THE ANATOMY OF CONVERSATION: A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF THE

COMUNIDAD-BUILDING CONVERSATIONS OF A SCHOOL LEADER

by

Enrique García, B.A., M.Ed.

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Committee Members:

Miguel Guajardo

Clarena Larrotta

John Oliver

Melissa Martínez

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Manuel Enrique and María Eva

García, my first teachers and constant supporters of all my life endeavors. Thank you for

believing in my, for your unconditional love, and for always reminding that "¡Jesús te

ama y nosotros también!"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Currently, social and political forces contribute to public school communities that are characterized by fear, finger-pointing, and self-serving interests. In particular, these dehumanizing characteristics contribute to lack of community within schools among and between campus leaders and teacher leaders. This current reality stems from the reliance on traditional directive, command-and-control approaches to organizational development and mechanistic systems views of school communities.

This research seeks to reframe the understanding and practice of organizational development by viewing it terms of collaborative, community-building within the organic systems of a campus community in order to underscore how current approaches based on directive, organizational-development practices that view campuses from a mechanistic hierarchical systems perspective result in fractured communities (Block, 2002) that dehumanize campus and teacher leaders. By understanding the contexts, conditions, and attributes of community-building conversations campus leaders will learn to engage in restorative community-building (Block, 2002) in order to rehabilitate campus communities. It attempts to find alternatives for campus leaders to engaging teacher leaders in ways other than command and control leadership and hierarchical structures.

Epistemologically, this research is framed from a critical social constructivist perspective couched in dialogical learning and dialogical community theory. Data collection strategies include a co-constructed campus life maps, reflective journals, and three semi-structured group interviews. A dialogical learning/community process will be

used in the analysis of the data in order to problematize the process of community-

building.

        This research is a step toward deconstructing current practice of command and

control leadership in public schools and the adverse effect it has on school communities.

The process for developing a culture of conversation through a theoretical framework for

effective conversations is presented a more humanizing alternative based on inviting

others to collaboratively share their intelligence for the practice of campus leaders

engaged in organizational development and as a contribution to the organizational

development literature.

I. BEGINNING THE INTERNAL REVOLUTION

Prelude – An Invitation

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

—Lao Tzu

Transforming one's practice as an educator is a lifelong journey. What follows is the narrative that encapsulation of a 10-year journey to transform my practice as a campus leader that began in the spring of 2009 when I took my first step towards writing my doctoral dissertation to answer the research question: "What are the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations?" This question had its genesis in my lived experiences as an educator who came to realize that my espoused belief of leading as an authentic dialogical leader were in conflict with my enacted beliefs. The desire to find answers to this question embarked me on a journey that forced me to reflect critically and to reconstruct my self as a campus leader and my understanding and use of conversation as part of my ongoing journey as school leader. At the same time, the challenge of identifying the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations provided the opportunity to engage in dialogue with Paul, my research partner and fellow campus leader, regarding the *comunidad*-building efforts in which he engaged on his campus.

As a narrative, the account is characterized by elements that depart from the traditional dissertation structure. First, the text consists of three stories: the story of my journey as inauthentic campus leader working to become an authentic campus leader, Paul's ontological journey as an authentic dialogical campus leader, including a 4-year period in Baum Intermediate School District (ISD), and the story of the research endeavor itself. In this way, along with the literature review, the data harvested from my

lived experiences informed the identification of the problem that the research question addressed. Similarly, data harvested from Paul's lived experiences growing up and in his grade school, and undergraduate and graduate studies informed the research methodology, while data regarding the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations were harvested from our interviews. Second, an acorn sprouting into a tree is used as a metaphor for the research story itself. The acorn-to-tree process depicts the passage from research question (the acorn) to the sprouting of roots illustrating the influences that informed the research (lived experience, the literature, and conversations), and culminates with the three branches of the findings, the contexts, conditions, and attributes of Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations. Additionally, the literature review and methodology, traditionally presented as stand-alone chapters, are woven throughout the first chapters as part of the three stories. Together, the acorn metaphor and the stories are intended to bring to life the internal and external dialogical and human processes and interactions of conducting the research.

Lastly, the narrative departs from the traditional dissertation with the use of the Spanish and first-person in weaving my story with Paul's story and that of the research process. As with the acorn metaphor, the use of Spanish and first-person are intended to bring to life the very personal and deeply reflective journey that is this dissertation. From the outset the purpose of engaging you the reader in the first person was and continues to be to frame this research as a humanizing endeavor of becoming by underscoring the fact that, at one point in my ontological journey as a school leader, I realized that the emperor had no clothes, that the cloak of dialogical leadership with which I had robed myself was in fact nonexistent and that I needed to make fundamental changes to the manner in which I engaged my *colegas* to be an effective campus leader.

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The result of this journey was a deeply transformative voyage that affected Paul and me as campus leaders. For me, this research unearthed the contexts, conditions, and attributes of Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations that can guide me on my journey towards becoming an authentic dialogical leader. Meanwhile, Paul came away with a greater understanding of his ontological journey as a campus leader and the *comunidad*-building process in Baum. Thus, having come to the end of this stage of this journey, I invite you to become a part of it as a reader of this dissertation.

Overview

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson
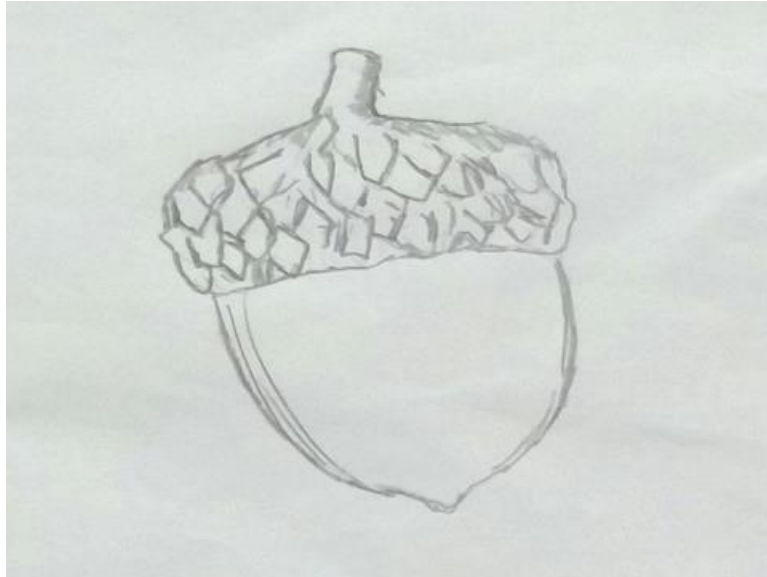
Figure 1. The acorn of research.

The research journey to identify the contexts, conditions, and attributes of

comunidad-building conversations began in the fourth year of my doctoral studies with

the initial disruption, the events leading up to the moment of internal dissonance between

my stated and enacted beliefs beginning with my rereading of Sister Christine Stephen's

account of her own moment of initial disruption as a leader and my first lived experiences

as a campus leader in the role of middle school English as a second language (ESL)

coach and doctoral student. In this chapter, I chronicle how these events forced me to

deconstruct critically my practice as a campus leader and ultimately to embark on the

research to identify the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building

conversations.

The Initial Disruption

> We had a hard session one time about my leadership style, how I made a
>
> presentation in public, how I came across to people. No one had ever done that
>
> with me before. I hated it, but I wanted to learn those things. I was scared stiff and
>
> Ernie had to push me. (Stephens, as cited in Rogers, 1990, p. 57)

Sister Christine and Sam Houston Middle School. Sister Christine Stephens'
(as cited in Rogers, 1990)remembered one of her training experiences with Communities
Organized for Public Service (COPS) founder and *comunidad* organizer Ernie Cortez. I
recall reading this excerpt first as a masters-level student and then again a few years later
as a fourth-year doctoral student. I was working as an elementary school leader, and I had
recently decided to research how campus leaders build *comunidad* with teacher leaders
using conversation.

Reading this excerpt, I really identified with Sister Christine's (as cited in Rogers,
1990) mixture of emotions: that gnawing sense of insecurity and sense of self-doubt
growing in the pit of one's stomach when a mentor has a very honest and frank "Come-
to-Jesus-type" conversation to discuss critical areas of improvement—the type of
discussion that many a doctoral student has experienced with a dissertation chair,
regarding a chapter draft, for example—tempered only by the inner desire to learn and
improve one's practice or performance.

Sister Christine's (as cited in Rogers, 1990) words evoked a vivid image in my
mind in which I could see and hear her engaged in this conversation with Ernie. As I
looked and listened to her, her struggle became mine. "When I first started as a leader,"
Sister Christine admitted,

I remember being frightened out of my wits. I didn't know how to get out of

myself. I was too stiff. I had a certain image of myself. I've been a nun 24 years.

I'm through and through a nun. When I came to the order, we were still wearing

long skirts and habit. We were taught the demeanor and conduct of a proper nun.

We were taught how to walk, how to swing our arms, how to walk down stairs in

long habits. (as cited in Rogers, 1990, pp. 56–57)

However, unlike Sister Christine, my journey as a campus leader did not begin

with feelings of insecurity about myself or my knowledge and skill. Unfortunately, *my

image of myself* was that of a confident, knowledgeable, and experienced educator who

would translate his ability to speak to and engage students in the classroom into my work

as a campus leader to mobilize campus and teacher leaders and to bring about much-

needed change in any campus context under any circumstances. Initially, this self-image

was affirmed when I accepted my first campus-wide leadership position as an ESL coach

at Sam Houston Middle School after an initial campus-wide presentation during our

beginning-of-the-year professional development. In this presentation, I laid out the

essentials of second-language acquisition and ESL instruction, and it was very well

received by my *colegas*[1]. However, this image was unexpectedly and abruptly shattered

once my daily work with teacher leaders began in earnest.

Riding the wave of my initial success, I proceeded to conduct weekly curriculum

meetings in which I adamantly and confidently challenged my *colegas'* current ways of

thinking and practice. "Your teaching practices need to become more culturally relevant,"

I admonished one grade-level team. "Your perceptions of English-language learners are

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[1] Colleagues.

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based on a deficit model of thinking. You don't believe they can learn," I accusingly pointed out to the unsuspecting group. "The manner in which you are teaching them right now is all wrong, and I am going to show you what you need to do."

Looking back on those "conversations," I realized that I was the one who went about teaching my *colegas* in the wrong manner. I realized that I had a deficit model perception of them and assumed that my *colegas* lacked the ability to teach English-language learners appropriately. To make matters worse, it never dawned on me to stop and ask myself, "So, what experiences, learning, and training about effective ESL instruction do you bring to the table?" I was so sure that I had the answers to their problems that it never occurred to me to ask, "What have you done in the past? What are you doing now that works for you and your students? What do you see as the most pressing issues facing you as teacher leaders working with ESL students and what are the most pressing issues facing students who are learning English here at Sam Houston?"

Sadly, as negative as my demeanor during our curriculum meetings was, my "shock-and-awe" approach to instructional leadership was not limited to my meetings with grade-level teams. It "bled" over into my meetings with individual teachers as well. During a one-on-one meeting with a well-meaning language arts teacher who sought my help because her students were struggling to develop academic English-language proficiency, I made the misguided mistake of going straight for teacher's heart. I recall saying to her, "You know, the reason your students struggle to learn academic English is because your teaching lacks the appropriate ESL strategies. Looking over the lesson plan you sent me," I added smugly as I flipped through the document without even stopping to look at her, "I don't see a single ESL strategy. We have a lot of work to do." In the end, although that teacher leader continued to meet with me for the next few weeks to go over

strategies she could include in her lesson plans, she never again asked me for help once we completed our initial work.

It was not apparent to me then—in fact, it was not until I started my doctoral work that my eyes were truly opened—but the manner in which I talked at my *colegas* as the ESL coach was indicative of the underlying assumptions guiding my work. The hubris and overzealousness with which I engaged teacher leaders as an ESL coach spoke more to my blind spots, deficit thinking, and negative assumptions about them and their practice as teacher leaders than it did of their methodology and their perceptions of their students. Even so, at that time, my own mindset inhibited me from seeing the error of my ways. As a result, well into the first semester of the school year, I found myself puzzled at the lack of change in my *colegas*' practice and wondering why they refused to change their methodology, despite all of the instructional "support" I provided. "There is no reason why we should not see a change in their teaching," I explained in exasperation to a fellow ESL coach after the third round of curriculum meetings. "I do not know what's wrong with them! They are just refusing to change their way of thinking and to use the strategies!"

Blinded to the fact I was not effectively engaging my *colegas'* in authentic dialogue (Crotty, 2006) about ESL instruction, I failed to see that I was actually alienating them with every curriculum meeting that I held. Furthermore, I put the blame for our students' lack of progress squarely on their shoulders. "I think they are just stuck in their ways," I explained to our principal. "I am showing them the ESL strategies and the theory and data that support these strategies as best practice! And still, they do not change! They do not realize that they are the problem!"

As time went on, my frustration grew, and I began to take my *colegas'* lack of progress and their growing opposition to using the ESL strategies personally. In my eyes, their lack of action was an affront to my role and authority as the campus "expert" on ESL instruction. "I am the ESL coach," I thought to myself one afternoon. "I have the qualifications and experience as a teacher of English language learners. They know I have a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. And I know that I am doing a good job of teaching them the strategies and showing them why they need to change what they are doing!"

However, halfway through the first semester, I did begin to have some doubts about how I approached the curriculum meetings. Unfortunately, unlike Sister Christine (as cited in Rogers, 1990), I did not have someone like Ernie to take me aside and have an honest conversation about why I was failing as campus leader. Consequently, instead of accurately identifying my missed steps, my doubts were about the method not the manner in which I approached my work. "I know what the problem is! I have not modeled how to implement the strategies in the classroom setting. That has got to be it! They are afraid to try something new, so they need someone to show them how to implement the ESL strategies."

Armed with this new understanding, I spent the weekend developing a plan for modeling the strategies I covered with my *colegas* by asking them to invite me to teach a lesson to their students. I even created an ESL instruction newsletter that reinforced the strategies and materials we covered during our curriculum meetings, and on the last page, I reached out to my *colegas* encouraging them to invite me to conduct model lessons in their classrooms. "Email me with a day and time, and I'll be more than happy to do a model lesson for your class," I cheerfully solicited supremely confident that this approach

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would usher in change. The following Monday, I placed a copy of the newsletter in every teacher leader's box and waited for the requests to come in. They never did.

Instead, I soon found myself not only unable to convince my *colegas* to implement the strategies that we had covered during our curriculum meeting, but I also faced my *colegas* directly and indirectly undermining my efforts. At the next curriculum meeting, one of the math teacher leaders defiantly pulled out a newspaper, turned his chair around to face the wall, and began to read the sports page just as I started the curriculum meeting. To this day, I recall the collective gasp from my *colegas* and how thick the tension hung over the room when I walked over to the teacher leader, peered over the newspaper and sternly said, "Excuse me. You can read the newspaper after the meeting." A few weeks later, following our usual curriculum meeting, one of the English language arts teachers, apparently fed up with my work, went to the principal and complained. In a meeting with my principal that afternoon, I was informed that my weekly curriculum meetings with teacher leaders were going to be scaled back. "I'm going to give you an alternate format for working with the teachers of ESL students on our campus," my principal informed me. "You'll still be working with teachers, but on a one-on-one basis and in conjunction with the English language arts coach. She will identify the teachers you'll work with, and you will follow up with them individually. And all we want you to do is cover the nitty-gritty, the ESL strategies they need to use in their class with their students."

I was disillusioned. I felt as though my career as an ESL coach was over before it had even begun. Nevertheless, bowed but not broken, I fulfilled the expectations of my new assignments, and did the best I could to advocate for quality instruction for ESL students for the next year and half. However, by then, I had begun the coursework to

obtain my principal's certification. Still stinging from what I deemed as my own

principal's lack of support, I decided that the only way that I could bring about the

necessary changes in ESL instruction was to become a principal. "If I am the principal," I

told myself, "there is no way that I will get undermined like that because I will be the one

making the decisions and setting the instructional agenda for the campus. I will be able to

hire people who have the right mindset for working with ESL students and make sure that

teachers are incorporating effective ESL strategies in their practice by making the

strategies a part of our campus professional development and a part of teachers'

evaluations."

As difficult as it was to recall my words and actions as a first-time campus leader,

honestly reflecting on it enabled me to move forward in my research by identifying the

problem that I needed to address. The acorn that would become this tree, this inquiry into

the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversation fell on fertile

ground (see Figure 2).
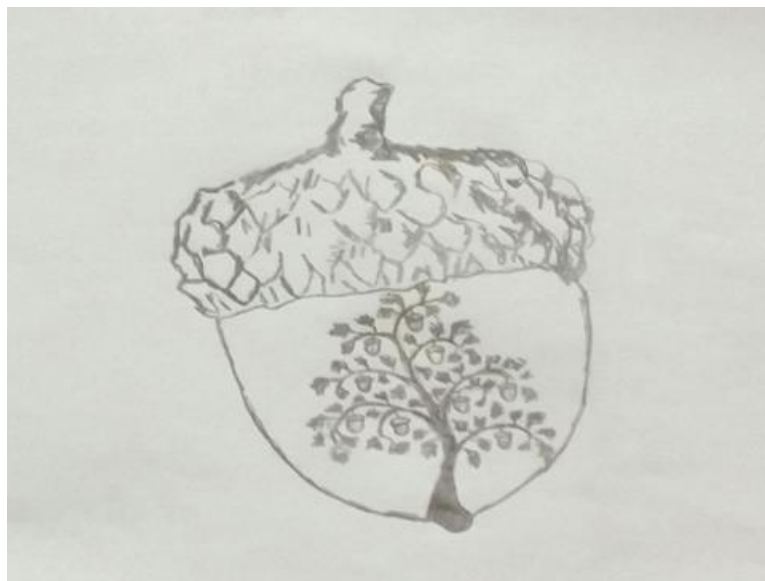
Figure 2. Acorn that will become the tree of inquiry.

Statement of the Problem

Taking the first steps on my ontological journey towards becoming an authentic dialogical leader meant that I had to acknowledge the dehumanizing character of the manner in which I engaged my colleagues at Sam Houston. As Freire (2003) noted,

> If people as historical beings necessarily engaged with other people in a movement of inquiry, did not control the movement, it would be (and is) a violation of their humanity. Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision making is to change them into objects. This movement of inquiry must be directed towards humanization—the people's historical vocation. The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity. (p. 85)

"If I agree with Freire's (2003) statement," I realized, "I will have to admit that in engaging my *colegas* as if I were the sole expert with respect how to best and most effectively educate ESL students on our campus, I committed an act of violence that robbed my *colegas* of their *dignidad y humanidad*. This is a difficult realization is it not, Enrique? For you or for any campus leader. After all, how many of us as campus leaders ever stop to consider the violence that we enact on our *colegas* and, by extension, on the students whom we teach? Have we ever wondered that? Have we ever wondered if the manner in which we engage teacher leaders and campus leaders in our school *comunidad* could be considered acts of violence? And if so, how have we responded?"

In a broader sense, the question remained: Have we as campus leaders stopped to critically consider that manner in which we engage teacher leaders and campus leaders in

our school *comunidades* or have we simply gone about our business unconscious of this dynamic and the potentially detrimental impact that our actions have had on the overall ecology of our campus *comunidades*? Worse, have we knowingly and consciously enacted violence upon on *colegas* and refused to choose an alternative pathway?

In essence, at the heart of my desire to understand the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations was the need to understand how to lead as an authentically dialogical campus leader such that my praxis was more humanizing, and more likely to develop fellowship and solidarity with others rather than alienating them. Clarifying and informing my goal of learning how to lead as an authentically dialogical campus leader in today's public school *comunidades*, was *Turning to One Another* (Wheatley, 2002), one of the first texts I read as part of my doctoral studies. Revisiting this text aided in further developing my consciousness of the fact that there is a need for change in how we lead in schools. Wheatley (2002) noted,

> I've been out in the world for many years describing the new worldview that science offers us. In my travels, I've met hundreds of thousands of people who have shifted their view and are creating organizations that are adaptive, creative and resilient. Yet many others are more cautious and doubtful. Some people can't be convinced that anything has really changed—the old ways still work fine for them. Others believe that organizations can only function well, especially in times of chaos, by using command and control leadership and hierarchical structures. And many want evidence that these strange new concepts apply 'to the real world.' (p. x)

As an educational leader who considered himself an effective communicator, who in fact *prided* himself in being an effective communicator, rereading this text made me to

come to terms with the ugly truth that I was one of the command-and-control leaders who relied on the presumed power of his position and status as the "expert" to get others to change their practice. This was indeed "a hard pill to swallow." After 7 years in the classroom, obtaining my Masters of Education and principal's certificate, reading Wheatley's words deepened the crisis of identity that brought me to a crossroads at which I had to ask some very hard questions: Who am I and who do I want to become not only as an educator *pero también como un ser humano*[2]. How do I go about deconstructing and unlearning my current values, beliefs, and practices in a meaningful and sustainable manner? More importantly, Can I learn how to transform my own conversational orientation and where and when will this learning take place?

As I asked these questions of myself, I could not help but wonder whether Sister Christine (as cited in Rogers, 1990) had asked herself similar questions as she began her own transformational journey from nun to nun–organizer of *comunidades*.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided my investigation into the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversation were themselves products of the critical self-questioning and reflection upon my lived experiences, especially my lived experiences at Sam Houston. The specific nature of these questions evolved from the macro-level question I first formulated: How does a campus leader use conversation to build *comunidad*? However, in dialogue with my dissertation chair, I concluded that this question was still too broad and needed to be honed.

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[2] But also as a human being.

This broad question served as the seed from which the more specific research question sprouted (see Figure 3):

- What are the contexts, conditions, and attributes of the *comunidad*-building conversations of a campus leader?
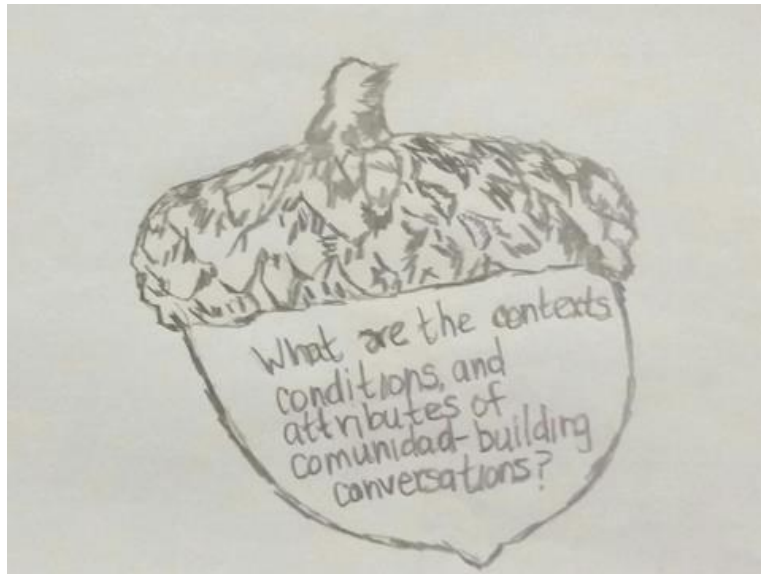
Figure 3. Acorn sprouts of contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations.

This question led me to approach Paul and propose our collaboration in conducting my investigations using Paul's narratives about his dialogical *comunidad*-building experiences in the Baum ISD schools. As a campus leader, I knew Paul self-identified as dialogical leader. As the principal of the Baum's elementary, middle, and high schools, would be a key informant for my research (Patton 2002). Additionally, I had heard that Paul used conversations to build *comunidad* with his *colegas*. I simply did not know what this looked like and sounded like in practice. Along these same lines, my self-questioning bore fruit and produced the following subquestions that guided my research into the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations:

- Why are *comunidad*-building conversations important to effective campus leadership?

- How will I use the findings of this research to guide my own efforts to become an authentic dialogical campus leader?

- How can this research contribute to the school improvement and school leadership literature?

In particular, the question of the importance of *comunidad*-building conversations to effective campus leadership came to mind when I recalled a conversation I had with an *amiga* about two key campus leadership events at Sam Houston. Monica asked whether she could interview me for a project on school leadership that she was working on for a class.. I agreed, and it turned out to be a fertile opportunity to reflect further on the problem of campus leadership that I was researching. I cringed as I recalled and told her about the one-on-one meeting with the teacher whom I mentioned above and about the time that I took my *colega's* newspaper during the curriculum meeting. However, that was only the beginning of our conversation.

"So, is the learning about school leadership from these events."

"The point is that school leaders can be very dehumanizing. I mean, my first year teaching I worked with an assistant principal who saw no problem with regularly telling jokes about wetbacks. When I first became an assistant principal, I sat in on a meeting in which my principal literally berated a teacher into resigning because his irritable bowel syndrome forced him to leave his class unattended to go the bathroom. Don't get me wrong, I recognized that leaving his class unsupervised on a regular basis was a problem, and I agree that the principal needed to address that matter. I just did not agree with the manner in which she did it."

"That makes sense. Her approach was not what one would call a very humane way of addressing the situation. (She paused for a bit, jotting some notes.) Are there any other experiences you recall along these same lines?"

"When I look back on my time at Sam Houston (trying to stay focused on the question she asked me instead of the camera sitting on a tripod), I recall often experiencing a sense of fragmentation and isolation as well. It was like I was constantly on the outside looking in."

"That's interesting. Tell me more about that."

"Well, one of the most common contexts in which I experienced this fragmentation and isolation was during our faculty meetings. I mean, you and I both know what these meetings can be like, right?"

"Sure, but can you give me a specific example of a faculty meeting where you experienced this fragmentation and isolation?"

"Hmm. Actually, I can. A faculty meeting took place early on in my second year at Sam Houston. During this faculty meeting we had planned to establish the process through which consensus would be reached during future faculty meetings."

"Consensus building. Nice."

"The meeting started really positive. A lot of our teacher leaders who saw themselves as disenfranchised from the decision-making process were really encouraged by the prospect of creating what they saw as a much-needed and desired way for their voices to be heard. For them, this meeting meant that a long-due change was finally at hand."

"That's great!"

"It was great (feeling myself mentally carried back to the meeting at Sam Houston like in those television shows where the start of a flashback was signaled by a fadeout of the scene accompanied by the strumming of a harp). And as a result, Mrs. DiCarlo, our principal, along with me and the other instructional coaches went into this faculty meeting with really high expectations."

"Ok. So what happened?"

"What happened? What happened is we got *way* more than we bargained for (somewhat sarcastically and rolling my eyes. Intrigued, Monica leaned forward in her chair, setting her pen and notepad aside on the coffee table in front of her.)"

I take it the meeting fell short of your expectations?"

"We didn't even come close! Within the first 10–15 minutes of discussion, arguments broke out between members of grade-level teams, and those of us charged with facilitating the meeting quickly realized that we failed to see this chaos looming over the horizon."

"Chaos (picking up her pad and pen to take notes)?"

"If you can believe it, at the center of the debate were two issues: how we defined consensus and the process through which consensus would be reached. For the sake of saving time, instead of collaboratively developing the definition consensus and the process through which consensus would be reached our leadership team came to the meeting with a predetermined definition and process. Moreover, this oversight "bit us on the ass!"

"Easy with the swearing (admonishing and adding a quick slap on my wrist)! I have to be able to show this video at a conference."

"Sorry."

"No problem. Just keep it PG [parental guidance]. So then what happened?"

"*¡Más*[3]chaos! Before long, the finger-pointing started, with one teacher standing up and saying, "I do not know about the rest of you, but it is obvious to me that the administration's attempt to get us to accept their definition of consensus shows that they are not sincere about including everyone in the decision-making process! This is the same old 'bull' again!" (pausing and expecting Monica to slap my wrist again."

"And?"

"And she just kept going. 'They make a decision, and then pretend to include us in the process!' The nit picking and arguing continued, and a few minutes later, another teacher angrily called out, 'No one here even knows what consensus means!'"

"You're kidding?"

"Nope! And the meeting continued like this until we had gone way passed the designated time allotted for this agenda item. I worried that things would continue like this, but then it came to an abrupt end when a whole grade-level team got up and started to walk out."

"The whole team?"

"The whole team! And when I attempted to convince them to stay their team leader argued with me saying, 'Our union representative told us that we cannot be forced to stay past the end of our duty day, and that was 3:15. It is already 4:30. We are leaving.' And with that, others got up and started to leave, effectively ending the meeting."

"That's crazy!"

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[3] More.

"I know! I was in shock. I had never seen anything like that in any faculty meeting. I mean, I do not know what was harder to believe, that people just walked out of the faculty meeting or that the cause of them walking out was that we could not come to consensus about coming to consensus!"

Thinking back on this meeting as part of my research for my dissertation made me wonder how the meeting could have been different if we as a leadership team had taken a more collaborative approach with our *colegas*. "But," I thought to myself, for that to happen, we would had to have learned a different way of leading. In addition, I do not know whether this kind of learning is part of the principal certification process. Perhaps my research can have an impact on this process."

My conversation with Monica continued.

"I totally understand how this would leave you shocked. So, what were the effects from that meeting? I mean, there were other faculty meetings after that one, right?"

"Yes."

"So were there any other meetings that played out the same way?"

"Unfortunately, yes. Not long after the meeting in which we failed to reach a consensus about consensus—the irony of this meeting is still not lost on me, by the way—another faculty meeting deteriorated into a similar melee of finger-pointing, accusations, and outright disrespect. This time, Mrs. Jones, the English Language Arts Department chairperson tried to lead a discussion to address our *colegas'* concerns about the overemphasis on getting students to pass the state exams at the end of the year. When it was her turn to talk, I braced myself for what could happen. Mrs. Jones got up and said,

'Focusing so much on getting students to pass the TAKS[4] test is causing some of our teachers to accuse each other of teaching to the test, but we have to realize that we are expected to make sure that we do our jobs and make sure that we prepare students for the TAKS test because that is how they will be judged. And so will we as a campus.' Then she talked about the accountability system and what it meant for students and for us as a campus and how we could and should go about teaching in a more balanced way in the coming year."

"And how did people respond to what she said?"

"Not well. I kept looking around the room to see how people were responding to what she said. There were a few nods of cautious agreement from some of our *colegas*, eye-rolls, and frowns of disagreement from a larger group including a good number of English teachers, and aloof looks of indifference from others."

"OK, but that's not too bad."

"That wasn't the end of it, though. In the middle of talking about our obligation as educators to ensure that our students were well-prepared to pass the state exams, Mrs. Jones was interrupted by Mr. Leffler, a teacher in own department, saying, 'You are a sellout! You are siding with the school administration when you should be advocating for students and for us teachers who have to deal with the stress and anxiety of these tests. If students do not pass the tests, they are threatened with retention and we are threatened with nonrenewal. This is not what we agreed to present during our department meeting, and you know it!' When another member of the English Language Arts Department got after Mr. Leffler for not being a team player and being unprofessional, Leffler got really

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[4] Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.

upset and went after him saying, 'How can you say we are a team, Chris,' holding his hands up and making quotation signs with his fingers when he said team. 'Our voices are not even heard? I'm not going to stay here and let you accuse me of not being a team player when our leadership does not work as a team and we are not even treated as professionals.' And then he walked out of the meeting, followed by other members of the English department."

"Another walk out?"

"Yes. Another meeting ended with people walking out. And , another opportunity to build *comunidad* was wasted!"

"Sad."

"I know! Of course, at the time, I did not see it that way. I lacked the *comunidad-*building consciousness even to look at it from that perspective."

"So, how did you look at it?"

"I was frustrated, but not surprised. I was not privy to the English Department's meeting where they discussed what they would say at the meeting, but I knew there was dissent in the ranks. In addition, I knew whom Mr. Leffler the leader of the dissent was and that he saw himself as an advocate for students and his fellow teacher leaders. So did the ELA[5] instructional coach. Moreover, so did DiCarlo. Looking back, by not making use of that knowledge and meeting with the English Department as a leadership team, we contributed as much to the debacle at the meeting as any of the dissenting teachers."

"So, you basically set up the department chair for failure."

"Yeah, you're right. We did." (See Figure 4.)

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[5] English Language Arts.

Figure 4. The acorn of research sprouted root.

Digging Further Into the Literature and Myself

Recalling and reflecting on my lived experiences as an ESL coach at Sam Houston serious questions: Do I allow myself to be questioned by others with respect to how I come across in front of a group of teacher and campus leaders? Do I challenge myself to honestly and constantly question and deconstruct my leadership and conversation styles to be an effective campus leader? Most important of all, do I build the necessary relationships with *colegas* in a way that honors their knowledge, skill, and lived experience?

These questions brought about realizations that connected to the relevant literature for my dissertation. At Sam Houston, verbally couching myself as a leader whom they needed to follow caused them to not listen to me, much less follow me. Even worse, my demeanor led my *colegas* not to want to participate in discussions altogether. "How was that good for anyone," I asked myself, "especially the students we all wanted to see be successful?" As a result, rather than engaging in dialogical and liberating leadership of

Freire (2003), I was enacting the leadership of the oppressor, and once again my enacted beliefs were in direct contradiction to my stated beliefs.

In addition to contradicting my espoused belief in dialogical leadership about which I learned in my reading of Freire (2003), my actions went against my espoused belief in Wheatley's (2002) call for leaders to turn to one another and talk with not at each other and Block's (2009) teaching that leading means inviting others into the conversation so that all voices, not one, is heard. Ironically, I also realized that instead of building *comunidad* with and among my *colegas*, I was in fact sowing the seeds of alienation, resentment, and division.

This reality was evident in my *colegas'* complaints to Mrs. DiCarlo and her decision to change the format in which I met and worked with teacher leaders. I thought about Sister Christine's (as cited in Rogers, 1990) experience with Ernie Cortez and I pictured the scene in my mind again. "My meeting with Mrs. DiCarlo was my Ernie meeting," I concluded. Another image came to mind, but this time it was about myself. I was the fairy-tale emperor who, after a lifetime of parading around in what he deemed was the cloak and garments of leadership, found himself suddenly realizing that he was in fact not wearying any clothes at all (Anderson, 1837)! I was attempting to sell myself as a leader to my *colegas* in the same way that Ernie Cortez argued that one must not go about developing relationships: "When you sell, you tend to be arrogant. You know it all. You build yourself up and you quit listening. You're not attentive" (Rogers, 1990, p. 59).

At the same time, the ability to ask questions evidenced a major shift in my worldview, a shift away from the enacted beliefs that were biased. Years ago, I wouldn't have asked these questions. However, recalling and reflecting on the events of my time at

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Sam Houston force me to ask some hard questions of myself, and admit that had I not

stopped to reflect on these events for my research, I may never have asked them.

In essence, realizing just how naked the emperor was resulted in what Kuhn

(1970) called a paradigm clash. Kuhn (1970) referred to the proverb, "'It is the poor

carpenter who blames his tools'" (p. 80). When I applied the same proverb to my

circumstances and lived experience, I determined that my version of the proverb would

read, "It is the poor teacher–communicator who blames the learner–listener." Taken a

step further and analyzed critically through the Freirian (2003) lens of the teacher–student

and student–teacher relationship and the concepts of banking education and problem-

posing education I deduced that the proverb would read, "It is the poor teacher who

oppresses learners by ignoring what he must learn from students, and by imposing his

thinking on them."

My application of Kuhn (1970) as a lens for understanding the internal revolution

that I had experienced was critical because his thinking encapsulated the depth of the

internal disruption that resulted in my research into *comunidad*-building conversations.

For Kuhn a paradigm was more than the rules that one accepts for how the world worked;

a paradigm in effect comprised one's entire worldview and that of a *comunidad* at large.

Moreover, this worldview remained in place so long as it continued to work for the

individual or *comunidad*. However, in the course of time, Kuhn observed that situations

or anomalies arose because of new learning that challenged the efficacy, viability, and

accuracy of that worldview. When such a disruption occurred, the *comunidad* or

individual became aware that the current paradigm had broken down and no longer

worked. Kuhn (1970) framed this dynamic as changes in the sciences:

If awareness of anomaly plays a role in the emergence of new sorts of phenomena, it should surprise no one that a similar but more profound awareness is prerequisite to all acceptable change of theory. On this point, historical evidence is entirely unequivocal. The state of Ptolemaic astronomy was a scandal before Copernicus' announcement. Galileo's contributions to the study of motion depended closely upon difficulties discovered in Aristotle's theory by scholastic critics. Newton's new theory of light and color originated in the discovery that knew none of the existing pre-paradigm theories would account for the length of the spectrum, and the wave theory that replaced Newton's was announced in the midst of growing concern about the anomalies in the relation of diffraction and polarization effects to Newton's theory. Thermodynamics was born from the collision of two existing nineteenth-century physical theories, and quantum mechanics from a variety of difficulties surrounding blackbody radiation, specific heats, and the photo electric effect. Furthermore, in all these cases except that of Newton the awareness of anomaly had lasted so long and penetrated so deep that one can appropriately describe the fields affected by it as in a state of growing crisis. Because it demands large-scale paradigm destruction and major shifts in the problems and techniques of normal science, the emergence of new theories is generally preceded by a period of pronounced professional insecurity. As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should. Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones. (p. 67)

In my case, the existing rules of my worldview (i.e., my enacted command-and-control leadership orientation from inauthentic conversations that resulted from my image

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of myself and my spoken beliefs) as a burgeoning campus leader failed to produce the results that I had hoped for as an ESL coach. Even more disruptive was the fact that my worldview failed to solve the problems that resulted from my enacted beliefs at Sam Houston. This failure created in me a powerful sense of disruption and disequilibrium strong enough to cause me to question my current paradigm and seek a new one.

Therefore, I had once again to stop, reflect, and deliberately deconstruct how I carried myself and how I came across in class. I revisited Ernie Cortez's conversation with Sister Christine, and I revisited Freire (2002), Wheatley (2002), Block (2009), and other scholars who had written about dialogue, conversation, and leadership. I realized that I had to develop an entirely new paradigm of what it meant to be an authentic dialogical leader to lead a campus effectively. I looked to the literature to help find a new direction for myself and other campus leaders.

"What did I learn from Habermas' (2004a, 2004b) concept of communicative action," I asked myself. Returning to Habermas (2004a, I found the following statement that spoke directly to my transformation journey:

> I shall speak of *communicative* action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through actions of reaching understanding . . . . Reaching understanding [*Verständigung*] is considered to be a process of reaching agreement [*Einigung*] among speaking and acting subjects . . . . A communicatively achieved agreement, or one that is mutually presupposed in communicative action, is propositionally differentiated. Owing to this linguistic structure, it cannot be merely induced through outside influence; it has to be accepted or presupposed as valid by the participants . . . it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in

the situation directly or strategically through influencing the decisions of

opponents . . . . Agreement rests on common *convictions*. The speech act of one

person success only if the other accepts the offer contained in by taking (however

implicitly) a "yes" or "no" position on a validity claim that is in principal

criticizeable. Both ego, who raises a validity claim with his utterance, and alter,

who recognizes or rejects it, base their decision on potential grounds or reasons.

(pp. 285–286, 287)

"There's the rub, Enriqué," I told myself reading and re-reading this excerpt. "The

action you expected to bring about at Sam Houston did not take place because you

engaged your *colegas* during the curriculum meetings by imposing rather than proposing

your ideas and beliefs. You needed to put the ESL strategies, data, and information on the

table for your *colegas* to consider. This way, they could determine the validity of what

you proposed based on their values, beliefs, knowledge, skill, and experiences so they

could be successful. Instead, you went in with the intent of succeeding for yourself rather

than the intent of building understanding of the matters at hand. This was the rub in how

you initiated curriculum meetings and in class."

"But what about when I shifted my strategy using the newsletter and asking my

colegas at Sam Houston to allow me to teach a model lesson so that they could see the

efficacy of the strategies? Was this not more in line with communicative action than the

curriculum meeting?" Clearly, the answer was no, and my revisiting of Habermas (2004a

led me to why:

On the other hand, not every linguistically mediated interaction is an example of

action oriented to reaching understanding. Without doubt, there are countless

cases of indirect understanding, where one subject gives another something to

understand through signals, indirectly gets him to form a certain opinion or adopt

certain intentions by way of inferentially working up perceptions of the situation;

or where, on the basis of an already habitual communicative practice of everyday

life, this is, induces him to behave in a desired way by manipulatively employing

linguistic means and thereby instrumentalizes him for his own success. Such

examples of the use of language with an orientation to consequences seem to

decrease the value of speech acts as the model for action oriented to reaching

understanding. (p. 288)

Granted, many teacher leaders have heard of or have lived the experience of a

colega conducting a model lesson in their classroom with the expectation that he or she

would use this learning opportunity to enhance their own practice. However, Habermas'

(2004a) words helped me to understand that at that particular point and time, my initial

actions had already alienated my *colegas* to the extent that they saw my offer to teach a

model lesson in their classroom as a form of manipulation on my part instead of a

genuine opportunity for them to gain an understanding of the efficacy of the English

language learner (ELL) strategies that I wanted them to use.

As far as they were concerned, I concluded, my *colegas* saw me as an outsider, an

unscrupulous carpetbagger peddling his wares for his own gain who wanted to enter the

sacred space that was their classrooms. I can only imagine what they thought when they

read the newsletter. "Oh, so now he wants us to invite him into our classrooms. Yeah,

right!" These thoughts were even more impactful when I realized that I approached the

situation in the same way that the leadership team and I approached the consensus

meeting. I didn't even include my *colegas* in the process of problem solving. I should

have reached out and talked with them and asked for their ideas and feedback about how

to better work with them. Instead, I came up with a solution, packaged it, and tried to sell it to them as we did the consensus-building process.

I put down Habermas (2004a, and picked up Freire's (2003) work in which I revisited his dialogical method for liberating dialogue. Here too, in Freire's (2003), I found clearer direction regarding my missed steps with my *colegas* at Sam Houston: "Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage of their struggle for liberation. The content of the dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive their reality" (p. 65).

"Aha," I thought. "There it is! That was one of my first mistakes with my *colegas*! Not once did I stop to find out where they were on their own historical journey, their experiences, their learning. And instead of learning from this mistake with the curriculum meetings, I repeated it again with the ESL newsletter."

That is not to say that I saw them as oppressed at the time. In all honestly, I saw my Sam Houston *colegas* as oppressors of the students they sought to teach, a perception and underlying assumption of mine that further explained the manner in which I engaged them. On the contrary, I was the one acting as an oppressor. In this respect, Freire's (2003) words spoke clearly to me with regard the nature of the dialogue that must occur for authentic change to take place:

> But to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiqué for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to

lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (p. 65)

"Ah! There too was a missed-step! Were there instructional issues at Sam Houston," I asked myself "Yes. Was there a need for change with respect to how ESL students were taught? Yes. And could I have contributed to finding solutions to these issues? Again, yes." But instead of engaging my *colegas* in authentically critical dialogue on how *we* could go about making these changes, I went in, demanding that they use culturally relevant instruction, develop students' cognitive academic language proficiency, and be conscious of students' affective filter. I didn't realize that these "slogans" were all part of my monologue rather than a critical dialogue about how to best meet the needs of our students. Moreover, to top it off, I then attempted to mend fences with my *colegas*, not by engaging in dialogue with them, but with a communiqué in the form of the newsletter!

Freire's (2003) admonitions about treating people as objects sparked another epiphany linked to the literature. "Where have I heard that concept before," I asked myself. "Of course, Buber's *I–Thou*!" Buber (1996) discussed the relationship between the speaker and the person to whom or with whom she speaks stating the following:

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak. The basic words are not single words but word pairs. One basic word is the word pair I–You. The other basic word is the word pair I–It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It. Thus[,] the I of man is also twofold. For the I of the basic word I–You is different from the basic word I–It. Basic

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words do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken[,]

they establish a mode of existence. (p. 53)

"This reading," I told myself, "is profoundly relevant to my research into *comunidad*-building conversations." In the I–It, the relationship between the speaker and the person being spoken to was that of subject and object while the relationship between the speaker and the person with whom the speaker speaks was that of subject and subject. When I spoke to or at my Sam Houston *colegas*, I did so from the I–It conversational orientation, thereby, treating them as objects upon which I acted rather than seeing them as subjects with whom I interacted, engaged, lived, and coexisted.

At the same time, for Buber (1996), the I–It relationship was void of language: "Here the relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language. The creatures stir across from us, but they are unable to come to us, and the You we say to them sticks to the threshold of language" (p. 57). In contrast, had I addressed my *colegas* from an I–You conversational disposition, I would have addressed them according to what Buber (1996) called the sphere of life with men: "Here, the relation is wrapped in a cloud but reveals itself, it lacks but creates language. We hear no You and yet feel addressed; we answer—creating, thinking, acting" (p. 57). "This is where I should have been," I realized after I reread Buber (1996). "I should have engaged my Sam Houston *colegas* not as objects but as subjects, as people with whom I could have and should be creating, thinking, and acting!"

The distinction became even clearer when I went back to the prologue of the *I and Thou* (1996) text in which Kaufman, the editor, noted the following:

Innumerable are the ways in which I treat You as a means. I ask your help, I ask for information, I may buy from you what you have made, and you sometimes

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dispel my loneliness. Nor do I count the ways in which you treat me as a means.

You ask my help, you ask me questions, you may buy what I have written, and at

times I ease your loneliness. Even when you treat me *only* as a means I do not

always mind. A genuine encounter can be quite exhausting, even when it is

exhilarating, and I do not always want to give myself. Even when you treat me

only as a means because you want some information, I may feel delighted that I

have the answer and can help. But man's attitudes are manifold, and there are

many ways of treating others as ends *also*. There are many modes of I–You. You

may be polite when asking; you may show respect, affection, admiration, or one

of the countless attitudes that men call love. Or you may not ask but seek without

benefit of words. Or you may speak but not ask, possibly responding to my

wordless question. We may do something together. You may write to me. You

may think of writing to me. And there are many other ways. There are many

modes of I–You. The total encounter in which You is spoken with one's whole

being is but one mode of I–You. And it is misleading if we assimilate all the other

modes of I–You to I–It. (p. 16-17)

Reading this explanation, I thought more and more about my experiences with my

colegas at Sam Houston. "The fact of the matter," I thought to myself, "is that I espoused

the belief in treating *colegas* as 'You' but in reality I dealt with them as 'It.'" At best, I

had treated my Sam Houston *colegas* as means for addressing the learning needs of our

ESL students; at worst, I treated them as as problems and as means to my success. Either

way, my enacted beliefs fell far short of my espoused beliefs.

As time went on and I revisited more of the literature to which I was exposed in

my masters and doctoral studies, I saw that I was truly learning the spirit rather than

merely the letter of what they wrote, as if I was truly listening and understanding their

significance. "It is almost as if the readings are speaking to me directly and specifically

about my lived experiences and guiding me in my research into *comunidad*-building

conversations," I told myself. I reread and really took to heart Nodding's (1997)

explanation of the ethic of care:

>Clearly, in professions where encounter is frequent and where the ethical ideal of
>
>the other is necessarily involved, I am first and foremost one-caring and, second,
>
>enactor of specialized functions. As teacher, I am, first, one-caring . . . . She is
>
>present to the other and places her motive power in his service . . . she starts from
>
>a position of respect or regard for the projects of the other. (pp. 471, 472)

This excerpt hit me as hard as when I thought about the curriculum meetings and

especially the one-on-one meeting I had with my *colega* at Sam Houston. "When you

conducted the curriculum meetings, Enrique," I reminded myself, "you were a teacher

and as such you should have been first and foremost one-caring, but you were not!

Instead of focusing your energies on caring for your *colegas*, you 'put the cart before the

horse' and focused on the specialized functions you wanted them to perform!" I read

Noddings (1997) further.

>The teacher's power is, thus, awesome. It is she who presents the "effective
>
>world" to the student. In doing this, she realizes that the student, as ethical agent,
>
>will make his own selection from the presented possibilities and so, in a very
>
>important sense, she is prepared to put her motive energy in the service of his
>
>projects. She has already had a hand in selecting those projects and will continue
>
>to inform them, but the objectives themselves must be embraced by the
>
>student…The special gift of the teacher, then, is to receive the student, to look at

the subject matter with him. Her commitment is to him, the cared-for, and he is—

through that commitment—set free to pursue legitimate projects. (p. 472)

"Just think how different, how powerful, meaningful, and transformative the curriculum

meetings could have been for your *colegas* and for *you*, and for your students, Enrique," I

said to myself, "if you had lived this belief!" It was as if I was reading Noddings (1997)

again for the first time, learning anew, and seeing with new eyes, especially when I read

this excerpt that got to the heart of the missed opportunities of the curriculum meetings:

Besides engaging in dialogue, the teacher also provides a model. To support her

students as one-caring, she must show them herself as one-caring. Hence[,] she is

not content to enforce rules—and may even refuse occasionally to do so—but she

continually refers the rules to their ground in caring. If she confronts a student

who is cheating, she may begin by saying, *I know you want to do well,* or *I know*

you want to help your friend. She begins by attributing the best possible motive to

him, and then she proceeds to explain—fully, with many of her reservations

expressed freely—why she cannot allow him to cheat. She does not need to resort

to punishment, because the rules are not sacred to her. What matters is the

student, the cared-for, and how he will approach ethical problems as a result of his

relationship to her…a teacher cannot "talk" this ethic. She must live it, and that

implies establishing a relationship with the student. (p. 474)

When I read this excerpt, I of course understood that my *colegas* were not

students caught cheating. They were adult professionals, and I understood that many of

them were honestly struggling in their teaching ESL students in their classrooms despite

their most concerted efforts. Therefore, I, as one-caring, should have started the

curriculum meetings saying, "I know you are doing your best, and I am sure that some of

you are having more success than others. Our goal here is to engage in dialogue with each other to identify what is working and what is not working. My role is to provide training and support so that you can be successful in your classrooms so that, that in turn, your students can be successful." What a difference that could have made.

Eventually, I made my way to rereading Guajardo and Guajardo's (2008) conceptualization of *plática*. Articulating what *plática* means to them, Guajardo and Guajardo (2008) noted the following:

> We learned at a young age that the *plática* was an act of sharing ideas, experiences, and stories. This process was reciprocal as our parents gave us an opportunity to pose questions or just provide the platform to exercise their skills . . . . The *pláticas* created the state for the game of life. Everybody had an opportunity to display skills; this display was not about schooling, however; it was about teaching, learning, and sharing . . . . The *plática* created the knowledge and allowed for the multiple realities to be (re)presented without being ridiculed. (p. 66)

Again, my mind went back to the missed opportunities of the curriculum meetings and even my doctoral classes. "¡*Imagínate nomás*, Enrique,"[6] I told myself. "All of the knowledge and skill that could have been shared by your *colegas* at Sam Houston if you had only taken time to invite them to share their stories, to engage each other in a real dialogue. Imagine what you could have shared with them if you had shared your story, your lived experiences, instead of relying on contrivances like your degree or your title as a starting point. The teaching and learning that could have taken place during your

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[6] Just imagine, Enrique!

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meetings with your *colegas* and then in classrooms with students would have been incredible!" These thoughts became even more poignant for me when I read this from Guajardo and Guajardo (2008):

> There was great laughter, but there was even more admiration for eveyone's willingness to participate in the *plática*, and even more in the collective growth. It made sense that when we grew up and became teachers and researchers we would use this same strategy to teach and learn. The *plática* as method is authentic and has an inherent and robust quality . . . . The *plática* pushes the researchers' comfort zone, for without authenticity, the *plática* will not yield the necessary currency needed for building community and conducting sound research. The *plática* requires the facilitator to become open and vulnerable, as the *plática* process becomes reciprocal. (p. 67)

"Great laughter! Collective growth! Willingness to participate! What more could I or any other campus leader want to see and experience with their *colegas* during a curriculum meeting or any other meeting for that matter?" I asked myself. This question remained in my mind long after I closed the text. I felt as if I was going through my coursework all over again, only this time, I had the benefit of lived experience and the realization of the need to change my conversational orientation to become the authentic dialogical leader whom I wanted to be. I was tarting over, and the prospect of doing so was frightening. I felt like an old dog having to learn to new tricks. "How am I going to do this," I asked myself. "I'm ack to square one having to unlearn what I thought was a solid foundation of leadership knowledge and skill to develop a whole new set along with a mindset I thought I already had firmly in place."

The Gap in the Literature Between Theory and Practice

Further reflection revealed that additional roots informed my research, including my lived experience and the literature (see Figures 5 and 6).
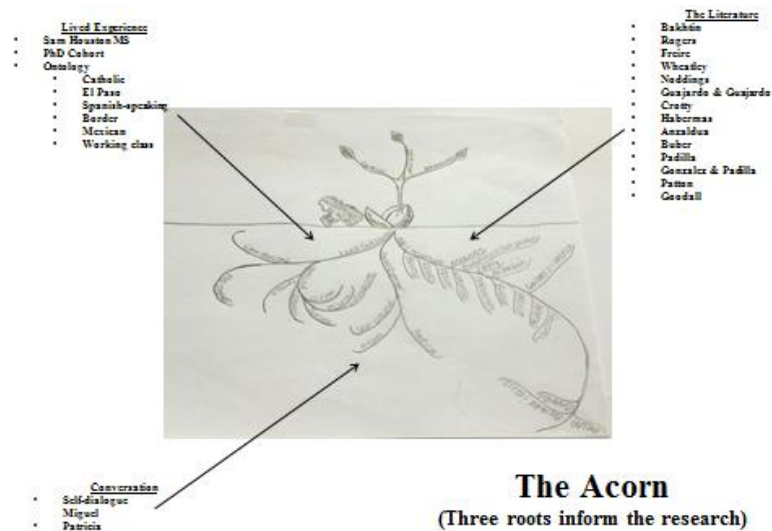
Figure 5. The three acorn roots that inform the research begin to grow.
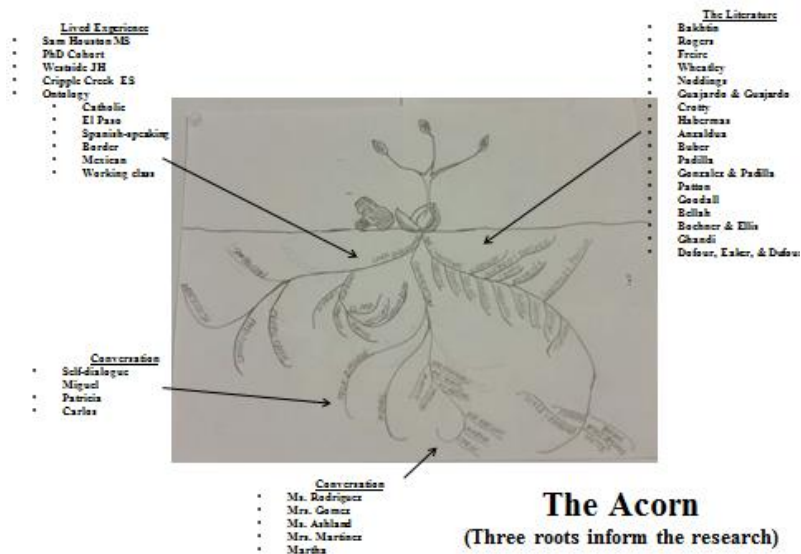
Figure 6. The three acorn roots that inform the research continue to grow.

To make a break with the past I came to understand that campus leaders must use authentic dialogue to build *comunidad* in schools in an ongoing and collaborative process. As Freire (2000) noted,

If communication and intercommunication represent processes that speak to life about the support system, in the existential experience they acquire a special connotation. In this instance, both communication and intercommunication involve the comprehension of the world. The life-support world does not imply a language or the erect posture that permitted the liberation of the hands. The life-support becomes the world and life becomes existence to the degree that there is an increasing solidarity between the mind and the hands. In other words, this change depends upon the proportion to which the human body becomes a conscient body that can capture, apprehend, and transform the world so it ceases being an empty space to be filled by contents. (pp. 32–33)

For this comprehension of the world, Freire (2003) went to say that *comunidad* or *comunión* must exist: "*Communion* in turn elicits *cooperation*, which brings leaders and people to the *fusion* described by Guevara.[7] This fusion can exist only if revolutionary action is really human, empathetic, loving, communicative, and humble, to be liberating" (p. 171).

In addition to Freire (2003), other readings and learning that I did as part of doctoral work influenced my understanding of the need to engage in authentic *comunidad*-building conversations. For example, Block (2009), echoing my learning from Kuhn (1970), referred to the nature of the great internal shifts that one's worldview and lens undergo when engaged in the complex work of *comunidad*-building:

What makes community building so complex is that it occurs in an infinite number of small steps, sometimes in quiet moments that we notice out of the

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[7] Che Guavara's call for communion with the peasants of Cuba's Sierra Madre as a necessary element in his revolutionary efforts.

corner of our eye. It calls for us to treat as important many things that we thought were incidental. An afterthought becomes the point; a comment made in passing defines who we are more than all that came before. If the artist is one who captures the nuance of experience, then this is whom each of us must become. The need to see through the eyes of the artist reflects the intimate nature of community, even if it is occurring among large groups of people. (p. 10)

Furthermore, in what he calls restorative communities, Block (2009) noted,

Restoration comes from the choice to value possibility and relatedness over problems, self-interest, and the rest of the stuck community's agenda. It hinges on the accountability chose by citizens and their willingness to connect with each other around promises they make to each other. (p. 47)

Similarly, I found that Block's conceptualization of *comunidad* spoke to my ontological self as part of this research. Block (2009) framed *comunidad* according to the kinds of conversations that took place in restorative *comunidades* and underscored the changes in paradigm that must take place to move towards a state of restorative *comunidad*.

Restoration is created by the kinds of conversations we initiate with each other. These conversations are the leverage point for an alternative future. The core question that underlies each conversation is "What can we create together?" Shifting the context from retribution to restoration will occur through language that moves in the following directions: from problems to possibility; from fear and fault to gifts, generosity and abundance; from law and oversight to social fabric and chosen accountability; from corporation and systems to associational life; and from leaders to citizens. (p. 47)

Reading this excerpt, I again thought back to the consensus faculty meeting and testing faculty meeting, and imagined how different those gatherings would have been if our leadership team would have engaged teacher leaders in the process of cocreating with each other as an authentic *comunidad* rather than focusing on individual agendas. As Block noted, "Community is something more than a collection of individual longings, desires, and possibilities" (p. 48). Unfortunately, those two faculty meetings were more like Block's description of the individualistic world where "we can congregate a large collection of self-actualized people and still not hold the idea or experience of community" (p. 48).

Further consideration of my lived experiences like the consensus faculty meeting and the testing faculty meeting above also made me aware the need for *comunidad*-building conversations because of the lack of *confianza*[8] that existed between teacher leaders and campus leaders in the Sam Houston *comunidad*. According to Sergiovanni (2007l, Virtues), deficits in *confiana* or trust deficits have serious consequences for schools that seem to worsen over time:

- The less trust there is in a school, the more people keep things to themselves. The more people keep to themselves, the less trust there is.

- The less trust there is in a school, the more often ideas are hoarded. The more often ideas are hoarded, the less trust there is.

- The less trust there is in a school, the less likely people are to be helpful and open. The less likely that people are helpful and open, the less trust there is. (p. 159)

---

[8] Trust.

Sergiovanni (2007l) further discussed the importance of *confianza* in school *comunidades* in terms of the relationship between social capital and *comunidad*:

> Social capital and community are close cousins in relational trust. They are so close that it is doubtful that a school has only one of the cousins. Social capital is the support that students and teachers need to be more effective learners and doers. Relational trust refers to the quality and kind of social exchanges found in sets of role relationships. Trust is high when every party to the role set feels supported and safe. Support and safety are provided by social exchanges. Social capital and relational trust are the DNA of community. They are so integral to community life that operational definitions of community routinely include them. (pp. 158–159)

Looking back, I realized how this lack of *confianza* undermined the possibility that we would engage in authentic conversations during our faculty meetings, conversations that potentially could have served to build *comunidad*. It became clear to me that as the leadership team we failed to take into consideration the lack of *confianza* that permeated our school *cultura*. Teacher leaders lacked the *confianza* in each other and in the campus leadership team necessary for honest, productive dialogue to occur without people becoming angry and walking out. On a deeper level, we failed to acknowledge and address the fact that the dearth of *confianza* stemmed from our *colegas'* view of themselves as disenfranchised and dehumanized by a leadership—of which I was a member—that was perceived as primarily authoritarian, directive, and command-and-control in nature.

Additionally, I understood that we failed to see that as long as this reality remained any attempt to engage in authentic, honest, and productive conversations

individually and at the team or at the campus levels actually contributed to the *absence* of an enfranchising and humanizing ethos (Freire, 2003) within our campus *cultura* and *comunidad*. By neglecting to take steps to build *confianza*, our leadership team devalued and; therefore, we dehumanized our teacher and staff leaders alike, and detracted from our ability to realize our campus' full potential as human beings, educators, and leaders. As Sergiovanni (2007l) noted:

> Relational trust is the antidote to the vulnerability that is likely to be experienced by members of roles sets in schools. Regardless of how deep and thorough exchanges are among people in role sets, without trusting relationships, these exchanges likely would encourage self-protection and holding back, severely limiting the capacity for collaboration, learning, and improved performance. Without trusting relationships, reciprocal bonds of obligation found in role sets would be broken, hampering chances for schools to succeed. (p. 159)

Moreover, in failing to acknowledge and address the lack of *confianza*, the leadership team and I contributed to the isolation, fear, anxiety, self-interest, and a lack of a sense of belonging that characterized a fragmented *comunidad* instead of restorative and transformative *comunidades* (Block, 2009; see Figure 7). Block characterized a restorative *comunidades* as

> One of possibility, generosity, and gifts. Communities are human systems given form by conversations that build relatedness . . . . The future hinges on the accountability that citizens choose and their willingness to connect with each other around the promises they make to each other. (p. 178)

Lived Experience
- Sam Houston MS
- PhD Cohort
- Westside JH
- Cripple Creek ES
- Del Rio MS
- Easton ES
- Ontology
  - Catholic
  - El Paso
  - Spanish-speaking
  - Border
  - Mexican
  - Working class

Lived Experience
- Bakhtin
- Rogers
- Freire
- Wheatley
- Noddings
- Guajardo & Guajardo
- Crotty
- Habermas
- Anzaldua
- Buber
- Padilla
- Gonzalez & Padilla
- Patton
- Goodall
- Bellah
- Bochner & Ellis
- Ghandi
- Dufour, Eaker, & Dufour

Conversation
- Self-dialogue
- Miguel
- Patricia
- Carlos

Conversation
- Ms. Rodriguez
- Mrs. Gomez
- Ms. Ashland
- Mrs. Martinez
- Martha
- Carla
- Samuel

The Acorn
(Three roots inform the research)

Figure 7. Added life experiences and conversations.

My View of the Conversation in the Literature

The final step in my preparation to conduct my research into the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations was to articulate my current view and understanding of conversation according to the literature. Figure 8 depicts the theoretical nature and conceptualization of conversation that constituted my conversation orientation while conducting this research.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF
COMMUNITY-BUILDING
CONVERSATION
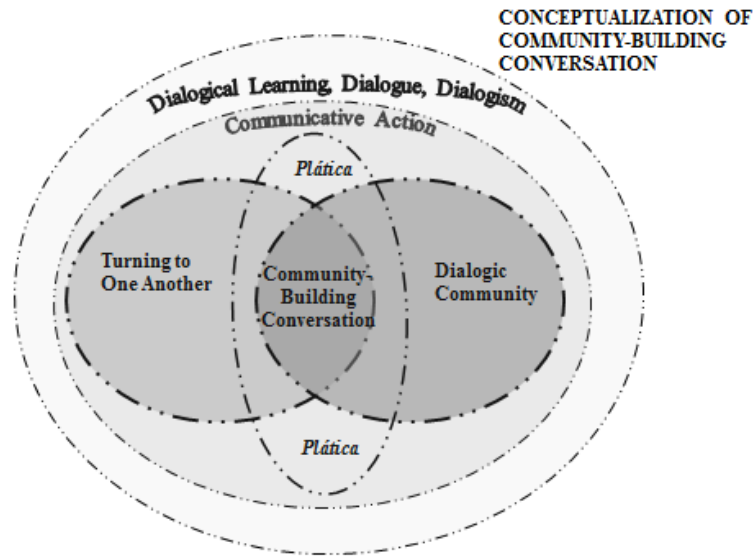
Figure 8. The theoretical nature and conceptualization of conversation.

Epistemologically, the center of this dynamically and constantly woven and rewoven

organic process is *comunidad*-building conversation. Conceptually, I found that, in

addition to *plática* (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008), my understanding of conversation for

this study was rooted and grew primarily concepts of dialogical learning, dialogue and

dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), communicative action (Habermas, 2004a, 2004b), dialogics

(Freire, 1990, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2000; Shor & Freire, 1986, 2001), *I–Thou* (Buber,

1996), and turning to one another (Wheatley, 2002).

In my graduate work, I had already been exposed to Freire's (1990, 2003, 1998a,

199b, 1999c, 2000) concept of dialogics, and I considered making it my starting point.

However, at the suggestion of Miguel, I began to look at Bakhtin's concepts of dialogue

and dialogism, and found them to be a more appropriate starting point. In particular,

Bakhtin (1984a) argued,

> The dialogic nature of consciousness. The dialogic nature of human life itself. The
>
> single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-*
>
> *ended dialogue.* To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, heed,

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to respond, to, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue, a person participates wholly

and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his

whole body and deeds. He invests his entire life in discourse, and this discourse

enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (p. 293)

"Using this," I thought, "as such, I will engage Paul's dialogue about his

comunidad-building conversations in with the Baum ISD ecology understanding that they

were influenced by his entire humanity, the entirety of his lived experiences as a child,

teenager, young adult, and into his present in the same way that I came to view my own

conversations as an enactment of the entirety of my own lived experience. As Paul shares

his narratives, I must understand that in essence Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations

in Baum had their origins in Paul's origins and were then shaped by the nature of the

Baum ecological fabric into which he wove himself as an educational leader."

Further reading led me to see what Bakhtin (1984a) considered to not dialogue in

his articulation of monologism:

Monologism at its extreme denies the existence outside itself of another

consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another *I* with equal

rights (*thou*). With a monologic approach . . . *another person* remains wholly and

merely an *object* of consciousness. No response is expected from it that could

change everything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and

deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any

decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some

degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be *ultimate word*. It closes

down the represented world and represented persons. (pp. 292–293)

Interestingly, Bakhtin's monologism led me back to see how Shor and Freire (1986) similarly provided a broad perspective of what conversation or dialogue is and what it is not:

> Dialogue is not a mere technique to achieve some cognitive results; dialogue is a means to transform social relations in the classroom, and to raise awareness about relations in society at large. Dialogue is a way to recreate knowledge as well as the way we learn. It is a mutual learning process where the teacher poses critical problems for inquiry. Dialogue rejects narrative lecturing where teacher talk silences and alienates students. In a problem-posing participatory format, the teacher and students transform learning into a collaborative process to illuminate and act on reality. This process is situated in the thought, language, aspirations, and conditions of the students. It is also shaped by the subject matter and training of the teacher, who is simultaneously a classroom researcher, a politician, and an artist. (p. 11)

Reading these quotes by Bakhtin (1984a, 1984b) and Shor and Freire (1986, 2001), I understood that they focused primarily on the teacher–student relationship. "That is very much true," I acknowledged, "but the spirit, the ethos, of the power and purpose of dialogue is not limited to the teacher–student relationship." In fact, the transformative potential of conversation to illuminate and act on reality is not only applicable but necessary and currently lacking in the relationship between and among teacher leaders and school leaders. Shor and Freire (1986, 2001) underscored the applicability of conversation within the realm of human interaction when they stated that, "Dialogue is a moment where human beings meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it," (p. 13). Similarly, Habermas' (2004a) concept of communicative action "came into play."

Finally, the concept of *communicative action* refers to the interaction of at least

two subjects capable of speech and action who established interpersonal relations

(whether by verbal or by extra verbal means). The actors seek to reach an

understanding about the action situation and their plans of action to coordinate

their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of *interpretation* refers in

the first instance to negotiation definitions of the situation which admit of

consensus. (p. 86)

Habermas' (2004a) focus on reaching understanding for action spoke to the importance

of dialogue.

For the communicative model of action, language is relevant only from the

pragmatic viewpoint that speakers, in employing sentences with an orientation

towards reaching understanding, take up relations to the world, not only directly .

. . but in a reflective way . . . . The concept of communicative action presupposes

language as the medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course which

participants, through relating to the world, reciprocally raise validity claims that

can be accepted or contested. (pp. 98, 99)

As with Bakhtin (1984a, 1984b), for Habermas (2004a) the process is ongoing,

In the case of communicative action, the interpretative accomplishments on which

cooperative processes of interpretation are based represent the mechanism for

coordinating action; communicative action is *not exhausted* by the act of reaching

understanding in an interpretative manner. (p. 101)

Along these same lines, in urging us to engage in conversation by turning to one

another, Wheatley (2002) noted,

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Most of what we do in communities and organizations focuses us on our

individual needs. We attend a conference or meeting for our own purposes, for

"what I can get out of this." Conversation is different. Although we each benefit

individually from good conversation, we also discover that we were never as

separate as we thought. Good conversation connects us at a deeper level. As we

share different human experiences, we rediscover a sense of unity. (p. 28)

Moreover, for this deeper form of conversation to take place, Wheatley (2002)

pointed out principles that must be in place:

We acknowledge one another as equals. We try to stay curious about each other.

We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners. We slow

down so we time to think and reflect. We remember that conversation is the

natural way humans think together. We expect it to be messy at times. (p. 29)

Lastly, Wheatley (2002) argued,

As we work together, to restore hope to the future, we need to include a new and

strange ally—our willingness to be disturbed. Our willingness to have our beliefs

and ideas challenged by what others think. No one person or perspective can give

us the answers we need to the problems of today. Paradoxically, we can only find

to answers by admitting we don't know. We have to be willing to let go of our

certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time. (p. 34)

Wheatley's argument really spoke to me because it reminded me of the need I had years

ago to be willing to be disturbed when I was Sam Houston and started my doctoral work.

From this literature, I came to understand conversation as a democratic, reflective,

process between and among agents actively and equitably engaged in relationships for the

purpose of creating and recreating the social DNA of conversations, the fabrics of

meaning, knowledge, and understanding that result in action. Moreover, I saw the nature of conversation such that agents engaged in these relationships continuously inserted and integrated their individual social proteins into their dialogues to weave, unweave, and reweave the social DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) of their dialogues as part of the process of critically constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing knowledge and understanding for their mutual benefit.

In this way, I also came to view my understanding of conversation as epistemological and action oriented in that in that the triple helix pointed to the process of knowledge creation as socially constructed. Thus, it was the dialogue between and among people that provided the initiating, sustaining, unifying, and transforming energy through which we invite and are invited to engage in democratic relationships with others to affect the world around them. Shor and Freire (1986) noted,

> In communicating among ourselves, in the process of knowing the reality which we transform, we communicate and know *socially,* even though the process of communicating, knowing, and changing has an individual dimension. But, the individual aspect is not enough to explain the process. Knowing is a social even with nevertheless an individual dimension. What is dialogue in this moment of communication, knowing and social transformation? Dialogue *seals* the relationship between cognitive subjects, the subjects who know, and who try to know. (p. 13)

Therefore, in the ecology of human relationships and interactions, I came to believe that conversations provide the tilling, seeds, soils, sun, water, and nurturing necessary for the cultivation of collaborative and transformative knowledge creation and action necessary for *comunidad* building.

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At the same time, there was a generative, self-organizing (Wheatley, 2006) aspect to this conceptualization of conversation. "As the three strands of the triple helix continuously come into contact," I concluded, "conversations themselves are then transformed into the fruit that we harvest from the process of human engagement and relationships that nourish and sustain future conversations as ongoing and organic human processes." These are the ecological processes that I believe will lead to caring and to mutually beneficial relationships I want to learn to cultivate as a campus leader. This is how we can begin to achieve what Block (2009) referred to as restorative and transformational *comunidades* that counteract our tendency towards isolated fragmented communities. (See Figure 9.)
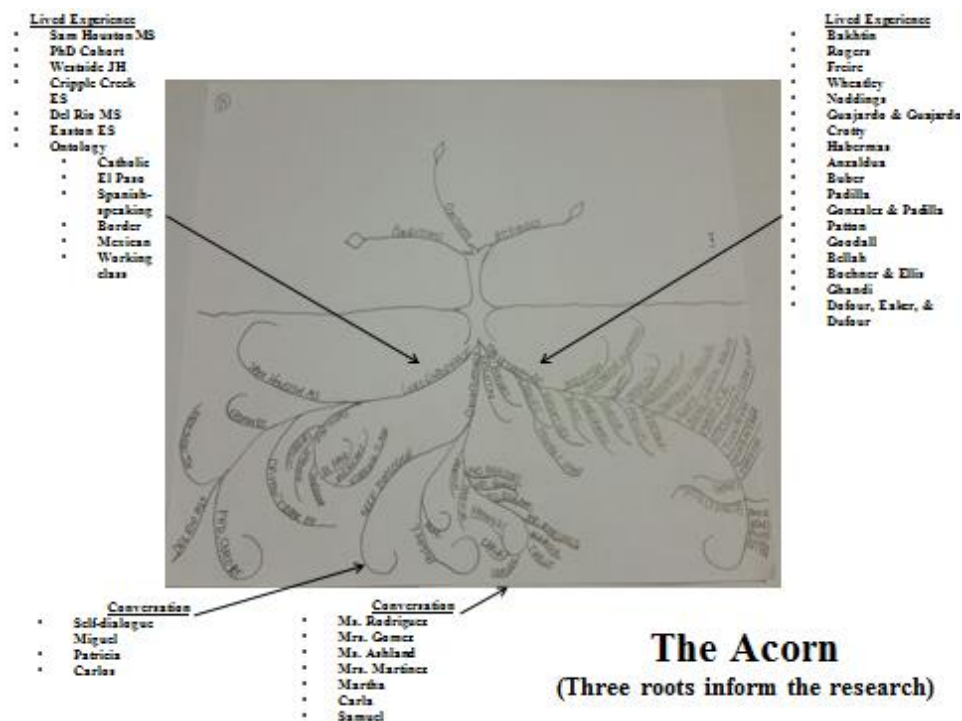
Figure 9. Literature root added the conversation literature.

II. BRINGING THE RESEARCH TO LIFE

Overview

Having decided to investigate the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations, I embarked on the research itself. In doing so, I wanted to continue to employ the biologically organic approach with which I began in Chapter 1, using the acorn metaphor. For Chapter 2, I chose to use the triple helix as the general framework for *comunidad*-building conversations. In this chapter, I delineate my rationale for using the triple helix as a model for *comunidad*-building conversations. Framing it as the theoretical, self-organizing system for this research, the general macro-, meso-, and microlevels of the triple helix are described. Additionally, I elaborate the triple helix of a person's conversation orientation. Here, the fundamental (macro), conversation (meso), and formative (micro) levels of *comunidad*-building conversation are described according to their constituent proteins, followed by an explanation of what conversations (one-on-one, small group, and large group) look like when framed within the triple helix. I then articulate my conceptualization of conversation using the relevant literature.

The Social DNA of Authentic *Comunidad*-Building Conversation

Biological origins. Through the course of my work as an educator, I came to view school *comunidades* as organic, living, breathing learning ecologies, like gardens. Consequently, for this research, I chose to employ a biological/ecological approach, in particular, the concept of self-reproducing, living systems. Wheatley (2006) pointed to self-reproducing, living systems that organically evolve and change over time, adapting and readapting in response to both internal and external stimuli.

This is a world that knows how to organize itself without command, control or charisma. Everywhere, life self-organizes as networks of relationships. When individuals discover a common interest or passion, they organize themselves and figure out how to make it happen. Self-organizing evokes creativity and results, creating strong, adaptive systems. Surprising new strengths and capacities emerge. (p. 170)

Moreover, on the flipside, Wheatley also spoke to the contrast between the self-organizing paradigm and the leadership paradigm from which I chose to walk away:

This real world stands in stark and absolute contrast to the world invented by Western thought. We believe that people, organizations, and world are machines, and we organize massive systems to run like clockwork in a steady-state world. The leader's job is to create stability and control, because without human intervention there is no hope for order. Without strong leadership, everything falls apart. It is assumed that most people are dull, not creative, that people need to be bossed around, that new skills develop only though training. People are motivated using fear and rewards; internal motivators such as compassion and generosity are discounted. These beliefs have created a world filled with disengaged workers who behave like robots, struggling in organizations that become more chaotic and ungovernable over time. And most importantly, as we cling ever more desperately to these false beliefs, we destroy our ability to respond to the major challenges of these times. (pp. 170–171)

"The consensus and testing meetings at Sam Houston," I thought, "are a great example of the self-organizing capacity of teacher leader *comunidades*. This is the same as with the curriculum meetings. In both cases, my *colegas* organized themselves in and

of themselves during their own formal and informal gatherings; they acted on their own, like an overgrown garden." I looked online for before-and-after descriptions of overgrown gardens and found one that fit the image. I had been self-organizing Sam Houston ecology and the need for *comunidad*-building conversations, and this advice from Gardening Know How (2016):

> Time can develop the most beautiful gardens or it can wreak havoc on what was once a carefully planned landscape. Overgrown plants, multiplying perennials, encroaching weeds, and blurred garden edges create a cacophony of chaos[,] which begs to be soothed . . . . Recovering an overgrown garden requires hard work and may take many seasons to fully achieve. Some of the tips you should learn included plant identification, dividing perennials, rejuvenation pruning, and controlling weeds. (n.p.)

This is where *comunidad*-building conversations could come in, as a way for campus leaders and teacher leaders to engage the self-organizing nature of a school *comunidad* to effectively lead a school. It could be that introducing the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations into the Sam Houston ecology could have made the difference between an overgrown and a reclaimed garden (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Spring garden clean up before and after. From "Spring garden clean up," by An Oregon Cottage.com, March 12, 2013. Used with permission.

The triple helix. For this research, I chose the triple-helix configuration, a hybridization of the traditional double helix about which I learned when I studied DNA in grade school. Figure 11 represents how a triple-helix configuration is formed by adding a third strand to a duplex-DNA consisting of the purine track and the pyrimidine track, as imaged by Buske, Mattick, and Bailey's (2011).
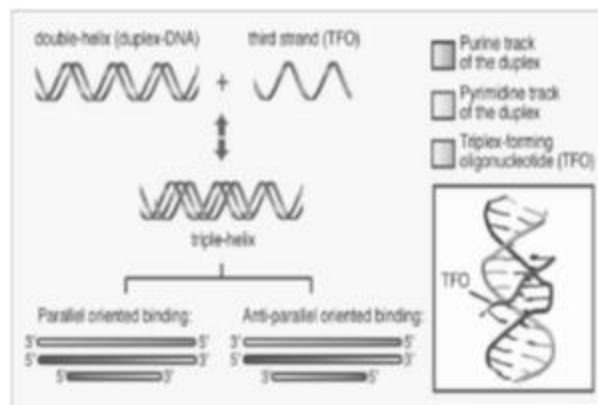
Figure 1. Parallel and anti-parallel oriented triple-helix motifs. There are three basic triple-helix motifs: [T,C], [G,A] and [G,T]. The [G,T] motif can bind in both orientations to the duplex while [T,C] binds parallel and [G,A] binds anti-parallel to the purine tract of the duplex. The inset shows a cartoon of a triple-helical structure derived from a NMR-structure contained in the protein database (PDB-id:1BWG).

Figure 11. Formation of DNA triple helix. From "Potential in vivo roles of nucleic acid triple-helices," by F. A. Buske, J. S. Mattick, and T. L. Bailey, 2011, *RNA Biology*, *8*(3), pp. 423–439.

A framework for possibilities. I chose the triple-helix configuration because, in reviewing the biological literature, I found that the triple-helix configuration offers new perspectives and possibilities in the area of gene regulation such as Nayak, Khare, Chourasia, Silakari, and Kohli (2006) suggested:

> designing compounds with extensive sequence recognition properties, which may
> be useful as antigene agents or tools in molecular biology. During the past decade,
> a new approach using DNA analogues, as therapeutic agents, is emerging in
> medicinal chemistry . . . . With this knowledge has come a natural desire to
> translate this information into new, target-specific therapeutic strategies for the
> treatment of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and other common maladies of
> humankind. (p. 701)

"From this point of view," I concluded, "the triple helix represents a transformative metaphor which I can use to represent the transformative nature of *comunidad*-building conversations for this research."

However, in learning more about the triple helix, I found that the current science also pointed to the configuration's limitations because of the structure's questionable sustainability, stemming from its poor stability, a factor that could potentially limit its use under physiological conditions (Nayak et al., 2006). Nayak et al. (2006) described the biological instability of triple helix configurations as follows:

> Biological applications of TFOs [triplex-forming oligonucleotides] are compromised by fundamental biophysical considerations, as well as limitations imposed by physiological conditions . . . . The first and foremost problem encountered in triple helical antigene strategy is the instability of the triplex formed by the TFOs under physiological conditions which consequently limits the utilization of this very fascinating strategy meant for gene correction to variable extent. Hence various approaches and strategies have been proposed to confer stability to the triple helical structure formed. (p. 700)

Despite the weakness found in this biological model, though, the addition of the third strand to the original double helix served as starting point for my research into the possible transformative influence of *comunidad*-building conversations. My thinking in this respect began with a number of speculative questions that harkened back to my lived experiences at Sam Houston.

   Adding the third strand of conversation. "The initial double helix, consisting of one strand representing teacher leaders and another strand representing campus leaders combine to form the traditional directive, command-and-control double-helix dynamic

that currently exists between teacher leaders and campus leaders in school *comunidades*,"

I thought to myself. "And then *comunidad*-building conversations would be the third

strand added to change the genetic bond between teacher and campus leaders with the

aim of transforming the current relationship." However, if the conversations that take

place between and among teacher and campus leaders are not authentically *comunidad*-

building conversations, as was the case for me at Sam Houston, then the third strand

would indeed be a destabilizing factor that would only serve to further deteriorate the

bond between teacher leaders and campus leaders. Figure 12 depicts the adding of the

comunidad-building strand to the double helix of the teacher leader and campus leader

relationship.
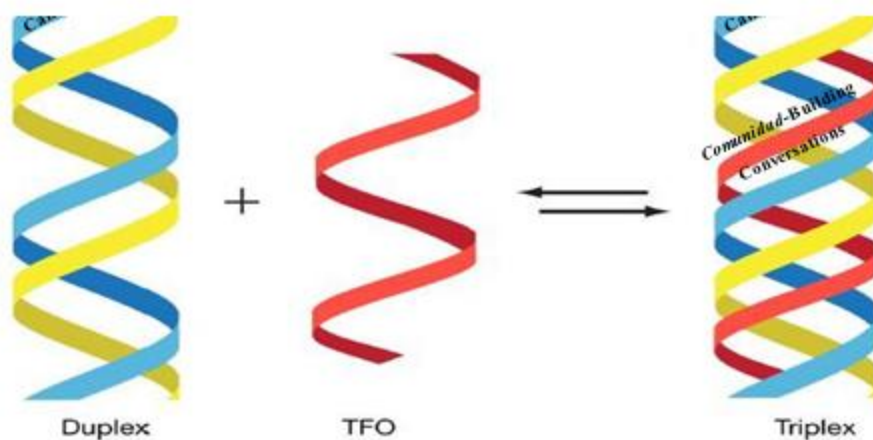
Figure 12. Adding the *communidad*-building strand to the double helix. From "Is there
any organism with three stranded DNA?" by G. K. Singh, 2016, *Quora*.

"If the nature of the third strand was a destabilizing factor," I concluded, "the

resulting unstable and fragmented *comunidad* would be in keeping with the current

science." However, what if the third strand that was added to the teacher leader/campus

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leader double helix represented authentic, *comunidad*-building conversation? The resulting transformative and restorative *comunidad* would embody the therapeutic possibilities that scientists see in the use of the triple helix.

  Additional possibilities. My continued research into the potential of the triple helix as a transformative metaphor and framework revealed that the triple helix had in fact found a home outside of the biological realm as a metaphor for innovation and transformation. Such was the case of the triple-helix model of university, industry, and government collaboration that Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1997) developed. According to Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, the three-stranded configuration of collaboration among universities, industries, and governments posited a generative role adopted by universities. In turn, this role overlapped with the traditional roles played by industry and governments in the process of economic regulation, driving regional economic development via universities' academic entrepreneurial activities. In doing so, universities engaged in human capital formation to address regional needs, thereby, transcending their traditional roles of teaching and research through their triple-helix relationships with industry and government. Figures 13 and14 demonstrate the triple-helix configuration of the university, industry, and government relationship.

Figure 13. Triple-helix configuration of the university, industry, and government relationship. From "Triple-helix: Participation TUSUR in the triple-helix formation," by TYCYP. 2011.

I discussed the model with my dissertation chair.

"Though in a much less developed and elaborated form, the teacher leader, campus leader, and *comunidad*-building conversation triple-helix configuration that I initially framed at the start of my research mirrors the triple-helix of innovation incorporating academic, business, and *comunidad* factors, supporting my use of the triple helix for my purposes."
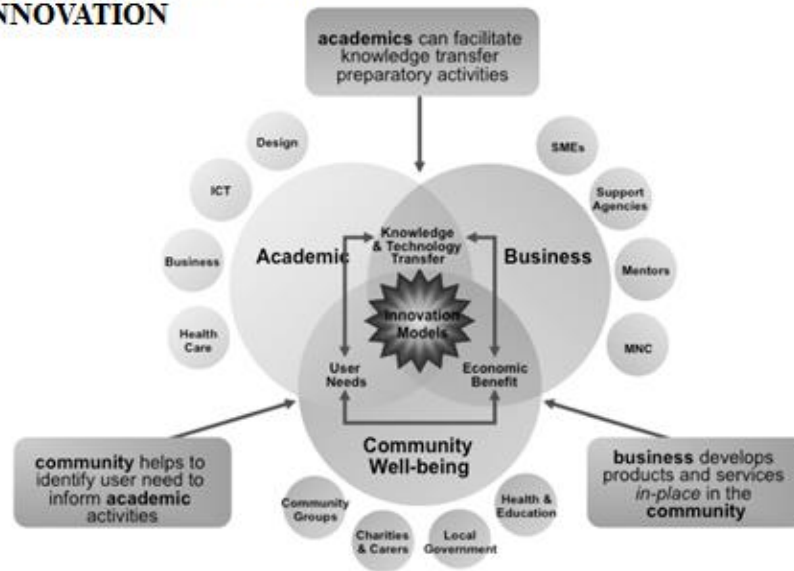
Figure 14. Triple-helix configuration of the university, industry, and government relationship. From "Enriching the research and development process using living lab methods: The TRAIL experience," by Maurice Mulvenna, 2011, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland.

"If that is case (looking over the two models), keep exploring the possibilities."

I did, and I found a parallel application of the tripe helix in the work done under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Institute for Educational Planning. In this case, Martin (2011) edited a compendium of research based on using the triple helix configuration to represent the opportunities and possibilities found in the collaboration of academia, industry, and government. According to Martin (2011), although the traditional linkages or partnerships between university and industry have "led to tremendous change worldwide in social expectations of higher education as the motor for human resource development and producer of knowledge" (p. 13), adding the third strand of government to form the triple-helix metaphor resulted in the creation of an environment that promotes innovation. Moreover, Martin (2011) went on to state,

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These authors see academia–industry–government relations as an interwoven

network of relationships among the three actors that influence each other. Rather

than a static mapping of linkages, the Triple-Helix model recognizes that the

respective roles of the different actors change over time, and that correspondingly

this dynamic provokes changes in the internal configuration of each actor. Both

national and regional governments play an important role in the national systems

of innovation and the knowledge economy, as the coordinator actors within the

Triple-helix . . . . The Triple-helix model anticipates a synergistic process of

scientific achievement and acceleration across the different actors through

collaboration. (p. 18)

Finding this example was especially fortuitous because it mirrored the opportunity and

possibility that I theorized, which is, by adding the third strand in the form of *comunidad-*

building conversations, a similar synergistic process of transformation would take place

in the dynamic between campus leaders and teacher leaders. Furthermore, not only did

the addition of the third strand in the form of government involvement accentuate the

relationship between universities and industry, it also served as a transformative force

that raised expectations and acceleration of achievement through collaboration between

the three strands. This finding was exactly in line with the transformation that I was

hoping to find taking place in a school *comunidad* in which a campus leader employed

comunidad building conversations.

At the same time, I found that Tuunainen (2005) pointed to the body of literature

that invoked the hybrid practices from plant biotechnology to describe the fundamentally

the transformational process of entire university institutions into hybrid institutions

because the "previously isolated institutional spheres of the university, government, and

industry, have become intertwined giving rise to entirely new types of science and university that bring academic, economic, and wider social purposes together in a compatible fashion" (p. 276). Moreover, Gunesakara (2004) used the triple-helix model of university, industry, and government relations in his discussion of adding the third role of human capital development to the traditional teaching and research roles of universities.

I shared this finding with Miguel, my dissertation chair, and some of the members of my committee during a follow-up conversation .

"I think I need to find examples that are more closely related to education, specifically in public schools."

" Not necessarily. Consider that you may be looking at an application of the triple helix in education that has not taken place. That may be a gap in the literature. If it is, then you have really got something here. If there are examples of the triple helix applied to education, it can support your application. However, you may still be looking at a different application of the triple helix in terms of the specific relationship between campus and teacher leaders and the potential role that conversation plays in this relationship. Again, that would be a gap in the literature."

Educational possibilities. As it turned out, I found one example of the application of the triple helix closer to the realm of education in the work of Strathdee (2007). According to Strathdee, educational reformers in New Zeeland and England have looked to facilitate school improvement by turning to network creation. The guiding principle for these reformers, Strathdee noted, was that greater collaboration and social relationships could drive school improvement through building professional learning communities, best practice, and driving innovation in.

Generating the Metaphoric Frameworks

      Basic triple-helix framework. I chose the basic triple-helix framework seen in Figure 15 as my starting point, adding the arrows within each strand to evoke the living, upward-spiraling dynamic of the triple helix. "In this way," I figured, "the framework is no longer static, but animated as the strands continuously rotate and grow upward transforming and evolving as a result of the constitutive proteins connecting them which also continuously change and evolve over time." This way, the triple helix effectively models the potential ontological transformation of its constitutive parts that I theorized would be characteristic of the dialogical process of *comunidad* building, using conversation.
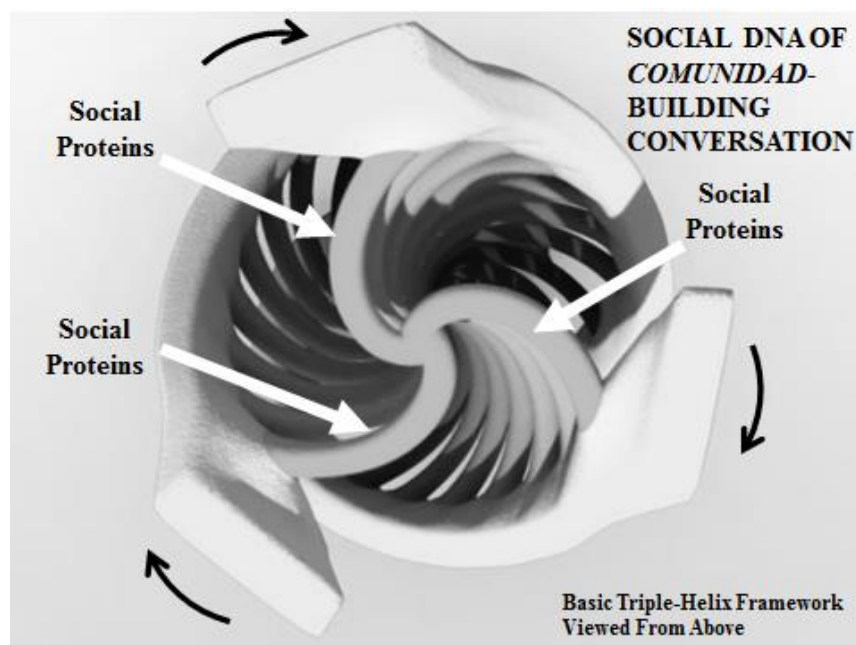
Figure 15. Basic triple-helix framework.

Similarly, I sought to illustrate further the transformative dynamic of the triple-helix framework by providing a glimpse into the organic evolution that was taking place at the heart of the triple helix (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Basic triple-helix framework viewed from above. From "Triple helix (large)," by Shapeways, 2011.

"This view of the triple-helix framework from above," I noticed, "reveals how the connective social proteins reach out from each strand. They reach out, coming together at a synthesizing nexus, where the transformative dynamic of the triple-helix framework takes place." It is within this dynamic that the answer to my overarching guiding question of my research is framed: What are the conditions, contexts, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations of a school leader? Figures 17 and 18 demonstrate the dynamic between the conditions, contexts, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations from which I sought to harvest data about the conversations that took place between Paul and the teacher leaders and campus leaders where he works.

Figure 17. Framework of dynamic between the conditions, context, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Figure 18. Framework of dynamic between the conditions, contexts, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Going deeper with the frameworks. My critical analysis using the triple helix did not stop with the framing of the guiding question. Having constructed the general framework of the social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations, I returned to the basic framework from which I started and came to a critical conclusion. "I have to go

deeper. I want to bring to life the growing complexity to which my researcher and

campus leader eyes were opened in my conversations with Paul. With this complexity in

mind I can construct the metaphoric frameworks for this research that will serve as guides

and lenses through which I will approach my continuing work with Paul, especially our

data analysis."

      Unearthing the macro, meso, and micro levels of the triple helix. Delving deeper

into the fundamental framework of the triple helix for understanding the relationship

between the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations, I

reflected on the possibility of viewing the triple helix of *comunidad* conversations

through macro, meso, and micro lenses. Viewed from the side, the general triple-helix

framework hides this possibility (see Figure 19).
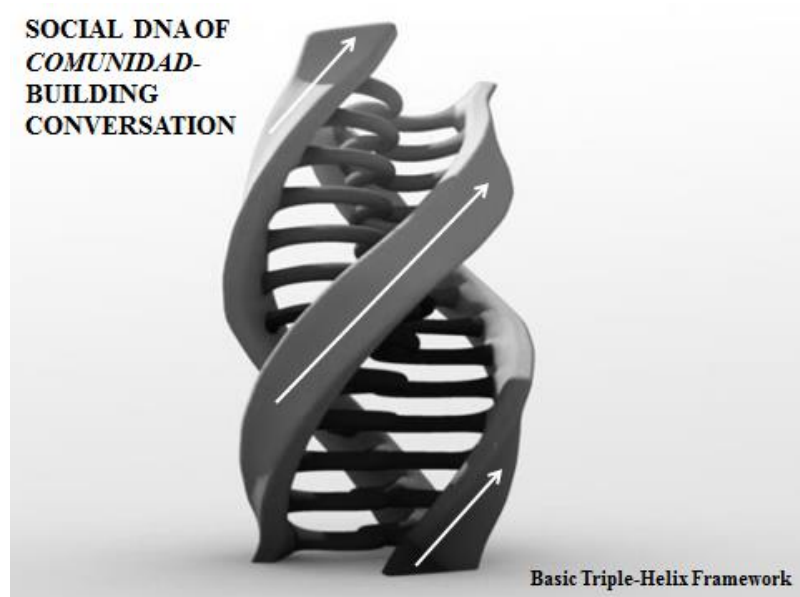
Figure 19. Basic triple-helix framework.

However, when viewed from above as a cross-section, I am compelled to wonder and

imagine what goes into each strand (see Figure 20).
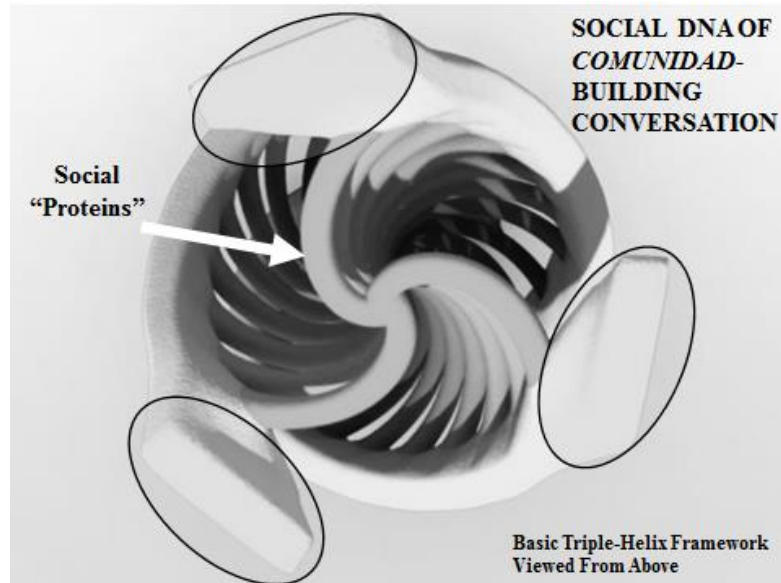
Figure 20. Basic triple-helix framework viewed from above.

When I posed this question in my mind, I was elated for several reasons. First and

foremost, that is exactly what I had endeavored to discover. I wanted to figure out the

constitutive proteins of that make up the conditions, contexts, and attributes of

comunidad-building conversations (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Framework of dynamic between the conditions, contexts, and
attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations.

"What could be the configurations or frameworks of the proteins that make up each

strand," I asked myself. "Could they too be framed as a triple helix such that each strand

of the triple helix is in turn made up of another triple-helix at the meso-level?" (see

Figure 22).
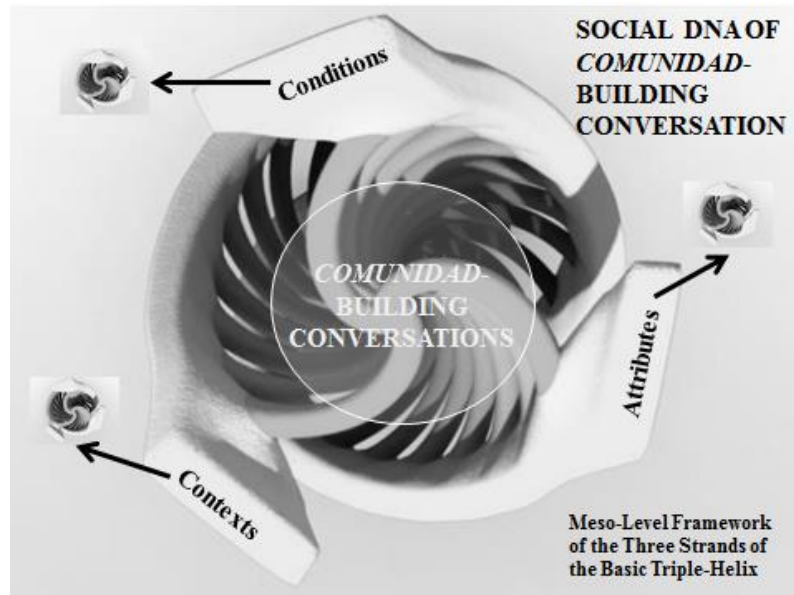
Figure 22. Meso-level framework of the three strands of the basic triple helix.

This was an intriguing proposition given that, if it held true, it would be possible to

further deconstruct and dig deeper into the social DNA of *comunidad*-building triple

helix, perhaps even to the micro level as depicted in Figure 23 and use these

configurations at instruments of analysis.

"To answer this question," I realized, "I have to find out if this proposition holds

true for the frameworks for which I do have the constitutive proteins of each strand. And,

if it does hold true," I concluded, "I can use these same instruments of analysis to

deconstruct the Paul's narratives to determine the contexts, conditions, and attributes of

the *comunidad*-building conversations with which he engaged teacher leaders and

campus leaders in Baum based on the constituent proteins of his conversational

orientation." After all, as in my own lived experience, Paul's conversation orientation had

to have influenced the nature of the contexts, conditions, and attributes of conversation he used as a campus leader.
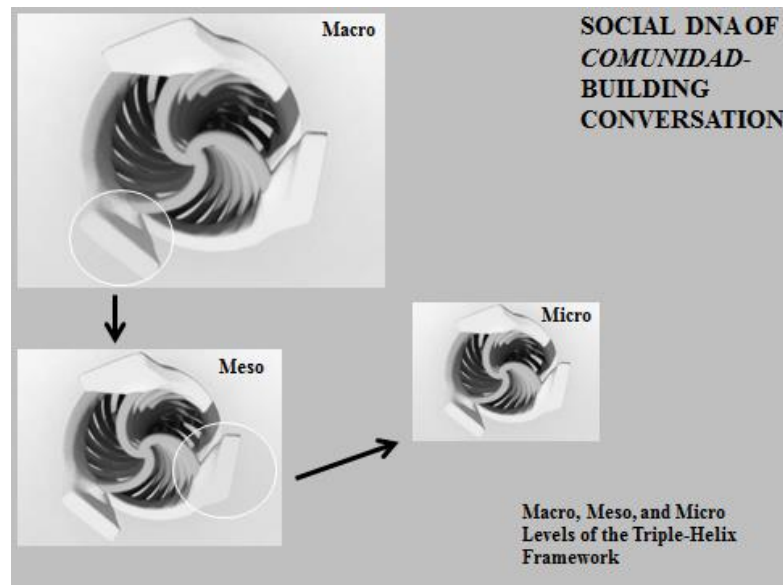
Figure 23. Maro-, meso-, and micro-levels of the triple-helix framework.

Framework of a person's conversational orientation. [You need to write a paragraph here to introduce the other subheadings.]

Macro-level. I wanted to find the constituent proteins of each of the strands that constitute the fundamental framework for *comunidad*-building conversations at the macro-level (see Figure 24).

In keeping with my desire to develop organically authentic instruments of analysis, I turned once again to my lived experience. I asked myself,

"In my case, what determined the contexts, conditions, and attributes that I employed as campus leader at Sam Houston, the ecology within which my initial disruption took place? I know my lived experience as an ESL coach at Sam Houston led me to realize that my enacted beliefs as a campus leader were that of a command-and-control nature, as evidenced by the manner in which I engaged my *colegas* in one-on-one, small group, and whole group conversation. Moreover, I know that the contexts,

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conditions, and attributes of these conversations were greatly influenced by my

conversation orientation, the deeply embedded values and beliefs about my ability to

speak and engage others in conversation and how these factors manifested in my actions.

This being the case, I have to identify the constitutive strands and proteins of my

conversation orientation at the meso-levels and micro-levels."
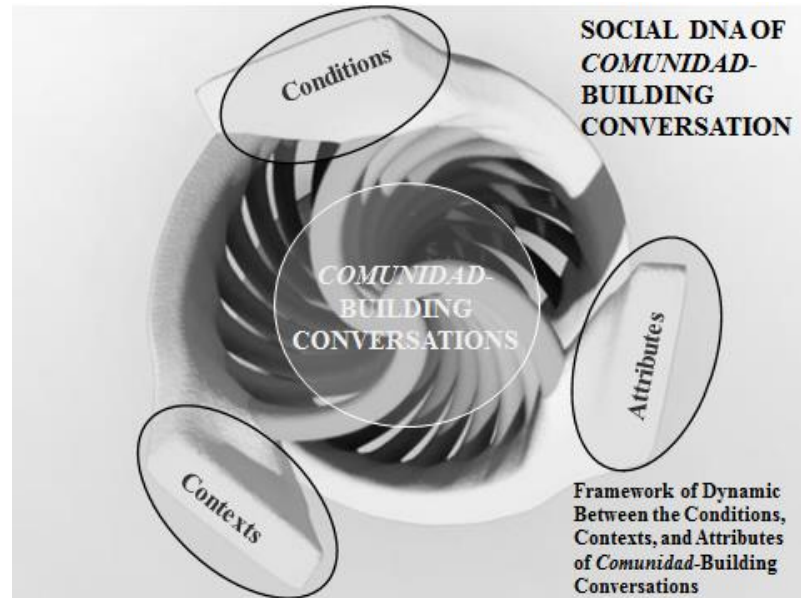
Figure 24. Framework of dynamic between the conditions, contexts, and
attributes of comunidad-building conversations.

Meso-level. At the meso-level I found that the constituent proteins of the context,

conditions, and attribute strands were my conceptualization of leadership, *comunidad*,

and *cutlura e historia*. Figures 25 and 26 illustrate my use of the meso-level, triple-helix

framework to show the hybridizing relationship between the constituent proteins that

make up a person's conversation orientation.
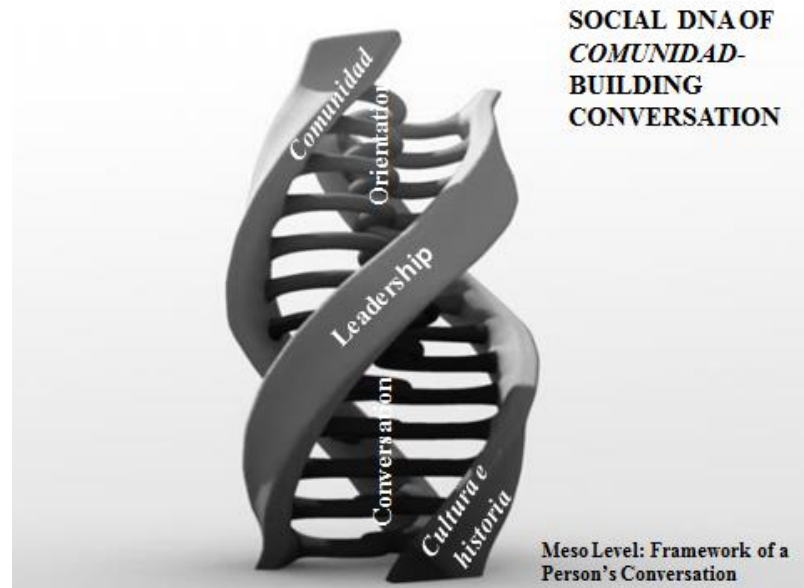
Figure 25. Meso-level: Framework of a person's conversation.
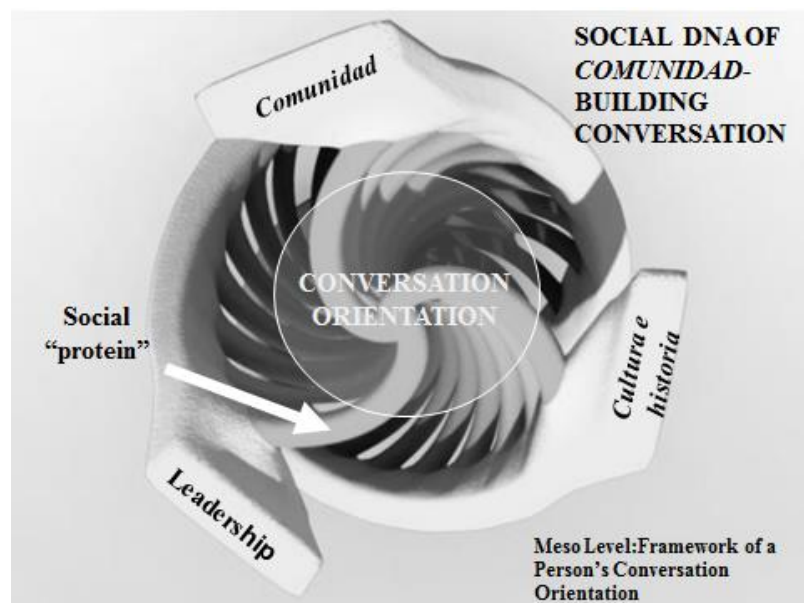
Figure 26. Meso-level: Framework of a person's conversation orientation.

This conceptualization grew out of the soils of a deeply reflective period in my research

during which I critically pondered and deconstructed the origins of my conversation

orientation, which found its expression in my work at Sam Houston. I told myself,

"Somewhere in my subconscious lie the seeds of the command-and-control

orientation that I used in lieu a collaborative, authentically dialogical orientation I

thought I was enacting. As much as I thought I lived my stated collaborative and

dialogical beliefs, in reality, my enacted beliefs contradicted them."

Figure 27 illustrates the macro-to-meso-level conceptualization of the triple-helix

instruments of analysis.
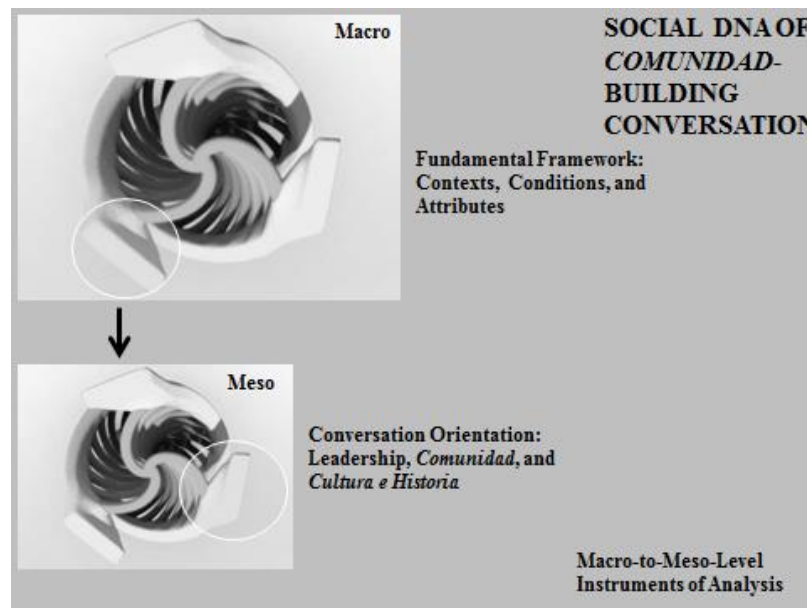
Figure 27. Macro-to-meso-level instruments of analysis.

   Micro-level. "Before using the instrument to analyze Paul's narratives," I

continued," "I can test the instrument by using it to deconstruct and identify the

constitutive proteins of each strand of my own conversational orientation, to dig into the

micro-level of my conversation orientation to identify the constituent proteins of my own

leadership, *comunidad*, and *cultura e historia* strands. from where or what in my lived

experience did my values and beliefs about leadership, *comunidad*, and *cultura e historia*

germinate and grow? Knowing what I know now about myself and making use of my

learning both in and out of the classroom, I came to the conclusion that my

conceptualizations of leadership, *comunidad*, and *historia e cultura* grew out of and were

nourished and supported by the micro-level triple helix formed by my lived experiences

with my education and my schooling, and as a teacher–leader and campus leader."

Figures 28 and 29 depict the micro level framework triple helix of the constitutive proteins of the leadership, *comunidad*, and *cultura e historia* strands of a person's conversation orientation."

Figure 28. Micro-level: Framework of a person's formative orientation.

Figure 29. Micro-level: Framework of a person's formative orientation.

Figure 30 illustrates the macro-to-meso-to-micro-level construction of the triple-helix instruments of analysis.
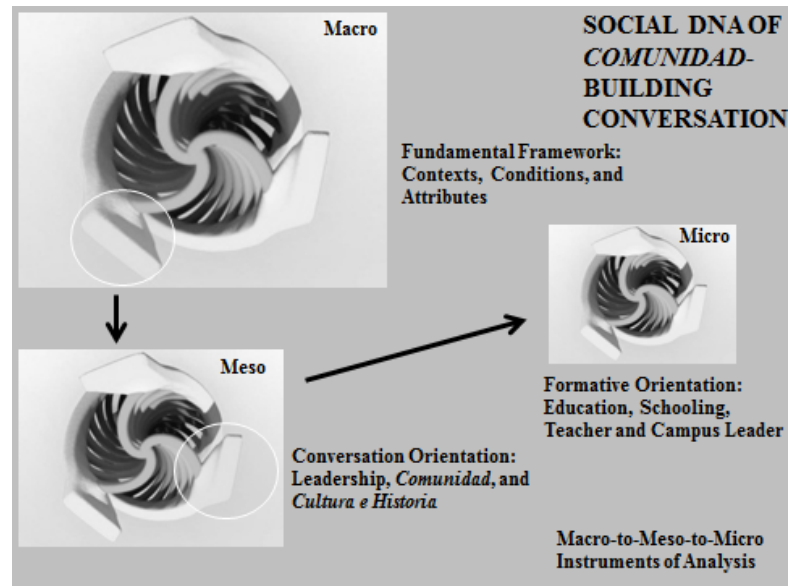
Figure 30. Macro-to-meso-to-micro-level instruments of analysis.

These factors reached down to the roots of my upbringing and learning beginning with my youth and continuing to my adult life; therefore, I designated this instrument of analysis as the formative orientation.

"If I can harvest constitutive proteins of my conversation orientation, then it stands to reason that a similar process of harvesting is necessary to identify the constitutive proteins of each of the strands that make up the conversation orientation triple helix of Paul's conversation orientation. Reflecting on my formative experiences, each of these—my education, schooling, and my teacher and campus leader experiences—shaped the manner in which I viewed and lived leadership, *comunidad*, and *cultura e historia*. Consequently, to understand better Paul's use of *comunidad*-building conversations with teacher–leaders, I must begin by understanding the development of his conversation orientation by understanding the influence that his *familia*, schooling, and teacher–leader and campus leader experiences had on his conceptualization of the fundamental components his conversation orientation, Paul's conceptualization of leadership, *comunidad*, and *cultura e historia.*"

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As it turned out, Paul's conversation orientation turned out to be much more aligned with *comunidad*-building than my own. How this finding contributed to the collection of narrative data for this study is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Conversation orientation within the general framework. Looking over the conversation orientation triple helix, I was ready to take the triple-helix metaphor a step further. "This then," I thought to myself, "is what a person's conversation orientation looks like" (see Figure 31).

Figure 31. Framework of dynamic between the conditions, contexts, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations.

"At the same time, it may be possible that this triple helix could then be used to represent individuals within the context of a conversation. I could create a framework that would represent the dynamic of conversation between two people, a small group, or a large group within the triple helix of *comunidad*-building conversation." (See Figures 32, 33, and 34)
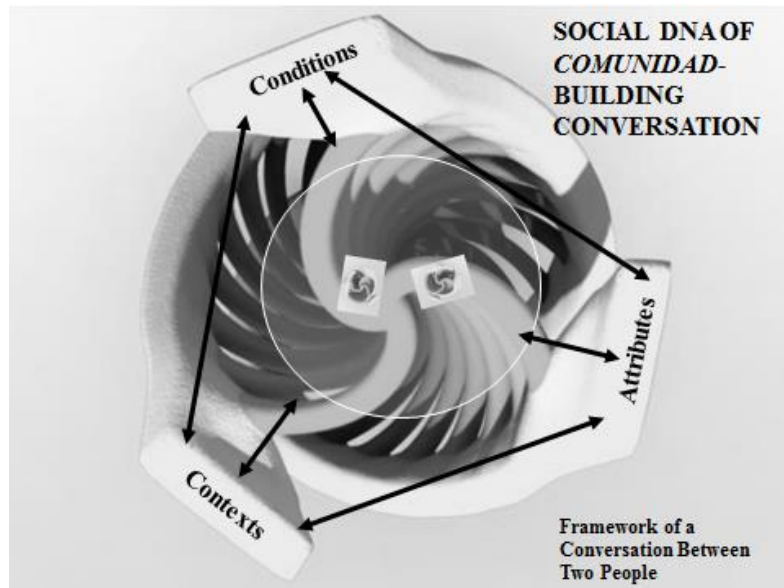
Figure 32. Framework of a conversation between two people.
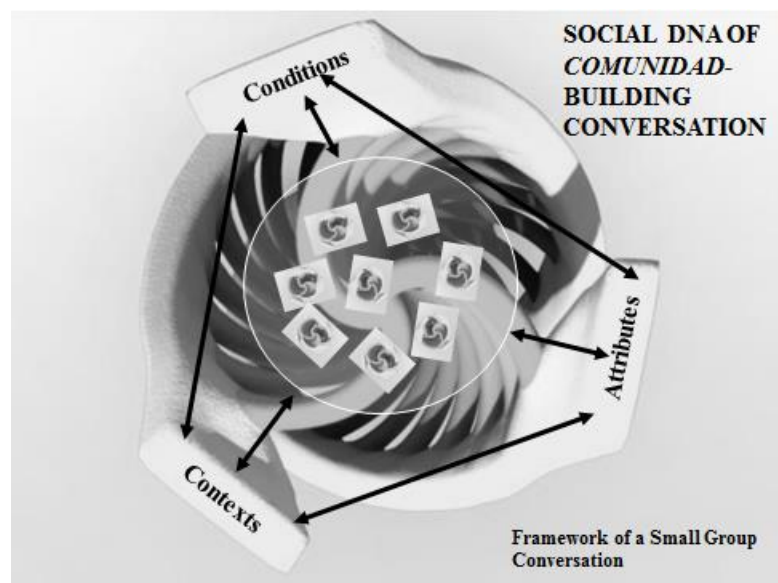
Figure 33. Framework of a small group conversation.
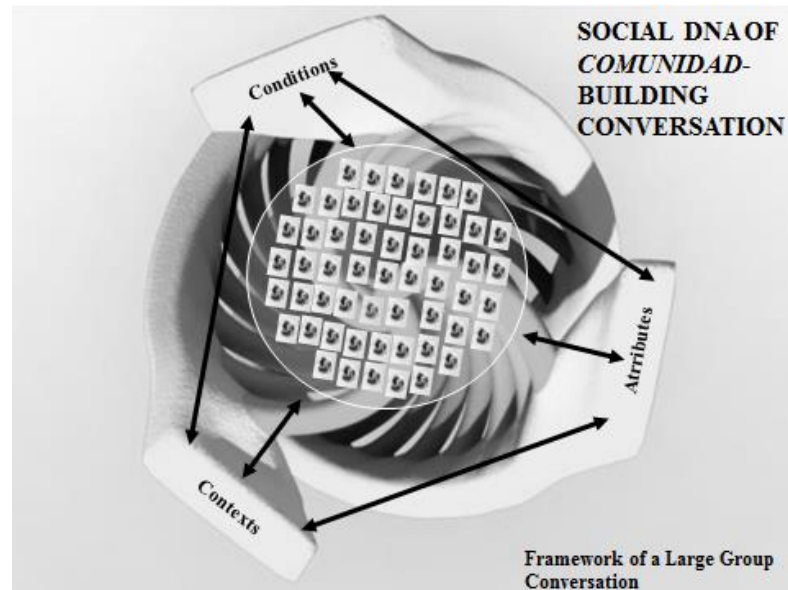
Figure 34. Framework of a large group conversation.

In Figures 32, 33, and 34, the arrows demonstrate the ongoing, transformative dynamic

that takes place during and authentic *comunidad*-building conversation in which the

contexts, conditions, and attributes act upon the persons engaged in the conversation and

on each other. At the same time, arrows also delineate how the conversational

orientations of the individuals act upon the contexts, conditions, and attributes of the

conversation, and how these factors act upon these persons as well. In this way, the triple-

helix framework serves as a visual representation of the complex ecology of a school

comunidad in which Paul's conversations with teacher and campus leaders took place,

and about which he spoke during our interviews.

    Moving forward. My intended outcome in this study was to use the learning from

this research (a) to inform and contribute to my practice as an educational leader, and

(b) to inform the authors of the body of literature to understand the conditions, contexts,

and attributes of conversations that result in this kind of *comunidad*-building, and (c) to

show them how to go about this endeavor in a an organic, sustainable manner. In doing

so, I sought to develop further my capacity for using *comunidad*-building conversations

within the school *comunidades* in which I work and expand the leadership literature through my public sharing of the findings by way of my practice, writing, and future conversations. Furthermore, Paul and I agreed to engage in this research such that the collaborative collection and analysis of data and the findings of this research would inform his ongoing efforts to build *comunidad* in Baum ISD.

By examining the social DNA of Paul's conversations with teacher and campus leaders, I aimed at developing an organically dynamic framework that could guide educational leaders in public schools so that this process would not be left to chance, but so that they could use the framework to cultivate deliberately and purposefully a *cultura* of *comunidad* using *comunidad*-building conversations. Specifically, using the triple-helix model of the social DNA of conversation as a guide, my hope was to harvest the data that would inform the development of a framework that would then enable educators to embark on their own *comunidad*-building journeys in a manner that would be sustainable and able to be made a part of other critical areas of our work together. In doing so, I approached this research as holding the promise of transforming our practice as leaders so that we could begin to move away from the directive, command-and-control approach of organizational development and begin to learn how to engage in *comunidad*-building through conversation.

III. CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

Overview

With the guiding questions and literature review for this research completed, I turned to conducting the research. In this chapter, the theoretical underpinnings from the literature for the research are described, including the use of *ethnographic* and *autoethnographic* methodology. Background information about Paul, my research partner, and of the Baum *comunidad* and schools are presented as well. The method for collecting observables (i.e. semistructured interviews) is delineated including my continued use of the triple-helix framework to guide the work. Subsequently, the methods for analysis of observables are described including the video and data analysis tools Paul and I used. Additionally, an explanation of the use of Sergiovanni's (2000, 2008i) concepts of the *systemsworld* and lifeworld as descriptors of the attributes and conditions of *comunidad*-building conversations is provided along with an articulation of the development of the terminology used to designate the constitutive proteins (i.e., the conditions and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations) for which we were looking in Paul's narratives.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Throughout my inquiry, I used an anthropological approach to unearth, analyze, and understand the contexts, conditions, and attributes of the *comunidad*-building conversations Paul used as a school leader. Specifically, I employed ethnographic and autoethnographic methodology (Spindler & Hammond, 2000; Thorton & Garret, 1995). As I considered the research that I wanted to conduct, I concluded that ethnographic and autoethnographic methodologies best lent themselves to achieving the following goals: (a) articulate the connection between my lived experience and this research, (b) uncover

how Paul developed an authentic dialogical conversation orientation, (c) identify the conditions and attributes Paul infused into his conversations with his *colegas* to make them *comunidad*-building conversations, (d) determine the contexts within which Paul succeeded in engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations, (e) ascertain the impact that these conversations had on his leadership, and the extent to which a *cultura* of conversation had taken root in Baum as result of Paul's conversations.

My role as autoethnographer was evident in my use of my personal lived experiences as lenses and vehicles through which I engaged Paul in dialogue to obtain and then analyze the narrative data (Patton, 2002). Through this process of self-analysis, I honored the learning and knowledge that I created while being in *comunidad* with myself (Freire, 2002). As part of this process, I reflected on how my life experiences contributed to my ontological evolution towards becoming an authentically dialogical educational leader.

At the same time, as an ethnographer, I sought to capture the complexity of the interwoven spaces Paul and his *colegas* occupied in the Baum ISD ecology as depicted in his narratives, and it was important that the method be congruent with the *cultura* and process of learning *in situ*. Consequently, my interactions with Paul had to be characterized by a constant process of being self-aware of my "experiences and introspections as a primary data source," while being constantly aware of Paul's experiences and introspections during our conversations (Patton, 2002, p. 86). In this way, this process of inner- and outer-awareness characterized our collection, analysis, and reporting of the data and findings.

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Paul and the Baum *Comunidad* and Ecology

Research partner. At the time of this research, Paul Mendoza was in his third year as the principal of the elementary, middle, and high school of Baum ISD. Prior to serving as principal, Paul served 1 year as assistant principal when he first came to Baum in 2009. Paul's role as principal and primary agent initiating *comunidad*-building conversations made him a key informant. Additionally, the small size of the Baum ISD ecology allowed for greater access to Paul and a more intimate context for our work than would have been possible within the context of a larger district. Paul was also a student in the same doctoral program for which I conducted this research. As such, his knowledge of the concepts and processes of research, especially with respect to ensuring safeguards for protecting him and his *colegas'*, facilitated my research. Similarly, as a researcher–practitioner himself, Paul was in an advantageous position to take the learning from our research collaboration and use it.

Before coming to Baum ISD, Paul was a teacher leader at the middle school that he attended in Salinas-Montgomery ISD. He taught there for 3 years, during which time he obtained his master's degree in educational administration. As a campus leader, Paul was very open about his use of conversation to build *comunidad* with teacher and leaders, students, parents, and other members of the Baum *comunidad*. In my conversations with him, I learned that the formative influences that contributed to his development towards authentic dialogical leadership included his *familia*, his work with *Horizontes Sin Limites* (a *comunidad*-based program in Texas' Rio Grande Valley that focused on youth development through *comunidad*-building and the use of digital stories) during his Kindergarten–Grade 12 (K–12) schooling, participating in Project LEAD (a U.S. Department of Education grant program that provided funding for educators) when

obtaining his master's degree, and attending programs through *Intercambio de Comunidades*[9], a national organization that is focused on building *comunidad* and developing leadership.

Comunidad. Baum, Texas is a rural Central Texas *comunidad* that covers a total area of 1.3 square miles. According to the 2010 Census, there were 1065 residents living in Baum. Of these 1065 residents, 78% were Latino or Hispanic, 9% were White, and 13% are Black or African American. There were 362 occupied households in Baum. With respect to age, 63.76% of Baum residents were 18–64 years of age while 27% are under Age 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Schools. At the time of this research, Baum ISD was a Class 1A school district. Baum's elementary, middle, and high school were located on a one-block area. The campuses consisted of three parallel hallways connected by an adjacent hallway that ran perpendicularly along the back. There were 263 students in the three schools, of whom 88.2% were economically disadvantaged, while 56.7% were considered at-risk. Paul's narratives about his *comunidad*-building conversations covered a period of four academic years beginning with the 2010–2011 school year and ending with 2013–2014. Figure 35 represents the demographics for the Baum ISD teacher leaders during this period (Texas Education Agency 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

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[9]_____ Communities. KAO: Provide the Spanish translation.

Baum Teacher Leader Demographics				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
# of Teachers	23.3	25.8	25.9	62.8
Avg. Years Experience	6.7	6.4	7.2	6.1
Avg. Years Experience in District	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.6
Turnover Rate (%)	26.5	21.4	46.9	30.4
Ethnicity (%)				
African American	12.9	7.7	7.7	10.5
Hispanic	20.5	17.1	15.5	17.3
White	66.6	75.1	76.8	72.2
Asian	0.0	0.0	0	0
Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0	0
Two or More Races	0.0	0.0	0	0
Gender (%)				
Male	32.0	20.2	26.7	27.8
Female	68.0	79.8	73.3	72.2
Highest Degree Held (%)				
No Degree	4.3	0.0	0	0
Bachelors	91.8	98.3	96.1	89.8
Masters	3.9	1.7	3.9	10.2
Doctorate	0.0	0.0	0	0
Years of Experience (%)				
Beginning	20.9	29.5	23.2	33.5
1-5 Years Experience	55.4	44.0	46.4	35.2
6-10 Years Experience	0.0	3.9	3.9	13.8
11-20 Years Experience	6.6	7.2	11.1	3.5
Over 20 Years Experience	17.1	15.5	15.5	14.1

Figure 35. Demographics for Baum ISD Teachers 2010–2011 through 2013–2014 school years.

Interviews. The primary source of narrative data for this research was obtained through interviews. As noted above, the narratives that Paul provided in our interviews covered a 4-year period from the 2010–2011 school year to the 2013–2014 school year. Over the course of a month, six semistructured interviews were conducted as *pláticas*, using a set of general questions as starting points for our dialogue (Patton, 2002; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). I asked follow-up questions that arose organically in response to the narratives and reflections that Paul shared. In this way, Paul and I unearthed and harvested Paul's observations about and interpretations of the *comunidad*-building conversations in which he engaged with fellow campus leaders and teacher leaders in Baum.

As an autoethnographer–ethnographer engaged in dialogue with Paul, I

understood that our semistructured interviews would result in a cross-pollination of our

conversation orientations (see Figure 36).
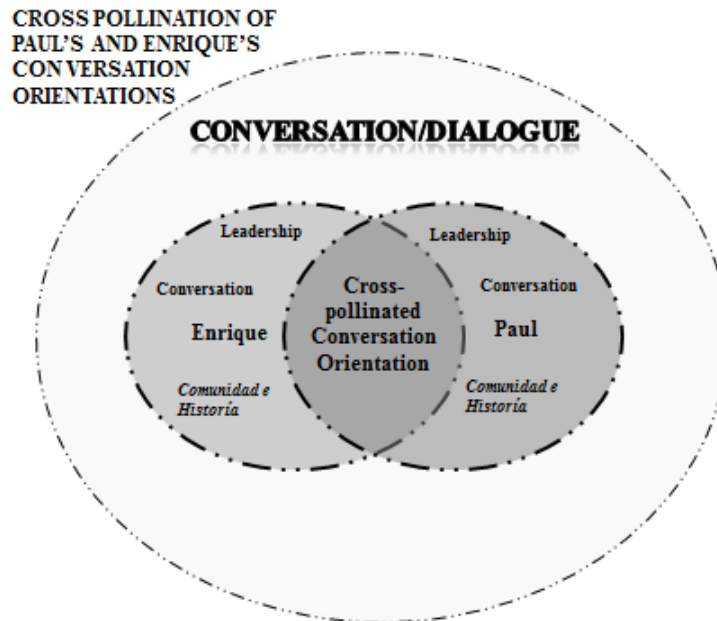
Figure 36. Cross pollination of Paul's and Enrique's conversation
orientations.

As such, our conversation orientations represented two DNA strands to which we added

the third strand, Paul's narratives about the *comunidad*-building conversations in which

he engaged in Baum. Thus, our conversation orientations became intertwined with each

other and with Paul's narratives to form a triple helix that produced the soil (transcripts)

from which we later harvested evidence of the contexts, conditions, and attributes of

comunidad-building conversation (see Figure 37).

Figure 37. Social DNA of semistructured interviews with Paul.

By using this methodology, I was in keeping with Ellis and Bochner's (2000) description of the autoethnographer's:

> Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle
> lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal
> experiences; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by
> and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom
> backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and
> cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (p. 739)

At the same time, however, the back and forth dynamic took place between me, Paul, and

the narratives that he shared. Figure 38 depicts how the dynamic Ellis and Bochner

describe above brings together the three strands of the triple helix to form the narrative

fabric (transcripts).
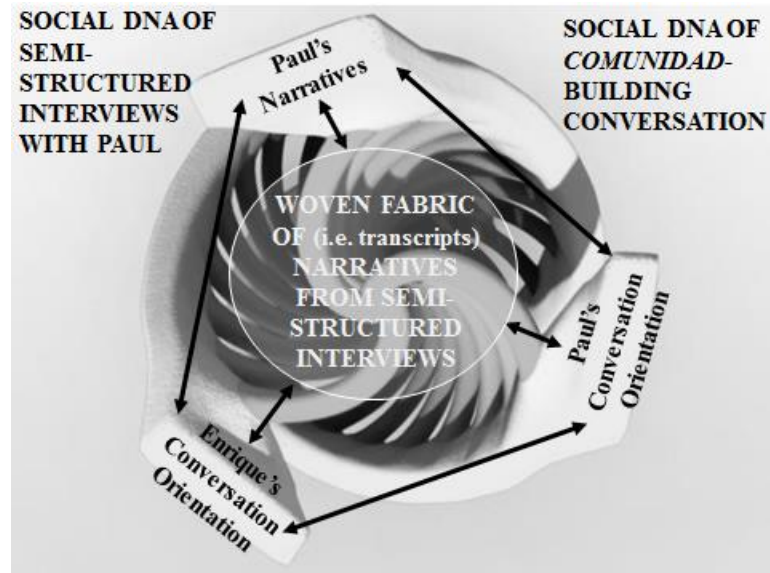
Figure 38. Social DNA of semistructured interviews with Paul.

Equally important, Figure 39 illustrates my how the social DNA of the

semistructured interviews within which Paul and I engaged paralleled the social DNA of

comunidad-building conversations in which Paul engaged with teacher and campus

leaders.
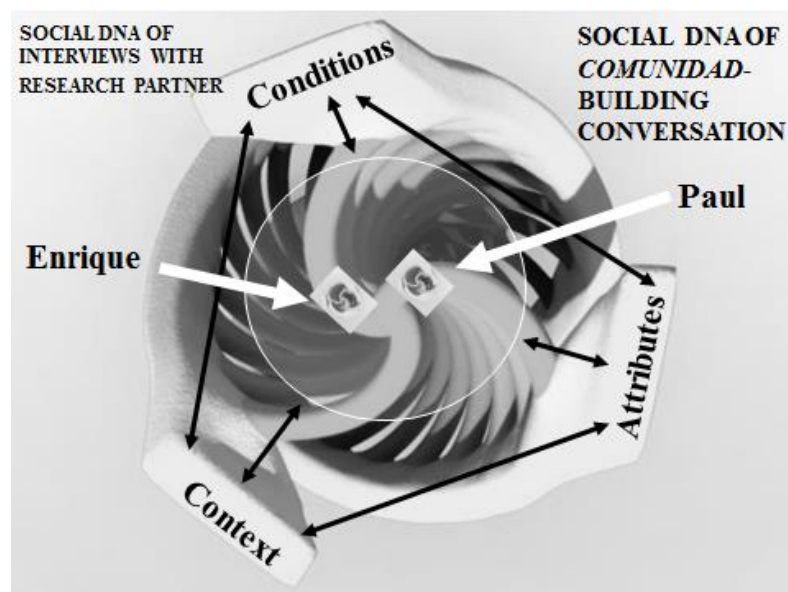
Figure 39. Social DNA of interviews with research partner.

By being aware of this dynamic, I acknowledged that the narrative fabric and

therefore the narrative data collected during our interviews/conversations were influenced

by the contexts, conditions, and attributes of our interviews in a manner consistent with the triple-helix framework used for this research. Figure 40 provides a more detailed depiction of the semistructured interviews in which Paul and I engaged.
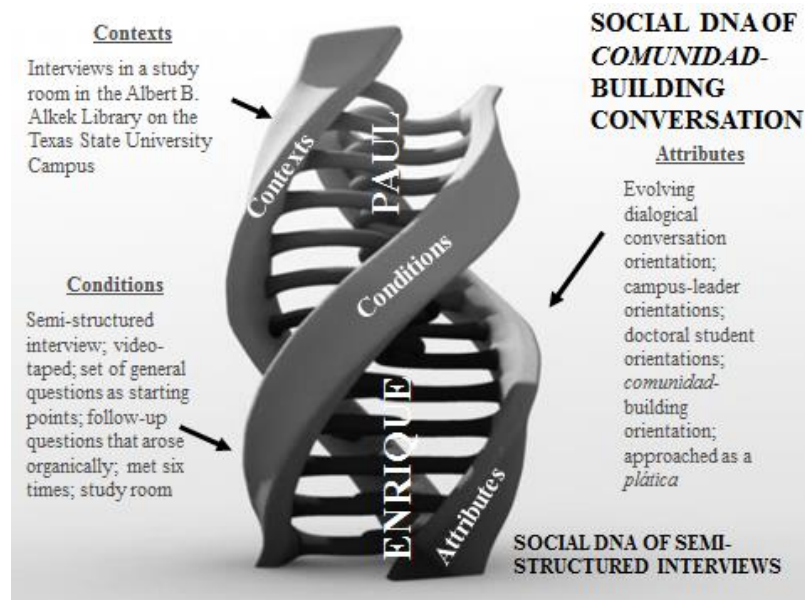
Figure 40. Social DNA of semistructured interviews.

Within in this dynamic, Paul too took on the role of autoethnographer in the process of relating and then reflecting on the narratives of the *comunidad*-building conversations he had with teacher and campus leaders. As such, our dialogues became a complex and organic fabric in which all three elements (me, Paul, and Paul's narratives) continuously acted upon each other. Similarly, this same dynamic influenced the process through which Paul and I harvested, analyzed, and synthesized insights into the larger *comunidad* of the Baum ISD ecology with respect to the use of *comunidad*-building conversation (Patton 2002). I then used these insights to identify themes, patterns, concepts, and understandings of Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations. Additionally, as noted earlier, our conversation orientations (see Figure 41) influenced the semistructured both the nature of the initial questions asked, the nature of the follow-up questions asked, and the responses to these questions that Paul provided.
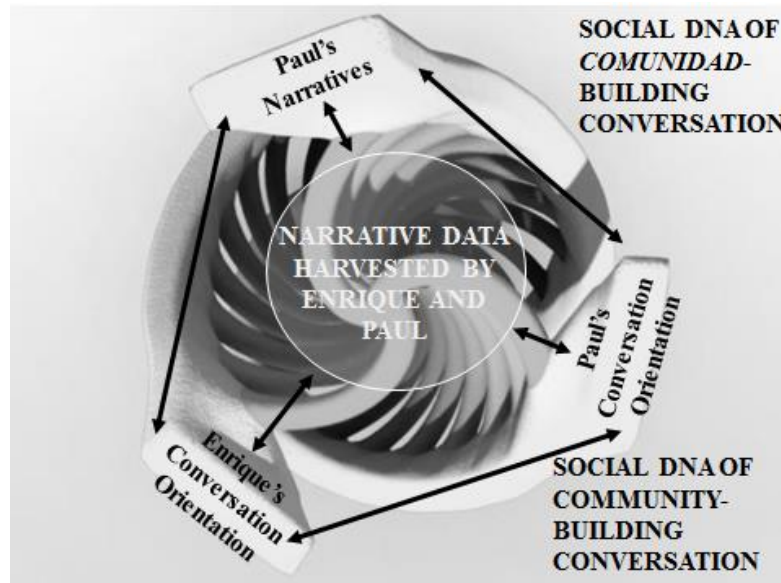
Figure 41. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversation.

To enhance the accuracy of the narrative data harvested, my dialogues with Paul were videotaped and audio recorded. Each interview began with a brief review of the previous interview's content. The first interview focused on Paul's foundational background with respect to the development of his conversational orientation via his upbringing, schooling, and lived experience as an educator. The second interview focused specifically on Paul's first 4 years in Baum ISD as a campus leader in the role of assistant principal (1 year) and principal (3 years) and the *comunidad*-building conversations in which he engaged during this time period. The focus of the third interview were the *comunidad*-building conversations in which Paul engaged during the current school year, his fourth year in Baum ISD and third year as principal. The fourth interview took place following the one Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meeting and the Six Weeks Meetings that I observed. I conducted a fifth interview as an opportunity to wrap-up the overall data collection process. During this interview, I targeted Paul's observations as to the specific conditions, contexts, and attributes of the conversations that enabled him as a campus leader of Baum ISD schools to build *comunidad,* using conversation. Lastly, I

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conducted a sixth interview with Paul to find out the result of the Baum ISD school board

vote on the Teacher Retention Proposal presented by Paul and the Baum ISD teacher

leaders at the end of Paul's third year as principal. (See Figure 42.)
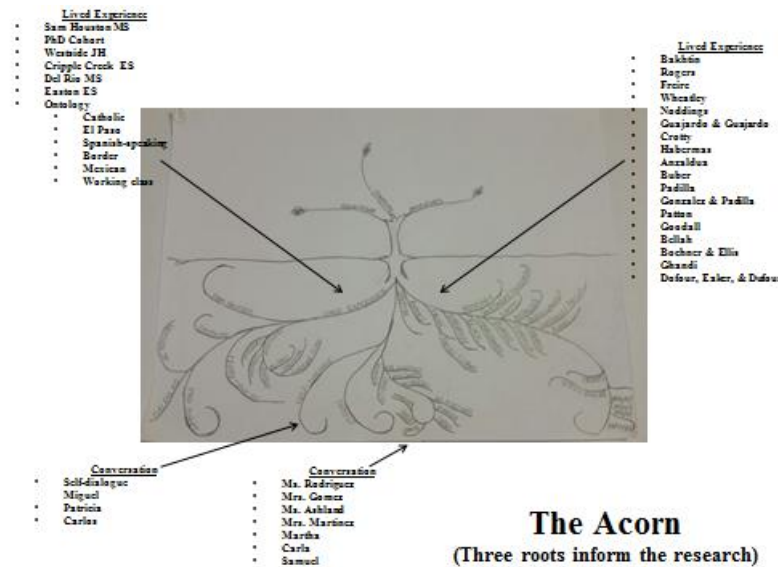
Figure 42. Acorn with literature roots for interviews.

Methods for Analysis of Observables

Triple helix. The analysis of the observables from this research was a

collaborative effort by Paul and me. In working collaboratively, Paul and I acknowledged

that our conversational orientations and the Paul's narratives themselves influenced our

analysis of the narrative data (see Figure 43). The time and distance was a challenge;

therefore, the collaborative analysis of the data took place electronically, as well as via

text and phone calls.
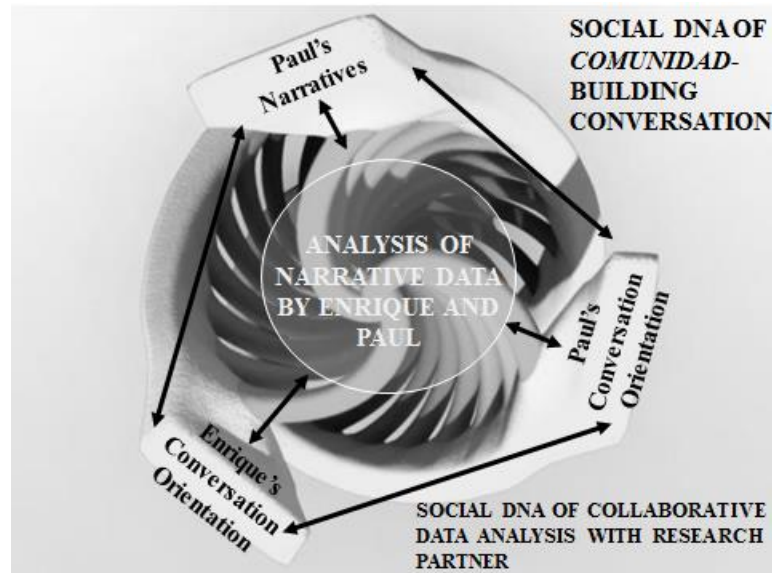
Figure 43. Social DNA of collaborative data analysis with research partner.

Using the video analysis tool (Figure 44), Paul and I independently viewed the

videotaped interviews identifying moments in his narratives that represented *comunidad-*

building conversations.

VIDEO ANALYSIS TOOL

Figure 44. Video analysis tool.

Paul sent his completed video analysis tool, and I compared the moments Paul chose to

the moments I selected, identifying the moments that we both characterized as

comunidad-building conversations.

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An authentic and organic data-analysis tool. With common *comunidad*-

building moments in hand, I proceeded to determine the contexts, conditions, and

attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations found in each. Rather than begin with a

predetermined list of conditions and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations, I

chose a more organic approach, harvesting the conditions and attributes unearthed and

collected from Paul's narratives about the foundational development of his

conceptualization of leadership, *comunidad e historia*, and conversation as well as the

notes that Paul included in his video analysis. Figure 45 shows the data analysis tool used

to analyze the data from the video/transcript narratives.

Figure 45. Data analysis tool.

The systemsworld and the lifeworld. To provide further clarity to the constitutive

proteins with the attributes and conditions strands, I chose to ascribe Sergiovanni's

(2007i) concepts of the lifeworld and systemsworld to each. According to Sergiovanni

(2007i), "The systemsworld is a world of instrumentalities usually experienced in schools

as management systems. These systems are supposed to help school effectively and

efficiently achieve their goals and objectives . . . a world of efficiency, outcomes, and

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productivity," (p. 147, 148). As such, I chose to classify the attributes constitutive proteins pertaining to the systemsworld because they represent the structures, knowledge, skill, and dispositions that cultivate consistency, efficiency, and productivity. In contrast, I classified the constitutive proteins of the conditions strand as pertaining to the lifeworld. As Sergiovannni (2007i) noted, the lifeworld "provides the foundation for the development of social, intellectual, and other forms of human capital that contribute, in turn, to the development of cultural capital, which then further enriches the lifeworld itself" (p. `148).

  The constitutive proteins of Paul's dialogical DNA. From Paul's narratives about the formation of his conceptualization of leadership, *comunidad e historia*, and leadership (see Chapter 4), I developed a list of systemsworld attributes and lifeworld conditions of *comunidad*-building conversation. The terminology used to label the attributes and conditions of *comunidad*-building conversations are terms that Paul used in his narratives and his video analysis. In some cases, however, I had to identify terms to encapsulate and represent the lived experiences described by Paul. Moreover, rather than define each term according to a pre-existing dictionary definition or definition found in the literature, I chose to "show" rather than to "tell" the reader the meaning of each attribute and condition, using the corresponding lived experiences that Paul shared—as a way of recreating the pictures that Paul created of the his *comunidad*-building conversations and interactions within the Baum ISD *comunidad* ecology, thereby, providing context for knowledge-creation . In this way, the development of this terminology was in keeping with Bakhtin's (1986) conceptualization of speech and, in particular, his view of words within act of speaking:

When we select words in the process of constructing an utterance, we by no

means always take them from the system of language in their neutral, *dictionary*

form. We usually take them from other *utterances*, and mainly from the utterances

that are kindred to ours in genre, that is, in theme, composition, or style. p. 87

In Paul's case, I viewed the *genre* of his words as that of *comunidad* building, the seeds

of which were planted in Paul throughout his lived experiences, his schooling, and his

education.

Similarly, this approach to developing the terminology for this research

maintained Freire's (2003) authenticity (i.e., word = work = praxis). The terms for the

conditions and attributes were defined by the actual events they represented, and were

then used as lenses through which Paul's *comunidad*-building work in Baum was

analyzed. In turn, the learning that grew out of this analysis lead to a change in both my

praxis and that of Paul.

List of conditions and attributes. After my initial analysis of the narrative data

and Paul's commentary from his video analysis, I developed initial lists of attributes and

conditions (see Figures 46 and 47).

INITIAL LIST OF SYSTEMSWORLD ATTRIBUTES	CONTEXT & CONVERSATION
ATTRIBUTES	
ACCOUNTABILITY	
ADAPTABILITY (WORKING WITHIN SYSTEMS WORLD)	
ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY (DIFFERENT MEANS TO THE END)	
AUTHENTIC (REAL-WORLD APPLICATION)	
AUTHORITATIVE NOT AUTHORITARIAN	
BEGIN EARLY ON	
CAPACITY-BUILDING (WITHIN THE SYSTEMSWORLD)	
CONTINUOUS PROCESS (YOU NEVER ARRIVE)	
CREATE THE SPACE (THE OCCASION OR SITUATION, ADEQUATE TIME, FLEXIBLE/ADAPTABLE, LOCATION)	
DEMOCRATIC (INVITATION, MANY VOICES AT THE TABLE)	
FACE-TO-FACE	
EQUAL CONTRIBUTION (OPPORTUNITY AND EXPECTATION, HONORING OTHER'S GIFTS)	
KNOWING THE SYSTEMS WORLD CONTEXT	
MEET REGULARLY (SCHEDULED)	
ONTOLOGICAL	
OPEN-DOOR	
PUSHING OUT OF SYSTEMS WORLD COMFORT-ZONE	
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (PRAXIS)	
STORY (PROFESSIONAL)	
SELF-EFFICACY (WITHIN THE SYSTEMS WORLD)	
TRANSPARENCY	
ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)	

Figure 46. Initial list of systemsworld attributes.

INITIAL LIST OF LIFEWORLD CONDITIONS	CONTEXT & CONVERSATION
CONDITIONS	
ADAPTABILITY (WORKING WITHIN THE LIFEWORLD)	
BELONGING	
CARING	
COMFORTABLE SPACE	
CHECK-IN	
CONNECTEDNESS/INTIMACY	
CONTINUOUS PROCESS (YOU NEVER ARRIVE)	
HONESTY	
KNOWING THE LIFEWORLD CONTEXT (*CULTURA e HISTORÍA* OF THE *COMUNIDAD*)	
ONTOLOGICAL	
PEOPLE AS THE END	
PUSHING OUT OF THE LIFEWORLD COMFORT-ZONE	
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (PRAXIS)	
RELATIONSHIP	
RESPECT	
SELF-EFFICACY WITHIN THE LIFEWORLD	
SHARING (VALUES, SELF, OTHERS)	
STORY (PERSONAL)	
TRUST	
VULNERABILITY	
ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)	

Figure 47. Initial list of lifeworld conditions.

With further analysis of the data, I realized that there were proteins in each list that could be consolidated into a single category, thereby, creating a shorter, more

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manageable set of conditions and attributes. As a result, I chose to modify the analysis

tool to reflect this relatedness by consolidating the attributes and conditions into related

categories. Figures 48 and 49 depict the revised lists of attributes and conditions

respectively.

REVISED LIST OF SYSTEMSWORLD ATTRIBUTES	CONTEXT & CONVERSATION
ATTRIBUTES	
ACCOUNTABILITY	
ADAPTABILITY (WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEMSWORLD)	
ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY (DIFFERENT MEANS TO THE END)	
AUTHENTIC (REAL-WORLD APPLICATION	
AUTHORITATIVE NOT AUTHORITARIAN	
BEGIN EARLY ON	
CREATE THE SPACE (THE OCCASION OR SITUATION, ADEQUATE TIME, FLEXIBLE/ADAPTABLE, LOCATION)	
DEMOCRATIC (INVITATION, MANY VOICES AT THE TABLE, EQUAL CONTRIBUTION, HONORING GIFTS PEOPLE BRING TO THE TABLE)	
FACE-TO-FACE	
KNOWING THE SYSTEMSWORLD CONTEXT	
MEET REGULARLY	
ONTOLOGICAL (GROWING THE SYSTEMS GIFTS PEOPLE BRING TO THE TABLE, ZPD, SELF-EFFICACY, CAPACITY BUILDING, CONTINUOUS)	
OPEN-DOOR	
PUSHING OUT OF SYSTEMS COMFORT-ZONE	
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (PRAXIS)	
TRANSPARENCY	

Figure 48. Revised list of systemsworld attributes.

REVISED LIST OF LIFEWORLD CONDITIONS	CONTEXT & CONVERSATION
CONDITIONS	
AUTHORITATIVE NOT AUTHORITARIAN	
ADAPTABILITY (WORKING WITHIN THE LIFEWORLD)	
BELONGING	
BEGIN EARLY ON	
CREATE THE LIFEWORLD SPACE (PERSONAL CHECK-IN, PERSONAL STORY)	
FACE-TO-FACE	
KNOWING THE LIFEWORLD CONTEXT (KNOWING THE *CULTURA e HISTORÍA* OF THE *COMUNIDAD*)	
ONTOLOGICAL (ZPD, SELF-EFFICACY, CAPACITY-BUILDING, CONTINUOUS/ONGONING)	
RELATIONSHIP (ETHIC OF CARE, I-THOU, CONNECTEDNESS;INTIMACY, HONESTY, PEOPLE AS THE END, RESPECT SHARING, TRUST, VULNERABILITY)	
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (PRAXIS)	
PUSING OUT OF THE LIFEWORLD COMFORT-ZONE	

Figure 49. Revised list of lifeworld conditions.

Final note. The findings that were reported were hybrids of my independent self-dialogue analysis and reflection as well as my group-dialogue analysis in *comunidad* with Paul. As such, this process kept true to Patton's (2002) articulation of the transformative, transmutative, converting, synthesizing, and sense-making nature of data analysis that is at the heart of qualitative (ethnographic and autoethnographic) research. Furthermore, our

collaborative analysis of the observables and the subsequent creation of knowledge also

reflected Wheatley's (2000) articulation of information as the creative energy of the

universe: "Information is a dynamic, changing element taking center state. Without

information, life cannot give birth to anything new; information is absolutely essential for

the emergence of new order" (p. 94–95). In the case of this research, the new order will

be a new understanding and a new praxis of *comunidad*-building conversation (see Figure

50).
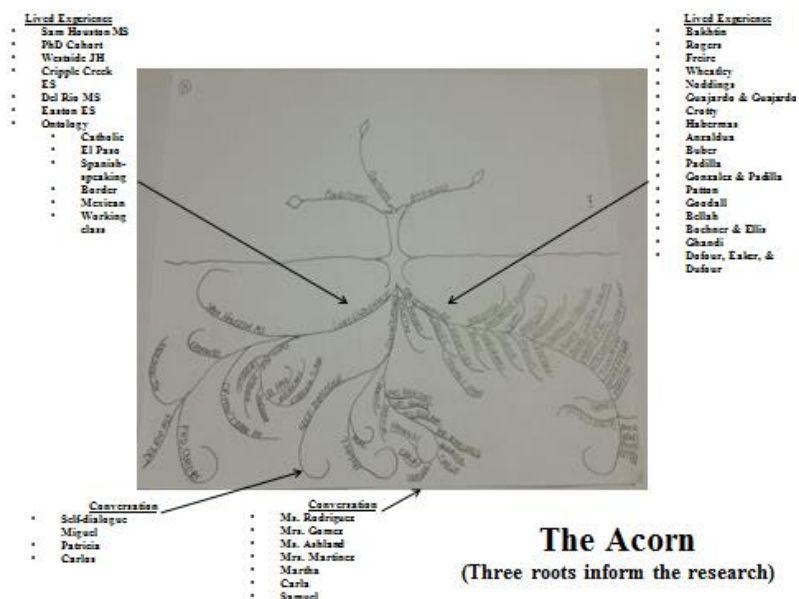
Figure 50. Adding conversations with Paul.

IV. NARRATIVES OF *COMUNIDAD*-BUILDING CONVERSATIONS

Overview

In this chapter, I present the findings from the data. I begin with one-on-one and triad conversations between Paul and teacher and fellow campus leaders, Sarah and Robert, continuing with small group conversations within the contexts that Paul and I originally selected for this research, including the ILT meetings, the Monday planning and development (PD) sessions, and the grade-level Professional Learning Community (PLCs) meetings. This section is followed by the data analysis of the cross-pollinated contexts, and the chapter closes with the additional contexts identified in the data (i.e., response to a car accident and death of a student, Paul's lunch meetings, the circle, and the teacher-retention proposal). The chapter closes with data from the final interview that I conducted with 2 weeks after we concluded our initial data collection.

***Comunidad*-Building Conversations in Baum Intermediate School District**

One-on-one and triad contexts with campus and leaders. When Paul and I decided on the contexts for this research, we chose to focus on the meeting contexts that Paul identified (i.e., ILT, Monday PD sessions, data meetings, and PLC meetings). However, our data analysis pointed us to several one-on-one and triad interactions that Paul had with teacher and campus leaders that proved to be *comunidad*-building conversations. Moreover, further analysis revealed that these conversations were some of the most powerful examples of Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations in the data, especially Paul's conversations with Sarah and Robert, the assistant principals whom he hired early on in his tenure as Baum ISD principal.

***Comunidad*-building conversations with former principal.** One of the first one-on-one conversations that caught my attention was actually not a *comunidad*-building

conversation: Paul's conversation with Mary, his former principal. In the following excerpt, after I asked him about his transition into the principalship, Paul described his conversation with Mary (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: I'll talk to that. And this is just from what I kind of heard, and what Mary's told me. She says that when she got there, her first year as AP, there wasn't a single system in place. I was like, "There had to be something. The school was running somehow." But I think because of the turnover, all those systems were gone. So there were questions about little things: "How do we write a referral?" "What form do we use for the referral?" "Do we have walk-through forms for evaluations?" All these things that at a bigger school district you wouldn't you wouldn't even think would not be available or known. In these districts you just go to pick up all these things and they are there or you just attend training and you know what to do. That wasn't there so, she says that she felt that their first year was just systems building and that was it. Systems building the second year was getting rid of all the other staff. The third year was then built on the systems that they had just put into place. So then my lens now, when I came in as AP, was, "Alright, we went from not having systems supposedly to having some sort of systems. Now let's look at the kids." I think I shared this, but our Special Pops[10] was a problem. I mean we had nothing. There was nothing there. Our Special Ed[11], we had just gotten into a brand new coop. Students hadn't been identified in like 5 or 6 years. So we had all these middle school and high school

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[10] A short name for Special Populations, a designation used in some district to cover students receiving services including special education, bilingual or ESL, gifted and talented, or 504 (_____). Smaller districts often have a department of Special Populations because of the lack of the human resources necessary to have stand-alone departments for each area of service.

[11] A short name for Special Education.

kids being served but no students at the elementary level. It was the same thing

for ESL. We had 6 students identified when I first arrived. Now we have fifty-

four. That increase in just 2 years. All of our GT were all in high school and

nobody had been identified for GT in middle or elementary school. These just

weren't in place.

The significance of this conversation was that, at the time that Paul shared it early

in our interviews, the systemsworld focus of his dialogue with the outgoing principal

gave me pause. I wondered if once he started as principal, Paul found his lifeworld focus

incompatible with the situation in Baum. "Apparently," I thought, "there were a lot of

systems missing or not working when Paul got there, but did that force Paul to abandon

his lifeworld focus, and if so, what did that mean for his efforts at *comunidad*-building?"

As our data analysis bore out, however, this conversation was not indicative of a shift

away from *comunidad*-building on Paul's part, but rather a necessary backdrop for the

critical *comunidad*-building conversations Paul had with Sarah and Robert.

> ***Comunidad-building conversations with campus leaders.*** Our analysis of the

narrative data evidenced that the need to establish systems within the Baum school

comunidades served as a catalyst for *comunidad*-building conversations between Paul,

Sarah, and Robert. Moreover, these conversations took place within one-on-one and triad

conversations from the very beginning of Paul's tenure as principal and focused on he

and his fellow campus leaders would address the systems issues they inherited (Interview

with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> ENRIQUE: So for a while, a lot of things were neglected.

PAUL: And I think the answer is they only had one administrator for the entire district. One principal. No AP. That was it. So that one person had to do everything that now three of us do.

ENRIQUE: So is it really a case now that it's three of you doing all of these things?

PAUL: Well I think it's because we've been able to divvy up the work, and we've been able to commit to what we are assigned. I mean that's our role, and so we hold each other accountable for it. And we're able to do it that way. And so I think that has definitely helped…We laid it out in that first conversation that first week that we worked together. I think or I know that first year I didn't give as much support as I would've liked to them because it was all new to us, and I was new to it. I left them on their own. And it was either very directive or I didn't touch it. And then, the second year was a lot more coaching than "Just do this. Do this. Do this." And then last year, it was a lot more coaching and lot more conversations. And this year, now it's "You're on your own, but not because I don't want to talk to you or anything but because I feel like you can do it on your own."

On the surface, this conversation narrative appeared lacking in attributes or conditions for *comunidad* building. Paul simply related that he was very directive during his first year as principal, and then, along with more coaching, he let his two campus leaders fly solo over time. In reality, Paul again engaged *colegas* authoritatively, first, sowing the seeds of *comunidad* building through his vulnerability and honesty about the limitations he faced because he was so new to the position. Then, Paul authoritatively increased his efforts at engaging Sarah and Robert in ongoing conversations and

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coaching. The seeds of *comunidad* building were also present in Paul's authoritative explanation to Sarah and Robert that letting them fly solo was based on his trust and belief in their growing capacity r instead of not wanting to engage them in dialogue. Rather than give in to fear by and micromanaging Sarah and Robert in their work, Paul approached the situation authoritatively and ontologically, working with Sarah and Robert, and himself for that matter, where they were in their first year, and then adjusting as they grew individually and as a team in their second and third years. Thus, we saw the naturally organic development of the social fabric of *comunidad* between Paul, Sarah, and Robert developing and transforming over time instead of remaining static and unchanging.

At the same time, the organic *comunidad*-building transformation Paul worked to initiate as the new Baum principal benefitted from the groundwork he laid as an assistant principal the previous year. This process was highlighted in the following narrative (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012):

> PAUL: And so we started. We had all worked together 1 year; Robert as a teacher, Sarah was strategist, and I was the AP. And the following year when we all moved into administration together we kinda divvied it up on the whole on how we knew each other best. And that's how it worked. And the last couple of years we just kind of tweaked it. But I knew that there were some things that Sarah was great at, and I wasn't gonna say no. I still want my foot in there, of course. And there are some things that Robert could do. And that's how divvied it up. And it's the same thing with teachers. I tell them, you know, if I put you in a place, or if I ask you to do something it's because I know you can do it or because I trust in you.

This exchange demonstrated the systems and lifeworld ontology found in Paul's conversations with Sarah and Robert as both their relationships and their capacities as campus leaders evolved and grew over time. The trio's knowledge about and willingness to honor each other's gifts as a result of their relationships to effectively adapt and move into their new campus leader positions pointed to a level of *comunidad* that developed during the prior year and that carried over into subsequent years together. At the same time, Paul employed the attribute of an authoritative leader in both the systemsworld and lifeworld in telling teacher leaders that placing them in a certain position or asking them to take on a particular task was not about he, "the principal," telling them what to do, but rather because of his belief and trust in their ability to be successful. In both cases, Paul made use of the relationships existing between him and his *colegas* the attribute of democratically providing the opportunity for them to contribute to the work.

Comunidad-building conversations in hiring campus leaders. These initial conversations only scratched the surface of Paul's *comunidad*-building efforts with Sarah and Robert. It was in his narratives about filling the vacant campus leadership position of assistant principal that he really delved deeper, unearthing the conditions and attributes that made his interactions with Sarah and Robert *comunidad*-building conversations (Interview with Paul, (July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: Mary left. The principal when I was AP, she left July 20-something. I
> found out she was leaving the second, no, 2 weeks before teachers returned. So I
> was like, "Oh crap! What's gonna happen?" So she left the second week in July.
> So I had 2 weeks before teachers came back. So in that week I interviewed for an
> AP. Wasn't thinking of Sarah. Wasn't thinking of Robert at all. Sarah had already
> told me "I'm not interested cuz of my kids so don't even go there." She was

trying to get her masters. She already had her masters, but she was trying to get into a principal prep program and had just talked about it briefly. Robert was still an issue. He was half way through his principal prep program and had just taken the test to become principal to get the certification. So we did the interview, and teachers didn't want Robert to be the AP. They flat out told me, "Don't hire him," "I don't want him," "I don't like him." Ok. He still applied. We interviewed him. We chose someone else.

Eventually, Paul succeeded in hiring an assistant principal. The relief that came with the hire, though, was short-lived (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: We hired her. So she worked with me and Sarah for like 2 days. And then she said, "You know what, I can't do this." We were down to a week before teachers come back, 2 weeks before kids come back. So, I go to my superintendent. He said, "Do whatever you want, but I would say this. At the point you're at right now just hire Robert. Paul, teachers are coming back. You have all of these things going on. And I'm leaving the first day of school." So then that's when I told him, "The only way I'll take Robert is if I take Sarah." And he said, "Well, talk to her." I talked to Sarah. I said, "I need you," and she said, "Fine. I just can't do anything after school, duty type."

Here, the growth of *comunidad* between Paul and Mr. Norman, the superintendent, and Paul and Sarah is clearly evident. In both conversations, Paul demonstrated being authoritative from a systemsworld and lifeworld perspective in lobbying to get Sarah to take the administration position. Paul knew and respected Sarah's lifeworld needs. Moreover, the conversations involved an honest, face-to-face dialogue with Mr. Norman and with Sarah about the systemsworld reality Paul faced that

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required Paul to make use of the conditions of adaptability, trust, and vulnerability. Paul also made use of his authoritative disposition on the in pressing Mr. Norman about getting Sarah along with Robert. Moreover, Paul was authoritative from a lifeworld perspective by taking into consideration Sarah's needs as a mother and ensuring that she did not have to take on after school duties.

Along these lines, Sarah demonstrated her trust in Paul because she was able to be honest with him regarding her concerns when Paul initially addressed the matter of her taking on the role of campus leader. "In many cases," I thought, "someone in Sarah's position might be afraid to say no to the principal, feeling pressured to say yes despite her misgivings." Sarah could have worried about the repercussions of saying no to Paul and simply said yes out of fear. However, she did not, and as a result, Paul was able to engage her according to her lifeworld needs. Consequently, they were able to come to an agreement that met both of their needs and the needs of the Baum school *comunidad.* That means a lot in a critical situation like this!

Even with Sarah on board with the proposed campus leader changes, Paul still had to address the matter with Robert, requiring and additional *comunidad*-building conversation (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: I told Robert what happened. Well, first, since Robert didn't get the position, he wanted to quit. He said he was never going to teach again. So, I had to call him one day. I called him to the office, and we talked for about 4 hours. And I told him what happened. He said, "You know what, Paul," he was like, "This is a blessing because I was about to get out of education. I was really, you know, heart-broken." I said, "Well, you gotta prove yourself now cuz there's

some people who say you can't cut it." And Robert said, "Ok, well, I'm gonna do my best." And that's really his attitude. That's what everybody loves about him.

I asked Paul to tell me more about the conversation he had with Robert. After all, as *comunidad*-building conversations go, this was a critical conversation on which so much depended. Moreover, the clock was ticking. Adding to the gravity of the situation, Robert had not only quit, but had decided to leave education altogether. As a result, I suspected that there was valuable narrative data to be obtained from Paul's conversation with Robert (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: I called him in, and he said that he couldn't make it at first. He was driving somewhere. He was on his motorcycle. He just stopped to see who was calling. He said he heard his phone vibrate, and he just stopped because it was me. And he said, "No, I'm not coming in right now. I'm driving somewhere on my motorcycle." And I said, "You know what, Robert, it's important." I didn't want to wait till tomorrow. I said, "I really need you to come over." And he's like, "All right. I'll turn around, and I'll go back." So he got there. I don't remember exactly how it started, but I told him, "This is what happened." And he's like, "Oh, OK." I said, "There's two other people," because there were two other candidates for the position. So I told him that, and I told him what they liked about Nancy, what they liked about the other lady, and what they liked about him. And so I said, "How do we put these things together so that teachers feel supported?" So he said he would do different things. And so we kinda laid it out and set out the reasons to what teachers said about him . . . . And, again, I had to be honest. I couldn't hide it. There was no way. I think he knew that the teachers felt this way about him, but I needed him to know before he went in. And then we talked. That's when he

told me the whole story. "After I applied, I was just going to stop doing this and do something else." Actually, he said he was going to go full-time into the ministry. That's what he was going to do, and so, we talked a little bit about that. And then I talked about that there wasn't only negative comments." Look," I said, "you do all these things well. You know the community. You know the kids. They respect you. And so, you're gonna be the disciplinarian on campus, because you have you have the relationships." And so, that's what that was. And that was maybe like a Monday. Nancy worked with us a Thursday and Friday, and that Friday afternoon she called me around 6:00 or 7:00 and said "I'm not going to go in Monday." And I was like, "OK. Thank you." And then Robert came in Monday. Actually, he said, "All this is great, but let me talk to my wife." He said, "because we had already made all these plans." "That's fine," I said, "but you have an hour to call me." So, he left. He called, and he talked to his wife. And he called me back: "OK, I'll be there tomorrow." And so, Sarah had started Thursday because I was paying her some extra days in the summer to get some curriculum writing done. So, she knew everything that had happened. And, so, all three of us started working that week before teachers came in.

This was one of the most powerful narratives harvested from my interviews with Paul. In it, I saw Paul as a campus leader built upon the *comunidad* that already existed between himself and Robert. "After all," I thought, "Robert himself said, the only reason he answered the phone was because it Paul! Clearly, there was a strong sense of relationship and perhaps even accountability between Paul and Robert. Given his feelings about not being selected in the first place," I figured, "It would have been easy for Robert to ignore the call and go about his drive. Instead, he answered Paul's call."

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The *comunidad* that existed between Paul and Robert was also evident in the honest and transparent conversation in which they engaged about what went wrong with the hire and teacher leaders' concerns about Robert. Similarly, the connection between Paul and Robert enabled them then to problem-solve honestly and transparently how to facilitate Robert's transition into the assistant principal position to the extent that Paul was able to add a sense of supportive accountability to the conversation, letting Robert know the high expectations that came with accepting the campus leadership role.

Such was the ecology of the of the three Baum ISD campuses within which Paul began the process of engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations with Sarah and Robert. In many ways, though, the intense and complex nature of the *comunidad*-building conversations that took place in the course of Paul's efforts to establish the core campus leader team with Sarah and Robert served to set the stage for the similarly complex and intense ongoing conversations that were yet to come.

In the next conversation, Paul underscored key conversations that exemplified this *comunidad*-building process as he, Sarah, and Robert took stock of the situation that also served to bring them together as a campus leader *comunidad* (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: This was our situation at one point. We didn't have a superintendent. We had a new principal. We had a new AP! So I turned to Sarah and said, "You're gonna have to take on the curriculum piece as much as you can." And so that's how that got started. And I think that as difficult as that was it was good because it forced us to be very upfront with each other. I told Sarah and Robert, "You know we don't have a safety net whatsoever. We don't have people to back us up. You know we have a superintendent who passed a bond and who people like, but

who's leaving. And we don't know who we're gonna get." Meanwhile, outside of our leadership team, teachers and other staff were like, "Uh oh! What do we do? Do I leave too?" It was a tough situation, but it forced us to really use each other's assets because that's all we had. We just had each other.

From a systemsworld perspective, this conversation contained *comunidad*-building attributes including Paul's authoritative disposition towards Sarah and Robert early on in their tenures as campus leaders. Along these same lines, it was an authentic, face-to-face, and transparent conversation about their current situation. Similarly, *comunidad* was developed as Paul made use of the lifeworld condition of vulnerability, honesty, and trust, building on his relationships with Sarah and Robert. Paul's emphasis on relying on each other also pointed to the condition of intimacy and connectedness necessary to ask for such a deep commitment in the face of such adversity.

Comunidad-building conversations with Sarah. The reality of their situation firmly in mind, Paul set forth engaging Sarah and Robert in the *comunidad*-building conversations necessary to move forward with the teaching and learning processes of the three Baum ISD campuses. In the conversations that follow, Paul and I delved into his conversations with Sarah and the conditions and attributes of the social DNA of these conversations that contributed to further *comunidad* building between them (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: I think between Sarah and I, we both know what we want. We both
> believe very strongly about what needs to happen. She brings 22 years of
> experience in schools and, she's always talking about how she really enjoys
> working with me. When I became principal I told the superintendent, "There's
> only one way that I'll get Robert as AP and that is if Sarah becomes an

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administrator too. So, in other words, I'm getting two administrators." And he said, "OK. Go for it." So, I presented that to Sarah, and she said, "OK. I'll try. I have my kids and they're really young. And so, my time is limited, but we can do it." So, at the end of that year, she said, "Even though I've been teaching 20 years, I've never felt like my voice has been heard as much as it's heard as much now." And so, since I heard that, I always make sure that I use her as a sounding board. I'll ask her, "So, what do you think about this," and "What do you think about that?" And I always try to get, her feedback. I value it because I know that teachers like her. And so, she brings another lens that sometimes I don't always bring."

In this narrative, I noted the presence of lifeworld conditions of honesty and trust as Paul once again mentioned Sarah's willingness to make her expectations for accepting the campus leader position. However, there was more. Additionally, Paul demonstrated knowledge of the lifeworld when he acknowledged Sarah's relationships with teacher leaders as a critical part of his decision to hire Sarah as an assistant principal. Similarly, Sarah's comment about feeling that her voice was being heard for the first time in her 20 years as an educator evidenced a sense connectedness and belonging.

Furthermore, Paul's success in building *comunidad* with Sarah was due in part to his awareness and honoring of Sarah's knowledge and experience in deciding what roles she would play in her new position. The role that this understanding played in Paul's decision-making was illustrated (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: Sarah had never been an administrator. She has a master's in bilingual education, but hadn't done the principalship or anything like that. So I knew that's what she was lacking. So, I had her do the least administrative stuff and all the

coaching. And so from the very beginning even till now I still tell the teachers, "She is not an administrator that is going to necessarily decide anything for evaluation. That's what Robert and I are. She's not an evaluator at all." So they will bring stuff to her they will never bring to us. So if I need, especially the first year because she was a teacher when she came in . . . when I had to communicate something to the teachers I would do it through her. And so that's how that's how it started. And now I don't have to do that.

First and foremost, Paul demonstrated a great deal of trust in this narrative by hiring Sarah as an assistant principal, despite the fact that she had no experience as an administrator and had not even started the coursework for the administration certification. "Instead of focusing on the fact that Sarah didn't have the title," I thought to myself, "Paul took Sarah where she was at that time, and created the space and time for her to develop her capacity as a campus leader." In this way, Paul recognized Sarah's leadership potential and honored the systemsworld knowledge and skill she brought to the table, making the conversation ontological in both the systems and lifeworld.

Equally important, Paul authoritatively made sure that he did not undermine the lifeworld connections and inroads Sarah developed with teacher leaders. By talking with teacher leaders and letting them know that Sarah was not an evaluator, and that he and Robert would play that role, Paul further acknowledge and honored the relationships Sarah had with teachers and authoritatively established her role such that her new position did not alter them. Furthermore, in addition to Sarah's sense of *comunidad* with the campuses' teacher leaders, Paul underscored Sarah's roles in working with curriculum and addressing teacher leader issues, as well as their collaboration in decision making (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: So, Sarah's major contributions are with the curriculum lens or the academic lens, more so than anything else. And when we talk about curriculum and academics, our conversations are respectful. We have raised our voices a couple of times, and Friday, you know, she was upset. Friday was hard. She had been sick Thursday. It was her birthday. I was out Wednesday. She was out Tuesday. So it was just a crazy week. And so she was saying that something needed to be done. I don't know what it was about. I think it was about a teacher. And so I said, "Tell me what the answer is," and she responds saying, "I don't know." And my reply to her was, "Great! So we're both at the same place. So, with that, on the table, what do you think?" And so I think we can do that with each other. The reality is we'll challenge each other but always staying very respectful. So I think, with Sarah, when we're coming from a curriculum stance, this is how we have to get there. And this is probably one of the only ways to get there. We both have to have our say. So then taking that and saying, "That's great. I value it, but how else can we get there and how can we navigate and incorporate all that stuff?" In a different way, the response to community and children is the similar. We advocate for the same things, just from a different angle. And so now, we find ourselves saying, "We can do it both ways." So, that's been positive. But I think you're thinking the same thing I am. That it's been about respect. I tell Sarah, "I respect your feelings, and I want to hear your input. And I'm going to use it," and she'll say, "But you're the principal." And I'll say, "Yeah I'm the principal. I know that, but I still need to hear from you."

That *comunidad* was created, nurtured, and sustained by Paul and Sarah in this narrative is exemplified in Paul's comment that they can "challenge each other but

always staying very respectful." This narrative encapsulates the sense of *comunidad* that continued to serve Paul and Sarah in their conversations which were rich in both conditions (adaptability, authentic, authoritative, capacity building, continuous process, face-to-face, equal contributions, meet regularly, ontological, and transparency) and attributes (authoritative, caring, connectedness/intimacy, honesty, people as an end, relationship, respect, sharing, trust, and vulnerability) of *comunidad*-building conversation. As a result of this kind of *comunidad*-building conversation, Paul and Sarah developed what Paul called the way they "get there," a way that allowed for each of their views to be heard and for decisions to be made according to what was the best solution rather than simply on what Paul said because he was the principal.

    Comunidad-building conversations with Robert. I asked Paul to compare and contrast his conversations with Sarah and his conversations with Robert. I wanted to know what the similarities and differences in the contexts, conditions, and attributes between the *comunidad*-building conversations that Paul had with Robert and the conversations he had with Sarah given the different roles that each campus leader played on the Baum campuses (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: He pretty much handles discipline and attendance. It's a lot more
> managerial. He hardly ever goes into academics, curriculum, or anything like that.
> And so it just so happens that the conversations we have are always,
> "Something's brewing," "Something's going on," or "People are upset." And so I
> think that because of that, I feel like I have to have a little more presence. If I
> were to say that I have Robert and Sarah in the same room and they're going to
> make a decision, I would have a little more trust in Sarah than I would in Robert,
> especially because of matters that he handles. It's very sensitive. I mean like on

Friday. I got a call from a school board member about a situation that Robert was

handling, and the school board member was saying, "You better fix it!" So, I have

to get involved.

As this narrative shows, Paul's conversations with Robert differed simply because

of Robert's roles on the three campuses and the nature of the issues with which he dealt.

Nevertheless, there was a definite need for Paul to engage Robert in conversations that

built *comunidad*. However, from this narrative, it appeared that there was an absence of

comunidad between Paul and Robert—the earlier conversations during the hiring process

not-withstanding. I thought about this as I analyzed the narrative data.

On the surface it seemed Paul did not trust Robert to do his work properly. But

the case was not so black and white. The fact that Paul trusted Robert to deal with

problematic and sensitive situations where people were upset demonstrated that there was

a great deal of *comunidad* between the two. As the principal, Paul simply needed to have

a greater presence in some instances as was the case when the board member came to him

about a problem.

Still, in isolation, the previous narrative left something to be desired from a

comunidad-building perspective between Paul and Robert. Nevertheless, attributes and

conditions of *comunidad*-building conversations were present in the following narrative

in which Paul went into more detail about what Robert brought to his new role as a

campus leader (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: The very first year we sat down together and I said, "This is what you're

good at." And so, Robert has great people skills. People like him. He knows them.

He has the most exchange with the community. He's been here longest. He's been

here like 7 years. He knows a lot of the parents. We joke and, I say, "You

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probably have over a hundred or a thousand contacts on the phone," because he's the type of person that'll have a phone number and call them. And he does. So he's like, "Will you help me check?" And so we checked. And he had like a thousand something contacts. And so, we tell the teachers, "If you gotta get a hold of somebody and you need to know where somebody lives, you gotta just call Robert, and he'll find it." And when a bunch of the teachers are saying, "Oh yeah, I already called for like 2 weeks and their phone numbers not good," I'll ask them, "What phone number do you have," and I will refer them to Robert. And so knowing that, me and Robert sat at the table, and I said, "Alright, Robert, you handle the discipline."

From these narratives, I noted that that some of the conditions and attributes that made the interactions between Robert and Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations were similar to the conditions and attributes of his *comunidad*-building conversations with Sarah. As with Sarah, Paul built on the relationships he developed with Robert the year before. At the same time, Paul also took into consideration the lifeworld knowledge Robert brought to the table, especially the relationships Robert developed in his time at Baum. For example, Paul honored Robert's knowledge of and relationships with people from the Baum *comunidad*, a possible source of lifeworld authoritativeness for Robert. Paul also demonstrated an authoritative yet vulnerable demeanor in acknowledging the *comunidad* knowledge and relationships that he himself had not yet developed to the degree that Robert had developed.

Moreover, Paul created the systemsworld space for Robert to become a campus leader, while being mindful of where Robert was in his leadership ontology. In the following excerpt, Paul underscored his understanding of where Robert was in his

leadership ontology while recognizing the gifts he brought to the table (Interview with

Paul, (November 18, 2012):

> PAUL: I knew Robert didn't have the same amount of experience Sarah has, but
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> he has great charisma and an awesome personality that won't ever cause any
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> friction between people. And Sarah doesn't have that. But she has this huge
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> experience so it's really interesting. But I think ultimately it's the same thing, it's
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> just making sure they are part of the team and contribute in their own way with
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> their own knowledge and skill even though I am the principal.

During our conversation, Paul noted that the nature of the conversations with

Robert evolved over time. This evolution came as no surprise given the similar dialogical

evolution found in Paul and Sarah's conversations. In addition, as in the case of Sarah,

the evolution of Robert's conversations with Paul came as Robert grew into his roles

within the Baum campus *comunidades* (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: But this year, I've been a little bit less directive because I've really seen
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> where he is going above and beyond and just giving it his all, just an all-out effort.
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> And I've been letting him do that. On Friday, we had a parent conference, and the
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> parent was upset. And then, after the parent conference, a board member called
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> me, and she was also upset. I said to the board member, "All right. Thank you for
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> calling." Robert and I met with the parent later on. I met with Robert, and I told
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> him, "I will let you roll with it. Just make sure you have this this and this." And
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> what he did was great. And you know the discipline measure stayed in place, and
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> we just kept business as usual. Afterward, I followed up, and I told Robert what I
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> really liked about how handled the situation. It was a lot more like a coaching
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> model with him than directive.

Viewed through a systemsworld lens, the narrative contained several *comunidad*-building attributes. By allowing Robert to continue to handle the situation after providing some guidance, Paul demonstrated the attributes of accountability, authoritativeness, transparency, and capacity building. At the same time, Paul provided the guidance in a face-to-face meeting that was part of the continuous process of growing Robert as a leader. At the same time, Paul continued to build *comunidad* with Robert, incorporating the attribute of ontological as well, in particular by creating the space for Robert to make use again of the lifeworld authoritativeness that stemmed from his knowledge and background of the Baum *comunidad*.

Using a lifeworld lens, Paul's conversation with Robert built *comunidad*, according to the presence of conditions—including Paul's creation of the lifeworld space by meeting with Robert after the situation was addressed to acknowledge Robert's effective work, a meeting that was part of the continuous process of conversations between Paul and Robert that had been aimed at developing Robert's sense of self-efficacy. At the same time, the follow up of both conversations conversation with Robert were characterized by a level of intimacy, respect, trust, and vulnerability necessary for Paul to let Robert handle the situation, while authoritatively guiding Robert in how to proceed.

One-on-one and triad contexts with teacher leaders. In our analysis of the data, we found that Paul also used one-on-one and triad conversations with teacher leaders to begin the *comunidad*-building process as the new principal of Baum ISD. In the following narrative, Paul described how he infused certain *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions into his conversations with his new *colegas* (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

PAUL: The other thing that's helped is opening up to the teachers. I mean I tell

them, "I am no expert. By no means am I the expert," I said, "but I'm a pretty

good facilitator. And I can help that way. And I can get things done that way. So

you all tell me what we need to do, and my job is to find out how we're gonna do

it. I will negotiate all the ugly stuff that nobody wants to do. You just tell me, 'We

gotta do this,' and I'll say, 'Okay, let me think about it and I'll come up with

something to kind of do it.'" That's what I tell them all the time.

In this narrative, Paul exemplified four of the key conditions and attributes that

served as principal roots of his *comunidad*-building conversations with teacher leaders:

authoritative, accountability, vulnerability, and trust. With Paul's "I-am-not-the expert,"

he made himself vulnerable with teacher leaders, acknowledging that he too did not have

all the answers. At the same time, Paul was authoritative and accountable in establishing

the expectations that teacher leaders would have of him as a facilitator who could deal

with the "ugly stuff." Lastly, Paul evidenced trust in the teacher leaders' knowledge of

what they needed and what needed to be done, and could communicate these needs to

him. Moreover, by infusing authoritative, accountability, vulnerability, and trust into this

conversation, Paul also made use of other *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions.

First, he established their responsibility to be honest themselves and to let him know what

they needed. By doing so, Paul created the space for him and for teacher leaders to

engage in ongoing dialogue. Additionally, Paul sowed the seeds of a democratic

relationship with teacher leaders, letting them know that he was open to the ideas of all

teacher leaders, not merely to a select few.

Paul's authoritative use of an "I-am-not-the-expert" approach continued

throughout his narratives. In particular, our analysis of the data showed that Paul made

use of the *comunidad*-building attribute of an authoritative disposition with teacher leaders to push them out of their systemsworld comfort zones, as seen in the following narrative (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: At first I remember, it was Mrs. Jones. We were working on the district improvement plan, and in the past, the principal would do it in isolation or with the superintended. So that year, I go up and change that. It was the third or fourth week of school. I said, "Alright guys, here's this district improvement plan that we have to create, and Ms. Jones' comment as I was walking out of the room was, "Here come these young kids, trying to tell us what to do. And then making us do their work. They should be doing this." And I thought, "Wow, you did not just say that!"

The irony of Paul's narrative was not lost on me. "It's funny," I mused, recalling a story Paul shared about his first principal. "Mrs. Jones' response during the meeting to work on the district improvement plan was the same as Paul's initial conclusion about his first principal." When Paul first arrived at Baum, Mrs. Jones believed that Paul was passing the buck onto her and her *colegas* by having them work on the district improvement plan, just as Paul thought his first principal wanted others to do all his work by getting him and other teacher leaders to take on similar duties. "And it wasn't until later that Paul realized that this was a deliberate strategy on the part of his principal to get Paul involved in campus leadership," I remarked to myself with a chuckle.

Later in this same narrative, Paul spoke about similar responses by teacher leaders when he pressed them to engage in decision-making and problem-solving processes. And as in the case of Paul and his first principal, the data demonstrated that teacher leaders

started to come around because of the *comunidad*-building conversations they had with Paul (Interview with Paul, July22, 2012).

> PAUL: So that was their reaction at first. But when it became more collective, teachers would say "Now you're asking me to do this on top of everything else that I have to do." But I think that's finally gone away. But it's taken 2 or 3 years. I keep telling them, "I don't know, so you're gonna have to figure it out. You tell me what the issue is, and then I will do all the negotiating and all the other stuff." And I think that's the biggest thing, you know, when people come into my office I think it frustrates some teachers. A teacher once asked, "What should I do about this?" And I replied, "Well what's going on?" And the teacher said well this and this and this. So it's just me questioning her. And so she eventually said, "Just tell me what you would do!" And I said, "But I'm not in the situation. I'm not in your shoes, so I can't." And she was just like, "Ahh! Never mind!" Sometimes that happens when a teacher will say, "Well, okay. I think I got it." I've had teachers say, "Just tell me," and I tell them "You really wanna know? You're not gonna like it." And they're like, "I wanna know." But I would say no or I would say, "Okay then that's what I would do, so now you're gonna have to do it." Just conversations like that.

"Even more so than example of Mrs. Jones," I concluded," this narrative demonstrated how Paul's responses to teacher leaders were a way of incorporating the attribute of accountability in an authentically honest and authoritative manner." At the same time, Paul created a level of discomfort, pushing his *colegas* out of their systemsworld comfort-zones by challenging them to come up with answers. In doing so, he also created the opportunity for the lifeworld condition of self-efficacy to take hold in

his interactions with teacher leaders and encouraged the development of their ontological capacity for adaptability and reflective practice. Moreover, within the context of these one-on-one, face-to-face dialogues, Paul used clarifying questions to encourage teacher leaders to share their professional story, thereby, allowing both he and the teacher leader to gain new insight into the situation that might otherwise remain unaddressed. Similarly, from a lifeworld perspective, Paul's "I-am-not-the-expert" approach denoted the lifeworld condition of trust. "If he did not trust teacher leaders to come up with their own solutions," I figured, "Paul could have taken a directive approach and told teacher leader the solution he wanted them to employ."

These findings made me wonder whether Paul's pushing teacher leaders out of their comfort zones caused them to avoid going to Paul with questions. As it turned out, not only was this not the case, but also as the date showed, teacher leaders came to expect Paul to engage them in this manner (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: They usually happen in the morning. For some reason people will come in before school where they wanna know that this and this is happening. I almost never give them an answer. It's always, "Think about it," "Let's kind of go through this," "How did they end up here," or "Who have you talked to?" It's uncomfortable at times, but I think because of those kinds of conversations, they know I'm not gonna tell them a direct answer. I know some teachers do get a little bit more frustrated, but for the most part I think they're okay.
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> ENRIQUE: So it's taken about 3 years for them to get to understand that you're just not gonna give them the answer?
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> PAUL: Yeah.

ENRIQUE: Miguel would say that's the pedagogy of leadership when you say, "I'm not gonna give you the answer. I'm gonna push you to come up with ideas. We'll come up with an answer, but you're gonna contribute to that."

PAUL: Right, exactly. Yeah I mean it frustrates some people. Some people want an immediate response and so I'll tell them, "Okay, I'm gonna tell you, but you're not gonna like it. And if I tell you then I expect you to do it." They know that, too. For example, Ms. March. She comes in all the time. I think I see her like the mornings maybe three or four times out of 5 days. And I don't see her on Friday because I'm in the ILT meeting. She'll say Mr. Mendoza, this and this is happening. Or you know, "What do you think about this?" I like it that she's coming in and she's asking me, but I sometimes she's the one who tells me, "Never mind, I'll just go ask somebody else." We've gotten to that point where she's okay with it. One time, she asked me about something going one with the grade. Oh no, no, no, no. I know what it was. It was the awards ceremony. It was the morning of the award ceremony, and she says, "I'm gonna change the person that I'm gonna give the award to." And I said, "Ms. March, we've talked about this for the last 2 weeks. You brought me this name and now you wanna change it?" I thought, "It's the morning of and I got all these things to do," so I asked why? So, she explained, "Because she didn't come to school yesterday or today and she missed my final." I said, "So is the award based on today or is the award based on the entire year?" And she said, "Well it's based on the entire year." So, I said, "Then you know my answer." So she said, "So you want me to give it to her?" And I said, "Yes, I want you to give it to her!" "Okay," she said, "I guess I'll give it to her." And so, a lot of conversations happen like that where I'll talk

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them through the process. Afterwards she came up to me said, "I'm glad you

made me think that way because it really isn't fair to her, and I found out that the

reason she wasn't here is because she moved out of her house and she's working."

An important finding in this narrative was that the conversation between Paul and

Mrs. March not only contained attributes and conditions of *comunidad*-building

conversations, but it also encouraged Mrs. March to look beyond the systemsworld

circumstances that led her to change her mind about whom she wanted to give the award

and consider the student's lifeworld circumstances. Paul authoritatively held Mrs. March

accountable for adhering to the criteria for the award, yes. However, he had a keen

lifeworld focus on the conditions of honesty, people as the end, trust, and vulnerability

with respect to the student for whom Paul found himself advocating. In addition, because

of this initial *comunidad*-building conversation, Mrs. March later engaged Paul in another

conversation characterized by sharing and gratitude after Mrs. March learned about the

student's situation.

Our data analysis also evidenced that Paul himself saw an evolution and growth in

teacher voice because of the *comunidad*-building conversations. Regarding whether his

one-on-one and triad conversations encouraged teacher leaders to engage in other

conversations on their own and then act on them (Interview with Paul. November 18,

2012):

> PAUL: Yeah, I notice a lot more teacher conversations. But there are still teachers
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> who are just waiting for you to tell them, "This is how you do it," and "This is a
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> new way to do it." And so they do it. But I think we hear a lot more of "I have
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> ideas too," "Can I do this," "Can I try this," "Can we see this," "Why is this
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> happening," or "Where's this going?"

Brief though it was, this narrative evidenced a shift in *cultura* taking place in Baum ISD,

from teachers complaining about being asked to take on additional work or asking what

to do to a *cultura* where teacher leaders engaged in systemsworld matters through

conversations they themselves initiated according to their own reflective practice as a

result of their ontological capacity building. Moreover, this development demonstrated

that teacher leaders were pushing themselves out of their comfort zones. At the same

time, there was a shift in accountability—from Paul who was holding teacher leaders

accountable for their work, to teacher leaders engaging Paul in dialogue about their ideas,

questions, and wonderings and holding him accountable with the expectation that

something would come of their conversation.

   Comunidad-building conversations during data meetings. In addition to the

spontaneous one-on-one and triad meetings with teacher leaders, our analysis of the data

revealed that Paul also engaged in one-on-one and triad *comunidad*-building

conversations with teacher leaders and Sarah during data meetings. This was a critical

finding given that conversations with teacher leaders about their students' academic

progress are often difficult and can create conflict between campus and teacher leaders.

Initially, however, our data analysis showed that a *cultura* of conversation had not been

established in the data meetings (Interview with Paul, October 6, 2012).

    PAUL: We really hadn't discussed data. Until yesterday, we only had small little

    conversations, but nothing major. I think, all last week and yesterday, we started

    having deeper conversations because we started getting data back. It's the end of

    the first 6-weeks, and a lot of students were failing the tests but passing

    everything else. The conversation came up of "What do we do? What do we do?

    What do we do?" When we have our 6 weeks meetings where we are looking at

the data and then talking about the other stuff, I think part of that is saying, "OK, so we know where we're at. We know where we've come from. We know what we're trying to do." And also, "What are your ideas for really starting to talk about the kids or with the kids? This is diagnostic. It's not an end-point." We've had those conversations, but we've really haven't had them if you know what I mean. We've mentioned it. We've talked about it in our PD hour. Last year we talked about, "How do we support students through questioning so that when they get a higher thinking skill question they can address it?" But it's been very superficial and it's been just, you know, 10–15-minute conversations, 10–15-minute conversations. Nothing continuous or nothing we're really following up on. And I think what could really help is that now were allotting a lot more time for it with the data meetings. And I don't even know if we should really call them data meetings because it goes beyond that. The time that Sarah and I spend with the teacher is very personal. One of the things that Sarah and I started talking about yesterday afternoon was "How do we convince the teachers that this is not an end-all either," because we think, "Six-weeks. I have to post grades. Then I start something new." And I think some teachers are ready for deeper conversations, and they understand that. But a lot of our staff still isn't. So the key is making the space, allotting more time instead of just little snippets…I want to encourage teachers to share a hundred percent of what they bring in the data. I think I'll find out when I do classroom walkthroughs anyway, but this is more meaningful. The conversation is just going to be, "What's working? What's not?" "What do we need to change?" "What do we need to continue?" "Where do we

need to be as far as pacing?" And so I think that it is just thinking about students.

It always comes down to whatever works for them.

Nevertheless, we did find that, over time, the *cultura* of the data meetings did

begin to shift. Moreover, it was interesting to find that, in contrast to the award

conversation with Mrs. March, it was Paul who recognized the need to shift the focus

from the systemsworld to the lifeworld so that the data meetings would result in

comunidad-building conversations. According to the data, this shift occurred in large part

because of Paul's incorporation of the check-in, a strategy that, like his use of an "I-am-

not-the-expert," helped establish the *comunidad*-building *cultura* in the ILT as well as the

other small-group contexts (Interview with Paul, October 6, 2012).

> PAUL: For me, Enrique, they're not too much different. They're very similar. It's
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> that I will always check in with them and say "How are you feeling? What do you
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> need from me to be able to support you?" That's my first thing always and usually
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> from there they will just lay it all out. And then that's when I'll throw in my two
>
> cents, you know. "This is what I've seen." "This is what I'm not seeing." "When I
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> do walkthroughs I see this," you know? "But I like it at this level," and so it's
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> very nondirective. It's very nonthreatening, and it's a check-in process really
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> more than anything. But through that check-in process, we get the most of it.
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> They bring their scope and sequence. They bring their lesson plan binder. They
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> bring their data from their 6 weeks exams. Now we're asking them to bring their
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> RtI [12] data and 504 data[13]. We're looking at LPAC[14] and our students who are

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[12] Response to Intervention.

[13] A designation for students who receive instructional supports to address their needs and who are also classified as Other Health Impaired (OHI).

ELL. We're looking at parent contact logs. You're bringing this whole massive thing, and that can be intimidating. And so I know they're stepping into the principal's office and they're going to sit down with him and try explaining what they've been doing this 6 weeks. Teachers come in and say, "Here are my results." And so because I know how threatening that can seem or how difficult that can be, I try to break the ice. It goes beyond breaking the ice. I try to just say, "I know you have all this to share and we wanna get to this, but what are you feeling first?" And I can usually gauge how teachers are doing just by those first few minutes. And then we just go over what we need to. So the data meetings don't look very different. I mean what you saw yesterday is very typical of most of the meetings, whether it's on a one-to-one or whether it's the full staff of fifty. If it's everyone or 26. If it's teaching staff or everyone on campus.

This narrative was a prime example using lifeworld conditions to facilitate systemsworld conversations so that they have the potential to promote *comunidad* building. Here, Paul authoritatively used the check-in to alleviate the tension and stress that he knew that the teacher leaders experienced during meetings of this nature. As such, the meetings were ontologically oriented, as Paul took the teachers where they were professionally and personally, and used the meetings and dialogue to move forward from there. Additionally, the check-in incorporated the lifeworld conditions of caring, comfortable space, connectedness/intimacy, honesty, sharing, trust, and vulnerability as Paul encouraged teacher leaders to share how they were feeling and what they needed from him for support. Similarly, the check-in allowed teacher leaders to feel that they too

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[14] Language Proficiency and Assessment Committee.

were important because the meeting with Paul began with their story instead of going immediately to a discussion of student data. Consequently, the data meetings were a context in which teacher leaders were encouraged to share both their personal and professional stories as an integral part of the conversation, thereby, contributing to the likelihood that a *comunidad*-building conversation would take place.

From a systemsworld perspective, *comunidad*-building conversations were supported by the Paul's authoritative disposition regarding the expectation of what teacher leaders need to bring and topics of discussion every time they meet. At the same time, the necessity for *comunidad*-building conversations during the data meetings was underscored by the fact that the data meetings were opportunities for teachers to reflect on and improve their craft, and to solicit help from Paul and Sarah in the process. Thus, the data meeting conversations lay at the core of building *comunidad* with teacher leaders through conversations, making them a context in which some of the most challenging yet important conversations took place. This reality was further demonstrated in the following narrative (Interview with Paul, October 6, 2012):

PAUL: And the other part is really having those critical conversations where we sometimes we have to be a little bit uncomfortable because we're looking at our own data and we're looking at our kids and saying, "Our kids are failing," or "Your kids are failing," you know? I tell teachers, "They're my kids, too, and so I don't want that," And how do I do that without offending a teacher and saying, "Whatever is happening isn't working," or maybe "It is working, but it's not showing." So just being able to frame that conversation to where you gotta be human with them because if not then they're stressed out themselves. And you end up even, I believe, hurting the situation some more. So I think both Sarah and

I have developed a relationship with most of our teachers where we can have that

conversation and it's not a personal attack. So I think two components are the

time and then taking time out of everyone's schedule. And then the relationship

that has been built to be able to bring up what can be tough because it's very

personal.

Going deeper, into this narrative, Paul further exemplified the level to which the

lifeworld conditions of the data meetings contributed to *comunidad*-building

conversations during data meetings and guided the systemsworld work. From the

beginning, both Paul and Sarah acknowledged the uncomfortable nature of the data-

meeting context, and responded by relying on the relationship to assuage the discomfort.

In doing so, they created a comfortable context that facilitated addressing systems needs,

including accountability for students' academic success and teacher leaders' professional

and personal needs. Along these same lines, Paul noted that he and Sarah took ownership

of students' academic progress as well, creating a sense of connectedness and intimacy

with teacher leaders to encourage them to be honest and open up about their students'

areas of strengths and needs.

Small-group contexts with teacher leaders. In addition to the one-on-one and

triad contexts in which Paul dialogued with Sarah and Robert, our data analysis

determined that the small-group contexts that Paul and I initially selected were also fertile

ground for *comunidad*-building conversations between Paul and his *colegas*. Again, these

contexts included the ILT meetings, the Monday PD sessions, and the grade-level PLCs

meetings.

Comunidad-building conversations during instructional leadership team

meetings. During our interviews, the first small-group context Paul and I discussed was

the ILT. Like his conversations with Sarah and Robert, the establishing the ILT was part of Paul's efforts to establish systems within the Baum school *comunidades.* Paul described the process of instituting the ILT when he first came to Baum as follows (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012)):

> PAUL: 34:35 When I became principal I started the instructional leadership team, and we meet every Friday morning from 7: 30 to about 8:00, 8:15. And that's been really key. So the teachers select a rep from each of their groups. So we have a K–1 and two group; a three, four, and five group, a middle school group, and a high school. And then, it takes three administrators, so me, Sarah, and Robert and our Special Ed instruction teacher or inclusion teacher 'cause she goes literally all over. So she sees everything! And so, there's about eight of us in that group, and we meet every Friday unless something serious comes up. Even if I'm out, they'll still meet. I think maybe twice this year, but we meet every Friday and it's just to check in. We check in and I ask, "What's going on? What are teachers saying, good or bad? Who do I have to address?" Then afterwards, we'll talk about calendar, what's coming up the next week so they can let their teachers know. And then we'll talk about the instructional strategy. Sometimes, I already have an idea of what's going to be brought up because of walk-throughs so I tell the team, "I wanna see more of this," or Sarah has an idea or Robert will bring in something with discipline. Or sometimes I just tell the teachers, "What do you think you all need?" This year we tried to do something a little different by asking "What does K–1 and two wanna do? What do three, four, and five wanna do? What does middle school and high school wanna do"? And so sometimes we had four different instructional strategies going on simultaneously. But I think that team

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has really helped. My first year, we didn't have it. And so it was a lot of top-down

decisions. It was just, "Here's what y'all need to do." The whole PD was already

all planned out, so I'd say "Here's y'all are gonna do." And so it was just us

telling teachers what to do.

In this narrative, the systemsworld attributes necessary for *comunidad*-building

conversations came to the forefront including Paul's authoritative approach by setting up

the ILT to meet regularly on the same day and at the same time each week. By doing this,

Paul ensured that there was a consistent, potentially ontological space and time for the

continuous process of engaging teacher leaders in conversation. As the data showed, over

time, the *cultura* of conversation within the ILT context evolved from a more directive

cultura of telling teacher leaders what to do and how to do it into a more collaborative

cultura where teacher leaders contributed their ideas about what they needed. In this way,

the transformation of conversations in the ILT mirrored the transformation of the one-on-

one and triad conversations between Paul and teacher leaders.

From a lifeworld perspective, Paul's authoritative decision to have the PLCs

select their own representative for the ILT was critical demonstration of trust on his part.

"Having been in Baum the year before in the capacity of assistant principal," I thought,

"Paul could have easily chosen to select the reps himself according to his perceptions and

evaluations of teacher leaders from the previous year." For a new principal, going the

safe route and choosing someone whom he believed would support him could have been

very tempting. Instead, Paul took a risk and exercised systemsworld and lifeworld

authoritativeness, and had the PLCs choose their own ILT representatives.

Similarly, this narrative contained all of the conditions necessary for *comunidad*-

building conversations to take place. As noted above, the key catalyst for this was Paul's

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authoritative use of the check in, Paul's way of checking the lifeworld and systemsworld of the school. Before getting down to the systemsworld business of reviewing the calendar, walkthrough feedback, and getting instructional and discipline updates, Paul inquired about what teacher leaders were saying, what was going on with them, and what needed to be addressed.

Despite these conversations however, it was evident in the narrative data that Paul was concerned that a discernable organic evolution in the conversations within the ILT had not taken place. Paul noted this in the following excerpt (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

ENRIQUE: So that wasn't conversation? That was just telling them?

PAUL: And so I didn't like that. That's why I said, "We have to create a group," and the group pretty much drives it. Now I've realized, though, that I'm still doing most of the talking during the small group. So next year I want that to change. I don't know how to change it up. That's still something I have to work on, where they're doing most of the talking. I'm still leading the conversations, but I don't want to. I want somebody else to do it.

Even so, it is important that Paul recognized that he was still doing the majority of the talking and was working to find ways of changing this aspect of the ILT *cultura*. As such, the ILT conversations also served as a catalyst for Paul's ongoing reflection as an authentic dialogical leader. Along these same lines, Paul did mention a subtle but important shift in *cultura* that contributes to *comunidad*-building conversations within the ILT on the part of Sarah (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: I noticed that for the first time ever, Enrique. It was just Friday. It was this past Friday. We had Faith create an agenda, and the first thing on there was the

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check-in. And Faith is very systematic, you know. "Let's go, and let's get it done." And there was a check-in there. So I didn't say anything. I put it out, and I gave it to her because she was doing so much stuff. She said, "Is it good?" I said, "Yeah. Go for it!" It was around 4:20. We were supposed to start at 4:00, so things were running late a little. But she said, "So, let's check in everybody." It was a really fast check-in, asking if everybody was ok. I laughed. And she and everybody basically said "Yeah, we're OK." Then, Sarah said, "All right. OK, let's move on." And I said, "Ok, let's stop. Before the meeting, when I was getting some stuff ready, I had heard someone share a story." So I said, "You know what, I think it was Mrs. Simpson." I just thought it was important. I mean, it was a funny story. It was about a student playing with a maggot in class. He had some acorns in his backpack, and one of them had sprouted maggots and was playing with it in class. But it was just, you know, not breaking the ice because everybody knows each other, but just getting people comfortable and feeling OK being there another 5 hours after a long day's Friday. And so I always try to do that.

During our interview I asked Paul about the significance of this moment.. Referring back to the story, he noted the following (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012):

PAUL: And it took like 2 minutes, but it got people talking and you know people started laughing. It's 4:30. Everybody's tired. Nobody wants to stay till 9:00 even though they're getting paid. But I think it just needed to happen. And so I see how Faith is now trying to do it. Later on, I told her, "You kinda forced it to go quickly, even though it was part of the agenda. 'Ok, let's move on.'" But it's at

least as far as our administrative team, it's becoming more common. When I'm present, I'm gonna try to always put it in.

This narrative focusing on the use of the check-in the ILT was one of the best examples of how Paul consciously and conscientiously ensured that the conditions and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations were infused with fidelity during the ILT. Taking the time to make sure the check-in was not rushed and adding a humorous story on top of that gave the ILT meetings a sense of caring that put people first and took into consideration the context of the situation at hand, in this case, an ILT meeting taking place after hours on a Friday when people were tired and ready to bring the week to an end. Using a systemsworld and lifeworld authoritative stance, Paul used Sarah's attempt at engaging in the check-in as an authentic, real-world experience to assist her in her ontological development as a campus leader. However, it also important that, as part of his authoritative stance, Paul engaged Sarah in a manner that did not violate any sense of trust, connectedness, respect, or sense of self-efficacy that *comunidad* between Paul and Sarah was nurtured as well as within the ILT membership.

The check-in of our interviews was so prominent that I asked Paul to elaborate on purpose of the check-in within the anatomy of the conversations that took place at Baum ISD. He articulated the following (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012):

PAUL: I have an agenda. Every Friday I send it to them that morning or the evening before. It's pretty much the same. The very first thing is the check-in and it's literally, "So tell me how you're doing today," "What are your teachers saying all this week," "Did anything come up that I didn't address," "Was there something that I still need to address," "Are you seeing enough of this?" And so, it's just time for the teacher to kind of reflect either on the week or vent.

Sometimes we just joke, and that's okay. But for me it is a crucial piece. For me they are good conversations because I get to know how that teacher is feeling, and then I also get to know how the other three or four teachers on their team are feeling. At semester, we change the staff, so that somebody else will bring a new voice in pretty much.

Of particular significance here is Paul's characterization of the check-in conversation in and of itself. This characterization further underscored the importance of the check-in, hence, Paul's efforts to ensure that Sarah implemented the check-in with fidelity. By beginning every ILT meeting with the check-in, Paul provided the space for teacher and campus leaders alike to engage each other in conversation with a sense of trust, vulnerability, sharing, intimacy, and respect that strengthened the relationships and sense of connectedness between and among those present before the business-side of the agenda was addressed.

Data analysis of about the ILT also revealed that ILT's structure organically evolved in a manner that made this context even more conducive to *comunidad*- building conversations. The evolution took place regarding the systemsworld attributes of the ILT's membership and was in keeping with Paul's belief in bringing as many people as possible to the table to be a part of the conversation and authentically and meaningfully to contribute to the school *comunidad* (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: The first year we did ask to have one person. This person was nominated by the team, and then it just kinda served that way. And then last year we, we decided we wanted everybody to be a part of something and be able to feel that they could come to us and have a conversation with us. And so, at the beginning of the last school, year we said, "Nominate someone, but then, at semester, you

will nominate somebody else. So, we at least get two people per team. A team is three or four people. And so, half of you will be participating." And so that's been something that's been really important. And then we have a different PLC leader. So then we have a third person who's taken over a certain role.

Along with the attribute of democratic, Paul's authoritative change of the ILT representatives' term also infused the ILT with the attribute of adaptability. By creating the space for more teacher leaders to participate in the ILT; moreover, the change also imbued the ILT with the greater potential to contribute to teacher leaders' ontological development through capacity-building, equal-contribution, reflective practice. Furthermore, greater teacher leader access to the ILT conversations gave the context a greater sense of transparency.

From the lifeworld perspective, the change in the ILT membership also enhanced the possibility of engaging in *comunidad* building as more teacher leaders had the opportunity to grow in their sense of belonging, relationship, connectedness and intimacy, caring, trust, respect, sharing, and honesty by contributing their ideas, participating in decision making, and engaging in check-in (see Figure 51).
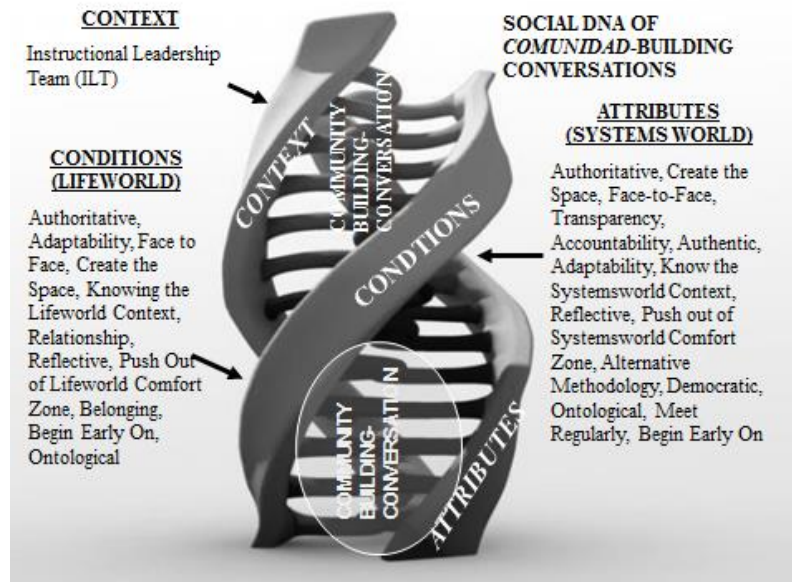
Figure 51. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Comunidad-building conversations during Monday planning and development

sessions. As with the ILT, the systemsworld data showed that the Monday PD sessions

were characterized nonnegotiable, weekly meetings that took place at the same time

every Monday. Unlike the ILT meetings, however, the Monday PD sessions originated

during Paul's tenure as assistant principal. In the following excerpt, Paul elaborated on

how the PD sessions evolved as a context where *comunidad*-conversations took place,

beginning when he first arrived as an assistant principal (Interview with Paul, Jul7 22,

2012).

> ENRIQUE: Baum ISD is a very unique context because you have elementary,
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> middle school, and high school all on the same campus. And then, as principal,
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> you had to bring all those people together and say, "We're having PD on
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> Mondays!" So this happens every Monday?
>
> PAUL: Every Monday, Pre-K through 12th.

ENRIQUE: Tell me about how you developed this. This is an assumption on my part, but I'm picturing these meetings still as some kind of a conversation about PD every Monday. How did you develop to that or was that already established?

PAUL: When Mary and I got there it was her first year as principal, my first year as AP. They had discussed the idea of having continuous, ongoing professional development. I don't know exactly how that conversation got started, but it was something that the superintended back then wanted. And I don't know if the other principal had brought it up or not, but I know our first year we did the Monday PD meetings, it was my first year as an AP, her first year as a principal. Oh, I know how it started. They wanted to do a book study.

ENRIQUE: About?

PAUL: They wanted to do a book study, and we did two books that first year. One was Failure's Not An Option, and the other one was something with instructional strategies. So that's how it got started. So we finished the books halfway through the year. So we had about another half a year of meetings. So then we started saying, "What are we gonna do? How do we use this time? We don't want it to go to waste." Originally, I remember, we proposed the Monday PD meetings to the board in August. We proposed it to the board as, "It'll be PD. It'll be time for tutoring once TAKS gets closer. We won't meet on Mondays, but we'll have an extra hour to tutor." We had an acronym for it, and I can't remember what the acronym was. And then the board said, "Okay. Yeah it sounds good." So that's how it got started. So, the first year we did the book studies.

From the data, we determined that, in its initial form, the Monday PD meetings and conversations had more in common with the early data meetings and conversations

than they did with the ILT. Except for the adaptability, this narrative contained very little in the way of evidence of either attributes or conditions of *comunidad*-building conversations. The content of the meetings was determined in isolation from teacher leaders. In further analyzing the data, I wondered whether the scarcity of evidence was a function Paul's own narrative or of the meetings themselves. And I wondered whether the book study meetings during Paul's tenure as assistant principal simply lacked in *comunidad*-building conditions and attributes. That said, Paul's narratives about PD Monday meetings after he became principal contained more examples of *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions as seen (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: Then the second year I said, "The book studies are great, but I want there to be a lot more. I want to practice different strategies." That summer, we had done a big ESL camp because we went from a pull-out program to "everybody's certified in ESL," and changed to a content-based program. I wanted to practice those strategies during the PD Monday sessions. So what me and Sarah did was we pretty much planned out every Monday for the school for the entire school year. We developed an ILT team, instructional leadership team. Sarah and I met on Fridays, and then we would discuss what strategy we were gonna use for the week or for 2 weeks. And then Monday, we taught it or we modeled it or we discussed it and set the stage for the week. "If we were doing something with vocabulary, we wanna see the evidence that you're using the strategy like a little Freyer Model. Everybody will be using it. So, this is what it looks like. Let's talk about it. How can we differentiate it? We have Pre-K all the way through 12th grade. So, at 12th grade, at the high school, how is it going to look different from the one at the elementary?" So Sarah and I had those kinds of conversations, and

then at the meeting we said, "Alright guys, it's 4 o'clock. Let's go. Here's the strategy. And then, next week bring some products, so we can share them out. Then we start the next strategy or it goes 2 weeks." So that's how that got started. It seems like this year we've all realized we've used it a lot more for administrative kind of meetings, and we don't like that.

In the second year of implementation, the PD Monday sessions were more conducive to *comunidad*-building conversations because of the systemsworld and lifeworld attributes and conditions that were established. As in other cases, the shift began with Paul taking an authoritative stance and incorporated attributes of accountability and authentic capacity building by having teachers bring products for discussion to the Monday PD session after the strategy was introduced. Paul incorporated adaptability, creating the space for teacher leaders to discuss differentiation of the week's strategy for their particular grade-level. In addition, by returning with products for discussion, PD Monday meetings contributed to teacher leaders' reflective practice and ontological development.

From a lifeworld perspective, sharing their products and experiences from their grade levels, provided the opportunity for Baum teacher leaders to learn about their *colegas'* work with the same strategy. These conversations increased the potential for developing the trust, respect, and honesty necessary for teacher leaders to make themselves vulnerable and to share their students' products and their experience. As this sharing took place, the *comunidad*-building conversations gained the potential for developing a sense of connectedness and caring among teacher leaders as well as with campus leaders, thereby strengthening their relationships. Sharing their products and

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experiences also contributed teacher leader's reflective practice and their sense of self-efficacy.

Like the ILT, the PD Monday day pointed to an organic evolution of the sessions as Paul and his *colegas* continued their dialogue in and reflection about the meetings. One of the first examples of evolution, presented in the narrative, showed that the PD sessions contributed to *comunidad* building, but then began to stray from their original purpose (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: When this past year finished, again we said, "You know what? Let's start with another book study, but this book study we're gonna use one of Marzano's. There's going to be more focus back on the PD because we kind of drifted from it." I think teachers for the most part enjoy it because they get to check in across the campus pretty much. And then they get to do so in groups. I mean it's never just one-on-one. It's always in a group or it's in pairs with something specific for instruction. And so, we go out into the hallway, and we do some stuff. So, for the most part I think it's pretty effective.
>
> ENRIQUE: So those Mondays, y'all are coming together and you're having conversations. There's a kind of, "Here it is. I'm modeling it for you." Then you're having conversations with each other about how they're going to implement.
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> PAUL: They implement and then they come back the following Monday.
>
> ENRIQUE: And what does that look like?
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> PAUL: It's just sharing products. I ask them to bring whatever the product is. So, if we're doing graphic organizers, sometimes it's just as broad as "Develop a graphic organizer or use something you already know, and then just bring it back

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to share so we can give each other ideas." I always ask for a couple of examples from elementary, a couple of examples from middle school, and a couple examples from high school. At the Kindergarten, it's mainly the teachers doing most of the work, and at the high school it's just student work, samples, so we kind of share that. But it's always a shared session where they bring the poster that they created or a picture of something or the actual model that was created, so they share it to each other. But this last year, towards the very end, we started saying, "You know what? This is becoming very administrative." So, I made sure that I started with a reflection question. And so when they walk in, there's something for them to reflect on. Then we share out, and then they have to show something. They show out in partners or in a small group. Sometimes we purposely place them in different groups, sometimes we just let them sit wherever. And so then it kind of varies. But it's always, "Show me what you've done in the week, and then let's model what we expect from next week."

With respect to the PD Monday meetings, the narrative above contained the most evidence of *comunidad*-building conversation attributes and conditions identified. Although all but the open door attribute and all of the lifeworld conditions were found in the narrative, attributes that stood out were authoritative, reflective, adaptability and ontological. With each year of implementation changes were made to the content and format of the Monday PD sessions so that they would serve the teaching-and-learning needs of teachers while maintaining a consistent element of teacher leader dialogue. The addition of the reflective question and discussion by Paul incorporated a reflective *comunidad*-building conversation space as well. Moreover, by varying the seating or other characteristics of the Monday PD sessions, Paul provided opportunities for teacher

leaders to engage in conversation with *colegas* with whom they might not otherwise engage in conversation, thereby, encouraging and nurturing *comunidad* building within and across grade levels.

A unique finding about the PD Monday sessions was that they represented the only context that moved away from the intended purpose. As Paul noted, the sessions became increasingly administrative; therefore, he took steps to get the sessions back on track. Paul elaborated on this issue (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: Coming back to it, we noticed we were taking a lot of time for other things, and I think this year what caught us off guard the most that we didn't expect all the paperwork. We were an unacceptable campus this year, and there is a process for getting out of being unacceptable. That process takes up a lot of time, and we were sharing a lot with teaches about the process during that time. And we eventually said, "Okay, we have to stop because we're actually doing what we shouldn't be doing. We took away something where we were modeling strategies and we were doing all this stuff to share information that we can share elsewhere or through the small groups or through email." And so, again, we said, "Alright, let's make the change," so actually in 2 weeks, Sarah and I will be creating the schedule again for those Monday PDs.

This narrative was significant in that it contained evidence of what could cause a context that was at one point conducive to *comunidad*-building conversations, to stifle if not altogether abandon the *comunidad*-building conversation process. In this case, the added responsibilities associated with an academically unacceptable rating and the

pressure that came with this designation caused the PD Monday sessions to become an administrative meeting focused on the process of getting out of AU[15] status.

However, this narrative is also exemplary of how an authoritative campus leader and his *colegas*' reflective praxis led them to re-evaluate and repurpose the Monday PD context so that it could, once again, serve as a space for *comunidad*-building conversations. "This narrative," I realized, "really underscored the ongoing reflective practice by campus and teacher leaders necessary for sustaining a *cultura* of *comunidad* building through conversation. If Paul and his *colegas* had not stopped to reflect on what the Monday PD sessions became, they might have continued moving away from building *comunidad*. Even worse," I then posited, "other contexts like the ILT might have suffered the same fate."

Like the ILT meetings, the data made evident Paul's use of the check-in as part of the Monday PD agenda. In addition, similar to the check-in for the ILT meetings, the check-in for the Monday PD sessions served Paul and teacher leaders well in building *comunidad* (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: Monday, during our PD session, we were sharing out about, I don't know, the Marzano book, and one of one of his strategies. I can't even remember what the strategy was, but what I said to teachers was, "Well, when I was doing this, I . . . " And so, I shared that, but then other stories come out. For me it really helps make things very personal and very real. So then, teachers saw that there's a reason why we're having them to do this, and people respond to that. And so, I think that's something that that I personally bring to the meeting. There are some

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[15] Academically unacceptable.

people who are like, "OK let's move on," but those who know me or have been a

part of the campus for a while know checking in is going to be a part of the

agenda. I can think of a middle school teacher, Mrs. Pavek, who's the same way.

And she's like, "Oh, here it comes! The touchy feely part," and she'll say it, but

she'll participate. And then she'll share something. So, that's that's how I see the

opposite side of people who are at the other end of the spectrum and who are not

used to sharing out. For whatever reason, they'll still buy into it. They'll still do it.

They'll still adhere to it.

In this case, Paul used the check-in as way for him share his story as an educator

and to encourage his *colegas* to do the same. In doing so, Paul counted on the trust and

respect of the teacher leaders present who were then willing to be vulnerable and trust in

their *colegas* when they themselves shared their own stories as Paul did (see Figure 52).
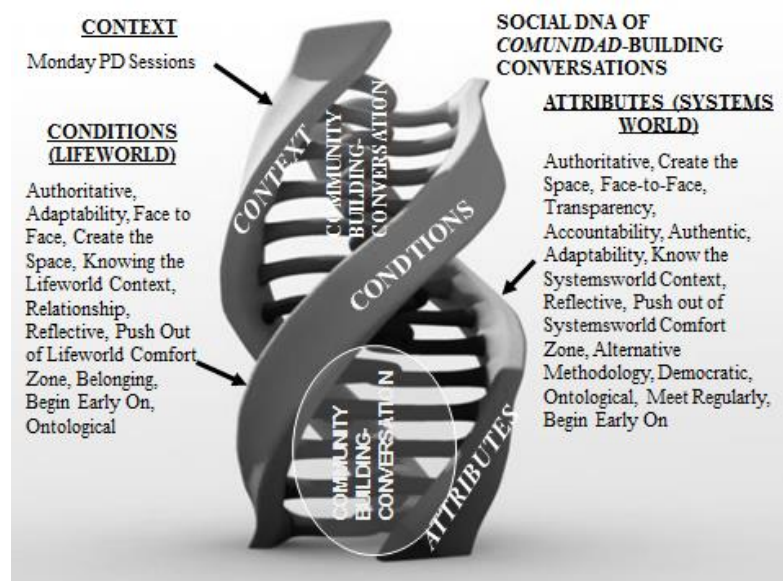
Figure 52. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Comunidad-building conversations during Professional Learning Community

meetings. Our analysis of the PLC Meeting data evidenced systemsworld attributes

similar to those of the ILT and Monday PD sessions. These attributes included beginning

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early on, meeting regularly, create the space, and authoritative. Moreover, like the PD Monday sessions, the PLCs were in place prior to Paul becoming principal of Baum. Below, Paul described additional systemsworld attributes of the PLC (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: There will always be someone taking notes and make sure people sign in because administrators don't always meet with them. So they'll meet alone. But we have a checklist: discuss academics first and then other areas like discipline, attendance, and a couple if additional issues that might be on it. So, when they take notes, we just have a real quick notes page where they document what was discussed, and what were some issues. Then that person gives it to the ILT Lead Member. Then, the ILT Lead Member shares that with the ILT when they do their quick check-in and we'll share that out.

As with the ILT and the PD Monday sessions, the data showed that the PLCs evolved over time because of in large part the *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions with which Paul infused them after he became principal (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: The PLCs were not very structured, and administrators didn't meet with them. As a result, they didn't meet. And so I said, "You know what? Administrators are often busy, but I still want them to meet. So these are things they will do." I like for the PLCs to kinda shape themselves, you know, but we give them the structure. "Here's your agenda, but then how you do it is up to you. What you all pretty much talk about is here in some bullet points just to make sure you hit them."

Paul did not speak directly to the lifeworld conditions that existed in the PLCs. Even so,

by having the PLCs meet even without an administrator, Paul demonstrated trust in his

colegas, counting on them to meet without a campus leader present and by allowing them

run the PLC meetings as they saw fit as long as they covered the items on the agenda.

Along these same lines, in these two narratives, Paul described the systemsworld qualities

that contributed to *comunidad*-building conversations. On the one hand, the agenda

provided accountability with respect to the topics teacher leaders covered. On the other

hand, the agenda provided for adaptability, allowing the teacher leaders to include

additional issues that came up and allowing them to decide on the manner in which they

would address the agenda items. By requiring the PLCs to meet regularly, Paul created a

consistent opportunity for the PLCs to become a part of the burgeoning *cultura* of

conversation. These regular meetings had the potential for nurturing the continuous

dialogical process of reflective practice and ontological development of teacher leaders

within an authentic context for discussing issues that were pertinent to their grade levels.

In addition, when the PLCs' ILT member presented the group's meeting notes in the ILT

meeting, the attribute of transparency was incorporated into the PLC process. In addition

to the initial shift noted above, the PLC data also showed that a shift had occurred in the

conversational *cultura* of the PLC meetings (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: By setting up the PLCs where they talk in small groups and share out in
>
> bigger groups I think it's given them the sense that it's ok to have conversations.
>
> It's ok to go to whoever is your supervisor is and ask a question instead of just
>
> waiting to be asked to participate or not be asked at all, and not participate at all.
>
> So you know for me the idea behind that is that I wouldn't be in the place I am
>
> right now if my principal hadn't given me the opportunity. So I started really

thinking about that and it's really about allowing people to play a part in the way we start to shape things on campus. And at least for me it's worked. And why I say it's worked is that we've been able to get people talking and collaborating and buying into things. So the meetings help me out because they help me run things smoother. Meeting helps me out also because I get to delegate and then it's very transparent because everybody at one point or another gets to contribute something. When you're gonna be in a small group you're gonna be in a district-wide small group or district-wide period. And so that worked. So, it just helped open up those lines of communication.

By delving deeper into the importance of the PLCs and the important role that meetings played in Baum ISD, Paul provided a better idea of the systemsworld and lifeworld attributes and conditions that contribute to *comunidad*-building conversations within the PLC context. In this narrative, Paul noted that the PLCs pushed teacher leaders out of their comfort zones and encouraged them to have conversations outside of the PLC context through the modeling of conversations that took place during PLC meetings. At the same time, by encouraging these conversations in and out of the PLC context, these attributes promoted the lifeworld conditions of sharing, vulnerability, trust, self-efficacy, respect, honesty, and relationships as teacher leaders engaged each other and campus leaders in dialogue. Furthermore, Paul authoritatively stuck to his convictions about the need to meet regularly, thereby providing for the time and space where he and his *colegas* could continue to develop their relationships and sense of belonging. "Had he just given up on the PLCs meeting or any of the other contexts," I concluded, "Paul would have decreased the opportunities for him and his *colegas* to engage in *comunidad*-building conversations."

Nevertheless, as with the check-in, we also found that that there had been some pushback with regard to Paul's emphasis on meeting. Paul addressed this issue (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: And even now some teacher will say we have too many meetings. One teacher said, "We need more time on our own." In response, I said, "You know what? I think we don't. I want to be like a coach. A coach is with his players or her players. Every single time they're training, they're coaching and they're with them on the sidelines." I said, "That's what I want to be." And so they said, "Oh, that's too much." And you know it's not. For me it's not

Moreover, Paul underscored the importance of a meeting harkening back to his foundational experiences growing up and then arguing in favor of the need to meet with teacher leaders more often (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: I think the other thing as far as meeting is just having that face to face is. I don't know if it's because that's how I was brought up, you know? Like I said, going with my grandparents every morning and just the whole checking in, maybe that's part of it. One of the frustrations this year, was I felt that I still didn't have enough time with the staff. I wanted to meet with them more. And so I talked to Sarah and to Robert. I told them, "We have our PD on Mondays, but what if every other Wednesday we have another meeting?" And one of them said, "Well, when do you get to where it's too much?" And for me it's never too much! For me, if we could do this every single day after school for 10 minutes, we'd get together every day after school for 10 minutes and just check in to see how things are going. I think that's my personality. I want to gain a sense of how people are

doing every day and I don't want to wait until I get the phone call or an email or until somebody becomes upset.

As this narrative demonstrated, meeting regularly for Paul served a systemsworld need to have his finger on the pulse of the Baum school *comunidad* to address proactively any issues that might lie beneath the surface. "But," I thought to myself, "Paul also said he wanted to know how things are going and have a sense of how people are doing. For him, knowing the lifeworld context through face-to-face conversations as part of the meeting had to be part of it." As such, Paul alluded to lifeworld conditions of connectedness and intimacy, relationship, trust, and vulnerability. Similarly, he said that meeting was an opportunity to have a sense of how teacher leaders were doing every day, rather than wait for something to go wrong, a person to get upset, or a problem to arise. In this way, Paul also invoked the lifeworld condition of people as the end and caring (see Figure 53).
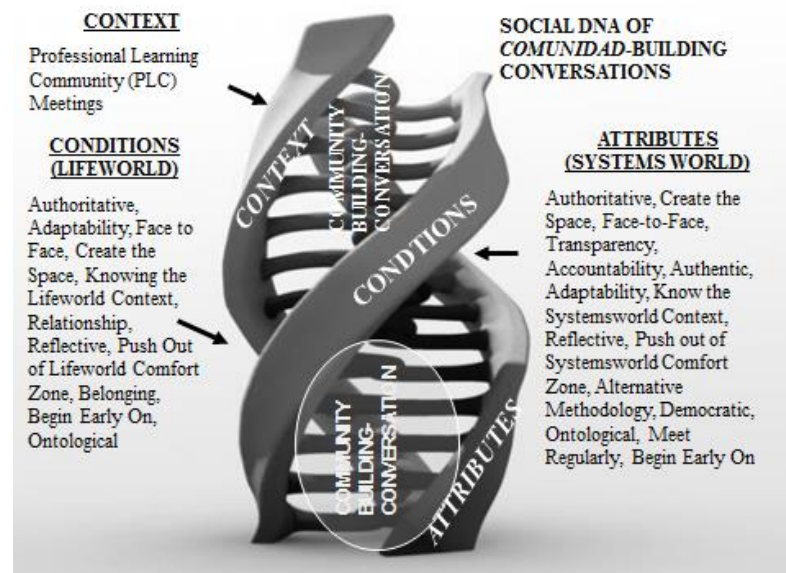
Figure 53. Social DNA of *comunidad* building.

Cross-pollination between contexts. In conducting the analysis of the data, I also found that in some situations conversations in one context carried over and

influenced conversations in another context. For this research, I referred to this *comunidad*-building conversation process as cross-pollination between contexts, evoking the biological process through which one organism is pollenated by another organism.

Comunidad-building conversations during change in instructional leadership team membership. In analyzing the narrative data, we found evidence of cross-pollination took place during the process of shifting from a two-semester to a one-semester term for ILT membership (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: So everyone on the ILT Committee is brand new except for the administrators, and so whether they want to or not, we switch the staff. The conversation between Sarah and I was, "We want everyone to be a part of this. What I don't want it to become is, 'Well, now it's not Mr. Mendoza making decisions. Now it's this team of the elite eight.'" So we switch it out at the end of the semester, and it's a brand new staff. We even had first-year teachers on there.
>
> ENRIQUE: What was the conversation when you put making that shift from two semesters to one semester on the table?
>
> PAUL: It was a Friday, and Sarah said, "How do we get more teachers involved?" We were talking like we usually do after teachers leave. Once the teachers leave, the administrators stay together and that's when we do our own check-in. After the teachers leave they go to class to 1st period. We stay there. And we do our own check-in and layout the calendar for each other; what we have to do. So it was one of those Fridays where Sarah made a comment about, "I'm hearing a lot of 'Me, me, me,' when teachers do check-ins, and I'm not hearing about the others. So how do we get them to include others' issues?" And I said, "You know, that's interesting." I thought for a while and then said, "Well let's switch them."

But then I was not so sure. "How are we gonna switch them? I like the people that are on here because I can count on them." And Sarah said, "Just give them a try." So I said, "Alright." I don't even know where choosing members got a little heated, but Sarah said, "Well let's choose somebody else." And I said, "No because then things might not get done." Finally, I said, "Let them decide!" She's like, "But what if we get a bad representative?" And I told her, "If we get a bad representative, it's the team choosing." So we did that and my conversation that following Monday with the staff was, "I believe in collective leadership and so it's not about me. It's about what each and every one of you brings to the table. So take a few minutes to discuss in your group who's going to be on the ILT team. That takes away your Friday mornings, but we always bring some snacks, cookies, donuts something." We just take turns bringing something in, the administration does. And so they elected a new representative. It actually went smoother than I thought.

Here, the cross-pollinating dynamic of *comunidad*-building conversations initiated during one of the conversations that Paul and Sarah regularly have on Fridays. That conversation resulted in another *comunidad*-building conversation when Paul and Sarah presented grade-level teams with the task of choosing their ILT representative. Both *comunidad*-building conversations involved similar systemsworld attributes including adaptability, alternative method, and accountability with respect to Paul and Sarah's authoritative and authentic conversation in which they decided to team-select their ILT representatives. Similarly, Paul and Sarah engaged in an authoritative, authentic, honest, and transparent conversation with the grade-level teams to let them know about this decision. In this way, Paul and Sarah's *comunidad* building in a one-on-

one context cross-pollinated the small-group context conversation in the short term via the conversation to explain the change in ILT members and the conversations that took place in each team when selecting their next representative. Long-term cross-pollination also took place in that the decision to change the ILT representatives at semester brought new people to the table during the school year, increasing the opportunity for more teacher leaders to engage in *comunidad*-building conversations. Lastly, trivial as it might seem, Paul demonstrated a lifeworld authoritative approach to the ILT meeting, noting that early on he made sure that he, Sarah, and Robert took turns bringing in snacks for the meetings. Combined with his lifeworld understanding that participating in the ILT meant that teacher leaders would have to give up their Fridays, Paul's authoritative stance contributed to the *comunidad*-building process of the ILT meetings.

Knowing that change can be difficult, especially in situations where a person (i.e., the current ILT member) is asked to step aside and let someone else play a particular role—committee memberships are sometimes seen as positions of privilege or even entitlement by some teachers. Thus, it was not surprising to find that the change in ILT membership resulted in some friction (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

> PAUL: It happened right there, so they elected their new person. And so it actually went smoother than I thought.
>
> ENRIQUE: It happened right there and then?
>
> PAUL: Yeah. They just had to give me a name on a piece of paper. Afterward, I said, "Alright, on Friday, I'm this is who I'm meeting with," and I called out the names.

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ENRIQUE: Think back to the process. Y'all said, "Okay, this is what you're gonna do." Can you recall any of the conversations you heard from the teams or the groups while all this was taking place?

PAUL: I think what it caused was a little unsettling. I think you know this. There're certain teachers that will naturally volunteer or be on whatever committee. It's always the same two or three, and I think they really threw a wrench in the process. And they were like, "Wow, I can't be there anymore." And even though they're great people and you like them, we had to say "Sorry, it's not you anymore. Now it's somebody else." And that I think caused a little bit of, I don't even know what the word is.

ENRIQUE: Friction?

PAUL: Yes, some friction in the teams, but I think in the end it was okay 2, 3 weeks later because the only thing we asked them to do was for them to report everything we share out in the ILT. So what they'll do is type up an email of notes and send that out. Or when they meet in their small PLC group, talk about it then. And so it caused other teachers to take that role, the ones that usually didn't. That was good.

On the surface, it appeared odd to say that a conversation that brought about friction within the grade-level teams was a *comunidad*-building conversation. However, as in the case of the data meetings, the *comunidad*-building process in this case required engaging in conversations characterized by discomfort. As one of my principal's liked to say, "If you're not upsetting the apple cart, you're not doing your job!" With this in mind, I asked Paul what he thought about the process that took place and the friction with which the teacher–leaders had to deal (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

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PAUL: I don't know. I think in each team it was different. Like my K–1 and two

Teams. There're some really strong characters in there where they all will speak

their mind, but at the very end there's never any issues. I think because they're all

so strong and forceful, they pretty much force each other to be honest, and once

they leave the table, they're good. So, I know there was maybe some of that

friction, but then afterwards they were good. My third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade

team—we brought in one new staff member—so it was like the three older

teachers versus the new one. I saw that back-and-forth a lot, and I think that's

where I saw the most friction because it's like, "Well how is this new teacher now

leading or telling us what is going on," which is interesting because the position

was never that of a team leader. It was just your PLC representative on the ILT.

ENRIQUE: But in their mind?

PAUL: But in their mind this person was the one who was checking in now. I

know that caused a little bit of that back-and-forth. With the middle school team,

it wasn't really big. I know the rep that was there before. She didn't want to leave,

she wanted to stay on. She said, "I like this. I actually think this is important to

cherish." She added, "I really enjoy meeting on Fridays. At first, I thought that

this was ridiculous, and I hated coming in on Fridays." "Even though," she said,

"I'll volunteer to see what it's about. I really thought it was a waste of time, but

after two or three times," she said, "it really forced me to do things that I would

never do on my own." Which, at that point, were the instructional strategies. She

added, "I actually like it. So can I stay here?" And I said, "You know what? I

appreciate that, but I want somebody else to feel that too." And she replied, "Ah,

okay. That's fine." So that's what happened with that conversation. At the high

school it was one teacher who had been there two years. The rest, they all were first-year teachers. So the veteran teacher of two years was like, "Oh no, they can't handle it. They're not ready for this." And I said, "Give them a chance." And so we brought on that other teacher, and things were fine.

I found the social DNA of the conversations in this narrative especially revealing. Not only did it evidence the cross-pollination that took place between Paul and Sarah's meeting and their subsequent meeting with grade-level teams about the ILT membership, but it also evidenced the level to which the ILT had served as to build *comunidad* for at least one of the ILT members. Furthermore, the conversation with the grade-level teams was an authentic and transparent, face-to-face dialogue that pushed teacher leaders out of their comfort-zones to select their PLC's ILT representative. Moreover, to achieve this goal, teacher leaders were compelled to adapt as they engaged in the unfamiliar space of honestly, reflecting not on their teaching-and-learning practice (as they usually did in their PLCs), but on the beliefs and values that guided their collegial practice with each other. In essence, by authoritatively passing the responsibility of selecting the ILT representative to the PLCs, Paul and Sarah's cross-pollination created a completely new context for ongoing *comunidad*-building conversations that would take place every semester. Additionally, the data from the ILT change pointed to the overall shift in *cultura* that Paul saw taking place (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012).

PAUL: You know, and now that I'm really thinking about it, I think maybe that's why this year I felt like, "What's next?" And that's why this year I feel like we have to get a lot more personal because now I have a chance to work very formally with everybody in different roles because we have more teachers participating in different roles. I mean we have the ILT where we saw two

different teachers so that's eight teachers. We saw eight different staff members in the formal role that year. Then we have PLC meetings, and that's a different leader. So then that's another four. That's twelve teachers in a leadership position out of the 26. So you pretty much have half the staff taking a role in something. They're the leader of whatever that process is. And so for me, it brought a lot more people to the table that wouldn't have been at the table. And now I think that's why, thinking back, I feel like, "Okay, what's the next step?" I feel like I know the teachers. I can work with them. They can all step up if I asked them to. And now, the next step is that of transferring this over to the in-service, and then tying in curriculum and community. And so I think being able to do that just it opened things up. The easiest way to put it is that it brought people to the table that wouldn't of been there. My first year as an AP, it was two of us making the decisions: the principal and the me. My first year as principal, it was eight of us making the decisions. So then you go from two to eight to twelve! So it's been getting bigger. The community's been growing. It also sounds like we've got systems, but now we're trying to make these systems include more people.

Stepping back, I realized that this narrative really exemplified the cross-pollinating power of *comunidad*-building conversations at the most basic level of Baum's social DNA. When Paul said, "I feel like we need to get more personal . . . . I know the teachers. I can work with them. They can all step up if I asked them to" (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012), these four sentences spoke volumes about the cross-pollinating lifeworld impact of bringing more people to the table and engaging them in dialogues that build *comunidad* in Baum ISD. Like bees going from flower to flower pollinating them, Paul's *colegas* were growing in their capacity to engage in potential *comunidad*-building

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conversations within any of contexts they inhabited in the Baum ecology. In addition,

Paul saw this growth in his *colegas'* capacity. Ontologically, this was a major step

forward in cultivating a *cultura* of conversation and *comunidad*.

With respect to the *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions of the

conversations themselves, when he acknowledged the relationships that he had developed

with teacher leaders, which allowed for deeper levels of caring, connectedness/intimacy,

honesty, respect, trust, and vulnerability. Moreover, in the process of getting to know

teacher leaders better, Paul created the opportunity to get to know their personal stories,

which was an ongoing process of sharing that put people first within the context of the

comunidad-building conversations taking place. At the same time, another side of the

lifeworld coin was that teacher leaders also had the opportunity to know Paul more,

adding to the potential that they too would say, "I know Paul more. I can work with him.

I know he'll step up for me when I ask him to," and perhaps say, "I too need to get more

personal with Paul." (See Figure 54.)
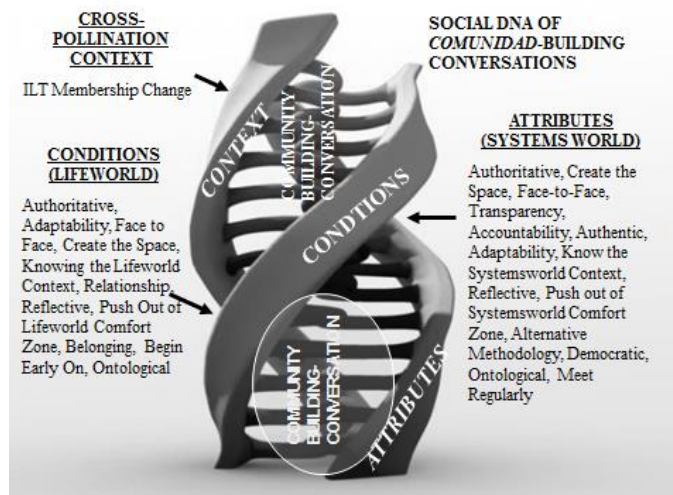
Figure 54. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Comunidad-building conversation while addressing teacher leader conflict.

Another example of cross-pollination took place as part of a series of events involving a

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dispute between two teacher leaders. Ironically, the conflict between the teacher leaders arose following the conversations that took place within the context of an ILT meeting (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: Last week we had two teachers who had a conflict. This hasn't' happened in a while, but it was a brand new teacher and a teacher of 20-plus years. The veteran teacher heard that the new teacher, who is their PLC's ILT representative, mentioned during her check-in at the ILT meeting, and I heard back from her. "It doesn't matter what she said," I said. "Me and you have a professional relationship. And regardless, you know people are always going to say things, but my relationship with you is not going to change if someone and says something.

On the surface, this narrative appeared to be a negative example of cross-pollination taking place and a *comunidad*-destroying conversation that bled over from the ILT to a one-on-one conversation between the veteran teacher leader and her *colega* who told her the ILT representative "threw her under the bus" at the meeting. However, as in the case of the friction resulting from the ILT membership change, the friction resulting from this conversation created the opportunity for cross-pollinating *comunidad*-building conversations between Paul and the two teacher leaders in one-on-one and triad contexts.

The lifeworld significance of the *comunidad*-building conversation between Paul and the veteran teacher leaders lay in Paul's affirmation and valuing of the relationship that existed between himself and the veteran teacher leader, as well as his decision to honor her concern by allowing a safe space for her to share her concern. Moreover, in sharing her story, the veteran teacher leader evidenced the trust and caring that existed in her relationship with Paul, which allowed her to make herself vulnerable and be honest about her concerns.

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Even so, Paul's description of the situation only scratched the surface of what appeared to be a critical situation. As such, I asked Paul to give me more background with respect to the events that resulted in the veteran teacher–leader coming to see him. The complex nature of the social DNA of *comunidad* building was revealed when I asked him to elaborate on the situation (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: Well, we got $15,000 to do some work for math. It was a math grant, and so part of using these funds was that, on Friday, we were going to have our first planning session. So, we asked teachers to stay after school from 4:00 to 9:00. Well, during one of the PLCs, one of the teachers said, "I'm not going to go. They're not going to get me there," or something like that. I don't know exactly what the conversation was. So then during the ILT, that representative told the ILT "That teacher is not going to come." Well somebody went and told her that "During the ILT your representative said you're not going to come," or something like that. And after school the teacher came in, and it just so happened that her PLC rep was in my office talking to me. So, the veteran teacher said, "I actually gotta talk to both of you," and she started screaming that she didn't appreciate what the rep said. "You're not right," she told her. And so I said, "The point is that regardless of what's said, you know I'm gonna hear about it."

"The bees were really making their way from flower to flower in this one," I thought to myself." Left as it was, the cross-pollination could have blown up into a bigger conflict between the veteran teacher leader and the representative to the ILT. Instead, Paul engaged in *comunidad*-building conversation with the veteran teacher that positively cross-pollinated the conversation the followed between the three of them. Furthermore, as in the case of the ILT membership scenario, the cross-pollination between the ILT check-

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in and the ensuing meetings between Paul and the teacher leaders resulted in conversations characterized by friction and conflict but *comunidad* building as well (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: "And, so, I could hear about it from somebody else behind your back or I could hear about it in a setting where that's what it's for. Reps bring things to the table. We talk about it." I think her biggest thing was, "You know that I'll do anything for the students, but I just don't like people talking about me." I said, "Well it's not that we're talking about you. It's just your name came up because you said you weren't' going to come." She's like, "But I was!" I said, "Well, whatever the context was or whatever the conversation was at one point it was a no, and that what was brought up."

Of importance here was that, as part of his mediation, Paul supported the ILT representative by acknowledging the systems side of her role in and her accountability to the ILT process for which the representative was responsible in her check-in. In this way, Paul provided the ILT representative with support similar to the support that he provided the veteran teacher. At the same time, this *comunidad*-building conversation demonstrated the adaptability and cross-pollinating capacity of the campus' systems for addressing teacher concerns; what started out as a one-on-one conversation between Paul and the ILT representative, who was already there, meeting with Paul, shifted to a triad dialogue whose purpose was to mediate the conflict at hand. Moreover, because of the intensity of the exchange between the teacher leaders, I asked Paul how he used the conversation to ensure that the sense of *comunidad* with the teacher leaders was not damaged beyond repair (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: On Friday they were working together, and so my point for the veteran teacher was, "You know me, and you have a, a relationship of four years with me. And so I know you're personality. I know you, and so I know that whatever I ask of you, you will be here." And the other teacher, I've known her two years now. So I said, "I know how both of you operate. And so regardless of what one person says about the other it's not going to sway my view one way or the other. If I'm gonna have to bring something up with you, it's gonna be me and you together not with somebody else." And so the veteran teacher said, "Well, I know that, but I still don't like that somebody else is telling this is to you." And my response to her was "But that's part of it!"

As I read this narrative, Paul's words from the earlier excerpt echoed in my mind: "I feel like I know the teachers. I can work with them" (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012). "This was a perfect example of Paul's observation," I thought. "This cross-pollinating, *comunidad*-building conversation was possible, in part, because Paul was able to rely on his relationship with each teacher leader to assure them that each of them had his trust and respect." In addition, he reassured them that he would not allow a comment by someone to change that. Thus, these relationships allowed Paul to push each teacher leader out of their comfort zones and challenge them to engage in the conversation.

When I asked him whether he had a follow-up conversation with the teacher leaders, Paul recalled the following (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012):

PAUL: When the teacher that was the most upset—which was the one that said that ILT representative was talking about her—left, I kept the other one and I said, "Look, your job as an ILT member is to bring whatever happens, and so you did

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exactly what you were supposed to." I asked, "Could you have said it in a nicer way?" She replied "It took a lot trying to get her there." And I said, "Could you have said it in a nicer way? Most definitely! But regardless, you still had to let us know." And she just said, "I just feel that sometimes it's tough to get to her." And I said, "You know what? That's her personality, and there's a story behind it." So I shared the story that the veteran teacher had shared. I don't know if had told you, Enrique, but the veteran teacher—this was on a trip to Houston we had taken to attend Capturing Kids Hearts—said, "At one point I didn't even leave my room because I'd been stabbed in the back too many times by my other coworkers." And so, I think for her this situation reminded her of all that. And that's why it was really personal for her. And so I shared that story with the new teacher. And she just said, "Well I understand that." I said, "You know, if you don't feel that you wanna keep doing this." She stopped me and said, "I just feel like everything falls back on me because I have to bring so much negative stuff back on to you guys." So I said, "But you know that's part of it. So if you don't wanna, if you don't wanna serve in that role, it's okay because at the semester we'll get a new person." "No," she said, "I enjoy it. I like talking to you guys." And she just said, "It's just, it's just hard." "Well," I replied, "that's part of the job." "But for me," the new teacher said, "how do we stop getting so negative or bringing only concerns?" I said, "You know, what if we don't allow the space to happen? Then I'm gonna hear it a different way." So I said, "I would rather hear it from you guys this way, in a more direct way. So even though it is negative, we at least address it than not hear it." Cuz I know even though I don't hear it, people are still talking about it. And just, I'm not hearing about it.

Once again, Paul's words from his narrative about ILT membership situation came to mind:

> PAUL: And that's why this year I feel like we have to get a lot more personal because now I have a chance to work very formally with everybody in different roles because we have more teachers participating in different roles.

In addition, in this narrative, Paul did indeed go deeper in his *comunidad*-building conversation with the new teacher leader. First, Paul allowed for the safe space for the new teacher to express honestly her concerns about fulfilling her role as her PLC's ILT representative. Paul then demonstrated caring, assuring her that she had done exactly what was expected of her and reminding her that she would only be serving as ILT representative until the end of the semester.

Paul then took the *comunidad*-building conversation even deeper when pushed the level of intimacy and connectedness of the conversation by sharing the veteran teacher leader's story. The vulnerability, trust, and honesty that Paul demonstrated by sharing this story contributed greatly to helping the new teacher leader gain a better understanding not only of her *colegas'* reasons for being upset, but also perhaps of how to plant the seed of the need to always stop and consider what the personal or professional story might be behind a colleague's response or actions. "This was a critical decision by Paul," I concluded. "As campus leaders, we often face the challenge of whether to share one teacher leader's story with another, a move that can help a campus leader build connections between *colegas* or that can seriously damage relationships." In this case, sharing the veteran teacher leader's story aided Paul in helping the younger teacher understand her *colegas'* reaction to her report at the ILT meeting.

I was still unsure regarding whether the relationship between the two *colegas* had been salvaged. So, I asked Paul to tell me more about the dialogue between the teacher leaders during their meeting (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: The dialogue between them was one was upset that she mentioned her name specifically, and so the other said, "You know what, I'm sorry. I apologize. That's the reason why we meet. Mr. Mendoza asked who was not coming and who was coming, and that's when your name came up. I know you didn't like that." So they apologized to each other a couple of times. After about ten, 15 minutes they walked out of the office around 4:30 and it was all right . . . . And so, it was just interesting to watch afterwards because they were on the same team. They were going to continue to meet every day. And that Friday they were both there after school, and they were working together. I'm sure there's still tension between them, but, at least they sat at the table and planned.

"In a very small space," I concluded, "this narrative epitomized the interconnectedness of contexts in that results in cross-pollination in school ecologies." In addition, it shone a light on the need and benefit for leaders to engage in *comunidad*-building conversations. Teacher leaders talk. Moreover, had Paul not engaged in *comunidad*-building conversations with both teacher leaders, the conflict between them could have spread to the other members of their PLC and perhaps even the ILT and beyond. Had Paul not developed *comunidad* with the individual teacher leaders prior to the conflict, the veteran teacher might not have talked to him about it. And if the veteran teacher leader had gone to him, Paul might not have been able to engage her in a *comunidad*-building conversation with to resolve the conflict (see Figure 55).

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CROSS-POLLINATION CONTEXT

Addressing teacher-leader conflict; ILT, PLC, one-on-one with teacher-leader, small-group with both teacher-leaders

CONDITIONS (LIFEWORLD)

Authoritative, Adaptability, Face to Face, Create the Space, Knowing the Lifeworld Context, Relationship, Reflective, Push Out of Lifeworld Comfort Zone, Belonging, Begin Early On, Ontological

SOCIAL DNA OF *COMUNIDAD*-BUILDING CONVERSATIONS

ATTRIBUTES (SYSTEMS WORLD)

Authoritative, Create the Space, Face-to-Face, Transparency, Accountability, Authentic, Adaptability, Know the Systemsworld Context, Reflective, Push out of Systemsworld Comfort Zone, Alternative Methodology, Democratic, Ontological, Meet Regularly, Begin Early On, Open-Door

Figure 55. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Additional contexts. One of the unintended outcomes from my interviews with Paul was that they yielded narratives about additional contexts in which *comunidad*-building conversations took place: (a) a whole-group beginning-of-the year in-service and back-to-school night, (b) whole-campus and small-group meetings following the death of a Baum student in a car accident, (c) one-on-one and small-group lunch meetings, and (d) whole-campus and small-group meetings held in preparation for a teacher-retention proposal presentation before the school board. The importance of each of these contexts and situations was that they revealed authentic data regarding the organic evolution of Baum's *cultura* of conversation that had begun to grow. Moreover, the conversations that took place within these additional contexts further evidenced positive impact of *comunidad*-building conversations and their cross-pollinating potential for school leaders.

Comunidad-building conversations, beginning-of-the-year in-service and meet-the-teacher night. One of the first of the additional contexts found in the narrative data were the beginning-of-the-year in-service and the meet-the-teacher night that took place at the beginning of Paul's first year as principal. In these two contexts, Paul, Sarah, and

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Robert found themselves having to build *comunidad* with *colegas* facing the uncertainty

of working with a new principal, two new assistant principal, and a new superintendent. I

asked Paul how he approached this challenge (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: I shared my story. That's how I started. It was new-teacher orientation.
> No, it was the first week in-service. And I, I remember my principal would
> always start the year with a recap of the previous year, some pictures, some
> photos, and some other stuff. And I said "Well, that's great, but you know people
> aren't happy right now. And so, as much as I show pictures and photos, that's not
> gonna make them happy." So, I started by saying, "You know what? I'm gonna
> tell them where I'm coming from and what I need from them, and what everyone
> else is bringing." So we pretty much did a power point for the staff, and I went all
> the way back to my high school years. I talked about the things that made the
> most impact in my life. I talked about *Horizontes Sin Límites*. I talked about my
> master's program, and all the field work we had done, and why I felt that was
> what we needed. And then told them that I needed them. And then Robert did the
> same thing. He talked about where he had come from. And then Sarah did the
> same thing. So we did that for the teachers. And then during "Meet the Teacher
> Night" before school started, we did the same thing for the community. And, so I
> said, "This is what I expect." I think it sounded like "Small Town, Big Dreams,"
> because I talked about how I came from a small town too. "These are my dreams,
> and this is where we need to be, and these are my expectations." And then Robert
> and Sarah did the same thing. And so that's what we had. We said this is who we
> are and this is what we want. And, you know, we had a really good year. I think

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that the only negative that year was our science scores that caused us to be AU.

And so that's what's carried over two years.

At a very critical juncture in their nascent campus leadership tenures in Baum ISD, Paul, Sarah and Robert, shared their stories as part of the *comunidad*-building process during the in-service and the meet-the-teacher night. This approach underscored the benefit of creating the safe space for people to make themselves vulnerable and share their story honestly and intimately as part of engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations. "Sharing their story," I concluded, "really helped Paul, Sarah, and Robert set the stage for talking about their systemsworld expectations at a time when their *colegas* and perhaps other members of the Baum *comunidad* might not have been receptive to what they might otherwise have had to say."

In taking this approach to the teacher in-service, Paul led using lifeworld conditions when he made the authoritative decision to use their stories to start the in-service and meet-the-teacher night in lieu of simply leading with a recap of the previous year. More to the point, by connecting his small-town life experience to that of the Baum *comunidad*, Paul incorporated the conditions of beginning early on, belonging, relationship, and knowing the lifeworld context. At the same time, he followed up his story with the systems world attributes of accountability, alternative methodology, knowing the systemsworld, and transparency by authoritatively talking about his expectations and what he needed as principal (see Figure 56).
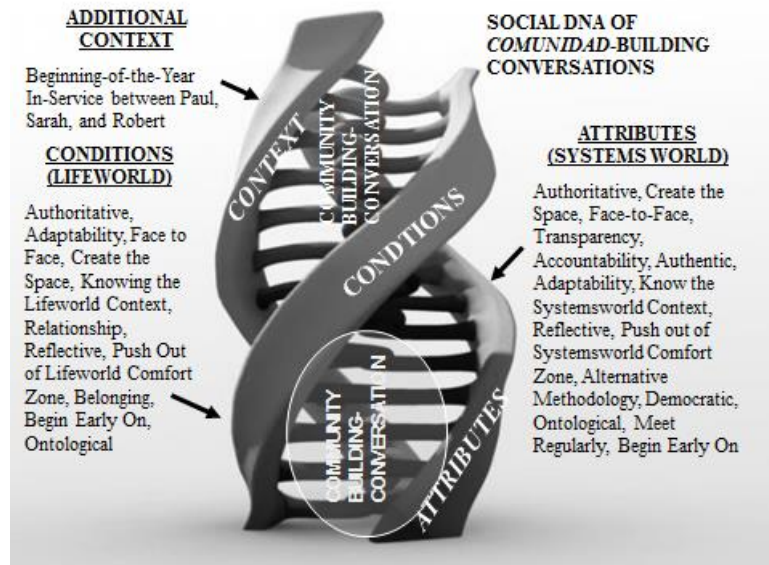
Figure 56. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Comunidad-building conversations during response to the car accident. The most viscerally impactful of the additional contexts we identified was Paul's narrative about his and his *colegas'* response to a car accident that claimed the life of a Baum ISD student and left his sibling in the hospital. The narrative began with Paul and his *colegas* heading into a professional development session at the start of the week (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL That Monday was the Monday we were supposed to do the 4-hour session about everything that we talked about in the summer. So I called Miguel Sunday, no Saturday, the same day that I found out it happened. I told him what happened and he says, "Well, we'll continue. Whatever we gotta do just let me know." So Sunday night I called him back and said, "Alright, well we obviously can't continue the way we were going to. Let's think about what we have to do, and we met briefly that Monday morning. The session was gonna happen 12:00 to 4:00, and I was scheduled to be with my staff that morning. It was it was the second week that they had been back on campus for PD. I briefly talked to Miguel

Sunday night about what we were gonna do that afternoon and we met Monday

morning as scheduled. But Monday morning we started off with a whole session

with the staff. And so we kind of just talked about what happened. Some already

knew. Some had no idea still. And some of the newer folks had no idea who we

were talking about. We kind of just filled them in. Then I had planned with the

basketball coach and the volleyball coach to pull their teams together so they can

meet with them because the students involved were athletes. So at 9:00, we met

with the staff for about an hour and I told them, "Look, I don't know what's

gonna happen right now. We don't have any arrangements for funerals, for now at

this point. You know, just go ahead and work in your classroom while we figure

things out in our end then we'll get back at 12:00."

It felt odd, even uncomfortable, analyzing these narratives from a systems

perspective; here Paul was describing a decidedly lifeworld situation and I responded by

holding up a magnifying glass to see what systemsworld attributes I could find. However,

my concern was assuaged when I considered the fact that systems attributes such as

adaptability, authenticity, authoritative, accountability, and beginning early on allowed

and provided the space for Paul and his faculty and staff to more easily shift from the

professional development orientation of the Monday meetings to a response to the crisis

in a timely manner. Paul's systemsworld and lifeworld authoritative disposition enabled

him to create the space, to organize the coaches and set up a meeting with the basketball

and volleyball teams, and to seek guidance from Miguel regarding how they would

proceed. Moreover, Paul's authoritative disposition contributed to his ability to be

transparent with teacher leaders regarding what he knew and did not know regarding the

accident. Furthermore, as the following narrative demonstrates, the presence of the

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attributes in Baum's systems, helped set the stage to take advantage of the conditions

necessary for meeting the lifeworld needs of the Baum *comunidad* dealing with this

tragedy (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: The first thing that I wanted to do was get to the students. I knew that the
>
> students were gonna need us more so than the staff, I thought, just because they
>
> were a lot closer to the kids involved in the accident. The coaches over the
>
> weekend had already told the team that they were gonna meet Monday. So we
>
> pulled them in. We sat in a circle. There was about 25 students. The boys
>
> basketball team because that's the team that Matthew's on and the girl's
>
> volleyball team. A couple of junior high students who were really close to them
>
> showed up. I invited the high school staff, and anybody else who wanted to be
>
> part of the conversation. We sat in a circle in one of the classrooms, in coach
>
> Elsa's classroom where we spent a lot of time in over the summer. I just told them
>
> what had happened. All of them had already heard about it. I told them that we
>
> were gonna definitely miss Cindy and that Matthew was still in hospital, but he'd
>
> be out soon. And then I said that we have to start thinking about how we're gonna
>
> support him. We talked about an hour. All the high school staff showed up and a
>
> couple other teacher aides. The students were really quiet. They didn't know how
>
> to express themselves or at least they didn't want to in front of everybody. That's
>
> the feeling that I got. But the staff really opened up and it went beyond any kind
>
> of relationship building that we could have had just because it was really sincere
>
> and it was really honest. Almost everybody in there was crying. And so it got to a
>
> level that I don't think we would've ever reached as a staff. And for the kids to
>
> see that we're human and we're real was powerful. We all went around sharing

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what we were feeling, then sharing some stories. I think I said, "What are some things we want to remember Cindy for?" And I shared a story, and we went from there. We finished that and then I had a meeting with the superintended to see what we were gonna do as a district on our end, see if we could take a bus to the funeral and that kind of stuff.

This narrative boldly highlighted the interrelatedness of the systemsworld and lifeworld as part of *comunidad*-building conversations in how Paul and the coaches adapted the space for conversations to accommodate adults and students to come together come together and share their stories about Cindy and begin the grieving process. The teacher leaders also adapted the conversational space successfully in the manner in which they made themselves vulnerable in front of each other and their students to share their stories about Cindy. Initiated by Paul, this process of sharing allowed the students to sit and listen in a safe environment without feeling pressured or compelled to open up if they did not want to do so. Hearing and seeing the teacher leaders open in such a humanly vulnerable way made the familiar unfamiliar by showing students a different side of the teacher leaders.

In the next narrative, the space was once again transformed by Paul and his *colegas*, this time engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations aimed at meeting the lifeworld needs of the teacher leaders. Here, the process incorporated caring, connectedness/intimacy, honesty, people as the end, pushing out of one's comfort-zone, relationship, sharing, story, trust, and vulnerability (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: Then we came back to gather the staff. And what we decided to focus on was that we ourselves have to grieve, especially those who were Cindy's teachers

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and then know how to respond to the students who come back, who were gonna come back the following Monday because they were gonna have questions and they were gonna have heard of the stories. And then they were gonna need our support too. So what we did was we broke into groups, into three groups, and Monica started by laying out a process that they had used just a week before or just a couple of days before at a conference in Montana. They built, I don't remember exactly what they were called, but it was a box. It was a really big box, and on the inside it had the emotions that we keep inside. Then on the outside, it had what we share with everybody else. We didn't have boxes, so we kind of just did it with foldable paper. So that's what we used. That was the process that we used it to go through our emotions and what we were doing. We broke up into an elementary group, a middle school group, and a high school group. It was pretty much "Just think of a time where you've gone through a grieving process," and it didn't have to be death or it could just be some sort of situation where you felt you had to go through a process and it took a lot from you. We did that in groups for about an hour, an hour and a half and then shared some out. But again, I think the most powerful thing was that we opened up the space for us to really get to know each other, and that's what the whole purpose of that PD was gonna be regardless. But it took it to a much deeper. I don't wanna say this, but actually, in light of the circumstances, it was actually a good thing that happened just because it allowed us to go through that experience and really get to know each other at a level that we probably would've never shared.

The narrative above exemplified how *comunidad*-building conversations helped Paul as the campus leader care for the caregivers, his *colegas* in the face of a trying

situation. By adapting the he box activity, Paul and his *colegas*t transform systems and contexts already in place (i.e., a teacher in-service). And they accomplished this transformation by infusing systems and contexts with the attributes of adaptability and alternative methodologies to engage in a *comunidad*-building conversation that fostered the conditions of relationship-building, honesty, sharing, trust, and vulnerability in sharing their stories about grieving. Paul continued to describe how this dialogue among the teacher leaders played out, and, as the following narrative bears out, Paul and his colleagues began to see each other in a different way while at the same time addressing the systemsworld and lifeworld needs of teacher leaders in preparation for the return of students the next day (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: I think that what came up for most of us was "We're real and we need support." And some people didn't want to share and so that was okay. Some people said "I'm not a counselor." It was a new teacher who said, "I'm not a counselor, and I don't know how to deal with this." And we said, "Guess what? Neither do we, but we have to because questions are gonna come up." And so there were some people who were hesitant. They didn't wanna open up in the space, but overall the conversations were really powerful conversations. It just so happened, and this is really weird, the following Monday, one of my staff member's mothers died and last Friday another one of my staff member's father died. So there have been three deaths that have affected the school just. It's been really interesting. I think what's helped us though is that we went through that experience together. It just opened up a space for a lot more personal conversations. There had been some deaths in the community or in our staff before and people had never gone to the visitation or the funeral, but this time the

staff went to those two. It was really interesting to see how that the first death affected the others. And so what it did was just really opened up this connection between us that was really interesting because I wasn't expecting that. I was thinking of more of a systematic, "This is how we're gonna respond to kids" or "This is the script that we're gonna have," and it was totally the opposite. It was real. It was interesting.

Here, the narrative data evidenced the extent to which the car accident and student's death produced deeper levels of *comunidad* building through the systems and lifeworld attributes and conditions present in the ensuing conversations as well as the level of cross-pollination that occurred with respect later in the school year. That Baum faculty and staff attended the services of their *colegas'* family members was indicative of the fact that the conversations related to the car accident actually germinated a process of *comunidad* building that carried over to the two deaths that followed. This process developed as a result of the deepening of connectedness and /intimacy, relationship, sharing, making putting people first. At the same time, the data again pointed to a shift in what it meant for a school to be accountable. The *comunidad*-building conversations resulted in a sense of accountability to each other that had not existed before. Similarly, the car accident data also revealed *comunidad*-building conditions and attributes in teacher leaders' responses to the shift in focus of the session and in their concerns about their capacity to handle the situation (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: That didn't come up in the sense of anyone saying "Why are we here? This is supposed to be our in-service." Their biggest fears was that they did not know how to handle the situation. This concern was mainly on the part of new staff members, staff member that went through the alternative certification

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program. I need to acknowledge that too. So I don't know if that was a factor or not, but that was one of my observations. Their biggest fear was, "I'm not trained for this." My response was, "Not a single one of us in here is trained except for the counselor." I said, "And we can't just say to students 'I teach math, go to the counselor over there.'" The other concern didn't come up as far as someone saying "You are wasting my time" or anything like that. At least I didn't hear it. And I don't think anybody said anything like that because usually, when someone says something, it gets back just to me because our schools are so small. The real concern voiced was the fear of the unknown. "I don't know how to respond," "I've never had my own classroom and the first day of the school year there's gonna be all these questions." "How do I prep for it?" "Where's the script?" Those kinds of things were brought up. And when I think back as we were going through the process, a lot of us knew that there wasn't a script. When I first learned about what happened, I called the counselor saying, "Get ready because this is something we're gonna have to deal with." And she said, "Well I'll start looking for things online to see what we can do." I started searching too and there were things that were scripted that were from universities to other school districts like, "This is how you write the letter" and "This is what we say in the statement." And so we had all that, but we ended up using none of it. I think this was because the time that we spent together really spoke to what we needed to do. What we needed to do was have conversations with students, with the parents, with Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, and with Matthew when he came back to school. I think what the best part of it was that we realized that this is just something that's gonna happen, something that we can't avoid, and whether you're ready or not, you're gonna

have to deal with it. And the way we learned how to deal with it, or at least one of the steps in learning how to deal with it, was just sharing our own experiences and asking "How did you deal with that," or "how did somebody else deal with it, and can we use that in this case?" It was real.

ENRIQUE: There are so many books, websites, and consulting firms out there today that claim to have a process and scripts to help leaders engage in different kinds of conversations for a variety of purposes. And many of us in education, I know, have gone through training like that. You yourself said you found examples of letters that you could have used in this situation. So, how did you come to the decision to no use them? Tell me more about that process of coming to the point of saying, "It's here but we're not gonna use it."

PAUL: I think for me was it was a change in perspective. I wanted to use it at first, and that was Saturday and Sunday when I hadn't talked to anybody. So when I was alone and thinking about it, my only recourse was "Well let me go on the internet and search for the best or for the answer." And so I thought that was gonna be appropriate, and I downloaded some examples. I mean they looked really good, and they were really formal. So I even typed a couple of notes, and I started typing a statement that we were gonna use. Then, come Monday, when I sat with the staff, everybody was pretty much at a loss. I think nobody knew how to respond. At Baum, I talked to the secretaries that have been there 30-plus years, and they said it had only happened once that they knew that a student had died while they were in school. And it was in the late 80s. So it had been 20 plus years since anybody had experienced that here in Baum. So, I because it was so new to everybody and really personal to a lot of the staff, we just didn't know how to

respond. So when I sat with them, at that that was the moment that I felt and thought "This is new to everyone, not just me. And nobody knows how to respond." It made me think "Is the script that's not personal at all gonna help us?" On Monday, I went back, and I talked to the superintendent. Then I talked to Cindy and Matthew's parents. And then I talked to the kids, and we had to meet again at noon. And by then, I knew that the script wasn't going to help because it was so impersonal and formal. I realized that having a conversation and talking about it was more appropriate instead of just saying, "I'm gonna read this to you and then we're gonna move on."

These *comunidad*-building conversations served to open the door of ontological possibility for the new teachers. Feeling the angst of facing students' questions and feelings about the accident and the death of a fellow student on the first day of school, some of the novice teacher leaders were in need of developing these systems and lifeworld capacities. Paul's authoritative transparency about their responsibility to be prepared to address students' issues added the attribute of accountability as well. Furthermore, as a campus leader, Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations with his *colegas* influenced his decision to forego using a scripted response. This decision indicated the lifeworld conditions present in the meeting including caring, honesty, respect, sharing, trust, and vulnerability. At the same time, the data showed that the context also provided fertile ground for individual cultivation and nourishment that came from engaging in *comunidad* and conversation with others (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

ENRIQUE: I wanna make sure we capture that process that you just described. You went from working individually to . . .

PAUL: To having good conversations with the staff, the superintended, the

parents, the students, and then having to make the decision about whether to use

the script based on that. And so when I was working individually using the script

was the best answer, but when I met with everybody in the community, the script

wasn't the answer.

ENRIQUE: Was there any feedback from anyone in during any of the

conversations where someone said, "Yeah, go with the script"?

PAUL: I didn't offer it. Actually, no. One of the teachers did because I did say,

"We're gonna prepare a message." That's right I did say it. "We're gonna prepare

a message," and only one teacher afterwards asked for it. So I sent him something

he could read. It was one of my high school teachers, and I don't know if he read

it though. I didn't follow up with him, but he was the only one that at the end

asked for it.

Once again, the narrative data revealed Paul making use of an "I-am-not-the-

expert" approach. In this case, Paul made himself vulnerable, going to several people

because, as already noted, this was uncharted territory for him as a campus leader. This

vulnerability, moreover, helped him to convey trust in his colleagues as well as caring,

respect, and honesty. Additionally, the further highlighted the authenticity of Paul's role

as a dialogical leader and the *comunidad*-building conversations that grew out of the

context of the accident (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

PAUL: I sat with the high school group just because I knew that was gonna be the

most personally impacted group because both students were in high school. And

so I knew that elementary had to deal with it with questions that were gonna be

asked from the elementary students and the middle school would deal with the

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same thing. So I wanted to be where I felt that I was most needed. So, I sat with high school. Robert sat with the elementary, and my Sarah sat with the middle school group. We took a few minutes to fill out the paper; the emotions that we kept inside during the time that we grieved or that we were going through something very personal. We filled out the paper on the inside. And on the outside we filled out what we showed. So we took about 10 minutes to think about that and either draw it out or write it out or both. And then afterwards, we took maybe about 5–10 minutes to share out. And so, in each group there was between six to ten people. We did that and that was the process. And then afterwards we just came together and we just kind of shared what worked for us in that process of grieving. A lot of what came up was that we're really tough on the outside and we don't wanna show our true emotions, that we hide what is on the inside. We knew that there was something that we were gonna have to share with students and it was okay. I caught myself saying that it's real three or four times, but that I think that it was authentic real because we were able to go beyond what we show. We went beyond "This is our teacher face, our administrative face," and we pretty much laid out our experiences from when our parents were dying or great grandparents and grandparents. There were issues of divorce that came up. Loss of a child I think also came up. So people shared very personal things like that, and even though they weren't dealing with the grieving process about those events, those feelings that we usually don't share came out. And I think that's why we were very honest with each other. As much as we would've tried the whole getting-to-know-each-other section from the 4 hours of trying to do our life maps that we originally intended to do for the in-service, I don't think a lot of

those deeper stories would've surfaced. We would've been very surface-level about the events in our lives that we would have chosen for the five or ten experiences on the life maps. Instead, we focused on pretty much that one experience that was really difficult.

As Paul's comments demonstrated, his authoritative decision to adapt the original in-service context and activity accommodated the lifeworld needs arising from the car accident. Moreover, this the nature of the activity chosen for the conversation encouraged many there to go much deeper in sharing their personal story, a development that Paul himself saw as a necessary next step in the *comunidad*-building process within the Baum school *comunidad*. And although this occurrence came as a result of a very unfortunate and tragic set of circumstances, the *comunidad*-building conversation generated by the activity served to help Paul and his *colegas* begin to cope and the strengthened their relationships with each, a silver lining in an otherwise negative situation.

Analysis of the car accident data also uncovered the self-organizing nature of the *comunidad*-building conversations that took place. From a systemsworld perspective, Paul said that he chose to sit with the high school staff because of their close relationship with the brother and sister involved in the accident. In the following narrative, Paul described how he, Sarah, and Robert decided on who would sit with each campus after I asked him if they talked about who would sit where (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: I don't think so, I don't think I talked to them about it because we went to go meet with the superintendent together and we talked about what we wanted we from him to support us. And then afterwards I went and I talked to the students, and they went with me so they were part of the circle with the students. Then I

went to talk to Miguel, and they started helping teachers in the classroom. So

when we came back after lunch I just told them that I would sit with the high

school and I told the Robert, the AP, to sit with the elementary because his office

is in the elementary wing. And so he would be with them a lot more. I told Sarah

to sit with the middle school just because the other two levels were covered.

There wasn't a deliberate conversation. We didn't have a conversation about

"This is how we are going to decide where to sit." We just kind of made that

decision.

Here, Paul brought to light how addressing the car accident sped up this already

fast-paced process and the conversations that took place that Monday. Paul's

authoritative demeanor with Sarah and Robert and the campus and district personnel

during these conversations was revealed once again as an essential part of engaging in

comunidad-building conversation along with the attributes of adaptability, alternative

method, beginning early on, and continuous process as Paul, Sarah, and Robert moved

from context to context literally creating the space for conversations as they went. At the

same time, Paul's interactions with Sarah and Robert demonstrated the presence of

lifeworld conditions such as adaptability, knowing the context, honesty, people as an end,

trust, and vulnerability. Paul was able to count on Sarah and Robert to engage with the

teacher leaders with whom they sat without having to have an extensive conversation

with them about whom to sit with and what to do once they were with their respective

group. Other narratives, moreover, evidenced the organic, self-organizing potential of

comunidad-building conversations (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: Yeah so, I brainstormed with the teachers in the morning from 8:00 to
>
> 9:00 about what were some things that we wanted to do as a district for the

family, for Matthew, and for Cindy for the funeral. And so there was talk about, "Well who's paying for flowers," "How are we gonna arrange that?" Scholarship came up. Delivering flowers came up. Taking the students did too; having transportation to the funeral. And so I just said, "Give me ideas because I don't know what to do either." And so the teachers said, "Well I lost a friend when I was in high school and we did this" and "I lost a friend" or "I was a teacher when..." And so that's the kind of stuff that we shared. So we just got a list about twenty things that people shared that we thought were good. And then we went to Mr. Norman's office, the superintended, and we sat with him. And we said, "These are the things that we wanna do. What can we do?" And so it was interesting because one of them was to provide transportation to funeral and he says, "Uh, that's gonna be a tough one, but let's do it!" And the others were set up a scholarship fund, send flowers, take her jersey and frame it, give one to the parents and keep one for ourselves, and a couple other things. That was Monday. The funeral, I think, I think it was on a Thursday. The viewing was Thursday. The funeral was Friday. Thursday afternoon, our business officer just says, "You can't take the bus to the funeral." We had already told all the kids we're gonna provide transportation, and when she found out about that she said, "We're sticking to the rules and if it's not a school function then you can't do it. Our insurance doesn't cover that." So, what ended up happening was, the teachers themselves said, "Well then, we will take them in our cars." I said, "Well that's also problematic." My comment then was, "As an administrator, I'm saying no, but the human in me is saying yes." And I said, "So if you're gonna take them just do it cautiously." One of my teachers, Mr. James, called me the day before the viewing because he

was gonna take some students and said, "Mr. Contreras, I just increased my insurance in my car to the maximum coverage," and he said, "I had like $30,000 of like insurance for bodily injury. I went up to a $100,000, so I can take kids." And I replied saying, "That's awesome!" He then asked, "Can I tell everybody else?" I said, "Yeah go ahead and tell everybody else that way if they wanna do it, they can do it." So he emailed everybody and said, "You guys, if you wanna do this go ahead and do that." So he did that and that was pretty awesome. And in the end they ended up going with a couple of parents and some teacher. And that's how we got everybody there instead of a bus. That was nice.

ENRIQUE: Was that during the school day?

PAUL: No. It was a Thursday. Students didn't come back until Monday. So it was still summer. It was just a matter of making phone calls and getting people where they needed to be so everybody could get a ride.

This critical series of events served as one of the most powerful examples of *comunidad*-building conversations in the data. In these conversations, I found the lifeworld conditions of caring, relationship, sharing, people as the end, and trust. These conditions led to the organically spontaneous systemsworld problem solving by Mr. James. Instead of waiting to be asked, Mr. James' decided to act and then go to Paul with his solution to the transportation issue. In turn Paul authoritatively honored Mr. James' decision by encouraging him to run with his idea and share it with his fellow teacher leaders. This exchanged demonstrated the level to which *comunidad* developed in Baum ISD. In light of the unique nature of the way in which the systemsworlds and lifeworlds of the Baum *comunidad* were forced to adapt to the crisis following the car accident, it was not surprising to find that the car accident *comunidad*-building conversations had an

impact on the conversational *cultura* of the Baum *comunidad* (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: Well, in one of the conversations that you and I had before, I talked about how I was meeting with teachers and I had set up times for them and it was a lot more formal but that this year it seems that it's been less formal just the way the conversations happens a lot more natural. That's usually not like me because I like to plan everything and have time set up. So it's been a lot more informal conversations that I feel like I've had this year. And now I know it's because there's a lot more new staff, and so I find myself going into their classrooms a lot more. Or if it's just because of what happened in the summer and that's how we got to know each other. So that's the level of relationship we built that's been the process for the past 4 weeks. But I enjoyed it more. We still had the formal conversations. We scheduled conversations with each teacher, but they're shorter. They're not during the school day. All the school-day conversations have been a lot more informal. So I'm just still getting the same results. I'm still getting the things done and so I think for me it's helped me think about there's a formality to try to get to everybody but as far as what happens in the conversation it's been a lot more fluid.

> ENRIQUE: What do you mean specifically by fluid?

> PAUL: Well like in the past I would've sat down and I would've said make sure you bring this, this, and this, so that we can at least keep to target points. And this year all I've done is I have asked them to talk about what they're gonna plan with their team and then what they need from me. And that's been it. And in that there's been a lot of conversation. Things are coming up. They're saying, "Well I

need help with this student." And things that I think would've still come up if we would've had a checklist, they're still happening in the conversation. But it's because those expectations are still on their mind. Being able to have those conversations without needing the checklist and without being so formal has really helped. So when I say things have gone really positive, I think it's because the relationships promoted really early on even with the new teachers, that things just seem a lot smoother. Last year we hired six new teachers over the summer and then we only hired 3 more during the school year in September because our classes grew. We weren't expecting it. I don't know if it was just because we were hiring while the school year had started, but last year the beginning of the year was just chaotic. And this year just seems to be a lot more, a lot calmer, despite the fact that we have the new staff members. And so, now that I'm thinking about it, I think part of it is because we built that relationship really early on. We got really personal that we feel now we can just have really good conversation.

Paul's observation that the level of accountability remained consistent despite the less formal nature of the conversations taking place in Baum pointed to the positive impact that engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations early on had on the systemsworld of the Baum *comunidad*. In his narrative, Paul acknowledged that the meeting process was enhanced by the conversations he and his *colegas* had early on, especially the *comunidad*-building conversation following the car accident that took the life of one of their students. Particularly interesting for me as a practitioner and researcher was Paul's observation that the one of the benefits of these conversations was that he was now freer to engage in additional conversations, in part because of teacher

leaders becoming mindful of what was coming up and reaching out to Paul with their
needs and questions.

  Comunidad-building conversations and the circle. On two occasions within the
car accident data, I found that gathering took place with the participants sitting in a circle.
Like the check-in and the "I-am-not-the-expert" approach, the circle turned out to be a
strategy that Paul used to enhance and promote *comunidad*-building conversations
(Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: Yeah, I think the circle; I've used it quite a bit. I just used it last week on
> Thursday when I was talking about the girls that I said were having the issue with
> Patty. The very first time that I used the circle was in at a meeting of the
> Intercambio de Comunidad in Massachusetts, and we opened the conference up in
> a circle. I was a teacher then, and I used it as a teacher. I think that's been really
> impactful for me. And I've used it in meetings with staff, and I've used it with
> students now. When we didn't have a counselor in Baum that's how I would go in
> and start meetings with students. I mean even last week with the counselors, I sat
> them in a circle. I think what it does, I mean first of all there's no barriers. It's just
> that whole sitting arrangement. It's uncomfortable and you gotta say, "You know
> what? This is uncomfortable, but there are no barriers between us." So it just
> opens up to some good conversations if you want them to happen. I think the
> other thing that helps is once you take the barriers out of the way, the power of
> one person speaking and everyone is listening is also really important. The circle
> has, I think, made a difference in that when you're ready to share, just the setup of
> it, it's ideal for that. And then when you're not, it kind of forces you to share just
> because everybody else has. You open up whether you want to or not. You can

pass, but eventually it's gonna come back again. I like to do that. It's a good process.12:07

ENRIQUE: Talk about how you set up to have that conversation? Is it something that you kind of keep in your pocket for the critical times or is it something that you use in general?

PAUL: I've used it quite often, but I try not to use it all the time that way when we do have to come in to the circle it sets up a more, I don't want to say, a sacred space, a space that we know has to be a little more intimate, more for a purpose than just everyday meeting. The other thing I think that kind of keeps us from having meetings that are too large, you know? The space when you get forty people makes it kind of hard to accommodate. I use the circle whenever I can and I know it has to be something a lot more intimate.

ENRIQUE: I know for a lot of us when we have conversations in the work place there's a big table like this and some people might say, "Well, this is kind of like a circle. We're all kind of around the table." Looking back at the conversations that you've had, have you noticed a difference or similarity in that?

PAUL: No. Like I said, I think the biggest thing is that there is lack of barriers. I remember always when I was growing and now at work that set up just feels a little bit more safe. In meetings, a lot of times you to stand behind the podium or want to stand behind a table, but I think that when you remove that barrier, it removes a whole layer. I think that what happens is when we have the table between us there's safety and security and along with that safety and security there's less of a chance that we open up because we feel comfortable. But when you take that off it leaves us a little bit more vulnerable. I think you're scared but

it's because everybody is sharing. It just invites you to go ahead and share. And I

think that's been the biggest thing. Last week when I was meeting with the four

girls and the counselor, she has a really nice table that we could've sat around and

they...we walked into the room and they went and they sat at the table and I said,

"No, go ahead and pull the chairs and we're gonna be coming to this side." There

was six of us so it was easy to sit in a circle, but it really makes a difference.

ENRIQUE: So it's the fact that there's the circle, but the open space?

PAUL: The open space, I think that that's the key.

Paul's explanation about his use of the circle for certain meetings highlighted his

authoritative efforts to create the trusting spaces where authentic and honest *comunidad*-

building conversations took place. Pauls' authoritative stance also came out in his honest

portrayal of the circle as deliberately uncomfortable design that often forced those present

to share. "On the surface," I thought, this factor makes the circle appear as a place that

discourages people from sharing. Then again, by pressing individuals to share, Paul

ensured that people listened to voices that might not otherwise be heard. That is a true

mark of an authoritative and authentic dialogical leader."

At the same time, I took into consideration the reflective process Paul mentioned

in deciding whether to use the circle or not, indicating that there was a level of caring

involved in his creation of these spaces, spaces in which people were seen as the central

focus of the conversations. Along these same lines, within the circle, people were in the

position of growing ontologically by taking small steps to open up in a safe environment.

As a result, the circle actually became a comfortable space where relationships can be

developed (see Figure 57).
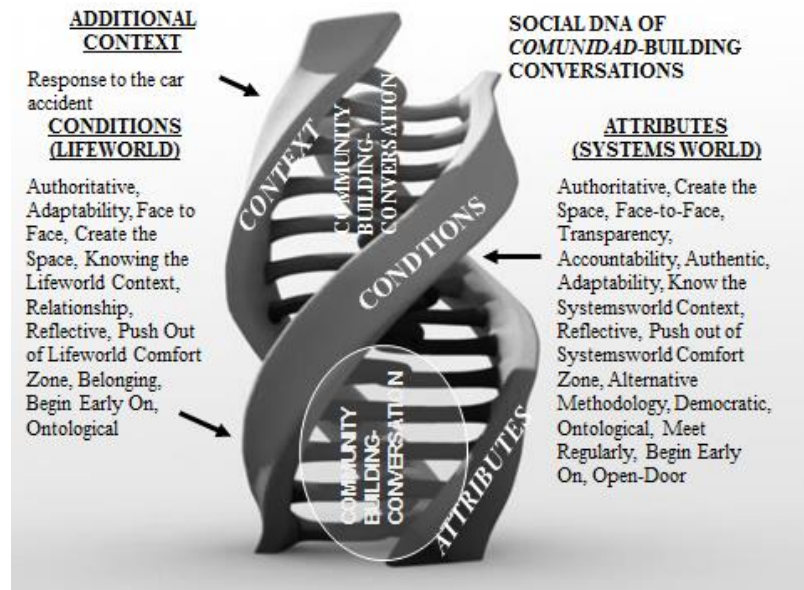
Figure 57. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

***Comunidad*-building conversations during lunch meetings.** Paul's lunch meetings were the third additional context found in the data. The lunch meetings were an example of the self-organizing nature of *comunidad*-building conversations via Paul's informal conversations with teachers that grew out of the *comunidad*-conversations from the car accident. Furthermore, a unique finding about the lunch meetings was that Paul made them a regular part of Paul's daily routine. As such, like the ILT, PLCs, Monday PD sessions, and the data meetings, Paul's lunch meetings became a consistent influence on Baum's *cultura* of conversation. In the following narrative, Paul described what these conversations entailed (Interview with Paul, September 16, 2012).

> PAUL: Yeah. I'm just checking in with them during lunch and I wonder if they think "Aw! Here he comes to disrupt my lunch! And I can't even eat in like lunch now," but I think the conversations, you know, have just been a lot more natural. And so I've forced myself to make sure that I go into their lunch but not with the intent of "We're gonna sit down and talk business," but just, "Let's just talk," and things come up. And so, I think that's been helpful, you know. I haven't gotten

any feedback, positive or negative, but just from, you know, being able to read people and things that we've gotten done it has been positive.

ENRIQUE: When you say you've forced yourself, what do you mean?

PAUL: I'll give you a couple of examples. Usually lunch time is between 11:00 and 1:00. It's pretty hectic on campus. I'm sure on all campuses it is, but that's just because that's when we have all our aides helping with lunch duty and stuff. And so people need a lot more help and there's a lot of transition. So we wanna be a lot more visible. Usually what I would do was I would grab my lunch from the cafeteria and just try to work during my lunch. And this time, I've tried to avoid that, or I've tried to do it after all the lunches. And so when I say "I force myself," I've said, you know, "I'll eat lunch afterwards. Let me get out and talk to the teachers right now." And so by doing that I think I've gotten to a lot of conversations that maybe they would have come to me later in the year. And so we've hit things a lot earlier just by being, you know, not necessarily more visible but just by engaging in these conversations, by not being so reactive. It's being more proactive and saying, "Let me go see what they need right now," or "Let me just go talk to'em and see what comes up."

In creating the space for these lunch conversations, Paul adapted a specific space and time within the Baum ecology that lay fallow and cultivated it into a space where proactive, face-to-face conversations took place. Moreover, Paul gave of his time during what used to be his personal lunch and work time to extend an invitation to teacher leaders demonstrated caring, honesty, authenticity, and transparency. Although he did ask teacher leaders what they needed, he also allowed the space to become one where he and his *colegas* simply talked, thereby, allowing for both systemsworld and lifeworld topics

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to be addressed. Moreover, although Paul did not mention this, when I reflected on this narrative, it occurred to me that these lunch meetings served as a bridge between and as ongoing nourishment to support the continuous process of *comunidad*-building conversations, encouraging natural, ongoing conversations that served as building blocks. "By doing this," I figured, "Paul ensured that the third strand of *comunidad*-building conversations continued to be nourished, strengthened, and transformed outside of the scheduled meetings" (see Figure 58).
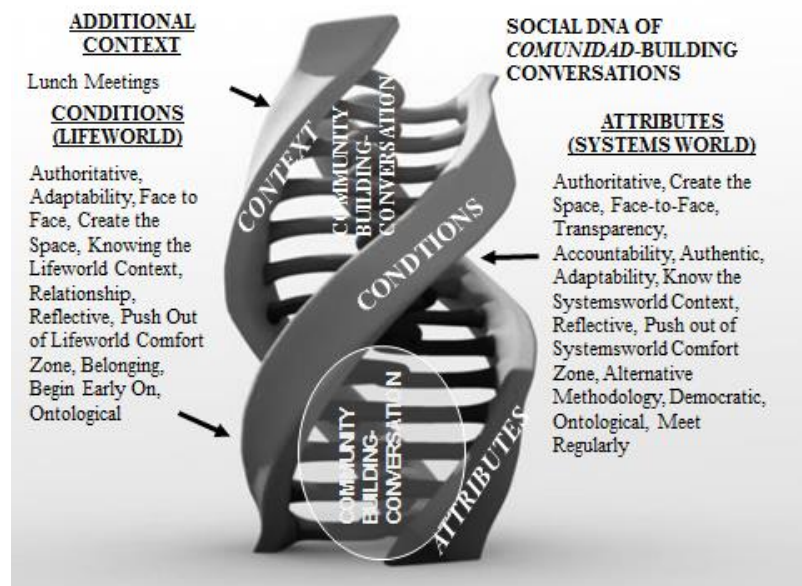
Figure 58. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Comunidad-building conversations during the teacher-retention proposal process. The teacher-retention proposal that Paul and his *colegas* presented to the Baum ISD school board was the fourth additional context that emerged from the data. The proposal originated because of the Baum ISD *comunidad's* decision to present a proposal of incentives aimed at stemming the tide of teacher attrition. As in the case of the car accident and lunch contexts, the *comunidad*-building conversations that took place within the proposal presentation context were a natural outgrowth and ecological evolution of the *comunidad*-building conversations that took place in the original contexts addressed

in this study. Moreover, the conversations regarding the proposal presentation context also blossomed in response to the systemsworld and lifeworld needs of the Baum school *comunidad.* In this case, the catalyst for the conversations was the school's need to retain teacher leaders. Below, Paul explained the significance of the proposal in terms of his role as a campus leader (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: I don't know if the word facilitator or maybe organizer, but the idea of just getting people together would be the biggest role that I think I've played in Baum. Tomorrow, if the school board will vote to support the teachers, I feel like my work is at a point where I can say I feel good, not done, but I feel like…
>
> ENRIQUE: Like you've hit a water mark?
>
> PAUL: Yeah. If we can retain teachers with this proposal it's something big. It's something that we've been dealing with since I first got there. I think that's gonna be a huge, huge motivator for teachers. It'll be big, I don't think the students necessarily understand everything that goes behind it, but that's something they keep talking about, that our teachers keep leaving us. This year alone I think I've heard like four students on four separate occasions, completely different contexts, say, "Why should I try if my teacher is not coming back?" And this year I've heard that more than any other year.
>
> ENRIQUE: So you've been trying to keep the community together. You're not just trying to build.
>
> PAUL: Yeah, pretty much. And so that's why I'm saying, if I can get this, if I can get the school board to buy in it will be big. The first time we tried was in July, but in July the message to the school board was all from the superintendent saying, "We've lost 12 teachers. Give 'em $3,000." They said no. So then after

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that happened, we thought, "Hey, well what do we gotta do? What do we gotta

do?" So then a couple conversations happened, and then we said, "You know

what? Let's just get the teachers together." And we've gotten 'em together. We've

got 'em to plan and we've got everything ready. So tomorrow night, if the board

supports it I think the board's also come full circle. And I said, "Ok. We've gotta

invest in this because if we don't, we're not gonna move beyond it."

Clearly, as Paul's narrative detailed, teacher retention was a critical issue in

Baum. So critical in fact that even Baum students felt compelled to comment about it to

Paul. Of note here was the fact that the teacher retention efforts began as a solitary

endeavor with the superintendent and evolved into a *comunidad* effort after

conversations. Paul elaborated on this (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: Actually, you know who said it? It was Julie Martin, TEA service

provider, who said it. She said "Have you had your teachers give their ideas?

What are your teachers saying and how did you relate that to your board?" And I

said, "We haven't." So she replied, "Alright. Well think about that." So that was

one thing she told me to start thinking about. And so then it went to the ILT, and

then from the ILT it went to the PLC and then back to the ILT and it's been about

2 months that we've been talking about it.

ENRIQUE: You said that you had a conversation in which you brought teachers

together in preparation for the board meeting. What was that conversation like?

PAUL: It started out with a survey. Well, actually, it started in the ILT meeting

and I asked them, you know, "What are some things you all would like? What are

some things? Go back to your PLC and have this conversation: 'What are some

things that you would like?'" And they brought back a few things like child care

or just the basic raise, some stipends, some extra planning time, and a couple other things. So I said, "OK, this is the idea. Let's present to the board and let's see what we can do." So then I put out a survey. I said, "Just tell me what you think. Here's like ten different things. Rank'em." And the top five were, I don't even remember what they were. It was a stipend for having a masters or a Special Ed or ESL bilingual certification, something like that. So they wanted those kinds of stipends. They also wanted extra planning time, extra planning days in the summer that are paid at their full rate. So those two things were the things we asked for.

ENRIQUE: Did they keep the child care one?

PAUL: No. That was actually the last thing on the list, and it was really important to some teachers. But to some it wasn't. There was a retention bonus if you stay. That was the third thing. What were the other two? We're presenting tomorrow, and I can't remember. I don't know what they were.

Once again, Paul remained true to his dialogical leadership orientation and his "I-am-not-the-expert" approach by engaging teacher leaders in *comunidad*-conversations regarding what incentives they wanted to propose to the school board. This approach was similar to his approach in the conversation about what the campus *comunidad* wanted to do for the students involved in the car accident. Moreover, Paul authoritatively asked the ILT members go back to their respective PLCs and lead other potential *comunidad*-conversation about what incentives they wanted to propose. This decision demonstrated Paul's respect of and trust in the ILT members and his willingness to make himself vulnerable because of this trust and respect. Moreover, Paul adapted the PLCs, spaces normally focused on conversations about students and the teaching-and-learning needs of

the teams, into spaces to address the professional and personal needs of the teacher leaders themselves. Additionally, the responsibility and accountability for leading the conversations within their PLCs encouraged capacity building and the sense of self-efficacy of the ILT representatives and their fellow teacher leaders.

As in the case of the organic, self-organizing nature of the conversational process that took place in response to the car accident, these narratives portrayed a process that fell into place within the systemsworld of *comunidad*-building conversations already cultivated and sustained within the Baum school *comunidad*. This process was indicative of the adaptability and transparency of the systemsworld attributes present in the contexts of the ILT and PLCs. To initiate the process of developing the proposal, Paul took advantage of the conversational foundation and relationships already developed over the previous three years. Similarly, by including teacher leaders in the process as suggested by the TEA service provider, Paul contributed to the connectedness and intimacy and sense of respect and trust between himself and teacher leaders as well as among the teacher leaders themselves. Paul also demonstrated that he cared about his *colegas* and what they wanted and needed as members of the Baum school *comunidad*.

Lastly, the extent to which *comunidad building* had taken root in Baum was evidenced by teacher leaders taking on the proposal even after the board turned the proposal presented by the superintendent himself. "Normally," I thought to myself, "teacher leaders might respond to the board's rejection of a superintendent's proposal by throwing their hands up walking away, figuring that if the board did not listen to the superintendent they would more readily reject a proposal by teacher leaders. But they didn't. Instead, they participated in the conversations and the survey initiated by Paul." (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012)

PAUL: The meeting is tomorrow night. And so we're asking all the staff to go tomorrow so that when the board has to say yes or no. This way, they are saying it in front of 26 people.

ENRIQUE: Wow. So, 26 people are gonna be present. OK. And how were presenters chosen?

PAUL: They were elected by their peers. And I'm just gonna do a real quick closing statement. But they were elected by their peers. So we've got one brand new teacher, which is our Special Ed teacher. We have Ms. Pavek, Ms. Jones, Ms. Sellman who's been there two years, and Ms. Adams who's been there two years.

ENRIQUE: Let's kind of take it back a little bit. Was this the first time a big group of teachers like this, since you've been there, has actually attended?

PAUL: This many teachers? Yes. A couple of times before, leading up to the meeting, if there was something important, I would ask them attend and I said to them, "I would like for you to attend." Three, four, five, six teachers would stay. This time I told them, "You know, I think it's going to be really important. It's gonna show that you're interested and it's gonna put a little bit of pressure on them."

ENRIQUE: That just made me think of when you said that if you're able to accomplish this you'll feel like you've accomplished something as far as building community. And the whole campus community is coming together for this. That's awesome dude.

Some of the most important systemsworld attributes that I found in this narrative were those of democratic and equal contribution. In my experience, presentations such as the teacher-retention proposal were made by a cohort of hand-selected individuals. And,

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more often than not, the group was selected by the campus principal. Paul, however, followed suit with the strategy he and Sarah used in selecting the ILT representative from each PLC as part of the ILT membership change: each PLC selected their representative. In addition, as Paul noted, the result was a group of teacher leaders with a diverse level of experience. And by having all 26 of the teacher leaders present, the Baum teacher leaders demonstrated the sense of *comunidad*, care, connectedness and intimacy, trust, respect, and relationship that exists among them. Paul further emphasized the importance of demonstrating a sense of *comunidad* to the success of the proposal presentation given the political atmosphere surrounding Baum ISD at the time (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

> PAUL: We met last Monday as a school board, and they expressed several concerns about issues like discipline. That was a big issue for them. And they mentioned that there were certain teachers that they're not happy with. So I said, "You all realize that it's not because it's that specific teacher," or "It's because of the retention issue," and "It's because of several factors." So we started talking about that, and then the school board members said that it's the culture of the schools. And I responded saying, "You're saying it's the culture as a negative thing, but how do you create that culture? How do you use what we have?" So that's what we talked a lot about at the meeting that we had Monday.

Paul authoritatively demonstrated his support of his *colegas* in this narrative. To accomplish this, Paul made himself vulnerable by pressing the school board members about their statements. Paul confirmed this move as he continued his narrative (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

PAUL: The first meeting it was really heated, especially between me and one of the school board members. If we didn't have the relationship that we do, which is really a strong one, I think I would have been asked to not come back.

Even so, Paul appeared confident that the school board would respond positively to the teacher retention proposal (Interview with Paul November 18, 2012).

PAUL: I think they should say yes. The only thing that I think they'll say no to is the retention bonus for people who have been there a while. I think it is 15-plus years because it is five thousand dollars, and it's a huge jump. So I'm a hundred percent sure they'll say no on that, but everything else I think they'll say yes to.

Although not engaged directly with Baum teacher leaders in these conversations, Paul's dialogue with school board members showed potential as a *comunidad*-building conversation. By supporting his *colegas* in the face of the school board's scrutiny and criticism, Paul employed lifeworld conditions taking advantage of the relationships he developed with them. This relationship allowed him to address teacher leaders' needs and concerns authoritatively and honestly. These actions by Paul had the potential for building trust and relationship with teacher leaders who, in a district as small as Baum, were likely to hear about the manner in which Paul came to their defense. Further evidence from the retention proposal data revealed Paul's take on whether he saw the conversations that took place with the school board as *comunidad*-building conversations (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012).

PAUL: The meeting was gonna happen and what Mr. Norman superintendent told us to do was to get everybody who will be part of the meeting there. He said all the seven board members will be there, so the administrators and the teachers will submit things that you want to put on the agenda. So items were teacher retention,

technology, getting another classroom for next year because we've outgrown our elementary and we need a new classroom. And there was something else. Oh, we . . . there were some issues that they wanted to talk about attendance, and so I put that on there. The board usually meets in the board room, so I had nothing to do with that. The board usually meets in like a U-shaped type deal, and so the audience in front of the U-shaped area and the board members are over here. I told Mr. Norman, "Let's change it. Let's move it to this other room, and we sat around the conference table. And so I think that worked because it gave the impression of "We have to be on the same page though I'm not going to be in this power issue with you guys." So we sat around the table, and then I was really forceful, more than I would've usually been because I knew that these things were gonna be really important. I knew this upcoming Monday our teachers were gonna present, so I had to really push a couple things. I used some words like "I challenge you," and things like that because I knew I had to. If not I don't think Monday would be would be as successful as it could be. I'm like 95% sure they'll get everything that they are asking for except for the retention stipend.

This was one of the most difficult narratives to analyze with respect to finding *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions. Paul, in collaboration with Mr. Norman the superintendent, did make the effort to create the context by setting up the seating arrangement in somewhat of a circle around the conference table. Moreover, Paul attempted to push the school board members out of their comfort zones using an authoritative disposition, challenging them to see the situation in Baum through a different lens and be accountable in their decision regarding the teacher retention proposal that was going to be presented the following Monday. In doing so, Paul made

himself vulnerable, trusting that the respect and relationships he built with the school board members over the last 3 years would serve to assuage any negative responses to his honest and challenging tone.

My conversation with Paul about the meeting with the school board took place the week before the proposal presentation, but I was very interested in finding out how the meeting went. Therefore, I asked Paul for a follow-up interview so that I could find out the result of their proposal presentation . Per Paul, the proposal presentation was followed by heated discussion with the school board members. In the end, the school board tabled the matter of the teacher retention proposal. As a result, Paul moved quickly to engage his *colegas* in *comunidad*-building conversations to do damage control (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

> PAUL: It's the end of the night and we go home. I knew that the next morning I was going to have 20 upset teachers because they finally get the courage to go and present and they put all these things together and they're turned down. So, that night I emailed everybody and I said, "Hey, thanks for showing up. Thanks for your support. I'll meet you guys in one of the classrooms at 7:30. Meet me there." So, I woke up that morning. I ordered a bunch of tacos and bought some juice and coffee and I called everybody in and we just sat there and I said, "All right, let's talk about what happened yesterday." Some of the teachers were really upset and saying, "Well, this is my last year." And I said, "But, if that's the attitude we're gonna get, then it's not going to help us. What do we really need to adjust or go back and revisit or maybe even just talk to them?" Somebody said, "Well, what if we don't make it a retention stipend, just an increase across the board?" "Well that may be something," I said. Then another said, "Well, we don't really need all

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the extra days. So let's cut that and knock that off the table." And so we talked about some of the things that we could change. After that, I met with Mr. Norman and he said, "I think if we say it's not going to be a stipend, it's not going to be a handout." It's a raise across the board." And so he said, "Let's present that." So, he talked to a couple of school board members and they felt a little bit better with that and the following month we brought it to the table and again. All 20 teachers showed up. At the second meeting, we presented it. This time the school board asked to go into closed session, so all the teachers had to leave. So, we could see them through the windows. They're in the building next to us. They had the miniblinds up and they were looking into the cafeteria where the closed session took place.

ENRIQUE: In the meeting?

PAUL: In the meeting. It was the school board, and they asked me and Mr. Norman to stay. So, everybody else leaves and we go into closed session...Finally, after about an hour, we get out of closed session and we call the teachers in and they approve it. So, what ended up being approved was a $2000 across the board raise to every step, 5 days added of personal or sick leave, and then a stipend if you have a master's and if you have another certification that's in your area. And so, a teacher really got a raise of $2000 if they returned plus anything that the step would have increased. So, if it was a step of $600 or $800, then it was $2000 plus the $800. So, that's what ended up happening.

ENRIQUE: How did teachers respond when they learned that? Was there any interaction between the teachers and the board?

PAUL: I actually turned around and I told them, "Go and say thank you." So, even though it was the middle of the meeting, the teachers stood up and they formed a line and they went and said thank you to all the board. And so that was nice. Afterward, a lot more teachers stayed until they finished the meeting this time. And they had some good conversations. I could see them talking, but I really didn't go see what it was about.

As I read this narrative, I could not help but feel elated. "Here," I thought to myself, "was a wonderful example of powerful potential and possibilities that come from cultivating a *cultura* of conversation within a school *comunidad*!" For me, this was especially evident in Paul's narratives about how he and the Baum ISD teacher leaders responded to the board tabling the teacher retention proposal. "Another campus leader in Paul's shoes might have decided to send a consoling email to teacher leaders," I thought to myself. Instead Paul remained true to his dialogical leadership orientation and made the authoritative decision to have a gathering with his *colegas* the very next morning after the board meeting. He demonstrated to teacher leaders that he cared about them and that their needs and feelings were a priority. At the same time, Paul pushed teacher leaders out of their comfort zones by inviting them to meet the very next morning despite the fact that some of his *colegas* may very well not have wanted to meet after their experiences in the board meeting. "Equally powerful," I concluded in my mind, "was the dual sense of accountability present in Paul's actions. First, he held teacher leaders accountable for not giving up and keeping the proposal process alive. Second, he ensured that he and his *colegas* held the board accountable for meeting the needs of district's teacher leaders by not letting the proposal die after being tabled."

I also realized that the *comunidad*-building conversations that took place during the gathering with teacher leaders and Paul's conversations with Mr. Norman were made possible by the *comunidad* that Paul and his *colegas* established over the previous 3 years in other contexts. And these conversations were characterized by the conditions and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations. The conversation at the morning gathering was democratic, with Paul inviting all of the teacher leaders to contribute their ideas about how to modify the proposal. As a result, the process was transparent. The conversations were also characterized by adaptability and the use of alternatives, with Paul challenging teacher leaders to modify their attitude and emotions in approaching the situation as well modifying the proposal itself to go before the board again. Moreover, teacher leaders responded by making the emotional shift and offering alternatives to the original proposal demonstrated and stepped up to the plate and met the challenge in the face of a major setback. Lastly, the emotional and attitudinal shift made by teacher leaders as a result of the *comunidad*-building conversations with Paul and Mr. Norman was evident when all of the teacher leaders lined up to thank the board for voting in favor of the proposal and the fact that many stayed until the meeting was over and engaged in more conversations with board members.

Analysis of the retention proposal revealed additional narratives in which Paul described the *comunidad*-building attributes and conditions of his conversations. In particular, he commented on the response to the board's tabling of the proposal (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

> PAUL: As far as with the teachers, they had to trust me that when we went into closed session, trust that I was going to vouch for them because it was only me and the superintendent there. And that's why when we left the after the first board

meeting, I knew that that morning, I was going to have to do something to, one, reassure them that it wasn't over, two, tell them that we're still going to continue to ask for this, and three, tell them "You're worth it. So it's OK if we have to put up a fight." And so I think because I was able to do that, then the level of trust goes even higher. After that breakfast meeting, they were saying, "Thank you," "We appreciate you," that kind of stuff.

Additionally, Paul elaborated further about the central role that conversations played in the retention proposal process, including during the meetings with the board (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

PAUL: The entire process actually from the very first time it came out was about conversations. It took about nine months. It was the beginning of the school year, and I don't remember exactly how the conversation got started, but we knew we had to do something with teacher pay. So, we brought the issue up with the school board one time and they said, "No, definitely not." That was the very first time. And it was just to proposing the topic for discussion. Then we started the whole conversation with the teachers, and then to present to the board. So, I think most definitely. I think that it impacts the community-building process in a positive way. Although it wasn't immediate, I think there were several conversations, and Mr. Norman made it a point and he said—and this is one of the things that I would agree with him—he said, "Our board, just like most other people, doesn't like to be put on the spot. If we put someone on the spot, they're gonna get defensive, including me and everybody else." Then he said, "We took a really tough approach the first time, and so maybe that hindered it. So, what can we do to maybe help the second time around?"

As before, Paul's dialogue with Mr. Norman evidenced the level to which they had developed a sense of *comunidad* with each other, in particular in the manner in which Mr. Norman made himself vulnerable by reflecting on the manner in which they approached the board initially. This vulnerable yet authoritative stance by Mr. Norman was indicative of the trusting, honest, and connected relationship he and Paul had developed. Moreover, in reflecting on the human response of the board to being put on the spot, Mr. Norman also demonstrated a willingness use his knowledge of the context to find an alternative way of addressing the matter of teacher pay with the board. Taking into consideration how the board responded to the initial teacher-retention proposal was Mr. Norman's way of holding himself, Paul, and the Baum teacher leaders accountable for adapting their next presentation to the school board context as well. Interestingly, Mr. Norman's reflection about the board's response to being put on the spot proved almost prophetic as the following narrative shows (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

> PAUL: The second time around, the school board didn't want to engage with teachers necessarily. That's why they called it into a closed session. But knowing that they knew me well, that they could trust me, I think that helped. And then coming back and voting in front of the teachers, making it very public and saying "We support you," I think that helped alleviate the fact that they had to leave the room during the conversation. If I were the board president, I would have kept everybody in the room, so that they'd know this is still a negotiation process, to say to the teachers, "It's not that we're saying no," and "It's a difficult process." But at the very end, I think coming back and then voting in public and saying, "We're here for you. We want to support you just as long as we see the return," really helped. Then afterwards, the conversations from the teachers was

important, one teacher in particular. He was a brand new teacher. He made a comment to another one of middle school teachers. I had been maybe a week or two later and I said, "Do you think it had an impact?" And the middle school teachers said, "Well, it had an impact on one of the teachers, Mr. Stark." And I said, "Why do you say that?" And she said, "Well, maybe about two months ago, he said that he wasn't going to come back. But after this, over lunch, he said, 'You know, the administration is definitely vouching for me, so they definitely want something good. So, I'll give it another year at least.'"

ENRIQUE: Wow.

PAUL: So they were talking about it and they definitely felt it.

Apparently, Mr. Stark was not the only teacher–leader positively affected by the proposal presentation process (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

PAUL: The next day after the board meeting, one of the teachers, I mentioned her before, Ms. Jones, one that the first year said, "Why are these people making us do their work?" and little by little got better, she comes in the next day during her conference, knocks on the door, and says "Can I come in?" "Sure," I say. "I just wanted to say thank you." I say, I did not expect that and I said, "You're welcome." And then she says, and then she said something else that surprised me. She said, "I didn't think you had it in you." And I replied, "What do you mean?" "Well, I saw you really vouch for us the first time, and you really pulled it through. So, thank you." And that was it. Needless to say, we still lost ten teachers, but the year before it was 12. So, it helped a little bit. I think what it did for the teachers was important, especially the teachers who are returning. They felt that they do have a voice and they can make a difference if they approach it

the right way. And I think the other part that the other thing that was made very explicit was that the board said, "We are willing to support you all as long as it's for the right reasons. If there's something that our students need, we expect that you all will take care of it." And so that was made very explicit by a couple of the board members. But I think that was good for the teachers to hear because there's another level of accountability that says they're willing to respond to our needs.

These examples of *comunidad*-building conversations between Paul and Mr. Norman, Mr. Stark and the middle school teacher, Paul and middle school teacher, and Paul and Mrs. Jones brought to the forefront the one-on-one conversations, the fundamental building block of the social DNA in Baum ISD. In these conversations, Paul tasted of the fruits of the *comunidad*-building conversation in Baum. In the case of the middle school teacher and Mr. Stark, a brand new teacher leader was able to confide in a *colega* that, yes, he indeed considered leaving Baum ISD but changed his mind because of the success of the teacher-retention proposal. Similarly, the middle school teacher felt comfortable enough to share this conversation with Paul, who himself embodied the fruit of *comunidad*-building conversations in the act of approaching the middle school teacher about her take on the impact of the proposal experience. Equally telling was Mr. Stark's reason for staying, focusing not on the monetary gain obtained as a result of the school board's vote but rather on the sense that the Baum administration cared about him and was willing to put themselves on the line to advocate for him and his colleagues.

The conversation between Paul and Mrs. Jones provided even more evidence of the *comunidad*-building process through conversations. In this meeting, Paul again saw the transformation that Mrs. Jones underwent from a teacher leader complaining about being made to do the work she believed was not her or her *colegas'* responsibility to a

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teacher leader who saw her campus leader as someone who advocated for her and her fellow teacher leaders. At the same time, Mrs. Jones went from a teacher leader making an off-hand criticism of Paul when she thought he was not listening to a teacher leader who felt comfortable enough to go to Paul and honestly tell him that she initially did not think that he had it in him to follow through on the teacher-retention proposal. Such a transformation evidenced the extent to which Mrs. Jones and Paul developed a *comunidad*-building relationship based on caring, respect, trust, connectedness/intimacy, and a willingness to make themselves vulnerable during a conversation. In addition, this conversation affirmed the existence of the safe space for teacher leaders like Mrs. Jones to feel comfortable coming to Paul and checking in regarding their thoughts, ideas, and feelings within a continuously growing and transforming *cultura* of conversation. Additionally, this transformation became even more evident when Paul spoke about the "big-picture" impact that the proposal presentation process had on the social DNA of Baum (Interview with Paul, October 10, 2012).

> PAUL: I think the teachers understand that they have the voice. I think they saw that it's definitely a process because even when we came back from that first meeting and I met with all the teachers in the morning, we then met as a small group. And so, as a small group we said "What's negotiable," and then we decided. And so, Mr. Norman was in there, and I think like five or six teachers and then myself and maybe Sarah or Robert, I can't remember. And then they still went back the second time and they presented the second time too. Then it went into the closed session. So, I think it gave teachers I don't want to say hope. It gave them a chance to figure out for themselves. They were able to say, "If I'm empowered, or if someone helps me along the way, or if somebody listens to my

idea, then I'll have a positive impact. I can have an impact not only for myself because you're talking about five teachers, but for everybody else." And something that we still even have conversations about is that investment in teachers and how it plays out into the students. I don't think that all these school board members necessarily see that. And so, that's still a conversation that we have to have. But, I think, it definitely strengthened it. And I think what it also did was it allowed teachers to see the influence, whether good or bad, that a school board has on the school.

It was befitting that Paul closed out our conversation regarding the proposal presentation context with this narrative. In it, Paul recognized the ontologically powerful impact of *comunidad*-building conversations on Baum teacher leaders. In particular, the narrative pointed to the impact that engaging in ongoing, face-to-face *comunidad*-building conversations had by creating a democratic space where all teacher leaders had an equal opportunity to contribute to the greater good of their *comunidad* and the sense of self-efficacy that came from knowing that there was a level of accountability if they as a *comunidad* were willing to make themselves vulnerable and engage in the dialogical process (see Figure 59).
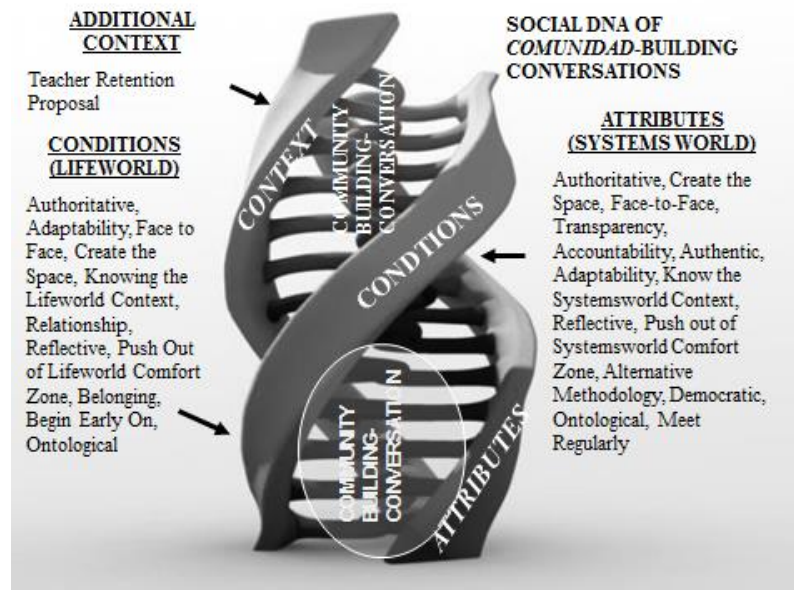
Figure 59. Social DNA of *comunidad*-building conversations.

Epilogue

Lastly, given the time that passed since our last interview, I felt compelled to take the opportunity get a quick update on the next steps that Paul and the Baum school *comunidad* were taking on their journey to build *comunidad* using *comunidad*-building conversations. I met with Paul a few weeks after our last interview and asked him about this process as he prepared to begin his fourth year as principal in Baum ISD (Interview with Paul October 10, 2012).

> PAUL: I think some things I've learned, just in this whole reflection process of being able to just sit back and say, "Well, what is it?" The first thing is that it's a never-ending process. Never-ending in the sense that it's a new staff, a new group of students. The only constant has been the school board. And conversation is a constant. Even though I feel I've already had a conversation or we've already tried to implement something, it's always a matter of thinking, "How do we keep it moving," and for those who have returned, "How do I now engage them to say or to model the same things so that I don't have to say it as much?" That's one of

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the things I've noticed myself doing more so now than in the last three years, saying, "How do I create the space?" I tried to do so, but I still found myself leading a lot of stuff and so how do I create the space for others. Even getting ready for in-service next week, I've been thinking about trying to work with the teachers who were there in year two or three and will be there year four or five. I keep asking myself, "What kind of role are they going to play?" That's the next step as I start thinking. There are certain things in place. We have a couple of systems in place. There are a few people who haven't left. How do I use them or get them to be the same or convey the same message and model that type of conversation that we want to see?

ENRIQUE: And your systems are going to continue to be the ILT, the PLCs, the professional development meetings?

PAUL: In part of the evaluation, some of the teachers said, "We like the Monday meetings, but we want more time for the practice." So, those are some of the conversations that we have to have. Definitely! Even today with the new academic dean, she asked a question about getting information about instruction out to teachers and I said, "People hear it three times. They hear it at the PLC from the ILT rep. They hear it at the PD session on Monday, and then they hear it in the weekly that I send out. So it's with that repetitive process and being able to put it out there in multiple ways." I think that kind of took her aback as if to say, "Do we really have to? We're so small."

ENRIQUE: And what was your answer to that?

PAUL: "Yes." I said, "It's not always easy, but we have to provide it."

ENRIQUE: History is kind of repeating itself in the sense that three years ago, the stories that you related were, "OK, we have a leadership change," or "Or we have changes taking place." Is there anything else you would like to add?

PAUL: I think the entire process has been a good one. I would like to find ways to do what you and I have done in these interviews with others, whether it's a classroom teacher or another administrator. Just pushing yourself to think back to, "What are the conditions, the attributes? What are the things in place that have worked? What if I would have done things differently?" So, just finding that reflection piece, that's the key.

ENRIQUE: So, creating the space for that conversations. So, you're going to change the data meetings?

PAUL: Yes, we just had this conversation. We're including the counselor now just to make sure that we're checking on any 504 students or anything like that. And, we're making them longer. So, instead of thirty to 40 minutes, we're going to extend it to 45minutes to an hour. And that came from saying, "All right, so we're making some progress. The meetings, we've gotten some great stuff out of them, but we're still only meeting at the end of the 6 weeks." We went to a 9-week grading period for this year. We spaced them out every 5 weeks I think because we didn't want to have to wait 9 weeks. I think that little change, including the counselor is going to be key.

ENRIQUE: You also said you were going to change a little bit on the Monday meetings?

PAUL: Part of what we were talking about is that if we're going to introduce a new strategy, we are adding more time to share as a staff instead of saying, "All

right so we introduced a new strategy. We tried it out all week. It's working, or it's not working. Drop it if it's not, or if it is working continue it." Instead, we're saying "Let's share out for an entire PD session and then the next PD session, let's evaluate." This last time we introduced, I think, twelve chapters in about 26 meetings. So, about every other meeting, we had something new. And so now, if we space it out with the new PD cycle, it's gonna be about half of the strategies, but a lot more time to implement.

ENRIQUE: And the ILT is going to continue . . .

PAUL: The ILT is going to continue. We had always met on Fridays. We played with meeting during the week on Wednesdays to give us a little bit more time. It just wasn't working out, so we're going to move it back to Friday, but still one rep per each group and then switch at semester.

ENRIQUE: Your PLCs, how are they comprised? Because I know you have like two teachers per grade.

PAUL: We've done it two ways. Pre-K, Kinder, 1st. and 2nd and then 3rd, 4th, and 5th. And then this year, we broke it even smaller. So, it's Pre-K, Kinder, and 1st, then 2nd and 3rd, then 4th and 5th.

ENRIQUE: And then for middle school and high school?

PAUL: Middle school is one group, because it's only four teachers. And high school is one group with four teachers. And then there are the electives. There are three teachers who join the high school group. And still, they get to decide when they're gonna meet. For the agenda, I have some talking points and then they create it from there. I just want to make it a habit of visiting a little bit more.

ENRIQUE: OK, I think that's it.

Clearly, Paul's narratives evidenced that over the last 3-plus years, a nascent *cultura* of *comunidad*-building conversation grew in Baum ISD and bore fruit. However, as Paul pointed out during our last interview, the process is not done and will never be done. As with any garden, there is constant need to change, to till the soil, weed, fertilize, trim and prune, reap the harvest, and plant new seeds all the while adapting to the seasons. In our last interview, the *comunidad*-building process had come full circle through change. Sarah left. New teachers were hired. And these changes required the process to adapt and evolve. Paul addressed this need in describing the changes planned for the ILT, PLCs, and PD Monday contexts, and I was confident that the *comunidad*-building process would continue in the coming school year. However, since we last spoke, I learned that Paul left Baum, and I wondered if the *comunidad*-building conversations would continue under his successor, only to find out that now, Baum hired a principal for elementary, middle, and high school, bringing into greater question the future of the *comunidad*-building conversations in Baum. Perhaps the opportunity to return to Baum and visit with the new campus leaders and teacher leaders will present itself in near future.

V. CONCLUSION

Overview

The primary question that Paul and I sought to answer in this study was

- What are the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations?

The other three research subquestions were

- Why are *comunidad*-building conversations important to effective campus leadership?

- How will I use the findings of this research to guide my own efforts to become an authentic dialogical campus leader?

- How can this research contribute to the school improvement and school leadership literature?

In this final chapter, the findings of the research are discussed beginning with the contexts in which Paul and I determined that *comunidad*-building conversations took place. These contexts included the cross-pollinated and additional contexts that we uncovered in the data. Our findings are followed by a discussion of the attributes and conditions that occurred most frequently during Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations. Lastly, the implications of this research are addressed while focusing on the importance of *comunidad*-building conversations for campus leadership, contributions to the literature, and implications of the research for me as an aspiring authentic dialogical school leader.

What Are the Contexts, Conditions, and Attributes of the *Comunidad*-Building Conversations of a Campus Leader?

Contexts. With respect to the contexts, the primary question Paul and I sought to answer was did *comunidad*-building conversations actually take place within the ILT, Monday PD, the PLC, and Six-Weeks Data meeting contexts. As the data presented in Chapter IV bore out, *comunidad*-building conversation did indeed take place within these contexts. Along these same lines, the data showed that *comunidad*-building conversations also took place within Paul's one-on-one and triad conversations with Sarah and Robert, his fellow campus leaders, and with teacher leaders.

Furthermore, we uncovered *comunidad*-building conversations that took place within cross-pollinated contexts as in the cases of the ILT membership change and the resolution of the teacher conflict. Moreover, our analysis of Paul's conversation narratives unearthed additional contexts in which *comunidad*-building conversations took place. These additional contexts included the beginning-of-the year in-service meeting and Paul's lunch meetings with teacher leaders, as well as the meetings held in response to the car accident that claimed the life of one of their students and the meetings related to the teacher-retention proposals.

Of particular significance for Paul and I was the organic cross-pollination of contexts and the outgrowth of the additional contexts, both of which occurred naturally as a result of the constantly changing ecology of the Baum school *comunidad* and the influence of the *comunidad*-building conversations that took place in original contexts. "These findings," I concluded, "are in keeping with Block's belief in the power of the small group." I recalled Block's (2009) assertion of the power of the small group as the

unit of transformation and that transformation in the larger group originates within the smaller group. "The transformative power of the small group was especially evident in the cross-pollination between contexts during the ILT membership change and Paul's addressing of the teacher leader conflict. And a similar transformational dynamic occurred during the response to the car accident and in the teacher-retention proposal process."

Along these same lines, the data pointed to the one-on-one and triad contexts as especially fertile ground for *comunidad*-building conversations. "Some of the most powerful examples of *comunidad*-building conversation," I recalled, "took place early on in Paul's tenure as principal with Sarah and Robert. The initial conversations Paul had as part of the hiring and transition process with his fellow campus leaders underscored the value of these two contexts in the *comunidad*-building process. The same held true for Paul's one-on-one and triad conversations during the data meetings and with teacher leaders like Jones and Mrs. March."

Additionally, Paul's conversations with Sarah evidenced the transformational power of *comunidad*-building conversations in small groups. In his narratives, Paul noted the impact of his conversations with Sarah because he always used her as a sounding board and solicited her feedback. He also described these conversations as "one of the only ways to get there" (Interview with Paul, November 18, 2012). Moreover, the transformative impact of Paul and Sarah's conversations came across during the ILT membership change when Sarah posed the question of how they could get more teacher leaders involved, adding the comment that she often heard a lot of "Me, me, me," during the check-ins. This prompting by Sarah resulted in the decision to change the ILT representative tenure from 1 year to 1 semester.

Attributes. As in the case of the contexts, all of the attributes identified for this research were found in Paul's *comunidad*-building narratives. However, I also found that some attributes occurred more frequently than others did. Figure 60 lists these attributes in the order of the frequency with which they occurred in Paul's narratives.

REVISED LIST OF ATTRIBUTES	TOTAL	LEVEL
ATTRIBUTES (SYSTEMS WORLD)		
AUTHORITATIVE NOT AUTHORITARIAN	71	L1
CREATE THE SPACE (THE OCCASION OR SITUATION, ADEQUATE TIME, FLEXIBLE/ADAPTABLE, LOCATION)	70	L1
FACE-TO-FACE	70	L1
TRANSPARENCY	70	L1
ACCOUNTABILITY	69	L2
AUTHENTIC (REAL-WORLD APPLICATION	69	L2
ADAPTABILITY	68	L2
KNOWING THE SYSTEMS WORLD CONTEXT	68	L2
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (PRAXIS)	68	L2
PUSHING OUT OF SYSTEMS COMFORT-ZONE	67	L2
ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGY	65	L2
DEMOCRATIC (INVITATION, MANY VOICES AT THE TABLE, EQUAL CONTRIBUTION, HONORING GIFTS PEOPLE BRING TO THE TABLE)	64	L3
ONTOLOGICAL (KNOWING THE SYSTEMS GIFTS PEOPLE BRING TO THE TABLE, ZPD, SELF-EFFICACY, CAPACITY BUILDING, CONTINUOUS)	64	L3
MEET REGULARLY	60	L3
BEGIN EARLY ON	59	L4
OPEN-DOOR	33	L5

Figure 60. Revised list of attributes.

Of all the findings, the most intriguing for me were the lowest- and highest-occurring attributes: open-door and authoritative-not-authoritarian respectively.

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Open-door policy. Going into this research, I hypothesized that having an open-door policy would figure prominently as an attribute of *comunidad*-building conversations. "After all," I thought to myself, "throughout my educational career I heard principals boast 'My teachers know I have an open-door policy. They can come in and talk to me any time they want. This open door policy ensures that I have effective communication and strong relationships with my teachers.'" However, in the final analysis, Paul's narratives did not bear this out. Although Paul acknowledged that teacher leaders did come to his office to address issues—especially when they wanted him to tell them how to address a particular issue—the narrative data showed that having an open door policy occurred the least of all the systemsworld attributes.

In addition, the more I thought about it, I came to a conclusion about why. "A principal who spends needs and open-door policy is a principal who spends a lot of time in his office. However, Paul did not have an open-door policy! He did not need it because his office was not the primary context in which conversations took place. Instead, he established a variety of contexts outside of his office. In lieu of his office, Paul used the ILT, PLC, Monday PD meetings and teacher leaders' classrooms to engage in face-to-face conversations. Sure, teacher leaders knew they could go to his office to speak with him, but they also knew that they did not have to. Paul did not isolate himself in his office. Instead, he went out to meet with teacher leaders in 'the trenches' as some educators like say. Paul invited his *colegas* into comfortable, safe, and democratic spaces where teacher leaders knew their voices would be heard and where they could engage him and others on a regular basis.

"That's how Paul went about building *comunidad* in Baum," I thought to myself. "Using the systemsworld attributes within the contexts he established, Paul ensured

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teacher and campus leaders always the space, time, and invitation engage in what proved to be *comunidad*-building conversations."

Authoritative not authoritarian. Along these same lines, I was intrigued by the fact that the most prevalent of the systemsworld attributes was authoritative not authoritarian. I came into this research primarily because I recognized the failure of my own directive, command-and-control leadership disposition, and the inauthentic conversation orientation that grew out of it. I failed because I believed that my title, knowledge, and skill as ESL coach or assistant principal entitled me to tell others what to do and that they would do it without question. Moreover, I believed that telling teachers what to do was a necessary part of campus leadership.

As such, going into this research, I expected that Paul would take a different approach, that he would not just go in and tell the teacher and campus leaders what to do or how to do it. I was only partly correct. In his narratives, he noted that he did tell them what needed to be done, especially with respect to meeting regularly. However, he did not just tell them to do it. Instead, what I found was more nuanced. Paul did in fact tell teacher leaders and campus leaders what he expected them to do. He told them that they had to meet as part of the ILT, PLC, PD Monday, and Six Weeks Data meetings. He even told them they had a specific agenda in their PLCs. However, Paul used a *comunidad*-building conversation approach so that teacher leaders bought into the process. As Paul noted regarding the middle school rep for the ILT (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012):

> PAUL: She didn't want to leave, she wanted to stay on. She said, "I like this. I actually think this is important to cherish." She added, "I really enjoy meeting on Fridays. At first, I thought that this was ridiculous, and I hated coming in on Fridays." "Even though," she said, "I'll volunteer to see what it's about. I really

thought it was a waste of time, but after two or three times," she said, "it really forced me to do things that I would never do on my own." Which, at that point, were the instructional strategies. She added, "I actually like it. So can I stay here?" And I said, "You know what? I appreciate that, but I want somebody else to feel that too." And she replied, "Ah, okay. That's fine." So that's what happened with that conversation.

Additionally, part of the nuance that enabled Paul to engage his *colegas* authoritatively was his "I-am-not-the-expert" approach. "By using this approach," I concluded, "Paul removed himself as the sole source of leadership and knowledge, opening the door for teacher and campus leaders to authentically and meaningfully contribute to the problem-solving and decision-making processes of the *comunidad*." Ironically, the effectiveness of Paul's authoritative disposition even showed through in *comunidad*-building conversations with teacher leaders in which he told them what to do by refusing to tell them what to, and the watching their response to him (Interview with Paul, July 22, 2012):

PAUL: So that was their reaction at first. But when it became more collective, teachers would say "Now you're asking me to do this on top of everything else that I have to do." But I think that's finally gone away. But it's taken two or three years. I keep telling them, "I don't know, so you're gonna have to figure it out. You tell me what the issue is, and then I will do all the negotiating and all the other stuff." And I think that's the biggest thing, you know, when people come into my office I think it frustrates some teachers…I've had teachers say, "Just tell me," and I tell them "You really wanna know? You're not gonna like it." And they're like, "I wanna know." But I would say no or I would say, "Okay then

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that's what I would do, so now you're gonna have to do it." Just conversations

like that.

In taking this stance, Paul was in keeping with Freire's (2003) assertion that a leader

cannot think nor act for the people, but must do so with the people in line with Habermas'

(2004) theory of communicative action, using their conversation to ensure that he and

teacher leaders reach an understanding of how they will act both upon the world (i.e., the

Baum ISD *comunidad*) to address situations. Similarly, Sergiovanni's (2007l) views on

the virtues of leadership come through as Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations with

teacher leaders aim to elicit an active reaction through which he and his *colegas*

collaboratively seek pathways towards solving problems.

The more I considered Paul's authoritative disposition, the more I was convinced

that the authoritative attribute enacted through *comunidad*-building conversations was a

nuance that made a big difference for Paul. As an authoritative, authentically dialogical

campus leader, Paul created a meaningful, reflective and ultimately ontological dynamic

that contributed to his *colegas'* growth and development that challenged Baum teacher

and campus leaders alike to use their own talents, knowledge, and skill to address the

needs of their campus *comunidad*. Moreover, as a result of these attributes, teacher and

campus leaders saw their talents and ideas welcomed and incorporated into the decision-

making processes of the campus.

Conditions. Paul's narratives evidenced that, as an authoritative, authentically

dialogical campus leader, he took the initiative to create the lifeworld space and time for

comunidad-building conversations, but also took the initiative infuse the constitutive

lifeworld conditions under which these conversations took place. Figure 61 shows the

frequency with which the lifeworld conditions of *comunidad*-building conversations were present in Paul's narratives.

REVISED LIST OF CONDITIONS	TOTAL	LEVEL
CONDITIONS (LIFEWORLD)		
ADAPTABILITY	65	L1
FACE-TO-FACE	65	L1
CREATE THE LIFEWORLD SPACE (PERSONAL CHECK-IN, PERSONAL STORY)	62	L2
KNOWING THE LIFEWORLD CONTEXT (KNOWING THE *CULTURA e HISTORÍA* OF THE *COMUNIDAD*)	62	L2
RELATIONSHIP (ETHIC OF CARE, I-THOU, CONNECTEDNESS;INTIMACY, HONESTY, PEOPLE AS THE END, RESPECT SHARING, TRUST, VULNERABILITY	62	L2
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (PRAXIS)	61	L2
PUSING OUT OF THE LIFEWORLD COMFORT-ZONE	60	L2
BELONGING	59	L3
BEGIN EARLY ON	57	L3
ONTOLOGICAL (ZPD, SELF-EFFICACY, CAPACITY-BUILDING, CONTINUOUS/ONGONING)	57	L3

Figure 61. Revised list of conditions.

The importance of the conditions of adaptability and face-to-face played in contributing to the *comunidad*-building conversations were evident in the data, especially in the car accident and teacher retention proposal narratives. In both cases, the original contexts that Paul created organically transformed to serve new purposes. In the car accident, the in-service initially planned shifted into the primary context within in which Paul and his *colegas* addressed the needs of students and their own needs in wake of the

tragedy. A similar transformation occurred during the teacher-retention proposal process in which the ILT and the PLCs shifted their focus to address teacher leader needs.

At the same time, Paul's focus on the need to get more personal called attention to four of the top five conditions: create the lifeworld space, knowing the lifeworld, relationship, and pushing out of the lifeworld comfort. "To prepare for students' response to the accident," I reasoned, "Paul infused the *comunidad*-building contexts in the Baum ecology with these four conditions, especially pushing teacher and campus leaders out of their lifeworld comfort zones, a process that began organically when several teacher leaders remarked that they did not feel prepared to deal with the situation." Paul himself acknowledged that neither he nor anyone else there was prepared, a realization that was not surprising taking into account the fact that the Baum school *comunidad* had not dealt with the death of someone in their *comunidad* in a long time and the relatively new faculty. In doing this, Paul ensure that the lifeworld need to come to terms and to cope with their loss guided their systemsworld responses with respect to shifting the planned in-service from training to responding to the death of their student, using a form letter and arranging for transportation to the funeral for students (Sergiovanni, 2007i).

Just as his "I-am-not-the-expert" approach provided Paul the necessary nuance to engage effectively his *colegas* authoritatively, the data pointed to his use of the check-in as a critical component to infusing contexts with *comunidad*-building conditions. In fact, the check-in went hand-in-hand with the "I-am-not-not-expert" approach in helping Paul build *comunidad*. When he spoke about the Data Meetings Paul noted that he began with a check-in, asking teacher leaders how they are feeling and what he can do to support them to create a very nondirective, nonthreatening conversation: "That's my first thing always and usually from there they will just lay it all out" (Interview with Paul, October

6, 2012). Moreover, this approach enabled Paul to raise the ante for the Data Meetings over time:

> Now, we're asking them to bring their RtI and 504 data. We're looking at LPAC and our students who are ELL. We're looking at parent contact logs…And because I know how threatening that can seem or how difficult that can be, I try to break the ice. It goes beyond breaking the ice. I try to just say, "I know you have all this to share and we wanna get to this, but what are you feeling first?" And I can gauge how teachers are doing just by those first few minutes.

Paul's use of the check-in is in keeping with again demonstrated the importance of the lifeworld (Sergiovanni, 2007i) focus in *comunidad*-building conversations by engaging teacher leaders as in an I–Thou relationship that results in communicative action by both Paul and teacher leaders (Buber, 1970; Habermas, 2004).

On a different note, I was initially surprised to find that the lifeworld conditions of belonging and ontological did not rank higher. "As Paul engaged in more and more *comunidad*-building conversations," I figured, "teacher and campus leaders' sense of belonging should have increased, especially with the level of growth evidenced after the car accident and during the teacher retention proposal process. Their lifeworld ontologies should have grown as well." However, this was not the case. As Paul himself acknowledged in his reflections, even after his third year as principal, there was a need for the *comunidad*-building process in Baum to become more personal and to rely less on him as its catalyst, indicating that the level of *comunidad* Paul and his *colegas* achieved was still in a nascent stage, its roots were young and not very deep. (this speaks to the consistent attention we need to put on this process… this does not just happen and it is not automatic. It is hard, deliberate, and purposeful sustained work!

Why Are *Comunidad*-Building Conversations Important to Effective Campus

Leadership?

As noted earlier, Paul's use of *comunidad*-building conversations embodied

Habermas' view of communicative action (2004), and in doing so, he demonstrated the

important role that *comunidad*-building conversation plays in effective campus

leadership. Moreover, Paul himself attested to his use of inviting *colegas* to engage in

conversations as a way of developing the leadership capacity of others in the same way

that his first principal did with him (Interview with Paul, July 15, 2012): "Now, as a

leader, I follow my first principal's process which was to invite people and help them get

where they need to be, and if they're ready for, get them going. And ready looks different

for different people."

Specifically, the data showed that *comunidad*-building conversations helped Paul

effectively address critical leadership systemsworld situations that required a lifeworld

nuance. First and foremost, the *comunidad*-building conversations Paul had with Sarah

and Robert helped him address the systemsworld challenge of assembling his leadership

by addressing their lifeworld needs and concerns. With Sarah, Paul addressed her need

for time with her family. With Robert, he had to address his decision to leave education

altogether after he was passed over for the assistant principal position in the first place.

On a larger scale, Paul employed a lifeworld approach following the board's initial

tabling of the teacher retention proposal, noting that he knew he had to address teacher

leaders' disappointment by meeting with the following morning. Here, in particular,

Paul's use of *comunidad*-building conversations with Sarah and Robert helped establish,

as Sergiovanni, 2007i noted, the "foundations for the development of social, intellectual,

and other forms of human capital" (p. 148) that he and his campus leader *colegas* would need to lead their campus.

Likewise, the teacher conflict originated with the report required of the young ILT representative, but required that Paul address the veteran teacher leader on a lifeworld level, assuring her of the strength of their relationship. Paul also shared a glimpse into the veteran teacher leader's lifeworld experience with the ILT representative to help her understand her *colega's* point of view. Similarly, engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations from a lifeworld perspective aided Paul and his leadership team to come together and connect with teacher leaders during the beginning-of-the-year in-service and later with parents and students at the Meet the Teacher Night by telling their personal stories. Sharing lifeworld experiences in conversation also contributed to Paul's leadership during the initial stages of grieving, following the car accident that claimed the life of one of their students.

Along these same lines, *comunidad*-building conversations contributed to Paul's effectiveness as a campus leader, serving as a pathway for growing teacher leaders' buy-in and commitment to participating in the ILT, PLC, Monday PD, and Six-Week Data meetings. As noted earlier, Paul made use of the check-in as a way of making the Data Meetings less threatening and directive. Moreover, the data showed that over time, Paul's *comunidad*-building conversations won over teacher leaders like Mrs. Jones who initially questioned Paul's capacity to lead the Baum school *comunidad* and Mrs. March when she wanted to change the student to whom she gave an award. *Comunidad*-building conversations also helped Paul initiate and facilitate the tenure change of the ILT representative first through his conversations with Sarah, and followed by the conversations within the PLCs in which teacher leaders chose their new ILT

representative on the spot. Additionally, Paul's conversations with the teacher leader who wanted to stay on as ILT representative evidenced the level to which she bought into the ILT role despite initial perception of the ILT as a waste of time.

This learning points to the need to dive deeper and go further into this research from an ontological approach that informs the systems world. "After all," I considered, "in the case of Paul, Baum's systems world was informed by his guiding principles (i.e. the conditions and attributes he infused into the ecological contexts within which he and his *colegas* engaged each other. Better said, the systems world was informed by the principal (i.e. Paul) who infused his values into the school ecology in order to transform the normative structured that prevailed at the time. In doing so, he planted the seeds of *comunidad*-building conversations that began to sprout over the course of his time in Baum. Yet there is more that needs to be researched.

Further longitudinal research into the contexts, conditions, and attributes could further our understanding of this campus leader/ecology dynamic in which he or she either exerts his or her own values and ontology on the world in which they live or they allow the system to mold them, thereby possibly missing the opportunity to take advantage of the social intercourse to penetrate and influence school ecologies with an alternative system of values that initiate the disruption of the organization and its work. It is in. It is at this critical juncture where my future work lies.
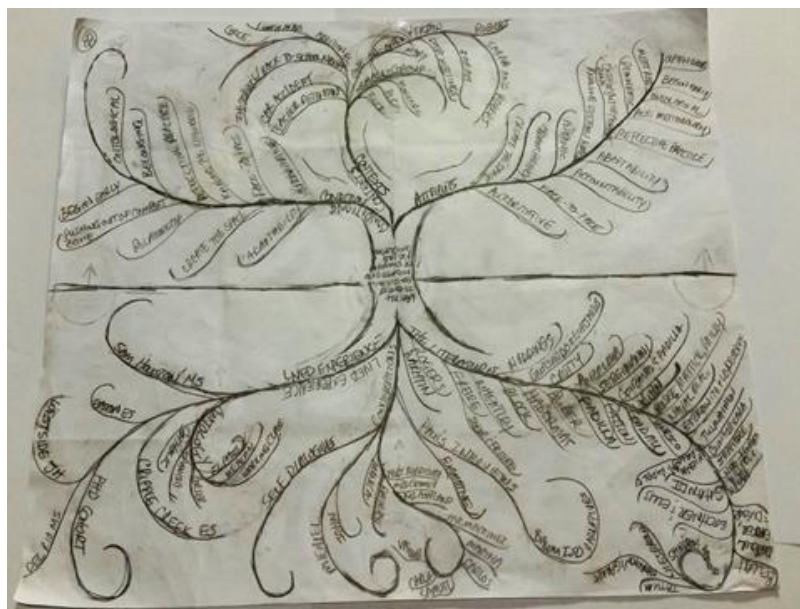
Figure 62. Fully-grown research tree with roots and branches.

Implications

How Can This Research Contribute to the Literature?

In addition to informing Paul's ongoing praxis as a school leader, identifying the contexts, conditions, and attributes that constituted the anatomy of Paul's *comunidad-*building conversations in Baum ISD has implications for the literature. Earlier in this dissertation, I made note of Calabrese's (1986) description of teaching as a dehumanizing endeavor:

> The working conditions found in many public schools are not consistent with those normally associated with other professions. These working conditions include a high degree of isolation from peers, evaluation by school boards composed of nonprofessionals, lack of involvement in the decision-making process, threats of physical and emotional violence, lack of control over teaching methodology and outcomes, and supervisory process that suggests that without supervision, teachers will not teach, will be late, leave early, and lack integrity. These are dehumanizing conditions. (p. 255).

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With the exceptions of the threat of physical and emotional violence—these were

not issues at Baum—the data harvested from Paul's narratives show that Paul effectively

addressed all of Calabrese's (1986) concerns using *comunidad*-building conversations.

Thus, the success with which Paul used *comunidad*-building conversations as a campus

leader underscores the potential that further research into the campus leaders' use of

comunidad-building conversations holds for the field of educational leadership. In

particular, this research points to the importance of establishing authentic *culturas* of

conversation, especially as a way of maintaining a focus on the lifeworld needs of a

school *comunidad* as a part of effective school leadership. Additionally, the findings of

this research point to the need for creating the space for campus leaders to engage in a

reflective process similar to that in which Paul engaged to identify the contexts,

conditions, and attributes of their own *comunidad*-building conversations. As Paul noted

when I asked Paul to reflect on his *comunidad*-building journey in Baum (Interview with

Paul, October 10, 2012):

> I think the entire process has been a good one. I would like to find ways to do
>
> what you and I have done in these interviews with others, whether it's a
>
> classroom teacher or another administrator. Just pushing yourself to think back to,
>
> "What are the conditions, the attributes? What are the things in place that have
>
> worked? What if I would have done things differently?" So, just finding that
>
> reflection piece, that's the key.

In his letter to Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation, Gabbard (2011) referred to the

challenge of training teacher leaders as one of "resocialization":

> Those of us in teacher education are required to align our curricula with those
>
> standards, but as early as their first field experiences in public schools, our

students hear teachers tell them to forget what they learn in their university

classes. And so begins their resocialization into the historically dominant patterns

and practices of public schools. I say 'resocialization,' because, after all, the vast

majority of our teacher education candidates have already received thirteen years

into those patterns and practices during their time as students in their public

school. (p. 191)

More to the point, Sappington et al. (2010) noted that, today, leadership programs face

the task of preparing principals to meet daunting expectations of increasing student

achievement and doing more with fewer resources, all the while facing challenging

circumstances within school ecologies that are often significantly different from their

own lived experiences.

The same can be said for campus leaders. The traditional view of campus teaches

us that, after years of socialization as teacher leaders, campus leaders must undergo a

resocialization in making the shift out of the classroom when they become assistant

principals. They then undergo yet another resocialization when they become principals.

However, as this research demonstrated, Paul's formative journey as a burgeoning

dialogical leader facilitated his transition from teacher leader to assistant principal to

principal. The data about his journey points to the value of developing principal

preparation programs that create the space for aspiring campus leaders to engage in

similar lived experiences that take candidates out of the classroom and into the

comunidad, and for school ecologies to take part in authentic conversations infused with

the conditions and attributes that were identified in this research through which they

become familiarized with the *comunidades* they seek to serve. Engaged in this endeavor,

we should create triple helix, school–university–*comunidad* partnerships through which

comunidad-building curricula can be developed and implemented, thus, making a significant contribution to the principal preparation and *comunidad*-building literature while assisting future teacher and campus leaders to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the early stages of their ontological development.

I found this last recommendation particularly intriguing considering the campus at which I currently work. "As an early-college high school, we partner with a local community college to provide our students the opportunity to take college-level courses and to obtain an associate's degree. In addition, one of the pathways offered is an education pathway for students who want to become teachers. It would be great if we could add a *comunidad* component to the existing school–community college partnership through which we provided similar field experiences to those Paul experienced through *Horizontes Sin Límites* and his master's program. Imagine if our students completed their program having gained hands-on knowledge and skills about our *comunidad* and developed burgeoning authentic dialogical conversation orientations so they could build *comunidad* using *comunidad*-building conversations."

As an Educational Leader, How Can This Research Contribute to and Inform My Praxis in Reconciling the Theory, Practice, and Action of *Comunidad* Building and *Comunidad*-Building Conversation?

Answering this last question brought me full-circle as an aspiring dialogical campus leader. In finishing this research into the contexts, conditions, and attributes of *comunidad*-building conversations, I found myself at a new starting point and I reflected on how I would continue my journey. That is, how I would from the campus leader I was when I first began my journey to the campus leader I want to become, and how my learning from this research would affect my campus leadership praxis.

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"First, taking a cue from Paul, I need to take time this summer to reflect on the extent to which I infused the conditions and attributes from this research in the contexts within which I engaged in conversation with my *colegas*. Like Paul, I have a set list of contexts within which I regularly engage teacher leaders, counselors, and other *colegas* in conversations including the PLCs I supervise and the Student Intervention Team (SIT), as well as the ongoing one-on-one conversations with *colegas* that I have as situations arise. These are all contexts within which I can construct the triple helix of campus-leader–teacher-leader, *comunidad*-building conversation."

In particular, one of my first steps is to make use of the check-in as an avenue for infusing the lifeworld conditions.

"Looking back, it was the check-in that enabled Paul to make the conversations in Baum more personal, create the lifeworld context, and cultivate a sense of belonging and relationship all the while pushing his *colegas* out of their lifeworld comfort zones. In addition, if I were to begin this praxis early on in the school year, and establish and hold to the expectation of using the check-in, I could begin to build a *cultura* of conversations within the PLCs and SIT. However, guided by my findings, in particular the example set by Paul's first principal I know I must put special emphasis on engaging in *comunidad*-building conversations at the one-on-one level. I can begin with the individual teacher leaders I supervise and branch out to others as time goes by. Yes, that is the starting point. It's where it all began for Paul, and that's where I need to start sowing the seeds of *comunidad*-building conversations in the coming year.

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