"UBUNTU" -- PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE: AN EXAMINATION OF XHOSA TEACHERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN LANGA, SOUTH AFRICA

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A recent South African study estimated that nationwide, 20,000 teachers in primary and secondary schools leave the profession each year (Samodien, 2008). It is important to ascertain what factors contribute to teacher job satisfaction, in order to promote quality education in South African schools (Mwamwenda, 1995; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999) and end the teacher retention crisis. Psychological sense of community (PSOC) might contribute to job satisfaction for teachers in under-resourced schools in South Africa. Before the effects of PSOC on job satisfaction can be studied, teacher communities must first be studied to verify that PSOC exists in the South African context. Building on the literature about PSOC, teacher community, and urban Black South African schools, this thesis examines Xhosa teachers’ PSOC in Langa, South Africa, in the context of the indigenous African philosophy of ubuntu. Applying qualitative methodology in the form of interviews and observations, this study explains how two male and three female teachers at Sandile Primary School (a pseudonym) conceptualize their community, as well as how they incorporate ubuntu philosophy into their work lives. Utilizing McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) theory of PSOC as a framework for analysis, this study examines the ways in which the participants construct and sustain their teacher community. This study concludes that a strong PSOC does exist among the teachers at Sandile. Additionally, the 5 participants feel very strongly about the relevance of ubuntu philosophy to their roles as educators, as they practice it in their everyday work lives. This thesis provides a foundation for future studies on the potential effects of PSOC on job satisfaction.
Dedicated to

Narcisse Toussa Nkoregha

and

Joshua R. Curie

who inspire me with their courage and their character

In Loving Memory of Nana

Helyn L. Collins

October 28, 1929 – August 22, 2008
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CHAPTER I.: INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession in South Africa is facing a serious problem with retention. A recent study by the Cape Professional Teachers’ Association estimated that nationwide, 20,000 teachers in primary and secondary schools leave the profession each year (Samodien, 2008), which is equivalent to 18.6 percent of the total number of primary and secondary educators (South African Department of Education, 2007). The problem of teacher retention contributes to an overall shortage of teachers; the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union reported that the country is in urgent need of about 40,000 teachers (Samodien, 2008). Some of the reasons why teachers quit teaching include: large class sizes, lack of materials and resources, dilapidated buildings, perceived lack of government support, low salary, and an overwhelming workload (Mwamwenda, 1995; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002; Samodien, 2008; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999). The number of teachers leaving the profession is particularly high in areas with urban, impoverished populations. In the Western Cape province alone, 595 teachers left their careers between January 2008 and August 2008 (Samodien, 2008). In areas with large populations of Black South Africans, factors such as lack of materials, large class sizes, and perceived lack of government support are a legacy of the apartheid regime, when Black South Africans received poor education with inadequate resources (Afolayan, 2004).

Yet not all teachers who work in resource-challenged schools choose to leave the profession. Several schools facing identical situations in terms of lack of resources and large class sizes may produce “vastly different results” (Milner & Khoza, 2008, p. 156). An example of this divergence can be found in Langa, a township in the Western Cape province that is almost entirely populated by Black South Africans of the Xhosa ethnic group. In Langa, there are 12 schools, almost all of which face the challenging factors mentioned above. Despite these
hardships, there is one school in particular where teachers seem to be very committed to their profession: Sandile Primary School, where some teachers have been employed as long as 28 years. Sandile serves approximately 791 students across grade R (kindergarten) through grade 8. This study examined the teaching community at Sandile to learn more about how the teachers’ working relationships help them remain committed to their school and their profession.

Significance of the Study

Various researchers have studied the challenges faced by South African teachers. In their study of Black teachers in KwaZulu-Natal province, Ngidi and Sibaya (2002) concluded that a large number of teachers report relatively high stress levels. In this study, stress was identified by such characteristics as the teacher having anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, or over-reacting to situations. Mwamwenda, Monyooe, and Glencross (1997), who conducted a similar study in the former Transkei homeland in the Eastern Cape province, put the number as high as 91.3 percent of secondary school teachers who feel stressed. Ngidi (1995) described the overall working conditions for Black teachers in South Africa as demoralizing. In another study of secondary school teachers in the Transkei region conducted by Mwamwenda (1995), the author stated, “the teaching profession is in serious jeopardy if the majority of its members are dissatisfied with the job of teaching and/or do not regard matters related to work as being of central concern” (p. 86). Therefore, it is important to ascertain what factors, if any, can contribute to teacher job satisfaction, in order to promote quality education in South African schools (Mwamwenda, 1995; Steyn & van Wyk, 1999) and end the teacher retention crisis.

The key issue is determining how to build job satisfaction among teachers who face so many challenges in their work environment. In his 2005 study of teachers in townships of the Western Cape province in particular, Bull found a strong positive correlation between
commitment and job satisfaction. In other words, if teachers in urban areas of the Western Cape province feel they have job satisfaction, they are more likely to be committed to the teaching profession. Bull also found a strong positive correlation between teacher’s professional working relationships and job satisfaction – the more a teacher felt he or she had strong professional relationships with coworkers, the more satisfied he or she felt with the teaching profession. Using Bull’s findings, it seems as though one potential method of building job satisfaction for teachers in the Western Cape province involves increasing the quality of teachers’ working relationships, creating a supportive working environment, and helping teachers feel as though they belong to their school and profession. Quality interactions, a supportive environment, and a sense of belonging are all elements of psychological sense of community (PSOC).

Psychological sense of community is one of the factors contributing to job satisfaction for teachers in America and Europe (Brouwer, Brekelmans, Nieuwenhuis, & Simons, 2007; Rossi & Stringfield, 1997; Royal, DeAngelis, & Rossi, 1996; Royal & Rossi, 1999; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Few, if any, studies have been published on psychological sense of community as pertaining to teachers in South Africa. If other international studies are any indication, psychological sense of community might contribute to job satisfaction for teachers in under-resourced schools in South Africa. Yet before the potential effects of PSOC on job satisfaction can be studied, teacher communities must first be studied in order to verify that PSOC exists in this particular context.

Problem Statement

The problem of this study was to examine the teacher community at Sandile Primary School to determine if psychological sense of community exists among the teachers. The focus of the problem was two-fold: (1) to conduct interviews with teachers at Sandile on topics such as
their working relationships and their interpretations of ubuntu; and (2) to make observations of teachers at Sandile interacting with each other.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ professional working relationships (i.e., the teacher community) at Sandile Primary School in Langa, South Africa. This study focused on the intersections of the teachers’ psychological sense of community and their interpretations of the indigenous philosophy of ubuntu. This study utilized McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of psychological sense of community (PSOC) as a framework for understanding sense of community among Sandile teachers.

Overview of Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology seeks to understand individual interpretations of human experience within a specific context (Coyle, 2007; Freebody, 2003; Lyons, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994), as opposed to quantitative methodology, which is often conducted in a decontextualized setting such as a laboratory. The context of the participant’s experience may include the cultural, geographical, historical, and ideological settings in which a person is embedded (Coyle, 2007). The qualitative tradition recognizes that the positivistic, scientific perspective of the quantitative tradition may not be effective in understanding the complex dynamics of human relationships, particularly when studying community (Tolan, Chertok, Keys, & Jason, 1990). Essentially, qualitative research is conducted to understand the participants’ point of view, to see the world from their unique perspectives, and to contribute to overall knowledge (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This differs from quantitative research, which seeks to make generalizations
about populations, to explain and predict behavior, and to search for cause and effect (Culbertson, 1981).

Qualitative research is less often used as a methodology in psychological studies. The academic discipline of psychology tends to rely on positivistic, science-driven quantitative methodology, which says there is an orderly, objective, knowable, and fixed reality (McGrath & Johnson, 2003). Yet some researchers in the field of psychology agree that qualitative methodology can be useful in explorations of how behavior and meaning are understood by participants in the context of their everyday lives (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003; Marecek, 2003; Maton, 1990). The setting-specific nature of psychological sense of community makes it a good research topic for qualitative methodology, given the focus of the qualitative tradition on contextual understanding (Hill, 1996).

When considering the context of research in post-apartheid South Africa, issues of race, class, power, and privilege frequently arise. Much of the South African research from the field of community psychology focuses on addressing oppression and ensuring that psychological services are available to historically underprivileged populations. The contextual nature of qualitative methodology can contribute to research that emphasizes social justice, as the unique circumstances of a specific sociocultural situation can be considered. This is different from quantitative methodology, the overarching goal of which is to generalize results to broader populations.

Overall, when conducting cross-cultural research, it is important to seek to understand the perspectives of the participants and the meanings they make in their everyday lives, as opposed to imposing a researcher’s view and cultural context onto their lives. Thus, qualitative methodology is an effective means of accomplishing this goal. In this study, I used qualitative
methodology to conduct a study of five teachers at Sandile Primary School. This study was conducted over the period of May 23 through June 19, 2008. My research procedures involved 60-minute oral interviews with each teacher, as well as 30-minute observations of each teacher interacting with other teachers at the school.

*Research Questions*

During the interviews and observations, I sought answers to three research questions in order to explore teachers’ psychological sense of community at Sandile:

1. What does teacher community look like at Sandile Primary School?
2. How does this teacher community display elements of psychological sense of community?
3. How do teachers in this teacher community incorporate ubuntu philosophy into their professional work lives?

*Limitations of the Study*

Perhaps the most significant limitation to this study is my role as a White American conducting research in a Black South African township. I can never completely understand the experience of living in a township in post-apartheid South Africa. South African society is still highly racialized (Ngonyama ka Sigogo, Hooper, Long, Lykes, Wilson, & Zietkiewicz, 2004; Ramutsindela, 2001) and the color of my skin may have caused the participants to have misperceptions about my power, authority, or purpose. Another limitation is my age. In Xhosa culture, young people are expected to show respect and deference to their elders (Sagner, 2001). My interviews and questions could have been perceived as disrespectful or forward, which might have led the participants to act differently around me. Also, all five of my participants were between the ages of 40 and 59. There are other teachers at Sandile who are younger than 40
years of age. The viewpoints of my participants may not adequately represent the younger teachers’ points of view.

An additional limitation is the fact that I conducted the interviews in English, which is not the first language of the participants. While the participants have strong English skills, the possibility of misinterpretation exists. On the whole, the teachers at Sandile speak in isiXhosa when talking with each other, as it is the first language of all of the teachers. With respect to my observations, I persisted in observing the teachers even when they spoke in isiXhosa, as their body language revealed important information. After approximately one week, I could understand some basic isiXhosa phrases, such as molweni bafundi ("Greetings, students"), moto mama, unjani ("Hello mother [woman], how are you"), and ndiphilile, nkosi ("I am fine, thank you"). Understanding these basic phrases assisted me with my observations, particularly because greetings are an important part of Xhosa culture. Every so often, I relied upon teachers to translate from isiXhosa to English, which occasionally created difficulty when an isiXhosa word did not have a literal translation to English.

**Definition of Key Terms**

In this section, I will provide working definitions of the following terms: ubuntu, community, psychological sense of community, and teacher community. These terms will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

*Ubuntu*. The five participants in this study are each members of the Xhosa ethnic group, a group that is indigenous to southern Africa. To best appreciate psychological sense of community amongst the Sandile teachers, I used the context of the indigenous African philosophy of *ubuntu*. Ubuntu is a philosophical tradition specifically practiced by the Nguni peoples, who make up approximately two-thirds of the population of Black South Africans
(Afolayan, 2004). The Nguni peoples speak the following languages: isiZulu, isiSwati, isiNdebele, and isiXhosa (Wanless, 2007); they include the Xhosa ethnic group (Scheub, 1996). The word ubuntu does not have a literal translation in English, but the meaning comes close to humanity, humanism, or human dignity. Buthelezi (1986) described ubuntu as a humanism of thought and deed. As a philosophy, ubuntu is commonly related in the isiXhosa phrase, “Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu,” or “People are people through other people” (Marks, 2000, p. 182). Ubuntu implies an inextricable link between a person and his or her community (Gbadegesin, 1998). Bhengu described ubuntu as “unity of community which is the heart of the [southern] African culture” (1996, p. 22).

Community. The definition of community does not exclusively refer to a geographic neighborhood; it can also be based on human relationships (Bramston, Bruggerman, & Pretty, 2002; Chavis et al., 1986). For the purposes of this paper, I will use a definition of community that comes from ubuntu philosophy: “Community is an ongoing association of men and women who have a special commitment to one another and a developed (distinct) sense of their common life” (Coetzee, 1998, p. 276). The members of this community might share a common geographic location, hobby, interest, or philosophy.

Psychological sense of community. If the members of a community have quality interactions, a feeling of belonging to the group can be created. The notion of belonging can be described as feeling as though one has a purpose; that one is accepted by fellow community members; and that one can trust or rely upon other community members. The concept of belonging is part of the definition of psychological sense of community. Psychological sense of community includes not only as the feelings of belonging, but also the feelings of commitment and purpose that members of a group share (McMillan, 1976). Essentially, it is the concept that
community members matter to each other and that they will work together to meet each others’ needs (McMillan, 1976). Psychological sense of community will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review section of this paper.

*Teacher community.* For the purposes of this paper, I will define teacher community as a professional-relational community composed of teachers who interact with each other primarily in the physical setting of a school, and whose overall goals include promoting the mental and physical well-being of students and engaging in collaborative activity. As members of a teacher community, individual teachers feel a psychological sense of community within the context of their specific work environment at a school.

*Organization of the Thesis*

The remainder of this paper is divided into four chapters. Chapter II provides historical and contemporary context for the study and review of relevant literature. Chapter III highlights the methods used for the study. Chapter IV presents the analysis and discussion of findings. Chapter V summarizes the study, with presentation of conclusions and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER II.: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of research and literature related to my research questions. The first review area presents historical and contemporary background on racial categories in South Africa, the Xhosa ethnic group, the Cape Town area, Langa township, and the state of urban Black South African schools. The second review area addresses the philosophy of ubuntu and its applications (which corresponds with research question #3: How do teachers in this teacher community incorporate ubuntu philosophy into their professional work lives). The third review area reviews the concepts of community, psychological sense of community, and teacher community (which addresses research question #1: What does teacher community look like at Sandile Primary School, and #2: How does this teacher community display elements of psychological sense of community).

Racial Categories in South Africa

Even though more than ten years have passed since the end of apartheid, life in South Africa is still deeply and inherently racialized. There are four race groups in South Africa: Black, White, Coloured, and Indian; the classifications themselves attest to the legacy of apartheid (Ngonyama ka Sigogo et al., 2004; Ramutsindela, 2001). Blacks can be defined as historically disadvantaged persons, persons with dark skin color, or persons of African linguistic heritage, while Whites can be defined as historically advantaged persons, persons of light skin color, or persons of colonial linguistic heritage (Ngonyama ka Sigogo et al., 2004). Coloureds are defined as Black persons who may not have an African linguistic heritage, or who may have a European linguistic heritage, or a person who does not fit into the other categories (Ramutsindela, 2001; Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). Indians consist of people who have a heritage from the Indian subcontinent or other areas of Asia (Ngonyama ka Sigogo et al., 2004). The terminology for these
racial groups continues to exist even in the post-apartheid era (Ramutsindela, 2001). Many people chose to continue to self-identify using these terms (Ngonyama ka Sigogo et al., 2004), even though these terms are connected with specific events that occurred in the period of apartheid. The Xhosa are South Africa’s second largest ethnic group with approximately 7 million people, behind the Zulu with about 9 million people (Nguni Imports, 2008). Many, if not most Xhosa identify with the Black racial category.

Xhosa Ethnic Group in South Africa

In this section, I will discuss a brief history of the Xhosa ethnic group in South Africa. I will also highlight a few traditions that are important to Xhosa culture. This information will help contextualize the perspectives of Sandile teachers.

History. I believe it is important to consider the Sandile teachers’ sense of community from their specific cultural perspective as members of the Xhosa ethnic group living in a South African township. According to Xhosa oral historian Bhotomane (1994), the Xhosa are a nation of people that traveled to South Africa from more northern areas of sub-Saharan Africa, eventually settling in what is now the Eastern Cape province. The traditional social structure of the Xhosa is composed of chiefdoms based more or less on familial clans (Nguni Imports, 2008). The Xhosa people were originally farmers and cattle-raisers (Scheub, 1996). The Xhosa lived more or less undisturbed in the region that is now the Eastern Cape until the late 1770s, when they began to clash with the Afrikaners, the Dutch colonizers who settled in South Africa. For nearly the next 100 years, the Afrikaners and the Xhosa fought over land in the region (Scheub 1996). When the British settled in the area in 1820, they also clashed with the Xhosa in battles over land (Thompson, 1995).
One of the most well known incidents in the history of the Xhosa people is the cattle killing incident of 1856. A young Xhosa woman had visions from her ancestors, telling her that the ancestors would rise from the dead and protect the living, so long as all of the cattle were killed, all granaries were emptied, and all farming ceased (Scheub, 1996). By August 11, 1865 – the date the ancestors were supposed to rise from the dead – nothing eventful had occurred. However, as many as 40,000 Xhosa soon died of starvation (Thompson, 1995). Some Xhosa said the young woman was deluded and others said the whole incident was a conspiracy by Europeans to drive the Xhosa from the area (Scheub, 1996). In the following year, the Xhosa began to lose their momentum in battles with White colonizers. In 1866, the land where the Xhosa lived was incorporated into the Cape Colony and the Xhosa, along with other Black South African ethnic groups, were forced into labor for the White inhabitants (Thompson 1995).

At the end of the war between the British and the Afrikaners in 1902, the Union of South Africa was formed and racial segregation became official national policy, with non-Whites being denied the right to vote in most areas of the country (Scheub, 1996). In 1948, the Nationalist political party, comprised primarily of Afrikaners, gained complete control over political power in the nation. Over the next 15 years, under the leadership of Hendrik Verwoerd, several hundred apartheid laws were created (Scheub, 1996). Examples of apartheid laws include: the 1950 Immorality Act, which prohibited interracial relationships; the 1950 Group Areas Act, which made separate racial residential areas compulsory; and the 1954 Natives Resettlement Act, which gave the White-led government the power to force other racial groups to move to townships.

Practically all of the apartheid laws affected the Xhosa ethnic group in some way, serving to entrench them even more deeply in poverty and oppression. Yet two policies in particular would lead to protests in the latter half of the twentieth century. The first law that greatly
affected the Xhosa and other Black South Africans was the 1953 Bantu Education Act, which phased out any school that promoted fair and equal education for Blacks and created a new system of education which prepared people for little more than manual labor (Scheub, 1996; Worden, 2007). The Bantu education policy also perpetuated stereotypes about Black South Africans in the curriculum and textbooks of both Blacks and Whites alike, and ensured that Black schools would receive less funding and resources than White schools (Michigan State University [MSU], n.d.). Another apartheid law that greatly impacted the Xhosa was the 1959 Bantu Self-Government Act, which terminated the citizenship of all Black South Africans, and gave the government the power to force them to move to new areas of the country (Afolayan, 2004). As a result, the Xhosa were divided into two groups and forced to move to two different regions: Transkei and Ciskei. This policy served to further separate the nation of South Africa in terms of race.

During the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, political and social turmoil erupted in South Africa. Black South Africans, including the Xhosa, participated in uprisings, protests, and marches. Many of the marches focused on both ending Bantu education and restoring the citizenship of Blacks (Scheub, 1996; Thompson, 1995). The White South Africans often inflicted violence on the Black South Africans, for example, the infamous shootings of Blacks by Whites in Soweto and Sharpsville (Scheub, 1996). A crisis point was reached in the 1980s and lasted until the early 1990s, when President De Klerk of the Nationalist party was elected (Thompson, 1995). De Klerk began repealing apartheid laws in 1990, including the Group Areas Act. In 1994, De Klerk restored citizenship to all South Africans, including Blacks, Indians, and Coloureds (Scheub, 1996). The first free election was held on April 27, 1994 and Nelson Mandela was elected the first President of democratic South Africa. Mandela was inaugurated on
May 10, 1994 (Scheub, 1996). At last, after nearly 200 years of oppression by Whites, the Xhosa and other Black South African peoples could begin the long process of healing and reclaiming their identities.

**Xhosa cultural traditions.** The Xhosa have many distinct cultural traditions. This section is intended to provide a brief overview of the key traditions. Explaining Xhosa customs further contextualizes the setting of this study. Additionally, understanding cultural traditions also provides insight into the events that the study’s participants feel are important in their lives.

One of the most well known Xhosa traditions is the circumcision ceremony for boys, which marks their passage to adulthood. The men of the neighborhood community take boys aged approximately 16-21 years into the countryside to participate in ceremonial activities where the boys learn about the Xhosa traditions of manhood, followed by ritual circumcision (Afolayan, 2004). Girls also participate in a ritual initiation at approximately age 16, although it does not involve circumcision (Nguni Imports, 2008).

The Xhosa also have customs specifically related to marriage. In traditional Xhosa culture, the patriarch of the family may have more than one wife (Nguni Imports, 2008). When a couple marries, a *lobola* or bride price is established; this is an exchange of cattle or money from the prospective husband to the father of the bride for the permission to marry (Afolayan, 2004; Nguni Imports, 2008). Historically, women in Xhosa society were placed in subservient roles. However, when the Xhosa men migrated to work in mines during the twentieth century, the women took on the responsibility of running the home, and they have not relinquished that role (Nguni Imports, 2008). Women in traditional Xhosa society wear long dresses and married women wear a special headpiece (Nguni Imports, 2008).
In Xhosa culture, the oral tradition is very important. Songs, poetry, folktales, legends, proverbs, politics, and knowledge are all traditionally passed along orally (Afolayan, 2004). The perceived wisdom of proverbs and riddles is highly valued. Also valued is respect for elders and the ancestors (Afolayan, 2004). Beginning in the 1800s and lasting through apartheid, many Xhosa converted to Christianity (Nguni Imports, 2008), yet ancestor worship is still prevalent for both Christians and non-Christians alike. Ancestral spirits can only be accessed by a diviner (known as an isangoma) or by the genealogically senior member of an extended family (Afolayan, 2004). Special ceremonies are held in honor of the ancestors. The Xhosa believe the ancestors offer advice, send good luck, even send sickness, all depending on how well the living relatives remember and honor them. In addition to accessing the ancestral spirits, isangoma also practice healing and herbology, and some Xhosa will visit an isangoma as often as or even more than they will visit a regular medical doctor (Afolayan, 2004).

According to the 2001 census, 23.7 percent of the individuals living in the Western Cape province identified isiXhosa as their first language (Statistics South Africa [SSA], 2001). This data suggests that at least 1.1 million people living in the Western Cape province are Xhosa (SSA, 2001). The next section presents an overview of the Western Cape province and the Cape Town area, in particular.

**Western Cape Province and Cape Town Area**

The city of Cape Town is in the Western Cape province, which is located in the southwestern corner of South Africa (see Figure 1, p. 17). The Western Cape province borders the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Indian Ocean to the south, the Eastern Cape province to the east, and the Northern Cape province to the north. Cape Town sits on the northeastern edge of
the Cape Peninsula, the southwestern-most point on the African continent, which borders both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans (see Figure 2, p. 18).

With respect to this study, it is most important to note that the geographical layout of Cape Town still bears the imprint of apartheid racial relations (Rohleder, Swartz, Carolissen, Bozalek, & Leibowitz, 2008). Rohleder et al. (2008), in their study of university students’ perceptions of community, discovered that “as with much of South Africa, [Cape Town] continues to reflect the legacy of apartheid’s segregated and unequally developed areas” (p. 256). Their study provides a good summary of the geography of the Cape Town area: Whites tend to live in spacious homes in prime areas such as the winelands; Coloureds tend to live in small houses and blocks of apartments in the congested, geographically flat, treeless area known as Cape Flats; and Blacks tend to live in small houses or huts made of iron sheeting, plastic sheeting, wood, or concrete in very highly congested areas near the airport or the major highway, with sandy soil and little to no vegetation. Some Coloureds and Blacks live in middle or upper-middle class areas, but Cape Town is still socio-economically and geographically segregated in this manner.

Introduction to Langa Township

During apartheid in South Africa, the White-dominated government denied citizenship to members of the other race groups and ordered them to move to less desirable geographic areas (Bähre, 2007). This decision was based on reasoning that different racial groups have important cultural differences, and each group should be kept physically separate to “develop its own genius uncorrupted by alien influences” (July, 1998, p. 444). An unspoken reason for this decision was that it allowed Whites to maintain power and authority over other groups (Hart, 2002; Ramutsindela, 2001; Thompson, 1995). The government passed laws that forced many
Blacks to move to areas called townships, which were small urban communities on the outskirts of major cities where Whites resided (July, 1998). Townships were carefully designed with the overall strategy of apartheid in mind, enabling White law enforcement officials to keep close surveillance on Black residents in order to monitor and control residents’ behavior (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation [IJR], 2005; Thompson, 1995). Langa is a township located on the outskirts of Cape Town, along with other well-known townships such as Gugulethu, Nyanga, and Khayelitsha.

Langa is Cape Town’s oldest township, created in the early 1920s (Etownship, 2008; IJR, 2005). The first homes in Langa were barracks or hostels designed to house those men who had left their homelands in the former Transkei and Ciskei regions to search for work, particularly men from the Xhosa ethnic group (Etownship, IJR). These small homes often consisted of one or two rooms, with no bathroom facilities (Etownship, 2008). These residences still exist in Langa, although families now occupy them, with as many as six or more people living in one or two rooms. One of the most famous historical events to occur in Langa during March 1960 was a march where over fifty thousand people rallied against apartheid pass laws. Police opened fire and killed and injured many of those involved (Etownship, 2008; IJR, 2005). Residents of Langa also participated in the 1976 student resistance against an addition to the Bantu education policy that mandated that students in the upper grades would be required to learn key subjects only in Afrikaans (Etownship, 2008; IJR, 2005).

According to the 2001 census, Langa had a population of 49,667 residents, of whom 49,444 were Black, 213 were Coloured, and 10 were White (SSA, 2001). The same source also revealed that the first language of 97 percent of Langa residents is isiXhosa. Because Langa is fairly close to Cape Town, many poorer people searching for work have moved to Langa from
other provinces. In recent years, an informal settlement or “squatters’ camp” nicknamed “Joe Slovo” has grown on the outskirts of Langa, where thousands of people live in shacks, with poor health and living standards (IJR, 2005). The 2001 census found that 30.5 percent of Langa residents live in informal dwellings or shacks, most of which live in Joe Slovo (SSA, 2001). According to the principal of Sandile Primary School, over 95 percent of Sandile students come from the Joe Slovo informal settlement; their parents primarily moved from the Eastern Cape province to Joe Slovo in order to search for a better job in the Western Cape province.

*The State of Urban Black South African Schools*

The socioeconomic environment of Black South African schools is certainly challenging, especially in townships such as Langa. As noted by Ngidi and Sibaya (2002) in their study of Black teachers in KwaZulu-Natal province, “the environment under which teachers work in this country is less conducive to teaching than that of first-world countries” (p. 13). Thus, it is not surprising to find low job satisfaction amongst many South African teachers. In their analysis of education in Gauteng province, Chisholm and Vally (1996) stated “the morale of teachers is influenced by the socio-economic environment in which they work” (p. 13). In their study of urban Black schools in South Africa, Steyn and van Wyk (1999) found the majority of teachers complained of poor salaries, yet they also complained that they are often expected to fulfill multiple roles and responsibilities. The teachers in that study also listed overcrowded classrooms, difficult students, and lack of support services as other factors that contribute to their low levels of job satisfaction. In a similar study of South African teachers in the former Black homeland of Transkei, Mwamwenda (1995) discovered teachers’ major concerns included: the inadequate supply of teaching and learning materials and equipment, overly large class sizes, dilapidated
buildings, lack of student discipline, and an overwhelming job load. These physical, resource-related, and job role-related inadequacies were also confirmed by Ngidi and Sibaya (2002).

In addition to the issues listed above, other changes and challenges facing all South African teachers include: the recent decision to ban corporal punishment; downsizing within the profession; early retirement; and the new national policy that states teachers must teach learners of any age or level, regardless of circumstances (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002). As explained by Ngidi and Sibaya, the decision to ban corporal punishment left many teachers unsure of how to maintain discipline in their classroom. Downsizing and early retirement continue to cause anxiety for teachers, who worry about their personal financial stability. The policy of teaching all learners regardless of circumstances contributes to overly large class sizes, as well as lack of resources to provide materials and support for learners at various stages of development and school readiness.

Another source of worry for South African teachers was the change to Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and the subsequent demand for increased assessment (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002). OBE was implemented in 1997 and was designed to make education equitable for all cultural groups in South Africa, to empower learners, and to hold schools accountable for providing quality education (Botha, 2002). Instead of focusing on teaching particular content during particular grade levels, OBE stressed the importance of teaching students to perform well in key outcome areas, pre-determined by the teachers and the school staff (Botha, 2002). As Botha noted, these outcomes established by individual schools were intended to highlight what learners should be able to do at the end of their education, such as think critically or use imagination and creativity. However, changing to OBE has been a slow process, and many teachers, as well as administrators at all levels of the education system, have been resistant to the new curriculum
(Botha, 2002). Also, resource-poor schools, such as township schools, struggle to find the money, materials, and staffing to implement the new curriculum and train teachers (Botha, 2002). These challenges – such as struggling to implement a new curriculum, a lack of resources, large class sizes, downsizing, early retirement – can lead to stress and burnout for teachers in the context of urban Black South African schools.

The Concept of Ubuntu

To appreciate PSOC in this context, it is important to grasp the concept of ubuntu, a philosophy unique to areas of southern Africa (Kamwangamalu, 1999). To appreciate ubuntu, it is helpful understand some philosophical principles about the individual and the community. In ubuntu philosophy, there is a mutually dependent link between the individual and the community (Gyekye, 1998). The individual person is an end in and of himself, yet he is also a fundamental part of the community, which may include his or her family, neighbors, clan, or larger society (Biko, 1998; Marks, 2000). The community cannot exist without individual members; individuals cannot exist without the community (Gyekye, 1998). From the time a person is born, he or she is surrounded by the love, care, and support of the community (Biko, 1998; Gbadegesin, 1998). The individual grows up inextricably linked to the community through family ties and personal relationships (Bhengu, 1996). The joys, sorrows, gains, and losses of the individual are also keenly felt by the community (Bhengu, 1996; Biko, 1998). As Coetzee (1998) explains, “the history of a person’s life is the story of his/her transactions with the community’s material and moral worlds” (p. 277). The individual’s reputation reflects upon the community (Gbadegesin, 1998; Prinsloo, 1998); therefore, community members feel it is necessary to contribute to an individual’s positive upbringing and formation.
In the metaphysical tradition of the Nguni peoples (including the Xhosa), God is an invisible supreme being who constitutes all of existence and is not apart from the world; that is, God is inherently part of all living things, and all living things are part of God (Greef & Loubser, 2008; Teffo & Roux, 1998). As Lord of the universe, God is above human understanding and accessibility (Afolayan, 2004). God created all individual human beings and continues to provide for them (Greeff & Loubser, 2008). As God only creates things that are special and good, a person must therefore be good in and of himself (Biko, 1998; Bhengu, 1996; Buthelezi, 1986; Gyekye, 1998). A human being is priceless and can never be thrown away or discarded (Gbadegesin, 1998; Khoza, 1994). Personal dignity is an important principle of ubuntu (Bhengu, 1996; Mbeki, 2006). Buthelezi (1986) stated that ubuntu philosophy teaches us to value every human being for the simple fact that he or she is a human being. The purpose of humanity is to simply be as God created humans to be. In addition to creating individuals, God also created community (Biko, 1998; Wanless, 2007). Biko (1998) noted: “We regard our living together … as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life” (p. 27). Thus, both the individual and the community are priceless.

According to ubuntu philosophy, while the purpose of the community (i.e., family, neighbors, and clan) is to discover and meet the needs of the common good, this cannot come at the complete expense of individual dignity (Bhengu, 1996; Gyekye, 1998; Marks, 2000; Ngubane, 1979; Prinsloo, 1998). The community must not pass any sort of laws that threaten the dignity of the individual person, since the person is a gift from God (Bhengu, 1996). Essentially, the community serves as a matrix in which an individual grows. To use a metaphor, the community is the potting soil in which the individual as a plant or flower grows. As that plant or
flower grows, it selects the nutrients it needs best from the soil, while its neighboring plant might select something different. The end result is a beautiful garden with different varieties of plants, all of which are necessary to contribute to the good of the whole garden, but none of which are the same, for sameness would interrupt the beauty and creativity of God.

The matrix of the community contains the primary elements of ubuntu, which include: sharing, sympathy, empathy, tolerance, caring, compassion, solidarity, sensitivity to the needs of others, warmth, understanding, and acts of kindness (Marks, 2000; Mbeki, 2006; Prinsloo, 1998). Mkhize (1995) described the major elements of ubuntu as communication, consultation, compromise, cooperation, camaraderie, conscientiousness, and compassion. One might view ubuntu as a philosophy or way of living that connects strongly with emotion (Bhengu, 1996; Biko, 1998; Khoza, 1994; Prinsloo, 1998; Senghor, 1962). This emotional connection relates to the emotional and affective components of PSOC, a topic that will be discussed in Chapter IV.

In ubuntu philosophy, the purpose of an individual is to constantly evolve (Bhengu, 1996; Ngubane, 1979). As a person grows older, he or she is evolving and becoming something new and better in terms of personal and spiritual development, through his or her interactions and relationships with other people (Bhengu, 1996). Philosophers such as Ngubane (1979), Bhengu (1996), and Gyekye (1998) use the metaphor of a coin: an individual is on one side of the coin and his or her neighbors are on the other side of the coin – both sides are necessary for the complete whole. An individual’s talents and capabilities alone are not enough for a person to fulfill his or her full evolutionary potential (Gyekye, 1998). The gaps in one’s abilities and knowledge must be filled from his or her neighbor’s knowledge and experience (Bhengu, 1996; Gyekye, 1998). Therefore, an individual is dependent upon her or his neighbors and the
neighbors upon her or him, as they help each other to grow in knowledge, skills, and ability (Coetzee, 1998; Gbadegesin, 1998).

One’s neighbors can only help one evolve if they, too, have all the basic essentials of life to ensure they are treated with dignity. Thus it is a person’s responsibility to make sure that his or her neighbors are cared for in bereavement, illness, and poverty (Bhengu, 1996; Biko, 1998; Mbeki, 2006; Ngubane, 1979; Prinsloo, 1998). To put it another way, if an individual discovers that a neighbor is suffering, one has an obligation to help relieve the suffering. Otherwise, until that neighbor’s suffering is relieved, he or she cannot reach his or her full potential, nor can the neighbor help the individual to reach the individual’s own potential. Furthermore, when an individual helps others, she or he contributes to her or his own evolution (Bhengu, 1996). One does not help others with the expectation that they will immediately return the favor – it is not a score to be tallied. An individual trusts that in one’s time of need, one’s neighbor will offer help, because that is the spirit of ubuntu (Bhengu, 1996; Biko, 1998). This also includes celebrating joyous occasions, such as marriage, or helping around the farm and contributing labor or money when needed.

Ubuntu is a philosophy that can be practiced by anyone. It is not a philosophy limited to a certain race, gender, or group of people (Bhengu, 1996; Makgoba, 1996; Ngubane, 1979). To be exclusionary in that sense would be detrimental to the philosophy: if other humans are excluded, the interactions that can promote our own growth and evolution are limited. Bhengu (1996) explained that ubuntu “does not give up on people and it starts from the premise that everybody has a potential to realize the promise of being human” (p. 12). Even if a different group of people has different laws or customs, one must still respect individuals from that group, because
ultimately they are still individual human beings, created by God, deserving of respect and dignity (Bhengu, 1996; Ngubane, 1979).

To summarize, ubuntu is an indigenous African philosophy consisting of elements such as care, compassion, kindness, tolerance, and respect. Ubuntu philosophy recognizes that an individual human being is a unique creation who deserves to be treated with dignity. Ubuntu also calls for individuals to fully participate in the life of a community. A community will provide individuals with the resources and support they need for their own personal evolution, but the community is also dependent on the contributions of individuals to sustain it. As Bhengu (1996) explained, ubuntu “aims at emphasizing the fact that every person is a social being who can realize his [or her potential] in the company of, and the interaction with, other human beings” (p. 6).

Applications of Ubuntu

Very little literature on potential applications of ubuntu to education is available. Most of the studies that were conducted for primary or secondary schools were related to citizenship education. One exemplary study was conducted by Enslin and Horsthemke (2004), who concluded that while understanding ubuntu is important for appreciating the culture and values of historically disadvantaged South Africans, ubuntu alone should not be used as a philosophical underpinning to citizenship education, as White, Indian, and Coloured South Africans may not necessarily relate to the philosophy. Other studies of ubuntu have been conducted with respect to higher education. Ubuntu was reviewed as a potentially useful tool for performance review of university employees (Beets & le Grange, 2005) and as a framework to utilize when making decisions about university restructuring (Van Wyk, 2005).
Beyond the field of education, other studies of the applications of ubuntu include research in business and government. An example of the practicality of using ubuntu in business is Fourie’s (2008) study of business practices of the South African media. Bhengu (1996) suggested that managers use ubuntu philosophy to ensure fair treatment of employees. In addition to its applicability to business, ubuntu is also linked to research on citizenship, civic renewal, and nation-building. Coertze (2001) and Nkondo (2007) each analyzed ubuntu as a framework for public policy and nation-building. Swartz (2006) considered ubuntu and its relationship to South African citizenship. Like Enslin and Horstemke (2004), Swartz noted that knowledge of ubuntu is useful for understanding the culture of particular South African ethnic groups such as the Xhosa or Zulu, yet it is not necessarily pertinent to all South Africans. Swartz also concluded that ubuntu philosophy alone cannot bring about complete citizenship renewal, as it does not address issues of redistributive justice. In addition to these studies, most other research on the applications of ubuntu relate to the fields of business and government. Given its emphasis on the individual in the context of a community, it is possible to apply ubuntu philosophy to research in South Africa in any academic discipline where there is emphasis on geographic or relational community.

Psychological Sense of Community and Types of Community

The concept of psychological sense of community stems from research in the field of community psychology. The discipline of community psychology was developed in the United States in 1965 by researchers interested in community mental health and addressing the psychological needs of disadvantaged populations (Tolan et al., 1990). According to Rappaport (1977), the purpose of a community psychologist is to become an agent of the local community in order to help meet the needs of the marginalized.
In South Africa, community psychology emerged in the 1980s as psychologists sought to reach those who were oppressed in the apartheid society (Ngonyama ka Sigogo et al., 2004). Some South African psychologists felt traditional psychology was ineffective because of its foundations in Euro-American perspectives and its perceived aim of addressing only the needs of middle class White South Africans (Seedat, MacKenzie, & Stevens, 2004). As in the United States, the South African discipline of community psychology sought to improve the mental health of disadvantaged populations (Seedat et al., 2004). The most significant difference between American and South African community psychology is that South African community psychology is heading in the direction of liberation psychology (Seedat et al., 2004), which emphasizes the redistribution of social and political power and healing the effects of oppression (Watts & Serrano-García, 2003).

Much of the research on psychological sense of community has originated in the United States. Initial studies focused on physical neighborhoods (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Later studies from the US concluded that a community could be physical or relational (Bramston et al., 2002; Chavis et al., 1986). Gusfield (1975) was the first to note these two different uses for the term community. A physical community consists of a geographic area or physical place, whereas a relational community is based upon human relationships and is not restricted to a specific location or area. In recent decades, researchers from not only the US, but also other countries, have explored psychological sense of community in terms of both physical and relational communities (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008).

In South Africa, published research has focused on geographical communities. This could be because the term “community” in the South African context has often been used to refer mainly to groups of poor Black South Africans in particular neighborhoods (Rohleder, Swartz,
Carolissen, Bozalek, & Leibowitz, 2008). As Rohleder et al. noted, even if we consider using the term “community” in a strictly geographical sense, it is still a racially charged word because of the legacy of racial segregation of neighborhoods during apartheid. For South African community psychologists, especially those interested in liberatory psychology, the priority is to address oppression and make psychological services accessible to underprivileged groups. Therefore, geographic community, as opposed to relational community, has remained the form of community that is most often focused upon by South African community psychologists. Even outside the academic discipline of community psychology, research focuses on geographic community, specifically communities where historically disadvantaged groups live. These studies tend to focus on protective factors and resiliency vis-à-vis building the overall mental health of the community. Two good examples of South African research on geographic communities are Copeland-Linder’s (2006) study of township women’s use of religion as a coping mechanism in dealing with stress, and Rashid, Seedat, van Niekerk, and Bulbulia’s (2004) study of community resilience in preventing injury in the context of violence.

Much of the recent research on community in the U.S. has focused on relational aspects of communities. In their study of American schools and workplaces, Royal and Rossi (1996) concluded that the phenomenon of relational community is growing while the significance of territorial community is on the decline. Other American researchers have concurred with this finding (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Chavis et al., 1986; Pretty, Andrewes, & Collett, 1994; Rheingold, 1991). Obst and White (2005), in their study of membership and identity in American university students, found that relational communities have a bigger impact on personal development than do geographical communities. Additionally,
an individual can have a strong affiliation with or belong to multiple communities (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Pretty et al., 1994).

Affiliation or sense of belonging is part of the definition of psychological sense of community. American researchers Chavis et al. (1986) noted that it is challenging to define the phenomenological notion of psychological sense of community. Sarason (1974), also an American, was one of the first to attempt to define PSOC. He defined psychological sense of community as “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure” (p. 157). Psychological sense of community was later defined as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan, 1976, p. 11). Peterson et al. (2008) revised the definition, simply stating, “sense of community refers to the fundamental human phenomenon of collective experience” (p. 62). Psychological sense of community can be mostly simply described as the sense of belonging that individuals feel when they are members of a community.

Due to its rather abstract nature, PSOC is difficult to describe and measure. Psychological sense of community is setting specific, which makes it hard to make general conclusions about its nature (Hill, 1996; Peterson et al., 2008). Several models have been developed to study PSOC, but one of the most widely used models is the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model. The McMillan and Chavis model will be discussed in Chapter III. Research in the field of community psychology and in other academic disciplines in the social sciences have begun using community psychology models, theories, and principles, such as McMillan and Chavis’s model of
psychological sense of community, to conduct research in relevant communities. For example, researchers in the fields of both psychology and education have conducted research on teacher community.

*Teacher Community*

As mentioned in Chapter I, strong sense of community has been shown to have positive effects on job satisfaction, retention, and psychological well-being for teachers in the US and Europe (Brouwer et al., 2007; Rossi & Stringfield, 1997; Royal et al., 1996; Royal & Rossi, 1999; Wenger et al., 2002). Most of the research on teacher community and teachers’ PSOC has originated in the United States. Little or no published research on either teacher community or teachers’ PSOC is available from South Africa. Therefore, this section will focus on research available from the U.S.

Teacher community has been defined by several researchers, many of whom have treated the topic as workplace sense of community, collaboration, or a form of social networking (Abbate-Vaughn, 2004; Brouwer et al., 2007; Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth, 2000; Lockhorst & Brouwer, 2007; Newmann and Wehlage, 1995; Royal & Rossi, 1996). As opposed to a purely relational or a purely geographical community, teacher community might be seen as an intermediary form, or a type of professional or working community. The workplace resembles a geographical community, while the working relationships are a relational community. Indeed, as Burroughs and Eby (1998) noted, people today spend so much time at work that they find meaning, identity, and support there. Goode (1957) was one of the first to define professional community, noting that it is a group of people who work together, but simultaneously exist within the constraints of a larger society. Teachers are a professional community. They share a
geographical community of the school workplace and also share the relational community of professional working relationships.

Lockhorst & Brouwer (2007) included three dimensions in their definition of teacher community: group identity, interactional repertoire, and shared domain. Group identity includes the signs and symbols that identify members of the group, as well as activities and feelings on a relational level. Interactional repertoire includes shared customs, language, and values. Shared domain includes shared subject or interest for collaboration. All three aspects of Lockhorst and Brouwer’s definition are akin to the membership aspect of the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model (see Chapter III).

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) also listed three critical elements of teacher community: teachers pursuing a shared purpose for all students’ learning, engaging in collaborative activity, and taking collective responsibility. These elements focus on common goals or a sense of common purpose amongst the teachers. The elements of Newmann and Wehlage’s definition parallel the integration and fulfillment of needs aspect of McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of PSOC.

Royal and Rossi (1999), as well as Grossman et al. (2000), stated that teachers can benefit from PSOC in terms of personal growth and enhancement of instructional efforts. A study conducted in the Netherlands by Brouwer et al. (2007) reported similar findings. Teacher psychological sense of community also has positive effects on students. Stronge (2002) and Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that teaching practices do have an effect on student achievement in the U.S. American teachers are more likely to contribute positively to a classroom or school when they have a strong sense of community (Royal & Rossi, 1999). Teachers who participate in a strong working community also role model good behavior for
students to follow (Grossman et al., 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Rossi & Stringfield, 1997).

In studies conducted in the U.S. where a strong PSOC was present, teachers share a common vision and sense of purpose, communication was free and open, and students felt cared for (Grossman et al., 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Rossi & Stringfield, 1997; Royal et al., 1996; Royal & Rossi, 1999). In order to sustain a community year after year, the institutional culture must be able to regenerate and adapt (Westheimer & Kahne, 1993). Success in building teacher community in the U.S. depends on human resources, leadership, school size, and other factors (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). However, Grossman et al. (2000) found that while time and resources are important to building teacher community, they are not entirely sufficient on their own. Nor does length of tenure necessarily correlate with psychological sense of community (Royal & Rossi, 1996). Other factors, such as cultural or personal philosophy, might contribute in building teacher relationships. Applying this idea to a South African context, in the indigenous African philosophy of ubuntu, the importance of building personal relationships is a central element; therefore, having an ubuntu philosophy might contribute to building teacher community.

To summarize, strong psychological sense of community amongst teachers can contribute to student achievement, and personal and professional growth for teachers. Certainly, sense of community is not the only element that keeps teachers in the profession. However, in schools where resources are limited and teachers face overwhelming socioeconomic conditions – schools in South African townships, for example – creating strong teacher community could be explored as a method for building teacher commitment and satisfaction, with the attendant consequence of retaining teachers in the profession.
Summary

This chapter provided a general overview of the historical and contemporary context of the Xhosa ethnic group, as well as an overview of Langa township outside Cape Town. The chapter also presented information on the state of urban Black schools in South Africa, with a focus on the problems faced by South African teachers. In addition, this chapter explained ubuntu philosophy, and topics relevant to ubuntu, namely psychological sense of community and teacher community, were also presented. Much of the published research related to the topics of psychological sense of community and teacher community have originated in the United States. The notion of relational community as a psychological construct is not as prevalent in South Africa as it is in the United States, possibly due to the racially charged meaning of the word “community” in a post-apartheid South African context (Rohleder et al., 2008). While few, if any, studies on teacher community have been published in South Africa, they have been documented in other countries, including the United States. Results from this literature review suggest that building a strong teacher community can lead to an increase in teachers’ commitment and job satisfaction, which provides the basis for the study conducted in Langa, South Africa.
CHAPTER III.: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology, research design, and data collection and analysis procedures used in the study. Additionally, this chapter contextualizes the setting of the study, Sandile Primary School, and presents an overview of the participants.

Qualitative Methodology

The way in which individuals or groups experience their world is the focus of qualitative research. Qualitative methodology enables the researcher to conduct exploratory studies in a natural setting (as opposed to a laboratory setting) and to collect and analyze non-numerical data, which results in thick detail about human experience (Coyle, 2007; Seidman, 1991; Taylor & Bogdan, 1985). Qualitative researchers believe that the phenomena being studied cannot be removed from its cultural context (Coyle, 2007; Freebody, 2003; Lyons, 2007). In other words, it is critical not only to study the phenomena, but also to seek to understand the practices, assumptions, and ways of thinking and knowing that surround it. In the qualitative tradition, all peoples and settings can be potentially worthy of study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Qualitative research calls for the researcher to reflect upon his or her biases to approach the research responsibly, so as not to be oppressive or force ideas upon the participants (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Jaeger and Rosnow (1988) concluded that many theories used in quantitative research, especially in the field of psychology, carry an ethnocentric bias in which the researcher imposes his or her own culture on to the phenomena being studied. In the context of South African psychological research, Macleod (2004), Ngonyama ka Sigogo et al. (2004), and Seedat et al. (2004) each concluded that a flaw in much of the country’s published studies is the frequent usage of theories and models developed from a White, middle class, Western, male perspective. As a White, American cross-cultural researcher, I am concerned with understanding
others’ perspectives rather than imposing my own upon them. The qualitative research tradition holds that Western positivism (based on European, hypothesis-based, scientific research) is not the only valuable form of knowledge (Coyle, 2007). Therefore, I sought to use qualitative methodology to involve the voice of the participants in my study, and to recognize that their philosophy and traditions are also valuable forms of knowledge.

Qualitative research has been used in education to understand relationships, social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions in the complex settings of schools (Corrie & Zaklukiewicz, 1978). This methodology can also be used in other disciplines in the social sciences. According to Hill (1996), Maton (1990), Riger (1990), and Stein and Mankowski (2004), qualitative research is congruent with the values of community psychology, particularly because the voice and knowledge of the participants is valued during the research and analysis process. Hill (1996) further described the direction of future research on psychological sense of community (PSOC), suggesting that a qualitative approach can be useful specifically for studying PSOC, as it requires a deep understanding of context, a central aim of qualitative research.

Researcher Perspective

Within the context of qualitative methodology, I chose to conduct this study from an interpretivist perspective. According to Smith and Eatough (2007), “[The] aim of interpretivist perspective is to explore in detail individual personal and lived experience to understand how individuals make sense of their personal and social world” (p.35). From an interpretivist standpoint, I believe the participants in my study should be allowed to create their own interpretation of their life experiences, based on the context of their own lives. Essentially, as I conducted and analyzed my research, I tried to see and understand the world from the
perspective of my participants. At the same time, I recognized that because I am not a member of the community I studied, I could never completely understand their points of view. My interpretation of the teachers’ perspective is what Smith and Eatough (2007) refer to as “second-order sense-making of someone else’s experience” (p. 36). It is critical to understand the context of the study in order to make accurate sense of the data I gather from my participants. Even though I was an outsider to the community I studied, the interpretivist perspective allows the researcher to observe something about the participant about which that participant is not aware (Smith & Eatough, 2007).

It is important to acknowledge that as a researcher, I adopt a social justice perspective. When reviewing the published research surrounding a topic, I actively consider which forms of knowledge are privileged, particularly in the analysis and interpretation of data. In conducting a study, I seek to validate those viewpoints which are traditionally marginalized. This social justice stance underpins my interpretation of the data I collect, as well as the formation of my conclusions. In addition to adopting both an interpretivist and a social justice perspective in this study, I also used two theoretical frameworks to assist in my interpretation of the data I collected.


A theoretical framework in psychological research is “any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels, that can be applied to understanding of phenomena” (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). For the purpose of this study, I will use the same definition to describe a theoretical framework. A researcher can use a theoretical framework in a qualitative study to help conceptualize and organize the study (Maxwell, 1996). Identifying a theoretical framework for a qualitative study does not imply that the researcher is
imposing a point of view upon the participant. Rather, the researcher is acknowledging that he or she is using a general set of ideas to help gather, organize, and analyze the data (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Flinders & Mills, 1993; Maxwell, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schram, 2003). The results of the research may or may not support the theoretical framework, but the framework at least serves as a starting point from which to orient ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

When selecting a theoretical framework for this study, I sought a psychological framework that could be applied to a variety of cultural and socioeconomic contexts, rather than a framework based upon a White, American, middle class perspective. The framework I chose was the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model of psychological sense of community. To further understand my participants’ perspectives in this study, I also used the philosophical framework of ubuntu, which is explained in Chapter II. These frameworks drove the selection of my research questions, the creation of my interview and observation protocols, and the analysis of my data. In this section, I will explain the McMillan and Chavis model.

In 1986, McMillan and Chavis proposed a four-part model for analyzing and describing psychological sense of community (PSOC), which can be applied to different contexts. This model has been widely recognized as one of the most useful theoretical frameworks for understanding PSOC, as researchers have utilized it for studies in a variety of contexts, including a relational or geographic community; mainly White or mainly Black communities; American, Israeli, or Australian settings; urban or rural neighborhoods; and poor, working class, or middle class communities (Chavis, Hogge, & McMillan, 1986; Davidson & Cotter, 1991; Hill, 1996; Obst & White, 2005; Pooley, Cohen, & Pike, 2005). The McMillan and Chavis model has been used in qualitative studies, such as Lyons and Dionigi’s (2007) study of older adults in Australia
who participate in sports. Recently, Peterson et al. (2008) used statistical analysis to determine that McMillan and Chavis’s model was still an accurate framework for defining PSOC in a given setting, particularly because its multidimensional nature allows for a more thorough understanding of the concept of sense of community.

The McMillan and Chavis (1986) model is composed of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The first element of PSOC, membership, refers to the qualities and characteristics that separate community members from non-members. These may include symbols, language, or other boundaries. Sharing a common philosophy such as ubuntu can serve as a membership boundary. In addition to boundaries, membership includes emotional safety, sense of belonging, and personal investment (Chavis et al., 1986). Membership creates a sense of intimacy, which allows people to feel that they can trust other members of the group. Membership is also a sense of belonging, a feeling that one has an accepted place in the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). As McMillan (1996) noted, “people bond with those whom they believe want and welcome them” (p. 317).

The second element of PSOC, influence, refers to the ways in which both individual members and the group as a whole place reciprocal pressure on each other. Individuals prefer to be a part of communities where they feel they can have some influence (Chavis et al., 1986), as they tend to respect leaders who are influential but not domineering (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). At the same time as individuals exert influence on the community, the community as a whole exerts influence on its members. This relates to the ubuntu concept of a community providing for the common good, but not at the expense of the individual – the individual and the community have mutual influence. Another concept relating to influence is the theory of consensual
validation, which suggests that individuals seek membership in communities as a way of validating their thoughts, opinions, and experiences – essentially, they join to know that they are not alone in what they experience (McMillan & Chavis). This creates a kind of conformity within the community, with the community confirming and reinforcing the beliefs of its members.

The third element of PSOC, integration and fulfillment of needs, refers to the ways in which members feel invested in the group and feel the community meets their needs. The shared values and goals of a group generally reflect the emotional and intellectual needs of its members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Some examples of individual needs that are met by association with a group include the need for status or prestige, competence, and rewards. Members also look to the group to provide alternatives or resources to help them solve their problems. As stated by McMillan and Chavis (1986), “A strong community is able to fit people together so that people meet others’ needs while they meet their own” (p. 13). This resembles the aspect of ubuntu in which people advance their own evolution as they help others grow in knowledge and ability.

Ubuntu is particularly relevant to the fourth element of PSOC, shared emotional connection. This is the hardest element to define. It refers to the affective or spiritual connection that members feel toward each other and toward the community as a whole (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). There is an emotional connection within the group, including a shared history with which members identify, even if they did not directly participate in that history (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This emotional connection incorporates time or other resources invested in the group, shared participation in important events, positive interactions and frequent contact with group members, and a spiritual bond. McMillan and Chavis argue that shared emotional connection is probably the definitive element for true community. Many of the aspects of ubuntu – caring,
compassion, kindness, and commitment – parallel the emotional connection that McMillan and Chavis describe.

**Research Questions**

Table 1 presents an overview of my research questions. In corresponding boxes are the interview questions I asked to uncover information about each of the overall research questions.

Table 1. Overview of Research Questions and Interview Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>CORRESPONDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does teacher community look like at Sandile Primary School?</td>
<td>-How long have you been teaching at Sandile?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What subjects do you teach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Tell me what a typical school day is like for you. Begin with your arrival at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-When I say the term, “teacher community,” what comes to mind?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What is life like as a teacher in Langa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this community display elements of psychological sense of community?</td>
<td>-When during the day do you interact with other teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-In what ways do you interact with them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Do teachers do anything together outside of school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What is it like when a new teacher joins the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What is it like when a teacher leaves (i.e., is no longer employed at) the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Do teachers at this school work together on any projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-If so, what kind of projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Tell me what it is like when you work together with another teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What happens when teachers disagree with each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-When you have a problem with another teacher, what do you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Do you think most of the teachers in this school get along with each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-In your opinion, is it important for teachers to care about each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do teachers in this teacher community incorporate ubuntu philosophy into their professional work lives?</td>
<td>-Are you familiar with the term “ubuntu”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What does ubuntu mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-How does ubuntu relate to your life as a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Do teachers care about each other at this school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-In what ways do they show they care?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When constructing the interview protocol, I considered the McMillan and Chavis (1986) framework for PSOC. Table 2 illustrates the connection between several of my interview questions and the McMillan and Chavis model.

Table 2. Interview Questions and the McMillan and Chavis (1986) Model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTS OF MCMILLAN AND CHAVIS MODEL</th>
<th>RELATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Membership                           | -Tell me what a typical school day is like for you.  
-When I say the term, “teacher community,” what comes to mind?  
-When during the day do you interact with other teachers?  
-In what ways do you interact with them?  
-Do teachers do anything together outside of school?  
-What is it like when a new teacher joins the school?  
-What is it like when a teacher leaves (i.e., is no longer employed at) the school?  
-What happens when teachers disagree with each other? |
| Influence                             | -What is it like when a teacher leaves (i.e., is no longer employed at) the school?  
-Do teachers at this school work together on any projects?  
-Tell me what it is like when you work with another teacher.  
-What happens when teachers disagree with each other?  
-When you have a problem with another teacher, what do you do?  
-Do you think most of the teachers at this school get along with each other? |
| Integration and fulfillment of needs  | -In what ways do you interact with [other teachers]?  
-Do teachers do anything together outside of school?  
-Do teachers at this school work together on any projects?  
-Do you think most of the teachers at this school get along with each other?  
-Do teachers care about each other at this school? |
| Shared emotional connection           | -What is it like when a new teacher joins the school?  
-What is it like when a teacher leaves (i.e., is no longer employed at) the school?  
-Is it important for teachers to care for each other?  
-Are you familiar with the term “ubuntu”?  
-What does ubuntu mean to you?  
-How does ubuntu relate to your life as a teacher?  
-Do teachers care about each other at this school?  
-In what ways do they show they care? |
Contextualizing the Setting

According to the principal, Sandile Primary School enrolls 791 students, of which 390 are male and 401 are female. The school serves grades R through 8. Grade R, or “Reception Year,” is similar to kindergarten in the American school system. In accordance with the South African education system, grades are divided into phases: foundation phase for grades R through 3; intermediate phase for grades 4 through 6; and senior phase for grades 7 through 12. Once Sandile students pass grade 8, they continue on in the senior phase at a local high school. Sandile has approximately 20 teachers. While I conducted this study, the principal was in the process of hiring additional teachers. There are five male teachers, all of which teach in the senior phase. The number of students in each classroom ranges from 40 to 60. In South Africa, a new classroom teacher just entering the workforce makes R115 276 per year (South African Department of Labour: Education Labour Relations Council [ELRC], 2008), or the equivalent of about $14,806 USD. The maximum salary for an experienced classroom teacher is R263 277 (ELRC, 2008) or the equivalent of about $33,834 USD. According to the principal of Sandile, teachers in South Africa do not have the same prestige and status as other professionals, such as bankers or lawyers.

Data Collection Procedures

This section will detail the permission I obtained to conduct the study. Additionally, this section will explain the process by which I chose participants, as well as the procedures I used for data collection.

Permission. I obtained permission to conduct this study from the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board (BGSU HSRB) (see Appendix A, p. 107). I also obtained permission from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct this study (see
Appendix B, p. 109). Prior to selecting teachers to participate in the study, I obtained written consent from the principal of Sandile Primary School to conduct interviews and observations of teachers at the school (see Appendix C, p. 111).

**Participant selection.** I chose to interview five participants, as five was a manageable number to interview within the time allotted to me for this study. The five participants reflect approximately one-quarter of the teaching staff at Sandile. In selecting my participants, I established particular criteria: 1) members of the Xhosa ethnic group, to be reflective of the majority ethnic group at Sandile; 2) familiarity with ubuntu philosophy; 3) gender balance; 4) teachers from every phase of the education system – foundation, intermediate and senior; 5) one participant from each age range, namely: 20-29 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years, and 50-59 years old; and 6) participants who had varying levels of academic preparation.

I asked for recommendations from the Sandile principal as to which teachers might be willing to spend time after school to participate in the study. I also asked which teachers might have comfortable fluency in participating in an interview in English. Using the principal’s recommendations, I selected three women and two men as my participants. All five participants are Xhosa, as are all of the other teachers at Sandile. The ratio of male to female participants in my study is 2:3, while the ratio of male to female teachers at Sandile is about 1:4. Two of my participants teach in the foundation phase, two teach in the intermediate phase, and one teaches in the senior phase, for a ratio of 2:2:1. This proportion is similar to the total number of teachers at Sandile in the foundation, intermediate, and senior phases. One difference between my participants and the general teacher population at Sandile is that my participants are all aged 40 years or older, while some of the other teachers at Sandile are in the age ranges of 20 to 29 or 30 to 39 years old.
Data collection process. I met with the participants one morning before school started and provided them with letters of informed consent (see Appendix D, p. 112). After the participants signed the consent letters, we arranged times for interviews. Each teacher agreed to participate in one 60-minute interview. I arranged for these individual interviews to take place once the students went home for the day. For each interview, I sat with the teacher in his or her respective classroom. I used a list of interview questions previously approved by BGSU HSRB (see Appendix E, p. 113). As I asked the interview questions, I took handwritten notes, and, with the teachers’ permission, also recorded the interviews using a digital recorder.

Additionally, each teacher agreed to allow me to observe his or her interactions with other teachers for a 30-minute period of time. It was not possible to observe interactions for 30 consecutive minutes, as each teacher frequently interacted with other teachers over short intervals of 5 to 10 minutes during the school day. Therefore, I timed each interaction I observed until I had obtained 30 minutes of observation for each individual teacher. Observations occurred primarily in the staff lounge, watching teachers at break times or lunchtime. I also made a few observations at the morning assembly and during staff meetings. Moreover, I made several observations after school ended for the day, while teachers were supervising extracurricular activities, working on grading homework, or socializing. All of my observations were made within the grounds of Sandile Primary School.

Description of Participants

Nomkikizelo is a female in the age range of 40 to 49 years old. Her first language is isiXhosa. Her highest level of academic preparation is a Bachelor’s degree, as well as a diploma in school library studies. She has 28 years of teaching experience, including teaching grades 2, 3, 4, and 8, and has taught the subjects of natural science, economic management science (EMS),
math, English, and isiXhosa. She has spent her entire teaching career at Sandile and she currently teaches grade 4, with particular focus on natural science and math. She has 41 children in her classroom.

Zola is also a female in the age range of 40 to 49 years old. Her first language is isiXhosa. Her highest level of academic preparation is a higher diploma of education (HDE), or the equivalent of approximately 2 to 3 years of Bachelor’s-level academic work. She has 7 years of teaching experience, having taught grades 1, 2, 5, and 7, and specializing in most subject areas, including math, reading, and isiXhosa. She has taught at Sandile for six years and currently teaches grade 1. There are 40 students in her classroom.

Kethiwe is a female in the age range of 50 to 59 years old. Her first language is also isiXhosa. She studied at college for five years, although she did not specify whether or not she received a degree. She has 24 years of teaching experience, having taught grades 1, 2, and 3 in all subject areas, such as English, science, and reading. She currently teaches 41 students in a grade 2 classroom.

Vido is a male in the age range of 40 to 49 years old. His first language is isiXhosa. His highest level of academic preparation is a teaching certificate, or the equivalent of approximately 1 to 2 years of Bachelor’s-level academic work. He has 15 years of teaching experience, most of which were spent in the Eastern Cape province. He has taught grades 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, with particular focus on the subjects of English, history, and economics management science (EMS). He has taught at Sandile for 3 years. He currently teaches English, history, and EMS to grades 7 and 8, with approximately 240 students divided into four sections, or 60 students per classroom.

Shakes is a male in the age range of 40 to 49 years old. Like the other participants, his first language is isiXhosa. His highest level of academic preparation is an HDE. He has two
years of teaching experience, having become a teacher after spending several years as a court interpreter. He currently teaches grades 5 and 6 with an emphasis on natural science, as well as teaching Afrikaans to grade 8. He teaches approximately 292 students divided into five sections, or 58 students per classroom. These five teachers – Nomkikizelo, Zola, Kethiwe, Vido, and Shakes – are the interviewees in this study.

Data Analysis

Following the completion of the study, upon my return to the United States, I transcribed the interview audio recordings. I used my handwritten notes as reference to fill in gaps where the recording was unintelligible. For example, my interview with Vido was conducted in the arts and crafts building. As we were talking, two or three younger boys ran by the window, playing a game and yelling at each other. When I listened to the audio recording, Vido’s voice was covered up by the children’s laughter for two seconds. I used my handwritten notes to help identify what I could not hear from this particular section of the recording. This is an example of one of the challenges of conducting research in the participants’ own setting, as opposed to conducting research in a laboratory.

Four of the participants in this study selected their own pseudonym and I used these in the transcriptions to protect confidentiality. When asked to pick a pseudonym, the fifth participant chose to use a personal nickname that many people know, so I selected a pseudonym for that participant instead. I also used the pseudonym Sandile Primary School to protect the confidentiality of the school. The recordings were transcribed word for word, in order to reflect the meanings and perspectives provided by the participants during the interview. After I completed all transcriptions, I printed them, read them for meaning, and created a coding system to organize the data. Next, I constructed themes as they emerged from the data. I chose themes
based on topics that appeared repeatedly over the course of one participant’s interview, for
example, Shakes emphasizing several times his participation in activities and committees at the
school (theme: investment). I also developed themes around topics that appeared consistently
across two or more interviews; for example, three participants mentioned the concept of family
when talking about their fellow teachers at Sandile (theme: family).

In addition to reviewing the transcripts from the audio recordings, I also re-read my
observation notes and the reflective journal I kept while in Langa. I choose to keep a journal in
order to record my initial thoughts and ideas regarding the many things I learned during my time
at Sandile while the study was in progress. I used the journal to record in a free-write format the
challenges I faced during my study, as well as to collect my general thoughts about the school
and the teachers (see Table 3).

Table 3. Examples of Reflective Journal Entries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLE OF CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE STUDY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 31, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned today that in Xhosa culture, if you are the first person to enter into a room where other people are assembled, it is your responsibility to greet everyone else. I did not know this. This morning I went into the staff lounge where some of my participants were gathered with other teachers. I didn’t say anything because I only intended to heat up my coffee mug and then leave. Later, a teacher approached me and said that one of the participants was disappointed with me because I did not wish her a good morning when I came into the staff room. The teacher explained the custom to me, and I went and apologized to the participant. Everything is okay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLE OF GENERAL THOUGHTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 24, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The classrooms are small, similar to a small classroom in an American primary school, except there are 50-60 students in each of these classrooms. This makes individualized instruction seem impossible. Lessons move slowly at times, due in large part to the class size. It takes a long time for the teacher to walk around the room, explaining things, helping students who have questions, and checking to make sure students have done the homework assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I compared the observation notes and journal with the transcriptions for the purpose of data triangulation. By looking for commonalities between the three sources, I began to recognize that my themes from the transcriptions were supported by data from the observations and journal entries. Using multiple sources of data in this manner helps establish the credibility of the data analysis.

Given that I had used the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model of PSOC as a guide when creating my interview protocol, I suspected that emerging themes from the data would overlap with the model. However, in order to not impose the McMillan and Chavis model on the analysis and interpretation of my data at the outset, I started by reading my transcripts, looking for general patterns, and temporarily suspending my knowledge of the model to allow the participants’ viewpoints to stand on their own. After I had read through the transcripts three times, it became evident that the themes were relevant to the model. I then created a list of themes and their relationship or equivalency to the terminology used by McMillan and Chavis (see Table 4). I also recognized that the themes were related to ubuntu philosophy. I created a list of the themes that were aligned to this framework (see Table 5).

**Credibility of Data Analysis**

It is important to establish credibility of data analysis in a qualitative study in order to produce a quality analysis that can stand up to the rigors of evaluation (Coyle, 2007). Credibility includes removing unacknowledged researcher bias, conducting the analysis with care and consistency, and looking for internally coherent findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To establish credibility of data analysis in this study, I used persistent observation and triangulation. In terms of persistent observation, the very setting of Sandile Primary School required diligence in order to make observations of teacher interactions. Teachers often interacted during the
Table 4: Themes Related to the McMillan and Chavis (1986) Model of Psychological Sense of Community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>RELATION TO MCMILLAN &amp; CHAVIS MODEL</th>
<th>EXAMPLE FROM TRANSCRIPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>Integration/Fulfilling Needs</td>
<td>Nomkikizelo: “You go to the other teachers and ask whatever you want.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Vido: “Some other people prefer to do it on their own, without consulting other people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Zola: “[When there is a problem] we talk and talk and try to fix it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Kethiwe: “The lady I was working for, she was on pension, last time was her last year. I was very sad. Because she was like my sister, a mother, a friend.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>Integration/Fulfilling Needs</td>
<td>Vido: “We have a tradition here, if something bad happens to you … we are compelled to visit you at your home or at the hospital.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Emotional Connection</td>
<td>Zola: “We sit and talk at tea time. After school we also sit and talk.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Emotional Connection</td>
<td>Shakes: “For the past few weeks I was really busy, because I am the organizer of the school tour that we have.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Zola: “The principal introduces the [new] teacher to us. We welcome her or him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Shakes: “I normally work around the garden. … So I’m in those projects. I’m not the only member.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Emotional Connection</td>
<td>Kethiwe: “We start with the grace of the Lord.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Integration/Fulfilling Needs</td>
<td>Shakes: “I heard that it’s the best school, Sandile is the best school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Vido: “When somebody joins [the staff], of course you are not used to that person. You do not know what kind of a character he or she has, you know.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Themes Related to the Philosophy of Ubuntu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>EXAMPLE FROM TRANSCRIPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern for children</td>
<td>Nomzikizelo: “The children have been abused at home, so we do sit down and talk about those problems.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Kethiwe: “Ubuntu means kindness. It’s sharing, you know? Having feeling about somebody else.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Kethiwe: “We go to such an extent that if I’ve got a financial problem, I go to one of my staff members, and ask her if she can or he can help me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Vido: “If you can afford maybe to buy some clothes for that child, you can do that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual dependence</td>
<td>Shakes: “We don’t always see each other, but we phone each other. We’ll just call, how are you today, all that sort of stuff.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Zola: “[I practice ubuntu] because I understand the learners [and] their parents’ problems, their parents’ homes.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

school’s short break periods in the morning and afternoon. However, these breaks never occurred at the same time during the week. The break might occur at 9:00 AM on one day and 11:00 AM on the next day. Also, teachers did not always take their break, nor did they always take it in the same place. I paid close attention to my participants during the day so I could make observations of their interactions with other teachers. This also included coming to school early to watch Shakes and Zola while they participated on the school crossing patrol and helped students cross the street in front of the school. It also required staying late after school to observe teachers working and talking together.

In terms of triangulation, I compared my transcriptions with my observation notes and a reflective journal I kept while in Langa. I also used input from my colleagues at Sandile, from my peers in my Master’s program and from my professors, both during and after the study. Their input helped me to identify additional themes I was overlooking and consider potentially different interpretations of the data, both of which expanded the findings of my study. For
example, while in Langa, I engaged in e-mail conversations with my peers from my Master’s program, sharing my observations and dialoguing about what those observations might mean. For example, a female colleague from my program engaged in dialogue with me regarding the use of Xhosa language at the school: whether or not classes were conducted in Xhosa, which language students used to complete homework assignments, which language teachers used when interacting with each other, and the possible implications of language choice.

While in Langa, I worked alongside four college-age volunteers at Sandile: two from England, one from Canada, and one from Ireland. Sometimes, my colleagues and I shared similar observations that seemed to support my research findings. While discussing the daily activities that occurred at the school, I discovered the volunteers had made some casual observations of teachers that paralleled my own notes. For example, the volunteers remarked to me that they frequently saw Vido giving small change to his students to buy snacks, or even sharing parts of his own lunch with students and teachers. Their informal remarks helped support my overall observations about participants’ behavior.

Summary

I used qualitative methodology to conduct a study on psychological sense of community by interviewing five teachers at Sandile Primary School. Each teacher participated in an individual interview with me and allowed me to observe his or her interactions with other teachers. When constructing the interview protocol, conducting the study, and analyzing the data, I used McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of psychological sense of community (PSOC) and the African indigenous philosophy of ubuntu as my theoretical frameworks to guide my analysis. The next chapter will explore the findings from my data analysis as related to teacher community, PSOC, and ubuntu philosophy.
CHAPTER IV.: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results from the study. The results are organized into three sections, based on the research questions: What does teacher community look like at Sandile? How does this teacher community display elements of psychological sense of community? How does this teacher community incorporate ubuntu?

Three major findings emerged from the transcripts and observations. First, while the participants initially found it challenging to articulate their own definition of teacher community when asked on the spot, the transcripts revealed ways in which they construct this concept. Second, most of the elements of McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of psychological sense of community can be found in the teacher community at Sandile Primary School. Third, teachers feel very strongly about ubuntu philosophy and the role it plays in their daily lives.

Sandile Primary School Teachers’ Conceptions of Teacher Community

As studies by Brodsky and Marx (2001) and Pretty et al. (1994) indicated, an individual can have a strong affiliation with or belong to multiple communities. Many people may belong to several different communities—such as neighborhoods, families, and the workplace—and people may move in and out of these communities throughout the day. Although a person might participate in multiple communities, the concept of what defines each community may not come to the forefront of one’s mind. Therefore, when pressed to provide a definition of community, an individual might not always be immediately able to articulate a specific concept.

When I asked the three female participants, Zola, Nomkikizelo, and Kethiwe, to define the term “teacher community,” their initial responses indicated that my question might have caught them off-guard. Consider this example:
Interviewer: When I say the term, teacher community …

Kethiwe: Teacher community, what is that?

Interviewer: Well, that’s what I want to ask you. What do you think that might mean?

Kethiwe: [pause] Teacher? … [pause]

Interviewer: Teacher community.

Kethiwe: Community. [pause] Community’s there, people around the… Teacher community?

Although Kethiwe did not initially provide a definition of teacher community, her answers to several other interview questions revealed that she does envision herself as a member of a community of teachers at Sandile.

As a researcher studying the concept of community, I had forgotten that not everyone thinks about the communities they are involved in on a daily basis. When the first three participants, Zola, Nomkikizelo, and Kethiwe, initially hesitated to create a definition of teacher community, I became discouraged and did not ask the last two participants, Vido and Shakes, the same interview question. Looking back on the study, had I given the male participants the opportunity to answer that interview question, they might have provided interesting data. All other questions in my interview protocol were asked of all five participants. As I did not ask Vido and Shakes to supply a definition, I decided to consult their interview transcripts to see if they provided conceptions of teacher community in their answers to other interview questions. Overall, the interviews of the five participants revealed that they have individual impressions of teacher community at Sandile Primary School. This section will present a case-by-case analysis of how each participant perceives teacher community.
Zola. When initially asked to define teacher community, Zola, a first grade teacher in her 40s, felt the term referred to a teacher’s role as a teacher no matter where he or she goes. “To me, the term community is broad, but I’m going to break it like this: you are the teacher from the community. You are the teacher for the kids. That community is just the assembling of everything,” she said. In other words, a teacher is always teaching, whether at the school or out walking around in the town. For Zola, being a member of a teacher community means that she must always represent that community in an appropriate manner. She commented that it is important for teachers to be role models for the learners, as “They trust us [teachers] very much.”

From Zola’s perspective, membership in the teacher community at Sandile carries with it responsibility to behave appropriately and act kindly.

These kind actions not only extend to the learners or the community as a whole, but also to her fellow teachers at Sandile. Zola feels it is important for teachers to care about each other and support each other. She believes the teachers at Sandile do care about each other, stating, “If I’ve got a problem, I’m not ashamed to share that with them.” Teachers help each other and offer support to each other when they face individual moments of crisis. This display of kindness, respect, and courtesy also extends to working with teachers on collaborative projects. When asked what happens if teachers don’t get along, Zola replied that teachers sit together, talk out the problem, and try to resolve it on their own. If they are unable to resolve the problem, they seek help from the principal, but they work hard to resolve the problem however they can so that the work can be done well.

According to Zola, as members of a teacher community, the teachers interact with each other frequently during the day. They sit and talk together during short breaks (such as tea break), long breaks (such as lunchtime), and after school while they are working on their
preparations for the next day. The teacher community provides a source of advice, gossip, help, and company. Teachers meet together outside of school at their pupils’ sporting events and music competitions. They also attend each other’s family gatherings. To welcome new teachers into the community, current teachers serve as mentors, telling the new teachers what to do and introducing them to their pupils. When it comes time for a teacher to retire or leave the school, the teacher community throws a farewell party, where the leaving teacher’s contributions are acknowledged.

In summary, Zola views the teacher community as consisting of members who serve in their teacher roles both inside and outside the school environment. The teacher community has a supportive environment of caring and kindness, where teachers work together not only to accomplish projects, but also to help one another. Teachers working to resolve their interpersonal disputes is also important. The members of the community interact with each other on a frequent basis, and new members are welcomed into the community just as members who are leaving are sent on their way with a kind farewell.

Nomkikizelo. As a fourth grade teacher in her 40s, Nomkikizelo defined teacher community as follows:

Interviewer: When I say the term, teacher community, what do you think about? Teacher community.

Nomkikizelo: So you’re relating the teacher to the parents, maybe?

Interviewer: Hmm.

Nomkikizelo: Communication between the teacher and the parents.

Interviewer: Okay. What about communication between teachers?

Nomkikizelo: Teachers and who?
Interviewer: Other teachers? Just teachers talking with each other?

Nomkikizelo: They do talk.

For Nomkikizelo, the aspect of community that initially stands out is the element of communication. That is to say, community is comprised of individuals interacting with each other, and their interpersonal communication is essential for Nomkikizelo. She also mentions communication when she talks about teachers who don’t get along, stating that teachers may argue but they come up with a final agreement in the end, even if it takes the help of the principal and the department head to resolve the argument. It is also important for teachers who work together in the same phase to talk to one another. Nomkikizelo noted that while the teachers at the school usually get along, they primarily communicate and interact with teachers in their own phase. In her case, Nomkikizelo mostly interacts with other intermediate phase teachers.

From Nomkikizelo’s perspective, teachers interact at lunch, during breaks, in the morning before the school assembly, after school while working on grading, and after school while participating on committees. This interaction allows teachers to ask each other for advice and to share ideas. Nomkikizelo identified a variety of committees where teachers interact, including the committee for children with special needs, the activities committee, and the finance committee. Teachers also interact outside of school when they attend their pupils’ music competitions. Staying involved and invested in the school is an important aspect of teacher community for Nomkikizelo.

Like Zola, Nomkikizelo believes it is important for teachers to care about one another. As she said, “So, we must care about each other [emphasis added].” In order to show that they care, teachers loan money to each other, bake or cook for each other when needed, offer advice, and provide emotional support during difficult times. As she stated, “When somebody has got bad
news, you can help.” This care and support is extended to new teachers when they arrive at the school. Nomkikizelo finds the arrival of new teachers to be an exciting time, as new teachers bring new ideas to share. When teachers leave the school, Nomkikizelo said the other teachers feel sad because the teacher who is leaving has been very helpful. According to Nomkikizelo’s point of view, it is important to build support and caring within the community so that all members of the community feel valued.

Overall, the key elements of teacher community that are important to Nomkikizelo are: communication, demonstrating care and support, personal investment in the school, working together, and interacting with other teachers. In one of her closing comments, Nomkikizelo summarized her general view of the teacher community: “We do look after each other, we know our differences, we know who is good at what and whatnot.”

Kethiwe. After pausing a moment during her interview to consider the definition of teacher community, Kethiwe, a second grade teacher in her 50s, described teacher community in this way: “If I’m a teacher here at school, I’m also a teacher in the community around. Even in my place where I stay, I must be also a teacher there.” Like Zola, Kethiwe feels that an important aspect of being a teacher is representing the Sandile teacher community to the broader community of Langa by serving as a role model and mentor. Kethiwe commented that a teacher is also a social worker and a guider; essentially, a significant part of membership in the teacher community is the ability to adeptly juggle multiple roles.

For Kethiwe, working with kids is the highlight of her job. “Oh, one thing I love: my job. I love to work with kids,” she said. Kethiwe values the Sandile teacher community because she thinks the other teachers are also dedicated to and passionate about working with kids. She also appreciates that her colleagues are committed to helping each other. Through times of sickness,
funerals, or family problems, Kethiwe feels she can rely on her fellow teachers to help her and each other. “When my colleague has a problem, I must be there for her or him,” she commented. This network of support is a critical element of the teacher community for Kethiwe.

When new teachers join the staff, Kethiwe becomes excited. Like Nomkikizelo, Kethiwe thinks new teachers bring new ideas. She feels it is important for teachers to learn from each other by sharing advice and ideas. Thus, in Kethiwe’s view, interaction throughout the day is important for the teacher community because it allows time for the exchange of ideas. According to Kethiwe, teachers interact at break time, before school, after school, and on weekends. This interaction might include sitting down to talk about learners, schoolwork, families, or personal problems. Interaction also occurs when teachers work together on committees. If teachers happen to disagree, Kethiwe said that they sit down together to talk it out until they come to a conclusion. “I can’t remember any incident that was beyond [us], so that we [had to] call the principal,” she added. Communication and cooperation are important elements of teacher community for Kethiwe. She feels that most of the teachers at Sandile get along. She also remarked that she primarily talks to other teachers in the foundation phase, as they work together most frequently on curriculum and projects.

On the whole, Kethiwe described several elements that were important to her definition of teacher community. A teacher must serve in multiple capacities as role model, social worker, and guider, both in the classroom and out. As members of a community, teacher colleagues must help each other out through difficult problems, whether personal or school-related. Communication and a willingness to work together are two other important aspects of the teacher community. For Kethiwe, the teacher community at Sandile provides a supportive environment
that she enjoys. “All my friends are here,” she said. “Sometimes, I meet somebody, [and they say] you are still there? Yes, I don’t want to change my community. I can’t go anywhere else.”

Vido. I did not ask Vido, a seventh and eighth grade teacher in his 40s, to provide a definition of teacher community. However, his concept of teacher community emerged from his responses to other interview questions. For Vido, the teacher community is largely built on trust. He is wary of new teachers who enter the school because he does not know whether or not he can trust them. Once he develops a trusting relationship, though, he accepts the new teacher as a member of the community. According to Vido, as colleagues in the teacher community, it is important for educators to provide personal support for each other. “I’m very positive about the fact that the teachers at Sandile care about each other very, very well,” he commented. To show that they care, teachers can visit one another during times of illness or bereavement, or just generally provide support when a colleague suffers a misfortune.

In Vido’s point of view, it is also important for teachers to work together on projects. Cooperation and investment in the school are two elements that help define the Sandile teacher community. Vido feels it is important for teachers to be committed, even if it means staying late to finish necessary tasks. It is also important for teachers share ideas with each other, especially when they interact at staff meetings, where, as Vido noted, “we have to interact in a way so that we can take our school forward.” Other opportunities for interaction happen during breaks, lunchtime, free periods, and union meetings.

Even though it is important for teachers to try to cooperate, Vido does not believe that people will always agree, nor does he think agreement is always necessarily critical to the teacher community. “Sometimes, there are times [of conflict] you know, because people are not the same,” he added. When conflicts occur, Vido said that teachers often involve the principal or
a senior staff member to assist them in reaching a resolution. This reflects the Xhosa tradition of involving an elder to settle a disagreement. Vido also noted that within the Sandile teacher community, teachers often interact mainly with other educators in their phase (e.g. foundation, intermediate, senior).

For Vido, the most important aspects of teacher community are trust, support, cooperation, investment, and communication. From Vido’s perspective, teachers must work together to build trust. They must also support each other through times of personal problems. Vido believes it is important for teachers to cooperate on projects and become involved in the life of the school. He also views cooperation and conflict resolution as important elements of the teacher community, both of which require willingness to communicate.

Shakes. I also did not ask Shakes, a fifth and sixth grade teacher in his 40s, to provide a definition of teacher community. Like Vido, Shakes’ concept of the Sandile teacher community became known over the course of the interview. For Shakes, the teacher community is a group of teachers to work together, support each other, and have common goals. Shakes believes it is important for teachers to work together and cooperate with each other. Through cooperation, new ideas are exchanged, and the best outcomes are reached. “Sometimes, when you do things with another person, you see, not both of you can be wrong, at least,” he added. Shakes also noted that students notice when teachers cooperate with each other, which in some ways helps students learn the importance of sharing.

According to Shakes, teachers cooperate with each other on projects and involvement with the school. Shakes views investment in the school as an important aspect of the teacher community. He volunteers on several committees and also coaches the student debate team. Shakes believes that investment such as this can help prepare students for the future, and student
development is a common goal of the teacher community. Even though teachers work together, they may not always get along. In times of disagreement, Shakes feels it is important for educators to rely on “the principal or the management to make means to settle the conflict.” Yet Shakes thinks that overall, Sandile Primary School teachers get along with each other quite well.

Another important aspect of the teacher community for Shakes is the element of support. Shakes believes it is important for teachers to show they care by visiting one another during illness or bereavement, phone each other, or inviting one another to social gatherings. Shakes also thinks teachers can show they care through their everyday interactions before school or during breaks in the school day. Teachers can show that they care by sharing advice, offering suggestions on classroom improvement, assisting each other to solve personal problems, and helping new teachers feel at ease at the school. All of these actions help strengthen the teacher community. Ultimately, in Shakes’ opinion, it is critical for educators in the Sandile teacher community to value education, and to be willing to help the learners and each other. Overall for Shakes, the elements that help define teacher community include having common goals, sharing new ideas, making an investment in the school, working together on projects, providing support for each other, and working to find resolution to conflicts.

Summary. I defined teacher community as a professional-relational community composed of teachers who interact with each other primarily in the physical setting of a school, and whose overall goals include promoting the mental and physical well-being of students and engaging in collaborative activity. Based on their responses during the interviews, the participants in this study view the teacher community at Sandile as possessing similar elements. Their community is professional in that it consists of the teachers they interact with on a daily basis. It is a relational community as opposed to a geographic community. The teachers value engaging in collaborative
activity and investing their time and energy into school tasks. Shakes noted the teachers’ common goal of promoting student well-being; this will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

Furthermore, the participants expanded upon the definition of teacher community by mentioning aspects that are relevant to their context. All five participants identified the following aspects as significant elements of the teacher community: showing caring and kindness to each other; offering help and support to one another; and cooperating to resolve disagreements. Some participants added other necessary elements, such as Vido’s focus on building trust within the community. On the whole, the participants’ conceptions of the teacher community at Sandile contains parallels to my definition of teacher community. The key concepts that define Sandile’s teacher community will also help define the psychological sense of community experienced by the participants.

The Four Elements of Psychological Sense of Community as Featured in Participants’ Responses

This section will highlight the findings of this study as they pertain to McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of psychological sense of community. The findings will be organized in the same order that the four elements of McMillan and Chavis’s model are presented.

First element: Membership. As explained by McMillan and Chavis (1986), there are several factors that contribute to membership within a community, including creation of boundaries, ritual, trust, and sense of belonging. In terms of boundaries, there are geographic, language, and cultural boundaries that help define the Sandile teacher community. The actual physical property of the school is surrounded by a fence, which creates a boundary. The arrangement of classrooms and the structure of the school in terms of learning phases help to
define boundaries within the school. For example, senior phase classrooms for grades 7 and 8 are located at the south end of the school grounds, with both eighth grade classrooms side-by-side, and both seventh grade classrooms side-by-side in the next building over. Intermediate phase classrooms (grades 4 through 6) are also located side-by-side, as are foundation phase classrooms (grades R through 3). The arrangement of classrooms in this fashion helps create boundaries for both the teachers and the students. One drawback to arranging the classrooms this way is that it can contribute to the formation of cliques, where teachers interact primarily with the other teachers from their phase, whose classrooms are also nearby. Vido picked up on this separation of the teachers when he noted that teachers form their own groups: “These four are going together. These three teachers are on the other side. You know?”

In terms of language, the teachers speak in isiXhosa, their indigenous and first language, whenever possible. They also have inside jokes and sayings that only each other understand. These are language boundaries that only community members can truly relate to and comprehend. Additionally, cultural boundaries exist for the Sandile Primary School teachers, as all teachers are members of the Xhosa ethnic group. The five participants are each familiar with Xhosa customs and traditions. For example, during their interviews, Nomkikizelo and Vido both mentioned the male circumcision ritual, Zola and Kethiwe each emphasized ubuntu, and Shakes described a Xhosa woman’s customary role in the home. If a non-Xhosa joined the community, he or she would not necessarily be familiar with these traditions, which would inhibit his or her ability to immediately relate to the other teachers. Thus, cultural, language, and geographical boundaries help maintain membership within the teacher community at Sandile Primary School.

Another element that promotes membership within the Sandile teacher community is the ritual of morning assembly and the routine of the school day. A typical school day at Sandile
begins with the ringing of the school bell at 8:00 AM. At that time, all students gather in the school courtyard to sing songs and recite prayers in isiXhosa for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Teachers take turns leading the students in prayer and singing. If it is raining, students gather in their individual classrooms to do this. After the assembly, students are dismissed to their classrooms to continue the school day.

Once students reach their classrooms, the day begins with a reading period, in which students practice reading in isiXhosa, English, or Afrikaans. This common reading period occurs in every grade, in every classroom. After the common reading period, teachers conduct their classes according to a specific daily schedule. There is a 15- to 20-minute morning break at approximately 9:30 AM for students to play and exercise in the courtyard. There is roughly a 30-minute break mid-day for lunch, around 11:30 AM or so, when all students are served a free hot lunch courtesy of the school. In the afternoon, around 1:00 PM, there is a second 15- to 20-minute break for students. There are no fixed times for these breaks during the day. During these breaks, teachers often gather in the staff lounge or in a classroom to drink tea or talk. The school day ends at roughly 1:30 PM for foundation phase students (grades R through 3) and at roughly 2:15 PM for all other students. The ritual of the assembly and the daily routine of the school day help teachers define themselves as members of the Sandile community. They know where to go, what to do, and when to do it. As Kethiwe commented, “I follow my timetable. If it’s maths, I do maths, if it’s science, I do science.” The educators at Sandile can rely on the routine of the school day.

Trust and relying on other teachers also contributes to membership. For Vido, it is important for Sandile teachers to be able to trust each other. When a new teacher joins the staff, the current teachers may not trust him or her right away. As Vido describes,
You know, when somebody joins, of course you are not used to that person. You do not know what kind of a character he or she has. You are unsure about the type of teacher he or she is, and you are not even sure if he is a good teacher or a bad teacher! You are being suspicious of the person.

Vido’s involvement in the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) may account for his cautious approach or views of new teachers. He is very aware of the current political climate in South Africa and its implications for one’s reputation. Vido explained,

You grew up in a very political situation in our country. You don’t know what [the new teachers’] political connections are, you know? So those are some of the things that make you uncomfortable about the new teacher that’s come, whether he [or she] belongs to the structures or political parties, particularly some of the revolutionary parties we have, or whether maybe his [or her] background is from the parties who used to be regarded as sell-outs. Party alignment counts in our country, you know. We could know by family name whether you are coming from the party that used to corroborate with the apartheid government. It’s quite a severe situation.

In South Africa, teachers’ unions are generally aligned with specific political parties. In this case, SADTU is aligned with the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party (South African Democratic Teachers’ Union [SADTU], 2008), which are viewed as more “revolutionary” parties when compared to the more traditional, conservative political parties of the past. Given his active involvement in SADTU, it is understandable that Vido would be concerned with the political affiliation of a new teacher. Due to his involvement in the union, Vido is an important figure amongst the teaching staff at Sandile Primary School. His colleagues rely on him and are interested in his opinions. I observed this to be especially true of his male
colleagues. If Vido is suspicious of a new teacher, he might be unwilling to let that teacher become a member of the relational community of Sandile teachers, and his fellow colleagues might do the same. That could make it very hard for a new teacher to adjust to community life at Sandile.

By comparison, Nomkikizelo, Kethiwe, and Shakes looked more positively on the arrival of new teachers, commenting that new teachers bring new ideas and positive energy to the school. These three participants seemed more willing to openly trust a new teacher. For example, Nomkikizelo laughed as she said,

When a new teacher joins the school, we become joyful, we become glad. A new member joining us! Maybe he or she will come with new ideas, and maybe she’s [or he’s] young! And since they come with new opportunities everyday, they come with new ideas from the college. So we learn a lot from the teachers that come to our school. We welcome them.

Kethiwe also welcomed the opportunity to learn new ideas from a new teacher, stating, “We’ve got a new teacher here [right now]. Woo, I feel good!” Shakes goes out of his way to welcome new teachers, because he vividly remembers his first day at Sandile and how nervous he felt. “I know how that person feels,” he said. “So I do my best to help that person and make them feel at ease.”

In addition to boundaries and trust, sense of belonging also contributes to membership. A humorous example of sense of belonging with the Sandile teacher community is an incident I observed one morning after the morning assembly. The principal and two female participants were bantering in isiXhosa in the school courtyard, laughing so hard they were clutching their stomachs. I asked the principal to translate for me. She said they were laughing about the school
assembly and how the former principal always made them keep time for the children’s prayers by banging on a steel pole. That habit of banging on the pole has become so ingrained in the older teachers that they keep banging the pole absentmindedly even after all of the students have left the courtyard and gone to their classes. They will never stop banging a pole! Furthermore, they feel that when they retire, they will still wake up at the same time each day and jump into action when they hear a nearby school bell ring. For these teachers, their membership in the Sandile teacher community will continue to define them even after they leave the school.

Through this ritual, they truly feel a sense of belonging to the Sandile community.

An interesting finding from this study is that three participants, Shakes, Kethiwe, and Vido, made reference to the teacher community at Sandile as being like a family. These findings emerged when participants were asked how they feel when a teacher leaves the school. Shakes commented that when a certain teacher left in March 2008, he felt very sad:

We are a family. It’s sad now, losing that family. It is hurting [us], because you are used to that person. I’ve got two years here, but I was so used to that lady, you would think I was her son, you know? I was so close [to her].

Speaking of the same teacher who left, Kethiwe added, “I was very, very sad, because she was like my sister, a mother, a friend. She was a very nice woman. I am part of her family.” Vido stated the following:

When you are here at work, irrespective of the number [of teachers], whether you are 50 or 100, you just come. You are a big family. And when one leaves, it’s very bad. We’ve just been left by a teacher. It was a very bad day, the day she left. And we knew she was leaving, she couldn’t come and be a part of us anymore.
The interviews with Vido, Kethiwe, and Shakes speak to a deep sense of attachment and a close relationship with their fellow teachers, perhaps suggesting that they view their fellow teachers as something more than just colleagues or peers. These findings are supported by my observations that the five participants often greet each other, as well as other teachers at Sandile, by saying *molo mama* (“Greetings, mother”), *molo sisi* (“Greetings, sister”), or *molo bhuti* (“Greetings, brother”). The way in which Sandile teachers view each other as members of a family might be related to the philosophy of ubuntu. In ubuntu philosophy, all individuals are linked together through close personal ties (Biko, 1998; Marks, 2000). From a Western perspective, this notion of close personal ties is similar to what one might think of when picturing a close-knit family, as opposed to picturing casual acquaintances. Essentially, from the viewpoint of ubuntu philosophy, all people should be regarded as family members and treated with appropriate care and concern. Therefore, it would not necessarily be unusual for workplace colleagues to address each other using family titles such as “sister” or “brother.”

The interviews with Kethiwe, Vido, and Shakes revealed that when teachers leave the school, the overall feeling is one of sadness and loss. This concept of “losing someone” reappeared when participants talked about helping other teachers in times of bereavement and death. In Xhosa culture, many people refer to a deceased person as “lost.” In her interview, Zola described the teachers as helping her when her “husband was lost.” Similarly, Nomkikizelo said it is important for teachers to care about each other “when somebody’s lost one of the members of the family.” This word choice indicates that the deceased person is missed because the community loses her or his presence as a valued, contributing member. The same concept seems to apply when a teacher leaves the Sandile community for retirement or other reasons. Perhaps Nomkikizelo described it best when she explained that when a teacher leaves the community, it
is like losing a treasure of information. The concept of viewing colleagues as family seems to indicate that several of the participants feel a strong sense of belonging to the Sandile teacher community.

Second element: Influence. Teachers at Sandile exert influence over decisions in their teacher community by participating on committees, where they work together to develop plans or strategies for the school. Then the committee brings the plan to the rest of the teachers for input. Not all teachers want to work in a group, however. Zola observed, “Other teachers are autocratic. They don’t want the group work or the sharing.” This can make it difficult to reach a decision on a project or a plan. However, each of the participants commented that ultimately a decision is reached that all group members find agreeable, even if it requires the intervention of the school principal to reach that decision. As Nomkikizelo explained, if some of the teachers do not agree with the plan, “We go up and down arguing! But in the end, we do come to a final agreement.” Vido explained that in Xhosa culture, elders are often called upon to resolve disagreements, to “engage them in serious talking to solve that kind of conflict.” In this respect, the principal might exert influence over the teacher community by serving in the mediator role. Yet the teacher community also exerts influence over its more autocratic members in order to get them to agree to reach a decision and end the disagreement.

As noted in the literature review, another factor of the influence element of PSOC is the idea of consensual validation. As mentioned in the literature review, consensual validation suggests that individuals seek membership in communities as a way of validating their thoughts, opinions, and experiences – essentially, they join to know that they are not alone in what they experience (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). At Sandile, one way in which teachers seek consensual validation is by asking each other for advice related to classroom management. To illustrate,
Shakes commented that he sometimes asks one of the other male teachers for help: “[the teacher] was also doing science in grade 5, so sometimes he’ll tell me how I can tackle this strategy, maybe, science, math, and beyond. How can I maybe introduce that to the learners.” By seeking help from this other male teacher, Shakes is accomplishing two things. First, he gains new ideas about how to conduct the classroom. Second, because Shakes looks up to the other teacher as a mentor, Shakes is seeking the other teacher’s validation that he is doing the right things and running the classroom in the best way possible. This reassurance is a form of consensual validation, which relates to the influence element of PSOC.

Another way in which I observed teachers seeking validation from each other is when they talked to each other about their personal observations of the students. For example, I observed Vido and two other Sandile teachers sharing with each other their frustrations about “today’s kids who do not know Xhosa traditions and stories.” I also observed Vido talking with a different Sandile teacher, validating each other’s observations about their current students being less willing to listen and behave than students in the past. Thus, as teachers share their opinions and observations with each other, they seek validation from each other, which leads to mutual influence.

Consensual validation can also create a sense of conformity within the community. As members’ opinions are validated and supported, it is possible that many members will end up sharing the same views. If some members share the same views, they can put pressure or influence on other members to change their perspectives. One way in which the teachers can be influenced to conform is in advice-giving. I observed Vido, Zola, Nomkikizelo, and Kethiwe giving advice to younger teachers. In many of my observations, the younger teachers proceeded to do exactly what the aforementioned participants told them to do. Zola noted that younger
teachers do not put older teachers aside, because the older teachers have experience. As the younger teachers listen to the older teachers share their opinions, younger teachers may change their minds to conform, due to the Xhosa cultural expectation that younger people will listen to the advice of elders. Thus advice-giving is a form of influence that can lead to conformity. Advice-giving can also contribute to the integration and fulfillment of needs element of PSOC.

Third element: Integration and fulfillment of needs. Zola and Nomkikizelo both noted that one of the nice aspects of teaching at Sandile is the opportunity to be mentored by older teachers who have experience. As Nomkikizelo confirmed, advice-giving by those who are older is an important part of Xhosa culture:

Interviewer: Do [other teachers] ask you for advice?
Nomkikizelo: No, I just ... [pause] They didn’t ask me. It was just a suggestion, since I’ve got experience from that thing.

Interviewer: In Xhosa culture, do people look to the elders or people who are more experienced and know that they will give suggestions when needed?
Nomkikizelo: Yes. It is our culture.

Interviewer: Okay. So it’s expected that if you have experience, you will give [advice]?
Nomkikizelo: Mmm-hmm. [Yes]

It is a Xhosa belief that those who are older have wisdom and experience that is perfected with age, and it is their obligation to share that wisdom with others (Sagner, 2001). Advice-giving fulfills the needs of the teacher community in two ways. First, teachers who have questions can find the answers from other teachers in the community, fulfilling the need for information. Second, teachers who give advice may feel as though they are fulfilling a purpose, that their membership in the community is important because it meets a need. Advice-giving connects
older and younger members of the teacher community together. Helping educators stay connected to the community could be an important factor in retaining membership. Additionally, the fact that Sandile has many older, experienced teachers who share their wisdom and advice can also contribute to the school’s good image (or prestige).

McMillan and Chavis (1986) concluded that an individual possesses a need for status or prestige. The participants in this study feel they have prestige among educators in Cape Town’s townships because they teach at what they consider to be the best school in Langa. Zola and Kethiwe each confirmed that working at the school sets them apart from other teachers. Similarly, when asked about Sandile, Shakes said, “I was lucky, really, to be here. I heard that it’s the best school, Sandile is the best school.” Indeed, when walking to school in the morning, I was frequently stopped by residents of Langa that expressed delight at learning that I was conducting my research at Sandile, “the best school in our town.” Zola said the large size of the student body at Sandile is due to the fact that it is a good school: “We have a lot of kids. About one thousand kids. We’ve got big numbers because of our performance.” Good student performance, as well as the chance to be mentored by experienced teachers, and a positive reputation within the Langa community – these are all characteristics of Sandile Primary School that give it prestige. Association with Sandile Primary School thus gives the teachers a share of the school’s prestige. The feeling of prestige is one aspect of the integration and fulfillment of needs element of PSOC.

Another key aspect of integration and fulfillment of needs is having a set of shared values. The teachers at Sandile share the values associated with the philosophy of ubuntu: having caring, kindness, and compassion; generosity and selflessness; providing for others. To probe the ways in which the participants share the values of ubuntu, I asked if they felt ubuntu was relevant
to their lives as teachers. Four participants – Zola, Nomkikizelo, Kethiwe, and Vido – specifically stated yes, ubuntu is relevant to their work lives as teachers. Although Shakes did not explicitly agree that ubuntu is relevant, his answers to interview questions made it clear that he feels ubuntu philosophy is important to his role as a teacher. All five participants explained ways in which ubuntu is relevant to both their work with children and their work with each other (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6. Relevance of Ubuntu to Participants’ Work with Children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF HOW UBUNTU RELATES TO THEIR WORK WITH CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zola</td>
<td>“I understand the learners, their parents’ problems, their parents’ homes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomkikizelo</td>
<td>“We do ubuntu to the kids, because some of the kids come from different communities. So, some come to school without food, so I must take care of them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kethiwe</td>
<td>“Our kids, homes where they are from, some of them, or most of them are having social problems, you know? I love to work with kids. I don’t want anybody to hurt them. Since last year I’ve started my own thing, that each and every month I must buy something new, whether it’s a pencil or a pen or what.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vido</td>
<td>“If, for example, you are seeing that this different child, maybe it’s a boy, is struggling, you really even have to go to his home, and find out what has happened. If you can afford to maybe buy some clothes for that child, you can do that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakes</td>
<td>“I can also say I’m a teacher and a parent. So I have to have that heart, that soft spot, because I’ve got kids, you see. So what I’m doing to my kids at home, how I treat them, that’s exactly the way I treat my learners in my classes.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of the Sandile teacher community also have a commitment to helping the people of Langa. Both Shakes and Vido commented on their desire to help the community of Langa, even in small ways, such as coaching a youth rugby team. When asked to comment on how he knows he is making a difference, Vido said, “So at least, to work here in Langa, you
Table 7. Relevance of Ubuntu to Participants’ Work with Each Other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF HOW UBUNTU RELATES TO THEIR WORK WITH OTHER TEACHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zola</td>
<td>“They help me, also support me. You see, my husband was lost, the staff all goes to my house, several staff goes with me to my home in Eastern Cape, and then when I came back, they also support me too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomkikizelo</td>
<td>“We as teachers, some don’t afford things you know? When one borrows money from another, that is ubuntu.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kethiwe</td>
<td>“When my colleague has got a problem, I must be there for her or for him. When, in case[s] like bereavement, in cases like functions, you know, I must go and support my colleague.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vido</td>
<td>“We have a tradition here, if something bad happens to you, or maybe you are sick and have been admitted to [the] hospital, or maybe you have been put off by the doctor, maybe for a week, we are compelled to visit you at your home or at the hospital. That is what you are expected to do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakes</td>
<td>“If there’s a ceremonial gathering, like I have my family in Mandalay, they’ve got a home, if you’ve got transport, you can meet them at my cousin’s place, here’s the address, there is a social gathering, you see? So we enjoy ourselves [there]. After that, if they’ve left, then I tell them to drive safe, all those things. That shows that we care about each other a lot.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

know, and try as much as you can to do something out of anything, I should think that is how we measure our strength.” Whether showing caring and kindness to students and teachers or to residents of Langa, the five participants in this study demonstrate the values of ubuntu in their everyday actions. These shared values contribute to the participants’ psychological sense of community. The ways in which Sandile teachers apply the philosophy of ubuntu to their lives will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

Caring and compassion are not the only shared values at Sandile. According to the participants, the teachers at Sandile also value education. “I was excited to be in such a school where we value education. We are here because of the learners,” said Shakes. Kethiwe agreed that many teachers at Sandile seem to really care about teaching. They value a commitment to helping all students succeed, which in this context includes learning to read and write, and passing mandated tests. Zola takes pride in seeing the students excel because of what they have
learned. She commented that many of Sandile’s eighth graders continue on to ninth grade at Leap, the special math and science academy in Langa. She also noted teachers who stick with the code of conduct shows they value education.

An additional way in which the participants work to fulfill needs is by serving in multiple roles. Kethiwe, Vido, and Shakes mentioned that at Sandile, they are not just teachers: they are also stand-in parents, social workers, nurses, and more. Kethiwe said, “Teaching is a diverse profession, because if you’re a teacher, you’re everything. You’re a social worker, you’re a parent, you’re a guider.” Vido stated, “Whatever you do in the class, you become almost everything. You must be [a] social worker, you must be a policeman, you must be a priest, everything, you know?” Echoing Kethiwe and Vido, Shakes added,

First of all, in school also, or in my class, I have to be a teacher, I have to be a social worker, I have to be a nurse, a policeman. Because if the kids need me, I have to try to help those kids as well. So, I’m everything. [To be] the social worker, and all that stuff, you have to have ubuntu.

These three participants recognize that in the setting of Langa, their role of educator does not simply include teaching subjects or planning lessons. As previously mentioned, many, if not most Sandile students come from Joe Slovo, an informal settlement where there are few social services, indeed even few material resources such as flush toilets. Teachers like Kethiwe, Vido, and Shakes, who strive to incorporate the philosophy of ubuntu into their lives, seem to feel an obligation to reach out and try to fill every need they can for their students. By reaching out to students, not only do teachers fulfill the children’s needs, but the teachers also fulfill their own need to feel useful and their need to feel as though they are living out the ubuntu philosophy.
Teachers at Sandile work to fulfill the needs of their students and each other through ubuntu values, prestige, and serving in multiple roles. As they strive to achieve the common goal of meeting needs, the teachers simultaneously integrate themselves into the teacher community. This common goal of meeting each other’s needs is one form of shared connection among teachers.

*Fourth element: Shared emotional connection.* Elements of shared emotional connection include: frequent contact, quality interaction, closure, shared a significant event, investment, honor and correction, and spiritual bond. I found examples of each of these elements at Sandile Primary School. To begin, the participants in this study said they had frequent contact with each other during the school day, and occasionally on weekends (see Table 8).

Table 8. Participants’ Interactions with Each Other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>ANSWER TO INTERVIEW QUESTION, “WHEN DO YOU INTERACT WITH OTHER TEACHERS?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zola</td>
<td>At break time during the school day; after school when working on grades; in the morning before the assembly; at Sandile student music competitions or sporting events on weekends; at funerals; at committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomkikizelo</td>
<td>At break time during the school day; at lunchtime; in the morning before the assembly; at staff meetings; at committee meetings; after school when working on grades; at student music competitions or sporting events on weekends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kethiwe</td>
<td>At break time during the school day; before school; on weekends when invited to family gatherings; when going out to have a cup of tea; at committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vido</td>
<td>At break time during the school day; at lunchtime; during a free period; at staff meetings; at union meetings; at committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakes</td>
<td>At break time during the school day; in the morning while helping with the school patrol; at committee meetings; on weekends when invited to family gatherings; at Sandile sporting events on weekends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with the participants’ interview responses, I observed the five of them talking with each other and with other Sandile teachers before school, during the assembly, at
break times, at lunch, and after school, all on a daily basis. Over the duration of the study, I observed each of the five participants stay after school at least once to work on grading with other Sandile teachers or to attend curriculum meetings. I also observed Shakes and Vido supervising student activities. In addition to interactions at school, Kethiwe stated that before the Department of Education made salary deductions, teachers used to have enough extra cash to go to dinner together, or go on picnics. Now, they still get together at the end of the month to have a cup of tea and a little chat. It is clear that the participants in this study have frequent contact with each other.

Not only do teachers at Sandile have frequent interaction, but it is also quality interaction. Whether telling jokes, sharing food, or offering advice, I observed that Sandile teachers tend to interact in a positive, upbeat, enthusiastic manner. For example, I observed a teacher sticking her hand into Vido’s lunch box to grab a part of his food to eat. I asked Vido, “Should I write that Sandile teachers are such good friends, they eat each others’ food?” He laughed and responded enthusiastically, “Yes! It is part of our culture!” Interactions like these are one element of shared emotional connection.

Closure is another element of shared emotional connection. When teachers leave the school, the staff throws a party for them. Vido said this farewell party is important for allowing fellow teachers to say goodbye and let the honored teacher know how much their presence at Sandile was valued. According to Kethiwe, this tradition was lost for a few years, but the teachers brought it back so they could have closure. Another example of closure occurs when teachers and students attend a memorial service whenever a student dies. I observed participants, other teachers, and students from Sandile attending a funeral. The funeral was held for a boy who had attended a different primary school in Langa before he was killed in the neighboring
township of Gugulethu. Some of the students knew the boy; some of the teachers wanted to attend simply to show their support for the Langa community. Attending a memorial service can bring closure. A major occurrence such as a memorial service also relates to the shared significant event element of emotional connection. The teachers of Sandile have faced numerous challenges together, whether helping Matthew after his stabbing or searching for donations to help Bishop after his family’s shack burnt down. These shared significant events unite the teachers together through common experience, building a shared emotional connection.

Investment is another aspect of shared emotional connection. Teachers at Sandile invest their time and talents not only in teaching the students, but also in serving the school through participation on committees or supervising extracurricular activities. Shakes pulls weeds in the school garden, supervises the debate team, and serves on the school field trip committee. Zola supervises the road crossing patrol in the morning and participates in workshops. Nomkikizelo mentioned her involvement with the HIV/AIDS awareness committee and the committee to help meet the needs of learners with disabilities. I observed Vido organizing students and leading them on a march through the streets of Langa in honor of Child Protection Day. Teachers at Sandile also invest extra time in grading assignments and creating lesson plans. Kethiwe always leaves school after 5:00 PM and occasionally takes a taxi into Langa on the weekends in order to work on her lesson plans. The participants noted that Sandile teachers are very committed to their work, whether teaching a lesson, grading a paper, participating on a committee, contributing money to a field trip or special project, or supervising an extracurricular activity. This common understanding of the importance of personal investment is an element of shared emotional connection.
Honor and correction are additional aspects of the shared emotional connection element of PSOC. At Sandile, I observed teachers being honored in public and humiliated (reprimanded) in private. For example, on the principal’s birthday, the whole school sang a “Happy Birthday” song to her at the morning assembly, publicly honoring her. She received cards and well-wishes throughout the day as well. Public celebrations such as these help teachers feel as though they are important to the students and staff at the school. In terms of reprimand, I observed one participant who lost his temper with a student and was later reprimanded quietly, one-on-one with a school administrator in the principal’s office. By conducting this reprimand in private, the teacher was spared the embarrassment of having other teachers know about the mistake, which kept him from potentially being made an outcast in the teacher community. Not everything can be kept a secret from the staff, however. As Zola pointed out, even if two teachers try to resolve a disagreement in a confidential fashion with the help of the principal, invariably some of their colleagues will find out. Nomkikizelo explained, “Since we are people, sometimes one of those involved can say we had a meeting with the principal and there was this and this and this and this, so we can hear it from that way.” Honor and correction are important elements of shared emotional connection.

The final aspect of shared emotional connection is the spiritual bond. This is perhaps the hardest aspect to concretely define. One way of thinking about the spiritual bond is to consider it from a traditional religious point of view. Although Sandile Primary School is a public school and is not affiliated with a church or religious group, the principal noted that the majority of the students come from families who believe in Christianity. Through my interviews and observations, I noted that three of the participants have a spiritual bond through their shared experiences as Christians. One of the first things Kethiwe mentioned in her interview was that
the school day always starts with the grace of the Lord at the morning assembly, followed by student recitation of Bible verses and Christian hymns. Nomkikizelo also mentioned the importance of the Christian prayers at the morning assembly. Shakes even draws a parallel between the religious experience at school and home:

And I always say to my kids, school is sacred – school is like a church to me. It’s also a holy place. So there must be a difference, how we treat ourselves here at school and in a church, as school is also a holy place.

Shakes’ comment speaks to his deep-seated spiritual beliefs. If he views the school as a sacred space, he might hold himself to a higher ethical or behavioral standard. His spiritual bond to the teacher community might be very strong because he views the school as a holy place. He might also be willing to make sacrifices to invest more time and energy into the school because of his belief that is a special setting.

Another spiritual perspective to consider is that of the Xhosa traditional religion. As noted in the literature review, many Xhosa converted to Christianity (Nguni Imports, 2008), yet ancestor worship is still prevalent for both Christians and non-Christians alike. I did not ask the participants in this study whether or not they practice the traditional religion. However, when I asked Vido and Shakes what they thought was important for me to know about Xhosa culture, both of them mentioned ancestors. While explaining the cultural role that ancestors play in the Xhosa traditional belief system, Vido described why it is important to be kind to visitors:

You know, in ubuntu, a visitor in our culture, man, is somebody who is being perceived as coming with blessings, for sure. The fact that you’ve come, we believe that you’ve been sent by the ancestors. It would be a shame and misfortune – a cause of misfortune not to be kind to that kind of a person.
Shakes gave an example of what happens when an individual does something to displease the ancestors:

If a woman wears a skirt above the knees, there is a curse that she gets from the ancestors, she won’t get any kids. Now, if you go to the sangomas [traditional healers] and the sangomas will tell you it’s because you didn’t respect the ancestors, the ancestors are hating you now. That’s a punishment from the ancestors. And now you must go back and do something, like [make the traditional] African beer, and in doing that you are pleasing the – you are apologizing to the ancestors.

In addition to Christian views, the traditional Xhosa religious views may also help form a spiritual bond between the members of the Sandile teacher community. I did not specifically ask the participants if they follow the traditional religion. Yet based on my interviews, as well as observations of participants’ conversations with other Sandile teachers, I inferred that at least two or three participants may hold reverence for these beliefs.

Religious views are one lens through which to view the spiritual bond between community members. Another way of thinking about the spiritual bond is through the practice of a common philosophy. At Sandile Primary School, the teachers share a spiritual bond in their practice of ubuntu, which will be discussed in the next section. The participants view ubuntu as a way of life, a set of guidelines for good living; it is a practice that binds them together emotionally and spiritually. Regardless of whether or not they subscribe to a particular religious practice, all participants implement ubuntu in their daily lives, which serves as a shared spiritual bond. A common spiritual bond, in addition to frequent contact, quality interaction, closure, shared significant event, investment, and honor and correction, are all elements of the shared emotional connection aspect of PSOC.
Conceptions of Ubuntu Philosophy

During the course of the interviews, it became clear that ubuntu is an important philosophy for Sandile teachers. It is a philosophy they try incorporate in their daily lives. Each participant held a slightly different perspective on the meaning of ubuntu, yet each of the participants’ definitions paralleled the definitions given by African philosophers such as Biko (1998), Bhengu (1996), and Buthelezi (1986). As Shakes pointed out, there are a variety of perspectives on ubuntu, and everyone is likely to give a slightly different interpretation: “Really there is no specific book that describes ubuntu, what is ubuntu. Even if you ask someone else, they will describe it the other way around, say, than the definition I give you now.” According to Vido, ubuntu “contains quite a lot of things, like sharing whatever you have, be it food, whatever, sympathy, respect.” To Shakes, having ubuntu “means to have that soft heart. That soft heart, yes. To understand one person, or take that person as you take yourself.” The female participants – Kethiwe, Zola, and Nomkikizelo – all described ubuntu as a form of sharing, caring, supporting, and helping out others.

When asked where they learned about ubuntu, the participants expressed a variety of sources. Three participants said they learned it from life experiences, including parents, family, school, and community. As Vido described, “every Black person is [familiar with ubuntu]. It’s something that we’ve been natured in.” Nomkikizelo laughed as she said, “I can learn it from TV and from reading newspapers and books. That word always appears.” According to the participants, the philosophy of ubuntu is an intrinsic part of Xhosa life. However, the participants also mentioned a fear that the current generation of children would grow up without knowing the values promoted by ubuntu. I observed the participants discussing the perceived impact of Westernization on Xhosa philosophy, values, and media. The participants feel this
Westernization results in the erosion of ubuntu and the lack of education about ubuntu for today’s youth. As Vido explained,

You cannot just eat in front of people, unless they reject your offer. It is expected that you must share. We are so worried these days that the spirit of ubuntu is deteriorating in the generation of today, due maybe to some influences by Western civilization. There are very strange things that happen now, things we never thought of when we were still young. Here today, you can see in some places or homes, where you find people eating in front of other people [without offering to share], that is very strange to us. We are just not used to that, and it is just another thing. And there are times when you see these things happen, and you wonder if the spirit of ubuntu is going away.

Because of this perceived erosion of ubuntu philosophy, the teachers feel it is their responsibility to teach the students about ubuntu. One way to teach students about ubuntu is to model it in everyday actions. Zola said it is important for teachers to care about each other because “we are the role models for the kids.” Based on the participants’ responses, ubuntu has both affective and practical aspects. It not only involves having sympathy or respect for others, but it also manifests itself in good deeds.

*The Application of Ubuntu at Sandile Primary School*

Teachers demonstrate ubuntu through acts of material or financial support, which I will term *welfare ubuntu*. For example, teacher-to-student welfare ubuntu occurs when teachers help their students obtain clothing, food, or school supplies. Kethiwe takes a small portion of her salary each month and uses it to purchase a tracksuit or a set of pencils for her students who are in need. I observed that at least two of the participants gave coins to students at lunchtime. The students used this money to purchase a snack from vendors behind the school, such as a boiled
chicken’s foot or a small packet of cookies. I observed participants commenting that the food the students receive at school might be the only food they receive during the day, which is why they do not mind giving away a few coins.

An example of Sandile teachers working together to encourage all students and teachers to show welfare ubuntu to other students is the example of “the Bishop of Langa”, a seventh grade student who is so nicknamed because he wears dress shirts and neckties like a clergyman. Vido told me Bishop’s story: Bishop lives with his family in a shack in the Joe Slovo informal settlement. Sometime during the year 2007, his family’s shack burned down and they lost all of their belongings. Bishop could not come to school because he did not have any clothes to wear. Vido explained,

So, I appealed to other children as part of ubuntu. I got quite a very wonderful response, they came up with cardboard [boxes] full of shoes. I went to other teachers, they came up with clothes from their children of his age and his size. So, that is what ubuntu entails in the teaching environment.

This example illustrates both teacher-to-student and student-to-student welfare ubuntu.

Teacher-to-student welfare ubuntu is a common practice at Sandile. Whether buying school supplies or uniforms for their pupils, sharing their lunch, or offering coins for snacks, I observed all five participants in this study engaging in welfare ubuntu. All participants in this study recognize that the children of Sandile Primary School need help to ensure their psychological, social, and emotional well-being, as well as their safety. Over the course of my study, I noticed that each of the five participants was keenly aware of the hardships faced specifically by students who come from the Joe Slovo informal settlement. During multiple conversations with other teachers at break time or lunchtime, I observed each of the participants
expressing their concerns over Sandile students who come from Joe Slovo. The participants commented on how students from Joe Slovo seemed hungry, impoverished, lonely, or physically ill. When discussing these learners, the participants frequently mentioned ideas for helping them.

The students from Joe Slovo seem to be at the forefront of the participants’ minds. The participants appeared particularly concerned about the socioeconomic statuses of these students’ families. I decided to ask the participants how they felt about the students from Joe Slovo. My purpose in asking this question was to probe a little deeper into the concept of ubuntu. Prior to asking this question, I had already observed the participants providing food, supplies, or coins to students who I knew were from the informal settlement. I wanted to discover if ubuntu philosophy was a motivating factor in the teachers’ care and concern for this particular group of students. The participants’ perceptions of students from Joe Slovo are summarized in Table 9.

The teachers’ impressions of students from Joe Slovo can perhaps be summarized by Shakes’ poignant remark, “Those kids [from Joe Slovo] that have come here, need someone who has ubuntu.” By partaking in acts of welfare ubuntu – such as providing lunch – teachers can help their students and feel as though they are making a difference. Demonstrating kindness and compassion to this particular group of students enables the teachers to fulfill their ubuntu-inspired obligation of caring for one’s neighbor when the neighbor is facing illness, bereavement, or poverty. This applies not only to the specific population of learners from Joe Slovo, but to all students at Sandile. Looking out for the best interests of the students relates to one part of my proposed definition of teacher community, wherein the community’s overall goals include promoting the mental and physical well-being of students.
Table 9. Participants’ Perceptions of Students from Joe Slovo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>ANSWER TO INTERVIEW QUESTION, “HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STUDENTS FROM JOE SLOVO?”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zola</td>
<td>“The students from Joe Slovo are having the problem of poverty. Environment, poverty, parents are ill-trained, not educated, or they are not working. They like it here because we’ve got the food from social services. They get food from school so they can’t have any problem. From coming to school, they know that they are going to have something.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomkikizelo</td>
<td>“If I had a place, I would take them [in]. They are sharing with parents and the children are sleeping in one room, you see, it’s not nice. You find they are in dangerous places, they always look miserable. That is why I like to think that even the school is cooking for these kids, because some of them don’t even eat at home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kethiwe</td>
<td>“What touches me, most of them are staying in shacks. They’ve got [a] problem of burning shacks. It’s very frustrating. I wish those people would understand that they are not supposed to stay there. They are [the] cause of stressful life to the kids. They are so stressed. Those kids are exposed [to] bad things. We are teaching children who’ve got social problems. They are surviving due to what, I don’t know.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vido</td>
<td>“We’re dealing here with children who come very poor homes. Yeah, from homes where people go to bed without any food in their stomachs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakes</td>
<td>“I should think, really, we do have a problem with those learners. What I’m saying is that they struggle a lot. I give them a round of applause for attending school everyday. The situation there really is not good for them. But they are coping okay.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to helping students, teachers also practice welfare ubuntu toward each other. Each of the five participants named two specific examples of teacher-to-teacher welfare ubuntu: bereavement and financial difficulty. When Zola’s husband died, the Sandile teachers supported her by providing money and food. Zola remembered that the entire staff came to her house. Several staff members also went with her to the Eastern Cape province to attend her husband’s funeral. When she returned home, Zola found the rest of the teachers had come back to her house to support her again after the funeral, helping her cook and providing other material support. Teachers also provide support for each other when a more distant family member passes away, by cooking food or sharing other material resources. A second example of teacher-to-teacher
welfare ubuntu occurs when teachers loan money to each other. Nomkikizelo and Kethiwe both mentioned that teachers borrow money from each other when they are faced with financial problems. Caring for fellow teachers in times of bereavement, illness, or poverty aligns with the examples of ubuntu expressed by several philosophers (Bhengu, 1996; Biko, 1998; Mbeki, 2006; Ngubane, 1979; Prinsloo, 1998).

The other way in which participants demonstrate ubuntu is through caring, compassion, kindness, and other affective forms, which I will term spiritual ubuntu. Demonstrating teacher-to-student spiritual ubuntu, Kethiwe arrives at school early to talk with her learners to see how they are doing:

When I’m early, I just want to stay here and see all of my kids when they are coming in. I just notice the smile on his or her face. But if she’s not [saying] hello, I can see that they are feeling, even from their facial expression, this kid is not okay. That’s the time they’re always telling me their problems. That’s why I just want to see them coming.

Participants described another form of teacher-to-student spiritual ubuntu when they described their feeling of compassion towards students who come from Joe Slovo. Shakes said,

Sometimes, you are teaching and you can see that the mind of the child is not here. And you wonder, what is the problem? Is she hungry? Or is there a social problem at home? Maybe it’s the parents? But you can’t be mad at the child.

Teachers recognize that situations such as these require patience and compassion, both of which are elements of spiritual ubuntu.

Participants also demonstrated teacher-to-teacher spiritual ubuntu. In an example such as the death of Zola’s husband, teachers provide moral support, prayers, and sympathy to each other when they are grieving. Furthermore, participants recognized that they are dependent upon
another for advice and guidance; therefore, they feel it is important to show kindness and caring. Each of the five participants commented that Sandile teachers care a lot about each other. I observed the participants offering advice or encouragement to each other, laughing with each other, and asking each other about how the day was going. These examples of care and concern are all forms of spiritual ubuntu.

A significant example of both spiritual and welfare teacher-to-teacher ubuntu occurred during my time at Sandile. Teachers receive their paychecks at the end of each month. On the day he received his paycheck, a Sandile teacher, Matthew, was stabbed in the face and robbed while he was walking in Langa. Crimes such as these are not uncommon in Langa. As Vido noted, “Langa is a place of poor people. Where there is rampant crime, you cannot know what will happen to you, you always expect that something will happen – you can be attacked, your wallet may be snatched at any time.” Indeed, this was not the first time Matthew fell victim to robbery. In this particular instance, I witnessed many Sandile teachers offer their help and support to Matthew and his family. As an expression of welfare ubuntu, the participants, as well as other teachers, organized transportation to visit Matthew while he was at the hospital. They also provided food for his wife while he was in the hospital. As an expression of spiritual ubuntu, they sent Matthew a get-well card, and they frequently talked to his wife to make sure she was doing okay.

I questioned the participants as to why they chose to do this. The participants responded that it was the nature of ubuntu, and not just because they worked together at Sandile. Vido noted that any time the teachers of Sandile get together to discuss helping one another, “you find teachers reminding each other about the spirit of ubuntu.” It is not simply their relationship to
each other as members of a teacher community that leads teachers to help each other; it is also their commitment to the philosophy of ubuntu.

Relevance of Ubuntu to Teaching at Sandile Primary School

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, all five participants thought ubuntu was relevant to their teaching position. One of the primary ways in which Sandile teachers apply ubuntu is when help the children at the school who come from difficult life circumstances. The many concerns faced by Sandile students are illustrated in the following sketch by an anonymous artist (Figure 3), which I found posted on the bulletin board in the staff lounge. The sketch depicts a student in a school uniform, surrounded by flies filling his ears with the “buzz” of competing priorities:

Figure 3. Sketch Depicting Issues Facing Township Schoolchildren. (Author unknown.)
Through my interviews and observations, I learned that the participants in this study fear that the adverse circumstances faced by Sandile students – crime, poverty, hunger, AIDS – will be detrimental to the students’ all-around well-being. To illustrate, Kethiwe exclaimed, “I love to work with kids. I don’t want anybody to hurt them!” The participants expressed the importance of understanding ubuntu because it allowed them to be aware of their learners’ needs and treat them appropriately. For example, Shakes stated, “I have to have that heart, that soft spot, because I’ve got kids, you see. So what I’m doing to my kids at home, how I treat them, that’s exactly the way I treat my learners in the classes.” This collective experience of wanting to promote student well-being serves as a common goal that helps define the Sandile teachers as a teacher community. The interviews with Sandile teachers revealed insight about the relevance of ubuntu to teaching. The interviews also revealed connections to the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model of psychological sense of community.

Summary

The findings from the interviews and observations reveal that teacher community does exist at Sandile Primary School. It is a professional-relational community whose members interact with each other frequently. They collaborate on activities and invest their time and energy into tasks around the school. They share a common goal of promoting student well-being. They also believe it is important to show caring, kindness, and support towards each other. This belief stems from ubuntu philosophy.

The participants in this study see ubuntu philosophy as an inherent part of their everyday work lives. They learned about ubuntu from their family, their friends, and the media. The participants also feel it is important for them to educate their students in ubuntu values. They accomplish this not only through teaching the philosophy, but also in modeling it in their actions.
The practice of ubuntu takes two forms, welfare and spiritual. Welfare ubuntu consists of providing material or financial support to a friend in need. Spiritual ubuntu consists of kindness, caring, empathy, and other affective forms. Participants performed both teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student acts of ubuntu. The participants believe ubuntu is definitely relevant to their teaching, especially when considering the physical and mental well-being of their students who come from the Joe Slovo informal settlement. Aspects of ubuntu philosophy can also be seen when considering the four elements of McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of psychological sense of community as it pertains to the Sandile teacher community.

The four elements of McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model can be seen in the teacher community at Sandile. The physical and language boundaries of the school, the ritual of the morning assembly, the routine of the school day, and the sense of belonging felt by Sandile teachers all contribute to membership, which is the first element of the PSOC model. The second element, influence, is exemplified in teacher participation on committees, the role of the principal in the resolution of disagreements, and the consensual validation teachers seek when complaining about “today’s kids.” Aspects of the third element of PSOC, integration and fulfillment of needs, include: the prestige teachers gain by working at Sandile, the shared values of ubuntu philosophy, the overall sense that Sandile teachers value education, and the teachers’ commitment to helping the people of Langa. Finally, the fourth element of PSOC, shared emotional connection, is demonstrated in many ways at Sandile. Aspects of shared emotional connection carried out at Sandile include: frequent quality contact among teachers, personal investment in school activities, closure when teachers leave the school, shared significant events, public honoring and private reprimanding, and the spiritual bond created by the common ubuntu philosophy.
CHAPTER V.: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I will review the major findings of the study. I will also discuss possibilities for future research, and potential implications for using ubuntu philosophy in a school setting.

Review of Major Findings

I defined teacher community as a professional-relational community composed of teachers who interact with each other primarily in the physical setting of a school, and whose overall goals include promoting the mental and physical well-being of students and engaging in collaborative activity. The teachers at Sandile Primary School comprise such a community. They interact with each other primarily on school grounds, during school hours. They also share the common goals of promoting the well-being of their students (by proving food or supplies, for example) and engaging in collaborative activity (such as participating on committees).

A strong psychological sense of community exists among the teacher community at Sandile Primary School. The McMillan and Chavis (1986) model provides one approach to understanding psychological sense of community. This model contains four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The interviews and observations of this study uncovered examples of all four PSOC elements existing in the Sandile teacher community. Thus, the McMillan and Chavis (1986) model is useful in understanding the sense of community shared by teachers at Sandile. However, that feeling of community is best understood within the context of ubuntu, a philosophy that is deeply rooted in the everyday lives of the Xhosa teachers interviewed.

The philosophy of ubuntu provides a context for the actions, beliefs, and practices of Sandile teachers. Sharing this common philosophy helps strengthen membership within the
teacher community. With the philosophy of ubuntu in mind, teachers realize they must use their influence for the common good of the group. Ubuntu provides the inspiration to meet the needs of both fellow teachers and the students at the school. As a common philosophy with an emphasis on caring and kindness, ubuntu offers a shared emotional connection for the teacher community. Because ubuntu philosophy is an inherent part of the life of Sandile teachers, their sense of community cannot be adequately studied without understanding it. This study demonstrates the need for an emic approach to research conducted in a culture that is different from the researcher’s own.

*Directions for Future Research*

This study is one of the first to apply the concept of PSOC to a teaching community in South Africa. Teachers in South Africa face many challenges that contribute to stress and demoralization, such as lack of resources, curriculum changes, lack of learning material, and an overwhelming job load (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002). South African teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates. Something must be done to keep teachers in the profession. One possibility is to promote job satisfaction. Bull (2005) concluded that job satisfaction can lead to an increase in teacher commitment for South African educators. Studies completed in other nations, such as the United States and the Netherlands have revealed that strong psychological sense of community can contribute to job satisfaction (Brouwer et al., 2007; Rossi & Stringfield, 1997; Royal et al., 1996; Royal & Rossi, 1999; Wenger et al., 2002).

As the results of this study reveal, strong PSOC can exist in a South African teacher community. Future research could be conducted to discover if a strong sense of community is directly linked to job satisfaction for South African teachers. If so, other research might seek to discover the process by which strong PSOC can be created and promoted within a teacher
community. Programs to build sense of community within a teaching staff could be constructed and evaluated, with a focus on the potential outcome of improving job satisfaction. Researchers should keep in mind that while teachers interact in geographic and relational communities on a regular basis, when pressed to articulate the concept of community, educators might have difficulty coming up with an instant definition. In addition to any definitions provided by participants, researchers can also carefully analyze data to look for ways in which psychological sense of community is manifested.

The results of this study suggest that for research participants who are members of the Xhosa ethnic group, the philosophy of ubuntu – which originates in and is applied in an African context – is an appropriate theoretical lens from which to view psychological sense of community. Although McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) model of PSOC, which originates from a Western context, was applied successfully to teacher community at Sandile Primary School, the framework of ubuntu philosophy was even more suitable for interpreting this phenomenon. When working with Xhosa participants, future researchers from education, psychology, or other academic disciplines might consider incorporating ubuntu philosophy as a framework for data analysis and interpretation.

South Africa is a nation of many distinct cultural groups. Therefore, it is imperative that future research on PSOC be conducted within a specific cultural context. It is important to create materials and ask questions in such a way as to avoid imposing an ethnocentric perspective onto study participants. Additionally, researchers should consider approaching their studies with openness to indigenous views. Macleod (2004) noted that in psychological research published in South Africa between 1994 and 2004, knowledge was mostly being generated about White, middle class adults in the three wealthiest provinces. Yet research with indigenous groups is also
important. Not only can research with indigenous groups contribute to the understanding of South Africa’s unique cultural heritage, it can also broaden the knowledge base and contribute to different ways of thinking about the world and formal education. Ultimately, researchers in the disciplines of education and psychology might benefit from collaboration with researchers who are trained in cross-cultural methods.

For researchers in the discipline of community psychology, future studies conducted in South Africa might benefit from considering the alternative definitions for the term “community” beyond a strictly geographical connotation. Continuing to emphasize geographical community could potentially perpetuate the segregation-related connotations of the word community. Relational communities are also important types of community to explore and study. In keeping with South African community psychology’s focus of promoting psychological well-being for all groups (Seedat et al., 2004), studying relational communities based on common interest, profession, or family heritage could lead researchers to find that such communities are also sources of support and resiliency. Again, any research conducted in South Africa needs to involve careful consideration of cultural context.

Finally, future researchers might consider the transferability of teacher roles across cultures. One topic that could be examined cross-culturally is how educators construct and define teacher community. Also, certain attributes associated with teacher community might be considered in relation to various cultures or countries. For example, the Xhosa teachers at Sandile described themselves as role models for their students. This was an important element in building teacher community. Perhaps the profession of teaching in general carries with it a sense of, or a responsibility for, being a role model. Future research might consider both similar and different attributes and functions of teacher community in diverse cultural contexts.
Implications for Using Ubuntu Philosophy in a School Setting

When I began this study, I possessed a general understanding of the philosophy of ubuntu. I wondered if the Xhosa teachers would find the principles of ubuntu philosophy useful in their everyday work lives. I was surprised to find the extent to which the participants in this study incorporate ubuntu philosophy into their lives. Vido summarized ubuntu philosophy as something every Black South African knows. In the case of Xhosa teachers at Sandile Primary School, the teachers not only know about ubuntu philosophy, but they seem to live it. This has important implications for schools that serve Black South African students.

Schools can make a contribution to a peaceful, harmonious, just society by providing nurturing environments where their students feel cared for and valued (Davies, 1996). Teachers who practice ubuntu not only strengthen their own professional working relationships and sense of community, but they also make a difference in the lives of their students. Davies (1996) concluded that a caring, dedicated teaching staff can make a difference for students if the staff genuinely cares and places the needs of the students above their own personal concerns. Teachers who model good behavior and attitudes, and who promote values related to caring and peace, can also impact students (Davies, 1996). At Sandile Primary School, the teachers try to employ ubuntu values in their everyday lives. They seek to teach the next generation about the importance of such values. As a result, Sandile has a special atmosphere, where teachers feel a strong sense of community, many students succeed in their studies, and all members of the school receive attention and care.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A.: BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY –
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER
September 3, 2008

TO: Amy E. Collins-Warfield  
EDFI

FROM: Richard Rowlands  
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H08T269GE7

TITLE: “Ubuntu” and Psychological Sense of Community: Examining Teachers’ Professional Working Relationships in Langa, South Africa

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of April 10, 2008, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on April 1, 2009. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (fax: 372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgsu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/ Modifications:
1. Internal BGSU HSRB conditions for final approval have been satisfied. The Board acknowledges that you will not initiate subject recruitment or data collection until permission from the school principal is obtained. Please provide documentation of that permission to the HSRB when you receive it. Thank you.
2. Relative to the destruction of project-related materials - please remember that federal regulations for the protection of human subjects require signed consent forms to be retained for a period of 3 years following completion of the project.

C: Dr. Patricia Kubow

Research Category: EXPEDITED #7
APPENDIX B.: WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

APPROVAL LETTER
Ms Amy Collins-Warfield  
219 University Hall  
Bowling Green  
Ohio  
USA  
43402

Dear Ms A. Collins-Warfield

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: "UBUNTU" AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY: EXAMINING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS IN LANGE SOUTH AFRICA

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators’ programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The study is to be conducted from 23rd May 2008 to 26th September 2008.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is to be submitted to principals where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following school: Siyabulela Primary.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

   The Director: Research Services  
   Western Cape Education Department  
   Private Bag X9114  
   Cape Town  
   8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 23rd May 2008
APPENDIX C.: PRINCIPAL’S CONSENT LETTER

"Ubuntu" and Psychological Sense of Community: Examining Teachers’ Professional Working Relationships in Langa, South Africa Study
Consent Form

Dear School Principal,

You are invited to allow your teachers to participate in a research study being conducted by Amy Collins-Warfield, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Kubow in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University. The purpose of this study is to gather information about the perceptions of South African teachers regarding the professional working relationships and interactions they have with other teachers. This study is for Amy’s Master’s thesis research.

If you choose to allow your teachers to participate in this study, approximately five teachers will be asked to complete an interview in which they will answer questions about their interactions and professional working relationships with other teachers at your school. This interview will take 60 minutes of their time and can be completed at a time outside of normal school hours. They will also be asked to allow Amy to observe their interactions with other teachers for one period of 30 minutes, which will take place during the school day. The estimated total amount of time for participation is 90 minutes for each teacher.

There are neither any foreseeable direct benefits, nor direct risks, associated with allowing teachers to participate in this study. However, their participation will help us understand teacher community and professional relationships.

Your decision to allow teachers to participate in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participation or withdrawal will not affect any rights to which you are entitled, nor will it affect your relationship or standing within your school.

All of the information collected will be kept confidential. Paper copies of the consent forms and data will be kept in separate locked storage locations while Amy is in South Africa. Upon Amy’s return to the United States on 21 June 2008, documents will be kept in separate locked file cabinets until completion of the study, upon which time these documents will be shredded. Data will be entered into a password protected database to which only the researchers will have access. Upon completion of the study, data will be reported for educational purposes only, for Amy’s Master’s thesis research. Data will be reported using pseudonyms for both participants and the school. This pseudonym will mask any identifying characteristics. At no time will your name, the teachers’ names, or any personally identifying information be reported or disclosed in connection to the information provided for this study.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact me, Amy Collins-Warfield, at 021 + 694-3679 while I am in South Africa. After 21 June 2008, you may contact Amy at 001 + 419 + 372-9504 or amywarf@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Patricia Kubow, at 001 + 419 + 372-7380 or pkubow@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University at 001 + 419 + 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

By signing this consent form, I, as a school principal, acknowledge that I am willing to allow my teachers to be involved in the study, and I have received a copy of this consent form for future reference. Moreover, all of my questions have been answered and I have been encouraged to ask any questions that I may have concerning this study in the future.

____________________________________  __________________________
Name (printed)      Signature      Date
APPENDIX D.: PARTICIPANTS’ CONSENT LETTER

"Ubuntu" and Psychological Sense of Community:
Examining Teachers’ Professional Working Relationships in Langa, South Africa Study
Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Amy Collins-Warfield, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Kubow in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University. The purpose of this study is to gather information about the perceptions of South African teachers regarding the professional working relationships and interactions they have with other teachers. This study is for Amy’s Master’s thesis research.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be one of approximately five teachers asked to complete an interview in which you will answer questions about your interactions and professional working relationships with other teachers at your school. This interview will take 60 minutes of your time and can be completed at a time outside of normal school hours. You will also be asked to allow Amy to observe your interactions with other teachers for one period of 30 minutes, which will take place during the school day. The estimated total amount of time for your participation is 90 minutes.

There are neither any foreseeable direct benefits, nor direct risks, associated with your participation in this study. However, your participation will help us understand teacher community and professional relationships.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participation or withdrawal will not affect any rights to which you are entitled, nor will it affect your relationship or standing within your school.

All of the information collected will be kept confidential. Paper copies of the consent forms and data will be kept in separate locked storage locations while Amy is in South Africa. Upon Amy’s return to the United States on 21 June 2008, documents will be kept in separate locked file cabinets until completion of the study, upon which time these documents will be shredded. Data will be entered into a password protected database to which only the researchers will have access. Upon completion of the study, data will be reported for educational purposes only, for Amy’s Master’s thesis research. Data will be reported using pseudonyms for both participants and the school. This pseudonym will mask any identifying characteristics. At no time will your name or any personally identifying information be reported or disclosed in connection to the information you provide for this study.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact me, Amy Collins-Warfield, at 021 + 694-3679 while I am in South Africa. After 21 June 2008, you may contact Amy at 001 + 419 + 372-9504 or amywarf@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Patricia Kubow, at 001 + 419 + 372-7380 or pkubow@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University at 001 + 419 + 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

By signing this consent form, I, as a study participant, acknowledge that I am willing to be involved in the study, and I have received a copy of this consent form for future reference. Moreover, all of my questions have been answered and I have been encouraged to ask any questions that I may have concerning this study in the future.

_____________________________________
Name (printed)

______________________________________  ___________________________
Signature      Date
APPENDIX E.: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Information

School

Enrollment: ___________ students

Gender ratio: _______ males, _______ females

Number of students in each classroom: __________

Grades served at the school: ____________

Language of instruction: ________________________

School address, phone number, fax number: ______________________________

Participant

Gender: ____ male ____ female

Age range: 18-22  23-29  30-39  40-49  50-59  60-69  70-79

First language: ________________________

Highest level of formal training achieved: ________________________

# of years teaching experience: __________

Grade levels taught: _________________

Subjects taught: _______________________________________

Interview Questions

1) How long have you been teaching at this school?

2) What subjects do you teach?

3) How many students are in each of your classes?

4) Tell me what a typical school day is like for you. Begin with your arrival at school.
5) When during the day do you interact with other teachers?

6) In what ways do you interact with them?

7) Do teachers do anything together outside of school?

8) When I say the term, “teacher community,” what comes to mind?

9) What is it like when a new teacher joins the school?

10) What is it like when a teacher leaves (i.e., is no longer employed at) the school?

11) Do teachers at this school work together on any projects? If so, what kind of projects?

12) Tell me what it is like when you work together with another teacher.

13) What happens when teachers disagree with each other?

14) When you have a problem with another teacher, what do you do?

15) Do you think most of the teachers in this school get along with each other?

16) Are you familiar with the term “ubuntu”?

17) What does ubuntu mean to you?

18) How does ubuntu relate to your life as a teacher?

19) How do the students at this school interact with the teachers?

20) In your opinion, is it important for teachers to care about each other?

21) Do teachers care about each other at this school? In what ways do they show they care?

22) What is life like as a teacher in Langa?

23) How do you feel about the students from Joe Slovo?

24) What do you think is important for me to know about Xhosa culture?

25) Is there anything else you think is important to tell me?