From Isolation to Engagement: Exploring the relationship between faculty collaboration and professional community

by

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Abstract

This thesis is based on a case study of faculty collaboration and community in a postsecondary education setting. Drawing on what educational theorists and practitioners have learned in their research on faculty collaboration, development, and professional community building, the study investigated specific aspects of collaborative processes that can help create strong professional educational communities. The study focused on 6 full-time faculty members at a postsecondary college in Ontario. As participant observer in this study, I worked in an environment that enabled me to interact both individually and collectively with faculty members through a program accreditation process, particularly in completing an accreditation self-study. Using transcripts and field notes from semi-structured interviews, observations, and my own reflections, I analyzed faculty interactions and perceptions of the self-study process. The thesis recounts the past history of the program as told by the faculty participants, outlines the nature of the program accreditation, and presents faculty
perceptions of their role and identity within the faculty community. The thesis outlines the changes that occurred among the faculty and the factors that appeared to contribute most profoundly to those changes. It suggests specific ways in which leaders within the world of postsecondary education can foster a culture of faculty engagement and trust geared toward facilitating curricular and educational change. It also identifies factors and resources needed to attract, retain, and empower faculty to work together to ensure sustainable program quality and, ultimately, student success. Besides the need for strong leadership to promote and guide change, and structural factors rooted in and responsive to faculty experience, the study points to the critical role that relational factors play in fostering a collaborative culture. The thesis concludes with specific suggestions arising from the study regarding: institutional policy and practice, how to facilitate professional growth among faculty in postsecondary environments, and avenues for further research on collaboration and faculty community.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The strength of every organization lies in the “sense of community” on the part of the people within it. Specific to the realm of higher education, there seems to be a general consensus that constructive, harmonious behaviour is encouraged through clarity of shared purpose, principles, and strengths of belief (Hock, 1999). Educators who are engaged in reflecting, collaborating, and participating in a negotiation of shared decision making about their craft not only feel better about their profession, but also realize the gains for student learning (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 2003; Hock, 1999; Palmer, 1998; Shulman, 2002).

Yet, when I reflect on my 25 years’ involvement in driving change initiatives in higher education, my thoughts are beset with the notion of faculty isolation—a kind of disconnect. As Palmer (1998) points out in The Courage to Teach, many institutions of higher learning cultivate and even maintain what he calls “cultures of disconnect,” educational environments in which the professional distance the institution maintains from what educators actually teach is somehow seen to make knowing more valid, while any new understandings those educators construct through their interactions with one another are often regarded as inconsequential.

My own experience confirms much of what Palmer has to say about educational alienation. In my work as student, educator,
administrator, private educational consultant, and senior policy manager for postsecondary education at the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, like Palmer, I have found that institutions of higher learning often are places where educators neither connect to get to know and understand each other through communication nor systematically work together to negotiate toward a set of shared values. For the most part, faculty members are encouraged to work in isolation behind closed doors (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hargreaves, 2003; Palmer, 1998; Shulman, 2002), and are given little opportunity to discuss important matters with one another that pertain directly to curricula, teaching, and learning from their own very significant front-line perspectives. The lack of faculty connection means that all too often faculty engagement and commitment toward facilitating substantive change in such matters as program continuity and curricular development is thwarted and/or unsustainable.

The necessity for such change is more pressing than ever. The world of higher education is changing rapidly: greater diversity and accessibility is needed in postsecondary education to meet the changing demands of both students and society. In 1988, the Council of Regents Ontario in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology presented a working paper outlining major changes that will face college systems in Ontario as it
relates to overall economic and demographic change, along with recommendations for addressing those changes (Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1988). Throughout that decade and looking forward into the 21st century, reports continually outline the need for greater accessibility, quality, and accountability for students looking to pursue postsecondary education. This need continues to be addressed within the provincial research related to challenges faced in creating a stronger knowledge economy in Ontario (e.g., Baker & Miosi, 2010; Rae, 2005). As a result, postsecondary institutions are faced with the challenge of meeting the demands for greater opportunity for expanded student choice, as well as better accountability and quality measures toward addressing those changes.

In Ontario, postsecondary education has gradually been reshaped to offer students more options than the traditional university education route. Students can opt for a variety of learning opportunities resulting in applied diploma or degree studies offered by 24 different colleges of applied arts and technology. In addition, there are over 500 private career colleges in the province with programs that teach students the requisite knowledge and skills to rapidly enter a professional field or trade.

The mandate of those colleges, whether public or private, is to prepare students to enter into the workforce in order to
succeed in their chosen trade, profession, or occupation. Learning in an environment where faculty members facilitate soft skill development such as teamwork, problem solving, conflict management, and shared decision making, then, becomes essential to student professional success.

Yet the solitary nature of the academic enterprise, as well as the reality that most academics and/or industry trained professionals who teach are traditionally not prepared pedagogically or trained to work together (Bohen & Stiles, 1998), makes it difficult for educators to connect with one another in ways that foster meaningful educational exchange. As a result, what can occur in the classroom is a lack of understanding or ability on the part of the educator to engage students in significant ways to interact with one another. Bohen and Stiles (1998) make this connection explicit when referring to a need for educators to engage together as learners themselves as a pathway to understanding how to work with students in the classroom. Bohen and Stiles argue that if we expect students to engage with each other in learning, then we must encourage educators to engage together as learners in inquiry, reflective practice, and continual problem solving about the content and skills they teach. Similarly, other educational researchers have argued that specific training in those skills that lead to teamwork and cooperative effort beyond discipline and content knowledge is essential for community
building among educators as well as within the classroom itself (e.g., Bohen & Stiles, 1998; Bruffee, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Shulman, 2002).

The clear challenge in effecting such an educational sea change lies in the history, practice, and ingrained habits of academic solitude (e.g., Shulman 2002, on the distinction between scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning). My own experience has taught me that while postsecondary institutions require faculty meetings, committee work, and occasional voting as part of their faculty’s responsibility within a faculty community, the vast majority of faculty work is done individually. More often than not, instructors write syllabi and course outlines using standardized templates. This is often done with little or no discussion with other instructors teaching within their department or program. As a result, course objectives, learning outcomes, and methodology may differ dramatically in the same course, if taught by different instructors or from one course to the next. This can be challenging for program continuity and achieving overall departmental objectives.

In addition, instructors I have observed in these institutional settings often adopt pedagogical styles that they have been exposed to throughout their own past educational experiences. Palmer (1998) as well as many other educational theorists throughout the last decade have discovered and discuss
that for the most part, teaching happens behind closed doors, leaving little to no connection to other instructors to examine methodology, and to explore multi-dimensional ways of teaching and learning. Additionally, what I have found throughout my experience is that faculty members are not systematically held accountable to engage with each other in any meaningful way—that is, to learn from and with one another about what works for the goals and objectives of the program within the classroom and as part of the overall curriculum.

The individual faculty member’s typical professional experience thus consists of sporadic instances of cooperation, in which faculty members come together to discuss ordinary issues like enrollment, retention, work deadlines, and curricular changes, and long periods of solitude in which the vast majority of the faculty member’s creative work is done. Whatever creative work a faculty member brings to the table is then simply presented, as a completed product, rather than negotiated or developed, as a work in progress. As a result of this somewhat disparate professional experience, many instructors are left unaware of ways to cultivate a classroom community of learners because they have not themselves been exposed to the lived experience of an interactive professional community that is working toward joint learning and shared educational decision making.
Scholars of teaching and learning have long recognized the interdependence of the nature of faculty professional life and the dynamics of the classroom. Palmer (1998) suggests that faculty collaboration outside the classroom promotes a greater awareness of shared mission. Through interaction with one another, he argues, faculty members can begin to identify what he sees as changeable “patterns” of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over an institution’s history. These patterns ultimately shape what faculty members think and how they act on campus and in the classroom. Shulman (2002) advances a similar argument when discussing change within educational settings. He maintains that it is only when members of a professional community inquire and engage together to refine and re-establish “systems of meaning” that culture truly changes and commitment to common goals for student success endures. The connection between learning, meaning, and identity within a “community of practice” is also espoused by Wenger (1998) as presented in his theory of learning as social participation. For Wenger, being “active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to those communities” (p. 4) shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we act through a shared practice. This engagement in social practice is, Wenger argues, the fundamental process by which we learn and become who we are.
While Palmer (1998), Shulman (2002), and Wenger (1998) maintain the importance of collaborative interaction within professional communities, their remarks on these communities are ancillary to their focus on teaching and learning. My goal here is to complement this emphasis on collaboration in teaching and learning by offering a single case study of how the dynamic of a professional educational community can change in the context of a collaborative self-study. My goal is less to offer a comprehensive theory of change than to explore the dynamics of change that can be seen in one instance.

1.1 Context of the Study

It will become apparent from the case study itself that I figure as an active participant and not just a neutral observer in the process I am describing. Some account of my own involvement in this study may therefore be helpful. Over a substantial part of the last 25 years, particularly as a private educational consultant to postsecondary institutions across Canada and the United States, I have guided a number of colleges through the process of institutional accreditation (e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Accrediting Commission of Career Schools & Schools of Technology, Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools) and programmatic accreditation (e.g., Council for Interior Design Accreditation, Commission for
The work I present in this study is inseparable from my own professional engagement in the accreditation activities I have mentioned. My own experiences and, admittedly, inclinations have impelled me to a strong emphasis on collaboration. My personal feelings are, however, well supported by trends among educational establishments themselves. By nature, accreditation processes are meant to bring faculty together through interaction, collaboration, and reflection on curriculum, teaching, and learning.

In the United States, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) defines the practice of institutional accreditation as a collegial process of self-review and peer review for improvement of academic quality and public accountability of institutions and programs (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 1998). The goal of accreditation is to ensure that higher education institutions meet acceptable levels of educational quality.

In Canada, most postsecondary institutions are operated by their respective provincial governments. There is no institutional accreditation in Canada, but there are a growing number of programmatic accrediting bodies working with provincial ministries to ensure quality and accountability through institutional self-governance.
In the institutional or programmatic processes of both countries, accreditation serves as an external, non-governmental or “arm’s length” accountability measure for postsecondary educational programs and has become particularly significant to those professional programs that certify students to practice in their field. The American Council for Higher Education Accreditation, for instance, identifies three major activities for accrediting bodies:

- A self-evaluation (self-study) by an institution or program using the standards or criteria of an accrediting organization.
- A peer-review of an institution or program to gather evidence of quality.
- A decision or judgment by an accrediting organization to accredit, accredit with conditions, or not accredit an institution/program.

While there are no institutional accrediting agencies in Canada, the provincial regulatory bodies that are “arm’s length” from provincial governance (i.e. Ontario Postsecondary Education Quality and Assessment Board) generally follow a similar protocol.

The self-study process involves interaction between faculty and administration on such matters as the reason for a program’s or institution’s existence, the beliefs and values that underpin that existence, and the learning objectives and outcomes. The purpose of this process, as defined by these accrediting councils, is generally to enhance institutional effectiveness and provide a sense of direction for developing and refining
programs, courses, teaching, research, and service by faculty. My case study is based on my recent experience with this process at one college of applied arts and technology.

Over a period of two years from 2005-2007, I worked closely with the administration and full- and part-time faculty within the department at a college in Ontario as a private educational consultant to understand the breadth and depth of their program and its curricular and educational objectives in order to manage a strategic plan toward initial program accreditation. Over time, I became responsible for guiding departmental faculty and administrative self-study teams in working together to assess curricular objectives, teaching methodologies, and learning outcomes to determine whether accreditation standards and program goals were being met in preparation for initial accreditation review.

Through the accreditation process that was the focus of this case study, faculty and administration from diverse educational and professional backgrounds were brought together within the department to engage in programmatic, curricular, and pedagogical reflection. These multi-representational teams shared responsibility for strategic priorities in programmatic improvement.

The teams were comprised of both faculty and administration directly involved in fostering teaching and learning within the program. Improvement, as a goal of this process, is meant to be
cyclical, emerging from shared responsibility toward sustaining and improving processes toward improved student learning.

My position as a private educational consultant charged with helping educators establish a working protocol by which they could define their own professional goals offered me the rare opportunity to both promote and observe cultural change. Prompting faculty to engage in active discussion of the issues required by the accrediting body compelled me to discover practical methods for promoting collaboration. At the same time, observing educators in these self-study teams provided insight into their perceptions of their own work environment and professional lives both before and after the self-study, as well as allowing me to witness changes in the dynamics of their interactions both immediately and first-hand. Taken together, my status as participant and observer allowed me to test some practical methods for promoting cultural change while assessing the impact of the self-study process itself on the changing shape of the professional educational community.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how the process of a collaborative self-study affects individual instructor and collective faculty development. The study also seeks to examine the role faculty collaboration has in shaping what we may call a professional educational community.
My use of the term professional educational community is meant both to particularize my discussion to the field of postsecondary education, and to offer a term general enough to imply the applicability of my conclusions in this case study across numerous and diverse “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998). I look closely at an association of faculty and administrators engaged with each other in discussions aimed at sustaining initiatives toward substantive educational change. The group was more inclusive and diverse than that implied by the distinction between professional and teacher community drawn by Talbert and McLaughlin (1994), which tends to see administrators and teachers as separate groups with distinct interests. The same can be said of Grodsky and Gamoran’s (2003) distinction between professional and school community, which excludes the culture brought to the classroom by students from what constitutes a professional community and hence may be more appropriate for analyzing the dynamic of educational practices at the elementary and secondary level than exploring the connections between classroom practice and professional discourse in the world of postsecondary education.

My case study group most closely resembled what Wenger (1998) has called a “community of practice,” because the emphasis is on a community engaged in a focused, shared enterprise. While such a definition is an apt description of the activities of faculty in a given discipline or program, I have
opted to use the term “faculty community” to describe the group itself, and “professional educational community” as a way to describe what the group was to become. My intent is not to confuse the field any more by further refining the multiple definitions of professional community, but rather to use a set of terms that can more readily chart the dimensions of the culture which I saw develop in one such community.

1.3 Research Questions

Primary:
What is the relationship between collaborative self-study and faculty community?

Secondary:
1. What aspects of the faculty community change as a result of the collaborative self-study process?
2. What factors of the collaborative self-study process enhance faculty community?

1.4 Significance of the Study
The culture of higher education is shifting from an individualistic to a more interactive model (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The form of that interaction, however, is shifting as well. More radical collaborative models and approaches to learning are emerging that underwrite a new paradigm of knowledge itself. Proponents of cooperative learning
often emphasize the responsibility of individual accountability to the group, along with expedient completion of assigned tasks established by an authority (Artzt & Newman, 1990; Brody, 1995; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1991; Kagan, 1989). Advocates of collaboration emphasize constructivist models of knowledge along with more democratic organization in the group itself to promote the very engagement, group cohesiveness, and shared purpose proponents of cooperative learning claim is central to group activity (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005; Bruffee, 1993; MacDonald, 2001; Panitz, T. & Panitz, P., 1998; Savery & Duffy, 1995; McLaughlin, 1994).

My research will identify both the possibilities and challenges associated with faculty who must negotiate the move from individual classroom work to cooperative models and collaborative models in the context of programmatic change. Because of the bifurcated nature of the discussions in the literature, there are few if any case studies which attempt to compare the relative merits of cooperation and collaboration in overcoming faculty isolation or promoting institutional change, much less to chart the factors, which themselves facilitate a cultural shift to collaboration. This study will serve as a preliminary discussion to such future work.

Study of a wider institutional context for teaching is also important if we wish to understand the relationship between communities of practice and meaningful, substantive change. My
work is offered here as a practical elaboration of some more theoretical approaches to institutional change (Fullan, 2003a; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Hargreaves, 1994; Hock, 1999; Senge, 1990; Shulman, 2002; Wenger, 1998). I anticipate that this research will benefit college administration, faculty, and the participants themselves by revealing ways that lead to better interaction within institutions among faculty members to enable cultural shifts toward collaborative interaction. It will also serve to benefit members of accrediting and governing bodies when making policy decisions that drive self-regulation and accountability within both the private and public college sectors by demonstrating ways that faculty within institutions can work together toward cultural and educational change.

Finally, I submit this study with an eye to its larger significance in the literature on collaboration itself. I intend to suggest ways to improve collaborative processes in the world of postsecondary education. Approaches to collaboration and professional community tend to emphasize the virtues of collaboration over the ways collaboration itself can be fostered or improved (e.g., Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1994; MacDonald, 2001; McLaughlin, 1991; Senge, 1990). My study identifies specific aspects of collaborative processes that can create strong professional educational communities. Reflecting on those aspects points to ways to develop a stronger faculty geared toward facilitating curricular and cultural change. By analyzing
faculty interactions and perceptions through the process of self-study, I wish to suggest ways in which leaders within the world of higher education can facilitate a culture of faculty engagement and trust.

In Chapter Two, I review both the educational and organizational literature to better address the conceptual complexity of professional community and collaboration. While the focus of my study is on postsecondary education, I compensate for the relative paucity of studies specific to the world of postsecondary education by drawing on studies focusing on faculty across the educational spectrum—elementary, secondary, and postsecondary.

My approach to the theory is simultaneously critical and kaleidoscopic. I argue that individualistic and cooperative models of education reinforce, both theoretically and practically, a traditional emphasis on the individual learner engaged in exchanging knowledge as a stable commodity with other individuals (for further information on knowledge as commodity or the "banking concept of education," refer to Paolo Freire, 1993). I go on to show how theories of collaboration are fundamentally different in their constructivist models of knowledge and dynamic models of community. Finally, I identify a number of different models of professional community, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in promoting the sense of group cohesion and shared purpose, which are
instrumental to the group’s productivity or success. My objective is to shape what the educational theorists and practitioners have learned in their research on faculty collaboration, development, and professional community into an interpretive lens through which to view the self-study process.

In Chapter Three, I outline the methodology used to conduct my study and explore its limitations in terms of design and participation. Further, I explain the ethical considerations in conducting a case study, and present ways in which I sought to ensure that the methodologies employed in the study were appropriate and implemented with integrity.

In Chapter Four, I trace the program history as told by faculty participants, outline the nature of program accreditation, and present faculty perceptions of their role and identity within the professional community. Also in this Chapter, I metaphorically paint a family portrait to present the dynamic of the faculty community as one that is divided through various initiatives toward change.

In Chapters Five and Six, I present my findings by outlining key characteristics that illustrate changes that occurred in the faculty professional community within my study. I further explore the factors that emerged that enhanced faculty collaboration. In these two chapters, I identify factors and resources needed to attract, retain, and empower faculty to work
together to ensure sustainable program quality and, ultimately, student success.

In Chapter Seven, I explore the significance of my findings in this study. I outline the lessons I learned through working with faculty participants on self-study teams through accreditation, and their perceptions of that process. Finally, I present implications for further research, policy, faculty growth, and development.
Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

Though this study is centered primarily on curriculum and teaching, some more general discussion of the relationship between collaborative learning and professional community from both an educational viewpoint and that of the business community will help situate the study in a broader context.

Since the early 1980s, education has been in a state of flux (e.g., Baker & Miosi, 2010; Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2004). There is now more than ever before an environment of supply and demand where education is mediated by capital. Competition for the ever-shrinking pool of funds flowing into the postsecondary education system is fierce. In such a climate, it is crucial to define educational initiatives in ways that directly support the needs of the business community (Baker & Miosi, 2010). Organizations are requiring that new graduates enter the workforce with the communication, social, and team working abilities that are integral to competing in a global economy. Therefore, it is no longer sufficient for educators to disseminate commodified forms of knowledge to student-consumers; it is essential for there to be a participatory process whereby students not only play an active role in their own learning, but also go on to assist their peers and the rest of their professional community to ensure the learning process is continuous, progressive, and shared.
My study seeks to discover salient aspects of faculty collaboration within professional educational communities that help facilitate this paradigmatic and practical shift in our approach to student learning. In the case study, I base my discoveries on the experiences of faculty participants in a self-study driven by professional accreditation standards. In this chapter, I review the literature to establish a theoretical frame that guides my understanding of the potential role faculty collaboration has in shaping a professional community, which in turn, has potential to guide educators to foster a collaborative learning environment within their classrooms.

To this end, I explore the ramifications of a view of learning as a social phenomenon for both the theoretical and practical dynamics of professional community and, more specifically, communities of practice. I discuss the most striking differences as well as overlapping features between cooperative and collaborative learning as models for negotiating the landscape of social learning. Then I explore the uses of those models in various sorts of professional communities. The chapter closes with a look at the role that collaboration can play in faculty development with an eye to change within the professional educational community.
2.1 Learning as Social Phenomenon

According to Wenger (1998), education is hampered by the view that learning is about the individualistic acquisition of knowledge. The prevailing pattern of thinking often assumes that learning “has a beginning and an end; that it is best separated from the rest of our activities; and that it is the result of teaching” (p. 3). In contrast, Wenger argues that learning is a social phenomenon, as information in and of itself is without meaning unless it is placed in the context of the social practices of the communities that give it cultural life. The social world, argues Wenger, is where meaning is constructed. It is the place where work gets done and learning takes place. The social world, then, is where innovation originates, and ultimately where identities are formed.

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced their innovative model of “situated learning” in Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation where they propose that learning involves a process of engagement in what they term a “community of practice.” For Lave and Wenger, learning takes place through engagement and participation with other learners. The collaborative process is what underpins this principle. Rather than ask what kind of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved when learning takes place, Lave and Wenger ask what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place. Thus, for Lave and Wenger,
participation refers to not only immediate events of engagement in activities with certain people, but to an overall process of being an active participant in the practices of social communities. For both theorists, this is how identities are constructed: in relation to one another as well as within the community.

The concept of social or “situated” learning has broader implications than simply to the world of education. By the turn of the 21st century, it had become a truism in theories of workplace organization that “the effective management of the social and subjective life of an organization is essential to its success” (Brown, 1998, p. 231). The realization that organizational culture directly affects the performance of those within an organization launched the rise of the “organizational learning” concept as early as the work of Argyris and Schon (1978). Even more appropriately for the purposes of this study is the idea of the “learning organization” as put forward by Senge (1990). For Senge (1990), learning organizations develop as a result of pressures facing those within an organization. The learning organization enables institutions to remain competitive in the business environment through five main features: “systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning” (p. 14). These approaches of learning in workplace organizational theory serve to contextualize the idea of “situated learning” in an educational
setting. Even more significantly, they provide a model for the way “situated learning” works in a professional educational environment.

Although educational institutions are understandably reluctant to move away from the classical model of learning as an individualistic endeavor, there is a growing body of theory, supported by efficacy studies, which emphasizes the social and situational dimensions of learning. Billett (2002) proposes that educational institutions represent social practices where learning occurs through participation; it is through complex cultural needs and situational factors, he argues, that learning is shaped. According to Billett (2001), Lave (1990), and Scribner (1997), the goals, norms, and practices of educational institutions form the culture of the community. These goals, norms, and practices frame the way the activities of participants create and sustain what Lave (1990) calls the “learning curriculum.”

The factors that shape learning are no less true for faculty than they are for students. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) propose that educators learn to a large extent through the strong influence of the culture of the community to which they belong. For researchers like Billett (2002), Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003), Lave (1990), and Scribner (1997), for learning to be comprehensive, participation needs to be enduring as opposed to a one-off source of knowing (Billett, 1996). Enduring
participation is what facilitates professional engagement with the ever-changing requirements needed for professional practice.

Fullan (2003a) quotes Stacey (2001) to drive home the point that new knowledge and change are deeply embedded in culture, social interaction, and relationships:

Knowledge is always a process, and a relational one at that, which cannot therefore be located simply in an individual head, to be extracted and shared as an organizational asset. Knowledge is the act of conversing, and learning occurs when ways of talking, and therefore patterns of relationship change . . . The knowledge assets of an organization, then, lie in the patterns of relationships between its members. . . The future of an organization is perpetually constructed in the conversational exchanges of its members as they carry out their tasks (Stacey 2001, pp. 98, 181 as quoted in Fullan, 2003a, p. 44).

But if my own study dramatizes Stacey’s contention that the real “knowledge assets of an organization” are in “the patterns of relationships” and “the conversational exchanges of its members,” the nature of the relationships and conversations is still in question. In the next two sections, therefore, I turn my attention to two approaches to social learning, at times exclusive, complementary, and competitive – the goal-oriented practice of cooperative learning, and the process-centred world of collaborative learning. I treat each of these separately before I look at their functions within a professional community.
2.2 Cooperative Learning

As many critics have pointed out, cooperative learning has been around for a long time. Its practice stretches back to protocols followed by the enlightenment encyclopedistes, who conducted individual research on various subjects to be shared in the larger project of the Encyclopedie. Such a comparison is not merely fortuitous. One meta-analysis on the research in cooperative learning outlines an illustrious pedigree stretching back not only through the libertarian free market economics of Ludwig von Mises and the cultural anthropology of Margaret Mead, but to Adam Smith’s theories on moral sentiment (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000). This particular etiology lays down one cornerstone of cooperative learning in the ontology of the individual and the morality of the marketplace.

Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne’s ideas on the origins of the practice of cooperative learning reveals an unspoken assumption behind many approaches to cooperative learning – the idea of knowledge as a stable currency to be traded within a free marketplace of ideas. I shall return to this later in my argument. For now, I would like to turn to approaches to cooperative learning more recent than the mid-eighteenth century.

Modern approaches to cooperative learning began in the mid 1960s, with substantial contributions coming most predominately from the work of Johnson and Johnson. Through the 1970s, the
idea became more and more popular, and by the 1980s a considerable body of literature on cooperative learning had burgeoned. Defined as a way for students to work together in order to maximize both the individual student and the group’s learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Houlebec, 1991), cooperative learning in the modern sense is based on the social interdependence theories of Kurt Lewin (1935) and Morton Deutsch (1949), another instance in which we can trace the underpinning of the idea to an individualist ideology. The influence of the structure of social interdependence on individual interaction within a given situation, affecting the outcomes of that interaction, is explored through all the theory and associated research (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Cooperative learning emphasizes the development of interpersonal skills that are deemed just as important as the actual academic learning outcomes. Within the cooperative learning model, Johnson and Johnson (1989) contend that by students being asked, for example, to take the role of either recorder or summarizer they develop both social skill as well as achieve the academic learning objectives that the instructors seeks.

Cooperative learning, then, remains firmly rooted in the ideology of the individual learner. A central feature of cooperative learning is its attempt to reconcile individual learning with the achievements of the group. One typical way
This is achieved through “group processing,” or “debriefing” where students can learn how to become more effective in group work (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1991).

But by far the most significant aspect of cooperative learning is the way it facilitates the completion of tasks focusing on knowledge as a matter of information retrieval and presentation. Cooperative learning can be defined as a set of methods that aid students in interacting with each other in order to accomplish a specific learning outcome. The process requires the strong presence of an instructor to define, guide, and evaluate any given project. Naturally, then, instructors control groups more directly than they do in collaborative approaches. That control leads to some measurable efficiency. Evaluation is facilitated because of the presence of an authority who can mediate between the students and the sources of knowledge they encounter. The instructor establishes which efforts of the group to process and to adjudicate that what they have learned is “correct.” The appearance of objectivity, in turn, makes cooperative learning quite comfortable for students and teachers alike. Collaborative learning, as we shall see, is more difficult to evaluate because it is more student-centred. But its decentring of evaluative authority facilitates mechanisms for both group analysis and introspection. Assessment of the value of each approach depends on what one believes to be
the end of education – the transmission of knowledge or its creation as part of an engaged social dynamic.

Definitions of cooperative learning often have strong moral resonance within a distinctly corporate character. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1991), for instance, have identified five basic elements required for a procedure to be considered cooperative.

**Positive Interdependence** - Positive interdependence can be structured by teachers through establishing mutual goals, joint rewards, shared resources, and assigned roles.

**Face-to-Face Interaction** - Students share their knowledge by explaining, discussing, and teaching what they know to students, and teachers structure the groups in such a way that students are free to discuss, face-to-face, each aspect of the assignment.

**Individual Accountability** - Individual accountability can be structured by presenting individual tests to each student or selecting, at random, a member of the group to give the answer without help from their peers.

**Interpersonal and Small Group Skills** - Teachers teach the social skills needed for groups to function effectively as purposefully and precisely as academic skills.

**Group Processing** - Teachers structure group processing by assigning simple tasks that help to recognize the group’s strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement. (p. 133)

Artzt and Newman (1990) give an account of cooperative learning that takes the content of the learning for granted. Cooperative learning, they argue, involves small groups of learners who work together to problem-solve, work on team tasks, and accomplish common goals. These researchers identify elements that are necessary to cooperative work. Specifically, members of
a group do in fact have a common goal. Communication and engagement in discussion about the problem is another element identified by Artzt and Newman (1990). Each group member must clearly understand from the instructor that their individual effort has a direct effect on the success of the group as a whole. For these researchers, teamwork is ultimately what is important.

Cooperative methods are systematized regarding the cooperative mechanisms of the group and the methods by which intellectual problems are approached. There is a structural approach to cooperative learning. The structure usually involves a series of steps that have prescribed behaviours for the students at each step. The activities within the structure are almost always bound by specific content outcomes (Kagan, 1989). The approach treats the content itself as a given rather than following the broader implications of learning conceived in social terms.

Cooperative learning allows its adherents to retain the integrity of knowledge-as-currency, its embeddedness within a system of intellectual ownership, and the mutual interdependence of the owners themselves crucial to the functioning of a free market of ideas. Obviously its attraction is in its reiteration of the traditional shape of the academic enterprise. What it lacks is any clear protocol for working out the dynamics and
ramifications of the more radical notion of knowledge as a relational process within groups of learners.

Cooperation, then, can be seen as a structure of individuals closely controlled by an instructor. It restructures the look of the educational landscape while retaining its fundamental reliance on the ideas of individualism and objectivity. The approach works well enough in situations in which knowledge must be simply acquired, facts gathered, and different viewpoints sifted and organized. But when knowledge is no longer conceived as a commodity to be exchanged relationally and instead is seen as the outcome of intellectual exchange, relational in itself, a different approach is required. If cooperative approaches to education allow us to conceive of what we may call new “ways of doing,” collaboration guides a more radical shift in what I would like to call “ways of being.”

2.3 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning was mainly established through the work of British teachers of English to assist students to better respond to literature by taking a more active role in their own learning. Cooperative learning is rooted in predominantly quantitative disciplines and tends to look at achievement in terms of the student’s ability to come to a predetermined outcome or product of learning, as opposed to the student’s ability to challenge or reshape ideas. The collaborative
tradition, by contrast, has its origins in more qualitative disciplines and is more useful in analyzing the interplay of different ideas advanced in constructing new ways of knowing by looking at, say, students’ responses to a particular piece of literature or primary sources in constructing new ways of knowing. Myers highlights some notable differences between the two concepts while arguing that theoretical “disagreements” are primarily the result of the theorists themselves looking at different ends of a “continuum of orientations toward curriculum”:

Collaborative learning advocates distrust structure and allow students more say in forming friendship and interest groups. Student talk is stressed as a means for working things out. Discovery and contextual approaches are used to teach interpersonal skills. Such differences can lead to disagreements... I contend the dispute is not about research, but more about the morality of what should happen in the schools. Beliefs as to what should happen in the schools can be viewed as a continuum of orientations toward curriculum from "transmission" to "transaction" to "transformation." At one end is the transmission position. As the name suggests, the aim of this orientation is to transmit knowledge to students in the form of facts, skills and values. The transformation position at the other end of the continuum stresses personal and social change in which the person is interrelated with the environment rather than having control over it. The aim of this orientation is self-actualization, personal or organizational change (as cited in Kumari & Srivastava, 2005, p. 176).

In comparing the two approaches to learning to understand the nature of interactive learning at the postsecondary level, Kumari and Srivastava (2005) reviews Rockwood’s description of the differences between collaborative and cooperative learning. Rockwood agrees that both constructs - collaborative and
cooperative - use groups. There is an assignment of tasks, a
time for group share and comparison to come to conclusions in
class sessions. The main difference for Rockwood is the fact
that cooperative learning deals solely with traditional
knowledge, while collaborative learning is based on social
constructivist views of knowledge. The concept of non-
foundational knowledge challenges not only the product acquired,
but also the process employed in its acquisition. In cooperative
learning, authority remains with the instructor as mediator
between the efforts of the students and the “tradition” they are
supposed to “learn.” The instructor retains ownership of the
task and knows or can predict the answer. In collaborative
learning, the instructor transfers all authority to the group
once the task is set. The task itself always remains open-ended.
In its emphasis on the discovery of predetermined answers,
cooperative learning may disempower students since students
serve the instructor’s ends if they produce the “right” answer.
Collaborative learning, in contrast, can empower the learners –
even if there is conflict with each other or the instructor.

The key to understanding the differences between those
educators who stand at different ends of Myers’ continuum is
their very different approach to foundational knowledge.
Proponents of collaborative learning are less concerned with
establishing such knowledge than they are in helping students
apply, critique, and transform it. For example, Bruffee (1995)
holds that every person belongs to several "knowledge communities." Those within the communities over time share points of view, similar histories, values, and conventions. In models of collaborative learning, one learns to negotiate the boundaries between the communities they already belong to and the professional community represented by others that one seeks to join. The point is that every learning community has a core of foundational knowledge, beliefs, and values that its members consider as a given. In collaborative learning, members of a learning community are given the open opportunity to negotiate, critique, discuss, and assess foundational knowledge, meaning, and value among themselves.

Throughout the literature exploring cooperative and collaborative models of learning, researchers agree that both concepts share basic skill sets such as leadership, decision making, trust building, communication, and conflict-management, while the critical difference is in their competing views of knowledge as transmitted tradition or knowledge as socially constructed and dynamic. We may therefore see the two models as similar in structure but very different in social orientation. As my study will show, the shift in outlook among members of a community from a predominantly individualistic culture to a more cooperative and collaborative culture is a key factor in promoting change in a professional educational community.
2.4 Exploring Cooperation and Collaboration

While my study focuses primarily on the transformative value of collaboration in a professional educational community, a case can and should be made for the inclusion of a cooperative learning lens in interpreting the data. Clearly, there are times when information is gathered rather than constructed, when research is more important than innovation, or when strong leaders must use their influence to move discussion toward a final product. The literature supports this relationship between cooperative and collaborative learning and definitively demonstrates the high degree of ambiguity that exists in the community with regard to what collaborative learning actually is.

In this section, I seek to clarify the distinction between cooperative and collaborative learning as it pertains to this case study. The research conducted by Johnson & Johnson (1989) suggests that collaborative learning is the most effective form of learning. These approaches for the most part involve combined intellectual efforts by students or students and teachers. From a pedagogical standpoint, collaborative learning encompasses the full gamut of learning, including the cooperative learning process defined by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1991). Communities of learners, on the other hand, are not constantly in the business of reinventing foundational ideas. How, then, do
we account for the persistence of cooperative approaches even in a collaborative community?

Myers’ view of cooperative and collaborative learning as a continuum is not only overly schematic; it understates the dramatic differences between the social dynamic of the two sorts of learning communities. It also betrays a heavy foundationalist bias by including “transaction” as an act that mediates between “transmission” and “transformation,” instead of looking at the fundamentally disparate styles of “transaction” in cooperative and collaborative communities.

Bruffee (1995) actually goes so far as to suggest that even seeing cooperation and collaboration as complementary tends to overlook important differences not only in method but in objectives: “Some of what collaborative learning pedagogy recommends that teachers do tend in fact to undercut some of what cooperative learning might hope to accomplish, and vice versa” (p. 16). Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005) point out that, unlike cooperative learning, which “assumes a traditional view of the nature of knowledge,” collaborative learning “is based on different epistemological assumptions, and has its home in social constructivism” (p. 6). They go on to suggest that such epistemological differences underscore even more dramatic differences in objectives, summarizing Bruffee’s argument:

The essence of his position is that, whereas the goal of cooperative learning is to work together in harmony and mutual support to find the solution, the goal of
collaborative learning is to develop autonomous, articulate, thinking people, even if at times such a goal encourages dissent and competition that seems to undercut the ideals of cooperative learning (p. 7).

Bruffee (1993, 1995) summarizes the differences in the two approaches well. He points out that cooperative learning is foundational in nature, attempts to eliminate competition and replace it with mutual support, and holds all members of a group accountable for the entire result of a learning endeavor. Thus, the emphasis is on shared understanding. Collaborative learning, by contrast, is non-foundational in nature, and attempts to help students find a way to negotiate dissent and difference, and downplays accountability by decentering authority in the classroom. Thus, the emphasis is on maintaining a functional, diverse community.

Bruffee then concludes that cooperation and collaboration “are two versions of the same thing. Both are educational activities in which human relationships are the key to welfare, achievement, and mastery” (p. 83). They may be useful at different ends of the educational enterprise. Cooperative learning, he argues, is most appropriate to establishing foundational knowledge, often in elementary educational settings. Collaborative learning is more appropriate for a college or university environment, where students must learn “to cope with intellectual challenges generated by and within encompassing communities of diversity, uncertainty, ambiguity,
and doubt” (p. 87). Since the two approaches operate at different stages of the educational enterprise, “what distinguishes cooperative and collaborative learning are their disadvantages.” Collaborative learning encourages “self-governed student peer relations” at the cost of “guaranteed accountability.” Cooperative learning guarantees accountability but “risks maintaining authority relations” both within and outside the group. What “unites” the two approaches, by contrast, “are their strengths: the educational advantage of marshalling peer group influence to focus on intellectual and substantive concerns” (p. 92).

I present the following table (Table 1: Cooperative and Collaborative Learning) to help clarify the way in which I am defining cooperative and collaborative learning based on the literature reviewed in this section. In this table, I have extracted the critical attributes of both concepts essential to a later discussion of my findings. This table is not meant to represent stark linear distinctions between the two, but will help to discern differences in approaches.
### Table 1: Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cooperative Learning</strong></th>
<th><strong>Collaborative Learning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imposed structure for learning provided by leader, facilitator, or faculty</td>
<td>The group holds the power together over their shared structure and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed to achieve specific goal or end product</td>
<td>Trial and error, group effort determines learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Interdependence Theory: Lewin and Deutsch</td>
<td>Social Constructivist Theory: Dewey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More directive and content bound — structural approach</td>
<td>Increased understanding is often impulsive and driven by shared experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to establish foundational knowledge</td>
<td>Negotiation of dissent and difference — Often more appropriate for intellectual challenge generated by diversity, uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmission/Transaction Model</td>
<td>Transformation Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working together toward a product</td>
<td>Working together toward negotiated process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is largely with the dynamics by which these agreements are reached that my study is concerned. Before we can look at those dynamics, however, we must look at the nature of the professional communities that come to agreement. This is my intent in the next section.
2.5 Professional Community

The concept of professional community in education may be seen as based in the concept of “occupational community” developed by Van Maanen and Barley (1984). Occupational community is defined as “a group of people who consider themselves to be engaged in some sort of work; whose identity is drawn from the work; [and] who share with one another a set of values, norms and perspectives” (p. 287).

These ideas from organizational theory have been most fully employed in discussion of professional community at the level of elementary and secondary schools. Bascia (1994) further develops Van Maanen and Barley’s concept by defining aspects that are significant in the formation of professional community. For Bascia, professional communities are based on shared experience or understanding of its members. Bascia elaborates on Van Maanen and Barley’s “work in common” to include commonality based on mutual support of the same broad efforts. In Bascia’s research, the aspects that form professional community are shared experiences and/or understandings, local organizational or normative features of the workplace, or mutual support of the same overall endeavour. Bascia’s study found that “teachers ‘discover’ and construct their professional communities around available opportunities for interaction, observations of common educational purpose, and needs for practical assistance, intellectual engagement and social involvement” (p. 64).
Bascia's emphasis on community as constructed, even in the context of highly structured environments like elementary and secondary school, is worthy of note.

In comparable research, Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) suggest five components of professional community. The components comprising professional community in their view include shared sense of purpose, a collective focus on student learning, and collaborative activity. Moreover, these researchers emphasize the importance of de-privatised practice and reflective dialogue within their definition of professional community. Within a community conceived in this way, everything, including reflection, becomes public.

Other researchers tend to see collaborations between teachers as safe, rarefied spaces for teachers to think and speak freely before they interact with administrative or support staff. Talbert and McLaughlin (1994), for instance, separate professional and teacher community to investigate the relationship between the two. Teacher community or collaboration and on-going learning among teachers in a school setting can foster or inhibit three different aspects of professionalism: the "technical" culture of teachers, teachers' service ethic, and their level of professional commitment. Talbert and McLaughlin show, in other words, that regardless of their positions within the larger professional landscape, teachers tend to accomplish more institutional goals and feel more
empowered if they feel like they are part of a dynamic and strongly interactive community.

Grodsky and Gamoran (2003), in outlining professional community in a broader context, point out that “professional community research is at its root a refinement of the school community approach to the study of schools as organizations” (p. 4). They make a clear distinction between school community and professional community by noting that the school community approach treats the community as a whole while professional community focuses on the “community among adults, particularly among teachers, as the mechanism by which school effects are achieved” (p. 4). They consider professional community among teachers “as a combination of shared values, collaboration, and teacher influence” (p. 5). Aspects of community such as shared values, collaboration, and collective control are seen as enhancing teacher commitment and effectiveness.

Bensimon and Neumann (1994) conducted a study focused on leadership within groups confirming that genuine teams depend on their capacity to “share power with other members of the team” (p. 111) and require a lessening of difference in status. For those researchers, genuine teams are defined as those that are complex both functionally and cognitively. These authors argue that genuine teams rely on shared values, respect, concern, and appreciation for their team connection or “convergence.”
Not surprisingly, little work has been done on notions of professional community at the postsecondary level. One of the reasons for this may be that at the postsecondary level, faculty have a greater degree of autonomy and a much more distinct system of hierarchies than is to be found at the elementary and secondary level. Nonetheless, we can still draw some conclusions about the ways teachers interact with each other when engaged in discussing their disciplines and professional lives, whatever the content of the disciplines happens to be. After all, there is arguably more diversity among the disciplines themselves than there is among any individual discipline at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. In any event, until more work has been done on professional community at the postsecondary level, we must rely on research in elementary and secondary education to point the way.

Amongst the theorists and practitioners whom I have included here, there are a number of central themes that dominate the research surrounding concepts of professional community. The literature reviewed points to ideas of shared sense of focus as necessary to the notion of a professional community. For some, reflective dialogue and shared experience is paramount to a better understanding of the members that form a professional community. Collective control, although less emphasized by all, is another facet of the make-up of a professional community. Finally, the development of professional
community requires opportunity for interaction and intellectual engagement. Bearing in mind the emphasis in the theoretical literature on the need for a sense of inclusion, the importance of reflection as a social act, the utility of some sense of collective control in a group activity, and the critical primacy of interaction and engagement, I turn to the literature on collaboration and its relationship to professional community.

2.6 Collaboration within Professional Community

Advocates calling for the development of professional community present faculty community and collaboration as a major route for educational improvement at all levels of a school (Barth, 1990; Fullan, 2003a; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Johnson, 1990; Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994; Rosenholtz, 1989; Shulman, 2002; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). Trowler, Fanghanel, and Wareham (2005) use the term “meso level” to describe the level of the department or workgroup within institutions of higher education, a level that is particularly significant yet largely forgotten within organizational change literature. These researchers argue that the most significant aspects of change processes involve social interaction at the level of the workgroup. This grass-roots approach to change process at the level of faculty within a department is most closely related to the structure within my study.
Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) collected data from 15 schools studied by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools to explore what conditions and resources are needed for the development of strong professional communities. These researchers argue that within strong professional communities teachers demonstrate five critical elements: reflective dialogue, deprivatisation of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values. They also identify both structural conditions and social or human resources necessary for a professional community to develop and grow. They conclude by stating that there has been too much emphasis on structural elements within school restructuring efforts, and that without a focus on interpersonal relationships it is unlikely for a strong professional community to develop.

While it would be interesting to explore the dynamics and potential for collaboration on a large scale, my own study has a much more restricted focus. That focus necessitates precision in terminology. According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003), the narrow definition of “community of practice” provided by Wenger (1998) is best reserved for a smaller scale of focus, as is the case with this study. Under this definition, a community of practice establishes itself along three dimensions:

**What it is about** - its joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members.
How it functions— mutual engagement that binds members together into a social entity.

What capability it has produced— the shared repertoire of communal resources (i.e. routines, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, styles) that members have developed over time (p. 73).

As these elements would imply, communities of practice move through various stages of development characterized by different kinds of activities carried out by the group and by different levels of interaction among the members.

A basic discussion of the current definition as it relates to the broader focus of this case study and its relevance to the group studied may be beneficial. According to Wenger (1998) communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. For Wenger, three elements are crucial in distinguishing a community of practice from other groups and communities:

**The domain:**
A community of practice has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people.

**The community:**
In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.

**The practice:**
Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems — in
short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction (p. 5).

The findings discussed in Chapter 4 through 6 of the group study in my research clearly illustrate that the group could be identified under the concept outlined above as a community of practice.

2.7 Collaboration, Community, and Faculty Development

There is a growing body of literature that documents the importance of an educators’ growth and development when they work together to teach one another, learn together, and focus on the success and challenges of educating their own students. Professional development strategies for educators have moved from old models of training, in which “an expert imparts new techniques in drive-by workshops,” to models in which “teachers confront research and theory directly, are regularly engaged in evaluating their practice, and use their colleagues for mutual assistance” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 326).

For McLaughlin (1994), teachers who report a high sense of efficacy and who feel successful with today’s students all share one characteristic: membership in a strong professional discourse community. Furthermore, almost without exception, the teachers in McLaughlin’s research singled out their professional discourse community as the reason they had been successful in adapting to today’s students, the source of their professional motivation and support, and the reason that they did not burn
out in the face of some exceedingly demanding situations. McLaughlin is not alone in his emphasis on the discursive nature of the group. As MacDonald (2001) has also found, “collaborative groups have produced extraordinary gains in the quality of teacher knowledge and skill by sharing expertise in order to overcome concerns about student learning, rather than concerns about bad teaching and by connecting to the education research literature” (p. 155).

The literature attests that conditions and relationships that develop around the interactions between faculty, staff, and administration, along with the strength of the group in defining problems and creating knowledge, are equally important for meaningful and effective change in higher education. Such interactions allow faculty to recognize their work as part of a shared set of challenges, approaches, and successes they hold in common with their colleagues across the institution and beyond. Savery and Duffy (1995) note that collaborative groups assist faculty members in testing their own understanding by examining the understanding of others. Such groups thus become mechanisms for enriching, interweaving and expanding faculty understanding of particular issues or phenomena.

Senge’s (1990) idea of the “learning organization” is proposed as a way to increase organizational capacity and creativity, while supporting the practice of people learning about learning together through reflective dialogue and inquiry.
Educators who are engaged in reflecting, evaluating, and revising their own practice, collaborating in professional growth opportunities, and participating in shared decision making about matters affecting teaching and learning not only feel better about their practice, but also acquire learning gains for students (Barth, 1990; Cross, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fullan, 2001; Palmer, 1998; Shulman, 2002).

Over and over, the literature reiterates the idea that change does not occur simply through a cooperative division of tasks meant to affect it. Rather, change is brought about by acting on and supporting the culture itself (Fullan, 2003b; Hargreaves, 1994; Shulman, 2002). Faculty members are enabled to make change as a community in the interests of the students they know best. Promotion of change in this cultural view is achieved by policy support strategies “that create release time for teachers to work together; assist them in collaborative planning; encourage them to try new experiences; involve them in goal setting; create a culture of collaboration, risk and improvement” (Hargreaves 1994, p. 72).

From the perspectives most frequently embodied within the literature, what is important for meaningful, substantive change is how faculty members interact with one another. Inquiry, discussion, dialogue and reflection about the core values and guiding principles are necessary to reshape meaning and define purpose. Lasting change is rooted in institutionally supported
spaces in which members of a community can feel free to come together to define the things of value, to work through issues that matter to them, to create meaning through shared inquiry and open-dialogue for the purpose of refining their craft (Hock, 1999). These collaborative spaces allow members to achieve consensus, forge bonds, and internalize values to create a sense of direction that is compelling for all those involved.

Offering ways to change school culture often falls short of sustaining any long-term action simply because, I argue, cooperative approaches to change focus on short-term fulfillment of obligations established largely by administrators and often requiring faculty groups to work in isolation. Collaboration, by contrast, is not comprised of a series of isolated acts. It is more a way of being together and, as such, it creates exactly the kind of dynamic globally engaged culture in which change can occur. As Lewis and Regine (2000) point out,

this new science we found in our work leads to a new theory of business that places people and relationships — how people interact with each other, the kinds of relationships they form — into dramatic relief. In a linear world, things may exist independently of one another, and when they interact, they do so in simple, predictable ways. In a non-linear, dynamic world, everything exists only in relationship to everything else, and the interactions among agents in the system lead to complex, unpredictable outcomes. In this world, interactions, or relationships among its agents are the guiding principles (pp. 18-19).

The presence or absence of what Fullan & Scott (2009) call a “change ready” culture conceived along collaborative lines has dramatic implications for the dynamic of the classroom as well.
Faculty members cannot fully create and sustain conditions for productive development of students if the conditions do not exist themselves for faculty and administration within a campus environment. Ultimately, if we want students to engage in working toward understanding and reflective practice, instructors need opportunities to become a profession of learners within a community who are supported by and participate in the development of shared purpose and consultative decision making. For Darling-Hammond (1997), this point — that everyone has a voice, and everyone hears the voices of others — is critical. The “development of shared ideas,” she argues, is the real force behind significant change in educational institutions.

Shulman (2002), like Darling-Hammond and other researchers within the field of professional development, is a key proponent in leading the world of education away from an emphasis on scholarship as an isolated, individual activity vaguely supporting what is taught in the classroom and toward initiatives that “recognize and reward scholarly contributions to teaching and learning” (p. 48) by faculty members. Professionalism (discipline, interdiscipline, or professional field), pragmatism (constant improvement on meeting objectives and responsibilities to students), and policy (capacity to respond to legislation and boards) are among the broad rationales that Shulman proposes are necessary to distinguish
between scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The concept of the scholarship of teaching and learning and its ensuing practice enables educators to treat courses and classrooms "as laboratories or field sites" (Shulman, 2002, p. 50) to improve upon both individual and communal understanding of teaching within a field of study. Shared discovery through systematic reflective analysis helps those within a community of professionals build on their work and make changes to the ways of teaching. Shulman’s work through the Carnegie Foundation for the Scholarship of Teaching has helped to develop networks of both campus-based and academy-based centers where support systems are in place to promote display and communication among members within a professional community.

The overriding concept derived from the literature reviewed for my study is the notion of human interaction and the evolution of learning through that interaction, what Fullan (2003a) refers to as the ability to "tweak and trust the process of change while knowing that it is unpredictable" (p. 101). In this study, I explore how collaboration is primarily a way of building trust and negotiating a consensus about educational improvement by having everyone assume responsibility for that improvement. Through collaborative endeavours, faculty members gain satisfaction for accomplishing important educational goals by working together to share ideas about improvement,
instructional effectiveness, and overall professional growth—characteristics that all help to shape a professional educational community. When members of a faculty community inquire and engage in this fashion, it is possible for the faculty cultural community to change, and commitment to the shared goals to endure (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Senge, 1990; Shulman, 2000; Wenger, 1998).
Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Methodology

My inquiry into collaboration as a social process and the way faculty members interpret meaning within their faculty community, along with my participative role in both fieldwork and analysis, were consistent with placing my study within a qualitative framework. Although the terms by which qualitative work is judged vary according to approach, questions about its methodology center on how accurately it represents reality. Historically, these questions have been framed in terms of the positivist criteria by which quantitative work is often judged. Because of the emphasis on the subjective experiences of the participants in qualitative studies, many theorists focus on such criteria as reliability, validity, and generalizability (Merriam, 1998). At the same time, qualitative approaches are called for when the researcher wishes to focus on the dynamic, social dimensions of reality rather than the objective, knowable quality of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Hammersley, 1992).

Scott (1996) has provided a useful overview of the issues surrounding educational research from the positivist approach taken by researchers in the mid-20th century to the post-positivist, post-modernist, and post-structuralist models that have developed since. Scott’s intention seems less evaluative than organizational. The substance of his argument is that if we see educational research as a means of understanding the ways
educational activity operates in “the world as it is,” of predicting future trends or changes in education, or of allowing research to be replicated and hence both verified and extended, then it should be evaluated according to traditional positivist criteria of internal and external validity. But “if we are not prepared to accept that research should be understood in this way, this relationship between theory and practice needs to be rethought” (Scott, 1986, p. 83).

Part of that rethinking involves a thorough consideration of the goals, methodology, and limitations of qualitative work. While Scott tends to see shifting trends from quantitative to qualitative approaches to research along a continuum, he is apt to regard differences in ontology in more absolute terms. In particular, he draws a sharp distinction between objectivist and constructivist views of reality, and is highly critical of those methodologies that overlook the importance of that distinction. In his critique of early positivist approaches to educational research, for example, he argues that “the natural science model has served as a prototype for social scientists and has in some cases been uncritically appropriated to provide justification for their methods and procedures” (Scott, 1986, p. 74). Scott’s account of positivist evaluative criteria seems studiously fair, as if he were attempting to represent a distasteful position in a favorable light. He even revises the term “representational realism” (Scott, 1986, p. 76) as a description of objectivist
ontology, calling it “naïve realism” later in the same chapter (Scott, 1986, p. 79).

Scott is harder still on approaches to social science research that shift the terms through which a given work may be said to have “validity” but remain embedded in an essentially positivist paradigm. He discusses grounded theory as an attempt to redefine the terms of the discourse of natural science in a way that makes them more suitable to research touching on social dimensions of reality (Scott, 1986, p. 77). Although he acknowledges the utility of some of their methods for analyzing data “at later stages of the analysis as the emergent theory was tested against new data,” he maintains that grounded theorists “do not refer to how the data were collected in the first place, and therefore cannot address ontological questions about what they represent” (Scott, 1986, p. 78).

More appropriate to this study are the protocols associated with naturalistic inquiry and authenticity. As Scott points out, the evaluative mechanisms advanced by Guba and Lincoln in their book Naturalistic inquiry (1985) are an attempt “to substitute different criteria for judging research, which complement but do not replace traditional criteria (internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity). They want to substitute credibility for internal validity, transferability for external validity, dependability for reliability and confirmability for objectivity” (Scott, 1986, p. 79). The substitution of terms is
not merely a matter of advancing old concepts under new names. The concept of credibility, for instance, is an attempt to deal with multiple constructions of reality such as one finds when asking study participants to share their perceptions rather than trying to describe their behavior or responses in “objective” terms. Guba and Lincoln describe credibility as a criterion measuring the extent to which the researcher’s representations of the varying views of the participants “are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 316, as quoted in Scott, 1986, p. 79). They include a number of methods designed to facilitate such credibility, including “prolonged fieldwork, persistent observation, and triangulation” (Scott, 1986, p. 79), all of which play an integral role in my methodology.

Another set of evaluative criteria closely related to those of naturalistic inquiry are those formulated around the notion of authenticity. Scott cites Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) work in authenticity as an attempt to address the faults implicit in their idea of naturalistic inquiry (Scott, 1986, p. 81). He identifies four basic criteria advanced by Guba and Lincoln: fairness (by which he means that the views of all participants are given equal weight by the researcher), educative authenticity (meaning the degree to which the research contributes to the understanding of other researchers in the field), catalytic authenticity (or the extent to which the
research process “stimulated activity and decision making”), and the degree to which the “research is designed to empower the participants to act” (Scott, 1986, p. 81). Likewise, Scott summarizes the approach to authenticity embodied in the work of Hammersley (1992). Scott identifies a “three-item schema” by which Hammersley establishes “validity.” The three criteria are “plausibility or credibility, coherence and intention” (Scott, 1986, p. 81). The first, Hammersley acknowledges, will change with the perspectives and attitudes of the audience of the research. The second and third are to be evaluated mostly in terms of the objectives of the researcher. The work must form a coherent and logical whole, and should be judged based on its stated intentions rather than conformity to a pre-established research design (Scott, 1986, p. 82).

The significance of naturalistic inquiry and authenticity criteria in my own study is that both approaches to qualitative research take the emphasis off objective reality as a measure of its value and refocus it on the capacity of qualitative work to address multiple perspectives and contingent understandings in a way that at least grounds them in social agreement. My practical application of the criteria is the subject of this chapter.

### 3.2 Case Study Design

In order to better understand the complex and dynamic nature of faculty collaboration, how the collaborative process affects
instructors, and what effect collaboration has on the development of the faculty community, I specifically utilized a case study design.

The case I selected to study involved exploring faculty perspectives, interactions, and outcomes in the context of a particular collaborative process undertaken by members of a faculty department within a postsecondary college in Ontario as they sought to acquire program accreditation.

Case study design is based quite specifically on the authenticity criteria embodied in the work of Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Hammersley (1992). As Stark and Torrance (2005) explain, "case study seeks to engage with and report the complexity of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them" (p. 33). Case study is a way of "organizing social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied" (Goode & Hatt, 1952 as quoted in Punch, 1998, p. 150). It is an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. xiv). Those three positions, respectively, focus on the authentic or credible representation of a reality constructed in multiple ways that cannot be reduced to one, the coherence between theory and data, and an intention to describe a phenomenon rather than test a hypothesis. The case study design
further helped me to emphasize contextualized data on approaches, interactions, and outcomes as experienced by faculty directly involved in a collaborative self-study process.

According to Stake (1994), different researchers have different purposes for studying cases. I used Stake’s identification of the instrumental case study to locate my interest. The instrumental case study was examined to provide insight into an issue or to refine a theory. In this way:

the case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but this helps us pursue the external interest. The case may be seen as typical of other cases or not. The choice of case is made because it is expected to advance our understanding of that other interest (p. 237).

Although this was a case study, I employed ethnographic techniques. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) view ethnography as naturalistic research in which the ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time to watch, listen, ask questions, and collect any other relevant data. The basic idea of naturalistic research is that human behaviour is based upon meanings which people attribute to and bring to situations, and that behaviour is not ‘caused’ in any mechanical way, but is continually constructed and reconstructed on the basis of people’s interpretations of the situations they are in (Punch, 1998, p. 157).

One of the goals of ethnography is to recreate authentic self-perceptions. But a complementary goal is to describe the context that allows others to understand those self-perceptions. This is
the concept that Clifford Geertz famously called a “thick” description, meaning a description of human action that employs the idiosyncratic terms with which people view themselves while at the same time providing a way for observers to understand the behavior by transferring it to a more familiar context (Geertz, 1973).

Theorists like Guba and Lincoln (1985) have drawn on the notion of descriptive “thickness” to address issues of validity in research. They claim that researchers cannot make statements about the external validity of their findings, but “can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether the transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 316, as quoted in Scott, 1986, p. 80). In approaching the case study partly from an ethnographic point of view, my goal is to allow readers to transfer conclusions drawn from this study of a small faculty community to other contexts in the educational world.

3.3 Site Selection

Prior to negotiating access, I had been working with both faculty and administration in the department as a private educational consultant since May 2005 to facilitate collaboration among faculty members within the program to complete and file the Program Accreditation Report (PAR). Over
the course of 19 months (May 2005-November 2006), I attended all faculty curriculum meetings, assisted in establishing self-study teams, and attended all team meetings to facilitate the review of course content and student work against accreditation standards. I met regularly with the full-time and part-time faculty members to determine courses that emphasize, reinforce, and support content described in the indicators by using the accreditation curriculum matrix. I worked with faculty to complete the PAR and to prepare student work for display during the accreditation team site visit.

During this time, I effectively became a “member” of the department, not only as a participant in the process of self-study and accreditation, but also by sharing experiences in the daily lives of faculty and administration over a prolonged period. Through this close interaction, I was able to gain significant insight into the workings of such collaborative efforts, observe faculty interactions with one another, and see many challenges associated with collaboration and a changing faculty community. In addition, I became more intrigued by this department as it presented not only fertile ground for exploring perceptions of collaboration and community, but was at the same time unique in that it was continually having to deal with drastic philosophical, curricular, programmatic, and faculty staffing changes.
Given the collaborative nature of this process, my long-term participative involvement as a private educational consultant with the faculty team at this College, and the nature of change within this department, I chose to conduct my research on this site.

In negotiating access, I met with the Program Coordinator in January 2006 to discuss the nature of my study, at which time the coordinator granted approval for my study to be conducted within the department. I was also given permission to continue to use the common office area as a place to observe interactions between consenting faculty members, review curriculum/documents/student work generated from the accreditation process, and conduct interviews with participating faculty members, as needed. In addition, the program coordinator granted me access to all upcoming departmental faculty meetings (see Appendix A: On Site Research Consent Letter).

I also presented this study to the faculty who were directly involved in the accreditation process within the department at a meeting arranged by the Program Coordinator, and attended by the Associate Dean of the department. At the meeting, I explained the purpose of the study, the methods to be used, and participants’ rights. I asked faculty members interested in participating in my study to contact me via e-mail. Only those faculty members who gave written consent were observed and interviewed.
Although I had been involved with this department and its faculty since May 2005, and was already quite immersed within its culture, I conducted my observation research starting October 2006 and interview research over a total of eight months, from February 2007 through June 2007, and again from September 2007 through November 2007. Since the interview research was conducted after the actual self-study accreditation process, I sought to gain both reflective insight into the collaborative process, including faculty perceptions, interactions, and any subsequent outcomes, as well as a current understanding of the relationship between the collaborative process and the faculty community.

I outline my involvement in this case study as distinct from my role as private educational consultant by presenting the following diagram (Figure 1: Collaborative Self-study Timeline). This figure serves to illustrate the timeline of my involvement as private educational consultant for the College to complete the program accreditation report while clarifying the overlapping periods during which I conducted my research.
3.4 Data Collection

Obviously, in attempting to recreate the authentic voice of the participants of any qualitative study, there is danger of misrepresenting participants’ perceptions given personal biases and idiosyncrasies that may be brought forth by the researcher in both the collection and analysis of the data. The use of multi-methods, or triangulation, reflected my attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon in question. As explained by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), “triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation; but an alternative to validation” (p. 76).

“Qualitative research covers a spectrum of techniques, but central is observation, interviewing, and documentary analysis” (Punch, 1994, p. 84). This multi-method approach served to triangulate the findings. In my study, I collected data from a
variety of sources through three primary means: participant observation, interviews, and document analysis.

For my study, insiders’ perspectives were essential to capture the multiple meanings that individuals construct to make sense of the collaborative process and faculty community. My intention, then, was to select faculty and administration from within the department for interviews and observation who had the potential to bring different perspectives — i.e., male and female, new and experienced faculty, full-time and part-time faculty, and those teaching different subject areas within the single discipline.

3.4.1 Participant observation

Qualitative fieldwork employs observation as its central technique. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argue that ethnographic methods rely chiefly on participant observation. Participant observation has its origins in ethnography and involves the researcher in prolonged immersion in the life of the group, community, or organization in order to discern people’s habits and thoughts, as well as decipher the social structure that binds them together (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 84). Ethnomethodology and interpretive practice examine how human beings construct and give meaning to their actions in concrete social situations (Schwandt, 1994). Many researchers in this tradition use participant observation and interviews as
ways of studying the interpretive practices persons use in their daily lives.

Given my involvement with both faculty and administration in the program, I considered myself more than merely a passive observer within this study. As such, I was able to assume the role of both researcher (outside perspective) and participant (inside perspective) in the processes, interactions, and events being studied.

As a participant in the process of initial accreditation as private educational consultant and researcher, I had the opportunity to observe the influence of collaborative processes on professional community by looking at faculty behaviours, relationships, connections, and interactions in formal and informal settings over the course of this study. The type of process I used to conduct my observations is considered focused observation. This process emphasizes observations supported by interviews, in which the participant’s insights guide decisions about what to observe.

Participant observation provides the opportunity to collect data where it is important to capture human behaviour in its broad natural context at several different times and from a multitude of perspectives. Although I had met with faculty both individually and as a group for over two years as a private educational consultant, I had the opportunity to observe faculty members in at least 11 distinct formal and informal settings
throughout the course of this study. The formal gatherings consisted of two meetings to discuss the accreditation team report and respond to it, and a series of nine curriculum development and program outcome meetings held through May-June 2007.

Informal settings consisted of many in-office conversations between participating faculty members, and two professional social gatherings. Both forms of observation offered insight into the relationships and interactions between and among faculty and administration. I recorded observational data through the use of field notes.

As Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) point out, researchers may neglect the complex relationship between attitudes and behaviours if they rely solely on what people say about what they believe they do, without also observing what they do. In this way, my observations offered an important source of information beyond interviews and self-reporting.

3.4.2 Interviews

The interview is one of the main data collection tools used in qualitative research, and one of the most powerful means we have of assessing “people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality” (Punch, 1998, pp. 174-5). Kvale (1996) regards the interview as a way of bringing together multiple views of people.
Semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask participants about the facts of a given matter as well as their opinions and beliefs about and experiences related to certain events. In particular, I sought to explore faculty perceptions and interactions regarding the process of collaboration, team experience, and professional community. As Yin (2003) suggests, the interviewer may ask the respondent to propose “his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry” (p. 90).

To recruit interview participants, I approached those members of the faculty who sat on self-study teams to give them the option to participate in the study. Limiting the interview sample size to this particular faculty population allowed me to gain a more intimate understanding of the thoughts, perceptions, and encounters of those faculty members who experienced the collaborative process most directly. My intention was to attract both full- and part-time faculty members within the department. The majority of part-time faculty members within the department, however, teach at other colleges or work within industry, which made scheduling time for interviews extremely difficult. In the end, I was only able to involve full-time faculty in the study.

While the final interview sample size is small (six full-time faculty members), the selection of faculty is diverse, including male and female, new and experienced, as well as faculty from different educational and professional backgrounds.
The sample also reflects those six full-time faculty members who participated in the accreditation process from the onset (other faculty members have been hired over the course of this study): these were only six full-time faculty members in the department at the time of the study. While there were approximately 25 part-time faculty members on the roster at the time of my case study, none of them (as noted) participated in the case study. Written informed consent was obtained from each interview participant prior to beginning the interview process (see Appendix B: Informed Participant Consent).

One of my primary concerns as a researcher conducting interviews was the authenticity of the responses of participants to the interview questions. My concern was even more pronounced because of my position. As an “insider” throughout this process, I had previously developed relationships with these participants that might, without measures to keep the interviews as neutral as possible, have affected participants’ responses.

I conducted initial interviews with the six participants that lasted anywhere from 45 to 60 minutes in February 2007. Interview questions were designed to explore faculty opinions, perceptions, values, and beliefs pertaining to the process of collaborative self-study, membership in the professional community, and initiatives toward change within the department (see Appendix C: Semi-structured interview questions).
I then conducted a series of two to three follow up interviews with each participant, lasting approximately 45-60 minutes each, to reflect on earlier interviews and to collect additional data for emergent findings. I also inquired about any new issues that may have arisen. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. All transcripts were shared with participants to ensure accuracy and in the form of member check. Member check was incorporated as a means of triangulation.

3.4.3 Document analysis

I reviewed documents and records associated with the self-study and any subsequent processes toward gaining initial accreditation. These documents included curriculum binders and course materials, self-study process template documents, and the Program Analysis Report (PAR). The PAR was the document submitted for initial accreditation review and included supporting curricular change documentation, meeting agendas, and minutes related to the process of initial program accreditation. I also had access to all accrediting team correspondence, program reports, and departmental responses to the accreditation team. These materials helped place collaboration in departmental context and assisted in tracking patterns of, approaches to, and outcomes of faculty collaboration. Additionally, each of these documents aids in describing accreditation work and collaborative accomplishments, as well as outlining the specifics of self-study team processes. Since I had been directly involved
as a private educational consultant in generating many of these documents, I had the opportunity to reflect on occurrences throughout the process. The materials also served as a source of triangulation.

3.5 Data Analysis

Another concern I had with regard to the relationships I had already developed with the participants of my study was the way those relationships could potentially have biased my assumptions and opinions regarding the overall conclusions. Here again I found qualitative methodology to be a helpful guide. Based on the methods presented by Miles and Huberman (1994), I first analyzed the data (field notes, observations, interview transcripts, documents) using preliminary coding. The primary function of this level in my analysis was to summarize segments of data. To do so, I have read and re-read transcripts and other forms of documentation many times over several months. Initially, my intention was to utilize qualitative software to manage this process, but I found sifting and sorting through data manually, especially listening to the taped recordings of each interview and thus hearing the participant’s voice, helped me to fully immerse myself in the context of the study.

I used preliminary codes as retrieval and organizing devices to identify, extract, and then cluster segments of the data relating to my research questions. This process aided in
the development of descriptive as well as interpretive statements to help me generate major findings.

In the second level of my analysis, my focus was on generating pattern codes. "Pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, pattern, or explanation that the site suggests to the analyst" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). By reading transcripts, observation notes, and document journals over and over again, I looked for threads that tied bits of data together. My preference was to generate pattern codes very early on in the analytical process (almost at the same time as generating my first-level descriptive codes) so that I could examine and qualify them while continually analyzing the data. Through this process, I was able to pull volumes of material together into more meaningful units of analysis, while identifying key themes related to the central issues of the study. This level of analysis also served a number of purposes including helping in data-reduction, focusing data collection, and identifying emergent themes, configurations, or explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69).

While coding, I recorded all of my ideas in the form of memos as they occurred.

[A memo is] the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding . . . [I]t can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages . . . [I]t exhausts the analyst's momentary ideation
based on data with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration (Glaser, 1978 as quoted in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). These memos helped to suggest deeper concepts and pointed me in the direction of new patterns in the data. They also helped me to relate different concepts to each other and aided in generating further meaning in the data.

I analyzed common themes in interviews with faculty members, journal entries, and other documents to ascertain how faculty members within this department engaged in discussion with one another in order to assess how their individual values and beliefs refined the values and beliefs in question.

Finally, I tested and confirmed my findings using the tactics presented by Miles and Huberman (1994) to verify and draw conclusions. To assess the quality of my data, I used both triangulation and member check. I also looked for “unpatterns” or exceptions to early patterns that I had identified to further check my findings. Finally, I chose to receive feedback from participants of the study who had supplied the original data to scrutinize emerging explanations that I generated from the findings.

3.6 Sample Size

The small sample size as well as the participants’ positions as full-time faculty members impose limits on the generalizability
of this study. Moreover, I was unable to obtain any part-time faculty, administrative, or staff representatives for the study.

Yin (2003) maintains that case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions but not to populations or universes. I have therefore limited my use of the case study to a description of a single faculty community in the context of collaboration and cooperation. Through the course of my study, my emphasis on the terms by which the members of this faculty community saw themselves allowed me to construct a modest but authentic ethnography, while my use of a collaborative and cooperative lens allowed me to view these faculty members in a context that makes my conclusions more transferable. A further query concerning this study, then, is to what extent the beliefs and behaviours of faculty members involved in my case study would be found in faculty members in a similar context in other colleges. Clearly, further research across similar populations is needed to address this question.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

It was imperative to the integrity of my study that I made every effort to protect the anonymity of participants as well as ensured that the methodologies I employed were both appropriate and ethical. To ensure that all participants fully understood the intentions of my study and their involvement as participants, I met with each of them individually to review and
discuss the consent letters prior to accepting the signed documents. Throughout the study I offered participants the opportunity to discuss with me any questions or concerns they may have had regarding participation in the study. Although I had access to the common space used by members of the department, I offered to meet with participants for interviews where they felt most comfortable to openly share their thoughts and ideas. Two participants chose to meet several times on campus in the privacy of their own office space. All other interviews were held off-campus in casual social settings (e.g., coffee shops, restaurants) where participants felt free to express themselves openly and honestly without fear of being overheard or interrupted by colleagues, administration, other college personnel, or students.

In order to protect anonymity, participants were assigned pseudonyms. Names of faculty, colleagues, the college, other colleges, and businesses mentioned were not recorded anywhere in the transcripts or within my field notes. Additionally, participants and other faculty members were not made aware of those faculty members who chose to participate in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts to edit, change, add or delete information prior to the completion of my data analysis. Almost all participants made minor edits to their transcripts. A few participants added comments for greater clarity on selected issues while two
participants deleted small sections of their responses where they felt uncomfortable with what they had previously expressed. I also shared field notes with participants and gave them the opportunity to comment on my observations as they saw fit.
Chapter 4. Exploring Participant Perceptions

In this chapter I seek to illustrate the nature of change within the faculty community and to understand key themes as they relate to the complex dynamic of the collaborative process within a faculty facing dramatic changes in terms of structure, culture, and commitment. To do so, I will briefly outline the history of the program at this college. I will then present an overview of the movement towards accreditation and highlight its significance for the future of this type of professional education. Finally, I will use a metaphor of a stepfamily, identified by participants in the study themselves, to characterize the faculty members who participated in this case study. This metaphor took shape over the course of the study and provides a way to elaborate on the role the participants identify with in their professional educational community while adding depth to the study by providing each participant’s individual voice.

Through the use of quotes taken from the interview data I will also describe how each faculty member felt about working together prior to the collaborative self-study. These findings provide the background necessary to better understand how the process of collaboration through self-study for accreditation helped create a new dynamic, and how that dynamic helped to shape the landscape of a professional educational community.
4.1 Tracing Program History

The following history is a compilation of those separately described by the three faculty participants who have been with the program the longest. This particular diploma program at this college began as one of the first diploma programs offered through the continuing education department in the early 1990s. This program was offered as either a two- or three-year diploma. The third year was designed primarily as an advanced portfolio or ‘practicum’ year. The program was developed to offer students an applied course of study that would prepare them to ‘fast-track’ a career in a growing professional field in the applied arts.

Although the initial focus of the program was on the decorative arts, the program advertised itself as a particular type of design program. The curriculum content and sequence was designed to promote a learning environment that would enable students to acquire fundamental knowledge of residential interiors such as art, antiques, and textiles while applying that knowledge towards their development into practicing professionals. Some courses provided technical skills, but for the most part the focus was firmly placed on the study of the decorative arts. Under the continuing education department, a student could enter the diploma program in any semester, thus providing increased flexibility.
Over the years, the program experienced great success. In 1993, it was taken out of the continuing education department and rolled out as a full-time day program within the School of Animation, Art, and Design.

Simultaneously, the program began undergoing change as part of a pilot project spearheaded by the program coordinator of the department under the Ministry’s College Standardization and Accreditation Committee (CSAC). The goal of the CSAC pilot project was to standardize such programs across community colleges within the province using the standards of a particular accreditation body as a benchmark. Consequently, from 1993 to 1995, the program was continually redesigned in an effort to comply with industry standards as outlined by both CSAC and the accrediting body.

One of the greatest changes made to the program was in the humanities. While the program always carried liberal arts courses, a change in the liberal arts requirements took place to broaden students’ repertoire of learning experiences, to facilitate critical thought, and to help students develop the capacity for lifelong learning. The liberal arts offerings within the program, however, were changed, as a faculty participant explained, essentially “to meet accreditation requirements which were inevitably gaining widespread recognition.” In 2004, prior to the onset of the accreditation initiative, the department added six additional liberal arts
courses to the program to meet the requisite 20% general education requirement under accreditation standards.

### 4.2 Accreditation

Several external initiatives over the last ten years have had a profound impact on the future of design programs in North America, which, in turn, has caused the need for drastic change within many postsecondary design departments. In the late 1990’s, a professional association, described by many of the participants as the most definitive design organization in North America, had begun to strongly encourage all colleges offering design programs to become accredited. Additionally, this professional association was definitively moving in the direction of a Practice Act. The purpose of this type of legislation is to protect public health and safety by limiting the practice of those in the professional field of this kind of design to persons having specific professional industry standard education, experience, examination, and other regulatory requirements.

This particular accreditation council is responsible for evaluating and accrediting design programs of hundreds of colleges and universities throughout North America, both degree and non-degree. However, in 1998, one of the most significant changes began to take place within this regulatory body. Seeds of this change were started with the previously mentioned
liberal arts standard. They later took root in the discontinuation of the Pre-Professional Assistant Level Standards for accreditation, and then flowered as a mandate (that is, by January 2004, any design program applying for accreditation would have to demonstrate that it culminated in a minimum of a bachelor’s degree). This major change primarily affected applied diploma programs in Canada and the United States.

Ultimately, colleges and postsecondary institutions offering a diploma or certificate program wishing to gain accreditation, as well as those currently accredited that did not culminate in a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, would have until January 1, 2010, to comply. Eventually, any student graduating from a non-accredited, non-degree granting program would no longer carry the professional title of this field of design. Those graduates would be given a lesser-recognized industry professional title.

The move toward accreditation and degree-granting status was really no longer a choice to be made, but a requirement to be fulfilled. One faculty participant talks quite candidly about the inevitability of change, and her perception of how it shaped the future of their department. She explains:

At that point, there was no ifs, ands, or buts about it. If we didn’t get this accreditation, we would not be recognized as a school that students could graduate from and call themselves the professional designation they came to school to obtain. That was the . . . well, there’s no
question in my mind THAT was the motivating factor behind this change. There was no turning back on this one, regardless of what we felt.

4.3 The Inevitability of Change

With the department moving toward accreditation, it was clear that the make-up of the current faculty would need to change. Faculty members armed with master’s degree credentials would be asked to file for accreditation, as well as to support a program that would eventually obtain degree-granting status.

Prior to the move toward accreditation, instructors within the department were not required to hold a graduate degree. In fact, the preference was toward hiring instructors who had experience as professionals in the field rather than those who held degrees. At the end of 2003, the diploma department in this case study consisted of one program coordinator/full-time faculty member, three full-time professors (including the previous coordinator and associate dean), one full-time support technician/faculty member and as many as nine part-time instructors. Only one full-time instructor within this faculty held a master’s degree.

Two new master’s degree faculty members were hired on a full-time basis by mid-2004. By 2005, the department had added three full-time Masters-degreed faculty members, with the intention of hiring at least two more over the next year.
Not only did this mean drastic change for the structure of the program and the credentials needed by faculty wishing to teach in the future of the program, but it also meant the emergence of a whole new dynamic within the current culture of the faculty community. As participant observer, I can quite distinctly remember a tension prevailing among the mix of “old and new” full-time faculty members when I met with the team as a private educational consultant for the first time in the summer of 2004. Until this point, faculty members were working cooperatively on the accreditation initiative only during curriculum meetings in May-June, where, as one faculty participant recalls:

We all sat down and went through the process. That was a horrible process. I didn’t like that at all. It felt much more like a critical/judgmental review process and I think that you’ll find that there are perhaps others who felt that. It was crazy, totally crazy. But anyhow, it was a start. And then you came into the picture.

I was recommended as a private educational consultant for this contract after the onset of those curricular meetings by one of the new members of the full-time faculty with whom I had worked previously, in the capacity as program consultant to a similar program at a private college in Toronto. During an early interview with one of the faculty participants, I very clearly recall my initial impression of the dynamics within the department that day.
I can still remember my very first interaction with the group where I met all of you for the first time in the studio. I had set up all of the stages of self-study and accreditation on PowerPoint, because I, quite frankly, wasn’t sure what I was meeting. I also was not really clear on what my role was at that point, or what you guys had known, had done or not done. I was trying hard to sort everything out, and what was most telling to me was to watch the body language throughout the room. I can remember standing upright, so professional (laughs), at the front of the studio going through each of the slides (laughs again) . . . some faculty, rolling their eyes as if to say ‘I’ve been through this before, come on, I know this,’ others exchanging glances in reaction to what other faculty members were contributing or not contributing during that meeting . . . I felt tensions, sure, but at the time, did not know what to make of it all.

I describe this first meeting in my reflective journal as “kind of ridiculous” in that the program coordinator had informed me that most people “somewhat knew” the process, and that they had already begun to review curriculum reflected against standards. After meeting individually with members of the self-study initiative, I thought that no matter how ridiculous or elementary I felt this group meeting may be, it seemed important to the unity of the process that everyone sit down as a collective in one room together to talk things through. What I did not realize at the time is just how significant this meeting may have been to the process of self-study collaboration. I was at the time also not aware that collaboration was needed as a venue for both old and new full-time faculty members to connect, albeit through very close, sometimes extremely intense, interaction. Ultimately, this series of interactions would help to facilitate a more “united” family, and would help forge
strong collaborative relationships that ultimately changed the face of the faculty community.

4.4 The Birth of the Stepfamily

When analyzing transcripts after each interview during the process of data collection, I quickly discovered that all six participants repeatedly spoke of “the old guard vs. the new guard” when discussing their interactions and experiences. As I continued to interview each faculty participant and observe interactions between them, I began exploring this overriding perception more closely as a way to better understand the initial tensions I felt among members of the group. I sought to understand the nature of this group perception as well as the changing dynamic within the faculty community.

It was during the second interview with one of the faculty participants that I first began to really explore the notion of “the old guard vs. new guard”. During this interview, this particular faculty member talked about intensity in the interaction between old and new full-time faculty members. She described this interaction as follows:

It is much like having to work through the relationships you have with those in your family . . . I mean, you may not like Aunt so and so, but you know she brings something to the dynamic of the family, and so you try to work with that as a member of your, you know, clan.
In an effort to give each of the members of the “family” a voice, and to better understand the role they felt they played throughout the collaborative process, I decided to explore the family metaphor in subsequent interviews with each of the faculty participants. It is important to note that I did not impose this metaphorical scheme on the data. Rather, it emerged from the data itself during ongoing analysis. Interestingly, each faculty member identified very clearly with the family dynamic. They were also very quickly able to identify themselves as playing definitive roles within a kind of “step-family” model.

Once I began to view the department in the conceptual frame of a stepfamily, I was better able to understand the “old guard vs. new guard” references. I was also better able to see how the dynamics of the group influenced our collaborative efforts, and, ultimately, what factors helped or hindered faculty interaction, growth, and development.

4.5 The Stepfamily Dynamic

What is truly fascinating about the stepfamily portrait that emerged from those participants describing themselves in the interviews through this case study is that while all members of the study offered their own description of the role they felt best suited them, no one role was repeated by any member of the
study, despite the fact that none of the members of the study was aware of the roles other members had chosen.

As each participant described the family dynamic and the role they felt themselves to play in the family, the model of the family took shape. They identified themselves as members of a community who, according to one of the faculty participants, were quite literally forced together "as if from two different families" through the accreditation initiative, much like the dynamic that might take place in a stepfamily. I use the following diagram (Figure 2: Stepfamily Tree) to chart out the roles each participant identified with, and used two different colours to discern between those that described themselves as "old guard" versus "new guard."
Figure 2: Stepfamily Tree

Legend

- Original Family Bonds
- Merged Family Connections
- Old Guard Family Members
- New Guard Family Members
4.5.1 The “old guard”

Those members identified by all six participants in this case study as the “old guard” felt they could offer wisdom, insight, and a helping hand to the dynamic of the newly formed stepfamily through their family roles.

Carol: The Wisdom of the Elder

Since I’m the one with the longest history, I find I play the role of grandma, right? I don’t see myself in terms of the traditional . . . I see myself as maybe just retired, right? So, I’ve retired. But I’m still, like a lot of older adults now, very active and very interested in pursuing my own thing, but I’ve kind of served my time. I like to believe that because of that I bring a certain wisdom to the table as well. From experience I’ve seen it happen before. I can help people understand what’s possible – do you know what I mean? – and not possible. That’s really my role. That’s exactly how I feel.

Carol’s experience speaks for itself. She began teaching in the department, through the part-time studies program in the continuing education department, many years before she became a full-time faculty member. She holds a degree in fine arts and has an extremely varied professional background having worked in art galleries in England, public radio in the United States, and teaching part-time in the arts department at a university in Canada.

She, like many other “old guard” faculty members, started taking particular courses at the college as a way to “turn [her] arts background into some sort of career.” Carol met an instructor while taking courses who thought she would be well
suited to teach within the particular program in which she teaches now. She explains her history at the college to me thus:

And so I started teaching history of art to the students, I don’t know, maybe in the late 80s. I became full-time. I was the first full-time employee actually in this program in ’93. I started as a program coordinator at that time also because there was no other full-time people, so someone had to do it. That’s right, so that would be me. And so I continued on and at that point CSAC was in place in the Ministry and in that year we looked at the courses, abolished other courses, and retooled the program . . . So I’ve been there since ’93, however long that is . . . it’s got to be close to 15 years now . . . I was coordinator until 2000, and then became a member of senior administration for three years.

Carol talks about how interesting it has been for her to watch the way the community has changed through the different integration of new faculty members over the years. She speaks about the “old” way relationships were forged with her colleagues in the diploma program:

Initially, [when starting the diploma program], we as a group had to find our own way. Not unusually, we were all really quite different. Specifically, Sarah and I were quite different. I’m quite conceptual. She’s quite practical. It worked out really well in the long run, but we had lots of, oh boy, it was a really difficult relationship to solidify initially because we were so different, right? Inevitably, we came to understand each other really well, and I think, respect each other very much. You have to work at it. Of course, we were lucky because we sat beside each other, so we would get up each other’s nose all the time . . . and if there was anything I should know, then I knew it straight away, which I find much easier to handle. Because then you don’t have all sorts of issues cropping up and you go “Wait a minute. Where did that come from?” And you’re right near somebody, so it’s hard to miss.

Through this conversation, she provides a glimpse of “the way things were directly handled in the past,” but also hints at
the way she felt challenged in connecting with and understanding others in her “new” family given the changes in both departmental structure and a “less direct way of communicating.”

**Dan: A Few War Stories to Tell**

In the family, I never considered myself the dad. I think we were a fatherless family when I was the coordinator of the program. Right, no father. So, sort of like the Peanuts. There’s all these kids running round. You’d never see any adults, except the ones that go ‘Whuh whuh whuh whuh’ [imitates the sound the teacher in Peanuts makes]. I was the big brother who’d been to war, come back with a few shrapnel wounds, but good war stories to tell. But knowing you’ve got to look out for siblings, lots of siblings, lots of little boys and girls who are growing up. And now I’m the big brother who now has responsibility to my family . . . when you get a new group of people with different credentials, and when the credentials are always such a BIG thing (implication on a big thing for the person who holds that credential), it’s too big really – it overshadows things, the people that do matter, all of the stuff we’ve done.

Dan has been combining professional practice and college teaching since the early 90s. He talks about his move to this college in 2000 from a proprietary school program with professional program accreditation where he was a part-time instructor prior to joining the diploma program at this college. He describes how he immediately took on the role of both program coordinator and full-time faculty member. Dan talks about his “initiation” into the department, and how he had to “hit the ground running”:

First things first. We really had to raise the profile of the program. No one out there really knows us, particularly a lot of the other working professionals and other schools, so that became my main focus and just encouraging, trying to get new people in, part-timers,
trying to work at getting new space . . . It was a disaster.

New space was critical for the growth of the program, and this initiative clearly took precedence over any thought of accreditation at that time. During our interviews, he talked about the ways in which the “old guard” was really responsible for building the reputation of the program within the industry. They were also directly responsible for delivering one of the first ‘mobile’ instructional “24/7” access programs in North America (online learning and web access). Mobility of instruction, according to Dan, was critical at the time to realistically offer students the option to take the number of liberal arts courses necessary to meet professional program standards.

Dan continues to describe the initiatives that came prior to the department “jumping on the accreditation bandwagon.” Through his “war stories” he makes it abundantly clear that many of these initiatives led the way for accreditation to be pursued, and ultimately granted.

The first year we were there [in the new space]. So there were lots of renovations that had to happen there. It was not a mobile space yet. I had to arrange the design of all of that. We didn’t have a proper sample room. Nothing. So I had to get that going. I began to attend all trade shows, made sure that I had my T-shirt on. Started our first grad show. We’d never had a grad show. So no contact with the outside world in that regard . . . So that was my main concern at the beginning [of his role as program coordinator], which resulted in a really big increase in applicants . . . After a couple of years of my focusing on the promotion, we went from 600 to 1200 applicants. We were
able to double the number of applicants, and because of that, accreditation got put on the back burner . . . By this time, of course, it was announced, the infamous announcement, that suddenly all programs would have to become degree-granting by 2010.

He acknowledges that it was a very exciting time to join and grow the team. Not knowing instructors, and not knowing “the politics”, he felt he started from ground zero in having to find out who “all the players were” and who could get things moving.

He laughs while he very bluntly explains to me that “when you come in fresh like that, you start to realize that it’s never the administration, of course, it’s always the front line workers” that he could rely on. He ran a very successful, growing department with only two other instructors and one department support technician. “And that was great! All of us had to sort of figure out what to do on our own, which was perfect. We did our own thing . . . I did my own thing.”

He talks about his respect for the history of the program and his commitment to those “guys in the trenches” who have made it what it is by use of the family metaphor:

So again, I think the family adopts or doesn’t adopt. I think when the dad is gone, you admit new members into the family for whatever reason . . . But when they come and start to take over the family that’s when you start to get your nose out of joint. If one of our [original] family members, one of our boys or girls had gone off, had been given the resources and encouragement and the funds, professional development funds to go off, fabulous people like [references three well-respected part-timers that have been with the department for a while.], if they would’ve thought to at least promote a few from within rather than bring on all new others. . . .
Dan assures me that he has no problem with change or the notion of bringing in new people. The problem, as he sees it, is when you “just don’t maintain your good, strong core, the one’s who brought you here.” In his opinion, you can’t just “throw out the history of how we got here. After all, looking back is sometimes the best way to move successfully forward.”

Susan: The “Go To” Gal — Listening and Lending a Hand

I see myself as the big sister. Big sister, yeah. I’m the big sister because I don’t want to be the mom, I don’t want to be the leader of the pack. I don’t want to be, but yet I feel I have kind of a unique role there because I do so much of the administrative stuff part-time, but I also teach part-time, so I am designated as a full-time employee. So, I feel like I’ve got a different perspective, maybe, than everybody else. I’m a part-time instructor so I know what the part-timers are up against. I do teach, so I know what it’s like to be in the classroom, but yet I also do all the admin stuff, so I kind of know what’s going on around the college. I know why things work the way they work sometimes. I was also very closely involved in all aspects of the ‘behind the scenes’ of the accreditation process. So I think of myself as the big sister because I’m in a position to help other people, in class and out. And during accreditation. To play that role, I give advice but I also support fellow colleagues as if I am their peer. I don’t want to be their superior.

Susan did not start out her teaching career in this current department. She, like Carol, attended the college where she now teaches as a student of fashion design, and was also approached by an instructor to take on a few courses upon graduating from the fashion design program. While her real love is teaching sewing, she explains, “in the 80’s people started to move away from sewing for their clothing, but there was a move toward
sewing for your home. So the clothing market sort of changed. Really, it became costlier to make clothes than buy them."

When the fashion department “folded” at the college, Susan landed part-time teaching opportunities through textiles within the department. While she does not practice within the design profession, she is responsible for overseeing the operations of the department: assisting instructors with resources for the classroom, working with students on placement in the industry, running the sample/resource room, arranging guest speakers/field trips, paying bills, ordering supplies, etc. “Anything that’s going on in the department, I seem to have an involvement in and sort of play a role.” And although she has never worked in the industry, she feels she knows it very well and is quite familiar with the way the firms operate through dealing with numerous contacts over the years.

Because of her distinctive role, one she describes as “the go to gal”, Susan feels she offers a different viewpoint than that of everyone else teaching in the department. “I think I have a pretty good sense of the big picture. It’s not that I’ve been pigeon-holed in one area. It’s more of an overview that I have.” This overview includes the opportunity to deal with part-timers on a more regular basis, and therefore, “sympathize with them and lend them an ear because I’m also considered a part-time instructor. It’s a contract position, you know. It can be taken away from me at any time, too.”
Part of the tension that exists in the stepfamily, she feels, between “the old and the new guard” is because of the drastic change in the future direction of the program. This change led to a feeling of instability among faculty members. She explains,

Many of the faculty who have been teaching in the program for a while are reluctant to share. They are protective of what they’re teaching and their knowledge, and they, quite frankly, don’t want to put their notes and their ideas out there because they are afraid they’ll be copied . . . Definitely an insecurity. There would be an insecurity about people copying your work and, well, taking their jobs . . . Especially to those with a degree.

She explains to me that some “old guard” full-timers may have taken offence at the administration overlooking existing part-time faculty for full-time positions. They have all worked together for so long, and, as Carol and Dan have already expressed, have really come to respect each other over the years. These part-timers that were overlooked by administration are not only “really good people”, those who “just put their heart and soul into it”, but are people who have “made the program what it is – a good strong program.” She feels that most members of the “old guard” felt some sort of resentment. “Administration wouldn’t even interview those part-timers with the chance that they might get their master’s degree – that’s when the tension began to rise.” Susan believes it is that tension that originally forged a division between “old guard and new guard”: 
It almost turned personal on those poor people [new employees], because they [administration] hired new people with Masters. Of course there’s going to be resentment. How could you not feel resentment, even though they’re the nicest people in the world, there’s got to be a bit of suspicion or bitterness about the situation. But you see, not the people, the situation.

This, as she explains, is the real challenge. Bitterness, suspicion and resentment about a situation and how it was handled by administration became the breeding ground for tensions, mistrust, miscommunication, and ultimately misunderstanding among all full-time faculty members — both old and new. “If we were going to move forward as a community committed to meeting a shared goal, we really needed to come together without all of this division.”

4.5.2 The “new guard”

Unfortunately, working together is not a simple task, nor is the development of a common goal or vision. Sharing meaning, knowledge, resources, responsibility, and/or power often involves taking risks and trusting others, which can be difficult to do when careers, reputations, or other valued assets are at stake, as was the case with the faculty members within this study. The following section tells the story of those members of the “new guard,” and their description of how they felt about joining the team and working together prior to the collaborative self-study initiative.
Trent: A New Direction Not Appreciated by All

I feel like I am maybe the stepfather, because I felt a strong sense of separation from the original family. But at the same time, I still think that my contributions were valid, but probably the existing family body didn’t necessarily like the direction of the new family. They didn’t like the new members, and they didn’t necessarily want to listen to them. They just thought, ‘There’s nothing wrong with our family right now.’

Trent was one of first two new members to join the existing family. He holds a master’s degree and practiced for roughly nine years prior to teaching. He first became interested in teaching others through his profession. As a designer, he was assigned as team leader and became responsible for overseeing others’ knowledge and participation around a particular design project. He discusses how education really “changed who he is” and explains that his main motivation for moving professionally in the direction of teaching is that he wanted at some point to take part in trying to help others change, to “become stronger people, whether it’s individually or as a designer.” He worked for several years teaching design full-time at a private college in Toronto within an accredited department prior to joining this college.

Unfortunately, Trent felt resistance within the department almost immediately after being hired and speaks candidly about his initial impressions.

There was a welcome. It was just very polite and required. I don’t know if they truly wanted us there because I think
they understood what the implications of our presence meant to their jobs and their practice there. It was very tense. They were very stressful times ... We didn’t really know who we could trust, so the other credentialed new hire and I fortunately learned to trust one another very quickly because we saw that it was kind of an ‘us and a them’, and we needed someone to talk to ... And while we knew that we were hired to shape it up [the program], we were hoping that there would be a mutual respect for that goal of bettering the program amongst the existing full-timers. But there was really a lot of resistance, there was a lot of guarded behavior, there was a lot of talk going on about what we were doing and what we were trying to do, and I think we were just looked at from a very negative or suspect point of view.

Trent was not sure how much administration or the team knew about what was required for accreditation or even to move ahead with the new program. Consequently, he became vocal about what he felt was necessary as well as how he felt things should proceed in terms of accreditation. To his knowledge, new hires were brought in specifically to reshape and redevelop the program to better accommodate accreditation standards and ultimately degree-granting status.

I would like to think that everyone involved was already aware of the requirements before we came along, and they were just relying on our strong opinions and being vocal, but ultimately, I don’t know. But we were very vocal about what we felt needed to happen in terms of the accreditation process and that sort of thing ... this is what needs to happen, we just moved ahead, that was my experience. I tried not to be too contradicting in terms of what they thought during those meetings ... It was a very tense time. They were stressful times.

Because of the tensions and suspicion about his involvement, and perhaps an insufficient introduction of his purpose by administration, Trent very quickly aligned with
Manny, another newly hired member, as someone by whom he felt he could run ideas without encountering any negativity or feelings of suspicion.

At least that’s how I felt initially. I needed someone to talk to about the reshaping of the program . . . I was not tenured and felt like I was on the line if things did not proceed smoothly with the program. So I talked with Manny . . . something that couldn’t easily be done with the whole group.

**Manny: A New Direction With A Softer Touch**

It’s sort of like a mother idea. It’s an odd metaphor to be using as a male . . . but nurturing, like a nurturing type of . . . the whole thought of really, and then it was tough because . . . this thing where I make reference to conflict a lot. But it was difficult because certain old members don’t really see eye to eye with new members, I don’t know. I mean no one ever came out and said it, but I felt the need to keep the peace a lot.

Prior to teaching, Manny practiced in the designated industry for over ten years, working for a number of firms including one of the largest architectural firms in North America. While many of the firms for which he had worked were quite reputable and allowed him to grow as a designer, over time he began to feel the stress of working in an industry with incredibly long hours, high turnover, and a lack of stability.

Practicing in the profession for all those years, it’s very grueling. And many firms hire you on a contract basis. You’re paid X amount of dollars for 37.5 hours a week and of course, you work way above and beyond that, and a lot of firms don’t pay overtime . . . It’s their time, right, your time, I mean, but they’re benefiting, they’re profiting from you.

Not only did Manny feel he was getting to a point in his life at which he wanted more stability, but he also really
longed for a career that was satisfying on a deeper level — so he decided to make a life change. He took on part-time teaching opportunities while continuing to practice professionally, attended grad school, and proudly became one of the first students in Canada to graduate with a master’s for this professional designation.

I went into education to have a life and to work hard so I can be respected as a teacher, to be respected by my colleagues, to help my students make a mark. For me, that’s what’s really important now: to see them do well, to take the knowledge that I share with them and to make a difference.

Although exceptionally proud of his degree, and the ability to make a difference, he recalls how surprisingly unwelcome and misunderstood his education made him feel as a new member of the college where he now teaches. He talks to me about the importance of working together as a team, especially in an environment where “faculty grow old together”, and although he describes this new environment as “very different from the transient workplace that [he’d] been used to [his] whole life — one that is very comforting” with respect to stability, he was quite surprised to find such competition and “in-fighting” within academia.

I felt very sad because I’ve worked so hard to get where I am. Nothing has come easy. I’ve had to work at everything I do. And when I was hired on, I remember some of the faculty there, especially the part-timers — the full-timers were not as bad — but some people were really just awful. There was a big house party and the Associate Dean was there, and I remember the first thing that came up in most conversation was like ‘What are your academic credentials?’
So this was the whole thing, and it was very odd for me. I realized very quickly that there were many part-time people who had applied for years that might have been a little bit threatened by me.

Manny, like Trent, believes that there was a real misconception from the start regarding their intention and involvement in the May-June curriculum meetings.

I mean, they looked at us like we were taking over, like it was either our way or the highway. All we would say was what we really felt was needed in the courses. Things like ‘maybe we should be thinking about adding this or deleting that’. And it’s hard. It’s hard to stand back, look at that and try to be objective and try to be sympathetic. I liked to think that I was really diplomatic doing it, but somehow I think many saw us as a little more hard-edged.

Given the misconceptions it was difficult, if not impossible, for the “two groups” to come together and “really collaborate” at the beginning. As a result, he tried very hard to mediate rather than collaborate — “to keep the peace” — between himself and Trent and the others who obviously had a hard time.

I think it was hard for them [the old guard] because they have a long-term relationship, and it’s very tricky business to come in as someone new and try to tell someone “maybe that’s not the way we should be doing this”, because they are supposed to be experts in their area. But even though they are experts, I did not want to just sit around and have nothing to say. And because of that, things started to unfold — dynamics and personalities came out — right? I am not a confrontational type of person, so I tried to continue to work through the process — to mediate — to be seen as less hard-edged.

Alyssa: A Fresh Perspective on an Otherwise Tense Situation

I am kind of like the middle child. It’s like being in the midst of a fight between the little kids and the older siblings, and I try to remain neutral. All I can say [to
others in conflict] is ‘that’s too bad.’ I try not to side because, again, I don’t know, I’m not in the situation [conflict between family members], and I don’t have anything against other instructors or professors, so it’s difficult. I think probably the most challenging part is remaining neutral because there are definitely two camps set up, and I didn’t want to be associated with either one.

Alyssa was the last full-time faculty member hired during the self-study collaborative. Her story is significant in that she was brought into the faculty community several weeks into the self-study process, and therefore has a very different perspective from those who preceded her, although she was definitely aware of the tensions that existed between old and new.

Alyssa became exposed to teaching through training in the industry. She began her profession as an architect but returned to school to obtain her master’s degree in the field of design. Like all other faculty members in this case study, while she felt she was contributing to the industry through practice, she decided that her contribution was on a very “small scale” and that through teaching she “would touch so many more lives”:

There’s one thing about practicing which makes you feel like you are contributing to the industry and to the built environment, but it’s on such a small scale. I only worked with a couple of clients at the firm, so you’re only dealing with two or three, maybe four clients a job. You know you’re touching lives but not on the broad scale. When you are teaching you can inspire and ignite the minds that will then go on to build so much more.

She explains that although she was intimidated at the beginning of the self-study process, because she did not know the content
of the curriculum or the faculty who were involved, “everyone was basically respectful of [her] opinions and [her] standpoint.” She points out, however, that,

at the beginning, I tried so hard . . . I didn’t want to appear like I took sides or was on a certain side. I knew that there was danger that I’d be seen as one of them (new guard) because we were the Masters, we had the appropriate background . . . I could see it instantly and I did not overly associate with anyone who was new because there was danger that if we became this clique, they [the old guard] would have just discounted anything we did because at that point I saw it as being very personal.

Alyssa also expresses the way she understands and sees the nature of teaching as an “isolated event”. She thinks that this nature may have contributed to the tensions that existed during those curriculum meetings and later throughout the self-study:

You’re able to have so much freedom in terms of what it is you do in your classroom behind closed doors, so that when you come to others, other people may have a different way in which they present something. Sometimes it feels a little personal and I think some people wanted to really hang onto their way, and not move on because it’s more difficult.

4.6 A Community Divided

In this chapter, I have outlined historic as well as external initiatives that had an effect on those faculty members involved in the future of the program considered in this study. I have also sketched for the reader the “family portrait” described by the faculty participants to provide the context of and add depth to the study. The stepfamily identity model that emerged from my conversations with faculty participants helps demonstrate the
tensions that exist based on the merging of two different groups of people within this community. However, understanding the negative realities sheds light on those things that really mattered to faculty, which helps focus attention on those factors of the self-study collaborative process that helped members of both groups work through difficult tensions to find a middle ground as members of a collective professional community.

The table below (Table 2: Old Guard and New Guard) summarizes each group’s perceptions as outlined in this chapter. These perceptions highlight feelings that were most significant to the members of the divided community in finding that middle ground.

**Table 2: Old Guard and New Guard**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Guard</th>
<th>New Guard</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping with imposed programmatic change</td>
<td>Coping with stress and conflict driven by attitudes about programmatic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling devalued by institution despite years of service and building a successful program from the ground up</td>
<td>Feeling of value/power granted by administration based almost entirely on credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of mistrust, suspicion and bitterness for new members</td>
<td>Feeling unwelcome as if threat to existing faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions not readily sought – feeling marginalized</td>
<td>Opinions strongly communicated – feeling misunderstood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In the next chapter, I highlight specific aspects of the collaborative relationships and processes that emerged from the data that helped to depolarize the perceived differences between
the groups, dispel myths about each other’s involvement, and facilitate movement toward the development of a new combined group identity. This new identity proves essential in leading to the success and sustainability of a strong, professional educational community.
Chapter 5. Findings I: Changes in the Faculty Community

The central question in this study is: What is the relationship between collaborative self-study and faculty community? The high stress levels, culture shock, role ambiguity, and “us vs. them” mentality among the newly formed “stepfamily” being studied make it very difficult to achieve such a community. However, over the course of the study, faculty members began to discover and redefine their faculty community by way of interaction with one another. In this way, both groups within the stepfamily were able to come together and begin to form new traditions, establish new relationships, and ultimately create a new union.

I have presented the findings of the study in this chapter and the next in terms of two sub-questions. In Chapter 5, the question is: What aspects of the faculty community change as a result of the collaborative self-study process? In Chapter 6, the sub-question is: What factors led to the changes described in Chapter 5? Of course, these two chapters will also reveal the interconnections of the two sub-questions.

In the following two chapters, I discuss the findings as they emerged from the data. In discussing these findings, I use participants’ voices in the form of direct quotes to illustrate points of analysis. I also include entries from my observation journal to support my own personal position and to share my experiences as participant observer within this faculty community.
In this chapter, I focus on the nature of the changes within the faculty community. To do so, I first outline key characteristics of change as they emerged from the faculty interview data. Following this, I use entries from my observation journal to illustrate the emergence of a professional educational community – one that has a different dynamic than that previously outlined in Chapter 4.

5.1 Key Characteristics of the Professional Educational Community after Collaborative Self-study

As participant observer in this study, I was fortunate to work in an environment that enabled me to interact both individually and collectively with faculty members for the sake of enacting change. Together we sought to determine the nature of the challenges they faced in teaching in the program, as it existed, while addressing standards that were required for accreditation and future advancement of the program into a baccalaureate degree. I experienced, along with faculty, the difficulty of working in an environment in which departmental culture was influenced by uncertainty, and an element of mistrust pertaining to certain people and directives dictating changes that needed to be made within the program.

Throughout this case study, what became most apparent through observation is that human interaction, an aspect most fundamental to collaboration, is not static: interaction has
movement; it is often chaotic; it can be full of tension; it most certainly has the tendency to evoke emotions that are sometimes wrought with vulnerability.

In this particular case, working collaboratively called into question faculty members’ values, beliefs, and perceptions of what it means to teach and to learn. It brought challenges in terms of breaking with the past to accept new ideas while getting rid of some old ideas. Many of those old ideas shaped participant’s thoughts and actions for a very long time. It called into question the ways in which faculty members judged each other; judgments that made a difference in the way faculty members were willing to interact with one another and, ultimately, work together.

In the following subsections, I outline the key characteristics of the changes within the professional community identified through the analysis of faculty interview data. They will be discussed as follows: change in ways of perceiving, change in ways of inquiring, and change in ways of interacting.

5.1.1 Change in ways of perceiving - understanding oneself and each other

The most prominent change noted by faculty participants is one that focuses on the way faculty members were better able to understand each other. This came about primarily through prolonged interaction with a focus on things that matter to them, the program, and their students. A better understanding
encouraged participants to start to examine some basic misconceptions they may have had about those around them.

Throughout the process of the self-study collaborative, one faculty participant began to question her own perception of the nature of her colleagues’ work ethic and wondered if different styles may bring a “sense of balance to a team.” During one of our interviews, she pondered, “Maybe it’s not because they [old guard] are less motivated, maybe their style is just more 
\textit{laissez faire}. And ultimately, maybe that’s what helped balance us out.”

A bit later in that interview, she reflected on how the newer members of the team may have had to temper their enthusiasm for change, specifically because they may have “overwhelmed” the existing faculty with a “hit the ground running” attitude. During our conversation, she saw her involvement in the collaborative as both a personal and professional growth opportunity — one that enabled her to understand herself better in relation to others. She said,

\begin{quote}
We [new guard] learned to tailor our ideas, well, the ways we expressed our ideas because we realized there was the opposite [way of thinking] . . . you know like maybe we were overwhelming others when we were all gung-ho about the program and did not hold back.
\end{quote}

Another member of the new guard discussed how getting to know each other better through close interaction had ultimately caused less anxiety for him in being together with all members of the faculty. He, like the previous participant, wondered
whether the change in perception had occurred from the way others perceive him or the way he has come to perceive others.

I think there were a lot of unknowns for everyone, but I think particularly with them [old guard], because they were at a more vulnerable position because of their credentials. I think that, although they're still aware of that fact, there doesn't seem to be... the same kind of separation or anxiety or whatever. I feel it is dissipated somewhat. And I don't know if that's my perception because I feel that way myself, if it's their perception, or if it's how I'm perceiving them. I feel like they know us more [by going through this process.]

Another new guard participant makes similar connections between a change in the perception of others and a kind of "comfort level" in working together. In the following description, he explained how he felt other faculty may have "eased up" from being so guarded in working with him. He felt this occurred because it may have become more apparent to the old guard that credentials really were a necessity in moving forward toward a degree program, since other master's degree professionals continued to be hired into the department. As a result, he felt less like a target — the "smartie pants" — and more like one who was listened to because of the true worth of his contributions. He explained this to me as follows:

I think also through the process, once Alyssa and others with Masters Degrees were brought on board, all of a sudden, people began to realize that it wasn't just us. Credentials were important. Like, 'Okay, you two new guys are serious. It isn't just a bunch of strong opinions. Maybe let's listen to what they have to say...they were really hired on merit.' So that's why I felt relationships were better.
As he continued to speak about changes in working with others, it was evident that he too changed in the way that he interacted with others over the course of the collaborative. This is best demonstrated through the following story:

When I was hired I revised everything that I was doing in the classroom. I couldn’t collaborate. We couldn’t really sit down . . . And for the most part, the faculty was supportive of my changes . . . But one course in particular, for me it didn’t seem like there was enough process. It was more fundamental. I did have to meet with the professor [through the self-study process] and it made all the difference. If I didn’t experience speaking to her about it, I wouldn’t really know the extent of what she was doing. It’s a good course. I worked with her and I worked with it and it will be an excellent course. For me, that helped me see that it’s all about teamwork. It’s team building. Compared to what I first did, it was hard, but I think we both were happy for the relationship and the result.

He continued by reflecting on the seriousness of the new guard versus what the earlier participant called “laissez faire” in the way they had perceived the old guards’ ways of doing things. He and I discussed the sense of “burn out” that he has experienced in the short time dealing with this project while also instructing students as a member of the full-time faculty. We discussed how perhaps the old guard may, in many ways, have experienced even more of a “burn out.” He wondered if this kind of burn out may better explain the way the old guard seemed to initially take on the project. He pondered this new way of perceiving the old guard as follows:

Maybe the longer you have been with the program, the more you kind of sit back and go, “What more do you want from
me? I’ve given 20 years service. How much more can you possibly want?”

Because I was interacting with all members of the faculty, I had a different understanding of the way the old guard took on the new project. I asked this participant to consider a different way of looking at the interaction between old guard and new guard. I described this way of perceiving the old guard as follows:

This could be a reason, perhaps, why there may have been initial tensions within the department. But think of it this way, there’s still a kind of camaraderie and respect for one another that I have encountered while working with and talking to each of you. And it goes like this . . . some of the people who have been here longer have been in the same shoes that you guys seem to be in right now. They have put in their all to grow a program, and I think there’s an empathy after all of this interaction. For you guys. Maybe like ‘Careful what you say or do, because it can be tough. Those are tough roles to play, pushing and driving change.’ You know?

After some discussion, the participant slowly came to accept different ways of seeing things, which helped him to have a clearer understanding of others. He recognized that perhaps he may have been a bit “closed-minded” in initially “sizing up” the old guard. He talked about the way this may have initially affected the way he dealt with them. He explained this as follows:

I think that when you are a teacher, and you’re trying to work together, you need to be able to collaborate. But I think it takes a special person to truly [collaborate] rather than someone who’s going to go in and want it ‘It’s either my way or the highway.’
He explains that he felt that perhaps both “guards” might have been a little rigid in the way they perceived one another. That rigidity, he says, may have come from a “focus on having something to prove to one another to validate themselves in their positions.”

One of the old guard participants reflected on how working together eventually opened her eyes to the purity of the collaborative process. It also helped her to more clearly see the true intentions of others (particularly members of the new guard). Ultimately, she felt they were not as selfish as she had originally thought. She also felt that working together helped to showcase the pedagogical strengths that each one of them brought to the table. This was particularly the case with the strengths the old guard members possessed, as it was those members of the faculty whom she felt were wrongfully called into question because of their credentials, and perhaps not recognized for the quality of teaching they brought to the program. She explained this as follows:

I think all of us who had invested many years in working toward the current program felt a bit bristly given this new process. But then I think we could have sooner talked about it. You know some of us ‘old stodgeys’. Eventually, though, I think we came to recognize that it was just a process of trying to see where we were, trying to figure out what we could do next. And maybe in some ways, it helped to make people understand that some of us really have quite a strong background in teaching and really know what we are doing in the classroom.
Most participants came to realize that while not everyone works together in the same way, in the end, people do come through. It is really a matter of "try[ing] to understand where they are coming from" and, more importantly, supporting their efforts as they bring them, not as you expect them to be brought. One participant explains this as follows:

I feel like I’ve learned more about relationships than I did about anything else, quite frankly. Working through the challenges of this self-study collaborative, I found that I really do like the faculty, and I like them for different reasons. But more importantly, I understand them more. Yes, they do work differently than I do, but ultimately we’re a team. And I think when you are a teacher, you really do need to be able to collaborate if you want to move forward.

Another participant talked about seeing the “humanness” in the process as a basis for understanding. He explained how maybe it was in the way that he “took chances while working with others” that may have helped others to see that it was okay to “come as you are.” He talked about how he wasn’t afraid to allow himself to take risks, and to show infallibility. This risk taking was important, he felt, to both his own personal growth and the growth of the team.

I find that I am very vocal about appreciating others’ contributions — whether they are right or wrong. I definitely do point out where things are falling short of expectations, but I also feel I’m very good at pointing out where things are going very successfully. Again, whether it’s my own initiative or somebody else’s. I feel I share a lot of myself with others . . . I’ll be very honest and say, “This isn’t working out so well, but I’m really happy how this is going.” That’s a way for them to see that I’m not perfect and I’m human. I have my successes and my struggles. If they do the same thing, that’s great. I’m still going to behave in a way that I’m happy with, show a
sense of integrity. If others want to baffle me with [garbage], then none of us wins. If they also want to be honest and forthcoming, that’s where we all win.

This same participant used a specific example regarding course conflict to exemplify how he was able to understand and relate to the way other faculty members may handle material in the classroom. He spoke of his experience as follows:

There was conflict with one professor in particular. And while I don’t support his methodology [in the way he teaches the same course I am teaching], I do support his intentions. And I do think we have similar intentions. And I think we have similar intentions for our students that we want them to succeed, but we want them to learn as much as possible, that we want them to be prepared when they go out there. And I am more than willing to admit that my methodology is not the only methodology, and that there are other ways of doing good things. I can say now that my methodology isn’t perfect either.

Through close and constant interaction, members of the community changed their perceptions of themselves and one another. This changing perception helped reshape the face of the segregated stepfamily unit. The unit emerged from one characterized by division to one that is more open to accept the diverse nature of those within the family unit.

5.1.2 Change in ways of inquiring – learning from each other

Another characteristic of the community that changed as presented by faculty participants is one that focused on ways of inquiring. Specifically, the change from trying to figure things out alone or with those you have most in common to ultimately inquiring together with all faculty members in an effort to
learn more about the program as a whole. One of the newest members of the faculty described her transformation as follows:

I learned a lot, and continue to learn a lot, about the program . . . I thought it was a fabulous process to walk into. Perhaps a little overwhelming at times because there was so much I didn’t know and I felt like I couldn’t contribute not knowing all of the courses being offered, but it was probably the best way to learn about the program and each other.

Other members of the new guard also described the way working together helped contribute to their understanding of the program as a whole. Just as the old guard members found pride in the way they built and developed the existing program, those members of the new guard felt as if they, too, had opportunity to “add” to the success of a program with such a strong foundation. One of the new guard faculty participants described this feeling as follows: “I feel like we came along, and added to their product [the curriculum], maybe even modified their understanding, or their contribution to a certain degree. This is a good feeling.”

Likewise, members of the old guard talked about the importance of seeing the program as a whole – something many of them did not get the chance to do in the hectic days of building a program. As one participant explained,

I certainly believe I’m more knowledgeable from working with others. Learning more about other courses is something that’s always good. I can remember even my first day [when the program was first growing] as coordinator saying, ‘I don’t know these courses, how they all work together, and I sure wish I had the time to sit down with the professors and really work through what works and what doesn’t.’
Well, this enables us to do a real sort of formal thing which helps us all understand the way the program works that much better.

Learning about the program together carried over into teaching within the classroom. For some faculty, this meant they were better able to connect what students were learning in their classroom to what they would be learning in other courses, and thus to show the students the sequence and importance of what they were learning from one course to another. One participant described the way working collaboratively helped her learn things that were helpful in streamlining answers about the program for students in her classes.

I have a new appreciation for what each course entails. Even today, there were a couple of questions [from students] about, ‘Do we cover this in future classes?’ I was able to confidently answer and say, ‘You know what? You will do this again. I now know that.’ Whereas it’s something that I don’t think I would have necessarily known before this process.

Another participant reflected on how his experiences with other faculty members through the self-study collaborative opened up his eyes to the challenges he faced given certain dynamics within the collaborative process. During one of our final interviews, he shared with me how he was reshaping some of his courses to better prepare his students on how to handle conflicts with one another within group projects. This was one of the areas that was flagged by the accreditation committee as “needing improvement” in their curriculum overall. His collaborative experience helped give him insight into ways of
helping students to understand and work through the kind of conflicts that may arise as a result of group work within his design process course, and ultimately within the field of design itself. He explained:

I thought, “Geez, we give our students, well, you know, we throw them into these group projects all the time.” But we never talk to them about the dynamics of a group. You know, like the forming, the norming, the performing, the storming . . . So this is one of the things that I thought we should be doing within the program that teaches them about the whole process of collaboration and group process. And that should definitely be happening in design process because that’s the first time students work together in a group. Dealing with conflict and group process for me definitely spilled over into my classroom — helping students to get it.

An old guard participant talked about how the process of collaboration through self-study really “forced” the need to work together, but in a good way. Because of accreditation standards, she felt the need to “raise the bar” technically in many of her courses, and not having the ability to do this alone, she sought the help of other more skilled “technicians” to help her upgrade the “quality of student work.” She wouldn’t have known quite so clearly who to turn to had she not been exposed to others’ abilities through collaborative team meetings. She explained,

In some cases we had to change requirements for projects, step them up a bit. Like, let’s push this to the next level because we want the best output from our students. Technical stuff is not my forte, so of course, I’d run off and have to quickly find somebody to help do up a CAD plan, let’s say, for this . . . Like, ‘Say, would you mind looking at this,’ or ‘Could I have a look at what you do’ or whatever. I don’t think that would have happened between
all of us before because we really didn’t know each other that well.

Raising the bar on her expectations for student project work within the classroom translated nicely into what she terms “a pride thing among the students.” As she explained, “Students felt [proud that] they were chosen to have their work shown during accreditation, and this made a great deal of difference in the work being produced within the classrooms.” She felt the process was equally valuable in that sense for students in her classes and within the program.

Some participants described how they learned more about the “process of working together,” and, in that way, ultimately discovered its inherent value.

I think I learned a lot. I feel like being together to discuss all of the content in all of the courses – that was new knowledge that I didn’t have prior to this process. But I think I learned more in terms of the process of working together. Its importance . . . really.

Discovering the inherent value of working together translated for almost all participants into working more closely together and listening to one another to refine courses that are designed to be taught by two separate instructors throughout the term. This is now evident within the community in many of the courses taught.

Other participants referenced a change in the community from one of isolation and “doing their own thing” to how they found more opportunities to learn from each other.
Working together... it makes the process that much more successful because if everyone stuck to their own, you know, their own space, and did their own thing as we would never have been able to continue learning off each other.

I think before this, it was just like, ‘I’m going to do my own thing and I’ll move forward, and you can do your own thing.’ But people didn’t really have a sense of other people’s content and style, and so how can you support other people’s courses? . . . And that’s not comprehensive. It’s just self-serving, and it can become almost defensive. I don’t feel defensive now.

Feeling “less defensive” led the way to learning about the value of respecting others and learning to appreciate and celebrate successes while learning from their mistakes. One participant described this as follows:

I think I learned the value of really respecting people you work with on a team. Always remain impartial and don’t be afraid to show your human side. And explore. That’s right, make mistakes. Who cares? You learn from your mistakes. Don’t we tell students that all the time? Let’s just throw it out there together and see what happens. Sometimes we get so focused that we forget it’s a human process. This helped us see through that.

Over the course of time, opportunities arose for collaborative inquiry and learning related to it. This inquiry helped faculty members overcome those chasms caused by misunderstanding and ill-defined direction. It forced debate among the faculty members about what is important, but ultimately helped the team to become a community characterized by learning together.
5.1.3 Change in ways of interacting – a willingness to work together

Another change in the community that emerged, particularly when analyzing the data from interviews and observation field notes, is one that can be characterized as a change in the way those members of the community became more willing to solve problems by working together over time. Opportunities for collaborative inquiry arose through the work faculty members did together and helped promote understanding and appreciation for others’ points of view.

One participant reflected on how it was necessary for the collective, rather than individual constituents, “to figure out how to make lemonade out of lemons” in order to make things work. He described his way of thinking as follows:

It’s kind of like ‘if life gives you lemons,’ [the answer is not] you make lemonade,’ but rather ‘HOW do you make lemonade.’ We needed to figure this out. I guess this helped me from that point of view because I basically had more of an understanding of my environment—both physical and emotional. I was able to somehow accept that and figure out how to get the most out of the existing situation given that it wasn’t ideal. As so, kind of, I guess I had to learn to assess the current situation, understand what’s flexible and what’s fixed. Well, learn to accept that and be able to try and incorporate that information into a better product as a teacher and as a member of the team.

Faculty participants described ways in which they reflected on themselves as professionals within the community while learning to accept different points of view. They learned to accept diverse opinions and ideas as both valid and important to the nature of who they are as a group. One participant spoke
about how they now “let people be who they are,” which will ultimately “let others’ strengths shine through.” She described this as follows:

I think we feel more bonded as a team now that we did this together. But what I learned from it is that in teamwork, you have to let people be who they are. Let them be who they are so they can bring their own strengths to the team. Definitely don’t focus on the little quirks that other people might have… just put your faith in people because I think if you have a high expectation of a person and they know that, they’re probably going to try to live up to that.

Another participant explained how she came to accept both difference and diversity as characteristics that accelerate the collaborative process. For her, these characteristics strengthened the ability of the team to work together. It also resulted in the production of a really strong program.

Everyone works a little bit differently, don’t they? And just because people don’t work the way you do, doesn’t mean your way is right and theirs is wrong. Diversity in a group is important. A real lesson for me is that it’s the outcome that really matters.

Participants also talked about “true colours being exposed.” They talked about getting the chance “to know one another well enough” so that collaborative work is most effective. In that, there is a new sense of “comfort” in being together as a group. One participant explained this comfort in working together as follows:

I think going through the process, working as groups, I really got a chance to know Dan. I really got a chance to know Carol. And I like them. I like them both as people and professionals and that makes it easier and much more comfortable to work together.
Another participant talked about reaching a comfort level in working with others that he hadn’t felt before. He attributed this change in attitude to the following:

I think for many faculty members, it’s become clear that our motivation isn’t to eliminate them. I think it’s become clear that our motivation is to better the program and the student’s experience.

For this faculty member, interaction with other faculty members clarified intentions. This clarification led way to an understanding and appreciation for shared values and personal practice.

One of the old guard members talked about how collaboration helped with spontaneous interaction between the groups. He felt this might have helped alleviate some of the tensions that were felt initially. He talked about how important spontaneity, or what another participant calls “water cooler chat,” is for creating an atmosphere that’s both caring and inviting. For him, it also served as a reminder of the “humaness” behind change.

It’s not like the old days anymore. We can’t rely on things kind of happening spontaneously on their own. Our group is too big for that now. Because I think, as you grow, and this is just the nature of the thing, you can’t really talk about the sort of regular people things like family, what are you doing this weekend, did you watch the Leaf game last night, if you don’t have moments of spontaneous interaction. The stuff that helps balance you out when change throws you off guard, that is the kind of stuff that we got to do together during the collaborative. It helped unify and reminded me, anyway, of the human process.

Another faculty member reflected on the nature of the change within the community. He spoke about open communication, and
claimed that this kind of communication is difficult in that it ultimately led to conflict with another instructor. He talked candidly about this conflict, and concluded that, while difficult, open communication is what eventually changed the way he was able to interact with others. It also changed the way he felt as a member of the “new” faculty community.

I find that as far as the major conflict that I experienced with another instructor goes — and again, maybe this is partially a change in myself as well — I think we both feel we ‘passed’, despite the difficulty in coming together through the process given our very different sense of teaching style. And I feel from that point of view, neither of us has to be on guard anymore. And even though we’re not necessarily ‘collaborating’, I’ve noticed a change in the way we interact, and I would label that change as more comfortable to be around because we both feel accepted as valid professors who bring different strengths from our style and our experience in industry.

Ultimately, all faculty participants described a definitive change in the way they were better able to deal with each other — or, better put, “more willing to give it a try.” They have learned to deal with change together as a team, rather than in isolation. One faculty participant described the evolution of this change within the community by reflecting on the way he works with those colleagues who have been part of his own business for over 16 years.

Like in my business. We’ve been working together in our office for 16 years now, and sometimes we’re in good moods with each other and sometimes we are not . . . sometimes we’re fighting over a project, or a design, or a client. But we can forget about it [the fights] because we know its just business. We’ve been together that long. So it’s hard to work with people you know and love, but you work well because you know who they are. You know how far you can
push them, you know when to pull back. When you’ve got a bunch of new people, it’s difficult. It’s difficult to be critical in a positive way. You can’t put your guard down, and you can’t be casual. This is serious stuff. Now we’re going to meet and do all this stuff. And we all want it to be right, so that’s tricky. I think, looking back on this in retrospect, I think it just had to do with a whole bunch of new personalities. Remember, this was a closely-knit faculty for a very long time. And when you get new people in who’ve got different ideas, it just takes time for it to sort of meld in . . . time for us to get used to them. And collaboration was the only way . . . it was way better than the alternative that was all of us working separately. There were two things that had to get done: decide on the future of the program, and start to rebuild a strong sense of community and teamwork. No better way to do that than to sit down and talk about it, fight about it, then build it.

As a participant observer, I couldn’t agree more. Although very difficult at times, collaboration really opened the door for different ways of perceiving, understanding, and interacting with one another. It is this kind of interaction that enabled a shift in the faculty community, which went from one divided to one united. It was not easy, did not happen overnight, and will continue to bring about challenges, but overall, the faculty members express satisfaction with this new way of being together.

5.2 An Illustration: the “New” Professional Educational Community in Action

As illustrated in Chapter 4 through the stepfamily metaphor, prior to and during initial stages of collaboration, the community was clearly riddled with uncertainty, tensions, misperception, and flat out division amongst faculty members. In this section, I will use excerpts taken from my observation
field notes to illustrate changes in the way faculty members interact with one another.

5.2.1 Faculty member changes

Before exploring the community in action, it is important to note a few key changes that were made among the faculty members within the department over the course of this study. Some changes were inevitable given the direction the program needed to take, such as the need for a change in the program coordinator. Others were self-selected initiatives that clearly indicated willingness on the part of individual faculty members to retain or regain a sense of belonging within this emerging professional community.

For some members of the old guard, personal steps needed to be taken toward professional change and renewal. It was made abundantly clear by administration toward the end of the accreditation project that master’s degree credentials were definitely a prerequisite for teaching in the new baccalaureate degree program. However, issues of administrative support in terms of both time and money certainly were a factor in old guard faculty members’ inability to move forward. As one old guard faculty member stated, “we were really getting tired of the morale-busting comments [especially toward the end of the accreditation project] you would hear now and then about credentials. Can’t they [administration] see how hard it was for any of us to move forward on that front?”
As another old guard faculty member reported, “it became almost impossible to complete a degree while putting everything into teaching and the accreditation initiative.” Despite these setbacks, those members of the faculty did not elect to teach within the newly established interior decorating certificate program. Instead, they firmly approached administration to fight for both time and professional funding to pursue the credentials necessary for them to teach within the upcoming baccalaureate degree program slated for 2010.

Additionally, one of the old guard members chose to take a sabbatical to work in the field on a grant-funded project. She stressed to me that this move would strengthen her knowledge of the profession. Although she held a terminal degree in the field, she had less experience as a professional in the field than she felt was necessary to give a well-balanced education to her students. This pursuit, she explained, was not solely for her own benefit, but was something she felt would help both the department and the students once she returned to teach at the college.

For new guard members, personal measures were taken to step up and take charge. They also began to include old guard members much more frequently in the plans to enact curricular change. The change in the characteristics of the faculty community led way for one of the new guard members to feel comfortable in accepting the program coordinator role. Incidentally, this
faculty participant is the only one who changed her role within the stepfamily metaphor. She mentioned this change during one of our last interviews together. This change of stepfamily member role was discussed with me prior to her decision to step up as program coordinator. Her description of the way she felt her role changed over the course of the project gives some insight into better understanding the nature of the changes that she went through personally within the faculty community. The quote also provides us with an awareness of how these changes helped her to feel prepared to take on a new role within this department. She explained her changing stepfamily role in the following way:

I feel my role has changed. I think I would have to say that now I play the role of an eldest daughter. Since [in the beginning] I was still new to the program, curriculum, faculty, or, ‘family’, I was in the process of gaining confidence, trying out where I stood in that world. My contributions to the family were justified from my experiences [with others], hence the reason I would probably feel like the eldest child at this point in time.

Very shortly after our conversation, she accepted the position of Program Coordinator for the department.

In the following section, I use excerpts from the last accreditation meeting held during this case study. These excerpts are used to illustrate a change in the way the group interacts. It also provides insight into the way individual faculty participants have grown over the course of the collaborative self-study process.
5.2.2 Observation journal: exploring professional community in action

Through the observation journal excerpts, I seek to illustrate a very different kind of interaction that occurs within the new professional community. This interaction is characteristic of understanding, learning, and a willingness to work together described by faculty members in the previous sections, but not observed fully in previous observation journal entries.

In the following observation journal excerpts, we see faculty interaction as much more comfortable, and while not totally free of challenge and disagreement, certainly more inclusive. Faculty members also demonstrate a greater level of respect toward each other and the delivery of input regarding change — change that these faculty participants are demonstrably committed to define and enact together.

As a precursor to the narrative, I would like to revisit Table 2: Old Guard and New Guard to outline the main issues that each one of the separate “guards” faced as challenges to moving forward toward reaching a middle ground.
Table 2: Old Guard and New Guard

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<th>Old Guard</th>
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<tr>
<td>Coping with imposed programmatic change</td>
<td>Coping with stress and conflict driven by attitudes about programmatic change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling devalued by institution despite years of service and building a successful program from the ground up</td>
<td>Feeling of value/power granted by administration based almost entirely on credentials</td>
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<td>Feelings of mistrust, suspicion and bitterness for new members</td>
<td>Feeling unwelcome as if threat to existing faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opinions not readily sought — feeling marginalized</td>
<td>Opinions strongly communicated — feeling misunderstood</td>
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By revisiting these challenges, the changes are better detected throughout the following illustration. In the following section, I keep observation journal entries separate from my analysis of those excerpts by using block quotes in italics to represent specific journal entries. Analysis of the sequence of events follows each quote.

Final Meeting, 9.00-11.30 A.M.

Eight full-time faculty members present, new coordinator chairs meeting.

Meeting Agenda: Strategic plan for baccalaureate degree to present to administration.

The faculty is working together to determine the basic structure of the baccalaureate degree plan because all faculty members present agree that the existing structure passed on to the master’s degree faculty [by administration] is riddled with flaws. The meeting takes place in a common room that was used throughout the self-study collaborative to pull faculty members together. There is a strong presence felt from the old guard.
It is important to note that all members of faculty, regardless of their degree credentials, are included in this meeting to discuss the future of the degree program. Prior to this meeting, only Masters Degree faculty members were asked by administration to work on this initiative. This caused a great deal of tension between old and new guard faculty members, and a pervasive mistrust toward both the administration and the new guard by the old guard faculty members. It is clear that the team is willing to work together on this new initiative.

I can feel tension in the room at this meeting, but this time the tension is not one that appears to divide the faculty. In fact, it appears that the tension is what draws the faculty members together and fuels a collective energy directed toward eliminating the top-down administrative decision making regarding the current projected design of the baccalaureate degree.

In previous meetings, new guard members were reluctant to include old guard members in the decision-making process for the baccalaureate degree program. They were fearful that the old guard would not take the initiative seriously because of the perceived lack of vested interest in a baccalaureate degree. As evidenced earlier in this chapter, over time, the new guard came to understand the value of the contribution made by the old guard. In addition, the new guard came to appreciate the importance of those faculty members within the community who have been working through various change initiatives over the years.
“Let’s face it, guys: this is the new albatross that drives us forward.” Here, while Carol was nonchalant, her comment really shows how the challenges that the team face together helps to define the direction they need to take as a team. They are driven forward by a new initiative, but this time they choose to define strategies together, as a team, so that they have a say in the direction that the program will take.

The faculty members discuss together the lack of both the necessary support and direction from administration concerning the direction that the program needs to take. New guard faculty members are clearly including and soliciting input from the old guard members at this meeting. While the new coordinator chairs the meeting, she asks regularly for input from Carol and Dan, specifically. There is a strong collaborative culture evidenced by definitive individual voice but an exceptionally clear common goal.

There is clearly still not very strong administrative support for the direction wanted by faculty. There is a new Associate Dean (part of the executive administration team) and all faculty members at the meeting look to Carol for her suggestions. She has a very strong presence in this meeting, demonstrating a level of interest that was clearly absent in previous meetings, and has taken on the role of mentor — guiding both the team and the new program coordinator with her wisdom and understanding.

The team is proactive, listening to each other, and working together to create a solid argument to outline their plan for curriculum development. It appears that the new guard is still trying to justify to the others what they have done up to this
point with the curriculum map, but, this time, not in order to prove their worth to the old guard but out of respect for the collaborative. They are reaching out for the input of the old guard much more than they have in the past. The new guard believes that the old guard has likely “been through it before.” For this reason, the old guard is no longer perceived as “stuck in their old ways by the new guard, but are valued for their understanding of the administration and how to handle them.

The new coordinator struggles when it comes to actually writing down the plan, but old guard steps in to help. There is a struggle between administrative direction and the direction that the teaching community wants to take with this program. Faculty members that are known for their strong opinions make suggestions (like Dan and Trent) but this time their suggestions are taken to heart, not seen as a threat. Carol even asks for Trent’s thoughts and vice versa.

This is a big improvement. In the past, most suggestions would be passed over if given by one of the opposing guards. The opposing ideas were not really considered by either of the two guards. If considered, they would likely be taken as either a threat, or as a means to keep things status quo, or a total “take over” of the project with new ideas. Here we see a very different interplay of ideas.

The previous coordinator and Dan are much more vocal than they have been in past meetings. They have much to contribute to the group. The new guard members, particularly the new coordinator, treat the old coordinators, Dan and Carol, as a wealth of information. Manny keeps everyone informed about curricular decisions made at other colleges. Manny remains the “agreeable one.” Dan gives brief but to-the-point answers while others take his input more seriously than they have in the past. Trent
plays devil's advocate (always asking members to clarify their thoughts) but is well-received. Surprisingly, he suggests that Dan should be the one to run the meeting with the administration once the strategy is mapped out.

There appears to be a new understanding and acceptance of the strengths that each member brings to the table. It is interesting to note that Dan sees his role in the family as the brother who has gone to war while Trent identifies his role as that of stepfather. There was certainly a tension throughout the project, specifically between these two members, but the misunderstanding has lessened in intensity. They are more willing to hear each other out.

The new coordinator continues to seek input from all faculty members at the meeting. She is relying heavily on all members of the team. Teamwork appears solid and fluent. Really good working rapport.

It is not clear if such intense inclusion shows the new coordinator’s lack of confidence in running her first meeting, or if it is truly indicative of her style as a leader. In either case, faculty members got a chance to showcase their strengths. This helped to secure the new coordinator’s confidence in her team members, but also clearly empowered those around her.

The previous coordinator adds levity to the meeting in moments of intense discussion. There is laughter, which helps the faculty work together more freely. Dan makes a few more suggestions. Although the suggestions are met with silence from the rest of the group, Trent says that he understands what Brad is saying and contributes suggestions to Dan’s ideas. This is an interesting and ultimately very productive blend of thoughts for the meeting that faculty will have with administration. The meeting ends on a positive note. The new coordinator seems consistent with her inclusive leadership style by informing the team that
she will write up a rough draft of the plan and distribute it for comments from all faculty members.

While only one member of the stepfamily took on a different role (new coordinator/big sister), all of the faculty members appeared to have forged a different kind of relationship with one another. It was clear that the members of the new guard no longer marginalised Carol. She was no longer seen as the “old stodgey,” as she had described herself during our interviews together. As previous administrator and one who has experienced a myriad of changes in the department over time, she became recognized as an important member of the team. She was treated with respect and her contributions deemed to be valuable. She was regarded as someone who brings wisdom and insight into the challenges they all face together.

Dan and Trent were able to rethink their perceptions of one another. This tension, so aptly characterized by the “stepfather/son” challenge, began to subside as both members attempted to deal with those issues that they identified as common. All members of the family seemingly overcame differences: differences in being an insider vs. an outsider, and the differences in attachment with one another caused by the old vs. new guard split. Through the collaborative process, relationships changed. These changes forged the foundation upon which a new community was able to emerge. This community is more clearly characterized by a willingness to learn, communicate,
solve problems and take action together, and is one that is now able to negotiate different ways of defining and enacting change.

There is no doubt that change is difficult. This is not a foreign concept, particularly to those who have lived through change. In this study, change was riddled with uncertainties, missteps, and held many surprises. To change, faculty members needed to consistently listen to one another with open minds and then agree on basic values together. To do this, most faculty members were forced to step outside of their comfort zone, and to step out of one’s comfort zone requires a certain level of respect for one another. It is important to note that these new relationships are fragile. Interaction with one another requires a constant give and take, but through this new union, faculty members were better able to open up and honestly speculate together. They became more likely to share their individual experiences and ideas on how to move forward. They felt free to try new things while accepting that “plans” often require adjustments. Ultimately, the experience faculty gained through their connections with one another drove forward positive changes within the faculty community. Those changes helped faculty interact differently so as to articulate collective commitments to shared goals and values. In the next chapter, I will discuss the factors that gave rise to the changes discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 6. Findings II: Factors that Enhanced Faculty Community

Through analyzing data from faculty interviews, observation records, and document reports, two very distinct categories emerged when considering factors that enhanced faculty community, structural and relational. I have provided a table (Table 3: Structural and Relational Factors) to outline the factors that will be discussed under each category in this chapter as follows:

Table 3: Structural and Relational Factors

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6.1 Structural Factors

In this section, I outline those structural factors, such as the procedures and resources that supported faculty and staff. These factors emerged from the data as factors that helped facilitate an interactive environment.

6.1.1 Structured interaction

As mentioned in Chapter 4, although I could not fully understand the severity of the division at the time of our initial meeting, I did sense tensions amongst those within the faculty community. After meeting with the program coordinator to
better understand the challenges that we faced, we both agreed that the best way to alleviate faculty tensions was to ensure that all members of the faculty had opportunity to contribute equally to the process. In addition, we felt it necessary for faculty to get to know one another better through closer, more structured interaction. Importantly, this needed to be interaction that focused less on the divisional aspects as described by the faculty in Chapter 4, and more on aspects that faculty had in common.

Together, the Program Coordinator and I developed the skeleton for a self-study plan, series of tasks, and timeline. We also worked together to create opportunities for every member of the faculty within the department, both full- and part-time, to take part in the collaborative process. One participant sees this as follows:

I think having you on board was a great decision, a great help to our coordinator. I don’t think we could have pulled it off otherwise. Put it this way: when somebody new comes in, everybody gets a little bit on their best behavior. We saw you as playing a larger role than what we were doing in our department. It was also evident that you seemed to have a plan – a plan that was important to the success of our program and our students. There was a real structure that we could readily follow and, really, could all contribute to.

There was a real issue in terms of time and budget for part-time contribution. So, as a way to empower every member of the full-time faculty to take responsibility for courses outside of their discipline as well as to remain fiscally efficient, we
both decided to appoint full-timers as members of a core team, the steering committee.

After reviewing criteria for evaluation, the steering committee chose to form six self-study teams that would be responsible for the evaluation of two accreditation standards per team. The accrediting body uses twelve standards to assess curriculum content, library and resources, and administrative structure. Each full-time faculty member was appointed to sit as chair on one of the six self-study teams. Part-timers would be compensated for their time if they elected to sit on a curriculum, administrative, or resource evaluation self-study team.

The following chart (Figure 3: Structure of the Self-study) outlines the organization of the committees that were formed to guide the process as well as distribute the responsibilities that ensued.
While the program coordinator presented the opportunity for self-study team membership to anyone in the department interested in becoming involved in the process, as mentioned, his hands were tied financially in terms of what he could offer as compensation for those part-timers wishing to be involved in the process. Despite this obstacle, self-study standards teams did end up consisting of both full- and part-time faculty members, although not all part-time faculty members took part.
One of the main reasons for committee formation, in both the program coordinator’s and my mind, was to structurally orchestrate a chorus of thoughts and opinions. The chorus would then drive the program forward rather than refine any one single or divisional group voice (i.e. old guard vs. new guard) as had begun to happen previously in the May-June curriculum meetings. Further, getting full-time faculty members to chair one of the self-study teams, we felt, would help to physically break up the two separate guard mentality as well as give each individual faculty member the chance to exercise, and be recognized for, their own individual voice while contributing to the whole. As one participant explains:

Once you set up this structure for accreditation standards, everyone was involved, everyone . . . it was clearly understood that everyone had equal value, brought equally to the table. Everyone was treated equally.

Faculty participants discuss the way that the committee formation also brought a structure to the process that helped facilitate a broad, collective focus on course content, classroom methodology, and student learning outcomes. Given the focus as well as the intensity of the timeline for completion of specific tasks, faculty participants spent a great deal of time working together on completing tasks “that mattered most to those of us within the program.”

And so when you came on board, committees were formed. And then it was the case – for me, at least – of ‘Yeah, I’d love to be on the committee’ . . . . Especially since the committees revolved around student work and things I know
about within the classroom. I felt I could really contribute on a level that everyone could relate to.

The collaborative structure, the responsibility full-time faculty members had to the core team, and their responsibility as chair people to the self-study committees opened up opportunities for faculty members to reach out to other faculty members within the department. It also facilitated interaction with faculty members in the department that they might otherwise choose not to work with or perhaps have not had the opportunity to work with in the past.

Finally, the formation of committees, according to faculty, acted as a way of bringing faculty together by taking them out of the isolation of teaching “behind closed doors” in the classroom. In this way, faculty members had an opportunity to interact in ways that shaped new understandings and perceptions of one another through common bonds, those of teaching and learning.

As a member of the faculty, in many ways you are all alone. You have no one to bounce ideas off because you literally don’t see them. And everyone’s on different schedules. The one bad thing about being a faculty member is you don’t have that coming together and sharing ideas. Like saying, ‘I just handed out this assignment, what do you think?’ . . . I think that we were able to talk, not only about what was being delivered each week, but we were also getting to test the waters of what everyone felt about the program. We had to the chance to say, ‘What are your views on the profession? Where do you think we are going?’

Committee structure and focus on program standards opened up the opportunity for faculty members to interact and begin to
communicate with one another about things that matter to the program through sharing understanding of both the profession and the classroom.

6.1.2 Outside perspective

Throughout the interviews, faculty participants talk about the need for some form of neutrality in dealing with one another, or, in this case, outside facilitation provided by me, the project consultant. They discuss how they felt an outsider was better equipped to bring internal organization “to a process that was already too deeply rooted in emotion” for anyone within the stepfamily to steer others clearly through it.

I remember your name coming up . . . that this is too big for any one person [referring to the role of the program coordinator]. You’ve got to have an extra person come in and sort of spearhead this whole thing. I also think the fact that there was a neutral person that . . . well, it’s not like Carol [another faculty member] all of a sudden is telling me what I’ve got to do. There’s an outsider that has come in that’s not pulling rank on anybody.

Because of the tensions and conflicts experienced by all members within the stepfamily, my facilitative role in this case was needed in the dynamic as what I would describe as a safety net. As facilitator, I was really also a designated listener. Not only could I readily invite faculty contributions during the collaborative team meetings, but also could somewhat protect the contributions of each participant by welcoming different perspectives into the dialogue. The necessity for this kind of outside facilitation is best understood through an observation
shared by one of the faculty participants during an interview as follows:

I think what happened, first of all, when the new faculty members joined us . . . it was awkward to begin with. And part of the awkwardness came around this notion of the ‘have’ and ‘have nots’ [of master’s degrees]. . . . This was a huge issue, and because it was set up that way [by senior management] that led to a fundamental misunderstanding, I think by the new people who were arriving. And I might be incorrect here, but for some reason, I think they were led to believe that their skill set was superior to our own [those members of the old guard]. Then there was the rest of us who were there for quite a long period of time. And that’s where the fissure occurred, because we felt no inclusion in any of the details anymore.

This observation was not exclusive to members of the old guard. In the following quote, one of the members of the new guard talks about a misunderstanding that mirrors the one quoted above.

I didn’t want to feel any different from them [old guard]. They’ve been teaching way longer. They have way more experience. So then all of a sudden, there is this hierarchy set up where it seems like, ‘Oh, you have a Masters.’ I don’t want that kind of hierarchy . . . and it’s by nothing that I’ve done or intended to do — that sense of privileged position because you have the credentials. So it’s really frustrating and awkward. It’s very difficult to feel the uncertainty, tension and awkwardness with everybody.

As an outside facilitator with no bias toward or against credentials, I was able to provide an opportunity for each faculty member to be heard regardless of their perceived skill set. By granting each faculty member equal contribution status, all members of the faculty were not only given the chance to
participate, but also to listen more fully to other people’s perspectives regardless of credentials or degrees held.

Your outside perspective was critical because you were able to bring structure to the process. You brought structure, you brought organization and you brought a really nice outside perspective. To keep people focused and on track, to get the work done by listening while leaving other things aside.

Faculty participants talk about not only the need for neutrality but also a need for someone to “step in” to manage this project, a project that, according to participants, required more time than anyone in the department had to spare. My outsider role allowed for the dedicated time and focus needed to help others with full schedules “get the job done.”

Ultimately, we needed a project manager, like you, who actually steps in to get things done . . . While the coordinator did a great job in making it initially come together, he still has so much on his plate in terms of teaching loads, and not really having the ability to make people do things that they have to do to get the job done.

Finally, this kind of outside role was also necessary in the faculty participants’ eyes not only because of the many tensions that had arisen in the newly formed stepfamily, but also given the structure of the program coordinator position. While the position, in faculty participants’ minds, is ideally one that should be a leader of change, in reality, the position is one that suffers from “structural flaws.” Faculty participants make reference to the way the program coordinator position is structured as “both a middle management position but also someone who is a fellow faculty colleague.” From their
perspective, then, the program coordinator is a position that has “little to no time or power in getting people to do things they have to do to get the job done.” The position is not structured, according to participants, in such a way as to make it possible to lead change. Given status, a full teaching load, and little to no support from senior management, it is extremely difficult, according to participants, to drive projects forward. One faculty participant describes this position more clearly as follows:

It’s a really hard balancing act because as coordinator . . . well, don’t forget, the coordinator is still faculty so hence my colleague. He’s a colleague. And in that way, he has no authority.

So in some ways, the role that I perceived for myself, as strictly the facilitator of a process, was somewhat challenged. One faculty participant talks about their perception of a “change” in my role and how they see this as a real “flaw in the structure of the system” in terms of the driving change:

Oh no, Elizabeth, you were the leader — from the outside. Don’t you understand that? I mean, at least I understand that. And I think that’s a real flaw in the system. I think throughout this whole process there was no clear leader who stood up from within us, right? They hired you from the outside, and I think it’s really interesting . . . one of the things I noticed early on: I sat back to see who it would be from within us . . . who would step up and take the reins, start to pull the information to feed to you, but as the process carried on, you became more and more the point person . . . which is interesting to me. Because it was our process and not yours.

Despite this perceived “flaw” in the system, ultimately, it pushed the team to figure out together what they had to do to
get the job done by giving them freedom to self-organize, a chance for distributed leadership. I use the following quote from one of the faculty participants to illustrate this idea as follows:

I think there was enough of us who felt strongly enough to drive the process. There wasn’t necessarily a need for someone in the driver’s seat per se because I don’t think there was one person in this instance. I don’t think there was one . . . I mean you were sort of a facilitator plus, but I don’t know if there was one leader per se that made all the decisions. I think it was everyone. We just ran with what the majority of us had to do.

Thus, while I did guide the team in a certain direction, the direction I provided was purely structural. The content within the direction was not mine, it was theirs, and although this was hard for all members of the team to grasp, from my perspective, it enabled the team to have the freedom to exercise their creative authority and participate more openly in shared decision making.

6.1.3 Common goal

Even if faculty members believe that they can contribute equally and openly to the collaborative process, they will not exert the energy or effort until they see reason to do so.

One task in particular that was necessary to complete the preliminary accreditation report served to help facilitate the beginnings of collaborative thinking. It was necessary for the core team to work together to create the program philosophy, mission, and goals, things that were imperative to unification
yet had not been previously recorded or discussed by members of the faculty or administration. One faculty participant states this very simply:

If you don’t have the same goals and you also have two different schools of thought, how can you work together towards something, towards a shared idea?

Not everyone felt that all members of the faculty were on the same page regarding the goals and purpose of the program. This perception was informed by core assumptions about one another and the perceived feelings linked to how people felt about the future direction of the program.

Perceptions about how members of the faculty felt about the direction that the program was going to take (i.e., bachelors degree) may have caused much of the division within the faculty community. New guard faculty participants talk about how they felt going into the self-study given their perceptions of the “differing” attitudes about program direction.

I don’t think there was a common enthusiasm about getting the program accredited, because that would mean the next step of getting the bachelors was in place. And that would then mean that other existing full-timer positions would be a little more precarious. Potentially, they might not necessarily be able to teach in the same way that they had been teaching.

If we didn’t get accreditation, we’re all out of a job [new guard faculty]. We knew the severity of the process . . . And I felt there were others that were not as concerned, and I don’t know if it was because they didn’t feel as passionate about the profession or that they had other things on the go that, you know, if the program fails, they’d be OK. Maybe retire, go back to practice, whatever.
However, members of the old guard discuss goal alignment as a perception problem that existed from the start, but one that may have “corrected itself” and proved essential to forging collaboration. One participant explains this as follows:

I believe that we were all very much on the same page even though it probably wasn’t perceived by all that we were at the start. I think we were because all of us recognized that we needed to have accreditation so that’s where we all were, right? Perhaps you come at it with different attitudes and different goals, but nonetheless I think all of us were there to play. We were all willing to contribute. So, I think we did have a shared goal that is, you know, how I think collaboration works. ‘I want it, you want it, we’re all going to work together to get it,’ right? Even if sometimes we find it awkward.

Although there may have been different attitudes and an “awkwardness” in discussing program goals, ultimately all faculty members realized that gaining accreditation for the program was critical not just for moving towards a bachelor’s degree, but for the continuation of the current program.

We initially had meetings before you got there, and it was frustrating because no one was willing to think about the goal right in front of us. But then I think people started to get serious when you arrived. Like, if we don’t get this accreditation, we’re not going to have any program, forget about the degree. If we don’t get this, our program will collapse . . . so we need this. We all need this.

As mentioned in the last section, participants speak about teaching primarily as an autonomous, isolated profession, one in which they can close their door and do what they need to do with the students without consultation with others.

[T]eachers are given a lot of freedom. In many ways, you build your own curriculum. The coordinator doesn’t really
oversee what I do. The associate dean sort of does, but I have a lot of control.

When I started teaching more courses, much like some other faculty who do their own thing, another faculty member and I teaching the same course were doing our own thing too because she wouldn’t give me any of her lectures. She wouldn’t give me any of her notes. I had to start from scratch, alone.

However, throughout the self-study process, people were brought together to work through issues to spell out common goals together, and this resulted in a certain sense of accountability to each other that was not felt before. Participants agree that coming together did bring about accountability, but also feelings of vulnerability, a fear of opening up. But, as participants explain:

I think it was a necessary evil because we are a common department. We do have a common base, and I think it would have been a lot worse if we had never come together. I think the product of this whole process would have been very different. We needed to have those opportunities to come together even though they weren’t necessarily enjoyable to, you know, work on the same goal.

We needed to have those opportunities to get together – the times you actually brought us together. Even though it wasn’t necessarily enjoyable from the point of view of having to bring what felt like two very separate bodies – the new and the old guard – to work on the same goal. I don’t think that it was comfortable, but it was important for that to happen for the program overall.

I enjoy being the master of my domain as well. I enjoy teaching, being the only kind of Alpha Dog in the room with my students, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t . . . I will feel more secure in the position knowing that there is a common goal amongst all faculty. I will feel more secure in my delivery to those students knowing that I am part of the bigger, unified vision, and I know where my portion fits in because I understand the whole picture.
For faculty participants, a unified vision was essential to the structure of the collaborative process. It was also effective in ensuring the continued progress toward a shared goal.

6.1.4 Physical working environment

Another prominent factor that emerged from the data pertains to the way faculty were physically brought together so that meeting and talking could occur on a more regular basis. Structural problems in the layout of the physical environment are described by faculty participants as one of the things that may have contributed to the division between old and new guards as represented by the stepfamily described in Chapter 4, and particularly the importance of structuring the physical layout of office and studio space for the sake of both faculty and student interaction. Yet new full-time employees were “curiously” placed together in a single spare office in a building away from both studios and, more importantly, each other — hence creating not only a psychological but physical divide. Faculty participants comment on the physical divide as follows:

I think the other problem we face as a faculty is not only are we divided in some ways by the way we’ve been handled in the last couple of years, but also we’re divided physically, and this, believe it or not, is a big challenge.

Maybe just the simple fact that our offices are so distinct and separate. There’s a certain group in our office [old
guard] and the other group [new guard] is in the other office.

The unfortunate thing is that they’ve [old guard and new guard] been separated physically, so that in itself helped create a division.

I think it’s unfortunate just the way our school is set up. I mean, the way that they have Carol, Dan and the program coordinator are in that office and then Trent, Alyssa and I in another. I mean, that helps to fuel this marginalization, isolation. There’s a disjoint, a disconnect.

This physical division wasn’t always the case in the department. One of the old guard faculty participants talks about a time at the college when the program was smaller and the physical layout of the department really enhanced a sense of teamwork. She believes this helped to foster a more positive collaborative experience.

I’ll say that [the physical layout] really impacts you a lot. I had the chance a few years ago to see Mount Royal College. They’re very fortunate because they had the fourth floor in the building. The administration offices and the faculty offices are on one side, and there’s a huge bank of studios on the other side, so not only are you incredibly accessible . . . well, we used to have that too. We had our studios, well . . . our studios were actually contiguous with our offices, which was fantastic. And we were all in the same area, and that is probably when we were the most cohesive unit.

Physical division was also noticed and cited as a deterrent for teamwork and faculty cohesion when the accreditation team conducted their site visit. One faculty participant explains his encounter with the accrediting team as follows:

It’s interesting because one of the things mentioned when the accreditation team was at the college for the visit was talk about the physical environment. The physical space,
like, ‘Does this physical space foster collaboration?’ I said, ‘No.’ They asked and I said it didn’t because we’ve got studios all over the college, and we’ve got faculty who are separated from each other. We really don’t have space that’s ours, studio space that’s ours.

During one of the interviews, I was asked by a faculty participant how the environment “struck” me as an outsider, particularly since I was responsible for facilitating a process to get faculty to work together. I commented on this physical divide as follows:

Originally, I thought that the whole area with the table, near your office, was devoted to the profession. That’s why I set those steering and self-study meetings in that area. To use the physical space . . . I saw it as an environment where faculty can see one another and be together. I didn’t realize that there were only a few instructors with offices in there, and that everybody else was kind of somewhere else in another building. And then poor Susan was off somewhere in another building near the studio in that room all by herself. Really kind of an odd set up. But we worked around it, that’s what’s important.

The faculty participants found it frustrating to be separated from each other prior to the self-study collaborative, particularly as members of their professional designation “who all know the significance of proximity and space, and what it does for the lived environment.”

We all know we need to have space for faculty to be all together. Marking rooms where we can mark our projects, so you can call faculty in and ask ‘What do you think of this?’ We know this would help foster more of a team environment, much like what happened when we met for steering and self-study team meetings.

Another participant talks about entering the self-study as a new faculty member after things had “already started” and
explains sitting around the table in close proximity as one of the main reasons she was able to get to know others in the department so quickly.

I thought it was a fabulous process to walk into . . . without it I wouldn’t have known them [other faculty], which is very sad because our offices are split up between two buildings and half of the faculty are in one building . . . It’s strange because all of us could really fit into the offices [in the area where we met for self-study team meetings], so it’s very odd. So, I wouldn’t have known them at all. I wouldn’t, other than, you know, saying ‘Hi’ at faculty meetings.

Thus, sitting together around the table in our meeting room “with the coffee pot and donuts from Tim’s” took on more meaning than originally anticipated. These meetings brought the team together physically much in the same way the dinner table brings members of the family together to catch up on one another’s day. These gatherings were even more significant to the stepfamily in that physical proximity opened up an environment of togetherness not previously experienced.

People talk about the significance of collaboration and working together when it comes to bettering the program, but it’s interesting that nobody [at our college] really sees the significance of sitting us together to better the work environment — to build the relationships one has with each other.

And in being together, through both conflict and camaraderie, the seeds of relationship were given room to grow.
6.2 Relational Factors

Setting up a collaborative structure opened up the door for faculty interaction. This led to factors that enhanced faculty cohesiveness through relationship. In the following section, I will discuss these factors as they emerged from the data.

6.2.1 Shared decision-making

According to faculty participants, the way the program director and I interacted with the team as both leader and facilitator was a model that helped to enhance the way faculty interacted with one another and opened up opportunities for shared decision-making.

You would explain [to us] that we have to do this because this is next. Not ‘You have to do this because I need it.’ Here’s an outsider coming in that’s not pulling rank on anybody. We’re all, in your eyes, we’re all equal and you would draw from us equally.

Having worked as consultant to numerous large-scale projects over the years, I knew the importance of making the process inclusive, informal, and participant-friendly. As one faculty participant explains:

I think those self-study groups were very informal. There wasn’t pressure to . . . well, it was very open and inviting and we could say whatever we wanted and we could have arguments and we could disagree. So because it was such an informal social environment, it wasn’t as intimidating as if, you know, you came in and said ‘All right, you are taking this course to review.’

As project consultant, I saw my role as a facilitator who needed to work together with the coordinator as leader of the team and the faculty members as experts in the area of classroom
instruction and the profession in order to successfully complete
the process. I was not interested in participating as an outside
accreditation “specialist” who may have been perceived as
“pulling rank on others” to get the job “done right.” To
illustrate my involvement, I quote from faculty participants as
follows:

So, I think by starting in a collaborative setting, we were
all discussing from scratch where we want to end up vs.
having ended up somewhere and then having to present it to
you as the specialist.

I was looking at you like you are a part of us. It’s
linear. It’s not you dictating the steps that we have to do
and you’re way up here and we’re just the lemmings doing
it, right?

You didn’t come in and say ‘I think I know better’ instead
of sitting down and going ‘Okay, let’s review this
together. Where do we think the strengths are and where do
we think the weaknesses are?’

Establishing a collegial relationship with the program
coordinator from the onset was important for me so that my
involvement in the process would not overshadow his authority in
any way. Getting faculty to understand that my role was to
facilitate and not lead, however, was a challenge. I speak about
this challenge in one of the interviews as follows:

And being someone who’s supposed to facilitate — that
really is my role — it was very difficult for me because I
wasn’t the leader. I’m not supposed to be telling the
group what direction to go in. It’s up to all of you.
Really, I’m just supposed to be listening to what it is you
all have to say and make sense of that for a report. So
that was difficult for me.
Not everyone saw my role as facilitator, but faculty participants understood that, given the challenges of the program coordinator position as well as the need for better structure to the process, that direction was needed. Most participants did not see this as a weakness on the part of the coordinator as leader, but as a strategic way of reaching out to help the team to “get it together.”

I think he [program coordinator] realized that he needed some direction for the process. Both he and I had no understanding what the process should be. And I think because of that we were looking to you . . . which is why he [program coordinator] was willing to let you set a direction, a structure. I think he welcomed somebody to take on more responsibility. I think he looked to your expertise to kind of lead on that level. That’s taking nothing away from him.

Additionally, the qualities of leadership displayed by the program coordinator throughout the process given the frustrations and interpersonal conflicts that continued to arise during faculty self-study collaboration were important to the collaborative process. One participant very clearly recounts how the coordinator’s ability to “keep it together” despite the challenges of his position acted as a “beacon” for her.

I just think as a leader, he led by example . . . I mean, in particular, his calm demeanor. He was professional and respectful of everybody. He puts his faith in everybody. He never pointed a finger, even when it was so obvious. I mean, like times when people were saying that so and so doesn’t even deserve to be part of the course. He never bought into that. He wasn’t influenced by that and stuck to his own style. If he had, it would have been a feeding frenzy, and it’s not like he wasn’t sweating buckets behind the scenes when things weren’t getting done, but he never fell apart. He was like a beacon or something. He could
Another faculty participant speaks about the coordinator’s role as follows: “I thought the coordinator was exceptionally good at ensuring that people felt they had a strong role to play in all of this. He was very good at doing things behind the scenes.”

So, the attributes brought to the team by both the coordinator and myself as well as the collegial relationship we established — of respect for each other’s abilities — helped pave the way for others on the team to begin to rely on one another.

I think I could see that nobody has one particular strength. And there isn’t one particular strength. You need tons of strength to pull this off. One person couldn’t have done this on their own. No way.

It could have been easy to get discouraged. And there were times when we were discouraged or overwhelmed, but being together as a group, there’s more chances that those of us who are the cheerleaders will, you know . . . while some people will be down while other people will be up and we’re just helping each other, spurring each other on.

Faculty participants became more open to discovering the strengths and qualities that each person brings to the team. They found that acknowledging similarities as well as differences was a necessity to moving forward together.

6.2.2 Empowerment and control

Those faculty members that are convinced they have no control over processes or outcomes are obviously less willing to
exert the effort needed to move forward than those who feel free
to play their part. Collaborative interaction through the self-
study offered faculty the freedom to take control of the process
and gave them the authority to exercise their own individual
creativity while working creatively together.

Faculty participants talk about experiencing forms of
empowerment and affirmation throughout the process. One faculty
participant explains how both individual responsibility for the
process as well as the freedom as a team “to steer their own
ship” acted as a basis for what she terms “collaborative group
empowerment.”

I feel then that I was given responsibility within the
process, right? I think that’s a form of empowerment,
saying, you know, “You do that standard, we’ll do this
standard.” So I felt we were empowered there. Certainly
there are some things prescribed for us, fine. You have to
have somebody who’s going to define some parameters, set
the template, if you will, but within all that, we were
given full, really pretty much full scope as to how it was
presented in a way that would make sense to the
[accreditation] committee. So I think there’s a sense of
empowerment in that, right? I think as a group we were
empowered at lots of times to really steer our own ship
because we weren’t being guided particularly from above. So
that was sort of a collaborative group empowerment, I would
say.

Feelings of empowerment led many faculty participants to
connect better with one another as well as the program overall.
For many, the more they interacted with one another about the
courses they taught, the more they began to understand how they
fit into the program as a whole. Interacting in this way gave
faculty participants a better understanding of the value of their own and others’ contributions.

If anything, it was empowering just to be able to have a really good understanding of the program and of the people. How people work together . . . how we all work together.

Maybe it was a bit of showing us that we all were needed. I’ve never realized that more in my life. Everyone needs to feel needed and wanted and valued. There’s nothing more empowering if you want people to perform for you or whatever, it never hurts to tell them that they make a difference. There’s certainly a power in that.

One of the newer faculty participants describes a sense of legitimacy that she had not felt before as a member of the professional community. By having the opportunity to contribute individually as an expert in the field, not only did she feel she added value to the group but also gained confidence in her sense of belonging as a new instructor. This interaction with her colleagues proved extremely powerful in boosting her confidence, not only in the way she was able to interact in the future with her colleagues, but also in the way she felt about her interaction with students and her ability within the classroom.

When we were sitting in one of the meetings in the self-study process, we were going over how to incorporate some of the standards into some of the courses. I mentioned, ‘Why not bring a sprinkler plan, or do a duct layout?’ And I think that really reinforced it for me, that I actually know something, and I think everyone said, ‘Oh, that’s a great idea.’ And that’s when I thought, you know, I can bring something to the table. Even though my experience might be a couple of years short of others. My experience is current. So I think that was a turning point in me. Not only professionally, but personally, because I had been juggling this confidence, its not even, well, it is a
confidence issue. An uncertainty about what I’m doing, so I think that was very empowering.

For another participant, empowerment came in the form of self-realization. He describes this as follows:

I’m a typical designer, I think, where I grumble and moan and fight and complain the whole time. ‘Grrrr. I’m all mad. Everyone hates me.’ And then at the end, in that final month, I guess, is when I just roll up my sleeves and say, ‘To heck with it. They need me. We’re doing this thing.’ So every weekend for many weeks in a row I was helping put the whole thing together. Making sure all the binders were done. Going through all my courses . . . I’m going to hang around and do this and it’s going to be a success, period. We’re going to do what it takes to get this accreditation. Even though people were complaining about my style. I take things personally, and I don’t react properly, but I always want to do the best job possible.

The form of empowerment common to every faculty participant, and one that was perhaps the strongest in pulling the community together, is connected to the sense of accomplishment that the team felt when viewing their students’ work displayed for the visiting team. Two faculty participants describe this experience as follows:

I think at the very end, I’ll be honest with you, when we were displaying our student work, and I saw the student work and I was able to stand up and I thought, ‘Geez, this is a good feeling.’ So I think it was the very, very end when we had our work up and I thought, ‘Wow. Everything that we had done, all of it was worth it at that moment.’ It’s about teamwork, right? It’s team building and in my heart I knew we were going to get it at that point. It was all worthwhile.

After accreditation, I think we all felt quite good about our work together and our program. It had received such a resounding applause from the accreditation visiting committee and the student work was there for all to see.
Having collective control over an outcome, along with the pride attached to changes made together that produced an environment in which students could flourish, illustrates a definitive change in the culture of the community. This change could not have occurred without the last two relational factors: open communication and respect for one another.

6.2.3 Open communication

One point made very clear by faculty participants is that “without communication there can be no community of any kind.” Nevertheless, faculty participants clearly express the opinion that open and honest communication is the most difficult thing to achieve. Open communication, according to faculty participants, requires a willingness to work through difficult conversations and express feelings of uneasiness that takes a “kind of openness” that can leave one feeling vulnerable.

When you’re in that group environment, when you’re discussing your courses, you can feel vulnerable, because something about your course, something you’re doing might become exposed, it’s part of you.

I find that it was tricky because you have so much freedom in terms of what you do in your classrooms behind closed doors, so that when you come to others, other people have a different way in which they present something. Sometimes this feels a little personal. I think some people really want to hang on to their way and maybe not move on because it’s more difficult to merge ideas. It’s a willingness to take their work and say, ‘Sure I’ll fix it’ or ‘No, it doesn’t need fixing whatsoever.’ This can be uncomfortable, but really it’s necessary.

In addition to working through difficulties, participants also feel that productive communication takes the ability to
challenge each other’s ideas while sometimes being able to let go of “one’s personal agenda” to allow the wisdom of the group to unfold. This, in many cases, requires a “temporary suspension” of faculty members’ own judgments in order to see the group perspective. The open exchange of views, opinions, values, and ideas is not only healthy but also constructive. But, as one faculty participant explains, even if there are opposing views, it is important not to allow the intellectual interchange to become too personal.

I think it’s important to challenge ideas, like “I don’t understand why this is being done this way,” but I don’t mean it to be threatening, and I don’t always think I know what’s best. My intention is always to basically be helpful in the process and really just to toss things out there. So I am extremely direct, and if that means that some people don’t like what I have to say, or if it challenges them, then I’ll need to give them a tissue every once and a while, but so be it. My hope is that I’m putting forth a suggestion and it’s not to judge, it’s not to belittle, it’s basically to make the product better, because we are all part of that product so we should be challenging each other. But I think it’s an intellectual game that not everyone engages in because maybe there’s a sense of vulnerability when you engage.

Not taking things personally, however, does not imply an absence of emotion. Having worked with a variety of teams throughout my professional career, I have come to realize that, when dealing with complex issues, as is the case in this study, strong emotions are often attached to various perspectives, and restraining those emotions can potentially impede the collaborative process, regardless of how faculty may bring a contribution to the table. Thus, to marginalize one who strongly
advocates for a particular position is to potentially stifle or silence valuable perspectives. As mentioned previously, for faculty members to make a worthwhile contribution, they must feel valued and listened to by their colleagues, regardless of any perceived “importance” or “conflict” attached to their ideas. One faculty participant explains how she came to understand the benefit of conflict to collaborative thinking as follows:

There’s a benefit in working with that conflicting viewpoint. Even though you want to tear your hair out that we had some people not contributing the ideas in the same way, I have to remember that there is no bad idea. There’s no bad idea no matter what they contribute . . . It’s somehow important to the group as a whole.

Another faculty participant describes how listening to others despite incompatibility of ideas or personalities can ultimately lead to a better understanding of their own contribution in relation to others. For him, it also helped bring commonalities within the group to light.

But I think by communicating it’s good to have a concept of what the other group of people are thinking and contributing, so that we have a sense of our own contribution . . . You don’t necessarily have the same ideas or compatible personalities, but I think it’s really important for people to at least be aware of and exposed to what other people are thinking. Sometimes there are some commonalities that are discovered. When you think perhaps there are absolutely no commonalities, when in fact there are some that can be discovered.

And as one participant explains, over time it became easier to approach other faculty to discuss issues within the classroom that they have in common.
Without the self-study process, I would not have felt comfortable going to another faculty member and throwing them something and saying, ‘What do you think?’ Now I feel much more comfortable. Now I can even e-mail and say, ‘I have a question about this. What are you doing in your course at this time?’ or ‘Will my students know about this?’ The communication is much easier. Much, much more comfortable.

Overall, by recognizing the strength of each person’s contribution, despite differences in the way each person may bring their contribution to the table (e.g., personality, viewpoint, or delivery), faculty members learned to better respect issues and welcome divergence as integral to a collaborative process. One participant states this idea clearly as follows:

I think there was also exposure to other parties’ perspectives, which, I think, can be, well, even if you don’t necessarily agree with it, you can at least respect where they are coming from.

6.2.4 Respect for one another

As illustrated throughout Chapter 4, those that feel disrespected or socially isolated are not likely to function effectively within a group. All of the factors discussed within this chapter are, as identified by faculty data within this study, fundamental to faculty unity. Yet “respect for one another” emerged as a factor that most emphatically changed faculty participants’ way of interacting together. This new way of interacting was perceived by participants as “less fragmented” and “more connected with greater respect for each other.”
I think we felt like we all came together around the process. People were beginning to respect each other for their strengths. That really, when we went through the process with the visiting team, I think people began to feel that we were really starting to become a team, having worked on this altogether.

I think what initially came out of the whole collaborative was that people came to respect each other for their strengths, right, because all of us have strengths, and really there’s none of us that is absolutely perfect in all areas. I think each of us brings something quite interesting to the table, and I think one of the powers of that as a group in any collaboration is beginning to look at your strengths, someone else’s strengths, and say ‘Let’s play to those strengths…’

For old guard members, working “harder” together helped shed light on what they felt was the “hidden” or “lost” history of the program. Disclosing this history, for them, was necessary to resolve the way in which members of the old guard and new guard interacted together to better the program. For members of the old guard, there was a feeling, as described by one of the participants that,

if the members of the ‘new guard’ could understand what some of us brought to the table in the first place . . . I think that there would be less of a feeling of superiority . . . that we could work more on par . . . as colleagues.

The fundamental divide between the old and new guard faculty is further described by another participant as follows: “when you are not included in understanding the history of who did what and why, you couldn’t possibly have an idea of what to bring to the table.” But the “harder” the members of the team worked together, the greater respect they began to have for each other’s contributions and in particular for members of the old
guard. This took the form of respect for the things that they had done prior to new guard members’ arrival.

The harder we work together, the more we can see and respect that some of us have been there and built the program to where it was, and the others’ that joined us helped to refine it, right. This is all good. Exactly how we should be working – healthy for all of us, really. New input built on an already strong foundation.

For the new guard, what was important for “breaking the divide” was for members of the old guard to see past their misguided perception of new guard “superiority.” They talk about wanting to feel respected by other members of the faculty for their contributions based on merit, not on their credentials “played up by administration.” One member of the new guard says, “I think I gained all the respect I have from my peers through this process, because they saw what I brought to the table and that I was serious. And I worked my butt off.”

Another participant talks about how he feels that respect for the work of those newer to the department was inevitable based on the quality and commitment they brought as members of the collaborative. He explains this as follows:

I feel they [members of the old guard] couldn’t help but respect the changes that we’ve brought into the program because the product really does speak for itself. And that made a difference in the way that we were perceived.

And although there may have been perceptions from the new guard that old guard members were “stuck in their ways” with regard to the direction of the program,
there was the building of respect for one another, the building of loyalty and trust. Ultimately, nobody [from the old guard] was jamming stuff down our throats saying ‘I’ve been here 20 years and you can’t try that’ and that was important for the growth of all of us working together.

Figure 4: Anatomy of Changes in the Faculty Community summarizes the findings I observed taking place during the course of the self-study with a foundation rooted in the theories explored in Chapter 2. As discussed throughout Chapters 5 and 6, the faculty community underwent a dramatic change during the self-study period. Conflict, relationships, and feelings toward one another about the nature of the work and each others’ motivations about it came to surface during both faculty cooperative and collaborative interaction.

I use the figure to help illustrate on a theoretical level how I would suggest seeing cooperation and collaboration as independent spheres representing different educational styles along a continuum of ways of learning. The spheres overlap in some areas that are the real points of agreement in what Wenger (1998) calls a “community of practice.” These areas can be thought of as islands of agreement, which are established by the faculty community navigating the uncharted educational waters of both cooperation and collaboration within the self-study process.
Figure 4: Anatomy of Changes in the Faculty Community

**Professional Educational Community**

- Willingness to better understand oneself and each other
- Transformative learning based on negotiated mission, goals and objectives
- Group cohesion and shared purpose
- Trust, empowerment, and collective control

**Structural Factors**
- Structured Interaction
- Outside Perspective
- Common Goal
- Physical Working Environment

**Relational Factors**
- Shared Decision Making
- Empowerment and Control
- Open Communication
- Respect for one another

**Changes in Perceiving, Inquiring, Interacting**
- Conflict/Tension
- Division
- Isolation
- Marginalized
- Suspicion

**Cooperation**
- Positive interdependence
- Face-to-face interaction
- Individual accountability
- Interpersonal group skills
- Group processing

**Collaboration**
- Social interaction
- Shared experience
- Negotiation of knowledge, beliefs, and ideas
- Formation of identity within the community
The figure also illustrates, on a more practical level, my research findings that address the secondary questions of my study. The factors identified within the study that led to a change in the way that faculty interacted with one another are displayed over the arrows leading up to the characteristics of the professional educational community. This illustrates a movement or change in the dynamic of the community. Those structural factors – structured interaction with one another, a common goal of accreditation, working in a shared physical working environment led by someone with an outside perspective – are represented over the left arrow leading out of the cooperation sphere, which as characterized is a more structured way of working together toward an outcome or a product. The relational factors identified – shared decision making, open communication, feelings of empowerment, and respect for one another – are represented over the right arrow leading out collaboration sphere, which as characterized is a more interactive, shared way of working together. In this way, the figure illustrates the overlap of cooperation and collaboration while demonstrating the flow of both factors surrounding the perceptions identified by the participants shown within the centre or heart of the community. Conflict, tensions, suspicion, and feelings of isolation are all represented as those feelings that were really at the core of the community holding participants back from interacting on a more collaborative
level. Yet in working through the process, both cooperative and collaborative, ultimately, participants changed in ways of perceiving, inquiring, and interacting with one another. The dynamic was able to flow and shift from division and isolation to the formation of an interactive professional educational community.

In the next chapter, I explore the significance of this case study, identify limitations of the study, and finally offer implications for future research, policy, and faculty collaborative development.
Chapter 7. Significance, Limitations, and Implications

The purpose of this chapter is to draw tentative implications for research, policy, and practice. In the first section, I outline the potential significance of the study in terms of what Guba and Lincoln (1989) call its “educational authenticity,” “catalytic authenticity,” and commitment to empowerment (Scott, 1996). In the second section, I reflect on the lessons learned through this case study about collaboration and faculty community. These lessons lead to a better understanding of how collaborative self-study can help guide faculty members to join together in shared goals and a commitment to one another within a professional education community. Following this reflection, I present the limitations of the study as well as implications for further research, policy, and practice.

7.1 Significance of the Study

For many years, educational researchers and organizational theorists alike have explored the foundation on which collaboration can be built, the dynamic nature of collaboration, and the factors and conditions that come into play enabling collaboration to maintain itself. Part of the significance of this study is its contribution to and enhancement of the ongoing discussion of collaboration. If it is to be evaluated in terms of its educational authenticity, its contribution in this respect must be considered first.
In response to my primary research question, “What is the relationship between collaborative self-study and faculty community?”, the findings and subsequent analysis of this case study are consistent with the theories set forth by Fullan and Scott (2009), Palmer (1998), Senge (1990), Shulman (2002), Wenger (1998), and Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002). In each case, whether the subject is a learning organization (Senge 1990), a culture of connection (Palmer 1998), the scholarship of teaching (Shulman 2002), a community of practice (Wenger 1998), or the call for “turnaround leadership” (Fullan & Scott, 2009), collaborative learning is identified as a personal philosophy rooted in identity, history, practice, values and meaning. Once cultivated, this philosophy has ramifications for faculty interaction within a professional education community. In addition to the conceptual validity that can be inferred from the consistency of my findings with the theoretical literature, those theorists provide a conceptual framework for interpreting and, in the most general way, promoting such interaction.

At the same time, my study enhances the theoretical discussion by adding what many of the theorists do not provide: an account of how, rather than why, collaboration works. This is true of the literature in general. For the most part, it focuses on the outcomes and achievements of collaboration. My own study explores how collaboration works in the context of a holistic approach to assessment, whether understanding and reshaping
curricula, identifying and revising evaluative measures, or developing a shared sense of mission.

In response to my first secondary research question, “What aspects of the faculty community change as a result of the collaborative self-study process?”, the case study has helped identify those elements that seem to facilitate working together, as well as the shared classroom experiences that enable those initially isolated faculty members to shift perspectives. Some of these elements appear sporadically throughout the literature. However, many more do not and are unique to this case study. These come from the grounded theoretical approach to analysis of data that allows theoretical categories to emerge from observation (Scott, 1996). Gathering, applying, and adding to the structural and relational factors that do not appear in the literature is another contribution of this study.

As we have seen reflected in faculty perceptions of both collaboration and professional community throughout this study, faculty members’ beliefs and values are the driving force behind how they act and what they are willing to do together on campus. But the emergent categories that organize faculty interaction also provide a contextual framework within which the case study can be understood in broader terms. Similar to the research reviewed in Chapter 2, I have found throughout my case study that the kinds of opportunities, tasks, and guidance
(organizational structures) afforded to faculty participants seem to shape how individuals elect to engage in self-study activities. Individual choice, in other words, is not merely idiosyncratic. Rather it can be seen through a theoretical lens that may be transferable to other faculty communities. Part of what facilitates a shift from individualism to cooperation can be described in terms of theoretical factors. These factors include organizational structures, or structural factors. But it was the close interactions with one another that were noted by the participants as the ones that facilitated the greatest change in the patterns of working with each other. I have categorized these as relational factors or social interactions. The relational factors are what helped to move the faculty community along the continuum toward a more collaborative model. According to participants in the study, relationships and the opportunity to interact with each other were what ultimately reshaped the face of the faculty community into what I have called a professional educational community.

Perhaps most significantly, then, the case study demonstrates the theoretical importance of individually forged relationships within an organization for helping its members make the transition from performing acts of cooperation to creating cultures of collaboration. This finding directly addresses my second secondary research question, “What factors of the collaborative self-study process enhance faculty
community?” It also suggests the capacity of my research to promote action and empower the participants of the study.

In addition to the research contributions I have cited above, there is an additional practical significance to this study with regard to the increasing demands placed on colleges by regulatory bodies. Collaborative cultures, or professional communities that collaborate, are critically important for managing those changes organizations face in this economic climate, as well as changes taking place within colleges in Ontario. This is particularly the case as it pertains to greater accountability measures imposed by regulatory bodies that address measures of quality assurance to promote excellence in education for private institutions and colleges of applied arts and technology in the greater Ontario area. Both governmental and professional regulatory bodies within Ontario and across Canada are swiftly moving toward identifying quality assessment measures to ensure that students receive an education that meets professional and pedagogical standards.

Over the last 10 years, Ontario public and private colleges offering programs with entry to practice or professional regulations have had to undergo processes of programmatic accreditation similar to those discussed throughout this study. Many regulatory colleges (e.g. College of Dental Hygienists Ontario, Law Society of Upper Canada, Association of Registered Interior Design Ontario) are pushing for legislation that
establishes graduation from programs within Ontario that offer the standards set out by these particular bodies as a requirement for all students who wish to enter into practice.

Additional legislation pertaining to degree programs in Ontario underscores the centrality of collaboration in general. Both public and private colleges seeking to offer degree programs fall under the Post-secondary Quality Choice and Excellence Act 2000 (PSECE 2000). This legislation was passed in Ontario to open up opportunity for student choice and greater accessibility to differing educational institutions and programs they offer. The Post-secondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) is an arms-length agency for review and recommendation for ministerial consent of degree programs in colleges. This review primarily assesses institutional viability with a focus on faculty qualifications, course sequencing within programs, and the way in which faculty interact with students in the classroom. This last area especially is measured qualitatively and with a special emphasis on collaboration in the classroom and self-assessment by the students.

The kind of review promoted by PEQAB closely resembles the process discussed in this case study, most notably in the way that self-study drives program change within the institution. My study explores the factors leading to change within the faculty professional community, and can suggest how qualitative standards established by regulatory bodies both programatically
and in terms of faculty qualifications may be used to address conflicts both pedagogically and communally.

To develop the capacity to create change on any scale, whether to student access, institutional excellence, or support for professional development, institutions need to understand the processes by which professional collaborative communities evolve and interact. This study suggests both organizational and interactive infrastructures that help to recognize, support and leverage collaborative processes. When a faculty community commits to being together, faculty members tend to distribute responsibility. Collaborative inquiry facilitates valuable membership in a professional community where faculty members are encouraged to invest their professional identities in being part of organizational change.

7.2 Three Lessons Learned

Through interactions with each other and reflection on faculty perceptions of the process and ways of perceiving themselves and others, three major themes emerged. I classify them as lessons learned. These ideas of course need to be explored in other contexts as well to develop them further.

7.2.1 Lesson Number One: Structural factors, while predominately used in cooperative models, are necessary but not sufficient to the collaborative process.
As evidenced throughout this study, structural factors and conditions of support are certainly necessary to the process of collaboration. It is important for members of the faculty to know what to expect of each other as fellow professionals in order to understand how to work together most effectively. Structural factors such as policies, procedures, and conditions of support helped create such an environment. In turn, professional expectations were defined and opportunities for working together as a team toward a collective goal were created. Setting the structure enabled faculty members to work cooperatively and made it possible for faculty members to carry out the process of collaboratively working together.

Consistent with much of the literature on the difference between cooperative and collaborative learning, the structural factors identified within this study (structured interaction, outside perspective, common goal, and physical working environment) worked in combination as a set of functional cooperative conditions opening the possibility for collaborative interaction. As faculty were put together in a single space and prompted to share their experiences in response to an outside perspective on their educational environment, they began to work together. The end goal in the group exercise in this case is the product of self-study that forged the path to provisional program accreditation. While some may regard this as the natural end product of any cooperative endeavour, my study reveals that
the development of collaborative cultures within institutional structures needs to push beyond the boundaries of cooperative models. In this way, cooperative models can be seen as a necessary path to the more relational collaborative model.

As we have seen through this study, extensive institutional infrastructure is not necessary to facilitate a practical working relationship between faculty members. But if a collaborative culture is to emerge, faculty members do need time and space to collaborate, an outside perspective or strong leadership to promote creative self-criticism, and negotiation of a common goal. These factors contributed to the move from individualism, to cooperation and ultimately a collaborative professional educational community. While self-organization makes relationships both dynamic and grounded, they flourish when their learning fits within their organizational environment.

Structural factors can certainly vary from campus to campus, but they have two common intentions. They can provide program continuity and coherence when assessing a program to help faculty members build an understanding of one subject — the sequencing and design necessary for a program to be cohesive. They also aim to build a community that is rooted in both the academic and social aspects for the faculty by bringing members together to discuss course work as reflected against student progress. Bringing faculty together in close proximity through
structured interaction and common goal setting in this case certainly helped to derail some of the more common problems plaguing undergraduate education today: the fragmentation of course material, lack of consistency in classroom pedagogical delivery systems, and the isolation of faculty members from others within the program.

Human connections, then, emerged as a central feature in my study. As Lave and Wenger (1991) point out, learning “only partly implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, and to master new understandings” (p. 53). Those activities, tasks, functions, and understandings that were reached during structured interaction do not exist in isolation. They are a broader system of relations that “arise out of and are developed within social communities” (p. 53). They are part of a system of relations among people within those communities. For new understandings to be formed, there must be a reshaping of relationships between people.

7.2.2 Lesson Number Two: Facilitation (Leadership) is often necessary both to manage the dynamics of human interaction and drive the process of change within a professional community.

Given the social context of learning, collaboration can and often does evoke emotional responses; therefore, facilitation is often necessary to manage the dynamics of human interaction as well as to drive the process of change, as is demonstrated in this case study. We have seen in this case study how the
emotional investment of faculty members in their work became clearer and more direct under the prompting of trusted leaders.

This aspect of the study dramatizes one of the most common ideas in the literature: collaboration thus requires a consideration of leadership concepts and what kind of leadership is best suited to lead change within a collaborative culture. The emergence of effective leaders in this case study thus bears out the emphasis in the literature on leadership as a balance between personal vision and shared community perspectives.

Hargreaves (2002) puts it well:

In a collaborative culture, leaders often need to suspend themselves in order to listen to and understand others. Suspending one’s views does not mean having to sacrifice one's perspectives. Suspension strengthens growth and understanding of oneself and others, strengthens relationships, and opens up doors to future possibilities (p. 503).

Whether these communities arise spontaneously or come together through facilitation, as was the case in this study, their development ultimately depends on internal leadership. Leadership roles may be formal or informal, such as distributed leadership throughout the faculty as evidenced in this study, or can be more concentrated. In either case, there must be legitimacy within the community. Educational leaders and others within the community of practice must work from the inside rather than attempt to design or manipulate from the outside.

There is some application of this lesson in leadership to administrative roles as well. Administrators play a key role in
providing opportunity and resources for faculty and staff to engage in inquiry, reflective practice, and continuous problem-solving while at the same time building the capacity for shared leadership within the community (Fullan & Scott, 2009). Leaders within a learning organization are responsible for creating spaces where people continually “expand their capabilities to clarify vision and improve shared mental models — that is, they are responsible for learning” (Senge, 1990, p.71). Most importantly, leaders need to be serious in their efforts to create conditions where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and hence lay claim to one part of the learning process. These efforts promote the development of trust that is one of the greatest services a leader can perform.

To promote this level of interaction, leaders need to learn to let go of the need to individually control the discussion process and even, to an extent, its outcomes. The notion of faculty, staff and administration learning about learning together through reflective dialogue is a way to increase organizational capacity and foster creativity (Senge, 1990). Hock describes this kind of engagement as “chaordic,” a kind of orderly chaos which is conceptually based on the belief that people are most creative and energetic when they have the freedom to create what they own and own what they create (Hock, 1999). The freedom to pool together a substantive body of professional knowledge that is owned through experience by
faculty, staff, and administration encourages the desire of members of the professional community to reflect upon and improve their practice as was seen throughout this case study.

Good leaders may start by sharing their own vision, but “as they learn to listen carefully to others’ visions, they begin to see their own vision as part of something larger” (Senge, 1990, p.352). When educators engage with one another as members of a learning organization, they come together in a way that forces debate about what is important on campus. Dialogue and discussion create the ties that bond and bind us to a shared set of values and beliefs. Such collaboration helped faculty members to identify with each other, which in turn helped to eliminate divisions between “participants” and “leaders.” Through connections with each other, faculty begin to identify and choose to internalize the shared values of the group.

7.2.3 Relational factors are at the core of the ties that bind a professional community together.

An organization's culture is primarily seen in the assumptions, beliefs, expectations and habits that constitute the norm for those working in it. But those structural changes, while necessary, were not sufficient to sustain cultural changes within this professional community.

Relational factors such as positive attitudes, dialogue, and respect facilitated a way of faculty “being together” that
helped transform the professional community within the study into a culture of collaboration.

It was indeed the relational factors identified in this case (that is, shared decision making, empowerment and control, open communication, respect for one another) that bridged the gap between working cooperatively and moving toward a more collaborative approach to being together. Collaboration, as defined in the literature as a philosophy of interaction, was possible in this study when individuals became responsible for their actions in relation to one another, including learning to respect the contributions of their peers without feeling as if they were sacrificing or compromising their own contributions, thoughts and feelings.

Faculty members in this study began to rely less on what the “authorities in research tell us about learning” (Cross, 2005), and started to depend more on the stories within their own classrooms as a foundation for exploring “learning about learning” (Cross, 2005). Sharing these stories helped to facilitate inquiry that led to the discovery of truth in contexts that are meaningful and directly related to student learning and better campus practice. Faculty members were empowered to involve themselves directly in the research equation to challenge the traditional view of knowledge. This traditional view of knowledge only distances us from the thing we know the best: our students and the years of our accumulated
knowledge based on a lifetime of first-hand experience with students and learning. Faculty ultimately see themselves as lifelong learners. Many in this study moved on to further educational pursuits to better engage in inquiry and reflection. They were able to use classroom experience and interactions on campus as the foundation for improving the standards by which they currently practice.

Collaborative communities are not as temporary as those communities that work together in teams. As found within this case study, they are organized around what matters most to the members of the community. In this way, identity is formed within the community as identified in this study. This is important, since teaching, as Denzin (1984) points out, “is not only a cognitive and behavioural practice where improving teaching involves attending solely to what teachers should know and be able to do. Teaching, like other 'people work' is also an emotional practice” (Denzin, 1984, as cited in Hargreaves, 2002, p. 505).

Hargreaves (2002) talks about how fundamental social bonds between people are essential to the development of a strong professional community. As Hargreaves explains, bonds are not based on personal knowledge, but on norms, principles, or understandings of how to work together. Bonds are formed, according to Hargreaves, when professionals know what to expect.
of each other as fellow professionals. Such is the case in this study.

As a social practice, "learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities but a relation to social communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Given the social dimension of learning, cultivating and sustaining positive connections among faculty members helps reshape professional communities. As Palmer (1998) describes, "if we had periodic conversations with each other about teaching over an extended period of time, we would know enough about each other to ask real questions and give real answers when the moment for evaluation arrived" (p. 143).

To develop a community of inquiry and culture of connection is:

No more and no less than the moving force of the mind, heart and spirit of people. To see the organization as a mental concept of relationship to which people are drawn by hope, vision, values and meaning, and liberty to cooperatively pursue them (Hock, 1999, p.120).

For faculty members to become engaged and committed in collaborative ways of learning and being together, interaction based on inquiry, discussion, critical dialogue, and reflection about the core values and guiding principles is what is necessary to reshape meaning and purpose within a professional environment.

If we want to grow in our practice, we have two primary places to go: to the inner ground from which good teaching comes and to the community of fellow teachers from whom we
can learn more about ourselves and our craft” (Palmer, 1998, p.141).

In this study, support and encouragement to try new things, those factors identified by faculty, clearly indicate a way of working together, a connection that needs to occur among members of the learning organization for engagement to be set in motion. If we want students to engage in working toward understanding and reflective practice, faculty members need opportunities to engage as a profession of learners who are supported by and participate with administration in all aspects of teaching and learning.

Once a professional and intellectual understanding between faculty members has been established, and safe spaces are provided, faculty and administration can begin to work together as a cohesive unit for the sake of their students. Real communication and understanding about issues related to teaching and learning will begin to infuse everyday school culture, and the sporadic implementation of principles outlined and shaped by the "experts" will become a thing of the past.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

When discussing research methodology in Chapter 3, I stressed the limitations of this study when seen from the vantage point of positivist evaluative criteria. Many of these limitations are connected to generalizability. Since every organization is
unique, the specific day-to-day activity of creating a culture of collaboration will obviously have many unique components; drawing implications from a single faculty community during the course of a two-year study calls for some hesitation. A further limitation to drawing implications from this case is that the sample is indicative of only members of a faculty following a larger regulatory mandate toward curricular and pedagogical change. To the degree that other institutions resemble the one in this study, the implications I offer may apply.

My study is also limited in its representational validity. Faculty members involved in it are full-time faculty members within the department. As discussed, part-time faculty, while included in the self-study, did not have the proper support to enable them to participate in my study. Additionally, I was unable to interview any administrators who went through the process. Doing so would have provided more balance to the study in that part-time faculty and administrators may have brought different perspectives and commitments to understanding the collaborative community shift for both faculty and the study.

In this study, I focused solely on the faculty community, and did not consider the experiences of those students within the program who were experiencing this change. Understanding the impact that changes in the faculty professional community have on the student experience is an extremely important issue. My intention is to pursue this impact in future studies, but I had
to limit the scope of the study for the purpose of this dissertation.

Despite the limitations of my study from the vantage point of traditional evaluative criteria, seen from the perspective of naturalistic inquiry and the authenticity criteria increasingly central to qualitative research, my study offers conceptual validity, theoretical refinement grounded in data, authentic representations of multiple perspectives, and a contextual frame that facilitates transference (Scott, 1996). The implications I present in this chapter contribute to a better understanding of collaborative community building and change within that community. The consistency of my findings with the theoretical literature and the way my study enhances conceptual understanding is complemented by its authenticity and contextual clarity. Theory emerges directly from the self-perception of the participants and the contextualizing framework provides a thick enough description to enable transferability. To the extent that other colleges experience similar contexts, they will be able to draw lessons from this research. Finally, my study, rooted in a commitment to empower participants to act in ways that encourage them to imaginatively transform their own realities, promotes an active engagement of participants in shared decision-making. So while this study does not aspire to representational validity, it does attempt to provide a thick, authentic, theoretically
informed representation of the multiple perspectives that form the social matrix of a shared educational space.

7.4 Implications for Future Research

Further research is needed to confirm the relationship between professional community development and educational change. My study examined the perceptions of a small number of full-time faculty members over a short period of time. Future longitudinal studies may provide important insights into the sustainability and long-term impact of interactive approaches to building collaborative faculty communities. Are these changes sustainable over time, and, if so, what are the sustaining factors? What is the potential impact that collaborative faculty professional communities have on classroom teaching and student learning? What changes are needed institutionally to sustain collaborative efforts? Such research would hold important implications for both faculty communities and educational change literature.

Additionally, further research is needed to address the difference between change initiatives that are imposed, such as the accreditation study initiative necessary for this particular program, to address professional standards and those that are generated from within. Is it possible for faculty to enact change from within, and, if so, what are the characteristics of professional community that leads to change without such imposition? Is it necessary for institutions to impose change to
generate the potential for professional communities to become integrative and collaborative?

Another important research question to be addressed in the future is how changes in the professional faculty community impact the student educational experience. What are the links between faculty change and student change? One particularly interesting question in this respect might focus collaboration between students and faculty at the graduate level. Since the faculty in my study came to the self-study process with little experience in collaboration, the question of their experiences as graduate students naturally suggests itself. One can envision a study that focuses on the very moment when a sense of professional identity is first formed - the final agonizing stretch of dissertation writing. Such research and other similarly inventive projects might provide insight into ways in which discussions of professional educational community can be broadened to include students at the threshold of their professional identities. The findings could contribute to literature and practice on a more global level.

Finally, further research is needed to address conflicts at the emotional level between faculty members and how dealing with those conflicts may impact the development of a collaborative professional educational community.
7.5 Implications for Policy

This study suggests that institutions must not ignore the issue of reward and recognition. While it has been stated within Chapter 1 that there is an ever-shrinking pool of funds for institutions, it cannot be overlooked that some systems that support faculty participation in learning communities would be beneficial to engagement. This can take place, for instance, by potentially linking participation and leadership to performance reviews. Educational leaders might also take note of existing compensation systems and how they either support or discourage collaborative learning. Such was the case for those part-time faculty members who did not have the means to participate in the self-study because of financial hardship or time constraints.

An element of policy that needs to be considered within the organizational environment is the support that is needed by administration to encourage interest in full participation. Further work needs to be done to open up support systems to ensure full access to participation. It might be necessary to revisit policies around structures in time and support to enable faculty members to pursue degrees if necessary for programmatic change.

Educational policy needs to be arranged to recognize the value of those faculty members who have years of professional experience with much to offer in the classroom. Policy that recognizes the need for members of the faculty to return to
study in order to upgrade academic credentials will only enhance pedagogical discussion and faculty collaborative learning.

7.6 Implications for Faculty Development

Professional development for faculty on many campuses is often treated as a scheduled, external event focusing on issues offered by outside experts with limited front-line connection to issues faced by faculty members teaching within the context of actual classroom practice at the institution. Faculty members in this study who made their own effort to change their classroom practice or course content in response to the needs of their students did so in isolation. To address faculty need and the promotion of a collaborative professional community, institutions could draw on best pedagogical practice and the strengths of those faculty members who deliver best practices in an effort to promote stronger faculty initiative, scholarship, and collaboration.

Rather than attempting to dictate change, it may be necessary for institutions to work on a grass-roots level, to understand faculty concerns and include faculty perspective as integral to the evolution of educational reform. Substantive change in this study occurred when instructors themselves became involved with one another in making change happen. Educational leaders should look to foster an environment where faculty
members regularly engage in reflection, critical discourse, and collaboration as a way to help faculty members grow together.

Faculty development might be geared more toward a forum where the faculty knowledge and expertise within the department, and ultimately across the institution, is shared to help educators and administrators expand their knowledge and their vision for education. The primary goal of this kind of faculty development initiative is to encourage instructors to reflect on their practice while providing them with the opportunity to share experiences and outcomes with other faculty members. Providing faculty with a platform such as self-study enables reflection, collaboration, and improvement on teaching practice.

In this way, faculty members have more of a stake and voice in the direction of teaching and learning on campus, greater opportunity for professional growth, fair evaluation from and frequent, positive interaction with administrative leaders on campus, and greater potential for moving in the direction of a professional community focused on collaborative and integrated learning.
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American Association for Higher Education 2002 National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, IL.


Appendix A: On-site Research Consent Letter
(Signed Letter on Letterhead)

College
Attention: Program Coordinator

October 31, 2006

Dear XXX,

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) / University of Toronto. I would like to gather data for my doctoral dissertation that will involve faculty from your department. In order to begin this study, I require written consent to conduct on-site research.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how the process of collaboration affects individual faculty development, professional community and institutional change. My research will focus on faculty members within your department who have participated in the 2005-2006 compulsory collaborative process of self-study driven by standards of initial program accreditation to examine how the dynamics of that process influences individual and collective faculty commitment to change within your professional teaching community.

This case study will take place over the 2006-2007 academic term. During that time, I will explore faculty opinions, perceptions, values and beliefs pertaining to the process of collaboration, membership in the professional community and initiatives toward change within the department. To do so, I will conduct 2-4 personal interviews lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes each with research subjects over the course of this study. As a participant in the process of initial accreditation, I will also observe relationships, connections and interactions among faculty members in both formal and informal settings, as well as study data, documents, and records affiliated with the self-study and subsequent collaborative processes toward gaining initial accreditation.

Subjects will be well informed about the nature of the study and their participation, including the assurance that they may withdraw at any time. In addition, participants may request that any information, whether written or audiotaped, be eliminated from the project. Participants will at no time be judged or evaluated, and will at no time be at risk or harm greater than that encountered by participation in their everyday lives.

The information gathered will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secured location. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons and the college cannot be identified. All data collected will be used for the purposes of a Ph.D. thesis and potentially for subsequent research articles. All raw data (i.e. journal notes, research journal, audiotapes, and transcripts) will be destroyed after completion of the study anticipated to occur prior to September 30, 2007.

If you consent to on-site research as outlined above, please sign below and return the letter to me in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (905) XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my thesis supervisor Dr. Clive Beck, OISE/University of Toronto at (416) XXX-XXXX. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth W. Jeffers, Ph.D. Candidate
OISE/University of Toronto

Program Coordinator Date
Appendix B. Informed Participant Consent Letter

College
Attention: Instructor
February XX, 2007

Dear XXX,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral degree in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)/University of Toronto under the supervision of Dr. Clive Beck. I would like to provide you with information about this study and what your involvement would entail should you decide to participate.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how the process of collaboration affects individual faculty development, professional community, and departmental change. The study will focus on faculty members within your department who have participated in the 2005-2006 compulsory process of self-study driven by standards of initial program accreditation to examine how the dynamics of that process influences individual and collective faculty commitment to change within your professional teaching community.

The case study will take place during the winter 2007 academic term. During that time, I will explore faculty opinions, perceptions, values, and beliefs pertaining to the process of collaboration, membership in the professional community, and initiatives toward change in the department. One of the ways that I will collect data will be to conduct interviews with faculty members who are directly involved in the process of collaboration by sitting on the accreditation self-study teams. As an interview participant, you will be involved in a series of 2 to 4 face to face interviews lasting approximately 45-60 minutes each over the course of the study where you will be asked questions that seek your opinions, perceptions, and feelings about collaboration and professional community. Interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts of your interviews will be sent to you for your review and to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that may have occurred during the interview process. Please be assured that you withdraw from participation in the interview at any time. In addition, you may request that any information, whether written or audiotaped, be eliminated from the project. As a participant in the study, you will at no time be judged or evaluated, and will at no time be at risk or harm greater than that encountered by participation in your everyday life.

The information gathered from this study will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secured location. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons and the college cannot be identified. All data collected will be used for the purposes of a Ph.D. thesis and potentially for subsequent research articles. All raw data (i.e. journal notes, research journal, audiotapes, and transcripts) will be destroyed two years after completion of study anticipated to occur prior to September 30, 2007.

If you consent to participate in the interview process, please sign below and return the letter to me in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Clive Beck, OISE/University of Toronto at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth W. Jeffers, Ph.D. candidate
OISE/University of Toronto

Instructor Date
Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Questions

**MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:**
What is the relationship between collaborative self-study and faculty community?

Participating Instructors:

1. Please describe your understanding of the central purpose of your department seeking to obtain initial accreditation.

2. What role did you play in this process? How do others see your role?

3. Can you describe any strategies employed for working together with others during this process?

4. Please describe both the individual and collective capacity for working with others to promote curricular and pedagogical improvement during this process?

5. What activities did you engage in during the accreditation process? Can you describe your experience?

6. Can you describe the relationships you have with others in your department?

7. Did these relationships change during self-study? How so?

8. Do those relationships affect your ability to work together toward goals as a department? Please explain.

9. What conditions, resources, facilitated or hindered collaborative processes during self-study and the initial accreditation process?

10. Have you learned from this process? In what way?

11. Do you feel this process affected your growth and development as a professor, member of the professional community, organization at large? Please explain.

12. What might you do differently in future work toward improvement?

13. Do you feel this process played a role in shaping the professional community within your department? If so, what roles do you feel collaborative processes play?

14. Do you feel like you are part of this community? Why? If so, how would you characterize this community? Can you tell me who is in this community? Who is not? Why do you feel this way?