen who would rather die than enter a library donated by Carnegie, children often have difficulty accepting gifts from the parent.

There were successes under conditions where the parents held absolute authority because such absolute authority was rarely questioned or threatened. The concept of democratic experience was not an experience for the children in Don Paolo's world. These children understood that the democratic experience was to be denied them until they were adults. As adults they could fully participate in a democratic society, exercising their right to vote and expressing their opinion among other adults. Until that time, they were simply to learn and to do as they were told, not questioning authority and accepting the responsibility for themselves and their actions. When they were adults, they could establish their own undemocratic institutions within their own families.

### **Culture of the Contented and Educational Reform**

The culture of the contented is at first not obvious through the fables. Galbraith (Galbraith, 1992) speaks of a contented group of voters who believe that as well off contented citizens, they are getting just what they deserve. For that matter, so are the poor getting exactly what they deserve. The contented voting majority supports the doctrine of laissez faire and inaction on the part of the government. However, when the government takes action, that action is in all cases to favor the selected voting majority, the contented. Finally, great differences in wealth are to be tolerated.

We see through the interview data that a contented culture was at work in Western Pennsylvania in the failed efforts of the Midland school district to gain access to education in another district in the area, and through the failed efforts of the Distressed Seven. In the case of the Midland students, the government failed to intervene on the behalf of the students and they were rejected by all districts except Aliquippa. It is interesting that while all districts rejected the Midland students, the Midland students rejected Aliquippa and were forced to seek educational opportunities out of state. The inaction on the part of the government was a tenet of the contented culture and worked to their advantage. The students got exactly what they deserved and the citizens of the area got what they deserved. Ohio apparently got what it deserved as well as the state of Pennsylvania pays the state of Ohio to educate these students.

The failed efforts of the Distressed Seven are another example of the favored doctrine of inaction on the part of the government. When the mills failed and the Distressed Seven requested adaptive resources from the state to allow them to educate

their students, they failed miserably. The government bodies and local politicians were inactive leaving these districts to fend, and to fail for themselves. While other nearby districts were wealthier and more successful, the Aliquippa district was poor. Inaction on the part of the government ensured that the wealthy got what they deserved and that the poor got exactly what they deserved in accordance with the values of the culture of the contented. Nearby wealthy districts had access to resources which ensured that their students received the education they deserved. Since the residents and students of the Aliquippa school district were land value poor, they could not raise enough in tax revenue to support their educational needs. Appeals to superintendents of nearby districts fell on deaf ears as no one was willing to risk a merger with such a partner.

This situation is in accordance with all four principals of the culture of the contented. The rich and the poor, both, are getting exactly what they deserve. The doctrine of laissez faire was held inviolate as public inaction was the recommended solution for the maladies of the Distressed Seven. The state, through its legislators, played a selective role in favoring the contented. Although it was well evident that Aliquippa and these seven districts would not be able to meet their public education obligations, through inaction, the state continued to favor the contented wealthy districts by failing to address the problem with the way education was funded in the state. Great differences in income and wealth of school districts were indeed tolerated.

Paul spoke at length of his continued frustration with politicians and the state forces to obtain the needed resources for his students. He spoke of the politician who just did not care, the superintendents who hung their heads in silence, the failure of those in

power to change the situation, and the great differences in resources between districts.

His appeal for his students to look through that telescope and peer at the heavens, the incredulity that one district cannot buy books for its students while a neighboring district spends millions on a new stadium, all of these examples indicate that a contented culture is well aware of the plight of these districts and is quite content to leave well enough alone.

As Paul stated in one of the interviews, “it is your problem, go back and solve it.”

These fables demonstrate the undemocratic practices extant in the democratic society as practiced by the dominant culture. In this society, the disparities in resources available to communities and the denial of educational opportunity to students from the Aliquippa and Midland school districts were tolerated. Government intervention was clearly avoided at the time it may have been the most helpful. Finally, the community of Midland was forced to seek educational opportunities outside of the jurisdiction of the democratic institution that they have given the consent to govern over them. The community of Aliquippa was forced to provide educational opportunities to the community as their diminishing resources would permit.

## **Corrosion of Character and Experience told through the Fabulistic Form of Narrative**

Sennett (Sennett, 1998) spoke of the attributes required to produce good work, to serve the god of utility in Postman's terms (Postman, 1996), in the new capitalism. These attributes include flexibility, mobility, transience, and pursuit of short term goals. These are not the goals which are ordinarily associated with good character and in the case of Aliquippa have definitely not been associated with good character.

When Paul referred to the man who lived next to Joe as 'the idiot', he was referring not to the mental capacity of the man, but to his lack of character. This person was transient, mobile, an opportunist, and pursued short term goals. Character, as expressed by Sennett and by the fables, is demonstrated through loyalty and mutual commitment, through the pursuit of long term goals, or by the practice of delayed gratification.

Within each of the fables is an enforcement of a higher truth, an attribute that produces good character. For example, the fable of the patient and the doctor illustrates the value of compassion and caring, an obligation to help someone in need if you have the ability to do so. The Fables of the garden show the value of hard work and commitment to a task and the practice of delayed gratification as the gardener waits for the garden grow and to reach harvest. The fables of discipline and commitment enforce the attributes of loyalty to one's father and family, and commitment to the principles of discipline and hard work. The fables of heritage knowledge enforce the attributes of stability, continuity, persistence, loyalty to neighbors, and mutual commitment.



The greater truths enforced by the fables of Don Paolo reflected the same life experiences of Sennett's Rico. The janitor had a measure of control over his life and a degree of self-respect. He had built a life's narrative which allowed him to maintain his character, just as Don Paolo's parents and Paul himself built similar life narratives based upon these attributes. However, Rico the son, although much better educated and considerably better off financially than his father and the parents of present day Aliquippa shared something in common with the parents of this town. They both lack narratives or long term witnesses for their lives. In the case of Rico, his parents could be long term witnesses to his life, but he and his family move often and are not near his parents. His neighbors cannot bear long term witness to his life or the lives of his children for the same reason, they are all transient. The parents of the children in Aliquippa cannot even bear long term witness to the lives of their children because often the parents are not there or are not interested. The extended family cannot bear such witness because economic upheaval forced it to disintegrate. No narrative is formed and character corrodes.

The fables of the hot water tank and accountability also attempt to enforce a greater truth, that of trust. It takes time to develop trust. Relationships based upon trust, the kind of relationships enjoyed by Paul's parents and their neighbors take time and are forged in the face of adversity. Rico, and the citizens of Aliquippa often face adversity alone, without the support of neighbors and family. With the lack of stability in the family and community, it becomes even more difficult to build relationships built upon trust. Either no fables will be created to enforce the greater truth of trust in another human being, or other fables will be created, fables which may enforce a truth of a much different

trait, one not often associated with good character.

Sennett argues that the effects of short term capitalism on Rico “threatens to corrode his character, particularly those qualities of character which bind human beings to one another and furnishes each with a sense of sustainable self” (Sennett , p. 27). The same argument could be made for the effects of the new capitalism on the people of Aliquippa. Their character has appeared to corrode, at least in the view of Don Paolo, and now, human beings are not bound to one another through shared values and virtues. Few of his students have been furnished with a sense of sustainable self. Don Paolo has shown us that the residents of Aliquippa are no longer cultivating gardens, either real or metaphorical gardens. As a result, like Sennett’s Rico they individually or communally, do not have a sense of a sustainable self.

### **Implications**

Educational reforms flow from the providers of the reforms to the consumers of reforms. Logically, the successful school districts offer evidence that certain reforms are working and these reforms are offered to other districts. The successful districts act as exemplary models for other districts to emulate.

Rarely are economically disadvantaged districts offered opportunities to provide input into educational reforms. These districts often do not appear as successful as other districts. Sometimes their standardized test scores are not as high as other districts and as a result they are not studied as agents of educational reform as Vanessa Siddle-Walker’s research has shown. As an example, Vanessa Siddle Walker’s study of a segregated

school in the South revealed many opportunities for educational reform, but because of racial bias and segregation, successful measures at these schools were not used as exemplary or even studied for what they could offer as educational reform measures.

Siddle Walker studied the events in the school, the meaning that those events had for the members of the community, and attempted to understand the meaning that school life held for the members of the community. She found that the community valued education and the parents supported the school and the teachers in whatever ways they could. These ways may have included donating lumber to the school for a building project, donating time to assist in extracurricular activities, raising money to provide a bus for the students, or even providing transportation to school and activities for the students. These parents, while lacking in formal education themselves, clearly indicated to the community and their children the importance of education and the school.

In a similar situation, the support of education by the community can have tremendous impact. Booker T. Washington has shown the impact of modest support to his own education as well as the education of his students. If parents and communities can support education and educators in even modest ways, then at least the parents would be indicating to their children that education matters and is important. The place to start demonstrating support of education must, of course, be in the home. If that value is ingrained in students when they leave the home, then they will bring that value to school with them.

The fables of Don Paolo certainly imply that it is essential to have absolute values established in the home life of the students. Certain core values would likely include the

value of the dignity of work, respect for authority and learning, discipline and commitment, and the role of heritage knowledge. These core values need to be established in the homes in the community. Once established in the home, these values can be reinforced in the educational lives of the community. The industrial life or the working life of the community is not a dominant force as it once was, so it is not likely that the industrial life will have much impact on transmitting values to the community at this time as a monolithic force. However, the industrial community can impart a value set to its employees by the actions it takes so that it becomes clear to the community the traits valued by the industrial community. So, for at least the short term, it would seem that the community has the opportunity to find ways to establish a coherent set of values between the home life, industrial life and the educational life of the community and to find ways to reinforce those values between each of the lives of the people in the community.

### **What to do next?**

Don Paolo has shown us a vision of a world that calls us to address the future. Through the fables he has shared with us, we learn of a community with a glorious past, a failing present, and an uncertain future. In his view of the world, we see a community that had shared values of discipline and commitment, loyalty, continuity, security, mutual commitment, and trust. All of these values were based on a foundation of work. Adherence to that ethic was a fundamental value that the entire community shared. This was a successful community and the fables reflected that success. The fables tell of people who knew how to make a sustainable life. The values espoused in the fables clearly worked for Paul and his generation.

Paul and his generation succeeded and they attribute much of that success to hard work and the values they learned at home, in school, in church, and on the football field. There was virtually no place in the community where these values were not being reinforced. It is difficult to understand how a community that had succeeded so well could come to such a state of despair.

The experience of living in a community like Aliquippa is often times not an attractive one. High crime, drug and alcohol problems, reduced standards of living and reduced incomes, and finally the ignominy of a pending state takeover of the once proud, successful school district do not speak favorably about the community. Even Don Paolo instructed us that when one lives in surrounding towns, people are proud to say where they live. Pride in community is not often attributed to Aliquippa.

The district appears to be failing in virtually every way that we normally judge success. Crime is high, property values are dropping, per capita and household incomes fail to rebound to the levels they were before the economic upheaval. The community is still entrapped in a twenty year economic slump. Surrounding districts and neighboring towns seem to have endured the economic collapse and have begun to slowly rebuild or at least move on, even if the pace may be called glacial by some standards. Still other towns seem to be enjoying great success and benefitting from the expanding economy. Yet, the expanding economy seems to have bypassed this community.

The future of the community and the school district remain uncertain at best. As Paul has shown us the importance of community narratives to his generation, he is not so inclined to think that his and his generation's are the only narratives. Rather, he has tried

to get the community and the school district to move on, to move forward to face the future.

While it is easy to conclude that the community has rejected the narratives of Don Paolo, there is much more at stake. Don Paolo does not advocate that his experience become the experience of his students, but rather, he advocates that the students and the community create their own experiences and narratives. The fables they tell will attest to the values and character of the students themselves.

It is not the rejection of his personal narratives, the narratives of another generation as expressed in the fables, which is troublesome. Rather it is the rejection or failure to recognize other positive narratives that has left a void in the community. These fables tell us of a community comprised of individuals bound to each other, furnishing each other with in Sennett's terms "sense of sustainable self." If fables are lacking, perhaps the commitment to others in the community is lacking as evidenced by the tolerance of crime and deviant behavior carried over into the classroom. Don Paolo urges us to look toward the future to create our own fables, to take a stand for those things of value and things in which we believe. He urges us to "get the job done, no excuses, no fear."

I have tried to demonstrate that my assessment of don Paolo as a participant is not a sentimental view. Rather, it is a view that recognizes the passion that Paul has for his community and for his students. It is a view that has recorded the affection that Paul had for the values and object lessons learned in his youth. To be certain, some of these fables such as accountability, smoking in the boy's room, late for dinner, killing the hog, white

washing the cellar are not necessarily pleasant tales, nor are they pleasant lessons. Paul makes no excuses for the actors in these fables, whether they are his friends or his parents. There is no sentiment, feeling or emotion in the declaration that “you’re guilty” anymore than there would be sentiment or emotion, other than revulsion, of spending the night with the hog and killing it in the morning, or receiving a beating from a father for coming home late for dinner, or for receiving a beating for not white washing the cellar when you were told to do so. This is not a sentimental view.

Another question to address is the possibility that the fables have relevance for the Italian-American experience only. Are the fables myopic in scope? That question would be significant if the fables were limited to Italian-American actors, or to a neighborhood that was completely Italian-American, or to an experience that was limited to the Italian-American experience. Paul’s old neighborhood was primarily Italian-American, but as he stated in the interviews, there were many other ethnic groups represented in the neighborhood. These ethnic groups were not bystanders in the experience of the fables. Each ethnic group participated in the creation of the fables and adopted the fables as their own.

Only two fables could be considered specific to the Italian-American experience, the fable of making prosciutto and the fable of peppers and eggs. While the fables may be specific to the Italian-American experience, other ethnic groups in Paul’s old neighborhood would have similar heritage knowledge that they passed on to their children. In fact, Paul even mentions the other ethnic groups making bread, or making stuffed cabbages. It is not the prosciutto that makes the fable relevant to all ethnic groups, but

the learning of how to make something rare and wonderful out of ordinary items. To my knowledge there has never been a culture that does not have a similar piece of heritage knowledge to share with their children or with other ethnic groups. It is not the product that is common to the ethnic groups, but the sharing of the experience that is relevant.

Some may wonder if don Paulo is locked in the past and if the fables have relevance in today's world. Like the experience of Rico in Sennett's study, one questions whether the experiences of the father are relevant to the experiences of the son. Are Paul's experiences and fables relevant to his students? These experiences and fables are relevant to the past and to Paul's students in today's world to the extent that the virtues and greater truths are relevant in the world of his students. To what extent are discipline and commitment, loyalty, and continuity, tenacity and hard work relevant to Paul's students?

It might be more helpful to pose the question in a different manner. Are the virtues expressed in the fables virtues of a long gone industrial world? Are these virtues relevant in the post-industrial world which Aliquippa must live in today? As revealed in the work of Sennett, the virtues which served Rico's father do not necessarily serve the son in the post-industrial world. The virtues which serve Rico under the new capitalism are flexibility, mobility, transience, and pursuit of short term goals. These are not virtues celebrated in the fables of Don Paolo. The challenge then of the fables is not whether the fables are still relevant, but whether or not the virtues enforced in the fables can be made relevant in a post-industrial world.

As stated earlier, flexibility and mobility are rewarded in the post-industrial world,



where in the industrial world, it was considered a virtue to be stable and to build a life's narrative in a community where you spent much of your life and where your parents spent their lives. Mobility renders the virtues of stability and continuity as irrelevant in the post-industrial world.

Transience is another virtue rewarded in the post-industrial community and the fables espouse the virtue of heritage knowledge. In a transient community, heritage knowledge becomes less relevant. In fact, continual retooling of workers skills is advocated as many workers now will face numerous career changes in their work lives. Loyalty and commitment which were character traits rewarded in an earlier time as virtues are now, if not considered vices, are at least not rewarded. How can one demonstrate loyalty to an employer who may not be there tomorrow either through merger and acquisitions or through plant closings? How can one demonstrate loyalty to a craft or a trade where technology may render that craft or trade irrelevant almost over night? Rather, one must maintain loyalty to themselves and to the skills that they continually develop in order to survive.

However, if society considers traditional virtues of discipline and commitment, heritage knowledge, continuity, and stability as relevant still today, then we must find ways for these virtues to manifest themselves in our lived experiences. If these virtues are part of our lived experience, then they will find their way into our own fables. If the post-industrial world builds new fables, these fables will espouse the virtues that the post-industrial world renews in their lived experiences.

### **Return to Zenobia**

In the very beginning of this research, I suggested that Zenobia, a city described in Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities, parallels Aliquippa. Calvino suggests that "if you ask an inhabitant of Zenobia to describe his vision of a happy life, it is always a city like Zenobia that he imagines, with its pilings and suspended stairways, a-flutter with banners and ribbons, but always derived by combining elements of that first model."

Paul has given me a vision of a happy life, the Aliquippa he remembers, the Aliquippa of the past. In the fable of Joe's garden, he comments, "Those days will never come back. Those were very enriching days. There was a structure being created. A new society was being born and value systems were being created."

Aliquippa was a product of the history of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Region, a product of capitalism, a product of immigration, a product of the Great Depression, a product of the labor struggle, and now in its failure, a product of the new economy. So for Paul, Aliquippa has become Zenobia, a city derived from combining elements of the first model of Aliquippa that was created.

Calvino suggests another form of order when describing cities, not whether they are happy or unhappy cities, which in the case of Aliquippa would be an easy judgement. Aliquippa of the past was indeed a happy place, and the Aliquippa of the present is not such a happy place. This classification offers no understanding of Aliquippa however. Calvino further suggests that cities might be divided into two other categories: "those that through the years and the changes continue to give form to their desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it."

Into which of these two categories does Aliquippa reside? The Aliquippa of the past was a city that continued to give form to its desires. It was a city that was efficacious and prosperous, a city that continued to grow and adapt to gradual changes. The city desired to create a structure, a value system and a society based upon those values and it succeeded in that endeavor. As Paul has shown us in the fables, Aliquippa was a city that gave form to its desires.

The Aliquippa of the present is another Aliquippa. This Aliquippa is a city of the second form, a city where desires have erased the city or where desires have been erased by the city. In either case, we have been shown a city which seems not to be able to form itself or its desires.

Do the desires of the past erase the city? That much seems doubtful because those desires, while perhaps not appropriate to the post-industrial world, are at least not malignant desires. Are there other desires which have erased the city? That again is doubtful unless one chooses to assume that the city possesses malignant desires. Has the city of the past retained its grip on the Aliquippa of the present such that present and future desires are erased? That seems doubtful as well because the Aliquippa of the past no longer exists. To hold the city in its grip, to hold it in the past would be to use its power to resist moving forward. It is doubtful that the desires of the past have that kind of power. Few that remain can remember the Aliquippa of the past. As the years pass, even less will be able to remember the Aliquippa of the past. The question is not one of the power of the past to control the future, but whether the city chooses to be anchored in its past and to grow upon that foundation, or whether the city chooses to be bound by its

past, to be limited by the confines of history, looking backward without a vision of the future.

What don Paolo has shown us is a city that has not formed new desires to replace those desires of the past. That is the challenge of the uncertain future of Aliquippa. Aliquippa is a city where desires have been erased by the city. In order to become a Zenobia that gives form to its desires, Aliquippa must find ways to preserve the virtues of the past, live those virtues in experiences which are relevant to the present, and find ways to incorporate them in the fables they will create in the future.

### **Recommendations for Educational Reforms**

Don Paolo spent a considerable amount of time instructing me in the articles of the Education Empowerment Act which was about to be take affect in the commonwealth. The Education Empowerment Act is the latest form of educational reform reflecting a combination of state control and imposed actions upon a locality under the premise of local control and decision-making. This act attempts to address the needs of the distressed school districts as defined by performance on standardized tests, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). How is this particular form of government intervention able to help these districts?

According to [A Guide to the Education Empowerment Act](http://www.pde.psu.edu/issini/edempower.html) (<http://www.pde.psu.edu/issini/edempower.html>), the state will establish an Academic Advisory Team to assist a School District Empowerment Team. Aliquippa is likely to be one of the districts which will be declared an affected district. For the first four months, the existing school board will be a figure head board with no power at all. This

assumption of power by the state over elected officials is an interesting exercise of government involvement and the democratic process. The elected school board will likely remain without power until the state appointed Academic Advisement Team balances the budget by means of budget cuts, tax increases, and reductions in services. A District Empowerment Team of eleven members, three from the district's academic community and the remainder from community stakeholders, will make academic recommendations to the state selected board. The takeover of the district by the state could be either a doorway to opportunity for Aliquippa or it could be a hindrance.

The takeover of a district by the state could be a blessing in disguise for the district. Since the state appointed board has the obligation to make the difficult cost cutting and tax decisions to balance the budget, the current board members are removed from making the difficult decisions. Perhaps this will represent an opportunity for the district to regain some financial stability, particularly in an expanding economy. In addition, if the state takes over the district, the state will award the district additional funding, something that the original members of the Distressed Seven had asked for many years ago. So this pending takeover could represent a doorway of opportunity.

On the academic side, after four months, the state will greatly expand the powers of the elected school board, giving them basically the power to do whatever they feel inclined to do to meet the school district improvement plan. These powers permit the school board to reconstitute the school as a charter, as an independent school, to dictate governance, prescribe educational goals and the mission of the school, to establish performance objectives both financial and academic, to grant school allocation and control

over funding and the budget, to control the school educational program and curriculum, and to prescribe authority of the school to establish working conditions, to hire employees, to contract with another party to operate the school, to reassign or dismiss employees, to supervise and direct professional employees, to rescind the contracts of professional employees, to reallocate resources, to change procedures, to develop achievement plans, and to implement evaluation procedures. Even if the school district improves performance and comes off the list of distressed districts, the school district will continue with enhanced powers.

It remains to be seen if such a procedure will have much of an impact upon test scores in the district. A similar attempt was made in the Wilkinsburg school district in Pittsburgh to transfer the responsibility for the operation of the district to a private firm. The community was dissatisfied with the performance of the private firm and chose to resume control over the operation of the public schools. Recently, the school board voted to increase taxes to balance the budget. Taxes in Wilkinsburg, already the highest in Allegheny County, were raised against a low value tax base which emphasizes the inequity of the present school funding approach. The budget situation in Aliquippa is no less difficult and it is likely that taxes will be raised against a similar low value tax base in order to increase revenue and to balance the budget. Other dangers exist with the takeover of the district including teacher morale, community support, administrative morale and commitment to the program, and the potential for continued and even enhanced micro-management by a school board with enhanced powers. Each of these dangers should be addressed to determine how much of a serious concern they would be for the district.

State takeover of the Clairton school district has similarly failed to turn that district around.

Micro-management by a school board with an inclination to micro-manage coupled with new and enhanced powers granted by the Empowerment Act, provides the board with opportunities to expand their involvement. Like parental involvement, enhanced involvement by the school board is not desirable since it usually takes the form of interference and not involvement. Increased support from both parents and the school board, however, is greatly desired by any school administration. Increased involvement by a school board in the affairs of the district will likely continue to erode already fragile morale.

Teacher morale is a very serious concern in a distressed district before a takeover by the state. After a state takeover, the potential for morale to decline even further is a real possibility. Any state takeover must be sensitive to the morale of the teachers in the district, especially since the Education Empowerment Act seems to make the assumption that the teachers and administration are part of the problem and not the solution. The state and the current governor seem to be advocating alternative certification for teachers to address the perceived problem of incompetent teachers. Similarly, the Education Empowerment Act seems to exclude the teachers from assuming any substantive role in solving the problem in the distressed district since only one member of the eleven person Empowerment Team may be a teacher and only three members of the team may be educators. No matter how one attempt to place a charitable view on the role of teachers in the Education Empowerment Act, teachers and educators play a minor role in the

solution in the eyes of the state. This may very likely be perceived as evidence that the state views teachers and administrators as part of the problem and not part of the solution to the districts ills. Such a perception, whether well grounded in fact or totally erroneous, does not do much to build morale in a situation in desperate need of increased morale.

The administration suffers from diminished morale also and with the enhanced power of the board would be anxious about the security of their positions. These administrators would be particularly anxious about their position with a board who has little training in the education profession, but has the political power to end careers and to decide educational policy. School boards have a reputation for a tendency to micro-manage the district without enhanced powers, and with enhanced powers, they have the invitation and opportunity to micro-manage with out limit. Such an attempt in increase the involvement of the board by micro-managing the district would only erode morale further and would make it difficult to attract the teachers and administrators that the district needs to succeed. It remains to be seen if the school board can resist the temptation to use, much less abuse, their enhanced powers.

The school board itself must certainly face a significant morale problem since the district would be taken over under their watch. The Academic Advisement Team appointed by the Department of Education assumes the authority of the school board and renders the board powerless for at least four months while attempts are made to balance the budget. This Academic Advisement Team may include certified personnel, board members, and business officials, but would include Department of Education selected experts. The elected school board would be given enhanced powers after four months and



how the school board chooses to use those enhanced powers will have much to do with the success or failure of the district. The school board would likely welcome the enhanced powers and logically would view these enhanced powers as a vote of confidence in their abilities. The teachers and administration might view these enhanced powers as a vote of no confidence in the teachers and administration and a vote of confidence in the micro-managers who helped put the district in its current distressed state. The issues of morale and effectiveness of the solutions offered may depend ultimately, not so much on the abilities of the parties. Success may not result from the exercise of power, but in the personal character and leadership of the stakeholders as demonstrated by restraining from exercising power unnecessarily. It will take people of good will with commitment, patience, and humility to succeed in such an endeavor. One is then led to question why, if such people are available and can succeed after a state takeover of the district, they were not utilized to avoid the problem prior to the takeover.

The focus of the Education Empowerment Act is to improve the test scores of the students in the district. If the students are to be the beneficiaries of this legislation, how will they be affected by a state takeover of the district? It is likely, as evidenced by the reaction of the students in the Sto-Rox district when faced with a state takeover, that the students would resent the takeover. The students at Sto-Rox resented being labeled as failures and voiced their opinions as such. It is likely that the students at Aliquippa would resent similar labeling and the stigma of being part of a failing district. Budget cuts, no matter how fairly and objectively they are determined will impact some students, teachers, and programs more than others. No one will be completely satisfied as programs are

eliminated or curtailed.

Parents also will be affected by the takeover by the state. The parents will question what benefit this takeover will have for the district and their children as their taxes may likely increase and programs decrease. In an era of increased local control, state takeover could be perceived as moving away from local control. Even after the school board regains control with enhanced powers, parents may view this as an uncomfortable situation since the school board is now the recipient of powers they were not elected to exercise. The parents may view the school board members as even further removed from the control of the voting public since the balance of power in the district will decidedly shift toward the school board and away from the administration. The opportunity for the community to be further paralyzed by petty politics increases considerably.

In spite of all its potential flaws, the Education Empowerment Act can represent a new start for the school district and ultimately the students in the district. From another perhaps ironic view, the district may benefit from the enhanced political atmosphere of the state takeover because it is no longer in control of its own destiny. Political interests, not willing to be held accountable for a district that continues to fail after it has taken over, may fund the district adequately enough to compensate for the diminished socio-economic status of its community. The wishes of the Distressed Seven may be addressed not in victory, but in defeat, as political entities striving to protect their own interests may provide a portion of the funds the members of the Distress Seven sought all along.

Yet, any victory would be a Pyrrhic victory. The Distressed Seven sought to

prevent a problem from occurring and rejection from the State and local political representatives only exacerbated the academic problems of the district. An attempt by the State to impose educational reforms on the district ignores the socio-political-economic problems of the school district. If the district succeeds in increasing test scores above the State mandated criteria and is removed from the affected list of districts, there is still no solution to the socio-political-economic problems of the district. These problems are a significant source of the academic problems facing the district. The Education Empowerment Act will have cured the symptom, but not the disease.

Educational reforms should include reforms to the democratic experiences within the school, professional status for educators, changes to school funding including the implementation of school choice reforms, navigating the thin line between parental support and parental interference, and finally professional development for teachers. Meaningful educational reforms for districts like Aliquippa must reflect the values of the community and must be democratic in nature. In order to achieve such a democratic curriculum reforms, the curriculum must be participatory and allow the students to relate the learning to the experiences of their world. A participatory curriculum where the students and faculty create opportunities for their own education and experience the democratic way of life is essential to a democratic school and a democratic curriculum.

Also essential to the democratic school is the free and open flow of communication and information. This free and open flow of information requires access to such information through the maintenance of libraries and implementation of technology. As important as access to information is the tolerance for dissenting views. Knowledge and

information must not only come from elite sources or sources endorsed by the dominant culture, but from many different sources including the students and teachers themselves.

Similarly, educational reforms must recognize that teachers and administrators are a significant part of the solution and need to be employed in the solution. Educators must gain professional stature and autonomy beyond local control. The autonomy required by educators is the same type of autonomy afforded other professionals such as accountants, engineers and architects. Community interference in areas where they clearly have no expertise or credential should be minimized. For example, it is appropriate for a community to offer input into educational goals for the students, but the determination of the educational system necessary to obtain those goals should be the decision of educational professionals.

The current educational reforms seek to employ market forces to improve schools such as vouchers, school choice plans and incentives for teachers. Each of these reforms will be addressed separately.

Nothing is more democratic than free choice. Free choice is at the heart of the individual freedoms that we enjoy in a democracy. Before vouchers and school choice plans make sense as an educational alternative, the issue of inequitable educational funding must be addressed. It makes no sense for a student's educational opportunity to be determined by one's birth status. Such a system seeks to ensure a class system of landed gentry, establishing a tacit nobility, albeit without title. American democracy is based upon a society without classes, with equal educational opportunity for all. In order for educational reforms to succeed, inequitable educational funding issues must be eliminated.

While it will not be possible to guarantee equal educational opportunity for all since the wealthy will be able to afford private schools for their children, at least society should provide equal educational opportunity for those in the public sector.

The elimination of school taxes based upon housing values should be eliminated state wide. The elimination of such taxes eliminates the disparity in funding between the wealthy and the poor districts. Since school taxes provide the primary source of revenue for a district, this source of revenue must be replaced by another source of revenue. In place of school taxes based upon housing values, revenue should be provided by the implementation of a single sales tax percentage to be returned to each parent in equal amounts for each child in the form of a voucher. Parents can then decide which school, either public or private, meets the educational needs of their child.

The exceptionally wealthy districts would have to realign their priorities as revenue sources may be curtailed. Poorer districts would then be reimbursed the full amount for their special needs students and would not be forced into a distressed status because of severe economic upheavals beyond their control. This realignment of the source of revenues for school districts is more democratic and promotes the values of free parental choice for the education of their children.

Naturally, there will continue to be good schools and poor schools. The forces of competition, market forces driven by demand for better schools, would work to improve schools that are failing. Still, there will be schools that fail, but at least those schools that fail will not fail solely by their socio-political-economic status. An important confounding variable will have been minimized or reduced in the determination of school performance.

Parental involvement is a much more difficult issue to consider. While school districts desire input from parents and stakeholders, interference from such forces is to be resisted. At the same time, educators should solicit support from parents and other stakeholders. Educators and only educators should be making the educational decisions for the district. Such decisions would include pedagogy, curriculum, management of the district and personnel issues. As the fables indicate, parental interference in the school district and education of their children was minimal, parental support for the district, the teachers and the administrators was maximized, all to the benefit of the students and the community.

School boards and their involvement in a district's operation vary considerably between school districts. As with the boards of any other organization, the powers of the board are to be limited to oversight only. The school board would not have the power to levy taxes if the basis for school funding changes from property value based taxes to a statewide sales tax. This change in funding base eliminates one of the more popular planks in a school board members agenda, holding the line on taxes. School board members would have to run on other issues, hopefully issues about building community and educational experiences for their students. If school board members are eliminated from the personnel decision-making process, other agendas are also eliminated. Two of the most popular agendas that would be eliminated include the ability to hire or fire coaches and athletic directors, and the practice of nepotism. These agendas are sometimes central to the agenda of school board members as they begin to use the school district as an employment agency at the expense of the community they were elected to serve. This

leaves the board with the opportunity to provide input to the school district, to hold the district administration and teachers accountable for the performance of the district, and to hold the district administration accountable for the financial performance of the district since the school board would have the ability to approve the school district budget.

Educational reforms should also address the role of the teacher in the educational process. Teachers should be required to continue to develop as teachers through continuing education and professional development programs for teachers. These programs include the attainment of advanced degrees, but should certainly include attendance at seminars and conferences. Teachers should be encouraged to present their experiences to their peers through publication and presentation of their learning to their colleagues in the profession and in their own district. Professional development is often under funded in the school district budget, but should certainly be required of both teachers and the district to meet this important need.

Educators can do much to meet the educational needs of the community, continue to meet many of those needs, and will continue to meet those needs. However, while these reforms are all important and necessary, they are not sufficient to ensure a successful educational reform. If any component of educational reform is necessary and by itself nearly sufficient to ensure a successful reform, it would have to be parental support for the educational process. Educators can solicit support for the educational process from parents and stakeholders, but educators and lawmakers cannot enforce or require such support. This type of support, like the support provided by the parents at Caswell, the parents in Aliquippa in Don Paolo's youth, the parents in the time of the creation of the

Tuskegee Institute, must be provided freely and continually. Without it, whatever educational work done at the school will not be reinforced in the home. Without reinforcement in the home, there can be no reinforcement of the value of education within the community. Lacking such support at the parental level, the students will not come to the school, ready, willing and able to learn. If the value of education is not instilled in the hearts and minds of the students at home, they cannot take such a value with them to the school.

While it may not be possible to ensure parental support in the home, it may be possible to get parents to recognize that the parents, the school and the community are partners in raising and educating the child. This partnership can be enhanced by pre-school programs such as Head Start and Even Start, all day kindergartens, extended school day programs to include tutoring and extra-curricular activities for students at risk, and perhaps even year round schools. Each of these programs seeks to provide through the public sector what the parents are either unwilling or incapable of providing. Society is left with the unfortunate choice of lamenting the situation that some parents do not provide a learning environment for their children and paying the social cost of poorly educated citizens, or paying for the additional cost of educating at risk children of parents who do not provide such a stable learning environment but enjoying the payoff of an educated populace.

As for the role of the state in educational reforms, it is essential that the state recognize the impact of severe economic upheaval upon school districts. When such upheaval occurs, it is necessary that the state must begin to act immediately to shore up



the educational system with financial resources before the conditions brought about by such upheaval fester, creating a distressed school district. For example, of the eleven districts affected by the Educational Empowerment Act, six of the districts, Clairon City, Duquesne City, Sto-Rox, Wilkinsburg, Aliquippa, and Steelton-Highspire were located in mill towns suffering from economic upheaval brought about by the closing of the mills in the 1980s. The relationship between the diminished economic fortunes in such districts and diminished performance of the school district is clear. Educators must demand more of themselves, and society must be realistic in the expectations it places upon the educator. The educational system cannot be expected to provide for all the needs of the students without the resources required to meet those needs. If the parents and society are not willing or able to meet the needs of the children in the district, it is unrealistic and improper to expect educators to meet those needs. As a result, the educational performance and educational experience of the students will continue to suffer. Meaningful educational reforms can only result from continued reinforcement of the values of education in the home, the school, and the economic life of the community.

### **Limitations of the Research**

This research investigated the views of the community from the perspective of the former superintendent. While a valuable perspective, this study made no attempt to verify or triangulate these data with other community members. Nor does this research attempt to be prescriptive in the sense that it would recommend a specific educational reform. Rather, this research provides the information required to understand the workings of the community in prosperous times and those findings can allow us to develop ways to

construct educational reforms that reflect the values of the community.

### **Future Research**

There are many possibilities for future research as a result of this study. The first area might naturally be the discovery of the fables of the parents of the students in the community. The comparison and contrast of the fables of the parents with the fables of Don Paolo would be significant to determine the correspondence between the sources of data.

Another topic of future research, for the same reason of correspondence, would be to determine the fables of the students themselves. The opportunity for a longitudinal study which compares the changes in the fables of the students and the emergence of consist fables would be of significant value in determining the growth and development of a value set within a community.

Within the fables we saw a glimpse of the importance of the topic of heritage knowledge in the educational development of the individual. Heritage knowledge in both this community and other communities needs to be explored further. It might be significant to compare the types and roles of heritage knowledge within different types of communities to learn the impact of socio-economic and cultural factors upon heritage knowledge within these communities.

Although the emphasis upon this study has been qualitative, the temptation to develop a index for community efficacy remains. While such an index would be significant, one might be able to more effectively understand the role of efficacy within a community through a longitudinal study of the fables of the community.

Finally, it would be significant to learn of the role of fables in other communities. Such research would be significant to determine if socio-economic and cultural factors influence the types of fables and the use of fables within a community. Do wealthy communities develop and use fables in the same ways that other communities use and develop fables? Is Calvino correct in his claim that one writes fables in periods of oppression? Is a period of oppression the only time when fables are constructed and if not, what impact does the environment have upon the types of fables developed and how are those fables used in the communities?

This research began with an introduction of a fable, the fable of Zenobia. It might be appropriate to look to a similar fable from Invisible Cities for areas for future research.

*"Gods of two species protect the city of Leandra. Both are too tiny to be seen and too numerous to be counted. One species stands at the doors of the houses, inside, next to the coatrack and the umbrella stand: in moves, they follow the families and install themselves in the new home at the consignment of the keys. The others stay in the kitchen, hiding by preference under pots or in the chimney flue or broom closet; they belong to the house, and when the family that has lived there goes away, they remain with the new tenants; perhaps they were already there before the house existed, among the weeds of the vacant lot, concealed in a rusty can; if the house is torn down, and a huge block of fifty families is built in its place, they will be found, multiplied, in the kitchens of that many apartments. To distinguish the two species we will call the first ones Penates and the other Lares.*

*Within a given house, Lares do not necessarily stay with Lares, and Penates with*

*Penates: they visit one another, they stroll together on the stucco cornices, on the radiator pipes; they comment on family events; not infrequently they quarrel; but they can also get along peacefully for years - seeing them all in a row, you are unable to tell them apart. The Lares have seen Penates of the most varied origins and customs pass through their walls; the Penates have to make a place for themselves, rubbing elbows with Lares of illustrious, but decaying palaces, full of hauteur, or with Lares from tin shacks, susceptible and distrustful.*

*The true essence of Leandra is the subject of endless debate. The Penates believe they are the city's soul, even if they arrived last year; and they believe they take Leandra with them when they emigrate. The Lares consider the Penates temporary guests, importunate, intrusive; the real Leandra is theirs, which gives form to all it contains, the Leandra that was there before all these upstarts arrived and that will remain when all have gone away.*

*The two species have this in common: whatever happens in the family and in the city, they always criticize. The Penates bring out the old people, the great-grandparents, the great-aunts, the family of the past; the Lares talk of the environment before it was ruined. But this does not mean that they live only on memories; they daydream of the careers the children will follow when they grow up (the Penates), or what this house in this neighborhood might become if it were in good hands (the Lares). If you listen carefully, especially at night, you can hear them in the houses of Leandra, murmuring steadily, interrupting one another, huffing, bantering, amid ironic, stifled laughter."*

*Italo Calvino – Invisible Cities, p. 78.*

Don Paolo has awakened us to the existence of these gods through his fables. The Penates moved with the people that moved and new Penates have moved in to the houses and neighborhoods. The Lares exist still and quarrel with these new residents. Future research should conduct conversations with the gods to see what fables they can relate.

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## APPENDIX

### CHRONOLOGICAL INTERVIEW DATA

#### THE SETTING

Don Paolo is a retired Superintendent of the Aliquippa school district and has lived most of his life in the Aliquippa area. A large man in his mid-fifties, Don Paolo is a former football player who has lived his life as a competition. Although time and other pursuits have taken their toll on Don Paolo physically, he still retains the competitive spirit of a football player and the directness characteristic of a long time resident of Aliquippa. I met Don Paolo at his very comfortable home in Aliquippa and we conducted all of the interviews in the kitchen of the house. Some interviews eventually migrated to the back porch off the kitchen, but the kitchen was the central location for all interviews. Since Don Paolo has his doctorate degree from a local university [the University of Pittsburgh], he understood my objectives and was quite comfortable speaking frankly with me. He had no hesitation in speaking his mind. Our interviews were conducted simply as open conversations that began with whatever topic Don Paolo felt was important for me to know about. Over the course of these interviews, he provided the information that I needed to understand the school district and the community, as a teacher would do for the student.

#### INTERVIEW ONE

As I drove to Don Paolo's house for the first time, I remembered the once busy, prosperous business district that was now boarded up with plywood. He would later refer

to that condition as being acquired by Weyerhaeuser, a national lumber products company. I turned up the hill and noted that the houses behind the library were once solid and well-maintained homes occupied by mill workers. They had fallen into decline and disrepair, not unusual for this section of town. I made one more turn up another steep hill to the section of town where Don Paolo lived. I was surprised to find the homes in his neighborhood still in excellent condition, just as they were when I was younger and we would run up the hills to see how the “big bosses” lived. It was as if the problems of the community continued to escape this neighborhood and the homes were still owned by the mill bosses.

He met me on the sidewalk and we exchanged a few pleasantries. I then asked Don Paolo how all this trouble in the district took place, because I remembered the community in its’ prosperity and saw its’ decline. Don Paolo put aside my question and began the interview by discussing the Distressed Seven. Aliquippa, (Farrell, New Castle and four) six other schools with a steel mill history joined with other distressed school districts to form the Distressed Seven during the 1980s. These districts were at one time very successful academically. So successful were these districts that at one time “Aliquippa had no unemployment” and was considered one of the best in the state. The school district, which is well known for producing professional athletes has also produced famous song writers and composers, a U. S. Surgeon General, a prominent waterfront architect and developer, and numerous successful business people and professionals. Clearly, this was a school district with a history of achievement in many different areas. It was also a district like the others in the Distressed Seven that had changed. In the words of Don Paolo, “you cannot raise the tax base in these districts because there is no tax base.”

Responding to these circumstances, the superintendents of these districts formed this group, the Distressed Seven, to solicit support from their local state representatives to provide relief from their dire financial straits brought about by the loss of tax base from the numerous and sudden mill closings during the 1980s. Don Paolo explained that these superintendents went to their representatives with three possible options, to support mergers, or if a merger is not feasible, to provide additional funding to keep these districts solvent, or at least to assist with the special education funding. He explained that funding for special education was breaking the backs of these districts. Referring to his own district, Don Paolo explained that he was “taking out of our budget \$1 million over and above my allocation of \$600,000 from the government. The laws of special education are crazy and you just can’t get out of the hole.”

When asked about the reaction of the representatives to this problem, Don Paolo explained that “we kept getting smacked across our face” and they were told, “This is your problem, go back and solve it.” The enormity of their financial problem and the futility of raising taxes any further were apparent to the superintendents. What perhaps was not as apparent was the difficulty of persuading others that these districts needed financial help. Similarly, no one expected the number or complexity of social problems that these districts would soon be facing.

Referring to the wealthier districts in close proximity to the Distressed Seven, Don Paolo questioned, “How could that be? How could you have poverty here and wealth here and call yourself a public school system?” Continuous efforts to solicit support ended in failure for all of these districts causing the superintendents to conclude that the politicians

“just don’t care.” As an example, Don Paolo noted that a local [the Duquesne] school district has difficulty buying books while a neighboring [the West Mifflin] school district, only a few miles away, has spent \$10 million on a new stadium and \$38 or \$40 million on renovations to their schools.

When asked why the politicians were uncaring, Don Paolo responded that for a politician to advocate a merger between Aliquippa and any of the adjacent districts would be political suicide. They “would not be reelected next year ... it is a racial problem.”

The problem seems to extend, however, beyond race. The population of Aliquippa consists of a large number of students, both black and white in poverty, 43 percent. About 85 percent of the students are on the free and reduced lunch program. As Don Paolo further explained, “with this type of population you carry a big headache, believe it or not. You have a high influx of crime, you have no parental involvement, you have an I don’t care attitude, they get there when they get there, there’s constant complications with this type of thing.”

Don Paolo and the other superintendents began to realize that they were not going to be part of a merger with any adjacent district because of the political implications of such a position. So they appealed to their colleagues for assistance of any kind. “It’s obvious that you don’t want to be a part of us ... we go to the superintendents’ meetings and say, fellows I need help, and everybody just puts their heads down.”

The frustration was evident in his voice as he explained the indifference or perhaps the lack of courage of his colleagues. “We’ve got to do something here. I need help. I’ve got 2,000 students. I can’t educate them the way they are supposed to be educated. I

need money and I'm sinking fast. Not only do they not want to give me help financially, they don't even want to give you help verbally, like 'hey [Don Paolo] Paul, maybe you ought to try this; hey [Don Paolo] Paul, maybe you ought to try that.' "

I shared his surprise at having access to the intellectual resources of the other superintendents of the neighboring districts and their lack of response. Don Paolo elaborated on the situation. "See, if I'm a poor person and have no money, and you are a medical doctor and I have been infested with illness. And I come to you and say Doc, I'm sick. I need your help and you ask me for my Blue Cross card and I say I don't have one. You ask me, do you have money? I don't have any. Now what's the next thing to do? You've got to say somewhere along the line, let me give this guy a couple Bufferins. Let me give him a shot of penicillin let me see what I have in my bag. Let me go to my cupboard to do something to help out this sick man. But when you turn your head and give no answer whatsoever, means that you just don't care, because you have your own problem. So now you ask the question, what does the Governor of Pennsylvania, and what does [a guy named Hickock] the state Secretary of Education have against me at Aliquippa? Duquesne, Clairton, Farrell, New Castle [the other schools of the Distressed Seven], what does he have against us?"

The issue of standardized tests and incentives based upon performance on the standardized tests brought out the ire of Don Paolo. "And now they come in with these test scores, these ridiculous, ridiculous test scores and if you don't perform well you are going to be punished financially. So in other words we know we aren't going to perform well, and you know we aren't going to perform well. We already don't have money, now

we are going to perform poorly again. And then, what are we going to do? You are going to take money off of us. Now what have you proved?"

This situation seemed to be a case of punishment of the innocent for Don Paolo as he reflected on the inaction at the state level to provide relief for the districts. It was even suggested to a lobbyist that the Governor should be told that 15,000 students in the Distressed Seven represented a small city. These were students who were not getting the things they need to get the education they deserve. These students need to get a "better opportunity academically so they can compete in society." Don Paolo was visibly upset and questioned whether it was that they were poor, an African American majority, steel mills towns, predominantly Democratic communities or just what the reason would be that they were not getting heard. "They [the state representatives] do not wish to say, they won't want to say anything."

He asked, "Now is it that we are all dumb?" Don Paolo noted that all of the superintendents of the Distressed Seven had their doctorate degrees and were each willing to do whatever was necessary to turn their districts around. In an appeal to [a local university] the University of Pittsburgh and the state Secretary of Education [Hickock], Don Paolo asked, "If I am making a mistake, I am willing to learn. I will give you my salary, here take it all, and show me how to put this school on the map academically."

Finances are only part of the problem Don Paolo explained. "Even though we're poor, we have a great opportunity to solve our problem. But when you have 75 percent who are fatherless and we have people coming and going and sometimes the majority of these kids don't know who their mother is . . . we have all this disturbance in the

classroom. We have 45 minutes in the classroom and it takes 22 minutes to settle the kids down.”

So this problem and the root of the solution lies with the parents. The parents in the district are not instructing their children in any way, much less proper behavior according to Don Paolo. He explained the problem with lack of parental concern another way.

“Let’s take you for an example, in your situation, let’s say you have two children. Things are really, really tight, we are just making it, we are going down hill very rapidly. And there’s other families the same way, so they’ll get together and say, these are our kids, we got to do what we can for our kids. We’ve got to do this, we’ve got to do that. Over here, there’s a piece of land, we can plow that field and grow crops and over here, we can do this, and over here we can do this.”

It was not a matter of being poor, it was a matter of not taking care of and instructing their children that concerned Don Paolo. For him, these parents were committing the unthinkable, they were turning their back on their families and their children. “They don’t read to their kids, they don’t supervise their kids, they don’t instruct their kids, and most importantly, they don’t love their kids.”

Returning to the behavior problems in the classrooms, Don Paolo spoke of removing the student from the classroom and calling in the principal. He warned that this is where support from the home is critical and it is completely lacking. “Now that’s when you run into complications. Now you have no support at home. Now the parent, if there is a parent, will ... argue and call you names. And the names can become very profane and



vulgar at times. Now you have to ask yourself the question, what the hell did I go to college for to put up with this garbage? Your kid's wrong, the law says in loco parentis and I'm his boss, and this is what your son's done. Now get him out of here and go home and straighten him out."

The parents are not providing the support to the school and often create disturbances themselves. The district then needs to remove both the student and the parent from the school. Emphasizing the need for parental responsibility and control, Don Paolo stated, "See, you've got to have cooperation. When your child is out of line, and we have to call for backup, to come up here and straighten out this kid because we can't straighten him out. [The parents need to say to their child] We're not going to have you come up here and cause any complications. That is your job [the parents'] to take that kid and listen to the instructor and say what are you doing up there? We're not going to put up with this at home. But you see that don't happen. That's what causes all the problems."

Don Paolo contrasted the parents in the district today with his parents and the parents of others his age; he pointed out the differences in economic climate between the two eras. I remarked that when "you got out of line in this neighborhood or any other neighborhood, and somebody jerked you back in line, one of the parents did. When did these changes occur?" Don Paolo was almost apologetic because his response "was heard over and over again like a broken record." He proceeded to instruct me in the ways of the parents of his age.

"What happened was when I went school in Aliquippa, Aliquippa was a booming, booming town. Everyone worked, all fathers worked. A large variety of ethnic peoples,

Italians, Serbians, Croatians, Lebanese, African Americans, Polish, Slovak, we had it all. Everybody went to work at 8:00 in the morning and at 4:00 in the afternoon the father was home. And that's the key, the father was home. And pretty much basically it was, your father must have told you once, twice, three times, you get into trouble at that school, then we'll take care of it right here. But the fact of the matter is, when the school called up your house, and said, "your son has caused complications in his Problems of Democracy class. And then you said, "What? What's he doing?" real loud. "Well he told the teacher he wasn't going to do none of that damn work." "My son?" "Yeah." "I'll take care of it." Boom. There was no more discussion. So, the son would come home, the door would open up, and your father would be waiting there with that strap, smack him across his face, knock him down the cellar steps, and he never had an opportunity to open up his mouth whether he did it right or wrong. So you say, God Almighty, you know, it's come to an end."

Emphasizing that there were no excuses offered or accepted, Don Paolo offered no apologies for what would now be considered unconscionable and even illegal conduct on the part of the parents. The children simply accepted such conduct. Virtually every child had parents who reacted in the same ways and placed the same demands on their children. If there were values that were shared throughout the community at that time, they were the absolute values of parental authority and that there would be no trouble at school; the teachers reigned supreme. In fact Don Paolo remarked that even the toughest guys he knew, guys who had no fears, were afraid of their fathers and the threat that the teacher would call home. He spoke of a friend who played football at a major college and finished

the game with a broken leg. He could not quit because his father, who had never seen him play football in college before, called off work to see him play.

“When it came time to eat dinner, all the fathers in the neighborhood had a [distinctive] whistle. So when you hear the whistle you said is that my father, your father? Everybody started running to get home. It was compulsory that if your father was home at 4:00, you ate at quarter after 4. You ate quarter after 4. That meant that you were sitting at that table with mother, father, brother, sister, everybody in that house was sitting at that table eating. And whatever mother made, we all ate. There was none of this stuff, ‘Well, I don’t like that’ [or] ‘I’m 25 minutes late, a half-hour late’, because you weren’t a half-hour late, because there was a consequence. Everybody is born with free will and you exercise your free will. However, you have to pay the consequences. Your father says, hey I want you here at 4:15, I want you here at 4:30 and you come in at quarter after 5, you can expect trouble. And your excuse, no matter what the excuse was, was not good enough, was not legitimate.” The notion of no excuses offered, and of no excuse being legitimate was to continue to surface in our interviews.

Contrasting the home life then and now, Don Paolo noted, “Now, let’s go this way, now we have no fathers, very few if any, nobody’s eating together, nobody knows what time they’re coming home, there’s just an I don’t care attitude about anything.”

The concept of time, regularity and continuity in the lives of the children at that time would be emphasized again when I asked about the mill whistles which marked the shift changes at the mills. The mill whistles signaled the shift changes at the mills. Fathers went to work and when the mill whistles sounded, one shift would end as another started.

Fathers were either at work or soon coming home from the mills. Everyday represented the same routine. I asked about the regularity and routine in the lives of Don Paolo's students.

“Well, the majority of these kids don't know that they have to work for a living. They have never seen their parents work. How do you know you have to work? The old saying was 'wait 'til your father gets home!' Home from what? Where is he going? Where is he? You know, at 4:00 and another bad thing was if your father was on 12 to 8 shift, the midnight shift, come home, go to bed, God forbid if this thing (the phone) ever rang and you had troubles at the school. Because see now, at 4:00 he got up now and it came time to eat, he was half asleep, he was hungry, and he's not going to hear any nonsense from school. He's just not going to put up with any nonsense from the school.”

The strict rules of conduct were the same at virtually every home in the community. Since most of the fathers worked shifts at the mills, when they were working night shifts and sleeping during the day, the children were quiet or were away from the home. Parental authority was unquestioned and no matter how tough you were, you feared the wrath of your father. Don Paolo offered an example of absolute parental authority.

“And, you know, let me give you a typical example. My father isn't a very educated person. When I went to Aliquippa High School we had very large restrooms. I was a football player and I didn't smoke. So you go in there, and when that bell rings, you go in there and they are all lighting up these cigarettes. Well, that didn't bother me, I didn't smoke. Going to the bathroom, here comes the principal and he pulls everybody out. You have two choices here, home for three days or take six swats (with a paddle). Wait a

minute, I don't smoke. Home for three days or take six swats. Well, I go, I'm on the football team, I got [ a big football game] New Castle coming up, whatever you do, don't let Coach [Aschman] know that I'm getting swatted, because I'll take the six swats, but I don't smoke. I get five swats, on the sixth swat here comes Coach [Aschman]. He catches the guy with me. What did he do? Well, he was in there Coach and they were smoking. Now, not only did I get the six swats for something I didn't do, now I'm going to get blasted by him, [Aschman] the football coach. Now when my father finds out, that's going to be curtains. Now here's what the final outcome was, I missed three days of practice. I was severely mentally harassed, and when I went back to practice there was a pack of Winstons on my dressing hook. There was a pack of empty Winstons on the seven man Carothers machine that I used to hit, and every time I did something, 'let's all light up folks let's take a cigarette break.' And my father said, look I believe you. But from now on, you're never to go into that bathroom again for the rest of the year. But what if I have to go to the bathroom? Wait until you come home. I don't want you in that bathroom at all." As a result Don Paolo simply waited until he got home or had football practice to go to the bathroom. He was guilty by association and in order to avoid any possible association with wrong doing, he was simply ordered not to go to the bathroom. Without question, Don Paolo obeyed his father's orders. After all rules were rules, and there were no excuses for not following the rules.

The parents were the rulers in the house and the concept of innocent until proven guilty was lost under this authoritarian rule. Don Paolo told me about the time he and his friends went to drink beer, but he changed his mind and did not drink any. "I sure hope we

don't get caught because Coach [Aschman] will make us run laps until our tongues fall out." As luck would have it, he and his friends were caught. It mattered little if you did anything or not. "I don't care, you're guilty. You see you're guilty."

Don Paolo, with regret in his voice, talked about how today the situation is different.

Before, the parents handled the situation. The students were responsible for their behavior and the parents expected no trouble. If the student made a mistake, there were consequences for their decisions and the student could expect little sympathy from anyone. Now you have relatives interfering, lawyers threatening lawsuits and requiring proof of guilt. "It has turned out to be nothing but a mess."

Contrasting the family of the past with the family of today's students, Don Paolo pointed to the absence of fathers. He reflected on the importance of having the fathers at home to provide discipline and guidance and love to their children. "You can't imagine the fathers we had out for Little League and Midget football. They never missed a practice ... they were there everyday. [Now] There is something wrong, they're not spending quality time with these kids, and these kids don't know what the hell to do with themselves."

He noted that the problems in the district were not limited to a specific race since both blacks and whites were in the same situation with the same deficiencies. He then claimed that the adjacent districts and the rest of the county viewed the problems in the district as problems solely within the African - American community in his district since it wasn't that way when there was a white majority. Don Paolo talked about the disgraceful situation with the Midland students [from a neighboring district] going to school in East Liverpool, Ohio [a bordering state]. No district in the county would take the Midland

students [from a neighboring district] since they had a significant African - American population and the [Midland] students [from a neighboring district] would not come to Aliquippa since Aliquippa had a majority African - American population, claiming it was too far away.

No politician would intervene on behalf of the Midland students [from a neighboring district] since it is considered a political liability. Don Paolo also believes that the Governor is not going to intervene until the state representatives support his plan to introduce vouchers into the state. “You give him what he wants, he’ll give you what you want” he says.

In a meeting with the President of [University of Pittsburgh] a local university and three major manufacturers, Don Paolo asked how they could help solve the problem with the Distressed Seven school districts. Since all seven were failing, they were seeking help from any one who would offer. Expressing concern for the children of these districts and the willingness of the superintendents to learn from whatever mistakes they have made, the superintendents asked for suggestions on how to solve the problem. No one responded with a solution.

One of the manufacturers then replied, “you know, I don’t think we could get the votes to help you.” At this time, Don Paolo’s voice rose. The anger and frustration of many years had not yet subsided and he shouted, “How dare you make that statement to me? You can’t get the votes to help me? Don’t these kids count? Are we still going to have statistic after statistic of shootings and robbery and drugs and alcohol on the news consistently because these kids aren’t educated because they [the legislators] don’t care?”

The frustration was apparent as he continued, speaking for his students. “How do you expect me to compete in the work force? How do you expect me to compete in college? How do you expect me to compete in vocational schools if you don’t expose me and give me the things that I need [to compete]? I know I’m troubled. I know I’m troubled. I know I’m involved with drugs. I know I’m involved with alcohol. I know I need my ass kicked. Someone better come down here and straighten out this God Damn oak tree because if you don’t straighten it out I’ll guarantee you one thing, you are going to pay attention to me ten years down the road. ... So now what are you telling me? These kids aren’t worth it?”

Don Paolo sat silent for a while as the gravity of the situation replayed itself in his mind. “What I’m saying to you [the state representatives] is this, give me some ... help. Give me somebody that is going to help me in the classroom, and help me in the home, or straighten out these parents.” Since it was beyond the resources of the community to ‘straighten out the parents’, he advocated that the government intervene by mandating work fare programs and frequent assessment of the home life of the child. He talked about how many of the children have low expectations, so low in fact that many children had no expectations at all. They had no idea that something had to be done with their lives, since so many did not see anyone else doing anything with their lives. Then he talked about how these students have for the most part accepted their fate, and the community has accepted that fate as well.

While he recognized that it was not possible to save all of the students in the district, additional financial resources from the state would at least permit him to save some



of them. If he could not control the situation at home for his students, at least he could control the situation at school and there they would be given an opportunity to succeed. Those who were marginally at risk would at least have a chance of not being “dragged down into the swamp.” In order to elaborate, Don Paolo spoke of the number of problems he has had with crime in the district. In eight years as a superintendent he has had 15 students sent to prison for rape and murder, “one kid killed his mother and father. I’ve been to the magistrate 1,500 times in my 32 years. I lost 98 percent of the cases. You know, what the hell gives here?”

Angered that the conditions in prison were often better than the conditions at home, Don Paolo questioned our priorities as a society. The prisoner receives access to education, air conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter, health care, food and treatment for mental problems. The homeless who committed no crime get none of those things. “Where the hell are our priorities?”

Turning to my original question, Don Paolo responded simply that when the mills shut down, people left the community seeking work elsewhere. The only people left were the retired, the unemployed and unemployable. “Now you’ve got problems.” What people are not saying is “that kid needs his ass kicked. That kid’s mother needs her tubes tied. How many babies you gonna bring into this world and not love them, supervise them, instruct them, and take care of them? How many fetal alcohol babies are we going to have to support? How many crack babies are we going to have to support?” He was unwavering in adamantly maintaining that the parents’ had the children and were responsible for raising those children. Without the parents assuming responsibility for the

situation, the district is faced with the nearly impossible situation of trying to educate children who were products of either fetal alcohol syndrome or crack addicted mothers. “These kids cause complications in school.” He referred to complications like attention deficit disorder or some learning disability, or behavior problems where the children are aggressive, and irritable with poor socialization skills. Referring once again to the lack of political support, he commented that these politicians claim to vote in support of their position, but they were always outvoted.

The anger over the seemingly hopeless situation was apparent when he spoke of a comment by a state senator from Philadelphia. The senator claimed to be “appalled” when he learned about third and fourth graders in the Philadelphia school district could not read. “Who the hell you fooling buddy?”, Don Paolo asked. “That’s [one of ] the most vicious school districts in the United States. Do you know what the hell is going on in that classroom? And you want to fire teachers? Huh. Come on!”

Once again he cited the need for parents to assume responsibility for the students’ behavior in the classroom. Unexpectedly, he shouted, “There’s no one at home reading to them!” It was apparent that Don Paolo felt that by reading to their children, parents would show in an important way their love for them.

Using my own children as an example, he asked pointedly if they were good students. I replied that they were and he challenged me again. “You think there’s a reason?” When I replied that I’d like to think that I was part of that reason, he talked about the real reason.

“I read to my kids. I spent time with my kids, my kids had a problem with their

math, I worked with my kids, my wife worked with my kids, we did things together as a family, my son asked me questions, my daughter ... I gave them answers. Wouldn't that be something if all parents did that? Now, where would we be? You think we'd have all these at risk kids at second grade? [We] have an over abundance of students at risk in these schools." The frustration got the better of him for a moment and Don Paolo said apologetically, "I hate to get carried away like this."

The concern that he had for his students was reflected in his attempt to secure funding from the politicians in state government. It was also evident in his concern for having his students burdened with an environment of poverty and crime. Most of all perhaps, Don Paolo was concerned with parents who were failing their children. "We need to get these kids away from this environment. ... I had programs every day after school. I fed these kids every day after school. I ran my own programs because it was better that they be with me than to be home. Isn't that sad?"

The difficulty with his students, Don Paolo told me, is that they have to be fed before they even get to school. Often they have to be clothed properly because you cannot teach a hungry, cold child. Where feeding your children is "customary in your house," Don Paolo's students sometimes don't eat from Friday at lunchtime to Monday at breakfast at the school. To illustrate his example of schools getting out of the education business and getting more into the social work business, he talked about schools serving two of the three main daily meals to students. The parents were just not doing their job, they were failing their children.

When I asked him "what in this situation can change?" He responded quickly that

the salvation was that we would have to get these uneducated parents back into school with their children so they could learn how to be a parent, so we would not continue to have babies raising babies. “I never heard of such a thing, 13, 14 years old having babies, and no shame.” They need to learn “how to raise a child, how to discipline a child.” The parents have to be held accountable.

I questioned the association between education and reward for his students and found that he had little to say about this relationship, largely because his students fail to make any connection between the two. For example, he explained about how he had to work as a student at Fork Union Military Academy. He excelled as a student at Fork Union and won a scholarship to the University of Tennessee [a major university] to play football. There he realized that he was still behind. “What did I do to myself?” he asked, taking full responsibility for the situation that he had placed himself.

His own students do not understand that you have to work to make good grades. “What is it to make a genuine B or genuine C? When someone asks you how you did on the test, you made a C. Well, how did you make that C? Well, I read chapters 1 through 5, I go over my notes, I did this. But when he says, ‘Well, I went in there and wrote what I had to write’, but when you go to college it ain’t that way. ... When you go in as a doorknob, these high powered academicians will eat you up alive. They don’t care how big you are, how strong you are, they’ll eat you up alive. You just can’t come up here to put in time.”

Don Paolo reflected on his college experiences and noted how far he had come from his days as a student in high school who did not apply himself. He remarked at how

many things remain to be done in his district to educate these children. He began to question out loud, “What is school? It is a gathering place, it is a community within a community. It is a place where you learn. What have your parent talked to you about learning? When you go home, do they talk to you at the dinner table about learning? What did you learn?” He talked about the need for parents to help their children to give them a “helping hand.” He emphasized that the learning process is a partnership between the schools and the parents, but in his district, no partnership exists. As a result, “some students will make it but there are going to be a lot that aren’t going to make it.”

Using Tom Brokaw as an example, Don Paolo once again stressed the need for sound reading skills and the need for reading to be a daily exercise with children. Brokaw was an avid reader and that was the basis for his success as a journalist.

Don Paolo now asked the question “What happens to the teachers?” He answered his own question by responding that they experienced high rates of burn out and wanting to retire. He also spoke of the problems with teachers getting attacked physically. “They didn’t go to college to get beat up. They didn’t go to college to be called ‘MF’er or to be told to kiss my ass.’ They went to college to teach school. So maybe we shouldn’t send them to school for four years for History, and English and Math. We should send them to school to be fighters.”

## INTERPRETATIONS

From the beginning of the interviews, one could tell that Don Paolo was going to use parables as metaphors for education and for experiencing the values of his world. The

Greek word for “parable” is *parabole*. Literally, parable means juxtaposition, to juxtapose, in Greek *parabollein*, to put side by side (Mussner, 1965). In explaining the use of parables as metaphors, Bernard Brandon Scott explains that “Parable as metaphor is generated from the experiential world of the teller.” (Scott, p.13). Using Jesus’ parables as examples, Scott notes that parables express the incomprehensible in terms of the comprehensible. “By its very nature metaphor creates new meaning. Meaning is contained in neither A or B [the parable or the metaphorical narrative], but is effected in their juxtaposition.” (Scott, p.13). This is the approach used by Don Paolo as he used these parables through narratives to allow us to comprehend his world and his experience. It is not possible for us to understand the value system of his world as a young student and to contrast it with the value system of his students or their parents without these narratives.

In the first of these interviews, Don Paolo makes it very clear that the distressed districts kept getting rejected in their pleas for help. They viewed their situation as punishment for being poor or on the wrong side of the political tracks or for being African - American. He noted the futility of incentives and test scores as a cure for the districts’ ills when he asked “Now what have you proved?” It was, as stated earlier by Galbraith, that the wealthy needed incentives while the poor were to rely on the spur of their own poverty. This causes us to question how these districts can ever rise far above their current status since the fall downward seems to be quick and deep, while the climb upward is steep and slow. Any upward pace at all, particularly when relying on incentives which would make up a very minor portion of their budget, would be at a glacial pace for these districts. Improvements at such a slow rate would only serve to prolong their status as poorer

performing districts.

The stories of the nonproductive efforts with the state representatives are particularly meaningful. The efforts of the superintendents were frustrating and not fruitful which would confirm Bandura's notion that one simply gives up after a series of continual failures. Failing to master this experience, the superintendents failed to build efficacy within themselves or their communities. None of the Distressed Seven districts has turned themselves around either academically or economically.

Solzhenitsyn in the *Gulag Archipelago* tells of a zek, a prisoner in the Gulag. The zek notices an ant in the bottom of his teacup. The ant tries to crawl out so the zek continually pushes the ant down to the bottom of the teacup. The zek begins to count the number of tries and notices that after 182 tries and 182 failures, the ant simply huddles at the bottom of the teacup. It never again tries to escape. The ant has given up any attempt to get free.

Solzhenitsyn saw the ant as a metaphor for the Russian people, the Soviet Union as the massive teacup and the Russian people huddled at the bottom, passively accepting the rule of the Communists. We might view the story of the superintendents' failures with the political representatives as Solzhenitsyn's ants. The teacup represents the political and economic forces thwarting the efforts of the distressed districts forcing them into continual failure. The ants are the superintendents who finally give up and accept the fate that they will not be able to turn their districts around.

Another view of the story of the superintendents' failures and Solzhenitsyn's story is from the view of the students. Failing to get what they need to succeed or not even

knowing that they need anything else in their lives causes them to even fail to try to succeed academically. They and their children now become like Solzhenitsyn's ants huddling at the bottom of the academic and socio-economic teacup.

The community similarly may provide a metaphor for the ants. Failing in their attempts to attract new businesses and jobs, failing to keep the younger people employed and involved positively in their community, the community becomes Solzhenitsyn's ant, accepting of its' fate. The only escape from the teacup is to leave and abandon attempts at recovery and transformation. In Solzhenitsyn's Soviet Union, the Ukraine votes the Communists into power with each election. In Don Paolo's community, the community votes for incompetent school board members in each election. Don Paolo spoke of the incompetent school board members who were only interested in socializing and the perks of the position, such as trips to conventions or tickets to sporting events, without caring about the needs of education, the students, or the community. The school board members would close meetings before business or discussions were finished to go to a local bar to watch football games on television rather than spend the time discussing educational issues. While in the pre-Soviet Union days, the Ukraine was known as the "bread basket of Europe," today it has sunk into an economic black hole. Like the Ukraine, the distressed districts once productive taxpaying communities, have sunken into their own economic black holes.

Galbraith cited earlier spoke of the culture of the contented and their desire to maintain their contentment. Sennett told of the people living in the suburbs having defined a good neighbor as one who lived without incident, one who did not disturb their



contentment. The superintendents of the distressed districts could not be described as good neighbors because they disturbed the contentment of their more prosperous neighbors. These superintendents brought their problems to the doorstep of their representatives and their neighbors and consequently, were not living without incident. It is not surprising then that the superintendents were told, "This is your problem, go back and solve it."

Don Paolo related the story of the Doctor and the poor patient. He spoke of the Doctor's compassion for the poor patient, 'let me try to do something to help out this sick man.' The Doctor, in the view of Don Paolo, was a metaphor for the state representatives and the superintendents in the neighboring districts, the poor patient who was infested with illness was the Distressed Seven districts. When the Doctor turns their back on the sick patient, they are showing that they just do not care about their problem. When the state representatives and neighboring superintendents turn their backs on the Distressed Seven districts, like the Doctor, they are showing that they just do not care either. These superintendents even refused to give him suggestions of things he and the other superintendents of the distressed districts could try.

There may be another view of the narrative, one that Don Paolo never contemplated or perhaps never intended. In this view, the Doctor is a Banker. The Banker never refuses a loan to someone who is well off enough financially and those who do not need a loan, those who can pay for the Doctor's services. On the other hand, those in need, the patients infested with illness are turned away. Now it is appropriate to argue that the Banker, unlike the Doctor, takes no Hippocratic oath, but only makes an oath with the

investors or with capitalist dogma to gather more profits and to grow more wealth. There is no oath to share that wealth with those most in need. That much is certainly true and in fact is the way the economic game is played. This view is in keeping with the Protestant ethic. John Wesley (cited earlier) summed up the role of economics in the life of the Protestant when he said, “we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich.” One does not accumulate riches in the eyes of such a God by giving riches away. The act of giving is in fact inappropriate because it causes others to lack industry. Sir William Petty (cited earlier) said that Calvinists and Baptists believe that Labor and Industry is their duty towards God. This is the conservative argument being made today and Don Paolo makes the argument that welfare teaches the recipient to not work. Hewitt, a steelmaker and member of the House of Representatives (cited earlier), envisioned a higher civilization where the steelmakers “could employ less intelligent men” for it was indeed up to the master to do the thinking. Perhaps now the superintendents of the wealthier districts and the state representatives view a similar civilization where the less fortunate, that is the less intelligent, who are no longer required as Hewitt and Holley’s ‘hack laborers’ and can now be ignored or rejected through indifference. Durkheim noted that the law reflects the values of society and defines an act as a crime if society condemns the act as harmful to society; the rejection of the act by society classifies the act as socially evil. By ignoring the pleas of the superintendents for help, the society of the state and the society of the local superintendents have condemned the act of economic misfortune as socially evil and have clearly shown their rejection of this act. The act of economic collapse Don Paolo viewed

as beyond the control of his community, but none the less, 'you are guilty.' Don Paolo referred to the plight of the homeless and compared it to the conditions of the criminal. Perhaps he is correct in concluding that the act of homelessness is a more serious crime than crimes that result in incarceration of the criminal and is consequently rejected by society more seriously.

Yet another interpretation of the parable of the Doctor is possible. The Doctor is the parent in the community who tries to do something to cure the patient infested with illness, the children. The caring parent searches for something to help the child, to cure the child and protect them from the illness that infests them. The illness might be the environment that sickens the children under the parents' care. Don Paolo continued to emphasize, in this first interview, the importance to the patient of the participation of the caring Doctor.

Another parable that surfaced in the interview with Don Paolo, was the parable of the garden. He referred to gardens in the first interview and many times in subsequent interviews. In this interview, Don Paolo spoke of the plot of land and plowing the land to grow crops. The gardener a metaphor for parents, either separately or together, tries to do something to take care of their children. "And there's other families the same way, so they'll get together and say, these are our kids, we got to do what we can for our kids." These gardeners are acting as a community with shared values that their children are prized possessions and are to be cared for and nurtured. Don Paolo once referred to the section of town where he was raised and spoke of the fine gardens that were there in his youth. "Now I wouldn't eat a tomato out of one of those gardens, if there are any, if it was the

last damn tomato on earth.” These new parents are not tending their gardens in the view of Don Paolo and there are no excuses for not tending your metaphoric garden. There could be no economic rescue of the community and consequently the district in his eyes. There could be no turn around of the community because the members of the community did not know how to turn such a thing around with parents who let it get out of control in the first place. These parents do not know how to plant or tend the garden, they had never been taught to do so.

Don Paolo spoke often of his relationship with his parents and especially his father. One may conclude that the relationship that Don Paolo has with his father is similar to the relationship he had with his students. He cared for his students after school because it was better that they be there with him. He would protect them, he would try to care for them as his father cared for and protected him. Don Paolo’s career in education after a troubled start as a student is his way of honoring his parents. He alone would still speak for the values that they ingrained in him, even if the parents of his students did not subscribe to those same values or did not know how to implement those values in their children.

When speaking of a school as a gathering place, a community within a community, Don Paolo addresses the role of education. Are we to educate people to make a living or are we to educate people to make a life? Don Paolo seems to believe that the purpose of education, particularly the education provided by the parents outside of school is to instruct their children in the making of a life. William Sloan Coffin, Jr. asks, “How many educators of all kinds consider the great implacabilities of human life, death and suffering, fate and sin, worthy of study? Why, most are paid to avoid these issues, as we educate not to make

a life but to make a living.” (Coffin, p. 4). Don Paolo’s students’ parents, by not instructing their children, are educating them in a way to make a living, that living happens to be welfare and unemployment. By tolerating behavior and even advocating behavior that for Don Paolo’s parents would be incomprehensible, the parents in the district are instructing their children in a different set of values. These values are clearly in conflict with the values lived by earlier generations in the district. Unless these differences in values can be reconciled, then the building of community cannot begin. These conflicting values are reflected most often in the narratives provided by the community and its’ members.

Don Paolo remarked that many of his students made no connection of the relationship between education and reward at all. Noting that he had lost a number of students to the prisons and even death, one imagines a group of lost souls. Here the danger is no longer that the students in the district have lost their academic souls, but that one-day they may have no souls to lose. Coffin states that it is “Small wonder that higher education paradoxically has never enjoyed a level of performance so high and a level of influence so low, influence on students of a nation which as a whole knows even less than its educators where to look for meaning.” (Coffin, p. 5). If students in higher education happen to know less than the educators about where to look for meaning, how much less do the students in a distressed district know about where to find meaning in education or in their lives? Neitzsche stated that “if a man has a why for his life, then he can bear with almost any how.” (Coffin, p. 3). In order to provide Don Paolo’s students with a why for their lives to bear the hows of a third world environment, the meaning of education and

learning must be made clear to them. Don Paolo urges the parents to provide their children with learning experiences so they can lead meaningful lives. These meaningful lives should be modeled after meaningful lives lived by the parents. A meaningful life may be reflected in something as simple as the tending of a garden and transferring that teaching onto the children so they can tend their own gardens. A meaningful life led by the parents becomes a necessary but not sufficient condition for the proper education of the children. Coupled with the proper financial resources and proper facilities, in the words of Don Paolo, ‘then you’ve really got something.’

## INTERVIEW TWO

Don Paolo met me at the side door and asked me if I knew what the word “education” meant. I told him I thought I knew what the purpose of education was and he quickly moved on to the meaning. “Education comes from the Latin *educare*, which means to develop, to develop the mind, the body, the soul. That’s what we’re there for, to develop.”

He went on to explain that the Boards of school districts and some superintendents do not know our purpose in education. The Board members sometimes do not care, and most importantly, they do not listen. If they would listen, then they might learn to care, but some just do not. “Tragedy occurs with the lack of programs, especially in ... these shot and beer towns. Do you know how many murders, stabbings, and shootings I’ve been through?” Marginal students get lost without these extra programs to keep them busy after school.

I then asked Don Paolo about the students who get lost at schools where no resource shortage exists, places like Columbine. He shrugged and said that Columbine would not happen at a place like Aliquippa because “it’s not our style.” Perhaps it is a perverse benefit that we have students who have outbursts in the classrooms, because they are confrontational as individuals to individuals. He remarked that Columbine is a very comfortable area with parents who are professionals. The children at Columbine were not confrontational and do not cause outbursts in the classrooms. They go home and build pipe bombs in the basement. “Somebody wasn’t paying attention to these kids. ... Kids aren’t the same as kids 35 years ago because they don’t have the same type of fathers at home.” He reiterated the problem with children lacking fathers by noting that if “you stepped out of line, then you got a smack across the head.” Without the fathers at home, no one is there to correct the children. “Call it child abuse or what ever you want, there were no problems, not like we have today”. Again, Don Paolo placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the parents.

The rule of the parents was absolute when he grew up and there were consequences for running afoul of your parents. Don Paolo told me that “even the toughest guys had to be home at 4:15 to eat.” He told me the story of a friend of his who was late for dinner. This is the friend who asked him to come home with him, “If I’m late, my father is going to kill me.” When he came home late for dinner, there were six people sitting at the table. The mother and sister were cooking. Don Paolo and his friend entered the kitchen. His friend sat down next to the father. Without a sound, the father hit him across the face and said, “Get out, if you don’t want to come here at 4:15, then you don’t eat. Get out.” It

was not that the conduct of the father was unusual, it happened to everybody in the whole town. The parents loved their children dearly, but they ran their house in a particular way, and if you lived there, you had to abide by the rules of the house.

Parents held children accountable for things 35 years ago. When he was 5, he passed out catalogs for his fathers business. When he was 8 years old, he could make change for a \$20 bill. When he was 16, he ran his fathers whole sales operation. His father told him, “if you don’t collect the money, I can’t pay for food, electric, and water.” Don Paolo explained how he learned that lesson from his father. One day he was supposed to collect the payments on his father’s route and he failed to do it. He came home and told his father that he had a bad day today and nobody could pay him. Then he asked his father for his wages, \$2.25 for 8 hours work. His father asked how he could pay him if he failed to collect any money. Don Paolo nodded his head, excused himself from the table and went back out to collect the money. He came home just before midnight after collecting all the money owed to his father. Don Paolo quickly calculated that his hourly rate was cut in half since it took him 16 hours to earn what he would normally in 8 hours. He learned that there were consequences for your actions and that he needed to be responsible and accountable. He also learned that there would be no excuses for not getting the job done. Don Paolo vowed, “I’ll never do that again.” Responsibility and accountability and consequences for your actions are values that Don Paolo felt are lacking in the community today and that the parents were failing to pass on these values to their children. These parents were failing to educate their children in these values and consequently were failing to develop their children as responsible citizens.



One time Don Paolo's father bought a pair of Converse shoes to give as a present. The recipient refused to wear the shoes because he did not wear Converse, "he would rather do without." Don Paolo wanted to know where those values came from. "Where did you learn that? Where were the parents?" He questioned the kind of values taught to that child by the primary educator of the child, the child's parents.

"A school is a community within a community", Don Paolo stated. The values we learn at home are the values we bring into the school. The conduct of the students will begin to reflect those values; a school is simply a mirror of the larger society that supports the school. "All these different value systems come under one roof. ... This is the reason that outcome-based education never flew. They never called superintendents in to see if this thing was going to fly." These outcomes reflect personal value systems and those are not always shared values.

One of the great problems of education, according to Don Paolo, is the lack of base knowledge. In order to make his point, Don Paolo spoke of a surgeon performing an operation and training others in the procedure. There is a part of the procedure that cannot be visualized; the location for the incision must be felt. Everything must be experienced to perform the incision correctly. The surgeon has this experience and passes that experience on to others.

No one questions the surgeon's expertise or training. The state department of education failed to ask the superintendents in the state for their input regarding outcome-based education. "They just dumped it down our throats." He told of a meeting at a local school to discuss outcome-based education and the response of the public. He reminded

me that when dealing with the public, “your answer doesn’t count. This lady with the superintendency started quoting from her dissertation. This guy said, ‘What the hell I care about your dissertation? I don’t want my kid to learn that garbage.’” The superintendents of the 500 districts in the state were never asked for their input and Don Paolo questioned why that would occur. He wondered why we are vacillating on educational issues, why was everything made a political issue with strategies changing with each new administration in Harrisburg. No one seems to ask the superintendents about what would work. People who are not educators are forming educational policies at both the state and local level. Non-educators decide the policy and assign the responsibility for its’ implementation to the superintendents.

“There is something, something wrong. Are we concerned about kids in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania?” Don Paolo questioned our commitment and concern about the students in Pennsylvania again. “What about the 15,000 kids in the Distressed Seven? Aren’t we concerned about them?” To resolve this issue, he once went to Harrisburg to talk to Don Carroll the Secretary of Education. He was told, “your children’s education, the success of their education will be solely based on your tax base in your community... now, one must ask about the meaning of public education. Public [education] means for everyone. If it is public then it should all be the same.” The educational opportunity that a student receives should not be based upon where the students’ parents reside. “If we do care, then why do we have such disparities across the state? Why does Black Lick school district have to beg for money every year?”

Don Paolo drew an inverted triangle and explained how it reflected the classes and

resources in society, few people with many resources at the top and many people with few resources at the bottom. He explained that there would be remarkable exceptions where people would move become upwardly socially mobile, but they were rare. “These kids have no knowledge, their parents have no knowledge. We’ve go to go back and teach these parents before we teach these kids.” He spoke of the parents suffering from a financial poverty, but they also suffered from heritage poverty. The people had no heritage knowledge to pass on to their children. There would not only be no inheritance of financial riches; there would be no knowledge base to pass on to the children to give them the skills to build a life.

Recalling his childhood, Don Paolo spoke of a time when everyone worked and Aliquippa had one of the best schools in the state. “Everyone cared.” They cared about their families, their children, and each other. The mill collapse was swift and total in the 1980s. The owners did not care what happened to the town and in fact tried to avoid paying back taxes to the district. Recent economic expansions have escaped the milltown and its’ inhabitants. There is a new plant being constructed outside of town that will employ approximately 250 people, but “they won’t live in Aliquippa.” The town has fallen too far and has a terrible reputation in the county. As a result, even the influx of some new jobs has limited benefit to the residents of the town. People will not move into the town because they do not want their children going to a school system where there are so many behavior problems interfering with the learning process. There is not much that can begin a turn around the town or the school system until the parents change the behavior of their children. What was lacking, Don Paolo said, was the discipline of our fathers.

I asked Don Paolo about the expectations of the children and their parents. He replied “go to school”, or to “get out of here”, or “I don’t care”, or “if you do good, you’ll do good.” The expectations range from an unfocused indifference “go to school”, or escape “I don’t care”, or a perception that their future was beyond their control “if you do good, you’ll do good.”

The guidance, supervision, instruction, the love, security, and support of the parents and extended family was missing. “It’s not the kids fault, they don’t get it at home.” Public assistance releases parents from the responsibility of raising their children. He emphasized that conclusion by noting that many of the elementary school children, and even more of the public assistance children in the district are on Ritalin.

Don Paolo spoke sorrowfully and angrily of a child who hid under a teacher’s desk, disrupting the classroom. The school psychologist was able to determine that the child hid under the furniture to escape violence at home as his mother’s boyfriend beat the mother regularly. “What teaching is he getting [at home]? What do his test scores look like? Instead of asking math questions, we should be asking, how many times did your mother get beat up this week?”

Citing the need for discipline in the lives of the students, Don Paolo spoke of the opportunity to develop an Army ROTC program presented at one time to the district. While the Army absorbed most of the cost, and provided the equipment and staffing, the board voted 8 to 1 against the proposal. Don Paolo felt that the district blew an opportunity, although if the public had learned about the opportunity, some would have supported it. The board members either do not know or do not care about the students, in

the opinion of Don Paolo. The board members are not concerned about education, they are only concerned about the perks provided to them from the business community seeking to do business with the district.

Don Paolo spoke favorably about the Army ROTC program and compared it to his experience at Fork Union Military Academy. The students were provided with “rules of how to live.” The program was disciplined and difficult. The program at Fork Union was so difficult that Don Paolo’s roommate committed suicide; Don Paolo “had no choice” but to continue. Before the Fork Union experience, Don Paolo scored only 540 on the college boards, after one year at Fork Union, his college scores increased to 1000. After a university college board course, his scores increased to 1340. He was instilled with seriousness of purpose, something missing with his students today. Lacking a seriousness of purpose, the students make no connection between performance and reward.

Don Paolo concluded reluctantly that there was “no way out for these kids.” The funds spent on public education with these types of schools are considered a “lousy social investment.” The public is fed up and they are going to charter schools or any other educational alternative.

We spoke a little longer about the disparity in funding within public schools and I got up to leave. It was then that Don Paolo decided to provide me with a narrative about his childhood. Don Paolo told me a story about when he was young; he always wanted a banana split from the local Isaly's, a local store. Don Paolo’s friends all stopped at Isaly’s with their fathers after Little League games, and got banana splits. Don Paolo’s father bought him an ice cream cone. He begged his father and worked hard and asked his father

if he could have a banana split. His father kept telling him, “some day Paulie [Don Paolo], some day.” Don Paolo quit asking since he knew what the answer would be. Finally, years later on his 13th birthday, his father told him to put on his coat they were going for a walk. Don Paolo got dressed reluctantly since it was below zero that day in February and went outside with his father. They walked to the local Isaly's and went inside. The furnace was broken that day, and the lady behind the counter wore a coat and stood there shivering. Don Paolo's father ordered a banana split and requested two spoons. Don Paolo asked why he ordered a banana split and his father told him because it was his birthday and he knew that he always wanted that banana split. So now it was his time to get the banana split. His father had kept his word to his son. Don Paolo had forgotten about wanting the banana split and said thank you. His teeth were chattering so badly from the cold that he couldn't even eat it. His father ate the whole banana split and was upset with Don Paolo because he didn't eat any of the banana split. His father thought that Don Paolo was ungrateful for what the father had tried to do for his son.

## INTERPRETATIONS

Don Paolo wanted to speak to me of the role of education in this interview and he began by explaining the idea of development. As a community of parents, the district was failing to provide the education and development of their children. In the stories of disciplining parents, discipline that by contemporary standards would be considered severe and even illegal, Don Paolo told of parents who were concerned with the development of their children.

In something as simple as being on time for dinner, these parents were telling their children that they needed to be respectful of others, to be accountable, to do what you were expected to do. The meal is a very symbolic event in the family. It is a communal celebration of togetherness and solidarity. The meal represents the nurturing act. In many ways, in ethnic families and especially in Don Paolo's Italian family, the preparation and sharing of the meal is an act of profound intimacy. It is an ultimate act of love. The act of sharing the meal and the preparation of that meal are ways for the mother to say to the family that they are loved and nurtured. The father who has worked to provide the food for the preparation of the meal says that he also loves and nurtures his family. To share the meal together with the family is an act of the sharing of the love and commitment that the family members have for each other. To be late for dinner is to reject the love and nurturing of the family. It is an act that says that their love is not accepted or required; it is an act of rejection and disrespect not to be tolerated. In the ethnic families of the milltowns of the Pittsburgh area, one loved God and their family in that order. That was the rule. There would be no excuse for failing to comply with the rules. The final result was that there would be no difficulties with the children, order was established in the household because children were taught respect for the family, respect for their parents, respect for others and respect for themselves.

Contrast this example with the perceptions that Don Paolo had of school boards. Rather than acting like the parents who would set down absolute rules and standards of conduct, the school boards often act like unruly children who do not view themselves as accountable to the community or students. No order results in this community and respect

is diminished. The end of self-respect brings the death of self-restraint. The community suffers, as individuals cannot conduct themselves according to the rules of the community. Without self-restraint, chaos results.

Perhaps the school boards act like parents who fail to set exemplary standards for their children. It is not important to be respectful of the mother and daughters who toiled to prepare the meal, it was not important to show love and respect for the community. What was important now is self-indulgence, the perks of the position, and using the position on the school board to move to another position of political power. Again, the result is chaos for the community family.

Don Paolo views it as incredible and untenable that educators have such limited input to the educational process. Relating the story of the surgeon and the transfer of experiential knowledge about surgical techniques, Don Paolo spoke of a standard of authority and credentials. These credentials are without dispute in the professional community and in the community at large. No one other than a professional with the appropriate credentials is qualified to speak regarding matters of professional procedure.

He contrasts that standard of professional practice with the educational community. Politicians decide policy without input from educators and often when educators provide input regarding the educational process, the public overrules them. Don Paolo laments this unfortunate circumstance and cites this practice as one of the reason why educational policy is unfocused and seems to vacillate all over the philosophical map. Lacking a base knowledge, the door is then open for the public to enter the educational policy arena with simplistic solutions to complicated problems. In their frustration with perceived failures of



public education, the public is willing to try almost anything else. Research and scholarship have little or no value in the face of public opinion which states, ‘What the hell I care about your dissertation? I don’t want my kid to learn that garbage.’

The narrative of the banana split was one of the more remarkable of the narratives told by Don Paolo. In the narrative of the banana split, we are told of a tale of delayed gratification, for Don Paolo did not receive the banana split for some time. Delayed gratification likely was a value held highly by Don Paolo’s father. As soon as Don Paolo received payment from his father for helping in the father’s business, Don Paolo’s father took him to a local bank to start a savings account. Perhaps the father thought that the reward would even appear sweeter if you had to wait longer to receive it. Don Paolo, on the other hand, appears to have lost all hope for attaining the banana split, and when it finally was obtained, it had little value or interest for him.

The banana split narrative also tells us of changing values between generations. Don Paolo felt that it was not unreasonable to have a banana split where his father may have felt that it was an unnecessary luxury. Why is it necessary to have a banana split when an ice cream cone would have been just as good? Perhaps to Don Paolo’s father, the banana split may have represented a luxury that was too extravagant for a family of his income level. The banana split may have represented living beyond their modest means.

It is curious that Don Paolo’s father ordered the banana split with two spoons. The two spoons represented sharing the rewards between father and son, a family splitting the sweet rewards of their success after many years. No wonder the father viewed Don Paolo’s inability to eat the banana split as the act of an ungrateful son. Don Paolo could

not eat it simply because it was too cold for banana splits.

There are other interpretations of this story. These interpretations concern the Protestant ethic as described earlier by Max Weber and the cultural contradictions of capitalism as argued by Daniel Bell. In the Protestant ethic, we are encouraged to carefully guard our material possessions and to save and invest our monetary possessions. This is a view likely shared by Don Paolo's father. Don Paolo, on the other hand, is a product of Daniel Bell's capitalism. The capitalism of a young Don Paolo is capitalism fueled not by investment, but by consumerism. The Protestant ethic advances the notion that success in an undertaking is a sign of being favored by God, the capitalism of consumerism is quite the opposite and is evidenced by the violation of the commandment to honor one's father. By not eating the banana split, Don Paolo's father may have viewed his son as violating a commandment and saw him as ungrateful. Ungrateful sons do no honor to their fathers. A similar theme was repeated in the fable of my father's name.

In yet another view, Don Paolo's desired outcome, the banana split, is unattainable. Failing to achieve that outcome since it was perceived as beyond his control reduced the efficacy of Don Paolo and he abandoned the goal. He had completely forgotten about the banana split. So thoroughly was this goal abandoned that, even at the age of 13 when he could have purchased the banana split with money earned from helping his father, Don Paolo did not pursue that goal. The banana split no longer mattered and he had quit trying. One might expect that Sennett's father and son, Rico and Enrico would view the narrative of the banana split in a similar fashion; father and son having different views and interpretations.

This narrative has relevance to Don Paolo's students as well. If a desired outcome such as the banana split or academic success is not attained, after a period of time, the students give up trying even though the goals are attainable. The students view the goal as attainable by others, such as Don Paolo's Little League friends, the goal is just not attainable by them. A more sinister view is that which views the parents as preventing the child from attaining the desired goal. While it may be correctly argued that the parents may just be preventing the child from attaining a goal that has little or no value in the development of the child, the child may not be making a connection between performance and reward. In fact, since Don Paolo had commented about how hard he worked and often stated that he had to work harder than his friends, Don Paolo may have viewed the system as prejudicial, with no connection between performance and reward in this case. He worked hard and got no reward while his friends who worked less hard got the ultimate prize, a banana split. Another view is that Don Paolo's father was preparing his son for the ultimate lesson in life, that life is not fair, and that often the reward comes very late in the game, if it comes at all. This lesson is the lesson that has defined the career of Don Paolo as a superintendent. He was to encounter unfair situations throughout his career and would often prevail in the face of adversity. As educators, we need to remember that the banana split would one day be forthcoming. We just don't know when.

### INTERVIEW THREE

Once again, Don Paolo met me at the door of his house and immediately started to

speaking. “We have always had championship teams in Aliquippa. When is the talent going to come to an end? The fact of the matter is it isn't going to come to an end.” Before I could collect my thoughts, I tried to keep up with the conversation. I wanted to know the secret of the success of these teams and asked Don Paolo. “There is nothing there for them [the athletes]. There is no one talking to them about life.” He emphasized that no one is teaching values to these children. The only people they are learning from are famous athletes.

Practices are rough on the athletes and coaches tolerate no verbal or physical abuse from the athletes. The athletes are used to high expectations and demands from the coaches. These athletes are used to being verbally abused and treated roughly in their environment and they do not want to put up with more abuse from the coaches.

Other schools produce top athletes too, Don Paolo noted. Some of the wealthier schools are very successful, producing top of the line athletes. Don Paolo was convinced that one's environment makes you what you are, and the tough environment has produced successful athletes at Aliquippa. Some of the wealthier schools in the area [Upper St. Clair and Mt. Lebanon] have successful teams as well. The parents and environment are “pumping success into these kids heads.” In Aliquippa success is expected only in athletics, not in the academic arena. “In their heads, they want to be a winner” whether it's Aliquippa or any of the wealthier schools [Mt. Lebanon, USC, Blackhawk]. Attaining success in athletics is the result of the success of a relative few number of students. Success in academics require all to be successful. For all students to succeed academically enthusiastic and capable teachers, parental support, and the

necessary resources are required. He would soon address the lack of resources in the district again.

Referring to the disparity in funding within the state and the area, Don Paolo asked, “Don't you think that we can take a peek through that telescope [at PR]?” He continued to question whether all schools should have the same facilities, the same teachers, the same opportunities for learning. He emphasized again that public school means for everyone. “Why does one school have the best and another school the worst?” This is a basic question about the disparity in school funding that haunted Don Paolo throughout his academic career and haunts him still. After 38 years, he has found no solution.

If these 15,000 children in the Distressed Seven districts are not educated they become a burden on society. Considering the cost of prison cells and the cost of maintenance of a prisoner, Don Paolo wondered out loud if it made any kind of sense as a social investment to invest in prisoners and not to invest in students to prevent them from becoming prisoners. Don Paolo explained that prison enrollment projections and consequently the necessary number of prison cells is determined by the number of at risk students in second grade. One jail cell is reserved for each at risk student in second grade in ten years.

“We know that they don't have parents, we know that they are not cared for.” He advocates that outside help be brought in to prevent these problems. Somebody has got to be held accountable for these childrens’ actions.” He noted that there are virtually no at risk students in second grade in the wealthier districts. In Aliquippa, there is no one at home to give them a hug and say "I love you." Academic and social development of

these students stops early. The problem is so large and so difficult that Don Paolo advocates for the government to intervene and require these parents to be responsible parents. He sees no other options to correct this problem since the parents are the source of the problem.

Don Paolo pointed out the problem is just like a dissertation, the problem must be clearly stated. "The problem is that the children are not being raised properly. they are not being loved properly, they are not being fed properly. Do we put the onus and burden on the school or do we put it back home where it belongs? Why is it that the school is at fault for low test scores? What can we do in a 45 minute period when we have only 22 minutes to teach? When the majority of time is [spent] keeping these kids under control. They have no respect, no values... the parents have taught them nothing. But they are causing complications.. Teachers and principals have to worry about test scores. But nobody is saying what's the problem?"

To Don Paolo, it was incredible that state politicians would consider incentives and penalties, a performance based system based upon test scores and attendance. "It's so easy for our representatives to say if you don't come up with certain scores, we are going to cut you out of your money. Well, how many times you going to slap me across my face? I'll tell you right now, the scores aren't going to go up. So don't tell me it's raining when you're pissing down my back." He spoke about the curriculum that all doctoral candidates had to take at the local university where many superintendents have graduated. He pointed out that both superintendents and teachers are all qualified. Praising his teachers, Don Paolo said, "My teachers are as good as teachers anywhere. Don't tell me there's something

wrong with your school. You bet buddy and it's something you can't handle. We are involved with a major problem with the kids and the parents. The parents are the key factor here.” As far as Don Paolo was concerned, nothing significant can happen until the problem with the parents not assuming the responsibility for the actions of their children was corrected.

“If you put up a big educational center with dormitories, with supervisors in the dorms, no parents, we are your new parents. I guarantee you that you'll see an increase in test scores in one year like you wouldn't believe.” I asked Don Paolo, “you are positive and hopeful for the abilities of the students, then, but just not the parents.” His curt response was “that's correct.”

Searching for another explanation of the respect for learning, Don Paolo stopped to tell me that he made his own prosciutto [a cured ham made in Italy]. He wants to learn as much as possible about his culture, the culture of Italy. He would take the effort to learn something. After seeing his grandfather attempt to make prosciutto and observing his occasional successes and frequent failures, Don Paolo wanted to know the proper procedure. “Who knows the truth, who has the real knowledge?” Don Paolo asked his relatives, his friends, his neighbors, any one who could possibly know and he found out that they all gave him different answers to the question. Don Paolo gathered his data and checked it against the literature. He experimented with different methods to see which would work; no method was successful. He asked himself again and again, “what happened to the bone? How do I take out the bone?” Don Paolo called the Parma ham company, and they put him in touch with Luigi, in the strip. “I want to know about how to

make a prosciutto [and] he told me about when and how to take a bone out. I felt as if I had done another Ph.D. The fact of the matter is that it's knowledge, I have it and you don't." Proud of his accomplishment, Don Paolo enlightened me since I truly did not know the sequence of the process. "The bone must be in when you cure the ham. When you take it out, you need knives and clamps, put it together and press it." He noted that knowledge is a matter of persistence. "That's been the way my whole life; now I can speak from authority." Don Paolo used the analogy of the mountain, "study the mountain [thoroughly] and learn and you can conquer the mountain," he advised.

Returning to the problems of the distressed districts, Don Paolo cautioned that 15,000 children at risk is a great jeopardy. It is dangerous to our communities and a danger to society.

Young children "are going to be strapped with these non-productive kids." He warned me again that if we do not choose to pay to educate these children, then we will pay for the criminal system to incarcerate them.

Returning to the story of the prosciutto ham, Don Paolo spoke of his passion for knowledge, he had to know how the process was done and how it worked. I reminded him that many of our parents had such knowledge. Perhaps that knowledge was not perfect knowledge, but at least they could pass on the knowledge that they had. We cited examples of people of all ethnic groups passing on such knowledge to their children, making stuffed cabbages, making bread, learning to manage the small family business, or tending the garden.

"These new parents are different - not like the people 35 years ago, Don Paolo said.



Many people in his old neighborhood were multi cultural people, there were many people from many different ethnic backgrounds. Their knowledge of academics was limited.

There was one consistent value shared by virtually all of the parents. “They did require that you did not bring embarrassment to the family. You are going to school to learn. You are going to be a somebody. We are not going to put up with any nonsense.” It was obvious that people are different in many ways, but the important point made by Don Paolo was that people are different in regard to values. These new parents represent a new culture, a culture in the community that does not support education.

There was another belief shared by all of the families, that belief was that there were consequences for their actions. “The bottom line was fear. There was fear that your old man was going to knock your head off if you made a mistake. There was fear that if you weren't home by 4:30 you were going to get smacked across your head. There was fear that if you got caught drinking your old man would beat the living daylight out of you. There was fear that if you told your mother off or refused to listen to your mother, your father would pull that belt off and beat the living hell out of you. There was fear that if you went someplace and bought beer and drank beer and he didn't know any difference between right and wrong you were going to get your butt kicked. There was fear, today there is no fear.

Don Paolo explained that today parental authority and, in some cases even their presence, is lacking. Everyone knew then that they had to do something after high school because they saw their father working at something. “I guarantee you now, right now, if you take a survey, 85 percent of the kids in this community, Clairton, Farrell what have

you, that they don't have an idea about the work ethic. They don't know that they have to do something when they get out of high school. They know that they get fed for free two times a day. But what happens when they get out of high school?"

"I think the kids are great. The kids need training, love. They need hugged, understanding, some one to play with them, someone to instruct them. They need these things and they are not getting them." Don Paolo compared these things to minerals and vitamins that you give your children to help them grow, to give them what they need. "There is no family ... the bottom line is that everything is based around the family." He noted that many decisions are made in the kitchen or around the fireplace, the heart of the home.

The one thing that he found unacceptable was that children did not help out around the house. No one told them, no one showed these children how to work around the house. This situation will continue, Don Paolo concluded, until the community decides it will not "put up with this nonsense anymore."

"When will the stabbings and shootings ... come to an end? Where the hell did you learn all this from? Where are you from? Where did you learn all of this combat?" Don Paolo asked these pointed questions to the children and the parents of his district? Calling for government intervention and strict enforcement of the laws, Don Paolo advocated that draconian measures are necessary and that punishment for crimes should be severe. "If you get caught doing anything, we're going to burn your ass, and you're going to get burned good." The pain in his voice was evident as he talked about the drug problem and how the drug problem was "killing kids." Don Paolo equated the drug problem to the eruption of

Mount St. Helen's with the lava flow going everywhere. The government's attempt to control the drug problem he equated to controlling the heat from the lava flow with a spray bottle. Obviously, this treatment was wholly inadequate. Speaking of drugs, "People are always looking for happiness somewhere where they are not ... but it is inside." Don Paolo's recommendation was to legalize drugs and give them away. At least the drugs would be administered correctly and cleanly, eliminating the crimes and disease associated with the drug problem, he concluded. Don Paolo believes that the majority of crime in the district was drug related. "Why is education saddled with the problem? ... Remember that when ever this country has declared war, we won. We never declared war on drugs, and we never declared war on illiteracy. And remember, we never declared war on Vietnam." I was left with the eerie feeling that like Vietnam, perhaps the drug problem and literacy were wars that we did not want to win.

Similarly, no one was interested in solving the problems in the Distressed Seven districts. "No one cares", Don Paolo stated frankly. "No one wants to know about our problems" declaring that "education has become a joke" because education has been reduced to a struggle of politics and power. There are political struggles between board members to control the board and local policies. There are political struggles between the political parties and the elected representatives to control educational policy at the state level . Finally, there are political struggles between all interests to control as much of the expenditures for public education as possible and to funnel those expenditures to their own particular agenda.

We were interrupted by a knock at the door. Don Paolo's friend, Fritz, entered and

spoke privately to Don Paolo. Don Paolo then began to tell me a story about construction.

One time he had been invited to watch the football playoffs at a stadium in the center of the state. A beautiful masonry wall surrounded the stadium property. Don Paolo stopped to admire the construction of the wall and the care that was taken to prepare the mortar joints between the blocks. The joints and the mortar were new, only a few years old. The wall appeared to surround the property and lead up to a wrought iron gate entrance flanked by two huge pillars at the stadium. The area where he was invited to watch the game was an elaborate press box heated and air-conditioned, with a private bathroom. A local caterer provided food to assure an enjoyable time for all in attendance.

The superintendent of the district, entered and introduced himself as Doctor. Don Paolo introduced himself as Dr. Don Paolo and remarked that he was very impressed by the surroundings and thought that Three Rivers [Stadium in Pittsburgh] could not be as luxurious. Don Paolo asked how they could afford such a luxury and the superintendent replied that each year they took a portion of their budget and allocated it to a fund for the construction of the wall. The superintendent then asked Don Paolo about his district. He explained that his district had about 85% of the students on the free and reduced lunch program. The superintendent looked at Don Paolo and “ten minutes later, he wasn’t there.” Don Paolo was left to watch the game with his friend. “You see, I didn’t even fit in. What are we going to talk about? Curriculum, AP Math, how many kids you got into Harvard last year? What the hell are we going to talk about? Am I going to tell you about my problems and you are going to tell me about your success stories? They don’t want to hear it.”

Don Paolo spoke of the challenge of solving this problem and the toll it took on him. “The magnitude of this problem is unbelievable... every night you come home you got a dynamic headache. Where do I go next? What’s going to happen when I go to work on Monday morning? How many kids saw their mothers get stabbed? How many kids saw somebody get shot? Now how are we supposed to teach these kids?”

Don Paolo blamed the Governor for not using his political power to force a merger. Mergers were not feasible because no one wanted to merge with Aliquippa. “We don’t want to go anyplace where we are not wanted. But give me the resources to keep these kids contained and I can educate them in the proper way.”

He questioned why people were so paranoid about a merger with the Aliquippa district. People, Don Paolo claimed, were afraid of high teen pregnancy rates and crime that comes with the lower income and African American populations. He acknowledged that his district was on its’ own, “but don’t let me have to go around begging, and begging like a jack ass ... let me do my job like a good strong human being. I’ll keep my kids the hell away from your school. We’re not going to come in here and cause any complications. We’re just going to come down and beat your ass when it comes to Friday night football. Fair enough?” Sadly enough, the problem continues because no one wants to solve the problem.

No one wants to solve the problem because of the cost, Don Paolo claimed. He noted that in all of the poor areas, the problem continues to get worse. Don Paolo criticized the Governor for not coming to Aliquippa schools when he was in Aliquippa. It would have been a chance for the Governor to meet his students and it would have given

his students a chance to meet and talk to the Governor. Unfortunately, for Don Paolo and his students, this chance to meet the Governor never occurred.

Don Paolo told me of an encounter with a college professor who told him that towns were towns, and people were people. He questioned the college professor about how it could be that a town of professionals, like the town in the professor's study, could be the same as a town of poor unemployed people. How could it be that you have the same community involvement, the same community leadership, and the same environment at home? How were they the same? "Don't piss down my back and tell me it's raining buddy?" When the superintendents of the wealthier districts were asked to speak to the Distressed Seven, they never responded. "Why is it that they can get back to you, but can't get back to me?" The only way that this can be solved, in Don Paolo's mind, is through teamwork with the government, and the surrounding districts. The law was the only possibility of intervention to correct the problems with the parents. He firmly believed that the only way to correct the problem with the parents was to get them off of welfare and to put them to work. The parents had to be put to work to set an example for their children.

Don Paolo friend began to leave and moved to the door. Don Paolo said goodbye to his friend and as Fritz left, I admired the back door of Don Paolo's house and stated that it was obviously made by hand. He proudly commented that he made the door and construction was a strong interest and a hobby of his. Don Paolo then gave me a tour of his house. He proudly spoke of an addition he had completed and spoke of the construction and the materials. It was a fine room and he was justified in being proud of

what he had done. We walked outside and he was especially proud that his integration of the exterior columns into the existing structure had worked well. I noted that the addition looked as if it were part of the original building, it had been done so well. The pride in his construction showed as Don Paolo admired the finished construction. His eyes widened as he looked at me. I smiled at him and said thank you for taking the time to show me and to teach me. He smiled back and told me to get back soon. Don Paolo knew that all the talk of construction had nothing to do with building structures, he was instructing me about building lives.

## INTERPRETATIONS

The narrative about athletics at Aliquippa is a narrative about efficacy. When Don Paolo describes the athletes at Aliquippa, he describes athletes who know that they are in control of the outcome of the game. They have had a history of success or mastery experience, in the view of Bandura. They also know that those that have preceded them and others like them have succeeded in athletics, sharing in that vicarious experience. The verbal persuasion from the coaches is often rough and demanding. The athletes respond because they know that they are capable of producing results at a high level of proficiency.

The experiences of the athletes at Aliquippa and successful athletes at wealthier schools are similar in several ways. Successful athletes know that they can succeed, that they perceive that they are in control of the desired outcome. Athletes at Aliquippa draw their vicarious experiences and mastery experiences from athletics. In fact, athletics may be their only positive source of these types of experiences. Athletes at the wealthier districts

can also draw upon mastery and vicarious experiences as well as the verbal persuasion of coaches, peers, and parents. However, these athletes may also be able to draw upon mastery and vicarious experiences in fields other than athletics. These types of athletes may also be successful academically, or at least it is likely that their school district is more successful academically than Aliquippa. Since these athletes are from wealthier districts, they are also sharing with the economic success of their parents, an experience missing with the athletes from Aliquippa. In fact, the athletes in a wealthier district most likely have seen success many times in their lives. Their lives may be virtually surrounded by the symbols of success, at least materially. The houses they live in, the presence of parents, the cars they drive, the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the school they go to, the vacations they enjoy, the professions of the parents, and the neighborhood they live in all provide ample symbols of success for these athletes. They are part of a successful community. There is no reason why they should not share in and add to that success. As stated by Don Paolo, the parents and the environment are “pumping success into these kids heads. In their heads, they want to be a winner.”

A successful athletic program is different from a successful academic program in the sense that for an athletic program to succeed, only a relative few of the student enrollment need to be successful. In order for a district to succeed academically, a relatively large number of the students need to be successful. The foundation for academic success, according to Don Paolo, is the home and the family environment established by the parents.

According to a July 1998 subcommittee report prepared by the Subcommittee on



Oversight and Investigations for the House of Representatives Committee on Education and The Workforce titled *Education at a Crossroads: What Works and What's Wasted in Education Today*, parental involvement in the education of their children is one of the characteristics of a successful school and school system. This report found that 64 percent of eighth graders in urban districts and 42% of eighth graders in non-urban districts attend schools where school officials report that lack of parent involvement is a moderate or serious problem (p. 5). The report cites an example of a private school, Our Lady of the Gardens located in the south side of Chicago, which defied the socio-economic and environmental factors to perform at exceptionally high levels. One of the reasons for success, according to the principal of the school was strong parental involvement (p. 9).

Aliquippa has a large number of single parent households. The House report cites research that reveals the relationship between single parent households and student failures. Citing the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1997* report (p. 205), the House report states that:

- ! Children in single parent families are more likely to experience early school problems than children in two parent families.
- ! In 1995, 3 to 5 year olds living with two biological or adoptive parents were more likely to have been read to three or more times a week, to have been told a story once a week, or to have visited the library in the previous month than 3 to 5 year olds living with one biological or adoptive parent.
- ! First and second graders aged 6 to 8 living with one biological or adoptive parent were more likely to experience academic problems and to have their parents report

that they were academically below the middle of their class than those students living with two biological or adoptive parents.

- ! Citing from Debra Dawson's research published in *The Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 53, 1991, "Family Structure and Children's Well-Being, twenty-two percent of children living with divorced mothers must repeat a grade and 30 percent of children born to a single parent must repeat a grade. Only 12 percent of children from two - parent families have to repeat a grade in school.

It seems that Don Paolo had that report in mind when he stated that the real problem, even though the district was poor, was the parents and their lack of, in his opinion, proper values. That foundation, which provides the respect for learning, is illustrated in the narrative of deboning and preparing the prosciutto.

Preparation of prosciutto represents a significant amount of skill and heritage knowledge passed from one generation to the next. Don Paolo's parents and his environment provided respect for knowledge and respect for himself and his culture. The environment provided teachers to guide him on the journey to acquire the necessary knowledge. While some of the knowledge passed on to Don Paolo was inaccurate, this knowledge still represented a link to a cultural foundation. This cultural foundation was steeped in values that were constant in the life of Don Paolo. Since prosciutto is an expensive delicacy, the proper preparation of the prosciutto represents a special act of love and nurturing toward the family. The special care taken to prepare such a delicacy reflects the special care given to the members of the family. When Don Paolo spoke of his quest for this particular piece of knowledge, he spoke with intensity and passion. It was

important for him to understand this process. After having gained that knowledge, he spoke with pride of having completed another Ph.D. “The fact of the matter is that it's knowledge, I have it and you don't.” Statements such as these reflect the pride that he had in his accomplishment. This was a pride, not borne out of self-aggrandizement, but a pride borne out of order and control. Without this knowledge, there could be only a ham at best and at worst a ruined ham. With this knowledge, you can prepare a delicacy. It is the knowledge that allows you to gain control over the outcome of your effort. Without the knowledge, it is futile even to try to prepare the prosciutto, but with the knowledge that Don Paolo had acquired, he could not only make a prosciutto, he could fashion a life. This life would be based upon values and knowledge deeply rooted in generations past. By gaining the knowledge of the preparation of the prosciutto, Don Paolo was able to correctly align himself with his origins.

If a ham is a good thing, then a prosciutto is the ultimate state of development of a ham. In another view of the narrative of the prosciutto, Don Paolo acts as a caring, loving, stern parent. The prosciutto represents a child. The quest for knowledge about how to properly prepare the prosciutto represents the quest for knowledge of how to prepare a child for life. Luigi represents the grandparents and parents of Don Paolo, people who would teach him the proper way to prepare for a larger role in life. Without preparation, the child may grow up to be something good, but ordinary. Without the care of the parent, the child could be ruined. However, with the proper preparation, the child can grow to be something extraordinary, something rare, a delicacy. The process represents the process of preparing the child for a significant role in life. Exposure to spices and the curing process represents the lessons and time that it takes for a child to mature to its full potential. It is

necessary to follow the process closely because of the level of expectation of the preparer. When one prepares prosciutto, the standards for the final product are extremely high. Similarly, the rules in the household of Don Paolo's generation were strict and the level of expectation for the children were extremely high. The pressure that a prosciutto is exposed to in the process of preparation represents the pressure and demands that a parent places on their child. At times the pressure can be intense and maybe even painful, but like the life of Don Paolo and his peers, the pressure ultimately transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary.

The role of Don Paolo as parent and the ham as the child can be extended to the community, the parents and their children. Just as Don Paolo had no knowledge of how to prepare the prosciutto, the parents in the community have no knowledge of how to raise their children to assume larger roles in life. Since these children are not exposed to any particular value system, a curing process, their development is limited. While the prosciutto is carefully watched and kept in the proper environment to cure properly, the children in Aliquippa are exposed to an extremely harsh environment, often with parents who do not care. There will be a few children who make it through, but many more will be ruined in the process.

Don Paolo's continual references to the local superintendents, the legislature, the Governor, and the Secretary of Education as not caring, indicate the level of frustration that he has experienced in his attempts to solve the problems in the distressed districts. An examination of the demographic and income data cited earlier, reveal the extent of the economic damage done to the district and its inhabitants during the 1980s. This district and others like Aliquippa are similar both demographically and economically. Aliquippa

and other districts cannot support the public education process financially. While there is no doubt that the district, like any other district, is not perfect in its administration of financial affairs, even if it were to perform at an extremely high level of financial administration, it would still not be on a par financially with other districts. The district, and the districts surrounding Aliquippa, are placed in a difficult situation. While neighboring districts may want to help, a notion disputed by Don Paolo, they have no reason to help other than altruism. To divert resources to Aliquippa, or to share resources with Aliquippa would be viewed as diverting resources from the children of the taxpayers in the neighboring districts. Any proposal to divert any resources away from the district raising the funds would be viewed as an unconscionable act. Some of the neighboring districts examined a merger with Aliquippa on at least a cursory level, but none felt that their district would benefit from such an arrangement, so the notion of a merger was rejected. Aliquippa would have to stand on its own and solve its own problems. The fact that the district lacked the financial resources to solve its problems was of no concern to neighboring districts except to the extent that Aliquippa disturbed their contentment. Don Paolo recognized that his district and his students disturbed the contentment of those in neighboring districts. He had accepted their rejection by stating “We don’t want to go anyplace where we are not wanted. But give me the resources to keep these kids contained and I can educate them in the proper way.” Neighboring districts may not want his students, but Don Paolo wanted to care for them and to nurture them. He lacked the proper financial resources and parental support to accomplish the task.

Failing in his attempts to rebuild the district, Don Paolo never the less succeeded

with certain individual students. These successful students represented evidence to Don Paolo that, even though the district was poor, they could have much better success academically if parents would support the educational process. Parents of successful students shared the same values as Don Paolo's parents and the parent's of a previous generation. They demanded that their students go to school to learn and the parents would accept nothing less than children with a serious of purpose toward the learning process. Even in a difficult environment, students could be successful with caring, loving parents and teachers who care about them. These students made it through the process to become rare delicacies.

Don Paolo's references to making a life and building upon knowledge were values which were reflected in his affection for construction. The story of the well constructed wall and the lavish athletic facility revealed the values of hard work, perseverance and working to achieve a goal. The admiration shown for the workmanship shown in the joints in the mortar showed his appreciation for the workmen showing pride in themselves, their work product and their craft. These workmen showed respect for the knowledge they possessed and showed respect for the craftsmen who taught them how to perform such highly skilled work. Don Paolo clearly subscribed to the same value set as the workmen and respected them for the skills they developed and the knowledge they possessed.

Yet, Don Paolo felt that he had little in common with the superintendent, a fellow educator with a terminal degree. The superintendent claimed some credit for his role in building the facility, but Don Paolo felt that they had little in common. More importantly, Don Paolo had little respect for the superintendent because the superintendent merely

helped to finance the project by setting some of the annual budget aside for the wall fund. The superintendent did not assist in the building by working on the project. Unlike former athletes who share a certain comradery based upon shared experiences, Don Paolo and the superintendent of this district had no shared experiences. Since the superintendent had not been through the same or similar difficulties as Don Paolo, they had little in common. In Don Paolo's view, there would be little common ground between him and the superintendent. Although they were both educators who served a common god, Don Paolo felt that they had few values which they held in common. The superintendent did not want to hear about the problems of educating in districts with circumstances like Don Paolo's. Don Paolo, perhaps after years of rejection and failure to interest others in his problem, did not try or did not expect to establish a relationship with the superintendent. In fact, he lacked the efficacy to attempt to achieve a relationship.

The importance of construction in the life of Don Paolo was evident when he gave me a tour of his home. Don Paolo's neighborhood is a neighborhood that one might expect in a wealthier district. The homes are large, well maintained, landscaped nicely, with manicured lawns. It is a neighborhood that might be mistaken for a neighborhood in a prosperous community. Like Don Paolo's students, his home represents a success story surrounded by failures. His home reflects his pride and hard work, it reflects how he has built his life.

While Don Paolo has obviously had opportunities to leave Aliquippa to reside in one of the wealthier districts, he chose to stay. Staying in Aliquippa when the community has collapsed has cost Don Paolo a tremendous amount in housing value. He has

suggested that he would not even be able to “give his house away” although if it were located elsewhere, it would be a prime piece of property. Selling the property at greatly reduced prices would be a financial burden for Don Paolo, costing him tens of thousands of dollars. Selling the property at a loss would not be the worst loss Don Paolo would have to incur however. The home is a symbol of his life, his values reified. By remaining in Aliquippa, Don Paolo continues to affirm those values, to defy the forces around him, forces which seek to destroy those values. He is resolute in his purpose, but the damage caused by this constant assault is clear, he is growing tired of the fight. Don Paolo is a warrior who knows that the odds are overwhelmingly against him and those like him. This is a battle which cannot be won, but is a battle which he refuses to lose.

#### INTERVIEW FOUR

In the House report cited earlier, the section titled Parents Involved in their Children’s Education begins with a quote from a parent in Napa, California:

“I think there is an arrogance on the part of the school bureaucracy that assumes that they know best what is for everybody’s children. I assume the opposite. I don’t think anybody can make a better decision for their children than the parent.” (Committee on Education and the Workforce, p.32).

With thoughts like this in mind, Don Paolo began our next interview.

“We are dealing with some heavy issues here. In every profession you have to be certified.” Referring to the engineering and medical professions, Don Paolo noted that one



needed to be trained, certified and credentialed in order to make decisions in that field.

Only professionals were permitted a voice regarding the means and methods to be used in the profession. Those outside the profession were not permitted a voice. In some professions such as architecture, non-credentialed people can be denied ownership of the firm. In medicine, architecture or law outsiders can be fined or jailed for practicing without a license.

“Only in education, only in our profession people have the right to speak and criticize and tell you what you’re doing wrong ... and they don’t know what the hell their talking about.” In other professions there is an accumulation of base knowledge. Demonstration of mastery of this base knowledge is the credential, the access for participation in the profession. In education, however, every body is permitted an opinion. Don Paolo told me about his recent experience in Italy, where a teacher is highly regarded. “Teachers are honored in Italy, especially in Germany.”

“When the hell did your firm ever bring people in off the street to tell you how to design a building? ... Never!” Engineering, architecture, medicine, legal, or business professions do not permit or invite outsiders to tell them how to conduct their profession. “Only in education do we bring in everybody off the street.”

He noted that some people in the community would like to see the schools in Aliquippa closed. Thinking that this would solve the problem, Don Paolo commented that it would only address a part of the problem. Aliquippa would not exist as a district anymore, but the problem would still remain. “What about the 2,000 students? What about the law?”, he asked. The students would simply be disbursed to other districts,

taking their problems with them to that district. The problem would not be resolved, the problem would not be concentrated in a single district, but the impact of the problem would be diluted among the other districts. “If the problem is not addressed, it is still going to be a burden on society.”

Noting that in business, if a supplier provides you with parts that are inadequate, one simply rejects the parts and finds another supplier. In education, students cannot be rejected and excluded from the school and the educational process. One cannot reject students because of inadequate parents, a student’s inability to perform or within a wide range, behavior problems in the classroom. The free market model is severely limited in the educational process. In business, those that supervise a process can refuse to introduce defective material into the process. In public education, the people who run the process have no right of refusal. They must take what ever shows up “at the door.”

“Who is at fault here?” Don Paolo asked. Unfairly, the school then becomes at fault because of its perceived failure to educate. When the parents are challenged to be held accountable for their children’s behavior or their child’s attitude toward education, they often respond that they will speak to the student. “But that ain’t good enough. What are you going to do to straighten this out?”

Reiterating that a school is a community within a community, Don Paolo told about children bringing their parent’s values in to the school. All types of parents and all types of values sometimes cause conflicts in public education. Values and rights are protected by the Constitution, by lawyers and groups like the American Civil Liberties Union.

Contrasting that situation with the situation in private schools, Don Paolo stated that “you

are following my rules and no other rules. There are no rights here.”

Curiously, he advised me that education and educators have now become the problem. Previously, educational philosophy could be summed up as, “The teacher teaches, the student learns.” There was no room for much else. Don Paolo reminded me that “When I go to school, I carry my father’s name. Within that name there is some pride. Whatever I do in that school, my father’s name is being used. When I put my name on a piece of paper to take a test, my father’s name is being used. My behavior in that school, my father’s name is being used. I was taught that at home.” I commented that then there was severe consequences for bringing shame to the family name. Now there appears to be no shame, no consequences for bringing disgrace to the family, Don Paolo observed.

Parents then were as illiterate or as uneducated as parents are today in Don Paolo’s district. Yet, these illiterate parents of a previous generation produced disciplined, educated children. Today these parents produce problems. Don Paolo told me of a friend of his who is uneducated, but each of his children were educated. Each child has a college degree and at least three of the four had advanced degrees.

“How could this be?” Don Paolo asked. “These parents don’t know what Education Week means. They don’t have a clue about calculus, trigonometry, geometry, algebra. How could that be?” His voice trailed off as he asked again, “How could that be?” The solution to Don Paolo was simple, there was family structure, respect and pride in those families. Today, “the family structure has fallen apart.”

Don Paolo mentioned a conversation he had with an educator in Montana. “Why don’t you have problems in your school?” The educator responded, “Well, we don’t have

time for that.” The children in these districts worked on the family ranch after school and they did everything with the family. They were part of that family structure and had no chance to cause their parents problems because they had to be back at the ranch where they were supervised and working for the family.

He continued to press the issue of the importance of family, and Don Paolo pointed out that education meant to develop the mind, the body, the soul. “It doesn’t say where to develop it, in New York City, on a farm, or in the jungles of Africa. It is to develop in different ways and some people don’t want to develop it at all. That’s why we have the complications that we have.”

In many cases, people look for simple solutions to the problems in education. These people reminded him of his mother who thinks that the “whole world washes clothes on Monday, makes bread on Wednesday, eats fish on Friday, and macaroni on Sunday. But it ain’t always that way.” He told of a discussion on education which included a Harvard law professor and some educators. The Harvard law professor embarrassed the educators and Don Paolo was shocked. He wanted to know why the educators failed to challenge the Harvard law professor to come down to their inner city school to address the problems himself. “What do you recommend that we do here? Come on down here and spend a couple weeks with us.” He was confident that viewing the world from a professor’s office in Cambridge would be considerably different than the view from an educator’s school in Philadelphia.

Joe Clark, the educator from the east coast was a particular favorite of Don Paolo’s. Joe Clark was able to solve the problem by eliminating the students and the

parents who were causing the problems. Joe Clark's error was that he had no alternative program for these students. "What type of alternative program would you recommend?" I asked.

Don Paolo would prescribe an alternative program consisting of rigid discipline, a boarding school where total control of the students could be exercised. Their studies, their physical activities, everything would be disciplined and closely supervised. "Do you know how much money we spend on students who don't care?" he asked. "Could you imagine what kind of program we would have if we spent the money on C, B, and A students that we spend on the D and E students?" In Aliquippa, Don Paolo sent the limit of ten students each year to a local alternative education program at an annual cost of \$10,000 per student. These students represented the most difficult behavioral problems and the alternative education program got them out of the school where they were disrupting classes. He estimates that he had another forty such students who qualified for such a program but could not be sent because the district had reached the limit of students it could send to the program. Even if he could send these forty students to the alternative education program, he is not sure if the district could afford to do so. He wanted to be able to spend that money on the better students to give them the opportunity to work with college professors to get them to compete better internationally.

Ultimately, the problem returns to the parents values conflicting with the education of the students. These children had no discipline and I asked if a military model might provide the discipline that was missing.

Don Paolo responded with a story told to him by an employee of the school. The

employee grew up with six other brothers. One time the employee's father told him to whitewash the cellar before he came home from work. The father only told one son to whitewash the cellar, not all seven of them. We might ask why the father did that, but "it was none of our business." The son wanted to play ball after school and planned to whitewash the cellar after he played ball. The father came home from work, found the cellar was not whitewashed, and left to find his son. He found his son playing ball and "beat the living hell out of that kid. [The father] drug him home and made him whitewash that cellar." Fear of consequences for being disobedient to the father provided the discipline that the son needed. "From that point on, ever since my old man told me to do something, I did it first. Everything [else] came last" the employee remarked.

One time Don Paolo asked a friend of his, if he wanted to roast a pig. His friend got upset and told him that he could never roast a pig. When asked why, the friend told a story of his father. When he was eight years old, the father told Don Paolo's friend and his ten year old brother to kill and gut a 400 pound hog kept by the family before he came home from work. Don Paolo's friend could not kill the hog because he was afraid. When his father came home, the pig was not killed and the father naturally was upset. The punishment for the two boys was to sleep with the hog all night long. The next day he and his brother helped his father kill the hog.

"... because of that discipline. So whether it was right or wrong, there had to be something there that was right that made this good generation. This generation of guys that came out are good guys." That discipline does not seem to exist today. Rigid discipline, demands and high expectations have to be there according to Don Paolo.

“There’s no one turning over the dirt for the garden. There’s no one spreading the manure. There’s no one going to the farm to pick up the manure in bushels and dumping it so we have crops to eat. There’s no one putting up peppers. There’s no one tying up the grape vines. ... That’s where the teaching and training comes in right there.”

He pointed to the Amish and their farming and craft traditions as important examples of heritage knowledge that was passed from one generation to the next. Amish parents were teaching their children about their religion, their traditions, their craftsmanship, and their value system. Unfortunately, alcohol and the drug problem has even invaded this society, he noted.

When speaking of the Amish, Don Paolo noted that they were exceptional craftsmen using only hand tools to erect barns and houses or to craft furniture. He contrasted the training of an Amish carpenter with the industrial arts training that our children received in schools today. Students today are often exposed to computer aided design and drafting programs which are connected to wind tunnels or numerically controlled lathes to produce a product. Don Paolo was firmly opposed to such training, particularly when students lacked the basic mathematical training to add fractions or to even read a rule. They were not learning how to craft a simple project from a piece of wood using the basic tools. “Make these kids make a bird house and be proud to take something home to their mother.”

Don Paolo gave me some examples of his students that were now fine craftsmen because they were given individual instruction in the basics of their craft. “I think that the problem is that we want to get to the top too fast.” Aliquippa has not escaped the culture

of instant gratification either. He noted that people are no longer willing to make the commitment in time or effort to learn a craft from the “bottom to the top.” The traditional method of learning a craft is in keeping with Don Paolo’s philosophy that “anything worth doing is worth doing poorly until you learn to do it well.”

Our conversation drifted to Don Paolo’s experience on other doctoral committees and talked about the problems in teacher education. He claimed that many teachers were being lost to retirement and they were being replaced by teachers who were hired by the school boards, not by the superintendents and administration of the school. He thought that schools of education were deficient in not instructing young teachers in how to get a job. “Do your damn homework. You’ve got to round up some votes. Let people know you are applying for a job. Forget that 3.8 average and that Phi Beta whatever the hell you belong to. It doesn’t make any difference.” Board members do not know about education and “what the hell they are voting for. They don’t know if these people are any good or not. ... Sometimes you luck out and sometimes you get stuck with pure garbage. Then you are stuck with them for the next 30 years.” He talked about the political process of talking to the Board members through friends or relatives to secure the votes necessary in order to be hired as a teacher. This political process is exactly what Don Paolo referred to when addressing the problems with people without credentials making decisions in the educational profession.

Don Paolo spoke of the problems with boards who micro-manage the superintendent and the district. When the superintendent makes a decision, as Don Paolo did once, and selected a candidate who was not the board’s preference, he suffered greatly.



It mattered little that the candidate Don Paolo chose was better qualified than the board's candidate, the board had its own agenda to fulfill. This agenda was not to hire the most qualified candidate, but to hire friends and relatives of the board members. After that decision, the board interfered in each decision Don Paolo made. "As soon as that extra vote comes over to the other side, you'll suffer. ... Micro-management in education is unbelievable."

Don Paolo gave me an example of micro-management and personal agendas with board members in his story about the board member who owned a number of empty buildings in the district. The board member instructed the superintendent to lease one of the empty buildings to store the district's equipment. Don Paolo then instructed me in the ways of the dumb superintendent and the smart superintendent. This superintendent, an intelligent person but actually a dumb superintendent, was vehemently opposed to the proposition posed by the board member. The dumb superintendent told the board member that it would be a conflict of interest and he could not be a party to such a thing. "It would never happen." "Oh really", the board member replied. "What the hell do you think I'm here for? The first chance I get, I'll have you fired." Once the board member got the votes in the next election, he had the superintendent fired.

The smart superintendent however, would respond to the board member that it was a great idea and they would do it immediately. "Do you have the necessary votes?" the smart superintendent asked. Advising the board member that once he got the necessary votes, the equipment would be shipped immediately to his warehouse. Like a warrior who must know the battlefield in order to survive, Don Paolo instructed me that the smart

superintendent must know the political landscape if he is to survive. It mattered little if the superintendent was qualified or not, what mattered most was political acumen. Board members who barely made it through seventh and eighth grades will “cut your legs off.”

Don Paolo noted that in an environment like that, most things were beyond the control of the superintendent. It was possible to implement some educational reforms. However, all that was required to stop the educational reform was a phone call or conversation with a board member criticizing the superintendent and the reform. With the mere mention that “the whole thing don’t sound right to me, get it out” the reform ended. The motivation for board members was not to serve the students and the educational process, or the community, but to have access to power and political patronage jobs.

“There are a lot of boards that listen to the superintendent, but a lot that don’t.” Don Paolo emphasized the problem with the micro-management of the school board by telling me about an engineer who designed a structure and confirmed his design with calculations. “Then comes along this jag off and says, ‘take that beam out of there. I don’t like it.’ Then the engineer is required to put his name on the drawings .”

## INTERPRETATIONS

In this interview, Don Paolo directly addressed the problems of education as a profession. In his examples of the medical and engineering professions, he speaks of the problems with those outside the profession over ruling educational professionals. He laments the fact that such a practice could never in professions like medicine, law,

accounting, and architecture because their certifications are protected by the law.

The story of the engineer is a direct analogy. As an engineer is trained to design a facility or a solution to fit the needs of the client, the superintendent is trained to design an educational program to fit the needs of the students. As the engineer has the directives of the profession to determine professional practice and conduct, similarly, the educator has educational training and research to determine professional practice and conduct. The uninformed 'jag off', however, is allowed no voice in the engineering profession. While, like anyone else, they might have an opinion and perhaps even an opportunity to express that opinion, their opinion is simply that, it is opinion and given no credence within the engineering profession. In contrast, the educational professional has to give credence to the opinion of the uninformed and those lacking professional credential.

The education profession is afforded no similar protection and as a result, is subject to the vagaries of the political system. Because of the involvement of government at the federal, state, and local levels, the impact of political forces on education is significant. These government forces determine funding for education from the federal government, educational policy at the state level, and influence or even determine the operation of education programs at the local level. At no point in the process of educational funding, policy making or operation of the educational system do the educational professionals have exclusive domain. The only time educational professionals have exclusive domain in the educational process is when the school board surrenders its power to the administration or in the classroom. In Aliquippa, the administration subject to federal funding for education as all other districts would be. More influential however, are the influences at the state

level. These political forces also determine educational funding, but also determine educational policy. The local school board also determines the implementation of educational programs in Aliquippa. The superintendent and administration are left to implement the programs that the board has chosen with the resources the school board has chosen to provide.

The influences of the federal, state, and local governments are essentially the same as they always have been, changing by nature and degree, but not by scope of influence. What has changed is that the local school board is a reflection of the community, a community that has changed in its shared values. To Don Paolo, the most significant change in the values of the community is the change in the values of the parents. Parents such as his own parents were illiterate and poor, they valued God, family, hard work, learning, discipline, and community support. In the perception of Don Paolo, the behavior of some parents in the community does not reflect those values. It is because of the rejection of these traditional values that Don Paolo attributes the most significant and the early insurmountable problems in the district.

Don Paolo statement about his father's name is a very important example of the value of God in the life of this generation. "When I go to school, I carry my father's name. Within that name there is some pride. Whatever I do in that school, my father's name is being used. When I put my name on a piece of paper to take a test, my father's name is being used. My behavior in that school, my father's name is being used. I was taught that at home." It is certain that he was taught respect for himself and his father's name in this example. What is also apparent is the deep religious conviction that was part

of the values shared in the community during his youth. I understood his statement to refer to his father, but perhaps he was referring at the same time to his Father, God. “When I go to school, I carry my Father’s name. Within that name there is some pride. Whatever I do in that school, my Father’s name is being used. When I put my name on a piece of paper to take a test, my Father’s name is being used. My behavior in that school, my Father’s name is being used. I was taught that at home.” To not succeed, to not give your best was not only a disgrace to your father’s name, it was a sin against your Father as well.

Discipline is one of the values which Don Paolo’s parents valued and instilled in him. He makes note of such discipline in the narrative of the son neglecting to whitewash the cellar and of the narrative of the two boys told to kill the hog. While the punishment of the characters in the narratives may have been extreme, for the time, and for the environment, it was not extreme. The message to the sons was “ you have a job to do, see that it gets done.” There are no excuses.

Don Paolo maintains that the reason that his students lack discipline is because the parents have not shown them how to live a disciplined life. The parents lack discipline because the parents do not work and have not shown the children how to work. In the example of the Amish, Don Paolo shows the importance of work in their culture and the heritage knowledge passed from generation to generation. In his example of the garden, Don Paolo demonstrates the importance of the dignity of labor. Through the discipline of planting the garden, one is able to nurture and sustain the family and the children. It is a disciplined act of love and caring. Love of the family and responsibility toward them is a basic value in the narratives of Don Paolo. The narratives expressed today, in the view of

Don Paolo, are not narratives of discipline, love or caring, but narratives of sloth and indifference.

#### INTERVIEW FIVE

Don Paolo met me in the back of his house and immediately began the interview. “Did you ever go to an Upper St. Clair game? he asked.” “I thought that I was at Southern Cal. The athletes are unbelievable ... and they are delivering the goods.” The tremendous success of these athletes from a wealthier district was no surprise to Don Paolo. It was not a matter of wealth making these athletes soft, but the fact that their parents spent time with them and taught them what they needed to do to succeed at every level that mattered.

Don Paolo told me a story of one of his former students who was a tremendous athlete. The student got a scholarship to a university in Michigan and eventually lost the scholarship because of involvement with drugs. Another university in Arizona decided to give the student an athletic scholarship which eventually he lost because of continued involvement with drugs. The student eventually got arrested for dealing drugs to an undercover policeman. Don Paolo warned that what went wrong was that the parents lost track of the student. They did not follow up to see that he behaved properly. Perhaps when he was in high school the guidance of the teachers and principals like Don Paolo were enough to keep the student out of trouble. When the student left the area to assume responsibility for himself, he lacked the discipline to master his own conduct. You cannot leave you children out on their own, Don Paolo maintained. “The two most over used

words in the language are Hey Ma!” Children become dependent upon their parents for everything and without their guidance and constant attention, they are susceptible to problems unless they have learned the discipline to avoid these problems.

He told me of when he was a student in college and he called home. His father told him that it “better be quick and important” because it was expensive to call home. Don Paolo told his mother that his clothes were dirty and he did not know what to do. Crying, his mother told him to put the dirty clothes in a box and send them home. His father told him to get down to the laundry and wash them himself. “You are the captain of your ship,” his father told him. “You’ve got to have control.” Accept responsibility for yourself. That was the way it was in Aliquippa when Don Paolo was growing up, accept responsibility for yourself. Don Paolo went to the laundry and washed his clothes. In an attempt to save money, he washed all the clothes together and ruined some of them. He wore them anyway and eventually learned how to wash clothes properly. He also learned the dangers of a false economy of washing clothes improperly, because the clothes he ruined, he had to replace.

The essence of parenting and instruction from parents can be summed up as, “You better not bring this family to shame. Go there and do what you got to do. Don’t come home with no cock and bull story. You better get the thing done.” There were very high expectations and “you better do it or else.” People have difficulty understanding the value of placing high expectations and great demands on their children. Because the parents do not understand the necessity of high expectations on their children, the children do not have high expectations for themselves.

“The parents do not know enough to go out to get a job and pick up the slack,” he claimed. The parents in Don Paolo’s district do not even do manual labor, they do not demonstrate the dignity of work to their children. Children, he said, are not required to do manual labor at home. The performance and reward cycle does not exist for these children. “You want the car, wash it and wax it, and come back with a full tank of gas. There are no parental demands placed on the kids.”

The demands on the children extended from the home to the school in Don Paolo’s day. “I expect you, when you leave this house to go to that school, I expect you to do your job as a student. I do not expect you to cause complications in that school and have lack of respect for those teachers. If you want to go out for football and basketball, fine. You better give it one hundred percent. But when you come home, I expect you to help your mother. I want the grass cut.” There were demands placed on the children and they were expected to succeed, there were no excuses tolerated. You were simply expected to work, no matter what else you did, you were expected to work.

This lack of discipline, the absence of a work ethic, and the lack of respect for teachers all contribute to the problems in the school district today. Don Paolo compared these young parents with the parents like his own and noted that they young parents today are not equipped to handle a depression. “We don’t know how to survive [like they did].” People in Don Paolo’s generation may not have been the equal of the people like Don Paolo’s parent’s generation.

He illustrated the last comment with another story. Don Paolo’s professor in college owned twenty two houses and offered free rent for four years to anyone who



would live in the house and plant a garden in the front and back yards of the house. “They can live off of those two pieces of property and no one did it. That means no rent. That money goes into my pocket. What I grow, I can eat. What I don’t eat, I can sell.” He stated as a matter of fact, “Are our young people equipped to go to work and bring home some money? I say No.” I asked why he became a superintendent and he responded, “it was better to be on top than on the bottom ... and I know how to get kids into school [college].”

Don Paolo steered the conversation toward the guidance office in school and remarked that the guidance office “doesn’t know how to pick up the phone and get a kid into school.” The guidance office is now a social work office, equipped not to provide career guidance but equipped to advise on pregnancies, alcohol, drugs, incest, “pure garbage.” Don Paolo summed up his educational philosophy simply. “If you are a history teacher, then teach history. I don’t need you to be involved anything else from 8:00 to 4:00 but teaching history. Just teach.” He resented the distractions that teachers have to deal with in the classrooms and in the school. These distractions come in the form of “complications” caused by behavior problems and the students lack of “seriousness of purpose.” These students were not taught by their parents to behave, to respect authority of the teacher and administration, to work hard and to succeed. These students then distract everyone at the school from the learning and teaching process. “If we are going to give 46 minutes to a period, then we should give 46 minutes of instruction.” Obviously, that would not be possible in Don Paolo’s district where twenty minutes are spent in dealing with a behavioral problem in the class. His students were not disciplined enough to

control their own behavior in the classroom. “There was too much bullshit going on in the home and too much bullshit going on in the schools.”

Don Paolo told me of a student who was in a vocational technology program and “doing nothing.” He spoke to the student’s teacher and wondered about his progress. The teacher said that the student was not serious and did not work. Don Paolo offered to “straighten the student out” and the teacher agreed to let him try. In front of the student’s uncle, Don Paolo grabbed the student by the shirt and told him to straighten out or he would “kick his ass.” Don Paolo told the student that in six weeks they were going to build a block shed in the back yard and the student was going to build it. The student changed his attitude and in six weeks, built the block shed himself.

Part of the problem, Don Paolo said was that the lack of discipline was evident with children sleeping while their parents were up working. He believed that children needed to know what it was like to get up at 6:00 in the morning to get ready for work, to have the equipment ready for work. “Get up in the rain and snow and put the boots on. I got news for you my friend,” he said, “nothing starts at noon. Everything starts at 7 or 8 in the morning. You see, they condone that stuff.”

He used the habit of eating at a fast food restaurant as an example of a lack of understanding of work and lack of understanding of the value of money. “What’s the matter with having cereal for breakfast or making a sandwich for lunch?” He spoke of stopping for breakfast and lunch at McDonald’s or Burger King, stopping for coffee, cigarettes, or snuff. He was angry at the thought of spending \$10 a day before the day even started, “that’s \$50 a week, that we’re spending on bullshit and we ain’t got no work

done [yet]. Now where's this kid going to go if there is a depression? They're too damn lazy to make a lunch."

He faulted the parents for permitting that attitude to occur in their children. He noted that he would rather do without a quarter than ask his father for it when he was younger. "Who wanted to answer fifty questions for a quarter?", he asked. "It just wasn't worth it. Then if you got it, he asked you for the change back. People that have come from the hard ranks know that there is something wrong here." The value set has shifted from one generation to the next and "the kids don't know anything anymore."

The lessons in Aliquippa were taught by the parents and grandparents in Don Paolo's youth and these lessons were reinforced daily. He provides me with another story of a garden at the end of the street in a residential neighborhood. "When my grandfather found out that we have some property [four lots], he grabbed his hoe, his shovels and put them on his back and we started up there. " His grandfather set the corners for the garden and started to dig the garden by hand. Don Paolo and his father helped his grandfather and father dig up the garden every night, put manure in the garden and planted the garden. They found a stream nearby and carried the water to the garden and watered the plants. Then when the crops grew, they picked the crops. "People just don't know what is to get up and do what has to be done." I asked Don Paolo what was so important about the gardens. He told me that there were three things that were important about the garden, "pride, food, ... and we're saving money." The pride from that garden planted years ago with his father and grandfather was still in his voice as he said, "Look how beautiful my garden is! I did that!" He had learned that through work, he could master his

environment. Referring to the area where he grew up and thinking of the beautiful gardens that everyone had when he was young, he lamented, “Go up there now. I wouldn’t eat a tomato out of there if it was the last tomato on earth! ... There is garbage everywhere. It is a disgrace.” He talked about the gardens on an island in the river. His parents and others like them turned that island into “one big garden” and the community worked on it together. They had bucket brigades to take the water from the river to water the plants. “Are we that type of society to do that today? I don’t think so. That’s what gives the Chinese and Japanese the advantage, they are disciplined people.”

I heard of a similar story and asked if Don Paolo knew my brother’s neighbor Joe. He said that he did, “he lives next door to the idiot,” referring to a man who lived in the neighborhood but did not have a reputation as a worker or as a decent man. I told Don Paolo that Joe told me the story of when he bought the house in that neighborhood. He brought in topsoil and rolled it, planted grass seed, fertilized the lawn, spread straw over it to protect the young grass plants, watered the grass, cut it when it grew and raked the clippings. When he was done, Joe’s father asked him to sit down on the porch and share a beer with him. Joe’s father told his son what he had observed about the hard work his son had done on the lawn. Joe was glad that his father had recognized his hard work and took some pride in his lawn. Joe’s father had only one question for him when he was all done. He asked his son. “how much of this can you eat?” Joe and his father realized that values were already changing from the generation of immigrants to the first generation born in America. His father would have planted a garden in the front and the back, Joe planted grass. Don Paolo agreed that Joe’s father had a point. “Those days will never come back.

Those were very enriching days. There was a structure being created. A new society was being born and value systems were being created.”

Don Paolo did not know that lunches were served in his high school in the cafeteria when he went. Students who brought their lunches ate in the gymnasium. “Who ate in the cafeteria? What do they serve? I went to school with some guys who had heavy duty lunches. You could always tell the Italian kids in school from the oil at the bottom of their lunch bags from the peppers and eggs sandwiches.” Everyone in Don Paolo’s neighborhood brought their lunches to school and all the Italians brought peppers and egg sandwiches on home made bread. The sandwiches were cheap, the bread was home made and the lunches were nutritious and delicious. Don Paolo noted that in some restaurants they are now serving peppers and egg sandwiches at a very high price, what was once described as “depression food” is now prized by a new generation as a new discovery.

He told me of another story of peppers and egg sandwiches. He was building his mother’s house and the workmen stopped work for lunch. As they sat down and rested, an old Italian woman, a mother of one of the workers came up the street with lunch for her son. She asked what these other men were eating. Don Paolo noted that they did not bring any lunches and was about to leave to get them lunch. The old woman told him not to go and that she would be right back. A short time later the woman came back with thirty six peppers and egg sandwiches on home made bread for the workers. She told Don Paolo that the eggs were cheap, she had made the bread that morning, and that the peppers were about to be thrown out of the fruit market because they had a few spots on them. The old woman bought the peppers and cut off the bad spots, saving the good parts for

peppers and egg sandwiches. She then asked Don Paolo how much he paid these workers and Don Paolo told her that they were paid about \$100 a day. The old woman was startled and replied that her husband never made more than \$50 a day and she raised a family on that. “These men made \$100 a day and their wives could not even get up to make them lunch.” The workmen hung their heads when the old woman commented about their wives. They were ashamed of the way they were living. With that story, Don Paolo suggested that we go outside and enjoy the evening air.

## INTERPRETATIONS

Don Paolo used the example of athletes from the wealthier districts to illustrate that it was not a matter wealth or in this case athletics as the sole way out of a dismal, poverty ridden existence. These athletes came from fine homes, educated parents, good school districts, and were surrounded by successful people. There are many options for these athletes and their success should not be limited to athletics. They were however given what they needed to succeed at whatever they would attempt. The presence of caring parents, knowledgeable people to teach them the sport, and knowledgeable people to train them, and the value of working hard at that sport in order to succeed all combine to provide these athletes with an opportunity to succeed. Their environment was a modern version of the environment of Don Paolo’s youth. The consistent trait between the two very different environments was the value set of the parents of the athletes.

In this interview as in other interviews, Don Paolo speaks of work and the lessons

learned through hard labor. Although he had parents who cared deeply about him and a mother who would be happy to wash his clothes even though he was miles away, Don Paolo's father knew that if his son was to succeed, he must work and be responsible for his actions.

A direct view of this narrative might be, if your clothes are dirty, then wash them. The dirty clothes might represent any problem that a student faces. The desired outcome in this case is represented by the clean clothes. If you want clean clothes, then do what you need to do to get clean clothes. Only you can accomplish that goal, accept responsibility for the fact that if your clothes are dirty, you are the one who made the choice out of free will to let them stay dirty.

Another view of this narrative is that of the educational and learning process. If you are to become an educated person, then you must wash away your ignorance as one washes dirty clothes. Clean clothes represent the value of presenting yourself in the best possible way, as the best that you can become. The process of washing the clothes is representative of the educational process. There are to be certain failures, as Don Paolo failed in his first attempt at washing clothes, but out of necessity, he tried again until he learned how to wash clothes properly. In the educational process, we will fail also. Out of necessity, we need to continue to try to educate ourselves to wash away the dirt of ignorance until like our clothes, our mind represents the best that we can become.

In the community of Aliquippa, work was simply a way of life. Everyone worked, whether you worked at the local mill which nearly everyone did, or you worked someplace else, people worked. The work at the mill was difficult and dangerous. The men leaving

the mill often walked to work and walked home, the toil of the day and the injuries they sustained working in the mill were symbols of what needed to be endured if one was to achieve something for themselves and their families. They left the house in the morning to go to work, came home and worked at home. They worked in the garden, they worked repairing and maintaining their modest houses, they worked with their children practicing sports, but they worked.

Many of people of Don Paolo's age started working in the mills after high school, but went to college at night when they found out that the work in the mill was not to their liking. They worked at their studies and pursued new careers and many of them pursued advanced degrees after they left the mill. They worked during the day and went to school at night. If there was something that you wanted, if you had a goal, then you committed yourself to that goal and did not stop until that goal was attained. There are numerous examples in the community like Don Paolo. He went to college, started teaching after college, worked on his masters degrees at night, and continued to work while he pursued his doctorate degree at night. Other examples include a millwright in the mill who went to school at night until he attained a doctorate degree. Others worked in the mill, studied until they could become teachers and then continued to study at night until they passed the bar exam and became successful lawyers in the area. If you want to achieve a goal, commit yourself, then work until you reach your goal. Demands and high expectations were placed on the children and they were expected to meet those demands. No excuses were considered. The vicarious experience of others helped them to believe that they too could accomplish their goal if they worked. That was the way they were taught to live.



Even the students of Don Paolo's generation at the university he attended as an undergraduate did not share the same values as Don Paolo. When offered free rent in exchange for planting gardens in the front and back yards of the house by a professor, no one accepted the offer. This offer was not available to Don Paolo since he was an athlete, but it was available to any other student. What was amazing to Don Paolo was that no one understood the opportunity presented to them, an opportunity to live for free, to eat for free, and to gain income from selling the excess crops from the gardens. It was almost impossible for Don Paolo to believe.

Again, in Aliquippa, gardens figured prominently in the lives of the families. Don Paolo's stories of the gardens that were in his old neighborhood spoke of the hard work of the people who lived there. No plot of ground was left idle as everything was used to produce food for the family. Food produced in the garden saved money for the family. Don Paolo spoke of the pride people displayed in their gardens and the order that they represented in their lives. It was an act of gaining control over the environment and a measure of control over your life.

The example of the community garden might be seen as an example of community spirit and the shared values of the community. The community worked together to convert an island into a garden, a useless piece of ground into a valued productive asset to the community. It required hard work and long hours after working in the mills, but with the efforts of the community, they were able to clear the ground, plant the gardens, and water the gardens. The bucket brigades were visible symbols of community support transforming something quite useless into something valued by the entire community. Similarly, the

community garden might be interpreted through the community's view of the educational process. It took an effort of the community focused on a single shared goal, that of the transformation of something underdeveloped into something valuable, something prized by the community, something which provided something that the community needed. The labors of the parents and the community represented the educational process which would transform this underdeveloped asset into something valuable.

The narrative of Joe and his garden is important in confirming the notion of changing values between generations. In asking the question, "How much of this can you eat?", Joe's father did not question the labor expended in creating a lawn, but questioned whether that labor would not have been better spent on something much more practical, providing food and saving money for his family. Don Paolo's comments about those being "very enriching days", about "structure being created" and "value systems being created" sum up the essence of Don Paolo's lessons. The society needs structure and structure was provided through the church, the family, and work. The value system that was being created was a value system that reinforced that structure, it was a value system that provided order in society and self - control. While parents were strict and even tough on their children, the children were provided with the lessons they needed to master their life. The success of such structure was evident in Joe's own family. His family produced three children, two of the children became nurses with advanced degrees in nursing and the other child became a successful psychiatrist. While this type of success story is evident throughout Aliquippa in previous generations, such success stories are not common today. Don Paolo would attribute this decline in success in the district to the change in values in

the community.

The narratives of lunches of peppers and egg sandwiches is not a narrative of a quaint cultural or ethnic custom. Peppers and egg sandwiches on home made bread are not prized by people of Don Paolo's generation as a delicacy, but as symbols of love and nurturing through the act of baking of bread, and symbols fortification of the family and hope in the bread and the eggs. It is the symbolism that makes a rather mundane sandwich enjoyable. The old woman understood that the act of making sandwiches for her son and the workmen was more than an act of providing nutritious food, but an act of nurturing and respect for their labor. Her respect for their labor was clearly shown as she spoke of raising a family on \$50 a day, about one half what these men were paid. By raising a family on what her husband made, she showed respect for his labor and what he was trying to accomplish for the family. The old woman was startled at the disrespect shown to these men by their wives and the disrespect shown by these men to themselves. The workmen did not show respect for their work because they did not have their lunch made, even by themselves. The men hung their heads because they did not show respect for their labor and neither did their wives

## INTERVIEW SIX

Don Paolo immediately questioned whether incentives and disincentives in educational funding as proposed by the Governor were appropriate. If test scores do not improve, then school districts will be punished financially. Yet, lack of finances are part of the problem in raising test scores within the Distressed Seven.

Comparing the Los Angeles riots and the destruction of the community with the destruction of the communities of the Distressed Seven, Don Paolo asked why we could find funds to rebuild Los Angeles and not find the funds to rebuild the school districts in the Distressed Seven. Why would we wait to go into these communities after the disaster has taken place, like Los Angeles, and not act to prevent the disasters? This situation was similar to the Distressed Seven. Why are we not acting now to prevent a further disaster with the Distressed Seven?

“Give me it [the resources] now and let me train these people. ... We can stop the problem.” Part of the problem, Don Paolo explained, is that no politician wants to address the real problem which is that educational problems are simply INTERPRETATIONS of problems in society, problems that society has yet to solve. Education does not have the resources or expertise to solve these social problems, nor, in Don Paolo’s view should education solve these problems. Educators and particular teachers should teach, “that is what they are trained to do.” Society should solve the problems in society, educators will work on the problems in education. “Do we want to solve the problem? No, we do not want to solve the problem. It ain’t going to change.”

Don Paolo cited examples of misplaced priorities in the Federal Government spending as representative of not wanting to address the problems. He talked of the amount of money spent on the Judge Clarence Thomas hearings as a tremendous waste of funds which could be better spent on education rather than pursuing political goals. He also spoke of foreign aid to countries like Israel as an example of wasted resources. These are resources that could be spent on schools, books, supplies, teachers, and programs to

prevent literacy.

“What do you think of boarding schools?” I asked. Don Paolo thought that they were great ideas for distressed communities like his own. It would be expensive, but a boarding school would provide what the students lacked. Boarding schools could provide discipline, regimentation, and commitment. It would also provide another thing that the students lacked, success. “These kids have never tasted success,” he remarked.

The reason that Don Paolo can speak of failure and success, in his view, was that he was a failure at everything he did except athletics. He was a failure academically even though he had committed parents. He was a student in serious trouble and no one on the side of the school spent time to let him know he could be successful. Don Paolo did not know that he could succeed until after high school in the military academy. He also remarked that it was notable that out of the five or six students who graduated at the bottom of his graduating class with him, a number of them are millionaires and successful business people. They are all decent citizens and productive members of society.

If we concentrated our efforts, he believes, we can conquer illiteracy. He believes that we are not serious about solving the illiteracy problem because we do not attack it directly. Don Paolo questions why we spend so much money on prisons when we could spend it on the homeless and on illiteracy. He questioned why we spend resources on educating, housing, feeding, and recreation of prisoners when they are criminals. On the other hand, the homeless, who have committed no crime, are denied for whatever reason the dignity of a human being. They have no facilities to take showers, to wash their clothes or to acquire new ones. By preventing illiteracy, we would be attacking the problems of

crime and homelessness. It was an example of not being serious about solving the problem and not wanting to attack the problem directly.

The population flight from Aliquippa disturbs Don Paolo greatly because people are ashamed to tell other people that they live in Aliquippa. When you live in Aliquippa “people think of all blacks, shootings and stabbings, total chaos and total destruction, drugs, and championship ... teams. No good people live in Aliquippa. No productivity in Aliquippa. These distressed districts have bad names, but there are still some good people who live here.”

Commenting that it was not always that way and the district began to change in 1969 - 1970 with the riots. The riots began when a group of people left a local bar and began attacking some blacks. The violence escalated into riots in the community. Up until that time, people lived fairly well together. After the riots took place, people began to leave “because they didn’t want to put up with that kind of stuff.”

The local mill provided considerable financial support to the district up until that time. After the riots, the financial support of the local mill began to decline and in the 1980s the local mill closed. I asked Don Paolo if the local mill left anything behind to support the district in their absence, wondering if perhaps a small endowment or foundation was offered by the local mill. He replied that they left nothing. “They didn’t even want to pay their back taxes. When they left, they left nothing behind except the people [unemployable].” The unemployed people left the community to seek employment elsewhere. The business people left because incomes fell precipitously. Housing values fell approximately 30 percent in the 1980s as noted earlier. Those that came into the area

came because of the availability of low income housing and other inexpensive housing in the area. The problems seemed insurmountable and “everybody just gave up.” The recent economic expansion brought few jobs to the area, and the construction of a new gypsum plant offered little hope. Remarking that the gypsum plant would produce only 150 new jobs on a site that one time employed 15,000, Don Paolo also noted that “It took twenty years to get here.”

Because the mills no longer exist, a decades old way of life in the community had ended. This way of life consisted of sons following their grandfathers and fathers into the mill, assuring them of at least a decent living. However, the children in the community today never get a chance to succeed. “Everybody wants to be a somebody,” Don Paolo observed. The way of life of the mill worker has been replaced by the way of life of the drug trafficker, and the free lunch. Because the dignity and discipline of work is lacking, the majority of the students in the district are behavior and discipline problems.

Don Paolo reiterated the lack of structure in the families of his students and spoke of the lack of regimentation, and the lack of discipline. The large number of students on the free and reduced lunch program, 85 percent in the district, was evidence of the parents’ lack of pride. Even though they were poor, they could and should perform something of value to society; even if all they could do was raise their children properly they would be performing a service of value to society.

I questioned Don Paolo about the expectations and desires that the parents may have for their children in the district. He responded that superficially, “The parents want it all, but are not willing to make a commitment to their kids.” The parents were not willing

to work to make their children a success.

The key ingredient, a necessary ingredient in success of the district was parental support. “Now [with parental support] when you get the money, you’re in business.” I asked what makes these parents different from his parents and Don Paolo quickly pointed out that these parents “have different values, there is no sense of right and wrong and no work ethic.”

Reflecting his disappointment with these parents, Don Paolo observed that it was a welfare culture. Behavior problems were reflected in the fact that they had no gardens and the order and discipline that gardening brought to the lives of his parents. “These kids are not capable of bringing order to their own lives. They can’t bring order to the society they live in.”

When I asked if an influx of jobs into the area would help to change the parents, Don Paolo commented that it would not make much of a difference as long as there was welfare. “These people never learned how to work.” Drawing from the experience with the Jewish in his old neighborhood, Don Paolo admired their belief in education and learning and referred to it as the “winning edge.” The Jewish culture, he noted, always had a tradition of learning and education.

Other cultures and ethnic groups in Aliquippa either had a belief in education in and learning or adopted that belief as residents in Aliquippa. All ethnic groups had successful people, he observed. Now, there is no respect for learning and education of the children in Aliquippa.

I hoped that the churches in Aliquippa would provide a source of reinforcement of



this belief in education and learning. Don Paolo dispelled that hope quickly when he commented that many churches both white and black fail to support education. When they do support education, it is only superficially. Education is supported as an additional source of funding and not as a source of cultural change within many of the churches in the town.

Don Paolo commented that the school board was not much help either as they refused to take their role seriously. There was “very poor leadership” on the board, he noted. The board members would devote a minimal amount of time in the board meetings, spending very little time talking about educational issues. The motivation for a board member was not service to the community or the students, but trips to conventions and other benefits of the position, according to Don Paolo.

No board member was an educator, yet the board felt it necessary to micro-manage each decision. Each board member felt that they were an expert in education and each member had their own agenda. Don Paolo reiterated the problems with those lacking credentials interfering with educators practicing their profession. It was regrettable, he said, that education is the only profession that lets the stakeholders form policies for the educational professionals to implement. “This would never happen in medicine,” he said discouragingly.

“It all goes back to what is taught at home, “ Don Paolo commented. He wondered how a district like Aliquippa could produce many professional athletes, a U.S. Surgeon General, famous composers and musicians, scores of attorneys, doctors, surgeons, and other professionals only a short time ago. Yet today, the district is considered a failure.

Don Paolo noted that many of the successful people in Aliquippa were altar boys. The discipline of the home and their religious upbringing helped to make them a success.

What was needed, Don Paolo stated without hesitation, was people who want to work, to take care of their property, to establish wholesome families and to do things the right way. It was not a matter of the town breaking down, he claimed, it was a matter of the people [families] breaking down.

One of the larger problems in the district was the concentration of a minority population living in public housing in the district. “This [minority population and housing] needs to be dispersed through out the county, not concentrated here. We don’t have the resources to deal with it.”

Don Paolo asked if I ever heard about the Conservation Club in Aliquippa and the volunteer work the club did to fix local parks. The club had several hundred members at one time. “Why isn’t that continued? Parents don’t encourage service [as they did before]. Nobody is spending time with these kids showing them how to be productive in society.” With the final comment that we are relying upon the government to provide order and control where it was at one time provided by the parents, Don Paolo got up and went outside for another cigarette. We had concluded another interview.

## INTERPRETATIONS

Don Paolo spent a considerable amount of time attempting to teach me about the problems of education. He was especially concerned about the tendency of stakeholders to avoid addressing the real problems of education. The real problems of education, he noted

are funding inequities, lack of parental support, and the notion that whatever problems society is unable to solve should be turned over to the educators for resolution. One of the near universal complaints of educators is that they are given mandates, either a statutory mandate or a tacit mandate, to address non-educational problems without the resources to solve those problems. That is what Don Paolo means when he claims that education is “quickly getting into the social work business.” Social and economic problems within the community are often given to the school district to solve.

Consider the issue of changing socio-economics in a town such as Aliquippa. The local mill generously provided financial resources to the school district for many years. With some changes in the social order brought about by the riots in 1969-1970, financial support from the local mill began to decline. With the demise of the local mill in the 1980s, the financial support of the local mill disappeared. The school district was left without the funding to support programs and facilities initiated earlier. With the total collapse of a tax base, the district was left with serious budget problems. Potential budget savings were offset by significant increases to special education requirements in the district. A declining socio-economic situation is inversely proportional to the special education requirements of the school district.

Diverting financial resources from learning to issues such as foreign aid or to congressional hearings with no relevance are considered wasted resources by Don Paolo. These resources are better spent on attacking problems like illiteracy and at risk students, which are more serious and an even greater threat to society. Perhaps these financial resources should be diverted to distressed districts to create boarding schools for these at

risk students. The value of a boarding school is that it would provide the things that the students lack and would also provide them with opportunities to succeed.

Bandura's research would confirm Don Paolo's belief that providing these students with opportunities to succeed is something needed by these at risk students. Bandura maintains that one of the ways to build self – efficacy is through mastery experience and opportunities to succeed would provide that mastery experience. Mastery experience would build the self – efficacy of the students and consequently, increase the academic performance of the students. With opportunities to succeed academically, the students could begin building efficacy collectively within the community.

What Aliquippa has experienced is an accumulation of negative effects of a number of factors. The community could have absorbed the reduction in population as a result of the riot in-1969 –1970 had the local mill remained intact. In order to address the concerns of the poor in the 1970s, the local county government built a disproportionate number of low income housing units in Aliquippa attracting even more poor and unemployed people to the area. The community needed both time and an opportunity to recover the population losses when the changing economic climate of the 1980s forced the local mill to close. When the local mill closed, the taxpaying population left the area further exacerbating the population losses. With such significant population losses in the community, housing prices fell precipitously. The drastic reduction in housing prices attracted even more poor and unemployed people to the community which caused an even more of the employable population to leave the district as people tried to liquidate whatever equity they had acquired in their homes before prices fell further.

What was required before the entire population of semi-skilled and skilled workers left the community, was an influx of jobs to replace those lost at the local mill. The national and local economies were unable to recover quickly enough to allow for a timely replacement of these jobs. As Don Paolo observed, after twenty years, economic expansion has replaced only 150 of the 15,000 jobs that were lost, an insignificant number. Even if there should be a massive influx of new jobs to the area, the district has been depressed economically for a long time and the district is considered distressed. Any new workers attracted to the area because of the influx of new jobs would likely choose to live in nearby school districts rather than in Aliquippa because of the district's distressed status.

The depressed economic conditions in the district make it difficult to attract and retain teachers and administrators. As Don Paolo stated earlier, "They didn't go to college to get beat up. They didn't go to college to be called 'MF'er or to be told to kiss my ass.' They went to college to teach school. So maybe we shouldn't send them to school for four years for History, and English and Math. We should send them to school to be fighters."

Prospects for recovery are dismal at best for the district. Although prospects for recovery are dismal or even remote, they are not hopeless. Any recovery would require continued economic expansion for several more decades, a change in the values of the parents in the area to support education in the district, and a recognition on the part of the local county government that low income housing should be removed from the district. As for the school district, the district must adopt the philosophy of Don Paolo that we are here to educate and we will educate everyday. No excuses will be accepted. Students should

be grouped homogeneously and behavior problems removed from the classroom. These behavior problems must then be sent to alternative education programs at facilities that are not available presently.

Naturally, it is still necessary to provide leadership at the board level and that appears to be lacking as well. Lack of leadership at the board level might be related to the fact that the pool of possible board candidates is reduced. The reduced pool of candidates is also a pool of candidates with a reduced educational level compared to surrounding districts, so the abilities of these candidates might be less than those in surrounding areas.

Don Paolo makes a sound argument for order and control in the lives of his students. In his generation that order and control was provided by the parents, the family, the church and the community. The school only had to reinforce these values. Don Paolo's students do not have any of these sources reinforcing these values in their lives. The only force influential enough to enforce these values would be the government. The difficulty with that argument is that the government should not and can not enforce virtue, they can only enforce compliance. Without the culture of the parents changing enforcing these virtues through the government would be to coerce the parents into compliance. This solution is difficult to administer at best and expensive and ineffective at worst. A cultural change must be adopted willingly and reinforced in the daily lives of the society or it will not be a sustainable change.

## INTERVIEW SEVEN

Immediately upon greeting me at the door, Don Paolo angrily addressed the

possibility of the state takeover of the district. He pointed out that it was obvious that is necessary to have students who are willing and able to learn if we are to educate. That means that the students must have support from their parents to learn and that the students are prepared to learn. In his view, teachers are ready, willing, and able to teach. The students, because of the home and family environment created by the parents, are not ready to learn. Without the cooperation and support of the parents, which amounts to a cultural change within the community, test scores will not improve.

The difficulty with a state takeover of the district, at this time, is that it makes an assumption that poor test scores are a result of poor teachers and poor administrators. Don Paolo advised that "there is a way to cheat in everything" and that the answers to the test would be given out if teachers pay and even their jobs are tied to their students performance on standardized tests. Teachers will adopt the common approach of teaching to the test. The state is advocating the free market model to solve education's problems, but "running a factory isn't running a school."

Don Paolo questioned why we would make an assumption that the teachers and administration are incompetent. "How bad are these teachers? What are they not doing and more importantly, what are they doing wrong?" It seems that we are looking everywhere for a party to blame because of poor test scores. Teachers and administrators are considered the problem, yet, we have not considered that the parents are part of the problem. "You never met finer teachers than we have in Aliquippa. They never stopped working. ... Everyone is at fault except the parents."

Predicting the action on the part of the state, Don Paolo suggested that the state

would cut the budget, and raise taxes in the district. "How much more are you going to raise taxes in Aliquippa?" noting that the district had a greatly reduced tax base and a large elderly population. The state took the same approach at Clairton and at Wilkinsburg and both failed. Rather than taking over the district, Don Paolo suggested that the state offer to send in advisors to work with the teachers, administration, and the parents to show them how to correct the problems. He realized that no one wants to address the problem with the parents because many people would be alienated. I asked if he was "aware of any district in the country which was distressed and turned itself around so that it continually improved to become a good district." Don Paolo's response was an emphatic "No!" As an alternative to state takeover of a distressed district or if the state would not want to provide advisors to assist the district, Don Paolo thought that the discipline of the military academy should be considered. Recalling his statements that regimentation, discipline and commitment were lacking in the lives of these students, Don Paolo commented that "waxing floors, shining shoes, marching, even dictating about how you sat when you ate, every minute of the day was supervised. Compulsory military academies would benefit these kids if they did not succeed in the normal school; they will break them like a wild horse."

Expressing his own frustration and the frustration of the public, Don Paolo commented that "people have had it with the garbage in public schools. What they want to do with charter schools is to take the best students and the most committed parents and separate them from the others." This is a method of homogeneous grouping that Don Paolo has long supported.



An unpopular position to take for Don Paolo, particularly in a district like Aliquippa which has a majority African - American population, is his belief that the “the black community does not want to clean up their act.” Referring again to the model of a dissertation, Don Paolo addresses the need to state the problem. “Well they’re not going to state the problem because it will cause complications.” The problem, as Don Paolo stated in an earlier interview, is not one of race because many whites contribute to the problems of the district as well. Neither the black nor the white community wants to support this change in values. The problem is one of changing values of parents from Don Paolo’s generation and today’s parents.

The frustration was evident in Don Paolo’s voice as he stated gave me another example. “Tell me what we are doing wrong. The state has not told anyone what they are doing wrong.” Don Paolo believes that it is simply a matter that the problem is unsolvable without the support of the parents and that is not possible on a large scale. The next best thing to do then is to segregate those better students and committed parents from the rest of the community in the form of a charter school or to provide parents with vouchers to allow them to separate themselves from the public schools where only the worst students with the least committed parents would remain.

Elaborating on the example of the state not “telling anyone what they are doing wrong” Don Paolo told me a story of a building inspector. The inspector inspects the building and says that the building cannot pass inspection because some things are not correct. “You guys aren’t doing it right,” the building inspector charges. “What are we doing wrong?” the contractor asks. The building inspector offers no response except, “you

aren't doing it right." After a few exchanges like this with the building inspector you finally conclude that "they [the inspector] don't know either."

"How could you have seven PhD's and they are all failing?" Don Paolo asked. If all distressed districts were at one time successful districts, suffered economic collapse, experienced demographic changes after the economic downturn and have similar demographics today, have large poverty rates, large participation in free and reduced lunch programs, and have similar socio-economic status, he wondered how one could conclude that the teachers and administrators are not teaching or are not qualified. "What's going on here? We've got 15,000 kids who are undisciplined and we are firing the teachers?"

The problems are the problems associated with poverty. The parents are uneducated, the family is non-existent with many single parent households, and parents spending little if any time with their children. "Why is it that your porch is not caved in, the clothes are clean, the children are fed, food is in the house, the parents are ready, willing and able to help with the homework?" Don Paolo asked his question to simply illustrate the differences between two sets of parents. Even if parents were unable to help with the homework, they would do what was necessary to find someone who could help the children with the homework when necessary. One set of parents living in the same district and at times even in the same house, produce different children than parents a generation later. He asked, "Why were [his old neighborhood] and West Aliquippa poor but nice places to live? [The old neighborhood] is a disaster now, why? How about Jones school, one of the best schools in the county was just torn down, they destroyed it. The kids are out of control." His question reflected a question posed by many residents of Aliquippa

who used to live in Don Paolo's old neighborhood and remembered it fondly. "What happened? How could this happen? How did you let a beautiful jewel tarnish into something so ugly, so terrible?"

Don Paolo explained his dismay with another story. "Every year or so, I have 2 pillars on my house that need to be painted. Go look at my pillars, they are perfect. All we are talking about are a few gallons of paint, a few brushes, and a few hours of labor. Where are the people who will tell these people to clean up their act?" He asked me if I remember my aunt's house in the old neighborhood. I said I did and he asked me if I had seen it lately. I told him I had been up there in January of this year and saw the house. "I remember my aunt and uncle's house, he was a cabinet maker and built a house [in the old neighborhood] and it is now destroyed [virtually unlivable]. Why did they not take care of what they had?" I understood that it was not important to express my opinion about the condition of the old neighborhood. Don Paolo's question to me was not to get my opinion, but to confirm what he already knew about the condition of the old neighborhood.

Having made his point, he turned his comments to the pending state takeover of the district. The educational reform model proposed by the state is flawed because it is based upon the assumption that the teachers and administrators are inadequate. "To prove that you are wrong we are going to punish you. We are educators not social workers." The school districts are caught in a lose - lose situation. The chances of the district turning itself around are minimal and if it fails, the state can simply state that the community does not want to improve or that the teachers and administrators could not keep up the

successful turnaround efforts of the state. If the reforms work, the state can claim credit for the accomplishment as a successful educational reform model. The irony was not lost on Don Paolo as he told me that the state would provide increased funding to the district after the state takeover, one of the requests that the district has had before the state for many years. I asked why the politicians have not been convinced of our argument? “Those that control the finances [politicians] control the policy” he replied.

Don Paolo expressed his concern that educators and resources devoted to education have to be diverted to social work areas. “There are a lot of kids at [the elementary school] that do well. There are some that do poorly and they hold others back from getting an education. The special ed population is about 33%. We get more money through chapter one than anyone, per capita. We are not social workers, we are teachers. We can’t solve your problems in your home.” Don Paolo has made the point several times that teachers are trained to teach and they should teach. Teachers are not trained as social workers and should not be assigned social work problems. “I never ever thought that I would be confronted with the problems I have in education. There is chaos in the society and so much ignorance; parents, people in general. Social workers training parents on how to raise their kids; training parents to raise kids, handling drug and alcohol problems is not our job. We never took courses in that. If you want us to get involved, then you give us the proper resources and people to deal with the problem.”

When he started his career in education it [educational policy] “started with the 10 goals of education, then 12 goals, then the long range plan, then the strategic plan, input from the stakeholders in the community; then outcomes based education, then standards

based education. You don't see it in other fields because of the political bullshit [in education]. Even sharp black educators are fed up. 'These people don't want to learn' [and] now he is in another district."

Turning his attention to the school board, he commented that, "if the state takes over, then the board will not be able to attend conventions. In one weeks' time they will balance the budget." Some superintendents exercise control over the local school board and some even work well with their board, but in Aliquippa, the board runs the district and the administration. Don Paolo reasoned, "how is the public better suited to solve the problems of education than the administration? I don't know, why do we have educators if everyone else has the answers?" After two terms as superintendent, Don Paolo decided to retire and focus his efforts elsewhere.

"The school board members always want something, they use that position as a wedge, their hands are always out." Don Paolo spoke of the decision of the board to transfer their account from one bank to another based upon the bank entertaining the board members at football and baseball games. He noted that board members often run for the office not because they wish to advance education in the district, but because it gives them access to power; then they use the board membership to move to another position, acquiring more political power.

It was apparent that Don Paolo was not feeling well and remembering the aggravation of years in education were both annoying him. I excused myself after thanking Don Paolo for his help and his time. He asked that I call him and that we get together again soon.

## INTERPRETATIONS

The impact of the years of frustration of dealing with a board with a non-educational agenda and parents who were not committed to their children have taken their toll on Don Paolo. As a warrior, it is difficult for him to imagine a situation that he cannot conquer, a situation that he cannot outlast or survive through sheer imposition of will. This type of attitude reflects the philosophy of Don Paolo's high school football coach, in order to win, one had to persevere, to hit and hit hard, approach the problem directly and continue to focus on the goal. Never stop working and there are no excuses. The superintendency of Aliquippa is just such a position because so much of what is necessary to succeed is beyond your control as the superintendent. As any good warrior would do, Don Paolo maintains that his soldiers are diligent, well trained and courageous. "You never met finer teachers than we have in Aliquippa. They never stopped working." Don Paolo offered small vignettes of the building inspector and of the pillars at his house. The vignette of the building inspector revealed his frustration with the state and his realization that they knew no more than he and his staff knew. They state was just in a position to decide policy and to criticize, they could offer no constructive suggestions to reverse the decline in test scores in the district.

The vignette of the pillars of the house contains more depth and meaning regarding his attitude toward the parents in the district. Don Paolo's house is unusual in that it was built in the style of many houses in Europe. The exterior walls are two feet thick and that dimension is reflected in the size of the exterior pillars at the addition he built. The pillars are solid, stable supports for that end of the house and although they required

considerable work to put in place, require little work to maintain their appearance and strength. With some paint, some brushes, and a few hours labor, the pillars remain strong and continually look new. His pillars "are perfect." Contrast his pillars with the pillars of the newer residents in Aliquippa whose "porch[es] are caved in." The pillars of their houses were solid and strong, "plumb, level and square" in the words of Don Paolo. Yet, they let these strong pillars decline until they could not support anything. The pillars are like the values of Don Paolo and his parents. They are strong values, sturdy and solid, with enough strength to build a structure that will be of lasting beauty. Structures with strong pillars would support the structure which would protect and nurture the occupants for generations. His reference to the Jones School is no less significant for its importance as a pillar of the old neighborhood, "the finest school in the county." The school represented a strong pillar for the community since it was the first school that the children of the residents attended. Jones School reinforced the values that the children were taught at home and nurtured and protected those students as they grew and learned. Like the pillars of the houses in the old neighborhood, it was not maintained and had to be torn down. "They destroyed it." Don Paolo's comments that the old neighborhood where he grew up was a poor, but nice place to live like West Aliquippa is perhaps the most revealing about what he views as wrong with the district. These poor communities consisted of small, well maintained houses and most had meticulous gardens. Many had only two bedrooms but the people who built these houses raised families, some of them quite large in these small houses. The children eventually grew and raised families of their own. Since many of these children were better educated than their parents, and had larger

incomes, they moved out of the old neighborhoods to live closer to where they worked or to move into a bigger house. As the families left the old neighborhood, they left the small but well maintained houses behind, almost as a legacy to the families that followed. If the families that followed maintained themselves and the houses as well as they did, these new families too could prosper and become upwardly mobile. It would require work, but these new families had what they needed to live comfortably.

However, the house were not maintained. Like the lives of the residents, they fell into disrepair. The beauty of the community faded. What seems to anger most of the former residents of the old neighborhood most is that the new families destroyed what they and their parents had built. That senseless destruction was more than a destruction of property. When the property was destroyed, it represented a destruction and rejection of the values which they and their parents had worked so hard to establish. For many former residents, the destruction of the old neighborhood represented nothing less than an attempt to destruct the virtues of them and their parents. These former residents would have little sympathy for the current residents and would want "nothing to do with that nonsense." They viewed the new residents of the old neighborhood as people without virtues. A racial and cultural void began to reinforce itself between the two groups.

#### INTERVIEW EIGHT

When Don Paolo and I got back together, I noticed that he was not feeling well. He had some things to tell me and he was still concerned about the likely takeover of the district by the state. "Do you remember," he asked, "the comment by the black legislator



who went into the classroom and said he couldn't believe that his own people can't read?" "I think that guys got rocks in his head." He advised that the legislator go to their homes and ask these people 'What are you doing?' Again, Don Paolo expressed his concern that we truly understand what is going on at the home. Contrast that situation, he suggested with the situation of his friend, a heart surgeon. The heart surgeon works six days a week and spends the seventh day with his daughter. Before he spends the day with his daughter, he asks his wife what she has taught the daughter this week and he continues with the teaching. He takes her to Greek school and spends the entire day teaching his daughter. At the end of the day, they do something together as a family. It is not that his friend is a heart surgeon that is significant to Don Paolo, but that the parents are engaged in teaching and spending time with the child seven days a week. Reading, including reading in Greek, is an important part of this child's learning.

Don Paolo spoke of the importance of structure and discipline and proudly pointed to the Success for All reading program in place in the district. The students are making progress and will continue to progress in this program, but they are hampered by the home environment where reading and learning are not important.

Programs other than reading programs are required by Don Paolo's students. His students have needs that are more basic than developing reading skills. Aliquippa has a program in place that feeds 1,000 kids per day in the summer. Eighty five percent of the students in the district are on free and reduced lunch and in the summer these children eat for free. The program is government funded and Don Paolo finds it tragic that these families do not have enough pride and responsibility to feed their own children.

He illustrated this situation with a story of a refrigerator in a nearby community. “What do we have in there?” He ran down the list of the variety of foods that were stored in a typical refrigerator in that community and noted the quantity and quality of food available. He pointed out that there was also something in the refrigerator to prepare for the evening meal. There were also leftovers in the refrigerator and food in the freezer. He now asks us to compare this refrigerator with a refrigerator in Aliquippa. He tells me to push aside the ‘roaches’. The refrigerator is empty “there is no nothing in that God damned refrigerator. The kitchen is filthy, God damned dirty, bugs are everywhere.” The food stamps that these people receive they cash in for “booze and crack cocaine”... “If the parents aren’t at fault, then why aren’t your kids there?” He referred to the government food program during the 1980s in Aliquippa after the mills had closed. “Remember those five pound blocks of cheese the government was giving away to the unemployed?” he asked. I did remember and he replied that these unemployed steelworkers had too much pride to accept the government food that was offered to them. That pride in being able to work to support their families was the difference between the people who left to seek employment elsewhere and those who stayed, and stayed unemployed.

Don Paolo noted that these parents just do not care. In the cafeteria lines at school, he noted that the children gorge themselves on Friday afternoon and Monday morning because they probably will not have anything to eat on the weekend.

Don Paolo had described earlier that these parents had not provided for their children’s social needs and learning readiness by not teaching them anything. These parents also failed to provide for their children’s physical needs by failing to feed them

properly. The parents failed to provide for the children's basic needs of decent, clean housing when he described the run down houses, and now he described how the parents failed to provide for their children's basic clothing needs when the children would come to school in the winter without hats, scarves, gloves, boots, or jackets. The teachers in the school would often provide clothes for these children from their own funds or from clothes that their own children out grew. "Now we're going to take the national test [and compare] scores. Come on, give me a god damned break!"

Don Paolo expressed his frustration with the notion of comparing test scores as a performance measure and commented that "we were forgetting about the kids." He told me again about the problems with convincing the politicians at the state level that the Distressed Seven "just gave up" because "where ever they went, they kept getting turned down." The continual failures forced them to give up. They had abandoned their goal of obtaining additional funding from the state.

That night, before Don Paolo called to ask me to come over to his house, I was reading an audit report prepared by the Auditor General for the Aliquippa school district. Don Paolo asked me if I had finished reading the audit and I told him that I had finished reading it. We discussed the audit and he told me that the audit was a financial audit, but since the audit was simply described as an audit, it implied that it was an academic performance audit as well. He felt that the audit was a farce since they reported opinions on school performance as well as findings of the financial audit. Those that conducted the audit were only qualified to perform a financial audit, no one involved in the audit was qualified to conduct a performance evaluation of the district.

As an example of their erroneous findings, he referred to a finding about performance evaluations being performed with the superintendent's own form and not the form required by the state. He replied to the auditor that the form was the correct form and showed the auditor that it was correct. The auditor was not familiar with the forms and never questioned the opinion of the staff member who made the incorrect assertion. In a similar example of poor audit procedures, Don Paolo spoke of a finding on the busing runs. One staff member felt that the district made too many bus runs to a section of town and the number of runs should be reduced from twelve to three. Don Paolo explained that they made twelve runs because buses were limited to carrying forty-five students. They had twelve bus loads of children to pick up and not three bus loads. The auditor had accepted the opinion of a staff member as fact and did not question why there were so many busloads of students. The state played staff members against each other and sent incompetent auditors to conduct a "phoney baloney audit." On the financial operations side of the audit, the auditors only finding was a recommendation to reduce the janitorial staff by three people to save \$760,000 over three years, a small savings from an annual budget of \$14 million.

We had discussed the audit finding that the district needed to upgrade the technology available to the students, "the students should have access to the same technology as students in other districts." The books, supplies, buildings and access to programs were not adequate and the students should have the same access to these resources as students in other districts. "Teachers buy supplies from their own funds." It was these very same arguments that the Distressed Seven superintendents made to the state

politicians. That argument fell on deaf ears. The audit also identified the need for an alternative school in the district. Don Paolo told me that the district had a need to send fifty children to an alternative school at about \$10,000 per year, but were permitted to send only ten children per year to that school. If the district could not send these forty additional students, even if they could afford it, how could the district afford to construct and run an alternative school in the district?

The audit also quotes, in its conclusion, from the mission statement of the Aliquippa school district that “the work ethic which is a strong feature of the traditions of this community must be restored.” If the work ethic is not taught and maintained in the community, then it should not be taught in the school he maintained. He questioned, if parents do not show their support of the work ethic at home, how can we teach it in the school? It was the mission of the school to get the parents involved in promoting the work ethic at home. However, these efforts were met with little success. The parents said that they wanted the best academic performance from their children but were unwilling to commit the effort to help their children achieve that performance. The parents and consequently their children were unwilling to work to make that outcome occur.

As we discussed the absence of the work ethic with these new parents, Don Paolo reflected on the impact of the lack of that value on his old neighborhood. Once again he recalled the old neighborhood with its immaculate gardens. He described the old outdoor beehive ovens where the mothers of all ethnic backgrounds made bread for their families, and how they fed those families from those gardens and those ovens. The smell of the bread baking in those ovens, the continuity of work, the regularity of the work in the

garden every spring helped to provide a safe, secure environment for the children of the old neighborhood.

Don Paolo told me of a friend of his from the old neighborhood who became a very wealthy businessman on the east coast. His friend told him that his best friend now was his wallet. If he needed anything, he could not go to anyone he could trust, he could only go to people he could pay. In the old neighborhood, if he needed something he could go to friends in the neighborhood and they would do what was needed to help each other. Don Paolo gave me the example of a family who needed a new hot water tank in their house. They did not have the money for a new hot water tank, and did not know how to install a new tank. So they would call one of their friends who would help them solve the problem. Someone would lend money or credit at the hardware store, someone else would provide the fittings, someone else would get some pipe from the local mill, someone else would provide the labor to install the hot water tank. Before long the problem was solved and the family in need would provide a meal for those who helped. There were people you could rely on in the old neighborhood in time of need and you knew that sometime you would be needed to provide for your friends when they needed help. Now, his friend says, my friend is my wallet. His friend had people who would help as long as he had money to pay. These people were close and committed to each other. They relied upon each other in time of need. Don Paolo and his friend remembered that if you were making a salad and your garden produced many tomatoes and few onions, you went to your friend's garden and took the onions that you needed and your friend took tomatoes when he needed them. No one kept score, it all would even out in the end.

Now, Don Paolo said, there is no one “pushing back anyone’s hair.” No one telling these children that they were loved. No one showing these children that they were loved. There was no guidance from the fathers, even if fathers were present.

As expected, there was no parental involvement in the school as there was in the past, Don Paolo said. He also noted that parental involvement in the school in the past did not mean that the parents were involved in the parent-teacher organizations or were even present at the school very often. Parents would be present for special events, and would provide things that the school needed for fund raisers, but they were not often present at the school. The presence of the parents was apparent in other ways, by having their children “ready, willing, and able to learn” and by providing an environment at home that advocated learning and hard work. Because that work ethic was no longer present in the community, restoration of that tradition became a part of the mission of the school. With that observation and noticing that Don Paolo’s cough seemed to be getting worse, I thanked Don Paolo and excused myself. He apologized and urged that we get together soon. He had more to say to me.

#### INTERPRETATIONS

Don Paolo had little tolerance for those who refused to work and in his view, many students in Aliquippa simply had lost the desire to work because they had never been taught the dignity of labor or of the pride to be taken in completing a task successfully. As for the parents, he is willing to excuse poverty. After all, many people in Aliquippa including Don Paolo were raised in a poor environment. What he could not excuse was the lack of pride and lack of responsibility for raising your children properly. For that, there

could be no excuse.

The narrative of the refrigerators represented more than material accumulation of food. What the refrigerators represented was a symbolic storehouse of pride, caring, and love. The food represented the nurturing of life, and respect for life, your own life and the life of those in the family. Having a full refrigerator indicated that you had your priorities in order. You may not be wealthy, but you are surviving and giving your family what they needed to grow stronger and to be nurtured so they might exceed your own accomplishments. Many people from the old neighborhood often reminded younger people that you might be poor, but with hard work, you could always eat well and stay clean. Many of the women in the old neighborhood became excellent cooks, preparing all sorts of delicious meals with ingredients and produce from the gardens. They might have been poor, but they would not have a poverty of skill in their kitchen. They would build wealth with their skill as cooks and demonstrate that skill to their family daily. Don Paolo pointed out almost venomously that the kitchens were now filthy, “God damned dirty, bugs are everywhere.” The filth in the kitchen spoke directly to the children about how the parents did not care. There would be no clean proper place to display their love and caring for their children. There would be no love or caring to display, at least not enough to be willing to work to show your love for and your pride in your children.

For ethnic families, the kitchen is the heart and soul of the home, the spirit of the family lives in the kitchen. A dirty kitchen becomes like a soul in a state of sin, it lacks grace and the perfect love of a parent to the child. The kitchen constantly in use becomes soiled and then cleaned as love and spirit emerges from the effort that soiled it. The love of



a parent is not always perfect in its demonstration daily, but there is effort to produce something from that soul daily and it often becomes soiled in the process. The love and spirit that emerges from those acts of love restore the cleanliness of the kitchen and the state of the soul as the parent repents from the imperfection of the act and promises to try to remain without imperfections. Cleaning the kitchen becomes like the act of reconciliation, the kitchen and the soul have been restored to a perfect state.

This does not mean that a clean kitchen which remains clean from lack of use is much better than a dirty kitchen. If a kitchen remains clean because it has not been used, it becomes like a soul which has not grown in grace and love, it is a soul which has become sterile and lifeless. There may be no sin in that soul, but there is no spirit there either.

Similarly, as the parents fail to provide for the other needs of their children, the needs for proper clothing, and proper housing, they show how they do not care for their children. It is not the amount of clothing or the magnificence of the house that demonstrates caring and love, it is how the parents care for and maintain what they have, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of their children that matters.

As parents fail to provide teaching and guidance for their children, they fail to nurture their souls. As these children come to school without social skills and without knowledge of the proper behavior, their souls and spirit are not nurtured. By providing the proper guidance, the spirit of these children and the spirit of the community can begin restoration.

Don Paolo's description of the old neighborhood gardens and beehive ovens becomes more than a nostalgic look toward the past. Rather, he provides for us a

description of his own type of paradise. It was a paradise which in one sense was difficult and sometimes even cruel, but it was a paradise built upon caring and security provided through the hard work and discipline of the parents. It was a paradise where not only the basic physical needs of the children were met, but their spiritual needs were being met also.

In the description of his friend, the successful businessman whose only friend was his wallet is a description of changing community spirit, changing values. It is also about caring as the object of that caring has changed from people to money. His best friend was not a person at all, but was the money in his wallet. In the narrative of the hot water tank, Don Paolo spoke of shared experience and shared values. The need to provide a hot water tank for a neighborhood was a result of a collective effort to achieve a desired outcome. In this case, the outcome benefitted only one member of the community, but all would eventually benefit because they would soon be in need at some time. The acts of individuals, however small, would accomplish nothing in isolation but when combined with the efforts of others, they were able to accomplish something that would not have been possible. The individual acts were demonstrations that individuals cared about the person in need, but the collective act was a demonstration that the person in need mattered to the community. No matter what their financial state, the person in need was treated individually and collectively as a person of value. By providing a meal to those who were there to help, the person in need showed that their friends were important and the person in need was there to provide the nurturing, love and caring that their friends would need because they were important to the person in need and to the community as well.

The simple practice of sharing the produce from the individual gardens without

asking for an accounting or questioning is a demonstration of trust. It was also a practice which reinforced the importance of the individual to the collective community and to the individuals in the community. The hard work and pride that these people displayed through their gardens showed how valuable they felt their gardens were to them. By allowing someone to share from something so valuable without asking or without accounting for it is a profound act of trust in that individual. To allow open and virtually free access to something so valuable to a person as his garden is a demonstration of trust and security in the community. Oddly enough, neither Don Paolo nor any other individual that I knew who lived in or was familiar with his old neighborhood could remember any act of vandalism to any garden. It would seem that their trust in each other was virtually absolute.

Contrasting that feeling with Don Paolo's near contempt that he would not eat a tomato out of their gardens is not a statement of contempt for their gardens or perhaps even these people as individuals, but a statement of contempt for their values and work ethic. The growing of tomatoes was an act of pride for in the old neighborhood because tomatoes were valued for their flavor, and their beauty. To let someone take a tomato from your garden is to let them have free access to something of yours which is valuable. You had trust in them and knew that they would not violate that trust. Perhaps Don Paolo felt that these people in their current state could not provide nurturing to anyone, perhaps they could not be trusted since they could not be trusted to care for their own children. As a result, he would not eat a tomato out of their gardens, if they even had a garden.

INTERVIEW NINE

By the time Don Paolo and I got back together, the state had passed the Education Empowerment Act. This was clearly on Don Paolo's mind and he wanted to discuss this implications of the legislation with me.

"The view of the public [regarding public education] is what's important." Because test scores are not good, the public impression is that the teachers are not good. What the public is ignoring is that "these kids are not well. They are not well physically, they are not well psychologically and they are not well socially. Their environment is a catastrophe." Don Paolo observed that these children were not ready, willing and able to learn.

I asked why the teachers were being blamed for the test scores, and Don Paolo replied that the answer was simple. The government has to answer to the public and by blaming the teachers and the administration, they give the impression that something has to be done and by the education empowerment act, they appear to be doing something.

With the education empowerment act, teachers will be laid off, class sizes will increase, and taxes will be raised. The budget will be balanced, which in the view of the public is important because it will not drain the public treasury any more than it already has. Test scores will become a secondary issue to the balanced budget. What is important in this education empowerment act is that the power of the school board will increase and the power of the educators will decrease.

Don Paolo expressed concern about the view of the state that the teachers and the administration are at fault. He noted that all of the superintendents in the Distressed Seven have their doctorate degrees. Even the consultants from higher education hired by Don Paolo to help solve the problem with student performance were unable to assist in solving

the problem. Don Paolo wondered who knows how to solve the problem. “Do the superintendents from the wealthy districts know? Do the higher educational institutions know, does the Secretary of the Department of Education know?” Don Paolo pointed out sarcastically that since he is a lawyer and has all of the answers, he might know how to solve the problem. “But the answer is that they don’t know”, because they do not want to address the problem. The problem is that the parents have not raised the children to learn according to Don Paolo, the parents “are a burden on society” because they refuse to raise their children properly. In the public view, it is popular to blame the teachers whether or not it is proper. In the view of the public, the taxpayers money is wasted, so something must be done.

Not all of the students are not learning in Aliquippa, Don Paolo said. We are still sending students to colleges, Don Paolo said. When Don Paolo started homogeneous grouping of students, the students with behavior problems were grouped together and the more serious students were grouped together. As expected, the more serious students started working and learning. The behavior problems distracted each other and did not learn.

The behavior problems at Aliquippa are significant, Don Paolo said. The sound of the police sirens went unnoticed as Don Paolo spoke to me. When the recording was played back, the police sirens were first noticed. Don Paolo spoke over the sirens and told me about a fourteen year old student sent to an alternative school. At the alternative school, the fourteen year old student defecated on the steps of the school. “Where did you learn that?” Don Paolo screamed. “Animals do that! Pigs do that!” He was appalled that

any child could be so uncivilized as that child. He questioned where they learned their foul language and that behavior. He wondered how a child could pick up a gun and shoot his mother or his father. He wondered how a child could pick up a gun and stick it in the face of another person and shoot. "Where did they learn that behavior?" Again the question fell silent. No response was required, but the school was soon to assume the blame for that behavior as well as the responsibility for dealing with and correcting that behavior.

"Do you know how much money we spend on educational problems?" The majority of students at Aliquippa represent behavior problems and the school has individual educational plans for all of them. "These students have no seriousness of purpose" Don Paolo said. You just cannot have babies and dump them and that is exactly what is happening. "We are not a social organization, we are a learning organization."

Expressing doubts that the state takeover would be effective, Don Paolo said that the state would fire some custodians, fire some teachers, and raise taxes. He did not feel that the state would be able to cut transportation costs because "no one wants us." The budget would be balanced, but "class sizes will increase from 20 students to 40 students." Any increase in taxes would hurt the large population of senior citizens in Aliquippa. In order to keep taxes down, the senior citizens would support firing teachers. Don Paolo noted that the ones causing all of the problems, the babies having babies, do not pay taxes anyway so raising taxes does not hurt them in any way. What is necessary, Don Paolo stated, is that the way we fund public education needs to be changed. Basing educational funding on the local districts ability to raise funds through property taxes denies some students access to educational resources that other students in wealthy districts enjoy.

Don Paolo spoke also about the agendas of some board members. He knows of a school board member in another district, a doctor with a thriving practice, who ran for school board and got elected. His only agenda is to get back at the basketball coach because his child did not make the team. When this was called to his attention, the school board member acknowledged it proudly and said that he was “out to get the coach.” Singular agendas like this that were unrelated to education were not uncommon with school boards. Rather than being the exception, these school board members were the rule according to Don Paolo. They were the rule, but not in Aliquippa but all over the state. These were the people who were going to make the policy for educators to implement.

Teachers were not always without fault Don Paolo reminded me. He told me of a former student he had who was a trouble maker. The guidance counselor called him names and made fun of him because he wanted to be a contractor and build things. When Don Paolo met the student thirty years after he left school, the former student was a very successful contractor. “Do you remember that guidance counselor? I want her to see what a success I am! Do you remember how she made me cry? I will take a backhoe to her grave and dig her up because I want her to see what a success I am!” After thirty years and many successes, the former student was still upset by the actions of a former teacher. “You were the only one who had faith in me,” the former student told Don Paolo. Don Paolo explained that there were some bad teachers, but you can not take the approach to fire them all. The public view is such that we all remember a bad teacher. Schools with bad test scores allow us to rationalize firing teachers without knowing whether or not they are actually performing their jobs well. “The teachers are sacrificial anyway.”

The solution to the behavior problems in school is to have the parents teach the children how to behave, Don Paolo advised. Since the parents have not taught the children how to behave, it is necessary to have access to an alternative school. The district could not afford an alternative school to remove the behavior problems from school so that those without behavior problems could be educated. I asked Don Paolo if he had tried calling in the parents of the behavior problems to stay in the classrooms when there were problems. Don Paolo said that he had done that and that they had problems with the parents behavior. The parents could not stay in the classroom without being belligerent, smoking, talking on the telephone, or bringing in their boyfriend to entertain them while they had to stay with their child. Eventually some of these parents would not show up at school to stay with their children. "If we are so wrong in how we are running the school, then show us what is right," Don Paolo asked.

His disgust and distrust of the state government's program was expressed in a comment about the governor's visit to Aliquippa. Don Paolo held the governor in contempt because he refused to come to visit the school and meet his students. His students may never have a chance to see a governor and the governor would have a chance to see Don Paolo's students. Don Paolo welcomed the opportunity for both parties to learn something, but the governor did not come to visit the school. Don Paolo simply thinks that he did not visit the school because it did not fit the profile and image the governor wanted to convey to the public view.

Don Paolo presented me with a two page summary of the Education Empowerment Act and we discussed the procedure for taking over the operation of a school district. The



criteria for inclusion on the list of distressed districts is for 50% of the students taking the standardized tests score in the bottom 25%, the bottom quartile, in both reading and math.

The Department of Education establishes Academic Advisory Teams and District Empowerment Teams to develop a plan for the district. The plan includes:

- ! identification of district wide academic standards
- ! establishment of performance goals, benchmarks and timetables for improvement
- ! revisions to curriculum, instructional practices, and programming
- ! establishment of system to assess performance of the district
- ! academic accountability for students, schools, and administrators
- ! procedures to increase parent / guardian participation
- ! increased authority and responsibility for individual schools
- ! greater freedom for parents to choose schools
- ! professional development activities for teachers and administrators
- ! policies / procedures to ensure safe and secure school environments.

In the Education Empowerment Act, the School Board gets greatly expanded powers to establish a charter school, designate the school as independent to contract with any individual or organization to operate the school, to reassign or dismiss professional employees, to supervise and direct teachers, principals, and administrators, to rescind contracts of the Superintendent and administrative personnel, and to reallocate resources. The school will receive a grant of \$450,000 and \$75 per student to purchase instructional materials, to reduce class sizes, to establish summer and weekend programs, to establish a

full day kindergarten, fund curriculum development, to fund enhanced professional development, to fund any other program. Even if off the list the district will continue “in perpetuity” with enhanced powers.

In the view of Don Paolo, nothing could be more disastrous to public education and to the profession of education. The basis of the Education Empowerment Act is that the problem with the performance of the school rests with the teachers and the administration. Don Paolo referred back to his examples of private industries or other professions being run by a public board. He finds it intolerable and an unconscionable affront to the profession that the public would get enhanced powers to make decisions in a profession where they are completely unqualified. He imagines the disasters if medical, engineering or architectural decisions were over-ridden by John Q. Public. Yet that approach is exactly what is prescribed in the Education Empowerment Act. The only people who have their powers reduced or eliminated are the educational professionals.

In the view of Don Paolo, the School Board is a large part of the problem, and the state reacts to their incompetence and indifference by expanding their powers. The other items identified as part of the plan, Don Paolo asserts, are simply extracted from the district’s strategic plan except for the greater freedom of the parents to choose schools.

What is alarming to Don Paolo is that on the 3 - 6 member of the District Empowerment Team, none are required to be educational professionals and on the 11 member Academic Advisory Team only three members, the Superintendent, Principal, and Teacher are educational professionals. The other eight members are not educational professionals. Clearly, the educational professional is a minor part of the academic

advisory team and may not even participate on the District Empowerment Team. The role of the education professional in participating in development and implementation of the solution to the problems in the distressed district is minimal under the Education Empowerment Act.

For Don Paolo, the most distressing facet of the Education Empowerment Act is the component which greatly enhances the power of the School Board. This component places the power for all the decision making in the district in the hands of those untrained in educational matters. Their qualification is their election. Don Paolo questions how the School Board can supervise and direct teachers when they have no knowledge of teaching. He wonders how or why they would be made responsible for the supervision and direction of Principals, some School Board members may not have had any supervisory experience at all. Most are clearly unqualified in personnel matters. He questions how a School Board member, uncredentialed and unqualified, is more qualified to make educational decisions than the Superintendent. Yet the Education Empowerment Act endows them with that power. He is dismayed that the Education Empowerment Act expands their power to select professional staff and to evaluate their performance. He asks, "How do they know who would make the best teacher?" He knows that the School Board makes many of those decisions already, but that power is clearly part of the problem. He sees no provision in the Education Empowerment Act which prevents the School Board from engaging in nepotism, a practice which is vigorously applied in Aliquippa and other school districts in the state.

Finally, he shakes his head and ponders why the state would provide annual school

improvement grants of \$450,000 and \$75 per student annually although kindly offered to discuss this further when I found my self ready. I told him that I would be back to talk to him in the near future.

As I left Don Paolo's house and looked at the sturdy walls and the large pillars, and the immaculate lawn, I knew that he had his house in order. He had worked hard to build a fine house for himself and for his parents. Hard work was something that rewarded both Don Paolo and his parents. Having the character and discipline to persevere also served him well. These qualities would work for his students also if some one could teach them how to work. Don Paolo could not teach them all and what might be worse, some did not know that they should learn. I knew that my conversations with Don Paolo were only beginning. We had just concluded the first phase of my instruction.

## INTERPRETATIONS

Don Paolo makes an important point about the view of the public. Much of public policy in education is not based upon research, but on political dogma. This is reflective of Galbraith's notion of justifying doctrine.

Throughout the interviews with Don Paolo, he stresses the fact that the politicians and educators "just do not know." It appears that we are saying that 'we know but do not want to say what the problem really is.' This means that the problem is society and the schools are merely reflective of society. If the children coming to the school do not demonstrate the right values and their behavior does not reflect the proper behavior patterns in society, then they are merely reflecting the values and behavior that our society

finds tolerable, if not acceptable.

Society, must place the blame elsewhere because it finds it difficult to admit that parents sometimes do not take care of their children, that there are children who have not learned anything proper in the home, that there are children unprepared to learn by the time school starts, and that there is a segment of society who does not understand the dignity of labor because they have not learned the dignity of labor. It is difficult for a political organization to accept that their policies have contributed to or have not solved the problems. It is equally difficult for advocates of a certain economic policy to admit that their economic system and policies have contributed to or have not solved the problems. Similarly, it is unlikely that a society would admit that their social policies have contributed to or have not solved the problems. It becomes even more difficult to blame the children, the innocent victims of the sins of the parents. Yet the public view needs to be addressed.

The public feels that they have spent a considerable amount of money on public education and have had little to show for their investment. In fact, the mistrust of public schools and educators has become so widespread that both are now under attack from all members of society. Public education represents a large budget expenditure and is a large public organization in the view of the public. Since the 1980s, the public view has been swayed to regard any public organization as an inept bureaucracy. As a consequence, the remedy for bureaucracy is capitalism and competition. Capitalistic approaches and the inevitable competition are more efficient and less expensive than public programs in the view of the public. That is why we have seen the public and some elected officials advance the notion of private schooling or home schooling as preferable to public education. In

order for public education to benefit from capitalistic approaches, it is necessary to introduce accountability, just as we do in business. The best way to introduce accountability is to introduce competition. The most logical way to measure competitors and to determine winners, for what is a competition without winners, is through comparison of standardized test scores. Hence, the public seems to be obsessing on standardized tests as a solution to the educational performance dilemma. If students perform poorly on standardized tests, then in the public view, the teachers have failed to teach the students. In those districts where students perform well, the assumption is that the teachers have done their job. In districts where students have done poorly, the assumption is that the teachers have failed. Such conclusions are simplistic though quantifiable. They satisfy the public's need for a solution which is simple, understandable, and most of all measurable. The tools used to measure the performance are benign and scientific. They are also incorrect.

The public is also spared the pain of personal involvement in any decisions and is spared the guilt of having to make a value judgement regarding a human being, the teachers. The public will simply define the line of demarcation between the acceptable and non-acceptable and the standardized tests would make the decision for the public. It is an impersonal way of making a very personal decision.

Don Paolo speaks at length about the Education Empowerment Act and its potential flaws. What he is telling us as educators is that we need to gain our profession back and that we need to conduct ourselves as professionals. Since educational professionals have not resisted attempts to usurp their authority in the schools by either the

parents, the school boards, or the students themselves, the profession has been wrested from their control, if it ever was in the control of the professionals. With the Education Empowerment Act, the single factor which means the most in regard to the student being ready, willing, and able to learn is ignored. The factor that is ignored or at least glossed over, is the ability of the parent to properly raise the child to be successful in school. Although the Act notes that the plan should include procedures to increase parental / guardian participation, it is not a central part of the plan. In fact, there is nothing which prevents the parent / guardian from being an active or even a central figure in the education of their child currently. The participation of the parent / guardian in that role is welcomed and advocated by Don Paolo, but it is a role which the parent / guardian has refused to accept. It is unlikely that a procedure would provide the impetus to gain their participation.

As I left Don Paolo's house and noticed the beauty and order of the place, it appeared to be a structure resisting the waves of decay which were making their way up the hill to the shores of his kingdom. Like that strong structure, Don Paolo steadfastly resisted the waves as well, but he was not gaining the advantage in this struggle. He was certain that his view was correct and that he understood the problem. Moreover, he had understood the remedy for the problem. In his view, the discipline, hard work, and commitment on the part of the parents to turn their children and their lives around was too bitter a medicine for the parents to take. In their minds, perhaps, the disease is worse than the cure. For Don Paolo, it is beyond human understanding that a parent could consider any other option than the remedy he has prescribed.

## INTERVIEW TEN

In this short interview, Don Paolo wanted to make a short statement about crime and punishment. He called me at home the night before, as was his practice and suggested that we get together the next night. I rushed home and changed clothes. Don Paolo met me outside, as usual, and began to talk about the Amish. He praised their skills as carpenters and craftsmen and offered them as an example of an efficacious community. They had shared values and knew what they needed to accomplish their objectives which generally included being a good spouse, a good craftsman or to be a good housekeeper, and to be close to God. The Amish had little formal education only completing the sixth or seventh grade he said. What these people had, he noted, was wisdom and understanding. They could pass this wisdom and understanding on to their children and teach them the ways of their society. Through the transmission of this heritage knowledge, the Amish were able to retain order and control in their society and the society would prosper in an environment hostile to their non-materialistic ways.

Contrasting the heritage knowledge of the Amish with the parents in Aliquippa, Don Paolo noted that these parents never had that knowledge and wisdom. They had nothing to pass on to their children, even in the form of accepted social behavior.

“Is what we are doing to these kids a crime?” Don Paolo asked. “And whose law are we breaking? ... The laws of the house or the laws of God.” He cited an example that the family forms the first social organization for the child and the laws of the house are the first laws that a child encounters. Without the proper rules of the house, the child is raised in a virtually lawless society, Don Paolo reasoned.



“Now consider the perfect meal” Don Paolo asked. The perfect meal he advised me consisted of perfect presentation, perfect color, perfect flavor, a perfect wine, and perfect conversation. All of those things were required to make a perfect meal. The wine was present to enhance conversation, but without conversation, the meal was incomplete and less than perfect. Without conversation, the meal was simply food, albeit food which may have been presented, prepared and perfectly flavorful. It may have even been accompanied with a perfect wine, but without conversation, it could not rise above the status of food. With conversation, it became a meal.

“You know how to make pizzelles,” Don Paolo asked. Pizzelles are flat, circular, anise flavored pieces of dough, baked much like a thin cookie in the shape of a small pizza. As an Italian from the area, I have seen many people make pizzelles and even helped my mother make them before the holidays. Don Paolo talked about how the act of making pizzelles included a dialogue between the mother and the children, and the mother and the father. It included dialogue between the father and the children. He commented that the making of pizzelles often turned into a family affair, culminating in eating the pizzelles as they were packed into tins to store for the Christmas holidays. The important fact about the process of making pizzelles was the dialogue and the common act done by the family. It was that way with the preparation of any meal. The preparation of any meal was a nurturing process. As Don Paolo pointed out, it was also a teaching process.

Many of Don Paolo’s students have not had the opportunity to learn how to prepare a meal. They had not had the opportunity to function as a family unit since so many of them came from single parent and greatly dysfunctional households. “So,” Don

Paolo questioned, “is what we are doing to these kids not a crime?”

He changed the subject and we talked about boxing, wrestling and other contact sports. It was clear to me that Don Paolo had said what he had to say, and now we were just going to converse about anything that came up in conversation. The rest of the time was to be spent enjoying the conversation and each others company.

## INTERPRETATIONS

Durkheim noted that the law reflects the values of society and defines an act as a crime if society condemns the act as harmful to society; the rejection of the act by society classifies the act as socially evil. However, we have not rejected the act of incompetent parenting as socially evil, even though we may acknowledge that it is harmful to society. Only in the most egregious cases of parental neglect does the law interfere with the parenting process and declare a parent as incompetent and incapable.

Don Paolo’s question about whether we are breaking the laws of God or the laws of man is an important question. While we may not be breaking the laws of man, it would seem logical that children are provided to us as a gift from God. If we choose not to care for and love these children, regardless of the law of man, it would appear to be a logical conclusion that we have broken the law of God. If we fail to educate these children as a society, then we do not care for or love them, similarly, we would have broken the law of God.

In an earlier interview, Don Paolo spoke of taking his father’s name into the school. As parent’s we take our Father’s name into our homes and should provide for our children

in the same manner as our Father provided for us. Without the love and guidance provided by a parent for a child, Don Paolo's position that what we are doing is a crime against God is inescapable.

The parents of a former generation would provide for their children as their fathers and their Father provided for them. In the ubiquitous stories of the gardens, Don Paolo reflects back to the garden of Eden and perhaps our gardens reflect our desire to recreate that perfect garden in our lives once again. We could try to recreate that time of perfect order in the human life with the recreation of a garden with perfect rows, in perfect order. Like our lives, the garden would reflect the perfect order of the garden of Eden.