
ON CHOOSING A THEORETICAL LENS IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

RESEARCH

OR

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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Abstract:

Noticeably absent from the discussion of school culture and educational change, is the frame of Individualism/Collectivism (I/C) (Toennies, 1887/2001) often employed in organisational research from the social psychological perspective (Erez and Earley, 1994; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). Inasmuch as I/C is a theory that bridges the individual and the group on both the macro (societal) and meso (workplace) levels, this theory presents a promising line of enquiry to inform debates about “teacher resistance” in change/reform processes, as well as illumining the concept of “community” as an avenue to the attainment of trust, collegiality, and consensus shown to be of great salience in the ability of schools to improve outcomes. In addition, this article presents I/C as an alternative to the social capital paradigm, which the author posits to be of an individualistic orientation, and as such, of questionable relevance to education. The “collectophobia” that has dogged the Western world has to a great extent precluded the use of the term, as well as the theory in educational research for which, this article suggests, it is inherently suitable.

Where We Are

Research into educational change would seem to some to be a straightforward case of “find out what works and do it”. Unfortunately, and despite years of case studies and surveys, qualitative and quantitative research, and variants of each, we have yet to find the recipe for change in “10 easy steps”. Conventional wisdom in the field posits that in looking at what does work, we can emulate success in other places, or conversely, by studying failed attempts, we can focus on what not to do. This is all very intuitive and sensible. Yet often what we miss is greater than what we gain. And we exit the school with no fewer, if not many more questions than we had when we entered. I would posit that it is our constant focus on the change attempts themselves that is at the root of the problem, and I would suggest that there is something far more fundamental that we are not attending to: the very foundations of the culture that is reflected in schools.

This approach is counterintuitive in a field that by name is concerned with the “action” of change. Yet it would seem that schools defy our attempts to transplant processes and procedures from one place to the next. And so I would suggest that we take a different road, a road not taken, a road in the main not even considered. That road is the frame of Individualism/Collectivism (I/C) as the filter through which to process our understanding. Inasmuch as I/C reaches the core of our personal, organisational, and national orientations, it goes to the heart of our perspective on how we see the world. I would posit that it is this worldview that in fact provides the foundation for both failed and successful change attempts. In order to present the case for the “I/C challenge”, let us first acquire a working knowledge of the topographical features of the educational change map.

Our Point of Embarkation

When embarking on a journey, we prepare and plan, check the layout of the land and measure distances, and plot direction and gauge travel time. We want to get where we are going. Implicit in our planning however, is the reasoning behind it. We know why we want to go and who is going. There is meaning behind the action. Yet in research, we often do not revisit implicit meanings. These assumptions of “givens”, whether methodological or conceptual, have misled us on our journey of the understanding of educational change. In order to better understand how we have travelled in the wrong direction, we need to revisit the only basics upon which we truly can rely: our fundamentally social aspect.

We are all on a collective evolutionary journey that is our common starting point. It is what has made us human. We breathe, we sleep, and we eat. Without these functions we could not survive. Yet there is another no less basic truth about our survival as human beings: we are social animals. Our species developed in groups, not in solitude. We actually need each other. In fact, a recently published study by Eisenberger *et al.* (2003) suggests that our brain reacts to social exclusion in the same way it reacts to physical pain. The same centre in our brain “lights up” the MRI screen when we feel socially excluded, suggesting that the “...adaptive value of mammalian social bonds, the social attachment system...may have piggybacked onto the physical pain system to promote survival.” (p. 238), creating a “social exclusion = pain” mechanism. In other words, we are neuroanatomically predisposed to social connectedness. This is the social foundation of human life.

Despite the fact that all educational endeavours are a negotiation between the individual teacher and the group of students, or the group of teachers and the individual principal, we tend to disregard this basic map of the school journey and rather attend to the plotting and connecting of point A to point B. In educational research, we overwhelmingly prefer to focus on our operationally oriented “business cards” and we often take our

conceptual “group membership” cards quite for granted. This can be attributed to our modern, industrialised world, or to the fact that policy makers are exerting enormous pressures on education to focus on the attainment of standards. Whatever the reason, we are allowing ourselves to be detoured onto a conceptual shortcut to outcomes, and away from what remains the most basic level of the educational interaction.

The modern world craves the attainment of outcomes. Educational change, whether curricular, structural, or any of the varieties thereof, is no different, replete with theoretical frames transplanted from the world of organisational studies. These frames view the world in terms of achievement, increased production, and economic goals. Schools are therefore diagnosed to see what ails them, and elixirs in the form of models, are prescribed. Much of our effort is on finding the best prescription for our perceived scholastic headache. And that headache, all too often, is the inability of our children to achieve those elusive high percentiles on standardised tests, which must be assumed by someone, somewhere, to reflect “learning”. This view of education not only skews our worldview, it does not reflect the basic topography upon which the educational organisation is built: the social world. Revisiting this world, through what research has suggested to date about teachers, may assist in mapping the terrain.

The World as They See It

Teachers, specifically primary level teachers, are an enigmatic group. Most everyone can recall one or more of his or her elementary school teachers; Mrs. G., whose daily increments of Charlotte’s Web and Stuart Little instilled in me a love of reading, Mrs P., constantly blowing the whistle dangling around her neck at recess, and Mrs. E., who could, without fail, be trusted to provide a modicum of comfort in an otherwise miserable day. And then there was Miss H. Her ravaging onslaught about the way I coloured my “ideal house” in the fifth grade unsurprisingly paralysed any artistic outlet I might have had until I was well into my

graduate work. When I became a teacher, Miss H. was my painful, personal lesson of what never to do.

Elementary teachers are our guides on those first faltering steps through the maze we call education. These are people who, for better or for worse, leave such lasting impressions that the feelings they induced revisit us, sometimes all too vividly, from one or two seemingly inconsequential recollections. How many others can materialise with such intensity? Who outside of family members plays such an important role in a person's life?

But teachers are also employees. They teach for a living. They are bound by organisational rules and regulations as well as by school boards. They, unlike other less socially intense professions, must deal with their students' needs, moods and difficulties, while satisfying externally defined goals. Teachers delineate appropriate behaviour both in the classroom and on the playing field and often the greatest amounts of time and efforts are by necessity, directed in this area. Teachers must both grade individual students on curricular achievement, while at the same time directly or indirectly moulding a group from the individuals in any given class. They are the agents of our children's socialisation, whether or not we like that fact, or the terminology.

And teachers bring 'themselves' to this endeavour. Their work is a reflection of their values, in form and content. Teaching is not a profession for the faint-hearted, or for those whose primary interest is in the accumulation of wealth. Teachers are between the "rock" of administrators and the "hard place" of students and their parents. This is not a profession in which you can be distant and polite and ask a supervisor to deal with the problematic or demanding client (or his or her parents). The teacher is exposed and responsible. In few other professions could an employee be charged with so many tasks yet judged as successful or failing by his or her employer for only one: the results on achievement tests. This is not

difficult to understand because for administrators and policy-makers all remains secondary to these coveted outcomes.

Teachers are all too often seen as the technicians of education, presented with new curricula or standards and expected to be the tools of outcome production. When changes or reforms are decided upon, it is up to the teachers to successfully implement them. When such reforms do not achieve set goals, teachers are said to be “resistant” or “teacher culture” (whatever cannot be otherwise explained) is blamed for the failure. Teacher cultures therefore, need to be “unpacked” and examined if we are to fathom what educational reform or change means to those who Cuban (1998) posits are “...the foot soldiers of school reform” (p.46).

Researchers have found a number of characteristics shared by teachers the world over. In the UK, Jennifer Nias, (1999, in J. Prosser, Ed.), for example, has labelled their culture “a culture of care”. She describes this as a culture in which the ascribed value of the work is in concern for and connectedness with others, and based in a sense of responsibility. This is similar to the “ethic of care” that Gilligan (1982, cited in Hargreaves, 1994) suggests. Hargreaves (1994) posits that this ethic is what draws many women to the teaching profession.

In addition, Kohn (2002) has pointed out the ineffectiveness of merit pay, as have other researchers who find a strikingly low correlation between extrinsic motivators, including salary increases, to teacher satisfaction (Farkas *et al.*, 2000; Lumsden, 1998). Lortie (1975) was among the first to describe intrinsic motivating factors he called the “psychic rewards” of teaching. And despite “...the rather low social status of the teaching profession and its rather low material rewards, (these) do not seem to affect teachers’ work significantly.” as Kremer-Hayon and Goldstein (1990; 297) reported in a study of 325 secondary school teachers in Israel. These findings seem to distinguish between most

professions and that of teaching. Teachers have deep connections to their profession, and it is these connections that enable them to persist.

Research also illuminates our understanding of teachers and how they sustain themselves despite difficulties. Overcoming the hardships of large urban schools, for example, is made possible because "...they speak of teaching as love..." (Nieto, 2003; 15) and regard their work through "A commitment to social justice – the ideals of democracy, fair play, and equality – (which)... figures prominently among the reasons why these teachers chose this profession." (Nieto, 2003). Farkas *et al.*, (2000) discuss the "sense of calling" (p. 10) that teachers feel and which they state brought them to teaching, and coin this "effective altruism" in their perceptions of being able to make a difference in students' lives (*ibid*, p.17). Although cynics may view such statements as naïve, they nevertheless characterise teachers' beliefs and motivations and reveal much about their culture.

Inasmuch as newly enlisted teachers have been found to be more concerned with the social aspects of teaching than with academics (Book, et al., 1986, cited in Hargreaves, 1994), and Brint *et al.* (2001) found that 77% of teachers selected "building character" as a school priority, it would seem that teachers hold some common and fundamental beliefs about what they are doing and why. In this light then, it is not difficult to understand the reticence of teachers to implement programs and models whose sum goal might be perceived as that of an arbitrary academic outcome. "Teacher resistance" it might then be suggested, is not simply unwillingness to do what is mandated due to power or status struggles or inflexibility. It could be regarded as the voice of teachers' beliefs.

This suggests that "the social" forms the foundation of teacher culture. When considering the environment and tasks of the profession, this is quite evident. The interaction of the individual and the group in any endeavour requires negotiation, whether implicit or explicit. The very ability to teach and to learn presumes that such understandings are in place.

The curriculum in this light, is embedded within “the social,” reflecting content and context, respectively, and underlines the connection between them. Change attempts directed at one will therefore necessarily impact the other. This is the culture of teachers. It is a world of values and meaning-making and “other-centeredness”. It is a culture of process bound tightly in an organisational structure of product. Yet in educational research we all too often view the former through the lens of the latter.

The Crossroads (and Cross-purposes) of Educational Research

Research into educational change is not unlike other research in the social sciences. Time constraints, limited funding, and outcomes weigh heavily on researchers. Longitudinal, in-depth studies are few and far between, and too often we take the ubiquitous as fact. The very concept of change directs our focus toward the operationalisation of projects, curriculum, and structure. Inasmuch as we can with some degree of certainty point to the predominantly social characteristics of teaching, as noted above, the incongruity is evident. Walcott (1987, in G. Spindler and L. Spindler, Eds.) notes that educational researchers are “...as likely to discover school culture as Kluckholm’s proverbial fish are likely to discover water.” (p. 51). The same parallel might be drawn to the educational change research focus on outcomes.

To some extent, (the degree to which remains open to interrogation) we are products of our external culture and its product-emphasis. Therefore, the search for ways by which to improve academic achievements is culturally implicit, and as a result has become the cornerstone of much research into teacher culture. As Western educational researchers are graduates of the self-same system they research, they overwhelmingly utilise theoretical frames that reflect Western culture. The allure of these frames is compelling in that they focus our efforts toward student achievement and explore those variables that have been shown to be of salience in this effort. It would be difficult to argue that this is not a noble and

worthwhile goal. Yet when visited from the perspective of teacher culture, lenses that focus on outcomes seem ill-equipped to quarry the social bedrock.

The study of school culture and the culture of teachers demand a theoretical lens that is able to fathom from a conceptual standpoint what “the way we do things around here,” otherwise known as culture, is telling us. Teachers’ organisational lives are an interplay of who they are, including their beliefs, values, and perceptions, and what they meet in the workplace. It is necessary then to employ a frame of analysis that can shed light specifically on a group of employees who, in the main, are not motivated by financial rewards, do not see the input/output paradigm as their primary orientation, and regard “the social” as central to their mission. Frames that cast light on the interplay between individual and group and context to content might inform a deeper understanding of the perceptions of teachers. This opportunity entails embarking on “a road less taken” through the landscape.

The Roads Most (Often) Taken

Two theoretical frames, both of which focus on the cultural and organisational aspects, are increasingly utilised in educational research in the growing awareness of the role of organisational culture to change processes. (I offer my apologies to the theoreticians for the sketchy treatment these frames will receive here, yet which will suffice for our purposes). The first, which I will call “community,” including both “communities of practice” (Wenger, et al., 2002) and “communities of learning” (Senge, 1990), focuses on building the characteristics of “community” in the workplace. These characteristics include the garnering of trust and commitment through a supportive and collegial workplace environment. These to be sure, are frames that recognise the salience of organisational culture to workplace behaviour. Inasmuch as these “community” frames also focus on the necessity and value of organisational learning, they seem to be consistent and congruent to the world of education.

The term “community” in addition, conjures positive feelings of days-gone-by, when intimacy rather than good fences, made good neighbours. And as Senge (2002) reflects “When you ask people what it is like being a part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected...” (p. 13). I would suggest that this is reflective of the natural and neuroanatomical predisposition humans have for interdependency and interconnectedness. However, in an organisational context this is a social bond that is administratively “created” and negotiated to further organisational goals. Is this the “community” of today?

The second of these organisational frames is the theory of Social Capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000). This theory posits that the shared values, shared history, trust and commitment found among organisational members produce a group-owned “capital” that results in higher production. Social capital, distinct from human or intellectual capital, is based in the connectedness of group members, and as such is dependant upon relationships “...among persons in ways that facilitate action” (Coleman, 1990; 304). The theory is enticing in its basic simplicity: when people have positive working relationships, they work more effectively together, and this ability is predicated on, and resides within, the group. The sum of these relationships, the commitment, motivation, and trust inherent within them, are then regarded as a collective “capital” toward the achievement of organisational ends.

The positive effects of this ‘social capital’ have been so widely accepted that organisations such as the World Bank have poured generous funding into social capital creation programs aimed, among others, at improving the economic situations of developing countries (Fine, 2001). In this way, social capital has of late entered the doors of the schoolhouse as a way to create human capital (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Orr, 1999; Schuller and Bamford, 2000). That is to say, create such “capital” in the school through an

organisational culture that will provide the basis for increased educational outcomes. What better example for education than to compare educational outcomes with capital production? It sounds so familiar and promising: the production of human capital through social capital investment. Here too however, the “social” is only the means for “capital” production.

Both these theories regard school organisational culture as a means by which to achieve increased organisational production. This view is inherently inappropriate if we are to view teacher and school culture from the perspectives of teachers who, research suggests, perceive “the social” as the basis upon which (and to a great extent for which) they teach. Research into educational change must be attuned first to the culture being researched, and to view in that light outcomes and the ways to attain them. If the culture we are researching reflects “the social” as both the context and basis for action, then our research on content alone, including outcomes, is misplaced. Inasmuch as these frames regard “arrival at the destination” as the ultimate goal, they fail to enlighten us regarding perceptions and meanings inherent to the journey itself.

Conflict and “resistance,” for example, might be revisited from outside power or outcome-orientations so prevalent in educational change research. In this way, the frame would be congruent to the characteristics it is attempting to illumine. Such a frame exists but has with few exceptions been, at best, underrepresented in educational research. That frame is the theory of Individualism/Collectivism (I/C) (Toennies, 1857/2001).

Individualism/Collectivism: The View from the Road of Individualism

I/C has been regarded as two ends of a developmental continuum, the former associated with industrialised societies, and the latter with the developing world, on a macro-cultural level. Nation-states are seen as being either collectivist or individualist, and interpolation from these “national” socio-cultural determinations regarding the behaviour of

individuals whether in society-at-large or the workplace, have been inferred. We in the Western, industrialised world take our individualism for granted.

Yet in our demarcation of individualism *or* collectivism, we are using a national characterisation for behaviour that is ultimately reflected on an individual or micro-level. Simply stated, people cannot be assumed to behave in a certain way because their country has been labelled in as “collectivistic” or “individualistic.” An individual’s behaviour is not determined solely on the basis of his or her national affiliation (Triandis, 1995).

An additional basis for the reticence to employ I/C as a research frame has to do with socio-political fundamentals. Inasmuch as collectivism has been equated with communism and/or socialism, it has also been viewed as antithetical to the capitalist, industrialised West. Kagitcibasi (1994, in U. Kim, et al., Eds.) relates that even the use of the term itself is avoided. The labels “*high and low context*” (Hall, 1976), “*traditionalism and modernity*” (Inkeles and Smith, 1974, cited in Triandis, 1995), and “*groupism*” (Schein, 1992) have supplanted the term itself when describing what could reflect collectivistic characteristics, when these appear in Western societies. Western dominance over research, fuelled by economic ideology, has led to what we might call “collectophobia”: a fear of recognising our collectivist aspect.

In educational change research specifically, this is evident in the discourse regarding individualism, where “collective” can safely be used as an adjective, but “collectivism” is notably absent (Fullan, 1997; Hargreaves, 1994). Although comparative education does employ this frame (Alexander, 2000; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1998), Sergiovanni (1994) is one of the few Western educational change researchers who relates to the term and the theory directly with regard to Western society. If however, we view the I/C frame at the individual level, with the individual as the unit of analysis, rather than at the national or macroeconomic

levels, we may be able to unravel it and ourselves from any lingering perceptions of a “red menace” not yet buried in the rubble of the Berlin Wall.

At the individual level, I/C is regarded as two separate continua that are found in each human being (Shamir, 1990; Singelis and Brown, 1995). Our individual evocation of one or the other in any specific situation depends on our experience, our values, and our surroundings. Yet as Triandis (1995) advises, we must not focus on individuals alone, but on the dynamics between the individual and the group in that one of the most basic facets of man is that he is a social creature. The benefit of our inter-relatedness with others is becoming more and more clear (See Triandis, 1995; 135-138, for a survey of studies suggesting the health benefits of socially cohesive groups). In this light, the presumption that we retain a collectivist aspect that can be evoked is fairly straightforward. And since “...the essence of any community is collectivistic interdependence...” (Triandis, 1995; 40), the creation of “workplace communities” suggests the evocation of our collectivistic aspect on more than a theoretical level.

The workplace “community,” it could then be suggested, reflects what some social psychologists refer to as the “salience of the organisational identity” (Kramer, 1993, in J.K. Murnighan, Ed.). In this way, an employee regards him or herself as a part of a larger unit, the entirety of which works collectively toward some common and shared goal. This label could be considered a misnomer, however, as the “salient identity” might be more a “social bondedness” with other organisational members than a reflection of the individual’s bond with the “organisation”. The “salience of the collectivistic identity” might better reflect what occurs on the individual level. A person’s collectivistic aspect is evoked when he or she finds him or her self with like-minded others. Whether or not this social bond also reflects an “organisational identity” would then be dependant upon the alignment of the individuals’ goals and values to organisational goals (Erez and Earley, 1994).

In organisations where trust, collegiality, and commitment are reflected, the outcome is higher production (Cohen and Prusak, 2001; Lazega, 2001; Wagner, 1995). In educational change research, these outcomes are suggested by Kelchtermans and Strittmatter (1999, cited in Troman and Woods, 2000), who posit that “Shared missions, core values, aims, and goals are the basis of collaborative cultures...” (p. 142). The absence of such a culture results in teacher stress, burn out, and negative impact on pupil achievement (Troman and Woods, 2000). The positive outcomes these factors facilitate, I would posit, reflect interpersonal relations and group identification, rather than *a priori* organisational goals.

Whatever terminology we use to refer to these characteristics, the group rather than the individual becomes the point of reference and a mediating factor in workplace behaviour. The group as point of reference reflects behaviour such as collegial support, a reduction in conflict, and willingness to compromise, resulting in outcome achievement (Flynn and Chatman, 2001). What this suggests is that positive social relations in the workplace tend to evoke the individual’s collectivist aspect, inasmuch as Triandis (1995) posits, “The more teamwork one does, the more one learns to pay attention to the needs of others, and thus the more one moves toward collectivism” (p. 66). It is then the evocation of the collectivist predisposition in us all that results in the behaviours noted in workplace “communities,” which in turn, facilitate the achievement of organisational outcomes.

The creation of “community” or social capital in organisations however, belies a utilitarian aspect. When organisational leaders desire to create “workplace communities”, there is always an expedient reason (Raz, 2002). The entrepreneurial creation of social relations in the workplace is a time consuming and complex enterprise and would not be embarked upon but for the effects it has been shown to create *vis a vis* production. And as Drucker (1994, cited in Sergiovanni) adroitly posits, “... an organisation is defined by

task...communities are defined by their centres of values, sentiments and beliefs...” (p. 13-14). If the creation of “community” in the workplace suggests the social as the point of reference, this poses many questions regarding the nexus among consensus, decision-making processes, leadership, and goal legitimacy, and the perceptions of such a “community group.” When viewed in light of the salient characteristics of teacher culture, we may glean a new perspective on the panorama.

The View from the Road Not (Yet) Taken

Before continuing with the label of “collectivist” and so being guilty of the same telescopic vision as those who see the “individualistic” orientation alone, a caveat is needed. I use the terms “collectivism” and “collectivist” as conceptualisations of a predominantly social orientation and perspective. The philosophy of the terminology and refinements I will leave to eminent and learned others such as Westen (1985) and LeVine (1973). The characterisation of individuals as evoking this aspect, therefore, is based in the posit that in any individual the “...calculative and the moral dimensions (exist) simultaneously...” (Shamir, 1990; 314), with the latter suggested in the value-laden meanings teachers attribute to their work. Inasmuch as education is, at its core, a process of socialisation, the perceptions of those engaged in such an endeavour and their reasons for such engagement in what they perceive to be a “mission” or “calling,” is compelling as the locus of examination. Inasmuch as “...goals can be viewed as applications of values to specific situations” (Erez, 1997, in P. Earley, M. Erez, Eds.; 205), the salience of such a perspective cannot be underestimated. In this light, “collectivism,” it could be suggested, reflects the shared meanings and perceptions of teachers as to the basis for and goals of their work.

The collectivist sees him or herself as part of a group that becomes his or her point of reference for action. Collectivist behaviour is characterised by empathy, the prioritisation of interpersonal responsibility, and is focussed on process, not product. In addition, this orientation reflects the value of effort over that of ability (Triandis, 1995). Two examples may serve to illumine these characteristics with regard to teacher culture and its analysis by educational change researchers.

First, in a study of socialisation messages in the classroom, Brint *et al.* (2001) found that “effort” was at the centre of teacher-student interaction. As might be expected from an individualistic, outcome focussed perspective, Brint and his colleagues relate to this as the “operational foundations of work performance” (p. 161), yet if revisited through the collectivistic frame might be regarded as a “value” that teachers ascribe to their students’ work in terms of process rather than outcome. In addition, Hargreaves (1994) describes at length that teacher culture is characterised by polychronic time rather than monochronic time, the former characterised by an orientation to people, context, and processes, and the latter, an orientation of schedules, timelines, and low context sensitivity. It should come as no surprise that Triandis (1995) and Erez and Earley (1993), whose organisational studies from a social psychological perspective place evidence of polychronic time as reflective of collectivistic cultures. Hargreaves (1994) does recognise the predisposition of some non-Western cultures in this regard, but refrains from invoking the term “collectivism”, while positing that “In the strained juxtaposition of monochronic and polychronic time-frames can be seen much of the reason for the apparent failure of administratively imposed reforms in education” (p.105). When viewed through the I/C frame however, this juxtaposition might suggest an orientation challenge rather than an independent variable causing failure. Through the lens of collectivism, time-frames are one additional component of a socio-cultural orientation. When

considering the social emphasis of teacher culture, I/C may well inform the nature of many of these heretofore independent variables.

And That May Make All the Difference

The continued use of frames that disregard these components of the educational organisation's culture will continue to produce "how to" recipes rather than provide a conceptual basis for contemplating meanings attributed by those involved in the processes, which thereby affect behaviours regarding change, for example. The I/C frame presents a conceptual basis through which the social foundations and implicit meanings ascribed by teachers to their work may be viewed. These foundations are of salience in our ability to understand educational change processes and to glean a deeper appreciation for the effects such change attempts have on the school as a whole. The Individualism/Collectivism frame may also illumine the underlying bases for successful change processes, such as in rural areas, where "community" is not a managerial creation (D'Amico, 2000).

When researchers such as Hess, *et al.* (2000) for example, conclude that 'Generational replacement of teachers, (and) efforts to recruit *new kinds* of teachers...may serve to increase teacher receptiveness to at least some forms of school choice' (p. 209) (emphasis added), one must ask where educational change research is headed. "*New kinds*" assumes that one understands what *kind* one already "has." Implicit is that education needs to rid itself of teachers who are not receptive to change. What this might more convincingly suggest is that educational change needs a *new kind* of research to provide a *new kind* of understanding. When viewed through the I/C frame, both resistance and success in organisational change attempts imply the congruence of, or conflict between, socio-cultural orientations. In an educational setting this is suggested in a recent study of a curricular change in an elementary school in Israel (Ras, 2003), in which the I/C frame was able to illumine the conflicting

perceptions of the individualistic, achievement, and outcome oriented administrators, when contrasted and compared with the collectivistic, socially focussed, process-oriented teachers. In light of this and other research regarding teacher culture in otherwise “individualistic” countries, might this imply that teaching draws individuals whose collectivistic predisposition has been evoked towards what they perceive to be a profession of public-service with an *a priori* social aspect? Parka *et al.* (2001), in a study of “person-organisation fit across cultures” suggest that ‘...people might self-select into organisations that have similar I-C values to their own...’ (p.101) If so, might such self-selection be at play in the teaching profession? This possibility alone presents a number of avenues for research using the I/C frame of analysis.

Yet as tantalising as these possibilities may be, they may well remain unexplored when such widely-read educational change mavens as Fullan (1997) deride collectivism as “groupthink” or as an “...undesirable endpoint...”(p. 49) with regards to the facilitation of school change. Inasmuch as I/C is both an individually evoked and group level dynamic, it would seem that the evocation of our collectivistic aspect is not a matter of choice; it is a basic facet of being human. Because we live and work with others, we often compromise, and we sometimes conform. We also accept certain norms of behaviour, and as Flynn and Chatman (2001, in C. Cooper et al., Eds.) point out, “...the mere existence of norms suggests that there is some *conformity* among organisational or group members, it does not necessarily suggest that there is also *uniformity* among these members” (p. 268) (emphasis original). And any organisational social system must have some discreet level of conformity if it is to function. The danger, I would posit, is far less in “groupthink” than in the organisational manipulation of basic human social needs. (See Raz, 2002, for an exhaustive and enlightening discussion of affective normative control in organisations).

If we recognise those characteristics that “community,” “social capital” and the collectivistic orientation hold in common, and appreciate that the latter is of greater congruence to the context of education than business or outcome oriented theories, then educational research can ill afford to ignore the promise I/C holds. Much research points in this direction, and our ability to grasp what the field is telling us about the context of educational change may depend on it. This process will not be easy in that it challenges us to mould a comprehensive, multi-level topography based on the work of many researchers from diverse disciplines. Education is after all at the nexus between the individual and society and so our research and our understanding should reflect those myriad meanings and interpretations at all levels.

Policy-makers, one might suggest with some assurance, will not appreciate research that does not supply quick fixes, systemic solutions, or focus on direct routes to educational “destinations.” Yet education at any level has never “produced” in the time frames of elected office. Education and research are incremental processes. It remains to be seen whether educational change research is able to traverse this conceptual terrain, for if so, we will be propelled into the most arduous meaning-making journey of all: What is the purpose of education, and who is to decide?

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