Report on Oral Defense of Thesis

The Partner School Drama: The Integration of the Hmong Community in Wausau, Wis.

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THE Hmong PEOPLE
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INTRODUCTION

People communicate: they talk, laugh, argue, agree and joke; they conceal, hurt, disagree, yell, threaten and lie. But what are people really saying, and why are they saying it? What, then, lies at the heart of human communication and motivation? Kenneth Burke, in analyzing rhetoric, described people as symbol-users engaged in drama. "Politics is above all drama," Burke wrote, where "(p)eople are neither animals nor machines but actors" (The Philosophy of Literary Form 310-311). Actors engage in drama based on patterns of identification that serve to both unify and divide groups of people. Simple words, phrases and symbols contain the power to move people. The peace symbol, the cross and the swastika have the ability to create varieties of reactions. The words "home," "loyalty" and "tradition" take on a myriad of meanings, depending on one's identification.

Language has the power to ignite wars, but these conflicts are not always fought on the battlefield. Through language, people create ideological enemies. With the "naming" of the enemy, "all 'proof henceforth is automatic" (The Philosophy of Literary Form 194). The enemy must then be "slain," according to Burke. The designated enemy ultimately bears the burden of guilt while the symbolic slaying ushers in what Burke called transformation, and involves the images of redemption and rebirth. Yet this "'desire to kill" a certain person is much more properly analyzable as a desire to transform the principle which that person
represents (A Rhetoric of Motives 13). The drama, a battle of words, is then complete.

OVERVIEW

Such a dramatic process captivated and transformed residents of the city of Wausau, Wisconsin, in the early 1990s. Here, the ideological battle was fought over the busing of students within the Wausau Area School District. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Laotian Hmong refugees, sponsored by local churches, began arriving in Wausau. Many residents knew little of the Hmong’s history and their covert role in aiding American forces during the Vietnam War. Following the withdrawal of American troops in 1975, many of the Hmong who fought in the war were hunted down and killed. Others fled to refugee camps in Thailand before immigrating to America (Hamilton-Merritt). Although most Wausau residents openly welcomed the Hmong, tensions increased as more and more refugees began arriving.

The stage was set for conflict as Wausau school administrators attempted to deal with the problem of the expanding student body. A number of elementary schools had high concentrations of Hmong children and administrators wanted to offer equal educational opportunities by balancing the number of Hmong and American children in each school. The School Board then proposed a solution: Partner Schools. Partner Schools, however, involved the busing of children. At that point, battle lines were drawn over who was “for” busing and who was “against.”

Despite heated controversy, administrators approved the start of Partner Schools in 1993. Neighborhood school supporters then united against the administrators who voted for the program. In December of 1993, five board members were ousted during a successful recall election.
In April of 1994, new board members approved a modified form of
"Neighborhood Schools." Ironically, students would still be bused, but only
Hmong students. With the rescinding of the Partner School program, the
drama was over.

The Partner School situation closely mirrored patterns of Burke's
dramatistic theory. Through identification, members of community were
both united and torn apart. Good friends stopped talking while strangers
experienced a new found camaraderie. Neighborhood School supporters
successfully created a common ideological enemy – busing. They infused
their political platform with terms such as “family values,” “safety,” and
“security.” As the drama unfolded, Partner School supporters (along with
the Hmong themselves) came to be symbolic scapegoats for the community.
With the slaying (recall election), the community experienced a
transformation, a rebirth of sorts.

If the Partner School drama closely followed Kenneth Burke’s patterns
of identification, what does this mean for researchers? The action research
of David Cooperrider suggests that the Partner School drama could have
had a different outcome, based on an alternative approach. A main premise
of Cooperrider’s Affirmative Inquiry theory is that society needs to move
away from its traditional view of “problem-solving.” His theory is based on
affirmation, rather than negation. People are asked to envision a positive
future, and then challenged to realize that future.

Inquiry is the second aspect of Cooperrider’s theory. Organizational
members begin to realize a positive vision for the future when they embark
on the inquiry process. As many people as possible are included in the
interview process, a process conducted by lay people. The premise of
Affirmative Inquiry hinges on a “positive presumption: that organizations
are ‘alive’ with infinite constructive capacity... Appreciative Inquiry is
about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them” (Cooperrider and Whitney 4-5). Positive change comes from eliminating the concept of “winners” and “losers.”

Identification theory, then, predicts the cycles of human drama and attempts to answer the why behind human communication and motivation. Action theory provides a method for analyzing how these identification processes can be modified or changed and how people can be motivated to envision and realize a positive future. This process can ultimately foster understanding and compassion among people and can be particularly helpful in bridging intercultural gaps. Studying human communication, then, can be the first step in moving away from typical dramatic patterns of identification and moving toward a positive and hopeful vision for the future of intercultural relations.

JUSTIFICATION

The Partner School situation lends itself to a communication study. Rhetorical study involves the study of human communication and motivation seen through the lens of rhetoric that “rises” from the situation. Parson stated that according to Leland Griffin, “...(O)ne could not encompass all the discourse of a movement, one could best discover its ‘essence’ by concentrating on the ‘rhetorical patterns which dominate the movement (5-6). Terms that people identified and rallied around became defined within simple terms: “busing” and “neighborhood schools.”

Evidence gathered from the rhetorical history of Partner Schools supports Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification. “First, by employing the concept of identification, the critic may determine the political speaker's strategy for acceptance and rejection” (Brock 444). Communication
becomes a persuasive tool that creates a "common enemy" through use of ideology (The Philosophy of Literary Form 193). Taken to its extreme, the persuasive power of a politician can be enormous, where words can ignite wars that inflict bloodshed, even genocide. This study, then, "allows critics to gain fresh insight into political speaking and to serve as a check upon the power of the politician" (Brock 455).

Studying Burke's patterns of identification becomes the first step in trying to create positive societal visions. With Cooperrider, education becomes a way to "overcome the universal problem – resistance to change" (Head, et al 280). Clearly, Wausau residents were fearful of change. During the Partner School era people resisted the changes that accompanied the arrival of the Hmong. This fear was combined with a fear of busing, a term that carries negative images of racial strife. "Ethical values such as 'good' or 'bad' have little force, except on an abstract level, but if those values emerge in the form of an image... they suddenly become a power shaping the consciousness of masses of people ("Positive Image, Positive Action" 43).

Combining the work of both Burke and Cooperrider can offer researchers a unique way of looking at intercultural conflict. In addition, this study can serve as a guide to other communities facing similar integration issues. Clearly, Wausau administrators had difficult obstacles to overcome. Cooperrider cites Churchill, who, in facing extreme strife, had a "towering ability to cognitively dissociate all seeming impossibilities, deficiencies, and imperfections from a given situation and to see in his people and country that which had fundamental value and strength ("Positive Image, Positive Action" 51). Like Churchill, people can learn to become artists, drawing a vision of a positive future that the community has a vested interest in.
RESEARCH QUESTION/PURPOSE

The study of the Partner School drama leads to the following research question: "How can a school integration program become a success?"

During intercultural conflict, people often take sides and find a "common enemy." In Wausau, this common enemy was busing and its supporters. Those who opposed busing banded together into a faction united under supporters of "Neighborhood Schools." This bitter war of words was won through "negative" rhetoric. The failure of the Partner School program occurred with the failure of its rhetoric.

The purpose of this thesis is to offer alternative methods to handling intercultural "problems." Burke theorized and offered insight on human motivation. Cooperrider offers a hopeful vision that these often-negative patterns of human behavior can be modified. Studying intercultural issues is becoming more important as the landscape of America continues to change with increased intercultural contact. This thesis argues that the outcome of the Partner School drama could have taken a different, more positive turn, with residents working together to create a common, viable vision of the future.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative methodology of the thesis will be based on a critical interpretation and analysis. Between the 1930's and 1960's, most communication studies shared a cause-and-effect emphasis. During the past several decades, interpretive researchers, with their linking of communication and culture, have been making valuable contributions to communication research. Burke offers a method of interpreting the Partner School program. "Motivations are not seen by Burke as simply
needs or deprivations; rather, they are seen in terms of situations, of strategic moments” (Parson 8). The Partner School drama was such a moment, and offers an opportunity for a critical interpretation of the communication generated during that time period.

The study begins with a critical interpretation relying on Burke’s concepts of identification. His concepts help researchers answer the “why” behind human communication. “What Burke provides is a series of insights by which the critic may discover the ‘patterns’ peculiar to the movement” (Parson 7). Rhetorical analysis offers a particular lens through which to study a communication situation, where analysis allows researchers opportunity to predict the way people may react in certain situations. A communication analysis combined with action theory, however, offers both understanding of human motivation and can foster positive intercultural relationships.

The drama of Partner Schools will be viewed analytically through the lens of Cooperrider’s Appreciative Inquiry theory. Here, concepts of the theory will be applied to the Partner School drama to analyze alternative methods that could have prepared the community for the controversial Partner School program. This analysis is hypothetical and offers a way to view the Partner School drama through the advantage of hindsight. Such an analysis can serve as a starting point for other school districts or organizations that are facing similar situations.

Certainly, one of society’s most pressing concerns is the future of intercultural relationships. People in today’s global society will have increased contact with people of various races and cultures. Research can provide a tool to organizations that are dealing with change. Analyzing how other communities and organizations have dealt with change becomes critical as they interpret a new vision for the future.
The following literature review will be divided into several sections. The first section will discuss interpretivist communication, the approach that is used in this thesis. The second section will discuss several intercultural concepts, including the differences between high- and low-context cultures. The third section will discuss Burke’s dramatistic theory and will analyze the points of identification, consubstantiality, scapegoating, and transformation. This will be followed by an overview of Cooperrider’s Affirmative Inquiry theory and includes his four phases of discovery, dream, design and destiny.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture and communication: An interpretivist approach

Communication and culture formation is best approached through an interpretivist definition of communication, which differs from a functionalist approach. Functionalist theories traditionally operate from a linear, cause and effect perspective. Interpretivist scholars, on the other hand, tend to view communication as an interactive social process that is based on symbol use. Through symbol use, people create and exchange meaning. People create and sustain the cultures that they live in through the exchange of beliefs, values and attitudes. (Daniels and Spiker).

Interpretivist scholars stress the connection between communication and culture; viewing both as inseparable. Each identity group has a unique culture, and every person is part of many different identity groups simultaneously. Culture “shapes” a member’s communication, communication that is based on his or her relations. “Culture provides a ‘highly selective screen’ between us and the outside world, what we notice, what we ignore” (Gudykunst and Kim 12).
Intercultural communication: contexting

The concept of how people "context" or understand their world is critical in beginning to study intercultural relationships. Cultural differences are often based on how people "context" their social realities. The way people context or interpret their world creates that world, hence, the great cultural differences among various races. People learn and accept behaviors, attitudes and traditions from their culture. Each member takes his or her cues from other members where perception is key to understanding where people are “coming from.”

Through contexting, people assign meaning to cultural cues. For instance, a salute signals authority or a wave can mean hello or goodbye. The study of cultural identity is critical in understanding the formation of social reality, particularly because the differences between Hmong and American cultures are so vast. The differences between these groups, considered high-context (collectivistic) and low-context (individualistic) cultures, will be examined. Intercultural scholar E.T. Hall regards contexting as a behavioral screening process that allows people to assign meaning to communication situations and also to prevent “information overload” (46).

Hall finds that cultural differences are rooted in the way people context information during meaning formation. Americans are considered a low-context, or individualistic culture, while the Hmong are considered a high-context, or collectivistic culture. Hall states that in low-context cultures people convey the majority of information in the communication in the “explicit code.” Americans are considered to say what they mean, to get right to the point. In a high-context culture, such as that of Southeast Asians, members view most of the information of the message either in the
physical context or as “internalized in the person, while very little information is in the coded, explicit message” (48).

Within a culture, people tend to receive “emotional support and a sense of security” from other members, while they also tend to accept the behaviors, values and traditions of that society. In high context cultures, the group becomes more socially important than any one individual, where there is a “greater submission of individual identity, individuality and self-expression to the group.” In a low-context culture, people stress the “individual as primary point of reference...one's social conduct is viewed as a reflection of one's character, and brings social disgrace to the individual only. In Japan, the notion of shame has much the same effect on people as the concept of sin does in America (Gudykunst & Kim 125-126).

Cultures of European descent are generally considered individualistic. These cultures are marked by values that include “individualism, freedom, honesty, social recognition, comfort, hedonism, and equity” (Triandis 375). In individualistic societies, or Western societies, the self is often seen as being independent, even separate from their in-groups. Americans are generally noted for their volunteerism and compassion for the needy. Often, a retired person may feel an obligation to volunteer for a charity or other organization. This person may quit after a year, feeling that the obligation has been fulfilled, perhaps citing a need to spend more time with family. Individualistic behavior is often voluntary, less committed and short term.

A person from a collectivistic culture, on the other hand, will often define his- or herself through the lens of the group experience. This society for instance, may have a person that acts as a grandmother to the group as a whole. People of Southeast Asian cultures, including the Hmong, tend to value “face saving, harmony, duty toward parents,
modesty, moderation, thrift, quality in distribution of rewards among peers, and fulfillment of other needs (Triandis 375). Stereotypes, however, may lead to the situation of ethnocentrism, which will be defined as follows.

Ethnocentrism

Cultural viewpoints are based on cultural experience, or inexperience. The limitations of one's cultural and intercultural experiences can promote ignorance, fear and intolerance. The ignorance or intolerance of other cultures can spawn prejudice, even racial hatred, as will be illustrated during the Partner School drama. Before the Hmong arrived in Wausau, the city was virtually “white”. Many residents found themselves to be unprepared for the rapid influx of a large amount of culturally different people.

In the age of technology, most people do not travel much further than their place of birth and remain “ethnocentric.” Such people accept the cultural perceptions of their parents, and pass down attitudes of tolerance or intolerance, views of liberalism or conservatism. In addition, most people remain members of these same cultural groups throughout their lives, and change is met with defense, even hostility (Singer). In the early 1990s, Wausau residents were forced to confront issues of their own ethnocentricty. As a growing number of Hmong people began to settle in Wausau, the stage was set for a Burkeian drama.

Review of Burke

Although the work of Burke is large and often regarded as conceptually dense, his basic concepts are readily understandable and shed light on human motivation. “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it” Burke asked (A Rhetoric of Motives xxii-xv).
The matter of human motivation often remains elusive due to the symbolic nature of language.

Burke analyzed the way people use symbols to create patterns of identification. Symbol use, according to Burke, results in symbolic action, action that is enacted within the human drama. This drama begins with the way people identify with each other through communication. “Indeed, it seems likely that Burke chose drama to represent what men do with symbols because drama portrays men in conflict...the existence of rhetoric hinges upon the division between men” (Davidson 10). The dramatic process, according to Burke, contains elements of identification, consubstantiality, scapegoating, and transformation, all based on the symbolic nature of language (A Rhetoric of Motives xxii-xv).

Man is a “symbol-using animal” Burke explained (The Philosophy of Literary Form xv). “The ‘symbolism’ of a word consists in the fact that no one quite uses the word in its mere dictionary sense,” he wrote (A Rhetoric of Motives 35). Thus, words become embedded with meaning, where symbol-use conveys values, attitudes, moralistic and accepted behavior. “And the nature of the human mind itself, with the function of abstraction rooted in the nature of language, also provides us with ‘levels of generalization’...by which situations greatly different in their particularities may be felt to belong in the same class” (The Philosophy of Literary Form 2). On one hand, people unite around the flag would even die for it. On the other hand, other people have rejected the flag and all the values it represents; some have even tried to burn it.

Burke stated that the function of rhetoric is “the use of human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents (A Rhetoric of Motives 41).” People unite around or divide against politicians, religious figures, those in the media spotlight, and those with similar or dissimilar
morals, attitudes, and values. Aristotle, according to Burke, discussed this concept under the nature of "topics." "(A)cts, things, conditions, states of minds, personal characteristics, and the like, which people consider promising or formidable, good or evil, useful or dangerous, admirable or loathsome, and so on (56)."

These topics serve as strong moral and behavioral guides, where rhetorical concepts have the power to persuade people what and who to believe in, what to wear and what to say (A Rhetoric of Motives 55-56). President Bush easily swayed many Americans to support the recent attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. He convinced a large number of people that our country needed to rid the world of terror from the "evildoers."

Rhetoric, then, is "speech designed to persuade," wrote Burke, relying on a concept by Cicero, who stated that language is "designed to equip people with 'attitudes' rather than 'action'" (A Rhetoric of Motives 49). The rhetorician will use "titles", which, like topics, "identify a person or a cause with whatever kinds of things will, in his judgment, call forth the desired response." In relating images and ideas, Burke stated that a speaker might employ the "mother-image" to create identification, to convey the idea of security, without ever actually using the word security (86).

An interesting tenet of Burke's identification theory is that people - despite a lack of common interests and attitudes - can "assume" that similarities exist or can be "persuaded to believe so." During the process of identification, through the mystery of hierarchy, "(T)he 'top' or 'culminating stage' stands for the 'image' that best represents the entire idea (The Philosophy of Literary Form 141). For example, the president or CEO tends to be either the object of affection or the object of scorn, depending on the economic climate of the nation. When entering the realm of rhetoric, one must consider "the identifications whereby a specialized
activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class... (B)elonging in this sense is rhetorical," Burke wrote (A Rhetoric of Motives 28)

People, despite their differences, identify and unite through their use of communication, which involves the “mystery” of language. Burke explained:

Similarly, the conditions for “mystery” are set by any pronounced social distinctions, as between nobility and commoners, courtiers and king, leader and people, rich and poor, judge and prisoner at the bar, “superior race” and underprivileged “races” or minorities. Thus, even the story of relations between the petty clerk and the office manager, however realistically told, draws upon the wells of mystery for its appeal, since the social distinction between clerk and manager makes them subtly mysterious to each other, not merely two different people, but representing two different classes (or “kinds”) of people. (A Rhetoric of Motives 115)

Burke stated that people employ “mystification” when attempting to “smooth over inconsistencies” and become “consubstantial” with each other. This explains how people of diverse backgrounds can unite into groups such as conservative or liberal, football or soccer fan, Pro-Life or Pro-Choice. During identification, where “A is not identical with his colleague B but insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B.” “In being identified with B, A is “substantially one with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time, he remains unique, an individual locus of motives.” Burke cited as example, “While consubstantial with its parents... the offspring is nonetheless apart from them” (A Rhetoric of Motives 21-22). A child is “at once outside them and of them” where the parents feel
“personal gratification” in watching their child at play (The Philosophy of Literary Form 45).

Identification occurs via a joining of common interests, yet division is also a necessary part of this unity, wrote Burke. “Because, to begin with ‘identification’ is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of division,” he stated. The very word inclusion connotes the concept of division, where presence of the “other,” of someone outside, completes the idea of unification. “We refer to that ultimate disease of cooperation: “war,” Burke wrote. “And in today’s climate of patriotism, the line that draws people together and also separates them becomes clearer, where we can see lurking behind the rhetoric the “lugubrious regions of malice and the lie” (A Rhetoric of Motives 22-23).

The power of the politician’s words bears scrutiny, according to Burke. Burke examined the abhorrent yet undeniably powerful rhetoric of Hitler’s Mein Kampf, “a testament of a man who swung a great people into his wake” (The Philosophy of Literary Form 191). Great masses identified with the “medicine man’s” portrayal of the Jew as the scapegoat (191 & 195). Burke explained:

Hitler’s “Battle” is exasperating, even nauseating; yet the fact remains: If the reviewer but knocks off a few adverse attitudinizings and calls it a day, with a guaranty in advance that his article will have a favorable reception among the decent members of our population, he is contributing more to our gratification than our enlightenment. (191)

The power of language, then, can be insidious and must be exposed. In today’s America, the enemy is no longer Russia, but terrorism. The line that separates the two enemies sharpens to black and white, good and bad, holy and evil.
The scapegoat “is taken to possess intrinsically the qualities we assign it.” This vehicle, essential to the experience of the drama, becomes a “representative’ or ‘vessel’ of certain unwanted evils, the sacrificial animal upon whose back the burden of these evils is ritualistically located” (A Philosophy of Literary Form 39-40). The “medicine man concocts” a “medicine” to rid society of the problem... crude magic, but effective” (191-192). The punishment of the scapegoat symbolizes the “solution.” “Hence, if you look for a man’s burden, you will find the principle that relieves his unburdening; if you look for his problem, you will find the lead that explains the structure of his solution” (92). Griffin explained that during scapegoating a “‘good’ order may turn faulty; the symptom of its turning is the growth of verbal corruption – vile error in the use of language” (459).

Modern societies still engage in the act of sacrifice, according to Burke. Through the sacrifice, society is relieved of guilt through symbolic purification. Today, the “sacrificial animal... the goat, has been replaced by the ‘sacrificial king’” (The Philosophy of Literary Form 40). Burke stated:

Similarly, the delegation of one’s burden to the sacrificial vessel of the scapegoat is a giving, a socialization, albeit the socialization of a loss, a transference of something, deeply within, devoutly a part of one’s own self...It delegates the personal burden to an external bearer, yet the receiver of this burden possesses consubstantiality with the giver, a pointification that is contrived (where the scapegoat is the ‘bad’ father) by objectively attributing one’s own vices or temptations to the delegated vessel.” (45).

Or otherwise put: “The imagery of slaying is a special kind of transformation, and transformation involves the ideas and imagery of identification” (A Rhetoric of Motives 20). Burke wrote, “The scapegoat is dialectically appealing, since it combines in one figure contrary principles of
identification and alienation" (The Philosophy of Literary Form 140). There is redemption and rebirth in the vicarious experience of the sacrifice enacted in myth, in stories, movies, literature and real life. The scapegoat is never far from modern society. During poor economic times, the nation’s president, the company’s CEO, the store manager, all may bear the burden of guilt whose demise signals the promise of redemption and transformation. In Wausau, the scapegoats became the Hmong and those who sided with them. Residents rose up in an attempt to purge the community from the perceived enemy, attempting to restore Wausau to the “idyllic” place that existed only in the imagination.

Yet the result of the dramatic process is always transformation, according to Burke, and involves redemption. Redemption is the result of the purging process and involves a change of identity or substance, according to Burke. This transformation, or “sloughing off” can involve a change of identity, such as when people change their names in an effort to break with their past, a “symbolic suicide” (A Philosophy of Literary Form 41). “Redemption can be found in a change of identity, a new perspective, a different view on life, a feeling of moving forward, towards a goal, or a better life in general…it is a life-long process of growth and change” (Foss, Foss & Trapp 197). Many people have experienced the renewal of starting over, moving to a new place, changing jobs, marrying or losing a spouse, or “turning over a new leaf.” Transformation and renewal are the result of the dramatic process, a process that changed the residents of Wausau in the early 1990s.

Summary

During the Wausau drama, people sought “opposites” through identification. These opposites became “Neighborhood Schools” (status
quo) vs. Partner Schools (busing). Within this drama, the community became embroiled in a battle that had clear winners and losers. Perhaps what happened in Wausau would happen anywhere people of two cultures are force to co-exist. The cultural worlds of American and Hmong are vastly different which makes the opportunity for misunderstandings great. In addition, both groups were facing major societal changes. The Partner School drama offers researchers an opportunity to analyze what occurred during this time and stands as a precedent for other communities. This drama can be viewed not only from a Burkeian perspective, but also from a perspective based on Cooperrider’s action research.

Cooperrider: Appreciation and Inquiry/Affirmative Topic Choice

Society as a whole has taken a problem-solving approach to societal concerns. This approach, however, attempts to isolate a problem and to treat the symptoms, according to Cooperrider. If people approach organizational issues as “problems,” the future of the organization is limited as such. “We believe the velocity and largely informal spread of the ideas suggest a growing sense of disenchantment with exhausted theories of change, especially those wedded to vocabularies of human deficit” he writes. A positive vision, however, is life affirming. “In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives ‘life’ to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms” (Cooperrider and Whitney 4–5).

Inquiry, like appreciation, becomes a key component of Cooperrider’s approach. “AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential.” This inquiry may include “hundreds, even
thousands of people.” Growth is clearly linked to inquiry, according to Cooperrider and Whitney:

One thing is evident and clear as we reflect on the most important things we have learned with AI: human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated. (5-6)

“Affirmative topic choice” may be the most important aspect of an Appreciative Inquiry study, according to Cooperrider. AI “says that the way we know people, groups, and organizations is fateful. Cooperrider further asserts that the “time is overdue to recognize that symbols and conversations, emerging from all our analytic modes, are among the world’s paramount resources.” Topics may be varied. “Affirmative topics, always homegrown, can be on anything the people of an organization feel gives life to the system” (Cooperrider and Whitney 7).

For example, topics can include ones such as “empowerment, innovation, sense of ownership, commitment, integrity, ecological consciousness, and pride.” Cooperrider believes that people often find what they are looking for. “In each case of topic choice, the same premise is firmly posited: Human systems grow in the direction of their deepest and most frequent inquiries.” These inquiries, according to Cooperrider, should be grouped into four phases: discovery, dream, design, and destiny (7-9).

Phase I: Discovery

The key to successful discovery is to “discover and disclose positive capacity.” The type of questions are positive, but “the inquiry we are talking about is anything but wishful…Appreciative Inquiry can get you much better results than seeking out and solving problems” (Cooperrider
and Whitney 9-10). Cooperrider states that all organizational members must be included. “When managers ask how many people should be interviewed or who should do the interviews, we increasingly find ourselves saying ‘everyone.’” This may number in the thousands, if necessary (10).

Cooperrider recommends that organizational members, not consultants or those in the upper echelon, conduct interviews. For example, an interviewer could say, “Obviously you have had ups and downs in your career here at XYZ. But for the moment I would like you to focus on a high point, a time in your work experience here where you felt most alive, most engaged, or most successful. Can you tell me the story? How did it unfold?” Questions allow people to begin to dream, the second phase (10).

Phase II: Dream

Information gathered during the first discovery phase are “put to constructive use” during the dream phase. “When an artist sits in front of a landscape the imagination is kindled not by searching for ‘what is wrong with this landscape’ but by a special ability to be inspired by those things worth valuing.” Members gather stories and narratives about what make members “feel most alive.” They are assembled just as an artist gathers tools to paint a picture, according to Cooperrider and Whitney.

“Appreciation, it appears, draws our eyes toward life, stirs our feelings, sets in motion our curiosity, and provides inspiration to the envisioning mind.” During the dream phase, themes and stories can be retold, where “a convergence zone is created where the future begins to be discerned in the form of visible patterns interwoven in to the texture of the actual.” The “actual” begins to be realized during the third phase, the design phase (11).
Phase III: Design

Following the dream phase, organizational members begin to create the "ideal organization" during the design phase. According to Cooperrider and Whitney:

Once the strategic focus or dream is articulated (usually consisting of three things in our model – a vision of a better world, a powerful purpose, and a compelling statement of strategic intent) attention turns to the creation of the ideal organization, the social architecture or actual design of the system in relation to the world in which it is part. (12)

For example, Cooperrider and colleagues worked in Zimbabwe with a partner organization of Save the Children:

It was fascinating to observe how easy it was to re-design the organization in terms of structures and systems once broad agreement was reached on a powerful Dream. The design centered around the simple statement: "Every person in Zimbabwe shall have access to clean water within five years. (13)

Importantly, this design hinged not on "bureaucracy's self-sufficient hierarchy" but on a "network of alliances or partnerships." Encouragingly, "when inspired by a great dream we have yet to find an organization that did not feel compelled to design something very new and very necessary" states Cooperrider and Whitney. This design turns into the organization's destiny, created not by a "set of platitudes, but a manifesto, what people believe in and care about in their gut" (13-14).

Phase IV: Destiny

The final phase of Appreciative Inquiry is destiny, which involves "giving AI away to everyone, and then stepping back." "Changes would
happen not by organized confrontation, diagnosis, burning platforms, or piecemeal reform but through irresistibly vibrant and real visions" state Cooperrider and Whitney. This destiny involves empowerment, not in the typical hierarchical sense, "from the top down," but from a "non-linear" patterns. "What is needed, as the Destiny Phase of AI suggests, are the network-like structures that liberate not only the daily search into qualities and elements of an organization's positive core but the establishment of a convergence zone for people to empower one another – to connect, cooperate, and co-create" (14-16).

Still, letting go of "problem-solving" is difficult for many people: "But then the question is always voiced: 'What do we do with the real problems?" Typically, organizational members, particularly those at the top, fracture issues into "problems to be solved." This limiting vision, a negative approach, is invariably followed by negative results. Rather, Cooperrider recommends looking ahead from a positive vantage point. "Our positive images of the future lead our positive actions – this is the increasingly energizing basis and presupposition of Appreciative Inquiry" (19).

The Positive Principle states that positive inquiries shape a positive future. This future is built upon "large amounts" of "things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together." These concepts are often overlooked with typical "problem-solving" techniques. "We love letting go of 'fixing' the world. We love doing interviews hundreds of them... And we are, quite frankly, more effective the more we are able to learn." (Cooperrider and Whitney 20).

Qualititative research asks questions rather than supplies answers. Human motivation and communication are complex areas of study that
elude hard-and-fast answers. Yet through asking questions, researchers can probe more deeply into the human condition, attempting to understand what motivates people to act in particular ways. Theory however, is incomplete without attempting to realize change. Burke's dramatistic theory offers one way of looking at human behavior, a plausible way that explains the negative patterns that people find themselves repeating. Cooperrider offers an escape from "problem-solving" where negative attitudes can be transformed into positive ones.

SOURCES

This majority of material in this thesis was researched in Wausau at the Wausau Area School District. Personnel with the Wausau Area School District kept meticulous records documenting this era. These records include School Board meeting minutes and correspondences between administrators. Records also include a large number of letters written to School Board members by Wausau residents. There is also a volume of newspaper, magazine, and educational articles that detailed a variety of integration-related topics. Within the Restructuring files, personnel also gathered articles that were circulated by administrators pertaining to research on other school integration programs.

The Wausau Public Library yielded a detailed account of the Partner School program through copies of the local newspaper, the Wausau Daily Herald. All quotes from this newspaper were examined and recorded from microfilm at the library. All other articles quoted and used as evidence were recorded at the Wausau Area District Administration office within the district's Restructuring files. Quotes from the 60 Minutes news program were recorded from a videotaped copy at the administrative office.
Quotes from the Atlantic Monthly article were taken from records at the University of Wisconsin/Stevens Point library.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter included a justification, research question and methodology for the study, followed by a literature review. Chapter two provides a brief history of the Hmong people. These people have experienced a great deal of tragedy in their migratory history and this background enhances understanding the cultural differences between the Hmong and American society.

Chapter three will detail the action taken by district administrators as they prepared for the institution of the Partner School program. Administrators, who believed that they were working in the best interests of the district, promoted the program through a political platform that failed to capture the imagination of the majority of residents. The failure of this rhetoric will be outlined in Chapter four. The Partner School drama will be outlined in this chapter, and evidence will support Burke's concepts of identification, consubstantiality, scapegoating and transformation.

Chapter five will probe the question, "How can school integration programs "succeed"?" The evidence supports the idea that the community of Wausau experienced a dramatic conflict sparked by Partner School. The premise is that theorists, through Burke, can start to understand how people identify with rhetorical use. Armed with this knowledge, theorists can then bring these concepts to action. In this chapter, the drama will be reinterpreted through the lens of Cooperrider's work, to support evidence that Partner Schools could have been a winner in the community's eyes.
OVERVIEW

Chapter two offers an overview of the Hmong people’s migratory history and their search for cultural identity. In the 1800s, many Hmong fled governmental oppression in the China to settle in the countries of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam (Hamilton-Merritt 3-5). The Hmong that settled in the highlands of Laos assisted the American government in the fight against the North Vietnamese communist government in the 1960s and 1970s (xiii).

During the war, the role of the Hmong was covert. Therefore, their contribution received little to no press coverage by American media, according to Hamilton-Merritt. When American troops eventually pulled out of Vietnam in 1974, most of the Hmong who assisted the American government were left behind in Laos. Sadly, these Hmong and their relatives were hunted down and killed by communist troops. Many of the survivors fled for their lives and attempted to cross into Thailand via the Mekong River. Scores of people lost their lives during this treacherous journey. Those that survived were placed into concentration camps there (xiii-xvi).

During the 1980s and 1990s, Catholic and Protestant churches began to sponsor the immigration of Hmong refugees to America. Some cities experienced sudden surges in Hmong population as immigrants sought out families and clan members. The stream of Hmong refugees ceased in the mid- to late 1990s when the Thailand refugee camps were closed. The sudden wave of Hmong people created conflicts, however. Local governments and school districts were little prepared to handle this burst of population growth (Beck).
Most Americans were unfamiliar with the history of the Hmong and their role in the war. "For years, Hmong veterans had explained that they had a great ache in their hearts and an enduring sadness because Americans didn't know about their sacrifices and their heroism in helping the U.S. during the Vietnam War" (Hamilton-Merritt xxiii). In addition, a large cultural gap existed between the Hmong and American people. Most immigrants to Wausau had traditionally come from Western Europe, immigrants who shared a number of culturally and physical similarities.
CHAPTER 2 – THE HMONG’S STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY

TIMELINE-HMONG HISTORY AND CULTURE (Hamilton-Merritt xxxiii-xxxvi).

2000 B.C. – The Hmong descended from mountain people of south China. Many fled when the Chinese government began taking over their lands.

1850 – The Hmong began migrating to escape Chinese oppression to northern mountains in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. The majority of the Hmong, called Meo or Maio, still live in southern China.

1893 – France assumes control over Kingdom of Laos.

1940 – Japan takes over French Indochina after the French surrender to Nazi Germany.

1945 – Ho Chi Minh declares Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

1949 – Laos is admitted into the United Nations.

1950 – U.S. troops are sent to Korea after communist troops of North Korea invade South Korea. The war ends in 1953 but Korea remains divided.
1954 – At the Geneva Conference, a cease-fire is declared between France and Ho Chi Minh’s troops. Vietnam is then divided into north and south regions. Laos is declared a “neutral” state.

1960 – Lt. Col. Vang Pao asks clan leaders to support the American fight against North Vietnamese troops. The agreement was sealed by a Hmong ceremony. A shaman “tied quick knots in three strands of white cotton thread and bound the wrists of each man, thus tying in their souls and their good fortune” (91).

1962 – North Vietnam defied the Geneva Accords by denying the existence of troops in Laos.

1964 – On Aug. 4, President Johnson called for air strikes after the Maddox “reportedly was fired upon by North Vietnamese gunboat.” The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was approved on Aug. 7, which gave Johnson “almost unlimited authority to act as he saw fit in Southeast Asia” (132). The conflict then escalated.

1967 – Equipment is installed at Phou Pha Thi, Laos, to provide “24-hour, all-weather precision bombing” in northern Laos and North Vietnam against communists.

1968 – President Lyndon Johnson publicly declares he will not seek re-election. Richard Nixon elected U.S. president.

1969 – Nixon announces that troops will be pulled out of South Vietnam.
1971 - Mansfield Amendment passed, called for president to withdraw troops from Southeast Asia if North Vietnamese government releases American prisoners of war. NVA troops remain in Laos.


1974 - All troops and government officials leave Laos. President Nixon resigns and Gerald Ford becomes president.

1975 - North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Pathet Lao take over Royal Loa government in Laos, the communist state is now known as the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR), North Vietnam troops takes over South Vietnam.


1985 - Thailand officials begin refusing Hmong who seek sanctuary there.

1991 - LPDR, Thailand, and U.N. officials agree to repatriate Hmong refugees to Laos, despite their fear of retribution by the communist government.
1993-The LPDR continues its “cleansing” of the Hmong. The Hmong, fearing repatriation to Laos, attempt to escape from Thailand refugee camps. About 10,000 flee to Thailand Buddhist temple.

1994 – In April, former CIA director William E. Colby “acknowledged the contributions of General Vang Pao and his army in the CIA ‘secret war’ in Laos” (xviii).

“Skeletons carried skeletons. With one baby strapped to their backs, one to their breasts, and holding on to one or two other children, men and women struggled on steep mountains. The old, the sick and the wounded often had to be abandoned so others could live. Relatives and friends wept at parting but the trek continued.”

-Jane Hamilton-Merritt, author of *Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans and the secret wars for Laos, 1942-1992*, recounts the journey many Hmong took from communist to Thailand refugee camps after communist takeover of Laos.

“Nowhere were they safe from the killing since the Americans had abandoned them to the vicious onslaught of the communist invasion. The combined effects of disease, starvation, chemical weapons, airpower and the awesome destruction of NVA (North Vietnamese Army) artillery had all but decimated his people.”

-Hueson Yang, author of *Through the Spirit's Door*, remembers the communist takeover of Laos.

**OVERVIEW OF THE HMONG**

Places and names such Laos, General Vang Pao, and the Pathet Lao often stir little recognition. Many Americans, to this day, are unaware of the “secret war” fought against communism in the highlands of Laos, a “small, landlocked” country in Indochina (Hamilton-Merritt 4). Unfortunately, the role that the Hmong played in the war has remained veiled in secrecy. Subsequently, the fate of these people also has remained unknown to most of the world. The Hmong, whose name means free, have remained an ethnic minority in each of the countries that they have made their homes (xiii-3). The Hmong, whose “4000-year-old culture treasures concepts of honor, commitment, loyalty, and freedom” continue their search for democracy (3). Yet survivor Hueson Yang believes that one day “the doors of freedom will once again be opened” for his people (371).
Since 1976, many Hmong have found refuge in western countries, including the U.S. Their stories are only now beginning to be told. Hamilton-Merritt, whose work began in Southeast Asia as a photojournalist, has devoted her life to the Hmong. Her comprehensive and detailed book, “Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992,” took 14 years of research and thousands of interviews. She relied on the Hmong themselves as “principal witnesses” (xv). Hamilton-Merritt writes:

When I was discouraged, frustrated, and tired, I looked at the memorabilia, the stark and poignant photographs, and the sorrowful letters. They prodded me to continue — to finish this tragic saga of loyalty, bravery, honor, and sacrifice of these Hmong whose abandonment resulted in genocide and in a deep sorrow among survivors of that holocaust. (529)

Many of the Hmong, a tribal minority of Laos, supported American troops in their fight against North Vietnamese communist forces. “Hmong did this at great loss of life. Not just soldiers, but old people, women and children died and suffered in large numbers” (Hamilton-Merritt xiii). Hmong soldiers assisted the American government in recovering pilots whose planes had been shot down. Some Hmong became skilled pilots themselves. Other Hmong soldiers were adept at attacking the North Vietnamese communists along the main supply route from North to South Vietnam, the Ho Chi Minh Trail. However, Laos fell to the communists in 1975.

When the American government then pulled out of Vietnam and Laos, the Hmong, particularly those who had assisted the U.S. forces, were sought for extermination. Hamilton-Merritt quotes Ly Chai, a Hmong who resettled in the United States. Chy stated, “The communists know
that we were the Americans' hands, arms, feet, and mouths. That's why they believe they must kill all Hmong—soldiers, farmers, children. We suffer and die just like the Jews in World War II, but the world ignores us” (Hamilton-Merritt 3). Following the American withdrawal, “Laos became a gulag” (xviii). Those that were not killed fled to other countries for refuge, forced to search again for cultural identity (xiii).

HMONG CULTURE AND SOCIETAL STRUCTURE

Ancestors of the Laotian Hmong lived in China. Known records of the Hmong have been dated around 2000 B.C. In 1850, the Hmong fled Chinese oppression and settled in the northern mountains of Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. The Hmong have remained an ethnic minority in every country in which they have made their homes. Yet the Hmong, through the centuries, have “practiced their own customs, spoke their own language, and followed their own religious beliefs” (Hamilton-Merritt 6).

To begin to understand the Hmong people, one must look at their culture. Their ancestors descended from “aboriginal tribesmen of the mountains of southern China.” The Chinese government prohibited use of the Hmong written language, and breaking that law was “punishable by death” (Hamilton-Merritt 5). Subsequently, the Hmong have remained predominately an oral society until the middle of the 20th century. The “fiercely independent” Hmong of China are called “Miao” a name Westerners have often used to mislabel the Hmong. The Laotian Hmong, however, find the name “Miao” to be insulting, because it connotes “slavery and contempt” (5).

RELIGION, CULTURE AND SOCIETAL STRUCTURE
Some Hmong, after fleeing China, settled in the Laotian mountains, where life was often difficult. Hmong there survive on “swidden cultivation,” also known as “slash and burn farming,” one of the few available options to the mountainous people. A family chooses a hillside, then cuts down and burns all the trees and plants into an “enriched residue.” Crops grown in this “hard-to-cultivate soil” include vegetables, rice, corn, and opium. The farmers would then move on to new lands when the nutrients in the soil were depleted. The Hmong have received criticism by Laotians for their “environmentally destructive” methods (Ovesen 11-12).

In addition, the Hmong have become targets of “eradication efforts” because of their opium cultivation. Opium is one of the few crops that grow well in the Laotian highlands, while the Hmong traditionally grew opium for medicinal uses. Drug abuse, however, is “frowned upon” by the Hmong culture (Hamilton-Merritt 28). Cooper, who researched the Hmong, corroborates Hamilton-Merritt’s statement. He quotes Westenmeyer, who practiced medicine on the Laotian Hmong. Westenmeyer claimed that less than one percent of the Hmong were “debilitated addicts” (Ovesen 13).

Another basic difference between the Hmong and the Laotians is that of religion. Laotian people generally are Buddhists, while the Hmong are Animists. Animism is a religion that involves belief in spirits. Ovesen states, “The complexity of Hmong religious beliefs and practices is considerable” (Ovesen 26). To Hmong, spirits are real and can be found everywhere. There are “household spirits, the spirits of medicine, the spirits of nature and the shamanic spirits.” Also, within every person, there exist a number of souls, souls that may “stray in search of the playful company of spirits or other souls.” When souls wander, people often get sick. During illness, a shaman is often called in to offer healing (27).

The role of the shaman in animistic religion is crucial. Ovesen explains:
The general idea of the shamanistic performance is that the shaman, in a state of trance, together with this auxiliary ‘dab need’ (shamanistic spirits) embark on a journey to the spirits which are the cause of the illness, in order to negotiate the cure by persuading or bargaining with them to either release the soul of the sick person or to prolong license for life. (12)

Often, during this process, a pig is slaughtered, and the pig’s soul is exchanged for the soul of the invalid. Today, although many Hmong remain animistic, others been converted to Christianity rather than Buddhism, attracted by the religion’s “messianic overtones.” Despite the fact that the present Lao government discourages “missionary activities,” about 20 percent of Laotian Hmong are Christian (28).

Religion is important to the Hmong, but so is the role of one’s ancestors. “The great importance attached to relations between patrilineal kinsmen by no means stops at death, and the influence of a lineage elder extends beyond his lifespan.” Because of Hmong’s “migratory life style” the recollection of ancestors may be somewhat “shallow,” states Ovesen. Nevertheless, adherence to proper ritual is urgent. For example, Hmong are expected to give parents a proper burial, to speed their passage to “land of the dead” (31). This ritual caused great emotional upheaval for the Hmong during the Vietnam War. In his memoirs Hueson Yang remembers: “Warriors who had seen and faced death without fear were emotionally devastated as they searched aimlessly for the bodies of their kin” (204).

The social experience of the Hmong is inextricably tied to ancestor worship, related to the clan system. The Hmongs are divided into 18 patrilineal clans, where the clan receives a member’s “primary loyalty,” according to Ovesen. “A Hmong person who happens to pass through an
unknown Hmong village may always call at the house of one of his fellow clan members and expect hospitality.” In addition, fighting between clan members is “mitigated at all costs.” If there are disputes between members of separate clans, they are resolved by the elders of each clan.

Loyalty must be shown to the clan, but primary loyalty belongs to one’s relatives. The Hmong also follow strict traditions that prohibit clan members from intermarrying. Each clan has its particular taboos. These taboos, based on Hmong tradition, usually concern food preparation and ritual, such as eating the heart of an animal, considered taboo. In addition, the Hmong turn to relatives for “economic help, practical assistance, and consolation” (Ovesen 19-20).

Importantly, the oldest living relative is viewed as the “spiritual elder.” When this person dies, the family may move to be near the closest spiritual elder. During the move, relatives in the new location act as “sponsors” to the newcomers. The sponsors will assist the relatives by giving them land, food, and helping to build their house. “A Hmong can only be really happy when he is together with his relatives,” according to Ovesen. This pattern of migration, begun in China, has continued in the U.S. as the Hmong migrated to cities where surviving clan members and relatives lived (Ovesen 23).

LAOTIAN HMONG HISTORY-From French rule to communism

Hmong history has been marked domination by other cultures. This domination has cause the Hmong to migrate to other countries in search of a homeland. The Hmong that fled from China to Laos in 1850 (and after) moved from Chinese to French control. In 1892, France claimed colonial ownership of Laos, yet “French rule rested lightly on Laos” (Hamilton-
Merritt 19). Many of the Hmong felt that the French, or “Fackee,” treated them fairly. Other Hmong did not, however. Phay Dong, of the Ly clan, became a “guide and collaborator for the Japanese and the anti-French Vietnamese, soon to be called the Viet-Minh.” Other Hmong supported Touby of the Ly Clan, who had been educated in France. Bitter wars between the two clans followed (20-21).

Yet the French and the Hmong joined forces to oust the approaching Japanese invaders. In 1940, after France’s defeat by Germany, the French remained in control of Indochina until the Japanese took an interest in Laos. “The belief that the French could guide the Hmong to a better life seemed reasonable until the Japanese army arrived” (Hamilton-Merritt 22). The Hmong attempted to remain in the mountains as “word about Japanese cruelty spread quickly” (22). Although the French attempted to retain control of Laos, the rest of the world offered no help. At Yalta in February 1945, Roosevelt proclaimed that America “would not assist the French in returning to Indochina (31).

In March 1945, Japanese troops captured French troops and the cities Saigon and Hanoi in Vietnam, and Vientiane and Xieng Khouang in Laos fell (Hamilton-Merritt 32). Japanese forces “paraded the captives...Demonstrations like this convinced many Hmong that they must help the French – whom most considered to be friends – to defeat the invaders” (33). Yet the French were “economically destitute and politically divided.” Communist troops took advantage of the “power vacuum” that existed in Laos (38).

Following World War II, communism was “on the move.” On Sept. 2, 1945, Ho Chi Mihn, Vietnamese communist, “proclaimed his Democratic republic of Vietnam” (Hamilton-Merritt 38). On June 25, 1950, North Korean communist armies invaded and captured Seoul, South Korea. In
1952, after brutal attacks by the communist Viet Minh troops, the French "had little choice but to turn to the indigenous people for assistance" (51). They turned to the Hmong army led by Vang Pao. Pao was a Lao Territorial Army soldier who became a general and became a key figure during the Vietnam War (52).

In the 1950s, the French evacuated Laos and left the Hmong to fight the communists. When French troops officially left the city in 1955 "only the Americans represented any challenge to Hanoi's dreams of expansionism" (Hamilton-Merritt 66). Americans took over the anti-communist cause. President Dwight D. Eisenhower "had no intention of allowing Laos to fall to communism" and America's "secret war" in Laos began. Eisenhower described Laos as a "key domino" in the war against communism, and he began a "large-scale military, economic and political strategy" (69).

After Eisenhower, Kennedy continued the war effort that was dubbed the "Third Option." Rather than conventional ground warfare, the government employed the "CIA's newly developed counterinsurgency techniques, strategies and experts." Like the French, the Americans asked Vang Pao for help. "Vang Pao's force - consisting of less than 7,000 volunteer soldiers - would be the bulwark of freedom" (Hamilton-Merritt 95). Pao, who later became a general in the Laotian Royal Army, hated the communists and decided to fight. Pao, who wore "khaki fatigues, a floppy bush hat and tan French Army jungle boots resembling tennis shoes" pledged to Americans, "For me, I can't live with communism. I must either leave or fight" (88-89).

The Americans "promised arms, training and a commitment to stop communism in Laos" (Hamilton-Merritt 90). In her memoirs, Houa Vue Moua recalls the verbal contract between Americans and Hmong soldiers, "They were told that if the Americans won, the Hmong would win with
them. If the Americans lost, they would be responsible for the Hmong tribes…It was believed that the Americans could never lose because they were ‘king of the earth’” (Rolland & Moua ii). Yang remembers:

Peaceful by nature, but warlike by design, the Hmong had been forced to take on the role of defenders in the beloved highlands.” He continues, “When offered weapons and training by CIA early in the war the Hmong could hardly refuse. That aid, combined with the tenacious fighting ability of Thai’s (Yang’s) people and some direct help from the American artillery, had inflicted enormous casualties on the NVA and held them virtually in check since 1960. (3)

As the war progressed the Americans began to rely more on Pao and his troops. “In Laos, the war had invisible battle lines, insurgents” (Hamilton-Merritt 95). Pao’s forces knew these lines better than the Americans. Yang states: “The Hmong, although only a small arm of the defending forces during the war, had inflicted casualties on the NVA and Pathet Lao far beyond the proportion of the army they represented” (16).

Yet “the harder Vang Pao defended his territory, the more aggressive the North Vietnamese strikes” (Hamilton-Merritt 136). Pao’s army continued to fight back. His troops became valued for their success in attacking enemy forces along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Other Hmong soldiers rescued fighter pilots shot down by communist troops. Other Hmong became pilots themselves. Ly Lue, nicknamed “fighter-ace…and astounded even the Americans by chalking up 15 bombing missions in one day.” Lue was eventually killed in a bombing mission (194).

Americans knew little to nothing of this secret war that was devastating the unfamiliar country of Laos. In the meantime, American protests escalated under the Johnson administration. Americans were not told that the war had “produced many Hmong heroes” (Hamilton-Merritt 211).
"American involvement in South Vietnam cost billions, often with little to show for it" (177). William Sullivan, former U.S. ambassador to Laos, "denied any formal obligation to Hmong by the United States" (226). Under the Nixon administration, many troops began withdrawing from South Vietnam in August of 1972 as Pao and his troops began to be pushed back by the communists (265).

In 1974, U.S. military support to Laos ceased and the Royal Lao army began retreating against the communists. The death toll among the Hmong troops was high. Approximately 17,000 Hmong soldiers were killed, while 50,000 civilian Hmong were killed or wounded (Hamilton-Merritt 334). As U.S. forces began retreating, "North Vietnamese troops and tanks moved in swiftly for the kill" (333). The communist government declared on national radio that the "Hmong must be taken out at the roots" (337). The Hmong were left to fight the communists alone.

The abandonment of Laos and the Hmong disturbed many Americans who had worked with the Hmong during the war. Darrell Whitcomb, pilot, stated, "It now bothers me a great deal how we just packed up and left those people. We knew that they were going to suffer (337). Fred F. Walker, American captain who flew the last transport plane out in June 1974, predicted that the communists would find and "exterminate" the Hmong (355). Yang (1993) remembers, "Little did the Hmong know then, that genocide at the hands of the communists would be their only reward when the CIA finally pulled the plug on covert operations in Laos in 1975" (3).

Upon the withdrawal of troops, the Hmong elders then met to discuss the situation. Pao states, "It was these ordinary Hmong that concerned Vang Pao...If Vang Pao left Laos, who would lead? The Hmong had to have leaders – that was the custom" (Hamilton-Merritt 341). Pao
requested that all of the Hmong that assisted the Americans during the war be evacuated, at least 5,000. Officials said that planes would air-lift only 1,000 people, while Pao “insisted on at least 2,500.” “But the planes necessary to fly out that many people never came” (345). Pao, torn, decided to leave Laos for America. Hamilton-Merritt describes the tragic evacuation site: “Many clutched battered suitcases or cardboard boxes tied with strings, or carried reed back-baskets. Children held tightly to their mothers’ clothes” (343).

The Hmong left behind feared for their lives at the hand of the communists. Some ran to the mountains to hide in caves, while others decided to attempt the journey to Thailand via the treacherous Mekong River. “The CIA, not in the business of resettling refugees or of publicly admitting or discussing its covert activities, left the Hmong to dangle and twist in the wind” (Hamilton-Merritt 368). Yang recalls, as a young teen, saying goodbye to a Hmong soldier who was fleeing the country. “He (Yang) could not begin to imagine, as he stood in the road watching Vang drive away, the horrors of war he was about to witness first hand or the agony his people and all those he loved were about to encounter” (12).

By 1975, about 25,000 Hmong had arrived in Thailand, while others struggled to escape. In the meantime, the Western press did not condemn the “gentle” communism of the new Lao government. Atrocities against the Hmong, particularly those with ties to Pao and the Royal Lao Army, went unreported. “Hmong children were maimed in public for all to see what happened to those who worked for the American warmongers” (Hamilton-Merritt 374).

The communists employed a new and effective weapon against the Hmong - chemical warfare. Many Hmong described the chemical “rain” that was being sprayed on them by airplanes, rain that defoliated the land,
sickened and killed the population, causing “bloody vomiting and bloody diarrhea” (Hamilton-Merritt 437). Yang, who escaped to Thailand, wrote, “The white dust was an enemy from which the Hmong had no protection” (111). Chao Tai describes the attacks that left her sick even a year later: 

Very often I go to the fields and see yellow drops. If the drops are on leaves they get dry and die...after the plane that day, my son begins to vomit with green. He vomits for two days until he is dead. I cannot help my son for I am sick. Everyone falls to the ground. I fall to the ground. Go to sleep (become unconscious). Then there’s vomiting. I can’t see well. Have difficulty breathing. I vomit for more than ten days – more than ten times each day. My children vomit all day long for a long, long time. (441)

Yet evidence of chemical warfare was questioned, even discounted. Professor Daniel Cullen of the University of Wisconsin claimed that the “yellow substance was bee feces, a natural occurrence” (Hamilton-Merritt 448).

As the years passed, the communists continued their extermination process. In December of 1978, many Hmong fled to Phou Bia, the “highest mountain in Laos” (Hamilton-Merritt 400). They waited in holes that they dug by hand, eating “leaves, bugs, mice and lizards, buds and bark.” As they struggled to survive, 6,000 to 7,000 enemy troops approached. “Day after day, night after night the enemy with its massive artillery and air power bombed, strafed, and pounded the slopes of Phou Bia” (401).

Yang discussed the massacre. “The communists were using new chemicals. There’s no defense against them. We were at Phou Bia for a while. Thousands were dying every day up there” (229).

By 1978, captured Hmong had been put in “seminar” camps, another name for concentration camps. Even the former ruling family of Laos who
“had been feted by President Kennedy and his administration” did not escape. “In Seminar Camp 1, the royal family, on starvation rations, with no sunlight and no medical attention, had perished.” Yet their deaths went unrecognized by western media. Torture, starvation and death were commonplace at the many “forced labor camps in the Lao Gulag” (Hamilton-Merritt 405-406).

The Hmong continued to flee Laos. When surrounding towns offered no safety, they attempted to cross the Mekong River to Thailand. “Skeletons carried skeletons...the old, the sick, and the wounded often had to be abandoned so others could live.” Babies were given opium to keep them from crying and being discovered. “For weeks and months – for some it was years – these groups moved through the rugged terrain, eating roots and leaves, hiding from enemy patrols and trying to move south and west to the Mekong River” (Hamilton-Merritt 407-408). Those that arrived in the Thailand camps, however, found poor living conditions and continued suffering.

The years went by, yet Hmong history has remained shrouded in mystery. Hamilton-Merritt writes, “In January 1981, the Reagan administration arrived in Washington. American Hmong believed this new regime would listen. “Yet nothing seemed to change” (423). Hamilton-Merritt said the contribution of the Hmong during the Vietnam War went unrecognized, as did their subsequent torture and death at the hands of the communists. She states:

An investigation by the New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights on the Hmong situation in Laos concluded that between 1975 and 1980, the destruction of the Hmong reached staggering proportions. From an estimated population of 350,000 to 400,000, some 100,000 Hmong perished and an equal number fled...
across the Mekong... Yet the U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report submitted to Congress did not mention Laos in 1976 or in 1977 and it failed again in 1978 to mention Laos. (410)

Advocates for the Hmong continued to try to expose the plight of the Hmong. In 1980, Hamilton-Merritt published an article in Reader's Digest that detailed the plight of the Hmong. At this time, editors of the Washington Post and Life magazine rejected subsequent articles, she states. “Particularly infuriating was the fact that the U.S. government would not acknowledge the Hmong role and relationship with the Americans during the covert war in Laos” (426). “U.S. interest in Laos focused on the issue of POWs and MIAs.” The government listed 555 Americans, mainly airmen, still reported missing in Laos. The men became “bargaining chips” for the Laotion and Vietnamese communist government, even “as late as 1992” (429-430).

The betrayal of the Hmong people continued. At the Thailand camps, many were forced to “repatriate” to the communist country of Laos, now a place of torture and death. Those particularly at risk were Hmong suspected of working with the Americans (xviii). “Despite clear and constant warnings about the nature of the Lao regime and about the problems in the refugee apparatus, in 1991, the UN, joined by the United States, Thailand, and Laos, launched the Hmong repatriation program...Volunteer agencies tried to fill the pipeline to Laos with terrified Hmong veterans and their families” (xix-xx). Hamilton-Merritt states, “This ongoing saga of mistreatment of the Hmong is, in fact, a book in itself” (xxii).

Although the Americans had denied the existence of any contract with the Hmong, the U.S. government eventually offered some assistance to them. Those Hmong who fought in the war, about 40,000, would be
allowed to enter the U.S. Remaining Hmong were to stay in the Thailand refugee camps until the Hmong in America became sponsors for the others (Rolland and Moua ii-iii). Many migrated to California, Minnesota, Rhode Island and Wisconsin, seeking out clan members and relatives. Since 1999, the Thailand camps have been closed and Hmong immigration to America has ceased. During the 1980s and 1990s, a number of communities saw their Hmong populations increasing faster than leaders believed cities could adequately handle, a situation that will be analyzed in the following chapters.

REFUGEE POPULATION ESCALATES IN WAUSAU, WISCONSIN

During the late 1970s, the first Hmong refugees began to arrive in cities around the country, with many settling in Wausau, Wisconsin. Wausau, had been called the “ whitest” community in the nation, according to a 1980 U.S. census, states Beck (86). Resettlement began as members of Lutheran and Catholic churches members began to sponsor Hmong families. In the early 1980s, migration of the Hmong proceeded smoothly. “To most residents, it seemed a nice thing to do” (84). However, as more and more Hmong people began to arrive, tensions began to surface. In addition, residents who pledged to sponsor families were only obligated to serve as sponsors for 30 days.

Both the labor market and school district became strained with the sudden arrival of the Hmong. During the early 1990s, Hmong children accounted for nearly 25 percent of the population. According to Beck, “Native-born taxpayers must shoulder most of the rising costs.” Tensions increased in 1992 when the school district’s property-tax rate increased almost 11 percent (Beck 83). Wausau residents often complained about the
size of Hmong families. The number of children often ranged between ten and twelve, driving the student population up (89).

Wausau began to attract national attention when the local school board turned to busing as a way to promote school integration. Six schools were to be "partnered" to more evenly distribute the minority population. Tempers flared, however, when the Wausau Area School Board passed the Partner's Program in a 6-3 vote and a subsequent recall election ousted five of the pro-Partner's members. CBS's 60 Minutes television news program ran a story in 1994 and the Atlantic Monthly did an extensive article that focused on Hmong immigration.

While Hmong parents generally supported the Partners' Program, many Wausau natives reacted with concern, questions, even negativity and opposition. Many people refused to support the program because their children would no longer attend their neighborhood school. Children who had walked a block or two to the nearest school would now be bused one to two miles away to a different elementary school. Many parents and residents decided to fight to save Neighborhood Schools, a fight to save a perceived way of life.

From a communication angle, this particular study involves the drama that occurred as Wausau's cultural climate began to change. The area was settled in the early 19th century by natives of Germany, Poland and other Western European countries. These people "spent roughly a century getting used to one another and creating a unified culture...many sense that their way of life is slipping away, overwhelmed by outside forces they are helpless to stop" (Beck 86-87). Residents felt helpless to stem the tide of change occurring in their city. Meanwhile, school administrators began addressing the problem of "cultural diversity," an issue that would ignite a chain of events to forever change the community.
TIMELINE – SCHOOL BOARD SETS THE STAGE FOR PARTNERS’ PROGRAM

1990 – Peggy Kleinhans hired as new district administrator of Wausau Area School District. Educational restructuring is defined as of “foremost concern.”

Aug. 13, 1990 – Strategic Planning Committee is appointed by School Board, made up of 38 people who represent a cross-section of the community. Several school board members participate.

Feb. 12, 1992 – School Board gathers legal opinion regarding district enrollments, lawyers determine that the district is experiencing defacto segregation, a type that does not legally require desegregation efforts.

March 30, 1992 – Board approves to move to allow planning committee to proceed with implementation of integration, a “restructuring program to promote culture and socio-economic diversity.”

Oct. 1992 – Parent forum is held with representatives from every school, board reports that diversity and safe school environment are top concerns.

Nov. and Dec. 1992 – Board introduces options for desegregation including status quo, sister (partner) schools, and limited choice.

Jan. 18, 26, 27 and Feb. 3 – Public hearings held on desegregation option. “A large segment is vocal about retaining neighborhood schools.”
Feb. and March – Teams of School Board members visited schools to
gather input requested by School Board.

March 8, 1993 – Citizens for Wausau Schools requested that outside
consultant be hired. Board states that since the request is made during
open forum, “no action is possible”.

April 1993 – Regular board elections held. Incumbents Bob Wulff, Patrick
Rice, and Kristine Vanden Heuvel are defeated by Carol Burgess, Patrick
Kinney, and Ya Yang.

May 1993 – Wausau 2000, a community group, presented report that
targeted school and community diversity a key concern.

June 14 – An open forum on restructuring is held with a “great deal of
public comment.” The board then votes to institute the program to partner
6 of the 13 elementary schools. The three pairs of schools will have one
grades K-2 center and another grades 3-5 center. The vote passed 6-3.

Summer, 1993 – The six schools are reorganized in preparation for
September.

Sept. 7, 1993 – School opens, with the Partners’ Program in place.

Sept. 9, 1993 – Citizens for Neighborhood Schools is formed. Over 6,000
signatures gathered for recall election.
Dec. 14 – Recall election is held. Five incumbents who supported Partners’ Program were voted out and replaced by new members who supported neighborhood school concept.

Dec. 21, 1993 – New board members take seats.

Dec. 23, 1993 – American Civil Liberties Union files public records request seeking documents from 1980 on.

Jan. 17, 1994 – New board approves a study to restructure district.

April 25, 1994 – Public hearing held on restructuring.

April 30, 1994 – Board votes to return to a modified form of the neighborhood school concept.

April of 1994 – The Atlantic Monthly does an extensive article on the Wausau conflict, intimating that immigration controls are needed in this country.

"How long can you allow an inequity to stand?"
-Berland Meyer, deputy superintendent of the Wausau Area School District, discusses the Partner's Program (interview, 2002).

"The future rests in your capable hands because the hearts and minds of children are at stake."
-Penelope Kleinhans, former district administrator of the Wausau Area School District, in a memorandum to the Board of Education, Dec. 16, 1992 regarding restructuring of school.

Chapter 3 – ACT I – THE ROAD TO A SOLUTION 1990-1992

Scene I – Homogenous Wausau Greets Hmong Immigrants

THE SETTING – Wausau and the “American Dream”

When the first Laotian Hmong began to arrive in Wausau in 1975, the cultural face of the city was almost exclusively white. “The 1980 U.S. Census found Wausau to be the most ethnically homogenous city in the nation, with less than one percent of the population other than white.” The “American dream” was alive and well here, where, by hard work, people could better their quality of life. In Wausau, “labor produced a comfortable standard of living in a community that was under the control of its residents and where there existed a safe predictable domestic tranquility in which to rear children” (Beck 86).

Most Wausau natives were initially welcoming and warm to the refugees. The first wave of immigrants was primarily comprised of Hmong (and their families) who had worked with the American government during the war. Fred Prehn, former School Board president, states, “At first, most saw the residents as novel and neat; people felt good about it.” In 1983, Wausau received the All American City award from the National Municipal
League" (Beck 85-86). That year, 826 Hmong residents lived in Wausau; in 1993, the number had grown to 3,157, about one-tenth of the city’s total population, reported the Milwaukee Sentinel (Herzog A1).

Once the Hmong began to settle in Wausau, the immigrants then began to offer sponsorship to relatives in Thailand camps. The 1965 Immigration Act allowed the Hmong immigration process (Beck 88). “Of the nearly one million refugees that came to America at the end of the Vietnam War, nearly 90,000 were of Hmong descent” (Meyer 11). With the influx of refugees, many in Wausau, initially accepting of the refugees, began to express concern. School taxes were rising, while school administrators searched for ways to offer equal opportunities to both Hmong and American students. Jean Russell, a Marathon County official involved with public assistance, states, “In the beginning, we had no concept of what this would turn into” (Beck 88).

AMERICAN DREAM: The ideal of freedom and opportunity that motivated the Founding Fathers; the spiritual strength of the nation.


Wausau administrators faced a new challenge. They felt an obligation to create equal educational opportunities for all, a difficult task when most of the Hmong children spoke no English. “Since colonial days, Americans had boasted that man would find, and in this country had largely found, the good life that was denied to the antiquated and corrupt nations of the old world” (Tipple 13). “More than any other nation in history the United States has carried a burden of obligation toward the oppressed of mankind. It is a burden, to be sure, which has never been recognized or shared by all citizens” (Graebner 98).

PURSUIT OF E DUCATIONAL AMERICAN DREAM
Cultural diversity had become more than just a catchphrase to administrators and teachers. Indeed, education is a key element of the America dream. In “Beyond the American Dream,” author Hayes writes, “Education in the fullest sense — education, that is, to live, work and play in a global economic society — increasingly depends upon a radical awareness of one’s being in the world, an awareness that comes from learning beyond our respective cultures and even calls for occasionally tilting at windmills” (xvi). Perhaps administrators “held to the stubborn belief that the right of all Americans to share and to share increasingly, in the gains of industry and progress was sanctioned by higher law” (Tipple 13).

Busing was seen as a way to equalize opportunities between American and Hmong children. According to Meyer, “It is clear that a school district has a duty to provide an instructional program for every student who resides within its attendance boundaries (9).” He continues,

With the influx of new Hmong immigrants, most of whom have little command of the English language, it became necessary for school districts to establish programs and instructional techniques to service the identified needs of these students in an effort to transfer them to the regular education setting and program as soon as possible (14).

Administrators were at odds with the community regarding their position on busing. The board, in 1992, identified busing as an “acceptable strategy” to achieve diversity. For many residents, the image of busing was extremely negative, recalling images of racial unrest and strife. A number of residents were prepared to fight any attempts at cultural diversity, and the community began to take sides.

THE ACTORS
Administrators faced other problems. Americans are considered to be literal, while the Hmong are oral. Most Hmong households, particularly at that time, contained few if any books, said Anderson (interview). Reading a child a bedtime story is not a tradition for the Hmong, she explains. In contrast, Americans mark their lives in a literal fashion, where birthdays, anniversaries and holidays serve as milestones. Often, the Hmong immigrants did not know their date of birth or even their exact age. “We have a lot of Hmong children that were born on January 1,” Meyer states (interview).

Administrators were forced to confront other glaring cultural differences. Family size for the Hmong is generally large, including 12 children or more to one household. In their homelands, Hmong survived on farming, aided by large families. The Hmong often experienced high infant mortality rates. In addition, having a large family was admirable and vital, a strange view to many Americans. “Babies were considered prized possessions” (Hamilton-Merritt 4).

Some questioned the Hmong tradition of marrying more than one woman. The Hmong have practiced polygamy, illegal in America. In Laos, multiple wives signaled wealth. For these men, “more fields could be farmed, more crops marketed, more livestock tended.” In addition, many Hmong men were killed in the Vietnam War so women turned to a relative for support. “Life for a Hmong widow was not easy; it was often better to be a second wife than to be alone” (Hamilton-Merritt 425). She explains:

For Hmong with multiple wives, however, resettlement in the U.S., where polygamy is illegal, was only possible if they divorced all but one...in many cases, these men took the children and left their divorced wives – now single women with no children – crying in despair. (425)
Religious differences are also vast. Many Hmong, according to animistic tenets, believe that spirits are everywhere. These spirits can cause illness, and at these times, the shaman must be called in. Physicians, emergency medical professionals, even teachers, were faced with difficult situations. For example, administering routine eye exams to Hmong children posed problems, states Anderson. During the test, drops to dilate the eye are administered, which causes blurred vision. Hmong parents believed that test actually caused vision problems, according to Anderson in an interview.

Administrators were forced to confront cultural stereotyping. One common myth was that the Hmong eat dogs. Anderson remembers a student who refused to put a picture of her dog in her locker. The girl said that she did not want the Hmong to know that she owned a dog because they would take it and eat it. In a separate incident, a girl was forbidden to eat any food brought by the Hmong children. Despite these efforts, the girl became friends with a Hmong girl. The American girl went home and said to her mother, “She cannot be Hmong – she eats turkey, dresses well, and her hair is not full of lice” (interview).

DEFINING THE “PROBLEM”

Scene II - Providing the “American Dream” to all students

“How long can you allow an inequity to stand?” asks Berlund Meyer, deputy superintendent of the Wausau Area School district (interview).

Although Lutheran Social Services and Catholic churches began to sponsor families shortly after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, Wausau mainly experienced “second migration,” according Meyer, deputy
superintendent of the Wausau Area School District. Wausau experienced “surges of population” between 1982 and 1985 as the Hmong sought out relatives and other clan members. “The large and growing number of LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students in the Wausau School District presented a new instructional challenge to the district’s educators” (Meyer).

Teachers were facing a formidable challenge. How do teachers - in a traditional classroom setting – instruct students who have little to no proficiency in the English language? At that time, Hmong interpreters were not readily available. “There were no bilingual aides,” Meyer remembers in an interview. As of 1992, there were only three Hmong teachers in the entire district (Meyer15). To complicate matters, a number of the district’s elementary schools were reaching the fifty percent minority mark (12). Administrators felt compelled to search for ways to offer educational opportunities to all students. “How long can you allow an inequity to stand?” Meyer asks (interview).

Language differences exacerbate problems for providing educational opportunities, according to Meyer. “Teaching the normal array of abilities found in the typical classroom is a difficult task, however, the addition of students who are Limited English Proficient certainly exacerbates the problems a teacher encounters” (2). He continues, “It is clear that a school district has a duty to provide an instructional program for every student who resides within its attendance boundaries” (9). In 1992, one of six kindergarten students was Hmong (13). Issues such as these became top priorities under the new school administrator in 1990.

SCENE III: Kleinhans: United under cultural diversity
"If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity" (The Philosophy of Literary Form 22).

Newly elected District Administrator Penelope Kleinhans brought the issue of diversity to the forefront in 1990. She was hired out of a field of 75 candidates; her contract was accepted at a meeting on Thursday, April 12 with a 7 to 1 vote. On Aug. 13, 1990, Kleinhans announced that she would be developing a Strategic Planning Committee of 38 people who represented a cross-section of the community. This committee, which would include several School Board members, had long-range plans that would project over five years. The committee would “help provide direction for the district and offer solutions to such problems as overcrowding and diversity.”

Administrators’ platform of persuasion was based on the concepts “cultural and socio-economic diversity” and “restructuring.” Burke stated that in order to identify with each other, people must talk the same talk. Here, lingo that was common to teachers and administrators was foreign to the general public. These terms held little mystery for most, sounding vague, abstract, and less than vital.

Despite the public’s lack of identification with the diversity issue, administrators forged ahead. In February of 1992, the committee presented its final restructuring recommendation to the board, which accepted the results. In March of 1992, the board further directed the committee to develop a plan to “improve educational programs and promote cultural and socio-economic diversity. The district would then be on a three to five year timeline to implement the diversity plan.

Language that rallied administrators to their cause would alienate and inflame residents. Diversity would be achieved through busing. Diversity,
however, *came to mean* busing. Diversity, which sounds somewhat neutral, now caught the attention of the community. Richard A. Allen, board member, circulated an article on busing dated April 13, 1992 from *U.S. News & World Report*. "It may seem like a flashback to the Nixon era, but school busing still has the power to inflame" (Whitman & Friedman 64).

The image of busing belied its benefits, however. The article stated that despite its "horrific reputation" busing children often offered educational benefits, particularly for minorities. "The results generally show that desegregation has no measurable effect on white academic achievement. But for black students, desegregated classrooms can lead to modest reading gains, particularly before third grade." Yet the authors cautioned, "No one anticipates that mandatory busing will return to favor, despite evidence of its success" (Whitman & Friedman 64).

Administrators, knowing the educational benefits of busing, had little problem approving its use to achieve their goals. Administrators echoed their support of busing in an official statement issued in 1990. On Dec. 16, administrators released the "Wausau School District Central Office Belief Statements" which was contained in two parts. The first part dealt with community and organizational staff requirements; the second part related to cultural and socio-economic diversity. The belief statement reads as follows:

**COMMUNITY AND STAFF REQUIREMENTS**

We believe that:

1-staff, parents and community members shall have the opportunity to assume responsible, decision-making roles in the Wausau Area School District.

2-a quality school district is responsible to the expectations of its publics.
CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

We believe that:

1- Every school in the Wausau Area School District shall reflect the cultural diversity of the entire district.
2- Busing is an acceptable strategy to achieve equity.
3- The quality of a child's educational experience is enhanced by involvement in a diverse population.
4- All students are entitled to a safe and nurturing environment.

WAUSAU: DEFACTO SEGREGATION

Administrators were accused of ignoring the wishes of the community. Later, many residents criticized the board's decision to "diversify" because the district was not legally bound to do so. At Kleinhans' request, the legality of busing had been researched. Attorneys Ruder, Ware & Michler, S.C. delivered a report to Kleinhans on March 27, 1992 concerning "defacto segregation," which the Wausau district was experiencing. Defacto segregation that is "innocently arrived at, without assistance of stated officials is not prohibited" the report read.

The report continued: Based on the facts and the case law set forth in this letter, it is our opinion that the racial imbalance which has developed in the Wausau School district is defacto segregation. All available evidence leads to the conclusion that the racial imbalance developed primarily as a result of housing patterns and not as a result of any intention discrimination or actions taken by the Board of Education (District minutes Feb. 25, 1993 – April 12, 1993).
"Here is perhaps the simplest case of persuasion. You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (The Philosophy of Literary Form 55).

The administration's political platform failed to captivate the imagination and heart of the public. This failure drew a line that clearly divided those who were for busing and those who were against busing. Administrators were encountering elements of Burke's human "wrangle:"

The Rhetoric must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurry of the Market Place, the flurries and Flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of Ownership, the Wars of Nerves, the War... But its ideal culminations are more often beset by strife as the condition of their organized expression, or material embodiment. Their very universality becomes transformed into a partisan weapon. For one need not scrutinize the concept of 'identification' very sharply to see, implied in it at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division (A Rhetoric of Motives 23).

The clash over busing became a clash over two versions of the American Dream. Busing became a threat to the community. Yet board members believed in their mission. On Dec. 16, 1992, just prior to the Dec. 21 restructuring meeting, Kleinhans issued a memorandum to board members. She stated:

We are at a critical crossroads in the ongoing process. You, as a Board of Education, are poised to make the decision that will begin to put into place the plans that will move the Wausau Area School
District into the new millennium. These decisions will reflect what we believe are current, excellent education reform initiatives and also reflect the growing multi-racial community Wausau has become.” She then closed with, “The future rests in your capable hands because the hearts and minds of children are at stake.

The lack of public input and sympathy during these planning stages would create a widening rift in the community. Kleinhans called a special meeting on Monday, Dec. 21, 1992, to unveil the three restructuring options developed by the Strategic Planning Committee. As the board gathered, the overhead projector read, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” Kleinhans then added, “Change is never easy,” and presented a document titled “Process for Restructuring.” She then repeated the mission statement adopted by both the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board of Education. She read:

The mission of the Wausau Area School District is to enhance the creativity of students and prepare them to become productive, responsible citizens and lifelong learners who understand their own worth, by providing a high-quality, cost-effective and caring education.” Before presenting the three options, Kleinhans asked the board, “What must we do now, to ensure our children’s lifelong success?

Three Proposed Diversification Plans:

At that meeting on Dec. 21, Kleinhans outlined the three plans which included elementary school boundary realignment, partner schools, and schools of choice. The first plan, boundary realignment, would maintain the neighborhood school concept with minimal changes in local school
boundaries. "Boundary changes are necessitated for cultural and socio-economic diversity," the plan read.

The second plan for diversification was originally called "sister schools" by the planning committee, but had its name changed to partner schools for "political correctness" said Meyer. This plan would pair elementary schools, where one school would house students in grades K-2 (primary center) and the partner school would house students in grades 3-5 (intermediate center). The minority population would be kept within a "window" between a low of six percent and a high of 41 percent.

The third diversification plan included schools of choice, where schools would not adhere to attendance boundaries and would "present the most far-reaching opportunities for educational reform."

Most administrators "bought" the need for educational reform. Kleinhans led the way in rallying district employees around key educational concepts, including diversity, integration, and "partners". "Penny Kleinhans stepped to the forefront. We had a good team, we all believed in what we were doing. There was a buy-in," Meyer stated in an interview. In addition, administrators felt that offering equal opportunities to all students was a responsibility of the school district. Although most teachers seemed receptive to the ideas of integration and busing, the next hurdle involved convincing parents and taxpayers.

TIMETABLE FOR INTEGRATION SET: Busing vs. neighborhood schools

To accomplish their goals, administrators knew that residents must also identify, or buy in to the idea of diversity. The board had clearly stated that diversification could be accomplished through the controversial
method of busing. In pursuing their agenda, the board then set up a timetable that included:

—January of 1993—two public hearings would be held to gather input on restructuring process.
—Feb. 3, 1993—The board would discuss and revise action plans based on public information and input process.
—Feb. 9, 1993—The board would develop a comprehensive action plan for implementing the diversification program.
—March 8, 1993—At regular meeting, the board would approve final action plan.

Thus, the stage was set and the drama of the Partners' Program began to unfold. "The 'dramatistic process' may be used by critics to explain the stages the politician takes an audience through in order to obtain acceptance or rejection for some policy or action" according to Brock (448-449). Administrators had failed to create public identification with the Partner School program. As Burke stated, "Our introduction of the word 'identified' suggests the importance of the 'name' as syndecoché" (A Philosophy of Literary Form 27). The name of Partner Schools would be little match against its new name: busing.

Really, this drama was a battle of words, a clash of ideals that resulted in a changed community. Brock describes, "Guilt reduces social cohesion and gives man the feeling of being less than whole so he strives to have guilt cancelled." Purification through sacrifice, then, "is designed to cancel man's guilt" according to Brock (448). Community members then faced the guilt of their fears and insecurities over their future, which was then relieved by the scapegoat. With the recall of the five School Board members, with the ousting of Kleinhans, with the dehumanizing the Hmong people, the
community was changed, purified, made whole again. As a result of this transformation, Wausau would never be the same.

In chapter four, Burke's theory of identification will be applied to the Partner School drama. Evidence will show that theoretical application can lead to insight into human motivation. Parson states: "For the student of the rhetoric of historical movements, the concept of strategies, the concept of the mystification of motives, opens an exciting avenue of inquiry" (Parson 12-13). The drama splits the community down the middle, leaving a city forever transformed.
"I don't think you, as a School Board member, need to solve all of Wausau's social and cultural works. Please stick to the basic principle you were voted to do — control the quality of education. You can do this by maintaining neighborhood schools."
-Resident Brian M. Dunnum, in a letter to Cheryl Jones, school board member, Jan. 24, 1993.

“We will work to get you recalled and get people that listen to what the people want.”
-Resident Allen Weinkeuf, in a letter to the School Board, Jan. 27, 1993

“The gloom and doomers tell us the sky is falling because some city kids are going to take yellow buses to school...It absolutely, positively isn't as bad as it's being made out to be.”

“The open forums may provide good theater but they offer a poor basis for making sound educational policy — shouting parents, personal attacks and frustration on all sides. Indeed, the debate over school restructuring seems to have become a question of good vs. evil, believer vs. infidel, status quo vs. Partner Schools.”

“This is our community, too, now.”
-Peter Yang, of the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association, in an article in the Milwaukee Sentinel, Nov. 23, 1993.
CHAPTER FOUR – ACT II - BOARD'S "SOLUTION" BECOMES COMMUNITY'S "PROBLEM"

THE PROBLEM RESTATED: "BUSING"

Background: Overview of Partner School Movement

"The 'dramatistic' process may be used by a critic to explain the stages the politician takes the audience through in order to obtain acceptance or rejection for some policy or actions."

-Brock, in Political speaking: A Burkeian approach, 448-449.

By 1993, the stage was set for the Partner School drama. During this movement, people united - not through force, but through language use, through "god-terms." "God-terms" serve as "the title of all titles," titles that bind or repel members of divergent groups ("The Rhetoric of Motives" 252). "Understanding the 'transcendence' of language, then, gives insight into the way in which language functions as 'motive.'" Through this transcendence, "a movement seeks 'sanctification' for its cause" (Parson 44–45).

In the case of the Partner School movement, both groups involved felt "sanctified." On one hand, administrators believed that they were working for the best interests of the district. On the other hand, neighborhood school supporters felt the same way. The drama that played out, then, is a rhetorical "wrangle" – a conflict of words, of ideas, of morals and values (The Rhetoric of Motives 26). This wrangle would divide the community during 1993 and 1994.

Wausau administrators' "faced the task of welding a unified whole out a divergent many" (Parson 27). The district's political platform was based
on the concepts of Partner Schools, restructuring, diversity, and equal education. This platform lacked mystery and the power to persuade; they failed to captivate and convince. Ultimately, “cultural diversity” failed to unite the district. Parson writes, “(I)dentification provides a methodology to becoming ‘consubstantial,’ where individuals transcend their “distinctness by becoming part of a group” (7). Through identification, the division that separates two people is temporarily bridged - when two people fall in love, when two people cheer for the same football team, when two people vote for the same politician.

“God-terms” work through “mystery,” according to Burke. Concepts become layered with meaning, conveying messages of morals and values. These meanings may have little factual basis, where people relate to the concepts on an emotional or symbolic level. Burke stated, “If image employs full resources of imagination, it will not represent one idea, but will contain a whole bundle of principles” (The Rhetoric of Motives 86-87). During the Partner School drama, then, board members “failed to make use of the ‘mystique’ that was” cultural diversity” (Parson 65).

“Neighborhood Schools,” a term that suggests exclusivity (my school, my child), came to symbolize safety, security, family values, and quality education. The concept of Neighborhood Schools both inspired and ignited the community. In redefining “partners” as “busing,” Neighborhood School supporters scored an important rhetorical victory.

Despite the lack of unity in the community, even the lack of unity among board members, administrators forged ahead with their agenda. On June 14, 1993, the board passed Partner Schools in a 6 to 3 vote. During the following summer months of 1993, board members received letters from residents, the majority in opposition to Partner Schools. The stage
was set and the battle to “save neighborhood schools” began in earnest on Sept. 8, 1993, the second day of school.

As the Partner School drama played out, the community rift widened. The dramatistic process includes a “scapegoat as well as a goal” where the scapegoat becomes a “foe shared in common” (A Rhetoric of Motives 40). Amidst the frustration surrounding the Partner School controversy, board members sacrificed one of their own - District Administrator Penny Kleinhans. Neighborhood schools supporters, in turn, targeted the five board members who supported Partner Schools. Other scapegoats included board member Ya Yang, who was politically ineligible for recall. The final scapegoats were the Hmong themselves.

With the resolution, society was then transformed. Kleinhans is quoted later in the Appleton-Post Crescent: “Regardless of the scrapping of Partner Schools the blending process will continue. They’re not going to turn back the clock” (Geniesse 1A). Ironically, the district never eliminated the busing of students. Starting in the school year of 1994-1995, the majority of students riding buses, however, would be Hmong students. Following the recall election, American Civil Liberties Union representatives requested access to district files, and examined the integration situation. Although a lawsuit was never filed, the school district, to this day, continues to use the redrawn boundary lines that resulted from the demise of Partner Schools, Meyer said (interview).

SCENE I: COMMUNITY RIFT APPEARS OVER BOARD’S “SOLUTION”: Community divides over “cultural diversity”

Informational meetings: Jan. 18, 26, 27, and Feb. 3 1993
"In Laos, we were partners; in America, we hoped Americans would help bring the Hmong through this crisis" Shua Lor, resident, at a Wausau Area District public informational meeting, April 25, 1994.

"What makes people who live closest to the school more important than others?"
--Denise Kuharsek, resident at Wausau Area District public informational meeting, April 25, 1994.

The “Partner” School system actually accomplished the opposite of its goal: it fractured rather than united the community. In trying to assimilate the Hmong into the larger culture, residents divided into two groups: those who supported “cultural diversity” (and opposed “status quo”), and those supported “Neighborhood Schools” (and opposed “busing”). This division began when residents rejected the god-terms upon which the administration’s political platform was built. Residents clearly stated that “cultural diversity” was unnecessary in Wausau.

In contrast, administrators bought the idea of Partner Schools. “The feeling was, let’s make a commitment. Six years (of study) wasn’t quick at all. We decided to draw a line in the sand and go for it. We had done our research and were not afraid to make a decision,” Meyer states (interview). “Penny Kleinhans stepped to the forefront. We had a good team. We all believed in what we were doing. There was a buy-in,” he said. Other administrators concurred. Board member Richard Allen is quoted, “It was done out of a sense of responsibility to provide equal educational opportunities to all students. Such civic mindedness is characteristic of Wausau” (Worthington 4).

Community members, on the other hand, were not sold. Many disagreed with administrators that the goals of “cultural diversity” and “integration” were important to the education process. Scott Williams, who would
become the next board president, wrote a letter to school administrators dated Jan. 22, 1993:

I believe the majority of people generally believe that cultural diversity may be a good thing in the abstract, but it really doesn’t make much difference to the quality of education one way or another” Williams wrote. He added, “I don’t believe that cultural diversity has ever come up either in the interview or the job.

Other residents shared William’s view. In a letter to Cheryl Jones, board member, dated Jan. 27, 1993, Terry Kohnert, substitute teacher, wrote:

The assumption that without equal diversity there can be no cultural understanding and compassion is nonsense. (My children) experience cultural diversity through involvement in the YMCA, school sports, children’s theater, church activities, TV programs, special Hmong presentations, cultural fairs and through learning opportunities provided by teachers. Walk into any grocery store, shopping center, bank, medical center or other public facility in the area and you know you are part of a diverse community. The opposition to restructuring is just as strong as it was last spring; I hear it wherever I go... Pair the children as pen pals.

Others also argued that “cultural diversity” did not constitute “quality education.” In a letter to Thomas Growcock, administrator, dated Jan. 15, 1993, resident Maureen Noteboom wrote,

The ‘Racial Restructuring’ train is about to leave the station and it is probably too late to change its course but I have serious doubts about the need for the trip. Children are receiving a similar education.” She added, “Put the ‘racial solutions’ on the shelf. They could be enacted if they were required.
Resident Brian M. Dunnum wrote a letter to administrator Cheryl Jones dated Jan. 24, 1993:

You, as a School Board, should tell your hired administrators to go back to the drawing board and come up with a plan that the public will accept. I don’t think you, as a School Board member, need to solve all of Wausau’s social and cultural works – please stick to the basic principles you were voted to do – control the quality of education. You can do this by maintaining neighborhood schools.

Although teachers generally supported Partner Schools, one school employee broke rank with the administration when he blasted cultural diversity. Rich Ament, school district psychologist, was featured in the Wausau Daily Herald’s column, “Be our guest” on the paper’s opinion page. The headline read, “Don’t restructure our schools. Shifting students would only be shuffling boxes.” Ament wrote:

Don’t listen to the scare tactics being used that if we don’t restructure, the government will force us to. Wausau’s restructuring plans are merely warmed-up, failed social experiments from the 1960s...forced integration and cutting up childrens’ and families’ lives into pieces isn’t the way to go (A6).

Ament, through the summer, continued to slam the idea of diversity. “ ‘Do I see diversity as being valuable? No’, Ament said emphatically. ‘A bunch of idealogues have come up with this garbage. It doesn’t hold any water’” (Miller A1). In an article in the Milwaukee Sentinel, Ament is quoted, “Sending (Hmong children) to another school isn’t going to make them smarter (Herzog A1). Even after the recall election, Ament did not budge from his viewpoint.

Some people, however, found merit in cultural diversity. According to a reporter for the local newspaper, “Most of the crowd (at the Feb. 27, 1993
hearing) supported neighborhood schools, however, a large group supported Partner Schools.” An article in Education Week states: “Teachers were generally supportive. The reaction from much of the public, however, has been strongly negative” (Schmidt 15). Teacher Dolores Zwalen, at the Feb. 27 hearing, stated that she supported Partner Schools. “I hope we can all live in peace. I cannot believe the hatred in people hearts,” she said. However, many residents of the 400 that attended the four-and-a-half-hour meeting “battered” administrators over the proposed integration program (Pekar A1).

Residents accused administrators and Partner School supporters of conspiring against Neighborhood Schools. Teachers were accused of “orchestrating” with administrators to paint a favorable picture of the Partner School concept. Administrators, in turn, were accused of exerting “subtle pressures” on teachers to back the diversification plan. At the Feb. 27 public hearing, Don Schultz received a “standing ovation” from some residents when he accused Kleinhans of skewing information. He accused her of “orchestrating the beginnings of meetings when several proponents of sister-partner options spoke” (Pekar A1). Incumbent Tom Allen called “it an insult to suggest that they (the teachers) were coerced into supporting the board’s decision on Partner Schools.” Neighborhood School candidate Don Langois “drew hisses from teachers when he suggested there were subtle pressures involved in their support of Partner School,” (Supporters Ready to Defend Partner School Lawsuit, 3).

Some parents expressed their approval of Partner Schools. In a letter to the School Board dated Dec. 31, 1993, resident Lee Ann Hughes wrote, “I am very supportive of the concept of redrawing district lines to desegregate... We who live in all-white Rib Mountain could benefit by having our district line redrawn to include Asian neighborhoods.” Resident
Lynda Schultz, in a letter to the editor, wrote, “People need to stop reacting out of fear and ignorance of the unknown. Don’t deny your children a wonderful opportunity because you fear something you have had no experience with.” Resident Julie Williams Van Dijk is quoted, “Kids need to know more than people who are just like them (Pekar A1).”

The Hmong people also supported Partner Schools. Most recognized that integration with Americans would speed their language acquisition. After the demise of the Partners’ Program, Peter Yang of the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association, stated, “In Laos, there was little opportunity to go to school. Only the rich could send their children to the city,” (Geniese A4). Resident Vang Thao stated, “We don’t want to separate from Americans. We don’t want to form Hmong town or Asian town. We want to mix together, to understand, to know more people, and to live as one family” (Worthington 4).

A number of the Hmong, however, apologized that they had created so much friction in the community. Teacher Iris Lind said that many of the Hmong favored integration, “but many have said, we will do whatever will not cause problems” (Geniese A4). Pong Moua is quoted, “Some white people have been angry at us because we came to Wausau and everything is happening. It is best for our children, but I feel bad that this is happening for parents that do not want their kids bused to another school” (Kent A1).

Even some officials gave their public support of Partner Schools. Mayor John D. Hess, in letter to Kleinhans dated Jan. 27, 1993, gave his approval of “cultural diversity.” Hess stated that he favored the board’s decision to restructure “to achieve their goals of meeting legal requirements associated with creating a culturally diverse district, enhancing educational opportunities, and meeting the needs of the district in terms of facilities.”
Hess’s advocacy, however, could not stem the tide of opposition that arose at the winter public hearings in 1992 and through 1993.

SCENE II: “CULTURAL DIVERSITY” DIVIDES COMMUNITY INTO TWO GROUPS: “Neighborhood schools” vs. “busing”

Our introduction of the word ‘identified’ suggests the importance of the ‘name’ as synecdoche” (The Philosophy of Literary Form 27).

“Hence, however ‘pure’ one’s motives may be actually, the impurities of identification lurking about the edges of such situations introduce a typical rhetorical wrangle of the sort that can never be settled once and for all, but belongs in the field of moral controversy where men properly seek to ‘prove opposites’.


Fear and anger united community members as Partner Schools became identified with busing. According to Burke, during the transformation process, ideas and concepts “transcend” or rise to the top, ideas that go beyond boundaries of class and occupation. “Partners’ didn’t engage everybody affected by it,” said Anderson (interview). “Busing,” on the other hand, played upon peoples’ worst fears: riots, community unrest, even violence. Meyer stated that recall candidate Scott Williams likened busing to “the plague” (interview).

US VS. THEM

For many, the Partner School issue became a simplified, clear-cut situation of us vs. them. “To identify A with B is to make A “consubstantial” with B” (A Rhetoric of Motives 21). Residents became consubstantial over the term “Neighborhood Schools.” “Busing,” on the other hand, became the wedge that would divide the community into two
groups – those who supported Partner schools and those who supported neighborhood schools. Board member Fred Prehn stated that he “resents how people have portrayed the issue as ugly busing vs. warm, fuzzy neighborhood schools (“Supporters Ready to Defend Partner Schools Lawsuit” 3).

The values embedded within the term “Neighborhood Schools” held an almost universal appeal. In a letter to the editor of the Wausau Daily Herald dated July 8, 1993, resident Chris Coscio wrote,

“"My family moved to this neighborhood expressly so my child could walk the three blocks to school...People wonder what happens to family values; I think neighborhood schools are part of it. It's a close, secure area for a child to feel safe in."

In a broadcast by a local radio station that summer, editors made the claim that:

""Neighborhood schools often mean parents being nearby...being involved with education, and children knowing they are a part of a family that cares about education," "Everyone must mourn the passing of neighborhood schools. It is a tragic loss...a decrease in parental involvement" ("Viewpoint" July 8, 1993).

Resident Cheryl Henkelmen, wrote to the local paper on July 22: "We will be losing our special walks and bike rides together to and from school. I know neighborhood schools are a vital line to preserve quality education and family values in Wausau" (A8).

During the mystification process, people of different walks of life become consubstantial. In Wausau, people united and rallied around Neighborhood
Schools. The concept held all the allure and mystery of the “American dream.” During the Partner School Drama, many stated that losing Neighborhood Schools a loss of the American Dream.

Resident Lee Ann Hughes wrote a letter to Allen, board president, dated Aug. 4, 1993: “Last night I walked and walked... (Y)ou see, twenty years ago when I moved here I cleared the land myself... Our son, we thought, would have the most perfect situation possible. He would go to elementary schools near his home... he would be happy and secure.” Resident Del Martha Plautz wrote a letter to the School Board dated July 16, 1993. “The American Dream means hard work, not welfare and not to have more children than you can support” according to Plautz.

The same words may hold different meanings for different people. Indeed, language can be manipulated. Mark Hadley, whose wife Debra would become a recall candidate, issued a press release on Sept. 8, 1993 to introduce the recall candidates. Hadley said that Citizens for Neighborhood Schools “can stand for many things” including:

- Children need security
- Children need structure
- Control needless spending
- Change neighborhood schools (yes, there are options for change).

Unlike Neighborhood Schools, busing held no mystery, no allure. For many Americans, the word busing can promote feelings of fear and resentment. Resident Bill Piper, at a open forum on Feb. 3, 1993, stated, “Busing does not work. Why are we falling back on a system proven not to work?” Resident Paula Hill said that racial tensions are continuing to grow. “Busing will not work per personal experience in Illinois. Do not turn kids into numbers,” Hill stated. Another resident, Sharon Hagge,
stated at that meeting, “Busing causes greater desegregation and upset.” Paula Hill wrote a letter to the local newspaper that foreshadowed events to come: “So many people oppose this choice that it would be nothing more than forced busing, not a pretty site” (A8).

Administrators were accused of social engineering through busing. Judy Laffin, in a letter to administrators dated June 16, 1993, wrote, “Are we going to let East Hill snobs, bigots and social climbers get away with getting the School Board to vote for forced busing? John Tabakos wrote a letter to the School Board dated June 8, 1993. “It just does not appeal to me to see the big push on Hmong education efforts...the majority may be sacrificed to bring up the lower end” Tabakos wrote.

Others played up on residents' fear of busing. In a letter to the editor, resident Tina L. Nikolai wrote:

Not only will our small children be on buses but also our smaller babies and parents will be in the cold, ice and snow, and dangers of accidents. Is the school board ready for that liability also...Our families can't take any more jammed down their throats. We can't handle any more decisions made for us without our consent. “Recall for all! (A8).

SCENE III: ADMINISTRATORS WIDEN “GREAT DIVIDE” THROUGH COMMUNICATION “PROBLEMS”: Retaining neighborhood schools is solution

“Hearing is different than listening” according to resident Janeen Karow, at a Wausau School District public hearing during the winter of 1993.
Administrators “unwillingness to listen” was a large selling point for the Neighborhood School platform. That winter, administrators admitted that inadequate communication was a problem. Administrative action that winter perhaps did little to dispel this perception, however. Administrators, with little discussion, eliminated the popular “status quo” option at the public hearing on Feb. 3. In addition, the board never acted upon the request for a third-party consultant to study integration, and they never held a referendum before they approved of the Partner School program in the spring of 1993.

Residents complained that administrators were not listening to the citizenry. At the public hearing on Jan. 27, 1993, resident Janeen Karow told the board, “Hearing is different than listening.” Resident David Piehler said that he “hears fear in people’s voices regarding a loss of educational excellence and fear of the unknown. Restructuring was handled badly, was poorly presented by a board that used scare tactics and inaccurate statements.” Piehler added that he believed the Partner Schools could work if the district goes back to “square one” to educate the public (District meeting minutes, Jan. 6, 1993 – Feb. 8, 1993).

In addition, administrators were charged with giving biased information. A local newspaper article stated, “Residents at the (Jan. 27, 1993) meeting accused Superintendent Penny Kleinhans of misleading the public with inaccurate and slanted information about the purpose of restructuring.” Board member Frederick Prehn said administrators were “giving the impression that the district was being forced to integrate, when in fact it was not.” The article stated, “Clearly, the public was not pleased by this presentation” (Pekar A1).

The two groups moved farther and farther apart. A Jackson, Michigan newspaper reported:
‘Anger’ reads the marquee outside the Unitarian Church, is the second deadliest sin... The residents of Wausau are angry at each other, at their leaders, and are reluctant as they are to admit it, at the growing Laotian population that has settled and multiplied in their once lily-white midst... Neighbors have stopped talking to each other. Business owners have lost customers with opposing views” (Palmer D12).

Although members admitted they had a communication problem, few steps were taken to address this issue. Board member Bob Wulff, on Jan. 29, 1993, issued a memorandum to board members and the administrative staff:

In one sense the public process has been a success – people are talking. In another sense, this process has been a dismal failure. The ‘overstatement’ of our legal liability... the failure to correct the misperception that a specific agenda exists (the ‘done-deal’ criticism, the lack of pertinent and specific data relative to inter-school performance and opportunity, and the inappropriate ‘cheerleading’ for the option most favored at our meeting with the Southeast Asian parents are all deeply troubling examples of mistakes in this process... I resent that we, or I specifically, will not listen and have already made a decision regarding restructuring.

Despite Wulff’s assertion, the board eliminated the “status quo” option, clearly the community’s most popular strategy. At that Feb. 3 public hearing, Wulff proposed to strike the “status quo” option from the district’s integration program. The motion passed unanimously, yet several administrators continued to express concern over the lack of community support for Partner Schools. At that meeting, board member Thomas Allen said, “The district has done a poor job of talking to the public on
restructuring. We have failed in the area of preparing children for the 21st century," he said. Administrator Floyd Shelton, who later voted against busing, said he and the board “have been remiss regarding educating the public about restructuring. We have a long way to go,” he added.

Other members echoed communication-related concerns. Member Kristine VandenHeuvel asked, “How can administrators proceed when they are halted by the basics? The public has spoken,” she said. “They are feeling threatened and are apprehensive. They favor status quo until the board can identify the problems and concerns and need for educational reform.” VandenHeuvel said she was not sure if all parents wanted “equal education for all, just the best education for their child. People are territorial about their neighborhood, that is why the status quo option is acceptable to most,” she warned.

During the winter of 1993, residents again petitioned the board to move more slowly. At the regular board meeting on March 8, 1993, Randy Westgate, representing a group called Citizens for Wausau Schools, asked administrators to consider using a “third party or outside consultant” regarding restructuring. According to meeting minutes, this consultant would “teach the community” while the process would “operate as an open classroom.” A motion by Wulff carried that the committee would submit a formal proposal to the board “no later than the April board meeting.” According to meeting minutes, the “administrative team sees merit, but the timing may not be appropriate as administrators are currently involved in providing follow-up information to the board.”

SCENE IV: PARTNER SCHOOLS PASSES AMIDST WIDESPREAD OPPOSITION: Administrators proceed with their solution
Despite the public outcry, the board passed Partner School program at the regular meeting on June 14. The board passed Partner Schools “after school was out and with little discussion” (Geniese A4). This action further fueled the opposition’s argument that administrators were not listening to the general citizenry. During the regular meeting for April of 1993, no mention was made of the Citizens for Wausau Schools who proposed hiring a consultant. At the next regular meeting on May 11, Westgate’s group was “still not ready to make a report.” According to minutes: “A report would be ready in June.”

Then, during the regular meeting on June 14, 1993, Westgate proposed hiring of one or more consultants to gather information analyze the district’s situation beginning with the school year. In a letter to administrators dated June 8, 1993, Westgate wrote, “The process thus far has been open, but increasingly partisan and bitter. Whether accurate or not, the administration and even the board itself has been the subject of accusations and of proceeding on a preordained agenda regardless of public sentiment.

At that same meeting following Westgate’s proposal, the board passed the Partner School program in a 6-3 vote. The program would begin in the 1993-1994 school year. Voting for the motion were members Richard Allen, Thomas Allen, R. Thomas Growcock, Cheryl Jones, Fred Prehn and Ya Yang. Opposed to the motion were Carol Burgess, Patrick Kinney and Floyd Shelton. The public was displeased with the administration and soon would “howl for their heads” (Geniese A1).

Administrators sensed that the summer of 1993 would be a difficult one. On the day following the approval of Partner Schools, member Fred Prehn, in an administrative letter on June 16, 1993, warned that all communication should have a “positive spin coming from the district. This is imperative
for the success of this project next summer.” Member Kinney, who opposed Partners’ Program, responded with a memo dated June 18, 1993. “Our district has a severe credibility gap with the public.” He warned again of this communication gap in a memo to the board on July 19, 1993. “Trust is part of effective communication, and like successful communication, must be worked at to be accomplished. I feel our current policy covering communication is inadequate.”

Other administrators admitted that Partner Schools would be a “tough sell.” F. Robert Pellent, principal of Rib Mountain Elementary School, wrote a letter to Richard Allen, board president, and administrators dated May 26, 1993, and warned of a “tough 75 days ahead”:

We have the opportunity to do something in Wausau that can benefit the education of our children and be an example for others to follow. A real change must take place and the sad truth is that the only workable solution is some version of partner school. Partner schools are still neighborhood schools and I feel that a surprising majority would be for it if ‘sold’ properly.

The board’s artificial attempts at balancing educational equity angered many. “Supporters of a school integration plan are holding their breath, waiting to see how their convictions play out in the real world of education,” read an article the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram on Aug. 24, 1993. Other administrators became targets of the community’s anger. “Prehn and his family received ugly threats from angry citizens. The hateful words are hard to forget: when you step out of your office, you’re going to get a bullet in your head” according to the above newspaper article. Board member Ya Yang was threatened. A person said to him, “For the next ten years, it is my goal to destroy your name in public” (Miler A1). Others targeted Kleinhans. Resident Jean Braatz, in a letter to
the editor of the local newspaper, wrote, “Let’s not buy Penny’s plan...this won’t last more than a year. We can throw her, half the school board, and busing out the door” (A8).

The press was not spared the community’s wrath. Some residents accused the editors at the Wausau Daily Herald of being the “board’s accomplice.” “As far as I’m concerned, what the Wausau School board did was the equivalent of a crime. If the Herald were the paper of the people and for the people, their reaction would have been outrage against forced busing and for neighborhood schools,” wrote resident Carl Berg in a letter to the editor. “Instead, the Wausau School Board’s action fits the Wausau Daily Herald’s personal liberal agenda, so they are helping the Wausau School Board get away with the crime of a decade,” he wrote (A8). In this unsettled climate, the first day of Partner Schools was nearing.

SCENE V – CURTAIN OPENS ON PARTNER SCHOOLS – Citizens’ group provides their solution to “cultural diversity”

"Men who can unite on nothing else can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all."
Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form, 193.

When school opened on Sept. 7, the “politics were intense as anything you could imagine,” Meyer stated in an interview. “The board was embarking on new territory; that’s about as nasty as it gets.” On the day prior to the start of school, editors from the Wausau Daily Herald attempted to defuse the situation. In “Our View”, the editors wrote, “The gloom and doomers tell us the sky is falling because some city kids are going to take yellow buses to school...It absolutely, positively, isn’t as bad as it’s made out to be. This is going to be a great year for the Wausau
School District” (Sept. 6, 1993). Meyer, after Partner Schools was rescinded, stated, “Most people are not against busing. Busing isn’t the issue” (Geniese A1). Yet when the district put 600 children on buses on Sept. 7, 1993, the community polarized into two groups.

Reports on the first day conflicted. On Sept. 8, the Wausau Daily Herald reported on the front page, “Bus snafus plague first day of school.” “Tight schedules at the end of the school day amplified bus problems, but Wausau school officials were confident they were off to a good start.” On one hand, Carol Burgess, a School Board parent volunteer, reported, “It went real well.” On the other hand, Debra Hadley, who would become a recall candidate, said, “Confusion reigned during the afternoon bus assignments.” Hadley’s three children were so frustrated that she drove them home, she told reporters (Baldwin A1).

With the start of school – and the start of Partner Schools – the community split was complete. “The open forums may provide good theater but they offer a poor basis for making sound educational policy – shouting parents, personal attacks, and frustration on all sides,” John Duffey of the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association stated. “Indeed, the debate over school restructuring seems to have become a question of good vs. evil, believer vs. infidel, status quo vs. Partner Schools” (A8). Meyer concurs: “’There was the emotionality of this thing. It became, ‘if you’re not for us, you’re against us’ – you had to choose a side” (interview).

With the start of school, Neighborhood School supporters stepped up the fight. On only the second day of Partner Schools, the opposition publicly proclaimed a stand against Partner Schools. On Sept. 8, 1993, the Wausau Daily Herald’s front page read: “Citizens’ group to kick off recall drive on Thursday.” Resident Peter Beltz, acting as spokesperson for the two groups Families Approve Neighborhood Schools and Citizens for
Neighborhood Schools said, “By this time next year we believe our children can be back in their neighborhood schools.” He added, “The next school board election will be a referendum of neighborhood schools vs. Partner Schools (Wierza A1).”

According to this article, residents would have to collect 6,740 signatures, one-quarter of the 25,000 voters in the previous election, to force a recall election. District employees would than have 31 days to verify signatures. Neighborhood School supporters had little difficulty in persuading the public that holding a recall was essential to the community’s future.

**SCENE VI: COMMUNITY PURGED THROUGH SACRIFICE:**
Kleinhans, Five administrators, Ya Yang, the Hmong

“The scapegoat becomes another kind of ‘representative’ in serving as the symbolic vessel of certain burdens which are rituatlistically delegated to it.”
--Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 27.

“The School Board soon turned on Kleinhans,”

**KLEINHANS: FIRST TO GO**

During the dramatic process, people feel guilt and anger. These feelings are then transferred to a “vessel.” Sacrifice is a necessary element of drama, when a person “rejects his place in society and suffers a feeling of guilt. Guilt reduces social cohesion and gives man a feeling of being less than whole. Purification is designed to cancel man’s guilt – redemption makes man whole again” (Brock).
The social cohesion of Wausau was in shreds, but with the ritual sacrifice of four “victims,” Wausau was transformed. The board’s lost faith in Kleinhans’s leadership abilities. After Kleinhans, the five board members who voted for Partner Schools were ousted, blamed for the community’s controversy. Ya Yang, politically ineligible for recall, became society’s third victim, while the Hmong people were the community’s ultimate and final sacrifice.

Every rhetorical movement, if successful, must have a strong leader, or “pivot.” “Each movement confronts the rhetorical necessity of unity...One method of gaining unity is to provide a strong leader who will fashion the rhetoric of the movement, with a membership to support the statements of that leader, according to Parson (). Kleinhans, prior to the start of Partner Schools, lost the faith of board members. During the most controversial portion of the drama - the start of Partner Schools - Kleinhans was placed on sabbatical, rendered politically ineffective by board members.

Board members stated that they tried to “improve” Kleinhans’ leadership ability. According to board minutes, Kleinhans had been having ongoing troubles with the School Board, with her contract under scrutiny during 1993. A special meeting was held on March 8, 1993, “to consider and possibly take action on the district administrator’s contract for 1993-1994.” Although the meeting was held in closed session, members issued the following statement:

By not acting upon Superintendent Kleinhans’ contract, a majority of Wausau School Board members acknowledge that continuing concerns exist regarding Ms. Kleinhans’ leadership, performance and working relationship with the board...an appropriate and mutually agreeable plan of improvement will be developed and implemented.
This mutually agreeable plan was never implemented. As of Nov. 8, 1993, and for the remainder of the school year, Kleinhans was placed on sabbatical. Her employment was to be terminated on June 30, 1994, according to School Board minutes. In addition, Kleinhans was awarded $57,500 as compensatory damages in agreement that no lawsuits would be filed. "The board resolved all disputes with Ms. Kleinhans regarding her employment contract." In a subsequent newspaper article, it was reported that "the School Board soon turned on Kleinhans...The prominent Judd S. Alexander Foundation, troubled by the divisiveness, acrimony and bitterness, included punitive damages of $57,000" (Geniese A1).

Board members were frustrated and angry over this highly controversial public issue. The guilt they felt was then transferred to Kleinhans. "Penny Kleinhans saw it coming when she accepted the superintendent job in 1990...but she wasn't prepared for the furor that greeted the Partner School concept even before it was launched" (Geniese A1). According to another article, "Kleinhans is more vulnerable, serving her last year of a three-year contract. Rumor has it she will not be rehired, no matter who is on the board" the article read. Board president Richard Allen rendered Kleinhans politically ineffective. "He forbid her to speak on behalf of the district without getting his permission" (Kent A1).

In addition, the guilt that board members felt was relieved with the extra settlement in her "buyout." In a newspaper article contained in the restructuring minutes, Kleinhans said there had been a "good potential for suing the board over her contract and discriminatory actions. She did not elaborate." The board agreed to pay her last year's salary at $87,166, plus a $57,500 "cash incentive" from private sources. In March of 1992:

Kleinhans accused then board president Fred Prehn of sexual harassment. He mocked her in a Halloween costume and made
references to her sunbathing in the nude and having an extramarital affair.” Following the alleged incident, both parties “issued a joint statement that any misunderstandings and misconceptions between them were resolved” (Herzog A1).

The community would not have faith in a leader that was dismissed by fellow administrators. Burke explained the behavior exhibited by board members. “People so dislike the idea of internal division that, where there is a real internal division, their dislike can easily be turned against the man or group who would so much as name it, let alone propose to act upon it (The Philosophy of Literary Form 206).

Kleinhans recognized her role as scapegoat. She is quoted, “Given the increasing turmoil surrounding the upcoming recall...I find it in the best interests of the school district and community to remove myself from those processes.” The article continued:

Kleinhans said she was given an ultimatum the previous week in a closed-door meeting. The board forced the issue but she declined to elaborate. She felt she was being made a scapegoat for the political turmoil that followed the board’s decision to blend classes. (Herzog A1).

The board had rejected their “change agent.” In 1994, during her sabbatical, Kleinhans reported to the Appleton-Post Crescent newspaper that “she was far from satisfied. She said she would “rather be on the front line of racial change in Wausau’s public schools.” Kleinhans said:

It’s so frustrating for me not to be part of the process.” “It was obvious to me when we embarked on this it would be rocky. But I told the board if you support me I’ll take the flak. The board told me to be a change agent – I had a clear mandate (Geniese A1).
The article stated that Kleinhans "was made a scapegoat of a creative partner school plan... when Wausau citizens rose up in arms against the widespread busing and loss of neighborhood schools, the embattled board 'lost confidence' in her." (The details of the closed session meeting regarding the Kleinhans termination were unavailable to the public). Following the exit of Kleinhans, five school board members became the next target.

**ROUND TWO - PRO-PARTNER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS OUSTED**

The board members who voted for Partner Schools would soon be the object of the community's wrath. This "sacrificial king," as assigned by Burke, "must be worthy of the sacrifice...he may be made worthy legalistically (i.e. by making him an offender against a legal or moral injustice, so that he 'deserves' what he gets" (The Philosophy of Literary Form 40).

School Board members had been warned for over a year that they were in danger of being recalled. "A bold school busing plan intended to unite this mostly white and Southeast Asian community appears instead to be tearing it apart," according to an article in Education Week (Schmidt). During the planning process, resident Allen Weinkeuf wrote a letter to administrators dated Jan. 27, 1993. He wrote, "We will work to get you recalled and get people that listen to what the people want."

In their political press release, recall candidates blamed administrators for the rift in the community, claiming that Wausau was torn apart by Partner Schools, that members acted in an irresponsible way, even an "uncivilized" way. Recall candidates included Debra Hadley, Scott Williams, Paul Butalla, Don Langlois, and Griffith Williams (no relation to
Scott). They issued the following press release on Nov. 8, 1993. The release read as follows:

Hadley: “The board’s decision last June to dismantle our neighborhood school system was extremely irresponsible. It was bad for education. It was bad for Wausau. Our children and our parents deserve better leadership.

Scott Williams: “We need to end the bitterness and divisiveness in this community by restoring effective and responsible leadership on the board.”

Butalla: “I think education should work with families, not against them.”

Langlois: “The incumbent board members have torn Wausau apart by forcing people to accept an obviously unacceptable plan.”

Griffith Williams: “The incumbents have ignored the wishes and feelings of the community. There is no reason we can’t address those issues in a civilized way.”

Many residents felt betrayed by School Board members, and were willing to retaliate. Resident Karen Compos, in a letter to the editor, wrote, “We voted in favor of neighborhood schools two to one. It seems we have a lot of Judases on the School Board. I cannot see how this will impact our children in a positive manner. Recall…we won’t stand for back-stabbing any longer” (A8). Resident Jeffrey Lamont, who supported Partner Schools, stated, “This is an issue that so inflamed people that they couldn’t wait until April for the regular election. They had to lash out now” (Herzog A1).

Board members were punished for bringing this “plague” to Wausau. “Wausau’s heralded effort was doomed before it began” (Geniese A1). The board became unwitting targets for larger cultural changes taking place in the community. Petitioners easily collected over 10,000 signatures, well
over what was required, to force the district to a recall election on Dec. 14, 1993. “As the conflicts are played out, it becomes clear that what is really at stake is control of the community’s collective identity” (Palmer D12).

With the recall, anger had peaked against board members. Administrator Fred Prehn was called a Hmong lover, according to an article in Education Week, Feb. 6, 1994. Prehn got a telephone call prior to the election, and the caller said, “On the night of the recall, as you step out of your brand new Suburban, you’re going to get a bullet in your head.” The article continued, “The next call promised Prehn his ‘little’ Augusta would not make it through the first grade.”

A former school administrator expressed his anger over the racist behavior. “The campaign turned ugly last week when former State Superintendent Herbert Grover likened critics of the change to a group with white supremacist views. The challengers called for Grover to apologize. He refused” (Geniese A1).

Residents were angry because they felt that they had no choice regarding changes in their community. “People feel that this decision was just stuffed down their throats,” said Peter Beltz, director of Families Approve Neighborhood Schools (Worthington 4). In hindsight, Meyer states, “When the wheels wobbled on the wagon, public discussion ceased. We should have continued it and reached a consensus” according to Meyer in an interview.

ROUND THREE: YA YANG

Ya Yang was labeled a traitor by the new School Board. Yang was originally elected for his support of “Neighborhood Schools,” according to an article in a LaCrosse newspaper:
The reason Yang's vote so angered people is that Yang was endorsed by Citizens for Neighborhood Schools who believed he was on their side against restructuring...Yang says that when the Neighborhood Schools groups asked him about his stand, he said he favored neighborhood schools. But he also says that he told them that if elected, he would see whether Wausau schools provided an equal education for everyone, and if they did not, he would support changing them (Kent A1).

Yang, no stranger to challenge, came from a family of Hmong leaders. He arrived in America in 1976 from a Thailand refugee camp and in college, he was voted most likely to succeed and graduated sixth in a class of 153 students. For several years, he worked as a police officer in Akron, Ohio. After moving to Wisconsin, Yang became the second Hmong to be elected to a school board position in that state. Following the recall election, he is quoted, "I realize I lost a lot of friends. One angry resident said, "For the next ten years, it is my goal to destroy your name in public" (Miller A1).

The new School Board dealt with the "outspoken" Yang by "setting him aside and isolating him," according to Meyer. Yang predicted this. After the recall, he told reporters that he expected a "lonely feeling" on the new board (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 1, 1994). On Aug. 26, 1994, Yang resigned from the board for personal reasons and moved out of the district, Meyer stated.

Yang, a symbol for the Hmong community, represented the hate, the fear, and the racist feelings felt by many. Yet the final scapegoats were the Hmong people themselves. Racist behavior is always a factor in intercultural conflict. "People feared about being labeled, but a lot of
decisions were based on racism,” said Peter Yang of the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association. 

Yet the issue went deeper than race. The Hmong people were blamed for the disruption in the community. This, in effect, justified the negative behavior they received from many residents. “Maybe racism is one of three or four issues, but to mention it, the other reasons go out the door,” said resident Jeffrey Lamont, Partner School supporter. “We’ve been stepping around racism because this town is too small and terms like racism are too powerful.” (Herzog A1).

FINAL ROUND: THE HMONG

The Hmong had “transgressed” on a number of counts. Culturally, they were vastly different. In the early years, they needed a good deal of assistance. Many felt that there were simply too many of them. “The Hmong people of Wausau are caught in the middle and some white residents blame them for the disruption in the schools” according to the author of an article in the LaCrosse Tribune dated Oct. 11, 1993. The article stated that a couple, “falsely identified as Ingrid and Erick Rathskellar,” came to Wausau to organize a white supremacist group called the White Knights. “She (Ingrid) was quoted in the alternative City Pages newspaper as saying she wants to drive Hmong people out of town” (Kent A1).

The great cultural differences made the Hmong easy scapegoats. The new immigrants were initially welcomed with open arms. However, as more and more Hmong people started immigrating to the area, patterns of racial stereotyping developed. Many people began repeating such statements as, “The Hmong eat dogs,” and “The Hmong come here for high welfare benefits” (Anderson, interview).
In a letter to the editor, resident Del Martha Plautz advised the Hmong to "learn more about American culture, the work ethic, and less welfare." She wanted them to "enlist in the military to learn a trade and be productive citizens."

She added:

Perhaps they were hard-working farmers years gone by, but I certainly don’t perceive them as hard-working at all in the U.S. Why should they? I see many of them always dressed up with built-up shoes, gold chains around their necks, driving new cars and vans with six or ten children on food stamps. Some have guns. Why can’t the Hmong help pay back the community? (A8).

The portrayal of the Hmong fared little better in the national spotlight. The Hmong became scapegoats not only for the community, but the nation. In the spring of 1994, following the recall election, Roy Beck, reporter for the Atlantic Monthly visited Wausau. In April, a ten-page article was published in April of 1994 "The ordeal of immigration in Wausau." Beck writes, "In little more than a decade the immigrant families' children have come to make up almost a quarter of the elementary schools’ enrollment, crowding facilities past their limits – and there’s no peak in sight" (85).

The anger many Americans felt toward immigrants became directed at the Hmong. The decision to resettle some Hmong, "a small and private charitable gesture inadvertently set into motion events that many residents today feel are spinning out of control," according to Beck. Following the recall, "community divisions are likely to persist, since busing supporters threaten lawsuits if the new board ends busing." In addition, Beck credits the Hmong are linked with "the emergence of gang activity" in Wausau. "The cycle of community tensions spins round as native youths link up with outside white gangs to respond to Asian gangs" (86.).
Residents targeted the Hmong as a burden to “the system.” “Wisconsin’s generous welfare system is a big draw,” he writes, adding that “Wisconsin became a popular destination” for refugees when, in 1982, the federal government began to limit aid. “Natives in Wausau complain about the size of Hmong families, and the young age that many Hmong girls are becoming pregnant. “Although such cultural patterns would not be so noticeable in Los Angeles or New York City, they are conspicuous and jarring to many Wausau parents concerned about the future of the Hmong girls and about the effects on their own children” (Beck 89).

The article hinted that the immigration of Hmong people changed Wausau from paradise to community divided. Beck admits that “Wausau remains quite a peaceful place,” but that many residents “sensed that their way of life is slipping away, overwhelmed by outside forces they are helpless to stop.” Beck states:

Although Wausau is not marked by splashy displays of wealth, the word “paradise” crops up in wistful descriptions of the recent past by all types of residents, including immigrants...What they have in mind seems to be a kind of pragmatic middle-class American dream, in which labor produced a comfortable standard of living in a community that was under the control of its residents and where there existed a safe, predictable domestic tranquility in which to rear children...It was a way of life created by the descendants of German and Polish immigrants and New England Yankee migrants, who by 1978 had spent roughly a century getting used to one another and creating a unified culture (87-88)
But many people told me that they don't raise the idea in public, because they believe that religious, media, and government leaders would readily label any kind of criticism of immigration a manifestation of racism."

The Wausau community "soured" when Hmong immigration increased, according to the article. The immigration laws between the years 1924 and 1965 "prevented foreign immigration from reshaping the social landscape...the laws no longer do," Beck writes, adding, "The resettlement stream shows no sign of drying up" (87-88). He added:

Nobody is exactly sure when and how everything started to go sour...Nobody involved, apparently, has the authority to stop the refugee-resettlement process if it becomes harmful to a community."

"It is noteworthy, however, that when natives told me longingly of a lost 'home,' most seemed to refer not to the Wausau of 1978, before the refugee influx, but to the Wausau of 1984, when the influx was at a level that still constituted a delightful spice and community relations were harmonious (94).

Beck continues: "Various Wausau residents told me they favor a cooling off period before more refugees are resettled in their city" (97).

Following the article's release, some jumped to the defense of the Hmong. Jack Griswold of the Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services of New York responded in a letter to the editor of The Atlantic Monthly. "It seems designed to lay blame for most of the real and imagined ills of today's society at the feet of Hmong, and by extension, immigrants in general." Griswold, who was quoted in Beck's article, refutes the claim that the nation's immigration efforts were "hardly shallow or short-lived." "The underlying message that seems to be the real point of this article is that immigrants, particularly if they are racially or culturally different, corrode our way of life and should be kept out" Griswold states.
Despite Griswold's letter, the Hmong continued to be victimized in the national press. CBS's 60 Minutes news program aired a segment on Oct. 14, 1994, about the city's immigration "problem." In this piece, as in Beck's article, the Hmong were blamed for the lost American Dream. The segment portrays Wausau as a town "almost mythological...a town so perfect that a lot of people think it only exists in television commercials." Wausau, according to the narrator, is "Norman Rockwell Midwest," a town full of "all friendliness, godliness, and generosity."

Yet the climate of Wausau changed with the introduction of Hmong immigrants, the report continues. According to the narrator:

In the mid 70's, Wausau's heart was touched by the plight of Southeast Asian refugees and some local churches invited a few families to come. Everyone felt good. Wausau is feeling somewhat less generous. It was the American government's sense of obligation that eased the way to America. Now they are workless and on welfare in Wausau. They may lack technical skills...but gained a perfect understanding of how public assistance works and they know Uncle Sam never misses a payday. More than 75 percent are on public assistance, and very few pay taxes.

According to one resident, "We've given and given and given. It's time for them to give something back."

Community members felt justified in their frustration. "What angered this docile community was, of course, education, the American institution that historically drives communities apart. White Wausau felt that education was their business. After all, they were paying for it" the narrator states. In the report, Prehn, former board member, defended Partner Schools. "I want Southeast Asians to play with my children. When they're both working in Wausau, they are both contributing. You
have to start assimilation early...you have to teach them English,” Prehn said.

After the national attention, other residents tried to set the record straight for the Hmong. Jeffrey Lamont, a vocal supporter of Partner Schools, said that neighborhood schools “preserve the notion of Ward and June Cleaver, that you don’t want to concede that the world has changed...When you learn a language its because everyone around you speaks it; if you keep them separate there will be racial tension.” Many of the Hmong, however, lacked the language skills necessary to take a larger societal role. Peter Yang, who acted as school liason for the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association, stated, “Hmong parents aren’t asked what they want. Only about 100 Hmong residents are U.S. citizens with voting rights...this is our community too,” adding that some people are “plain prejudiced” (Herzog A1).

Others also supported the Hmong. “They (Hmong) are an industrious people who came here because of very strong beliefs in freedom and self sufficiency,” stated Susan Levy, director of the Wisconsin office of Energy, Poverty and Refugee Services. Levy stated that from 1986 to 1993, the Hmongs’ dependence on welfare dropped from 78 percent to less than 50 percent “despite the increasing number” of immigrants (Herzog A1).

Neighborhood Schools supporters scored a victory with the successful recall, but the integration of the Hmong and American cultures could not be halted. Integration is a painful, slow, time-consuming, and transforming process. The Partner School drama was the initial clash of two divergent groups thrust together with little choice. Through Partner Schools, however, residents were beginning to learn how to co-exist. Wausau was slowly moving toward that culturally diverse future that they had fought against.
SCENE VII: WAUSAU: A COMMUNITY TRANSFORMED- Curtain closes on Partner Schools

*Does the public understand that we will never go back to segregated schools or no busing?*

With the “scapegoating” process complete, the community moved into the transformation stage. “For the so-called ‘desire to kill’ a certain person is much more properly analyzable as a desire to transform the principle which that person represents” (“A Rhetoric of Motives” 13). The majority yearned to retain the status quo. Despite the apparent “victory” of neighborhood school supporters, the community and its residents were changed. The community simply could never return to status quo, could never return the community it once was.

Following the recall election, new board members immediately began to hold meetings about “restructuring,” ironically, the same termed used by the previous board to promote Partner Schools. Facing a threat of a lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union, the new board voted to return to a “modified” form of the neighborhood school system in April of 1994. “ACLU and local business people are preparing a civil lawsuit if the district tries returning to neighborhood schools. Under those laws both the district (taxpayers) and possibly the board members personally could be found liable, according to Christopher Ahmuty, executive director of the ACLU of Wisconsin” (“It’s Déjà vu All Over Again”). A lawsuit was never filed, however, as the new board decided to redraw district boundaries in a limited form of the Partner School concept, said Meyer (interview).
During its short life, the Partner School program began to draw parents' support. The slow process of cultural change had begun, despite the community resistance. Like the previous board, new members had "their mind made up" about restructuring. The board spent the spring of 1994 researching options that included "enlarged neighborhoods."

Before the rescinding of Partner Schools, many asked the new board to give the program another chance. At a public hearing on April 25, 1994, many people spoke out in support of Partner Schools, including many Hmong people. Many residents asked the board to give the program "one more year." Resident Gayle Gialdini-Grover recognized the transformed community. "The district can never go back to no busing or neighborhood schools," she said. An unidentified resident said, "If the teachers and children like it (Partner Schools), then why don't you? Just because you had your minds set on neighborhood like schools, other people have changed their mind so be big enough to do so also. In my heart, I truly believe you are afraid of the minority someday being your equal."

Ironically, new administrators were accused of not listening to residents, the same accusations made to the previous board. At the April 25, 1994 hearing, an unidentified resident stated, "The recall election was not a mandate for a dictatorship. You must listen to all people." Resident Jerry Rienardy said, "The last board fixed a broken district. It's no longer in need of fixing." David Aicher said the new board's proposal is "flawed beyond imagination." Resident Amy Christopherson said she was initially neutral about Partner Schools, but is now more in favor. Dan Danson, who identified himself as clergy and peace agent, said the new plan was "unfair." With the redrawing of district boundaries, his child can walk to the neighborhood school, but Southeast Asians are bused, he stated. "Please,
please, please give Partner Schools another year,” said resident Paulette Koski.

At the same hearing, many Hmong voiced support of Partner Schools. Resident Zova Yang said, “I fought in the war and am here to stay as an American citizen. My children are entitled to equal and quality education.” Resident Vilay Her expressed anger that the board failed to get in touch with the Southeast Asian community. Resident Nao Pao Lor asked the board for help to receive “quality education like American children.” Lor said he has “lost his family, friends, and country, and now wants the same American opportunities”.

A letter to administrators by resident Pat Mattiaci typifies the dramatic and painful transformation that occurred in Wausau. Mattiaci, on Feb. 17, 1994, writes:

First please consider the possibility that returning to a K-5 neighborhood school format may not be the will of the majority of the Wausau community, especially its elementary school parents. The overthrow of the board had other factors:

1. Many citizens were outraged by methods used by the previous School Board.
2. Many citizens were angered by the high property tax bills they received the week before the election.
3. Many citizens were disgusted by the previous board’s handling of Penny Kleinhans’ dismissal and contract buyout.
4. Some citizens took the recall election as their first public opportunity to voice their anger, fear and frustration over the very unwelcome changes to their traditional white community and schools.
5. Many citizens were angry and frustrated by the previous board’s decision to implement the new Partner School plan so quickly.
Change in any form and for any reason is difficult and disruptive. I beg you to leave the current Partner School program in place for the 1994–1995 school year” Mattiacci wrote.

Despite the outpouring of support for Partner Schools, the board rescinded the program at a meeting on May 6, 1994. The board’s resolution read, “The Board determined the Partner plan is not in the best interests of residents and school children.” A newspaper article states, “Next Thursday, the ‘Partners’ will split. The grand experiment to integrate a huge influx of Hmong in Wausau’s central elementary schools will be scrapped at the end of the school year” (Geniese A4). Starting the following 1994–1995 school year, the district reverted back to neighborhood schools, but neighborhood schools with “gerrymandered” district boundaries (Meyer interview).

On the surface at least, neighborhood school supporters “won.” Children would still be bused, but they would be mainly Hmong children. The School Board, in initiating Partner Schools, was, in effect, trying to “partner” an increasingly diverse community. The sad irony is that the attempt to “partner” the community actually divided it, for as Ament stated, “you can’t force people to be friends.” But as Meyer intuitively stated, “There is a period of change, breaking down old paradigms. But over the long period, people will adjust and say this isn’t such a bogeyman after all” (Kent A1).

For the failure of Partner Schools can also be viewed as a success, albeit a limited one. The community was talking, although some of this talk was punctuated by anger and prejudice. But people – people from dramatically different cultures – were in the process of learning how to co-exist. In an interview, Meyer states that the Partner School drama was one of those
"life lessons" that is often the subject of a sermon: love thy neighbor. "Despite the strife and anxiety, you can point to a lot of good things – it made the community stronger."

Roy Beck of *The Atlantic Monthly* portrayed the Hmong immigration as a "stream unending." Yet his statement proved inaccurate. With the closing of the Thailand refugee camps, the stream has ended. However, the Wausau "situation" is one that more and more communities facing similar conflicts can use as a learning tool.

Since the Partner School drama has ended for Wausau, its rhetorical study can be examined in hindsight. "Human relations should be analyzed with respect to the leads discovered by the study of drama" according to Burke ("A Rhetoric of Motives" 310). Thus, the study of the drama contained within the Partner School issue is applicable to other "dramas." Drama is everywhere one looks. When the drama occurs in a community, the political rhetoric that is generated can reveal larger truths about human nature. These truths can then be applied to understanding future intercultural contact and conflict.

Theory is only as important as its application, and chapter five will deal with the application of dramatic theory to real-life situations. Kenneth Burke's theories help researchers understand and possibly predict the way people will react in intercultural situations. His concepts can be usefully combined with those of action-theorist David Cooperrider who offers a fresh perspective for handling society concerns. In conclusion, limitations of this study will be briefly examined along with potential for further applications.
"Indeed, as we move into a postmodern global society we are breaking out of our parochial perspectives and recognizing that organizations in all societies exist in a wide array of types and species and function within a dynamic spectrum of beliefs and lifestyles. And according to the social constructionist viewpoint, the possibilities are infinite."

David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, 29)

CHAPTER FIVE – IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION STUDY

Research question: How can integration programs work?

Evidence gathered in Chapter four supports Burke’s dramatistic perspective and offers a lens through which the analyst can interpret data. Thus, dramatism helps researchers predict why people act the way that they do. Although the Partner School program failed in Wausau, Burke’s theory can be applied to similar situations to help communities understand how people act and react during cultural controversy. Rhetoric creates “umbrellas” under which people unite and umbrellas under which they sometimes hide. Rhetorical use of language then, can create bitter divides between people.

But if language can create bitter divides, then it can also build bridges of understanding. Applying Burke’s theory to communication situations can be the beginning of “partnering” diverse racial groups, the beginning of
“smoothing” the integration process. Burke answers why. Other theorists ask how. This chapter will attempt to answer the following question: how can integration program work? Options for promoting integration will be explored, with an emphasis on action research.

Certainly, applying a theory to a communication situation is no guarantee that a “problem” will be solved. A theory is not a cure-all, nor does it hold to hard-and-fast rules. However, a good theory illuminates key issues, and its theoretical tenets can act as guideposts. Burke has illuminated the why behind the failure of Partner Schools. This chapter turns to the question of how can integration proceed successfully?

Theorists can surmise that people, in racially complex situations, will react in certain ways. How can they then assist people in avoiding the negative behavior of racial stereotyping, prejudice, and hatred? The key lies in the amount and quality of preparation that people undergo before change or intervention is implemented. As seen in Wausau, integration will proceed on its own, but often takes a great deal of time. School officials, and indeed, anyone interested in dealing with societal issues, may wish to find alternatives for expediting that process.

WAUSAU UPDATE: “A SUCCESS STORY”
Time builds bridges of understanding

The Wausau immigration influx – predicted to be unending – has ceased. Since the Thailand refugee camps closed in the late 1990s, the Hmong population in the city of Wausau has actually decreased with “out migration” according to Berland Meyer, deputy superintendent of the Wausau School District (interview). The Hmong have become more educated while many are holding down well paying jobs. Many have
relocated from the city to the suburbs, and are becoming homeowners. The negative portrayal of the Hmong people by the national media has proved to be untrue. Most Hmong people are now off welfare and have proved to be good workers and good citizens, according to Nell Anderson in an interview.

This success has not been a coincidence, according to officials. In 2001, the local television news station WSAW presented a Town Hall Special program titled “Know Your Neighbors, Know Yourselves.” Wausau Minority Affairs Director Thomas Lee stated that in 1994, 75 percent the Hmong in Wausau were receiving welfare benefits. This statistic has changed dramatically in less than ten years, according to Lee. In 2001, 95 percent of Hmong people are now working. “This is not surprising,” Lee stated. Peter Yang, representing the Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association stated that the number of Hmong people who own homes has increased “very rapidly.” Of the approximately 800 Hmong households in Wausau, over 550 are individually owned, Yang stated.

“It’s been nothing but a great success story,” agreed Phyllis Bermingham of the Job Center of Wausau. Bermingham stated that she objected to the 60 Minutes news segment that portrayed the Hmong in a negative light. “I get angry when I see it still. How can a community with no ethnic diversity be called perfect?” she said, adding that the community is “more perfect now.” Younger generations are seeking more education and the occupations they are filling include positions of engineers, accountants, and sales representatives, and teachers. “I can go on and on...many employers prefer the Hmong because of their work ethic,” Bermingham said.

Yet acclimation to American life also has its drawbacks for the Hmong people and their culture, while some still suffer from language differences,
Yang said. As younger generations become more “Americanized” they have less time and less interest in retaining the Hmong culture, according to Yang. Language differences are also widening the gaps between the generations, as many older Hmong, particularly women, know little English.

The Hmong struggle to retain their cultural identity. Many of the Hmong have found the adjustment to American judicial and educational systems difficult. Yet the Hmong consider America their home, and are struggling to retain their cultural identity, according to Yang. Anderson emphasized the need for preserving traditions: “Is the United States really a melting pot or is it a mosaic or a tossed salad? We all don’t have to melt down, rather, throw it all together and enjoy the crispness and tartness.”

Intercultural Drama in Lewiston, Maine

The dramatic conflict sparked by the rapid influx of the Hmong is emblematic of conflicts occurring nationwide. Since the Thailand camps closed, Hmong migration to America has ceased. The Hmong and American people are on their way to coping, to adjustment. Yet the American landscape becomes increasingly diverse. One of most recent influx of immigrants to America has been the Somali people.

The parallels between the Wausau experience and the ongoing conflict in Lewiston are strikingly similar. Here, one can see the Burkeian drama unfolding. The community, like Wausau, has begun to divide. There is a “side” that includes people who accept their Somali neighbors and there is another “side” that does not. As in Wausau, arguments have sparked over the same issues: welfare, education, and cultural differences.

Several years ago, the Somali people began leaving their war-torn country in Africa for a new home in America. Refugees from Somali, who
initially settled near larger cities such as Atlanta, disliked the amount of crime in the larger cities. They also disliked the amount of prejudice they received, particularly from members of the African-American community. Somalis sent “scouts” to search for a more hospitable community, and these scouts decided on Maine. Today, the city of Lewiston, Maine, has seen a large and rapid influx of the Somalis, where this influx is “secondary migration,” which Wausau also experienced.

“White” Lewiston is undergoing much of the same cultural conflicts that “white” Wausau has undergone and continues to experience. “But it’s America’s dilemma. From Wausau, Wis., where thousands of ethnic Hmong have settled, to Holyoke, Mass., where city officials (last week) asked the federal government to rescind a grant to resettle other Somalis refugees, small cities and towns now wrestle with issues once seen as the province of larger cities. About 1,000 Somalis have moved from Atlanta to Lewiston, a “largely white Franco-American city of 36,000. Laurier T. Raymond, Lewiston mayor, stated, “Please pass the word (Bouchard).

We have been overwhelmed...our city is maxed out, financially, physically and emotionally (Bouchard). Raymond has asked Somali elders to put a stop to immigration. “Welfare roll and rents have gone up, and school officials are scrambling to provide health check-ups...The large number of new arrivals cannot continue without negative results for all,” he stated (Powell).

Raymond’s letter reveals the division felt community-wide. “Raymond’s letter has stirred a tempest in this old mill town in the nation’s whitest state.” In October, “about 250 people marched five blocks to show solidarity with the newcomers. Old time residents outnumbered the Somali demonstrators 3 to 1 by one estimate. “The issue of public assistance has helped increase divisiveness among community members. “(C)ity officials
estimate that only about 40 of the 400 to 500 Somali adults living in Lewiston are working... The Somalis' arrival has strained Lewiston's limited resources and rattled city and school officials who are trying to hold down taxes" (Bouchard).

Quotes from both the Wausau and Lewiston situations are strikingly similar. The 60 Minutes news segment portrayed the Hmong as "workless and on welfare. The Somali are portrayed in a like manner. Lewiston Mayor Raymond is quoted, "Unfortunately, many of them don't come with any money and they don't have jobs, and there is some resentment of that." As in Wausau, there is racist behavior, while some Lewiston residents have had their lives threatened. "Another man, 33-year-old Samuel Gaiewski, has been charged with a hate crime for using a racial slur when he allegedly threatened to kill a Somali man during a parking confrontation last year" (Bouchard). And, as in Wausau, Lewiston residents ask that things cool down before more immigrants move to the city.

In Lewiston, the community is splitting. Through Burke, theorists can predict what the likely outcome to cultural conflict is. Relations between the two groups usually worsen before they improve, and often, a dramatic conflict occurs. These types of situations offer an opportunity for researchers to put theory into action. Cooperrider has become a leader in promoting a new approach to social action known as Appreciative Inquiry.

According to Cooperrider, the time has come to take a different approach to organizational communication. In other words, change agents need to stop viewing situations as "problem to be solved." Cooperrider, who developed Appreciative Inquiry, states, "Seeing the world has a problem has become very much a way of life" (Cooperrider and Whitney, 18). In the past, "theories wedded to human deficit" have been the common approach to dealing with "problems" (4).
In trying to solve problems, one looks in hindsight, according to Cooperrider. Instead, people should actually be creating new visions for the future. In hindsight, communication “problems” incurred during Partner Schools become clear. First, administrators treated diversity as a problem to be solved, not an uncommon approach. They instituted the busing of children as solution.

This solution in turn became the problem. Neither side shared the vision of the other. Only after a year, after parents and children were “forced” into increasingly diverse situations in the classroom and community did racial and cultural tolerance make strides. Each “side” began to share a positive vision for the future. After a year, many people began to believe that Partner Schools were indeed working.

The greatest aid to cultural tolerance can be time. Yet racial and cultural tolerance is not a guaranteed occurrence, even after years of cultural exposure. Hatred and prejudice will forever be a part of the human nature. Yet negativities can be lessened. A key factor in lessening intolerance is creating compassion, when one sees another person as a real person. This is a great challenge. During cultural conflict, issues become fragmented, simplified and divided. Issues become reduced to black and white, while each side often tries to win.

Cooperrider’s theory, which discusses the link between imagery and action, may hold clues for cultural researchers. Since “all action, according to Heidegger, has the nature of a project” people anticipate projected realities. “Much like a movie projection on a screen, human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a casual agent” (Cooperrider 33). “We see what our imaginative horizon allows us to see” (37). Wausau residents, afraid of the powerful, often negatives stereotypes of “busing,”
rejected that as their future. How then, can the image of “busing” be
reinterpreted into a positive image, particularly in a time when our society
is pervaded by a “universal, diffuse cynicism?” (41).

Cooperrider maintains that the an organization can flourish by viewing

In many respects, it can be usefully argued that organizations are
limited primarily or even only by (1) their affirmative capacities of
mind, imagination, and reason, and (2) their collective or
coaffirmative capacity for developing a commanding set of shared
projections among a critical segment of stakeholders. (47)

At times, however, organizations must leave behind “best affirmations” that
for one reason or another are not working, to find “better” ones.

A second key point of Cooperrider’s that can be applied here is that
organizations need “constant reaffirmation” and more specifically,
“appreciation.” This is based on the idea that appreciative inquiry “tries to
apprehend the factors that give life to a living system and seeks to
articulate those possibilities that can lead to a better future. This involves
having a leader that, like Churchill, refuses to give way to pessimism, and,
like a good artist, paints an inspiring picture of the future” (“Positive
Image, Positive Action” 50).

Cultural differences are often smoothed by time, but how can
practitioners speed this process? Realistically, some people never achieve
tolerance. Cooperrider, however, gives us the possibility that theories can
incite positive change.

According to Cooperrider, there are four key steps to Appreciative
Inquiry. The first element is discovery, where participants ask, “What
gives life? (the best of what is). The second step is to “dream,” where one
envisions results by asking, “What might be?” or “What is the world
calling for?” The third element involves design, where people “co-construct” the ideal. The fourth element to Appreciative Inquiry involves the destiny of the organization, where participants ask, “How to empower, learn and adjust/improvise?” (Cooperrider and Whitney 7).

Cooperrider’s theory adapts well to the concept of school integration programs. One organization that experiences a great deal of division in cultural differences is the public school system. The task of administrators in times of cultural change can be formidable, evidenced in the Partner School drama. Complex issues of integration were reduced to simplistic, black and white concepts. Wausau administrators spent many years preparing for the integration program, yet most residents failed to share administrators’ vision for the future.

Indeed, many residents felt “rushed.” They complained that the transition happened suddenly and was forced upon them. Administrators and teachers need to “think outside the lines” while preparing children, parents, and the public for large-scale integration programs. Appreciative Inquiry can hold some clues.

PHASE I: DISCOVERY

“Discovering” the dream of the entire district involves the engagement of a large amount of people. The Wausau district approached integration in a more traditional way, where administrators formed a steering committee made up of 50 residents, business people and public figures. This committee was answerable to the School Board at large, and made recommendations according to their findings. Recommendations almost certainly had the interest of the entire district at heart.

In future integration programs, there still is a need for some sort of committee to get the project going and oversee research procedures.
Perhaps the somewhat sterile title of "steering committee" can be changed to something like "dialogue teams." Members of the dialogue teams must then seek out and interview as many people as possible, with an emphasis on average residents. The list of people interviewed during this process must be unlimited, and may involve thousands of interviews. "The core task of the discovery phase is to discover and disclose positive capacity, at least until an organization's understanding of this 'surplus' is exhausted" (Cooperrider and Whitney 10).

Cooperrider believes that discovering the Affirmative Topic Choice is the "core" of this four-step cycle. "Affirmative topics, always homegrown, can be on anything the people of an organization feels gives life to the system" (Cooperrider and Whitney 9). Questions that interviewers might ask include, "What are the best experiences you remember from school?" "Can you relate some stories?" "How do you envision the term "quality education?" "Describe your version of the American Dream?" Cooperrider explains, "The new methods will be distinguished by the art and the science of asking powerful, positive questions" ("The Child as Agent of Inquiry" 123).

Since Cooperrider advocates the process of interviewing as many people as possible, children may be the key. Children conducted interviews during an action-research project conducted by Bliss Browne, called IMAGINE CHICAGO. This project is a "catalyst for civic innovation, working to bring people who live and work in Chicago to the realization that they are the owners and creators of Chicago's future" where Appreciative Inquiry was selected to be the implemented approach. "The outcomes have been dramatic" ("The 'Child' as Agent of Inquiry" 125). The best interviews, "resulting in the most inspiring stories, the most passion filled data, the
most textured and well illustrated examples, the most daring images of possibility, were all conducted by children of Chicago" (125).

As a result, all ages benefit from these interviews, according to Cooperrider. "The child as agent of inquiry is something I think all of us...need to reclaim and aspire to: openness, availability, epistemological humility, the ability to admire, to be surprised, to be inspired, to inquire into our valued and possible worlds, to wonder" ("The 'Child' as Agent of Inquiry"127-128). Sometimes, adults may lose or perhaps forget the importance of wonder in their daily lives. This wonder can be reclaimed for the benefit of all, according to Cooperrider. "When I'm really in a mode of inquiry, appreciable worlds are discovered everywhere. The feeling of wonder is the outcome. Of course it also cycles back" (128). Children and young adults can help rekindle this flame.

The children in Wausau could have been the “positive change agent.” Parents admitted that children did not have difficulty with Partner Schools, but their parents did. During the public hearing on April 25, 1994, parent after parent asked the new School Board members to give the program another year. Parent Margaret Getzin said “This was a fantastic year for my daughter. Go slowly. Ask the students what is working,” she said. Parent Jay Coldwell stated that for his children, “this has been the best year so far. Leave it in place.” Resident Dan Shilbeski said he talked to the teachers who said they “did not want to go back to what did not work before.”

School administrators, then, could more greatly involve the children and parents as part of the discovery process. This process involves envisioning the best Wausau (or Lewiston), where the key is “involvement.” One of the reasons Partner Schools may have failed is because the average parent was not engaged, not involved. People revealed what made Wausau special to
them, through the imagery in their letters to administrators and statements during public hearings.

Understandably, this process would be a huge undertaking. Cultural fairs, open houses and public hearings are a start, but administrators have to dig deeper than traditional cross-cultural methods. "The thrill of discovery becomes the thrill of creating. As people throughout a system connect in serious study into qualities, examples, and analysis of the positive core – each appreciating and everyone being appreciated – hope grows and community expands" (Cooperrider and Whitney 11). One key change is that people involved no longer focus on the negative. In almost every case, a negative can be shown to contain positive attributes. Through discovery, the fear of busing can be seen as an exciting adventure, particularly through the eyes of the child. This brings researchers to the dream phase, the second phase of Appreciative Inquiry.

THE DREAM PHASE

As the community begins to discover the positive potential of integration, the dream phase – based on appreciation – begins. "During the dream phase, the interview stories and insights are put to constructive use." Residents begin to appreciate who they are – everyone, those for Partner Schools and those against, those who are white and those who are Hmong. Through one-on-one meetings of parents and teachers, through mailings, through school activities, through open meetings, stories that make Wausau the place it is are told and retold. "When an artist sits in front of a landscape the imagination is kindled not by searching for 'what is wrong with this landscape,' but by a special ability to be inspired by those things worth valuing. Appreciation, it appears, draws our eye toward life, stirs
our feelings, sets in motion our curiosity, and provides inspiration to the envisioning mind” (Cooperrider and Whitney 11).

The key to the dream phase is gathering people together, not an easy task. Some may refuse. But a number of parents could be drawn to greater involvement with school activities. Many parents were involved in Partner Schools, yet involvement included much negativity. Perhaps teachers could pair a white parent and student and a Hmong (Somali) parent and student together for the day. They could talk about what they view as ideal educational situations, ideal visions for their city. They could simply talk. Children could relate what they like best about aspects of each other's culture. Parents could do the same. Perhaps involvement could include role playing. They could meet in homes of both cultures.

The Hmong, even through interpreters, can talk about their past struggles. Students can produce and act in videos depicting past events from both cultures. Students can be paired for a variety of projects, where they talk openly about cultural differences, where they begin to truly see themselves as neighbors and partners. The methods could be and should be endless. This dream phase then leads to the third phase, that of design.

PHASE III: DESIGN PHASE

This positive vision is the cornerstone for the third phase, which Cooperrider terms the design phase. “One aspect that differentiates Appreciative Inquiry from other visioning or planning methodologies is that images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from an organization’s positive past” (Cooperrider and Whitney13). Many residents had fond memories of the neighborhood school system. Many were greatly upset with the idea that this system would undergo change. Change is hard in almost every case. Residents resented Partner Schools.
Residents resented being told that Partner Schools was best for the district. In order to work, residents have to be convinced that integration is really best for all. Not just administrators, but all involved, can co-create a vision for the future.

For Cooperrider, the design phase is made up of three things, a vision of a better world, a powerful purpose, and a compelling statement of strategic intent. Wausau residents reiterated over and over the importance of neighborhood schools; this concept needed careful consideration by administrators. The vision for Wausau (or Lewiston) must include the idea of neighborhood schools, with a new and somewhat different concept.

The powerful purpose must include the betterment of the children, where parents understand that cultural integration really does have the best interest of all children at its core. The compelling statement of strategic intent must include the interest of all residents, and can focus on the importance of keeping Wausau a close-knit neighborhood. The input from all is key here – not only administrators, but parents, children, even residents who do not have children. Here, the idea is to “co-construct (Cooperrider and Whitney 7).

In co-constructing this reality, all sides need to be considered, even the “opposition.” While doing research, Wausau administrators would have realized that ignoring the public’s importance of “neighborhood schools” would be (and was) catastrophic to the program. Simply being told that the Hmong and white population were “partners” did not make them so. Being partners involves working together and being partners involves listening to each other.

Actually, listening may be the biggest key to a program’s success. People stop talking when they feel they are being ignored. Listening creates empathy, the first step to successful integration. Listening also
leads researchers to the fourth phase, which involves the destiny of the community.

PHASE IV: DESTINY

Destiny is reached through successful completion of the first three phases, and involves the empowerment of the community residents. Appreciative Inquiry works best, according to Cooperrider, when its concepts are "given away to everyone." At this point, coordinators can then "step back." (Cooperrider and Whitney 14). "At some point, apparently minor positive discoveries connect in accelerating manner and quantum change, a jump from one state to the next that cannot be achieved through incremental change alone, becomes possible" (16). Cooperrider, in stressing the positive, states that he wants to steer away from the notion of Appreciative Inquiry as "Pollyannaish." "The focus on the positive, where change comes through inquiry, not decision" (18). Yet the approach is based firmly in reality.

Most Wausau residents focused on the negative aspects of "busing," where the negative term created an almost un mendable rift in the community. Through questions, through interviews, through contact, integration supporters can help create an overarching view of a new Wausau district that appeals to a wider range of people. Cooperrider and Whitney state:

Put most simply, it has been our experience that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together. (20)
In Cooperrider's experience, the inquiry will not work if people view the topic, here, integration, as a "problem to be solved." "We love letting go of 'fixing the world... and the whole thing is beginning, we believe, to make a number of our change-management traditions look obsolete" (20). Corporations have proved the ineffectiveness of time-quality programs that ask questions but ignore the findings. Cooperrider believes a key to success is in truly listening to people involved. Perhaps, the cycle of Appreciative Inquiry never truly ends, as people continue to change and grow.

LIMITATIONS AND STRONGPOINTS

Granted, Appreciative Inquiry is a huge undertaking, which can be a drawback. Yet the implementation of Partner Schools was no less of a huge undertaking, an undertaking that could have been more successful. The program, however, was pulled down by the spin of ideological negativity. Opponents of the program successfully portrayed integration as "busing," as something to be feared and resisted. Once set into motion, administrators simply could not battle these negative images. One can sense that in its first year, however, the Partner Schools program was taking a positive turn, as parents began to see that the program "was not so bad after all." The rescinding of the program may have been avoided with perhaps not more preparation, but different preparation.

Another drawback of the application of Appreciative Inquiry to intercultural situations is the language difference. Many Hmong people were unable to effectively voice their opinion during the Partner School era. Consequently, those undergoing language differences are at a severe disadvantage. Administrators need to recognize the gap that language mastery can cause, and take steps to bridge that gap. Interpreters can help make the minority needs known. Meyer stated that in the early 1990s, very few interpreters were available. Somehow, administrators need to
create programs to train liaisons, which also needs to be a top priority. The difficulty in preparing a solid foundation for the program will "pay off" in the future.

The future is created through vision, according to Cooperrider. If people share a negative vision, this is often the outcome. Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the positive, not in an unrealistic, but in a viable and commonsense manner. This is a positive aspect in itself. Anyone can search out and find negativity. Sharing a positive vision becomes a reality when people truly listen to each other. When people believe that people really care about what they care about, they are making the first steps to true partnership. When people feel they are making a valuable contribution to that future, they will go to great lengths to realize that vision.

Another positive aspect to this type of theory is its flexibility. This is not an exact science. The program, though, can be molded and adapted to suit a community or school district's particular needs. Admittedly, there may be some guesswork involved yet mistakes allow change to happen. If a method chosen upon simply is not working, practitioners can feel free to change. They are not "stuck," as Wausau administrators may have felt upon implementation of Partner Schools.

The Wausau Area School Board pursued a worthy, perhaps a noble cause when they attempted to offer the Hmong a piece of the American Dream. Although Wausau administrators spent several years researching the integration issue, they could not possibly have anticipated the fury with which the community would respond to busing. In hindsight, analysts can often speculate on what could have been done differently to reduce the divisiveness and anger.
The failure of the Partner School program was a failure of communication. To this day, many people remain ignorant of the history of the Hmong, their courage, their sorrow, and their nobleness in the face of much tragedy. Ignorance breeds prejudice and hate. Ignorance breeds stereotypical and racist behavior. Education must be the first step in fostering compassion, but the educational process must go beyond the four walls of the classroom. Administrators and teachers, who dealt with the Hmong first hand, often developed the sympathy needed to actually make the Hmong and American people into true partners.

In order to sell the Partner School program to the public, administrators needed to create public understanding for the Hmong. This is a huge and even daunting task. The huge cultural differences between the American and Hmong cultures created an even greater task for administrators. Residents, fearing the changes in their city, found they could easily shut out people who looked and acted so strangely. To advance their position, administrators needed to dispel myths about the Hmong. Administrators needed to portraying the Hmong as real, with the same fears, aspirations and needs as the rest of the community.

Administrators were prepared for Partner Schools but the community was not. This was the communication failure. In order to prepare the community, administrators needed to retell the story of the Hmong over and over. They needed to create visions of the Hmong: the Hmong dying side by side with Americans in the Vietnam War, the Hmong crossing the Mekong River to Thailand, the Hmong bravely trying to make a new home in the strange land of America. They needed to make the community want to be partners with the Hmong, to identify with the Hmong.

In the end, the Partner School program, which on the surface appeared to be a failure, paved the way for the integration and assimilation of the
Hmong into the Wausau community. On certain levels, it did succeed. After only one year, many people had changed their minds about Partner Schools and regretted its demise. Despite the pain and division caused by Partner Schools, it stands as a precedent from which other communities can draw from. If life is a learning process, Partner Schools can help other communities learn how to communicate more effectively.

Theory is a guide, a map, a path, and only as useful as its application. Other theories would also have been applicable to the Partner School communication situation. Human communication continues to puzzle and fascinate; answers elude, while questions remain. “The question, therefore, may not at all be, What is communication? Rather, it may be, What can we know about human communication that could make a real difference in the human condition, in the evolution of civilization?” asks Thayer (1987). He continues, “To speak at all is to philosophize, no matter how ‘scientificaly’ one might pretend to do so. The question is not whether to be ‘philosophical,’ but how” (xi-xii). Let all be questioners, then, let all be dreamers and philosophers.
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