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## **Faculty Community Under Construction: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

This case study describes some of the elements of the social construction of community by faculty involved with an innovative residential and academic subgroup at a small private university in the northeast US. Examples from the case study demonstrate that the social construction of faculty community can be accomplished through both routine and marked activities and events; that it is possible to build a resilient sense of community deliberately and overtly, inadvertently, and subtly, and that it is possible to respond to potential vulnerabilities in ways that build a resilient sense of community.

### **What Builds Faculty Community?**

What does it matter whether faculty on any campus successfully construct among themselves a sense of community to enhance their collegiality? Does a sense of community enable us to teach more effectively, to be more productive citizens of our universities or colleges, or to be more productive or successful scholars? Does it give faculty a sense of shared purpose, or does it enhance how faculty feel about their existing shared purposes? Is it merely an element of a pleasant climate within which to teach and think, or is it the necessary fabric from which we construct ourselves as faculty?

Barnes, Agago & Coombs (1998) found that a lack of a sense of community was one of the two most important predictors of faculty intent to leave academia, while a strong sense of collegiality and institutional fit influenced faculty to choose to stay in their jobs, echoing a common theme in the literature on the professoriate (Boyer, 1991; McGuire and Reger, 2003; Palmer, 1998; Rosser, 2004). For faculty, this disconnection underlies much of the notable absence of community in university life (Astin, 1993; August & Waltman, 2004; Barnes, Agago, & Coombs, 1998; Baumeister, 2004; Bennett, 1998, 2004; Boyer, 1991; Calderwood, 1999; Frame, 2002; Hartley & Hollander, 2003; Smith, 2003; Taub, 1998). Although researchers have identified faculty characteristics that are positively correlated to establishing a sense of community, Silver notes that the elusiveness of a unitary, contextualizing university culture within which faculty activity occurs contributes to the challenge of identifying how faculty are, or are not, in community (Armstrong, 1999; Astin, 1993; Lindholm, 2004; Silver, 2003).

Tierney and Minor (2004), in their extensive survey of perceptions of faculty participation in university governance, note, "apathy and lack of trust are the most significant barriers to participation (p. 18)." Others note that faculty service engagement of any kind must be rewarded by the tenure and promotion system in effect at the university (Kreber, 2003; Tierney, 2004; Tierney and Bensimon, 1996; Ward, 2003).

On a hopeful note, Lindholm (2003) notes that, although the cloistered nature of professorial work makes it difficult to establish a sense of community, intellectual engagement with and emotional support from peers can help provide some of the benefits of collegial community on campus. In her recent research, she has learned from faculty that intellectual

engagement with colleagues who “share similar worldviews, values, and approaches to research, teaching, and service” is highly valued, especially if these colleagues stimulate creative thinking. One of the more important roles such colleagues play is to confirm the worth of one’s ideas and work. Others have suggested ways of supporting each other, including co-mentoring (Hamrick & Nelson, 1999; McGuire and Reger, 2003). In another vein, the recent literature on college faculty spirituality further emphasizes the importance of the spiritual in both personal development and satisfaction (Dalton, 2001; Estanek, 2004; Palmer, 1998, 2000).

Many of the characteristics associated with the successful construction of faculty sense of community on campus, such as intellectual engagement with each other and with students, and enhanced opportunities to interact in meaningful ways outside class with students, are characteristic of a recent, well-funded initiative, the *Ignatian Residential College (IRC)*, at a small private university in the northeastern US.

I wondered, as an educator who studies the notion of community as it is constructed in educational settings, is this residential college also an incubator for the growth of faculty community? Although the idea of community has considerable appeal (Anderson, 1991; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler and Tipton, 1985; Frazer, 1999; Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Tönnies, 1988 (1887)), the delicate relationship of fragility and resilience within community for any group serves as a caution (Calderwood, 2000). On the other hand, creating identity, accounting for difference and diversity, learning how to be in community, and celebrating community provide a basic foundation for the construction of resilient and enduring social relations of community (Calderwood, 2000; see also Cohen, 1985; Frazer, 1999; Knight-Abowitz, 1997; Magolda, 2000). The social construction of community is done through both routine and marked events. It is possible to build resilient community deliberately and overtly, inadvertently, and subtly. Groups can allow community to falter or fall apart by ignoring vulnerabilities and faultlines, or even by attending to these, but in ways that undermine building resilience into community. A sense of community is an important element of satisfaction for faculty, and resilient and/or healthy practices of community can help pull a faculty through difficult times. The first years of this particular residential-academic group offered some excellent opportunity to observe and participate in building (or not building) community on campus. Would an examination of faculty involvement in the IRC program find instances of vulnerability and resilience clearly connected to these foundational processes of community construction?

### **The IRC**

The IRC is not a separate college within the university, but rather an innovative blend of student housing, a two-course core academic component, and numerous intellectual, social and recreational activities, all wrapped around a core set of identity questions and, purportedly, a sense of community, that for many is significantly spiritual or religious (Calderwood, 2005). This is an expensive undertaking, initially funded by a seven figure, five-year external grant that has been used to underwrite faculty development, aid in furnishing the residence hall, pay the directors, pay for the costs of the activities for students, offer modest honoraria to mentors, and be used for expenses and fees for guest speakers, and so on.

The fundamental orientation of the IRC, which houses and educates about 25% of the sophomore class at the university, is to examine vocation, broadly defined, within a comprehensive residential and academic community. Vocation, as will be explained more fully below, is not meant in the sense of being called to the clergy, but rather is considered in its more

varied meanings. IRC's primary goal is to facilitate the maturation of its students as engaged, adult members of whatever faith community to which they belong. The students live together in one residence hall, take at least 2 courses from a roster of approximately two dozen specially designed and designated core curriculum courses offered during the academic year, and meet regularly with mentors, some of whom are faculty. There are numerous special and daily events available for the students, staff, and faculty that blur academic and residential distinctions, such as group dinners, mentor groups, guest speakers, opportunities for community service, excursions, weekend retreats, parties, optional prayer groups, religious services, and so on. In addition, substantial faculty development opportunities are offered to all interested university faculty, both those who offer IRC courses and those who do not. In an interview with an administrator who co-wrote the successful grant proposal for funding and who serves on the IRC steering committee, she noted that the concept of the IRC as "the leaven" that will permeate the university community has served as a useful metaphor for the reinvigoration of the university's mission and identity as a Catholic, Jesuit institution (MM, personal communication, 2003).

The number of participating faculty varied from year to year, as did the extent of any specific faculty member's participation. Some faculty only participated peripherally through attendance at some of the short term faculty development days, while others attended all faculty development, including a week long seminar during each of the summers of 2003 and 2004; about a dozen taught courses labeled as IRC courses in a given semester, some served as mentors who met monthly with small groups of students, and a handful of faculty both taught and mentored the IRC students. When all possible ways that faculty could participate were included, about 25% of the 240 + full-time faculty, and a handful of part-time faculty could be counted as participants to some degree during the first two years of the IRC's existence. Faculty participation in the Ignatian Residential College was compensated with stipends for attending the week-long and day-long seminars during the first two years, and mentors received a modest honorarium at the end of each year.

### **Research Method**

In order to learn more about how faculty experienced the Ignatian Residential College, and to analyze whether this experience supported the construction of community, I utilized a combination of ethnographic methods (primarily participant observation, interviews, and surveys) to collect and analyze data (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004; Ellen, 1984; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). From my vantage point as an untenured assistant professor of curriculum, the work of the other participating faculty was both familiar and strange. All were primarily teaching undergraduate students in core courses across disciplines, and were on the "day shift." My teaching was conducted for masters' level students in teacher education, and was done on the "night shift." However, there was significant overlap in our work, particularly in the areas of faculty governance and other university service, so we often found ourselves on common ground. My status as simultaneous insider-outsider was felicitous, in that my ignorance of and interest in the particulars of their work made sense to the other faculty, who were very patient and generous with me. As a participating faculty member in the week-long seminars and day-long sessions, I received the same stipend as other faculty participants. However, I was not able to teach a course within the IRC, as my teaching assignments were limited to graduate courses, and I was not invited to be a mentor during its first two years.

For the purposes of understanding the faculty experience as fully as possible, given the limited time and resources I had available, I anchored my data gathering and analysis in

participation in faculty development events and seminars, attendance at public events such as lectures, and, when possible, observation of classes. I have also relied extensively on formal and informal interviews with participating faculty, staff and students; and, to a lesser degree have mined responses to course surveys that I distributed to students and faculty during each of the four semesters of the first two years, and have analyzed numerous documents, such as the original grant proposal that secured the funding for the IRC, suggested readings distributed for faculty discussion, dozens of course outlines and course proposals.

I conducted about a dozen open-ended faculty and administrator interviews during the first year that focused on their initial expectations for the IRC, particularly in the areas of students' personal and academic development, on-going residential issues, special events, faculty involvement and development, and impact on the larger campus community and the university's mission and identity. During the second year, informal conversations with faculty and staff about daily life, teaching, and mentoring focused more explicitly on their own development as members of the IRC community. The evidence of markers for the particular nature of IRC community, including vulnerability and resilience, was primarily drawn from the juxtaposition of the interviews, informal conversations, and participant observation. In particular, the faculty development days and seminars provided rich conversational exchanges with both highly and peripherally involved faculty, staff and administrators about the meaning they found in their own participation.

In order to understand how, if at all, faculty developed an understanding of themselves as members of IRC community, I framed my analysis within a previously developed framework for locating instances of community resilience and vulnerability in educational settings (Calderwood, 2000). This framework posits that creating identity, accounting for difference and diversity, learning how to be in community, and celebrating community are foundational to constructing community. As this framework is new to the literature on university faculty sense of community, I draw on insights from that literature and from the literature on meaningful work to balance the analysis of this case study.

As part of my participant observation in the IRC, I have shared all of the survey data with the steering committee and with the official program evaluator, and have provided them with a comprehensive report of my findings, including a paper focused on student sense of community within IRC. They have developed further survey documents for students based on my categorization of the responses to the surveys. The specific analysis of faculty community has been shared with, and critiqued by, four participants: the faculty director of the first two years, one of the co-directors, and two participating faculty. Their insights, agreements and disagreements with my interpretations have been reconciled into the analysis included in this paper.

As might be expected when focusing on faculty experience, themes emerged about their identities as educators and scholars; these themes were often contextualized in terms of their work and relationships with students. Perhaps more unique to the particular context of this educational group, themes also emerged about a spiritual dimension to educating and to the identity of teacher.

### **Faculty Community Under Construction**

Early in the fall of the first year of the program, I interviewed the academic chair, a popular professor of history, about his expectations for the success of the IRC. One of the topics

we spoke of was faculty engagement. He stressed faculty communication and knowledge building, both within and outside the IRC, as crucial components of a successful program (in terms of its being a positive element within the university with regard to student intellectual, social and spiritual development, and with regard to its ability to act as a “leaven” within the campus culture), and then mused:

You know, I think that this will build over time, but it is a crucial determining factor as to whether we’re succeeding. How great is the knowledge? How deep is the interaction? How serious is the discussion, not only among the faculty among the different disciplines, but between the faculty and the other parts of the IRC?

In response to my question about what incentive would draw non-involved faculty, he continued:

They’ll do it. They’ll come. They’ll learn. They’ll maybe even do something, but unless they’re committed to it, they’re not going to pursue it to the next level. So, I think it’s deepening all the rest of the connections, and for there to be belief and credibility that all approaches, all faculty from all disciplines and religious commitments ... can be and will be welcomed into this (McFadden, personal communication, 2002).

The above quote, illustrative as it is of the challenges of building faculty buy-in of the project, also captures the tenor of how faculty sense of community and belonging would be stirred over the first two years of the project. Interdisciplinary conversation about learning and teaching, multiple opportunities to join in the full social life of the community, and constant reassurance that all, regardless of religious or spiritual beliefs (or lack thereof) would be welcomed into the IRC community, would dominate. This spirit of welcome, of engagement along multiple paths, marked each of the formal events designed for faculty, and infused the informal recruitment efforts made by the academic chair of the IRC during the two years of the study. In addition, the quote hints at the particular nature of community to be found within the IRC.

### **Intentional Community**

Within the IRC, at least two distinct types of community were evident for all participants. The first, an *intentional community*, was brought together through spiritual and religious explorations of vocation, a feeling of being called toward the life to which one is destined (Haworth, Cooper, Sucher & Sullivan, 2004; Palmer, 2000). Although there were differences in faculty perceptions of and attitudes toward the IRC as an intentional community, the IRC undeniably had many characteristics of intentional community, particularly the combination of living together, working together, socializing and regularly engaging together in highly salient activities appropriate for the group’s core purposes, along with the deliberate setting apart of the group as distinct within the sophomore class. Faculty participated within the intentional community most visibly if they attended dinners or other events in the residence hall’s Commons, a large, attractive and comfortably furnished room, or if they served as mentors to groups of students. Attending events such as dinners, parties, lectures and movies could be done sporadically and with little attendant responsibility, but mentoring involved a significant amount of time and energy. The mentors were expected to meet with a small group of students on at least a monthly basis throughout the academic year, serving as role models and leading discussions intended to help the students discover who they were, whose they were, and who they were

called to be, three iterations of their developing adult identity as individuals, as members of families, faith communities and other social groups, and as someone who was “called” toward a destined life. A less visible membership in the intentional community was felt by those faculty (teaching and/or mentoring) who saw the IRC as a subset of a more encompassing spiritual community that permeated and connected their teaching and other interactions with students.

### **A Learning Community**

The second type of community, a *learning community*, was also animated by the possibility of the discovery of vocation, and was solidly anchored in the three questions of identity mentioned above. The term *learning community* most commonly is used as a label for a group of students and a teacher who are consciously using hallmarks of communal affiliation, such as interpersonal relationships, and approaches such as interdependence of work, to construct knowledge so that all (including the teacher) might become more expert in the subject studied (Rogoff, 1994; Schroeder & Hurst, 1996; Smith, 2003; Taub, 1998). Faculty participation in the learning community was predominately through their roles as teachers of the specially designated courses. In the IRC, student and faculty responses to course surveys each semester of the study consistently pointed to hallmarks of strong learning community, such as knowing each other, having a voice, deep engagement with the course content and a feeling of closeness, when they wrote about how the IRC courses differ from others (Calderwood, 2005). In addition, the faculty seminars, particularly the week long seminars of the first two summers, offered nuance to faculty membership within the learning community, providing dedicated time to learn from each other, and, especially after the first year, to learn more about Ignatian pedagogy. Ignatian pedagogy is the name given to the 450 year old pedagogical approach credited to St Ignatius, founder of the Jesuits, an approach notable for its student centered teaching, and its incorporation of reflection and action as important elements of learning (Duminuco, 2000).

### **Liminal spaces**

The notion of *community of practice* offers a frame for understanding how the intentional and learning community elements of the IRC twine together. A community of practice includes members from novices to experts in the activities associated with the practice, an extensive formal and informal system of learning and teaching the practice, and mechanisms for the development of novices into expert practitioners, of newcomers into old-timers, so that the practice can continue over time (Chaiklin & Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). When communities of practice intersect, liminal spaces arise where a participant might hold multiple roles, and where the peripheries of expertise and experience are fluid. For example, a faculty member might be a novice with regard to the spiritual or religious practices that permeate the intentional community of the IRC. At the same time, she might be rather expert within the learning community, due to extensive disciplinary knowledge. She interacts with others- faculty, students, staff- who are more or less experienced or expert within intersecting arenas of practice. They learn from each other in interaction. These liminal spaces offer both the fragmentation of fragility and the security of resilience for the blended intentional/learning community that is the IRC.

The distinctive student-centeredness of the intentional and learning communities promoted extensive faculty-student interactions. Although there were multiple points, some physical, some social, some ideological, where intentional and learning community intersected, a core set of identity questions was always present. These three complex questions of identity

(Who am I? Whose am I? Who am I called to be?) were asked and explored no matter which aspect of community, intentional or learning, was foregrounded, tying the intentional and learning communities together. During the first and second years, the task of familiarizing faculty with using the three questions as elements of their courses underlay most of the formal faculty development. This placed a slightly greater emphasis on the construction of the faculty role in the learning community and less on their role in the intentional community, although there was a subtle implicit expectation that faculty were also members of the intentional community. As will be noted later, the perception among some participating faculty, and among some non-participating faculty was that the emphasis on the religious and spiritual dimensions of the intentional community increased from first to second year.

### **Talking Our Way Into Community**

Throughout the first two years of the IRC, the intentional community of the IRC was seen by some as potentially open to all faculty, but for others was persistently seen as limited to those with religious faith. Faculty participation in the learning community arena of the IRC was perceived as more weakly linked to religion or spirituality and more strongly linked to disciplinary interest. Although interest in teaching and/or mentoring within IRC and/or interest in its faculty development were sufficient credentialing for faculty participation, according to the first academic chair, some faculty who found the IRC appealing or intriguing refrained from teaching or otherwise participating more than peripherally. Reasons told to me during interviews and in the faculty surveys included the concern that participating would imply an unintended defacto endorsement of specific religious values. As time passed, the expressed reservations of dubious faculty about defacto endorsement of a faith-based learning community were not allayed, but reinforced as the faculty leadership in the IRC changed. At the end of year two, the first academic chair, a history professor, turned over the position to a religious studies professor of passionate Catholic faith and deep commitment to the specific intent of the program to develop active members and leaders in faith communities. This professor had been one of the original authors of the grant proposal, and had expressed to me her disappointment that the goals of the IRC had been interpreted loosely during the first year, to the detriment of the spiritual and religious aspects of the “whose am I” question that was expected to be embedded in each course.

The first week-long faculty seminar, offered the summer before the first semester of residence and classes began, offered the opportunity to talk about religious affiliation issues, and to express multiple interpretations of what the three cohering questions meant. Several faculty members delicately raised the issue of inclusiveness as existing in tandem with perceptions of exclusiveness, with regard to whether faculty with divergent beliefs would be invited or welcomed into the IRC. During the conversations that week it was evident that more than a few of the 20 or so participants had drawn borderlines between becoming part of the IRC and endorsing the religious (specifically Catholic) identity that was key to purposes set out in the grant proposal. Many of us expressed an affinity for the Jesuit identity, however, finding little to no incongruity in separating the two. At the time, it was apparent that some at the table seemed comfortable with openness about this equivocation, but also that others preferred a more conservative framework truer to the language of the grant.

The gingerly constructed separation of spirituality and religious beliefs by about half of the participating faculty during that first faculty development seminar was one of the earliest potential faultlines of vulnerability to be brought to the communal table. How it would be managed would make the parameters (of belief and values) for faculty membership more or less



inclusive. Although accommodating much diversity of beliefs and values was a significant tension, given the explicit intention of the project to align with the reclamation of the University's Catholic identity, faculty participants found tolerance enough that first summer. It was clear, however, that building a sense of community and belonging among faculty would continue to require attention to the challenges of accommodating the diversity and differences among us, a challenge others have noted elsewhere as well (Bensimon, 1994; Calderwood 2000, 2003; Tierney, 1993; Varlotta, 2001).

During the second summer of faculty development, there was increased representation from the religious studies department in the group of faculty meeting for the week. There was also a more explicit and directive emphasis on spirituality and faith-based identity spoken about by two of the program's directors (one lay, and one religious). One's personal identification as religiously affiliated or non-affiliated was not overtly at issue, although it lingered as a politely downplayed node of tension. The nuances of the emphasis on faith-based spirituality that marked the second year were prompted in part by the first summer's renegade interpretations of the explicit faith-based community of practice that centered the goals of the original grant proposal. This was seen as a corrective emphasis by those who found the looser interpretations of the previous year in conflict with the foundational purpose of the IRC, for others, it was noted as a constriction of the egalitarian, secular welcome extended during the first year.

During that second week-long experience an appealing new element of the second year seminar, an emphasis on Ignatian pedagogy as a philosophy and method of teaching, captured faculty interest and induced us to accept or put aside the stronger emphasis on religion and spirituality in order to delve into the pedagogical discussions (Duminuco, 2000; Morelli, 2002). Because of its considerable similarity to more modern and secular progressive approaches to student-centered critical pedagogy, faculty still not buying in to the faith-based and spiritual foci of the intentional community found Ignatian pedagogy appealing and relevant to their teaching. We spent two half-days in intense collegial discussions about our courses with regard to their disciplinary rigor, holistic care for our students, and attention to issues of social responsibility and social justice, absent of the previous year's more tentative pokes at the three identity questions. In particular, the "Whose am I?" question, the one most difficult to unlink from religious overtones, seemed less of a faultline for possible fragility when considered as an element of effective pedagogy. Asking us to think about what was particularly Ignatian about the courses, the residence and social experiences led us to a less defensive and more exploratory conversation, even though it was now growing much clearer that within IRC community, the emphasis on faith and spirituality were to be substantial.

The turn in the faculty seminars from one year to the next, from the self examination and bold declarations as in or out of a faith community paired with desultory examination of the three identity questions, toward the enthusiastic adoption of an Ignatian pedagogy paradigm as framework for exploration of teaching, made it much easier for more participating faculty to find ways to design their courses around the 3 questions regardless of how they saw their membership in the now explicitly faith-based intentional community.

After our weeklong summer seminar in August 2003, I sent a note to the seminar participants, inviting their comments:

I was struck by the more emphatic emphasis I heard on spirituality and religion this year. Does this mean that the emphasis will fall more sharply on the "whose

am I” question? Last year during the faculty seminar, there was a pushing of this question so that it didn’t have to be a spiritual or religious one. Is this same elasticity still present? (8/18/03)

In response to the above questions, a professor of religious studies and a first time seminar participant, wrote in August 2003:

... For me, spirituality lies in the commitment to the hunt for God/truth or however you name it. Spirituality is the possession of the searcher, whether she or he uses a religious language or not. "Religion" is the name for a class of things, each of which tells a story that purports to hold the answers to the search for God/truth, though not necessarily in such a way that the searching ends. But people can grasp religion in a couple of ways, either as aiding them in their search for God, or as ending the search. To me (and I speak only for myself), the former entails a provisional commitment to a tradition in the service of an absolute commitment to God/truth. This is open to others. The latter entails an absolute commitment to a tradition which forecloses the "more" that God must always be. This approach is not open to others.

Now, while members of the seminar might not agree with the way I put it, I would say that we did so well because we all of us fall into that searcher category. If we are religious, it is only as a means to a greater end (God/truth). And, by the way, those who are not religious can become "religious" through an equally dogmatic attachment to some ideology or other (Lakeland, personal communication, August 25, 2003).

Faculty identity within the blended intentional-learning community is not only that of teacher, scholar and truth-seeker, but also for some, as mentor, as a guide and model. The role of mentor to a group of students was one to which one was selectively invited by one or another of the IRC steering committee, and was not contingent upon faculty status. Rather, those invited to become mentors during the first year had previously demonstrated qualities that were not necessarily pertinent to the occupation of teacher, such as an affinity for mentoring, a sense of a purposeful life, or a sense of spirituality or membership in a faith community. However, JD, one of the co-directors of the IRC, emphasized to me several times that there was no deliberate exclusion of potential mentors based on their affiliation, or lack thereof, with any religious or spiritual tradition. During a multi-day discussion with a group of faculty during the summer faculty seminar of 2003, after the college had finished its first year, I wondered:

...Who isn’t a potential mentor? (8/18/03)

In response, one of the co-directors responded thoughtfully:

As far as a particular type of person for a mentor...I think the qualities and characteristics we are searching for are people who in one way or another have a sense about the path they have taken in their life and can articulate that. Someone also who is perceived to have a good rapport with students and can make the kind of time commitment required and has a certain amount of facilitating and small group dynamic skills (Lederer, personal communication, 8/20/03).

As the first faculty chair had noted, there was a disconnection between teaching faculty and mentors (only some of whom were faculty) during the first year. This disconnection was a

fairly significant faultline of vulnerability, as the mentor groups were expected to bridge intentional and learning communities through extensive examination of the three identity questions, contextualized by residential, social and academic experiences. Communications between teaching faculty and mentors became thicker during the second year, as the mentors received course outlines and held regular mentor development sessions in addition to their scheduled meetings with their assigned groups of students.

### **Caring for Students and Each Other**

Relevant to the conditions for job satisfaction that supports building a sense of community among faculty, Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi & Damon (2001) have documented what they have come to call good work – “work of excellent quality that benefits the broader society (p. XI). Similarly, Mike Martin writes of “meaningful work” – work that is “...rich in intrinsic satisfactions from goods internal to the work (2000, p. 21).” John Bennett brings the notion of hospitality, of welcoming and openness, to this good, meaningful work for faculty:

... Cultivating habits of openness is essential to our becoming educators with integrity. For the very lifeblood of our teaching and scholarship (and our work as student affairs professionals) involves attending to others through open, respectful, and mutual inquiry as well as engaging in honest conversation about our findings—not ignoring or attacking others, sequestering our knowledge, or shielding ourselves from the scrutiny of others (Bennett, 2004).

The IRC was seen by some faculty as an opportunity to refresh their teaching and to connect with students and colleagues on a more personal and meaningful level, although the surveys of faculty teaching the courses in the first three semesters indicated that many had not yet significantly changed their existing courses. Although some had added the identity questions to their courses, either as a recurring theme that was discussed from time to time, or as a discrete unit of study, only a few had designed their courses using the three questions as a cohering theme or as a lens through which to view the disciplinary knowledge. Many of the first year’s courses had been habitually taught as part of the University’s existing core curriculum, and the new focus on the three questions has occurred at the inception of a school-wide reconsideration of the “core” itself, an examination that is expected to include substantial reflection on the purpose and nature of core courses (see also Parker, 2003). By the fourth semester, an increased number of faculty expressed intentions to put the questions at the heart of new or redesigned courses, an indicator of increased faculty understanding of and willingness to engage in the vision of the IRC, but also perhaps an indication of a growing concern with the current core curriculum. The various founding administrators, faculty and staff had indicated to me the previous year that this would be an important indicator of success for the program. Depth of engagement by individual faculty would be expected to vary, but the expectation was that the courses offered within the college would soon all be developed using the three questions in significant ways.

At first, faculty who expressed interest in teaching for the college did so because they saw a good fit with the IRC, although this fit was not always visible to the academic chair, who sometimes found discontinuities between their courses and the IRC model. Other professors, who were not teaching courses for IRC, told me that they believed their courses wouldn’t work for the IRC because they didn’t deal explicitly with the questions, or because they had some personal or intellectual reservations about the cohering questions. Academic freedom and

disciplinary integrity were the most often cited explanations for both engagement and lack of engagement with regard to teaching IRC courses.

For at least one of the participating faculty, teaching as a member of the Ignatian Residential College provided an opportunity to reflect upon how and why her teaching was of consequence. She wrote to me as the second spring semester drew to an end:

Here are the kinds of comments I get in student Environmental Impact Logs:

"Although today was not unlike any previous Tuesday routine, I realize that my Tuesdays should begin to change. I need to make a more conscious effort to conserve water. I personally believe I consume too much water on a daily basis."

She continued, "A shift like that can change the world." (Choly, personal communication, May 14, 2004).

During the faculty development seminar of the summer of 2003, the notion of loving one's students came sharply into focus as we discussed pedagogy. At first, the concept of teaching as an act of love for our students slipped quietly into the afternoon conversation among the 15 or so professors comfortably sprawled in the IRC commons. But as we talked, the repeated expression of this love for our students begged for an explanation. I asked, "What is this love? It seems different from the personal affection I feel towards my students." We all grew silent, many of us thinking about teaching as love, some of us for the first time.

Teaching as an act of love is a powerful idealistic concept that elevates the job of teaching into something rather noble. Understanding our work as noble helped us see each other as noble, which infused the already cordial sense of collegiality with a sense of greater good.

### **Community Flickering**

Although the idea of community was thickly woven through the words and activities of members of the Ignatian Residential College and was in pervasive use as a label for the program and its participants, faculty construction of community through IRC participation has been difficult to document, partly because its subordination to the focus on student development and student sense of community is significant. Building faculty sense of community was not one of the IRC's core goals, but rather an incidental, though not insignificant, benefit of the attention paid to developing IRC community. A change in the nature of faculty development during the third year of the program illustrates the lesser emphasis on developing community among the participating faculty. During the third year, group development did not include the week-long seminars of the previous years, although two university-wide development days were offered to all faculty and administrators interested in attending. The first two years' stipends for faculty participation were reconfigured so as to provide two competitive summer stipends for faculty to design courses to be taught in the college. Thus, the number of faculty to receive stipends for participating in teaching workshops shrunk from between 12-15 per year to 2 in the third year. The change has reduced the amount of money spent on faculty development, and insured that funds were more clearly linked to specific desired outcomes, such as courses specially designed for the IRC, but also reduced opportunities for faculty to spend substantial time together in IRC community. It has not reduced the number of faculty teaching courses with an IRC designation,

however, as the IRC course sections have become a more established element in the curriculum planning of the University.

The decision to change the nature of faculty development was not transparent, as this and other such decisions were made by the steering committee during their regular meetings, which were not generally attended by others not directly involved in administering the IRC. There was no surprise among the general faculty as to the opacity of the decision-making processes within the IRC, as opacity to some degree is a fairly routine constituent and consequence of much decision-making at the university. In fact, the reduction in the financial compensation for faculty development was inevitable, given the finite duration of the funding grant.

Across campus, the long-anticipated creation of the highly popular faculty initiative, The Center for Academic Excellence (CAE), emerged as another source of faculty development for teaching and for supporting research on teaching and learning. The CAE jointly sponsored several of the day-long workshops and lectures with the IRC during the second year of the study, notably those focused on Ignatian pedagogy, and, in addition, offered a variety of well-attended short workshops and brown bag discussions. The occasional partnership of the two groups in offering faculty development cast the groups as compatible allies within a learning community, but the CAE was not a partner in the intentional community.

Likewise, the university's administrative office for mission and identity co-sponsored some of the faculty development days during the second and subsequent year of the IRC. This is the organizing or facilitating office that arranges campus events and activities that articulate and support the university mission and its identity as Catholic and Jesuit. The administrator of the mission and identity office, a highly respected and popular Jesuit, was a member of the IRC steering committee and a significant influence in the development of its configuration as an intentional community.

### **Vulnerability and Resilience**

Each of the elements (notion of vocation, boundaries of community, membership norms, and IRC leadership) situated on the faultlines of vulnerability for faculty community in the IRC were also sites of community resilience. For example, often decisions made by the IRC leadership were arrived at quickly, as need arose, and thus were only partially transparent to participating faculty and students not immediately involved. The generally high esteem in which the leadership was held has supported a remarkably unproblematic acceptance of decisions and policy. Similarly, the nuances of the notion of vocation have attracted and repelled potential members, giving rise to community vulnerability because they muddied agreement about two of the central cohering questions, "whose am I" and "who am I called to be". At the same time, however, that particular vulnerability was addressed successfully, although differently, in each of the first two years of the program, by framing the nuances as contributive to a tolerance for varied beliefs about faith and spirituality, and as elasticizing the notion of vocation so as to fit varied discipline-based courses. Membership norms for faculty and mentors were sometimes perceived as exclusionary, challenging or even chafing, but once embraced, were noted as highly valued and important.

The slight differences in how the elements were elaborated in intentional or learning community within the IRC generally increased the depth and strength of resilience. As the opportunities for working through tensions or contradictions were nuanced differently depending on which manifestation of community, intentional or learning, were more prominent, the

possibility of fresh, rather than stale, interpretations, approaches and interactions was always present.

In addition, the three identity questions, the extensive faculty development, and the alignment with other university goals and organizations, supported the development of resilient community in the IRC. The three questions, especially when contextualized within the spirit of Ignatian pedagogy, particularly its emphasis on reflection, excellence, care for the whole person and social responsibility, refreshed and invigorated faculty who had become weary or bored with their teaching, and were welcomed by less experienced faculty across the university as solid building blocks upon which to base their teaching and organize their classroom learning groups. The faculty development sessions, comprised of informative lectures and workshops, also offered rare opportunities for faculty from across the university to think and talk together about who they were, intellectually and spiritually, about what they cared about and what they believed, and about how they cared for students. The extension of their participation in activities with students beyond the classroom, as mentors, for example, allowed faculty to see and understand how students incorporated their classroom learning into their lives, a satisfying (and sometimes stunning) validation of the importance of their work. Taken together, these factors (the three identity questions, the faculty development, and the extension of the usual interactions with students) contributed to a sense of being in community with each other. This opportunity to construct a sense of community could not have emerged at a more opportune hour, given the discontent caused by an unrelated faculty-administrative disagreement over compensation and governance. The alliance of the IRC with University mission and identity work provided an alternative focus for faculty, a positive outlet in which we could remember our commonalities of purpose. Likewise, the congruence of the IRC faculty development with that of the highly popular faculty-initiated Center for Academic Excellence reduced perceptions of exclusivity (with regard to religious affiliation or understandings of spirituality) that had been circulating about the IRC.

However, even when vulnerability gives rise to resilience, the potential for fragmentation and fragility are ever present. At the two-year mark, there was turnover in the program's faculty leadership and further changes in the University's administration, and it is not yet clear if or how this will affect faculty engagement for the long-term. Other exciting campus initiatives, such as the CAE, offer opportunities for interdisciplinary conversations and work for interested faculty, without an attendant focus on religious affiliation or spiritual sensibility. The current alignment with the CAE could diminish if pressure for religious affiliation increases as a condition of participation as a teacher or mentor in the IRC.

In particular, the week-long faculty development seminars were excellent opportunities to experience a sense of community among ourselves as well as with the larger population of the IRC. They brought the faculty together in the liminal space created at the intersection of intentional and learning community. The charged nature of that space, evident mostly in the evolution of the emphasis on spirituality and religious faith, introduced vulnerability into a sphere where experienced teaching faculty are usually quite comfortable. Working through the vulnerability stimulated appreciation for our commonalities and respect for how we managed our differences. The shared effort to manage the vulnerability built connections among us. In contrast, the actual teaching of the courses did not stimulate a strong sense of community among faculty, but rather stimulated a pronounced sense of purposeful teaching and learning between an individual faculty member and her or his students. For many of the teaching faculty, that was a

much appreciated experience, but not one that nurtured a sense of community with their fellow teachers. The experience of mentoring a group of students produced a similar sense of shared purpose between a mentor and her or his group of students, but did not necessarily extend out to fellow mentors. The energy of the relationship flowed between mentor and students. The opportunity for faculty to work and think and converse together was needed for that sense of community to emerge.

### **Concluding Notes**

In its first two years, the IRC did indeed serve as an incubator for supporting a multi-faceted sense of community among participating faculty. It has been an opportunity for faculty to feel connected with the lives of their students in and beyond the classroom, to cross disciplinary boundaries in order to converse with each other about teaching and learning, to feel connected to the mission of the University, and to explore with their students and fellow teachers who they were, whose they were, and who they were called to be within the liminal space at the intersection of intentional and learning community.

However, as the IRC transitioned from its infancy to maturity, the scope of its developmental support for participating faculty has accordingly become more modest. One of the elements of community construction, the learning of how to be in community, consequently became less robust for participating faculty. Similarly, though to a lesser extent, the opportunities to co-construct shared identity, and to celebrate it, were fewer and somewhat diluted as the week-long seminar model gave way to briefer workshop days that were at once more democratic and less intimate. This diminishment of the intensity and intimacy of faculty development has etched a new flickering of vulnerability in the faculty sense of community. It will be attended to, or not, in ways that support or fail to support a continued sense of faculty community.

The case study of faculty community under construction fits well with the model of community construction within which it was examined. In particular, it serves to demonstrate that the fundamental work (building identity, dealing with difference, learning how to be in community and celebrating community) is managed through both ordinary and marked activities. It illustrates that any one interaction, such as a conversation about love as an element of teaching, can multi-task, serving simultaneously as identity building, community celebration, and illustration of norms. Further, it illuminates elements of community construction that are not emphasized in the guiding model- the nuanced iterations of community identity and norms that mark the transition of a fledgling group into its maturity. Keeping community robustly under construction may be particularly challenging during such transitions.

Finally, this case study adds the notion of flickering to the concepts of vulnerability and resilience within community. Flickering conveys a sense of movement and change, subtle, quick, and delicate. It marks transitional moments within community. This flickering can be illuminative, making visible the work of community construction as identity gets built, differences become noticeable, norms are tested, and opportunities to celebrate are taken or missed. It is present in the early interplay between vulnerability and resilience, useful perhaps as a warning to prepare for difficult or challenging moments. It might sometimes be a beckoning beacon, lighting the impending iterations of a group's construction of itself in continued community.

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