A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND TEACHER BELIEFS ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

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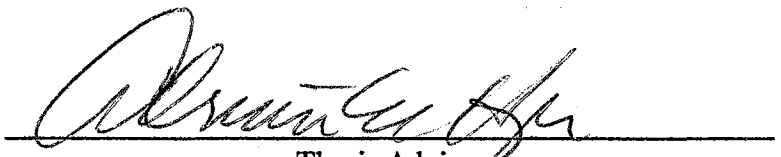

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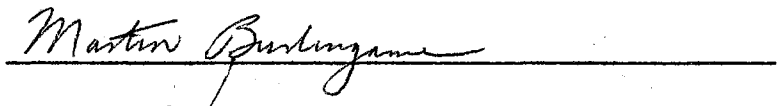

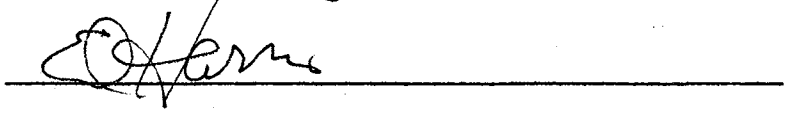

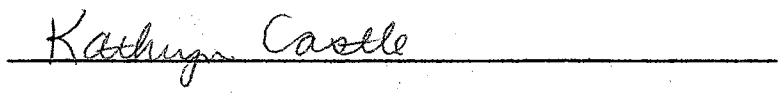

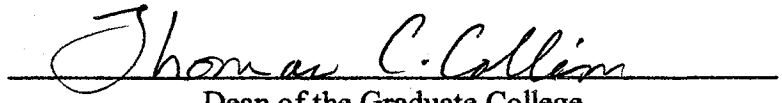

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER ONE

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Every teacher maintains a set of beliefs about how children learn and grow and exactly what knowledge should be acquired to live a successful life (Parkay & Stanford, 1992). These beliefs are the foundation for one's educational philosophy; they may be easily recognizable or unconsciously held convictions (Kagan, 1992). Despite the fact that teachers hold individual convictions, Cuban (1984) posits that the majority of teachers teach as they were taught. This perpetuation of teaching styles and philosophy is influenced through a variety of sources, particularly social networks (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Schubert & Ayers, 1992).

Perhaps teachers' beliefs are impacted by the social networks that they create (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Schubert & Ayers, 1992). Every teacher brings with them an internal history that influences their beliefs of elementary education. Therefore, to understand education, we must view it through the eyes of the teacher. Teachers construct their realities of education based on their beliefs and practices. We must strive to comprehend how schools appear to those who make that reality come to life in the classroom (Rosenholtz, 1989). To do this, we must look at teachers' beliefs.

Statement of the Problem

In the literature on teacher beliefs, two conflicting sets of realities are being constructed. One supports the notion that teachers mold their beliefs based on interaction and reflection with other teachers (Schubert & Ayers, 1992). Through this interaction and reflection with their colleagues, teachers are able to develop and reconstruct their

knowledge about learning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). The other reality supports the notion that teachers work in isolation of each other and are rarely provided an organized way to communicate with other teachers (Lortie, 1975; Goodlad, 1984). In an isolated culture, teachers are seldom offered the exposure to alternative practices and viewpoints (Bauch, 1982; Hargreaves, 1982; Fullan, 1991).

This anomaly is like that reported by various researchers examining segregation (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981; Wells & Crain, 1994). Their explanation of the perpetuation of segregation relies upon network analysis. It was determined that the strong ties, characterized by relationships with family and close friends, anchor traditional views of segregation while weak ties, characterized by acquaintances or friends of friends, bridge to new views and social ideas including integration across races. Through the lens of Perpetuation Theory, then, the perpetuation of traditional educational perspectives is explained through the overdevelopment of teacher's strong ties and the underdevelopment of teacher's weak ties.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of teachers' strong and weak ties and the impact of those associations upon their beliefs about the realities of elementary education in terms of the knowledge and skills that influence those realities: the nature of the learner, general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, school context, and self as teacher (Bennett & Spalding, 1991).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' beliefs about elementary education?

2. Generally, what has impacted those beliefs?

3. Specifically, how do strong ties and weak ties affect those beliefs?

Theoretical Framework

This study was driven by one theoretical framework and one conceptual framework. The theoretical framework is Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981; Wells & Crain, 1994). The conceptual framework is that derived from Bennett and Spalding (1991) which details the potential components of elementary education.

Theoretical or conceptual frameworks impact our traditional understanding by questioning the conceptual categories we use and the goals we think we want to achieve (Liston & Zeichner, 1990). When "examining teaching and the social context of schools through various conceptual frameworks, one begins to see new issues, reformulate old issues, question one's accepted image of society and the social order, and look at oneself in a new light" (Liston & Zeichner, 1990, p. 135). It is in this spirit that Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981; Wells & Crain, 1994) was used as the theoretical framework to guide and inform this examination of educational beliefs held by elementary educators.

Perpetuation Theory

Perpetuation Theory, based on the developments of Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock (1981), maintains that segregation of black Americans tends to perpetuate itself "across the stages of the life cycle and across institutions when individuals

have not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life" (McPartland & Braddock, 1981, p. 149). Braddock (1980) points out that as adults, minority students will most likely make choices perpetuating physical segregation because they were never afforded the opportunity to test their racial beliefs. Black students from desegregated high schools are more likely to attend a predominantly white college (Braddock, 1980) and have higher occupational aspirations that are more realistically related to their educational aspirations and achievements than segregated black students (Wells & Crain, 1994). Building on these assumptions, Hoelter (1982) predicted that school desegregation would provide black students with more information pertaining to educational and occupational opportunities and a means of achieving specific goals, thus breaking the cycle of segregation.

Wells and Crain (1994) expanded Braddock's Perpetuation Theory by including the notion of network analysis. In conjunction with Perpetuation Theory, they used Granovetter's (1973, 1983, 1986) "strong ties" and "weak ties." Granovetter (1973) maintains:

> the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie. Each of these is somewhat independent of the other, though the set is obviously highly intracorrelated. (p. 1361)

Strong ties include close relationships between individuals with similar thoughts and beliefs, i.e., family members and close friends. "The more frequently persons interact with one another, the stronger their sentiments of friendship for one another are apt to be"

(Homans, 1950, p. 133) and the stronger the tie or network.

Weak ties, however, are a "less formal interpersonal network - that is, acquaintances or friends of friends" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 533). Weak ties often link individuals to "new" socially distant ideas. "Weak ties are more likely to link members of different small groups than are strong ones, which tend to be concentrated within particular groups" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1376). Thus, weak ties play a significant role in networking. The termination of the average weak tie would possibly do more damage to the communication system within the organization than that of the strong tie, since weak ties travel a greater social distance and reach a larger number of people (Granovetter, 1973). Overall, weak ties afford people more opportunities.

School desegregation studies frequently show that cross-raced ties are not very strong. But even such weak ties may significantly affect later economic success. Because employers at all levels of work prefer to recruit by word-of-mouth, typically using recommendations of current employees, segregation of friendship and acquaintances means that workplaces that start out all white will remain so (Granovetter, 1986).

The findings of Lortie (1975) and Goodlad (1984) indirectly support the notion of the importance of strong ties in schools. Traditionally, teachers work in isolation of each other and are rarely provided an organized way to communicate with other teachers. When teachers do collaborate, they do so with those who have similar thoughts and beliefs, such as those who teach the same subject or grade, or perhaps those nearer their own age. In an isolated culture, teachers are seldom offered the exposure to alternative practices and viewpoints (Bauch, 1982; Hargreaves, 1982). Perhaps this perpetuates a

traditional educational perspective of education that has been handed down through many generations; teachers tend to teach as they were taught (Cuban, 1984). The use of strong ties offers no opportunities to break this cycle.

The notion of weak ties is supported as well. Teachers need the opportunity to "discuss practice, collaboratively design materials, and inform and critique one another" (Raywid, 1993, p. 30). Such opportunities allow teachers to form networks that provide "support, knowledge, and encouragement necessary for teachers to implement innovative ideas" (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992, p. 675). When teachers are brought together to interact and reflect, they are exposed to alternative beliefs and practices (Schubert & Ayers, 1992). Opportunities for professional collaboration are provided through staff meetings, collaborative committees, team teaching, workshops, and casual social functions. It is assumed that weak ties will afford teachers with more opportunities to solidify their beliefs and thus, indirectly challenge traditional ideologies.

The connection between network analysis and school desegregation suggests the need to include "Braddock's micro-level acknowledgment of racial fear and distrust on the part of isolated minorities, [as well as] the micro-macro connections inherent in the flow of information and opportunities through interpersonal networks" (Wells & Crain, 1994, p. 534). This study examined beliefs of elementary education on a micro-level as well as a micro-macro level. The micro-level of education included the individual teacher's beliefs. Strong ties would most likely be dominant at this level since teachers generally associate with people of similar thoughts and beliefs. The macro-level referred to the belief systems of the school district. The macro-level offered more opportunities for weak ties to occur

due to interactions among teachers with different beliefs. At the macro-level, teachers were afforded opportunities to function differently, to communicate with a different set of people, and to learn new information. The micro-macro level of education referred to the relationship between the individual teacher and the belief systems of the school district. Perpetuation Theory was used to examine strong ties and weak ties as reflected in teachers' beliefs of elementary education. It also guided the study in examining the perpetuation of traditional perspectives and the use of strong or weak ties to break or perpetuate the cycle.

Components of Elementary Education

Bennett and Spaldings's (1991) model of decision making was modified to provide a conceptual framework portraying the areas of knowledge and skills that influence the constructed reality of elementary education: self as teacher, general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, the nature of the learner, and school context. Bennett and Spalding (1991) did not provide definitions for the areas of knowledge and skills. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, definitions for each area were derived from a combination of literature and expertise.

Self as teacher was defined as the teacher's perspective of his or her beliefs, roles, and responsibilities. Specifically, this would include what teachers saw as their role or responsibility in the classroom and school district (Porter & Freeman, 1986; Pajares, 1992). General pedagogy referred to the teacher's general instructional philosophy and strategies. More specifically, this would include the role and purpose of schools in society, who decided and dictated the curriculum and teaching strategies used (Porter &

Freeman, 1986). In general, specific subject matter pedagogy dealt specifically with content of different subjects (i.e., reading, mathematics, or the nature of science). The importance of each subject area was considered, as well as effective instructional methods (Pajares, 1992). The teacher's philosophy of students and how they learn defined the nature of the learner. Specifically, this would include the different roles and responsibilities of students within the classroom (Porter & Freeman, 1986; Pajares, 1992). School context was the culture and climate of the school, specifically the personality of the school and who was responsible for setting that tone. Each component was pursued in the inquiry of the study as a potential component of teachers' beliefs (Bennett & Spalding, 1991).

Procedures

This study first examined what teachers believe about elementary education, what factors impacted those beliefs, and finally, how they came to believe the way they do, through strong ties and/or weak ties. Background information about the researcher acquaints the reader with the reasons for researching the relationship between teacher beliefs of elementary education and social networks. Certain biases and assumptions were considered as well as precautions taken to prevent their interference with this research project. The case study method of inquiry was the chosen method of research. Participants from two separate sites were selected based on purposive sampling. Interviews and observations served as the primary data collection methods during which data were analyzed and cast against the literature. Before proceeding with the research study, I submitted my proposal and received approval to proceed with the study from the

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board. Appendix A has a copy of the Institutional Review Board approval form.

Researcher

I, the researcher, have been an elementary educator for nine years and an elementary principal for two years. I have taught in three different grade levels, at three different settings, under the leadership of three different principals, male and female. I now provide the leadership at a school in which I formally taught. My educational beliefs were greatly impacted by my life experiences, i.e., parental and adult values and beliefs, social and theological training, and role models of outstanding teachers. As I evolve as an educator, I become more cognizant of my educational beliefs and their relationship to my education, my environment, and my leader's expectations. It is through self-reflection, examination, and professional collaboration with other teachers, that I gain understanding, direction, and professional growth.

It is my assumption that teachers teach much as they were taught. I presume that their educational beliefs are passed down through socialization, expectations, and experiences. I believe that a principal can positively or negatively impact those beliefs as he or she sets the tone for the culture of the school. This view of the world greatly affected my research - from developing a problem statement to analyzing data and interpreting findings (Merriam, 1988). I also believe that "a theoretical perspective is a way of looking at the world, like assumptions people have about what is important and what makes the world work" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 30). Given who I am, with my theoretical perspective, preferences, and assumptions, I was cautious to cast the data

against the literature and not base my interpretations upon my perspective, preferences, and assumptions.

Case Study Method

The explanatory case study method (Yin, 1984) was used to reconstruct the respondents' constructions and illuminate the meanings of their experiences. It is "an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena" (Merriam, 1988, p. 2). The objective of an explanatory case study should be to present "competing explanations for the same set of events and to indicate how such explanations may apply to other situations" (Yin, 1984, p. 16). Explanatory case studies generally seek to answer the "how" and "why" questions. In case study research, there are no fixed procedures or rules by which to abide. There are simply guidelines and the wisdom of seasoned researchers available for assistance (Merriam, 1988). The case study report allows for a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Site Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in this study. "Purposive sampling is governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and purposively seeks both the typical and the divergent data that these insights suggest" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 33). In purposive sampling, the researcher chooses who and what will fit the basic purpose of the study and eliminates other options. Individuals were selected on the basis of what they could contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1988).

This study included two case studies. The sites consisted of two different schools

located in the northeastern section of a Midwestern state. Schools were selected based on the criteria of traditional and non-traditional schools. It was assumed that traditional schools would be administratively authoritarian and bureaucratic, with a homogeneous, isolated, less diversified and collaborative setting. Non-traditional schools would be a more diverse and heterogeneous setting, promoting teacher professional collaboration. Principals at each site were interviewed. Additional respondents were selected based upon recommendations of the principal and further recommendations of teachers. Participants representing diversity in the building (i.e., age, grade level, years of experience, educational background, and ethnicity) were sought.

Data Collection Needs

The purpose of this case study was to find out from people those things that cannot be directly observed (i.e., insights, assumptions, and beliefs). Therefore, the long interview method was the primary source used for gathering data. "The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). This method enabled exploration of multiple realities of elementary education. Through the interview, I was able to continuously assess and evaluate data collected, allowing me to redirect, probe, and review the line of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Interviews also helped me to "understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 85). Interviews were based on an open-ended format, allowing for dialogue and interaction. A series of questions were structured to allow the respondent to reconstruct

the past, interpret the present, and predict the future (Fettermen, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interview protocol is included as Appendix B.

I began the interview process with the principal at each site. Then I interviewed those teachers recommended by the principal. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by another individual to protect against my assumptions and biases. After the initial interviews were conducted, I observed faculty meetings and faculty lunch periods to determine the social networks present within the school. I also observed the classrooms of participants to view the impact of beliefs upon practice. A record of what transpired during the observations was kept for later review. During the observations and initial interviews, further recommendations and data led to additional interviews and observations. In addition to interviews and observations, I reviewed documentation of communication between and among the teachers and principal.

The primary instrument for data collection and analysis was me as the researcher. It is through my fabrications and interpretations of what occurred during this study that I acquaint the reader with the respondents' insights, assumptions, and beliefs (Merriam, 1988).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed simultaneously throughout data collection. Merriam (1988) maintains that in a qualitative design,

> one does not know whom to interview, what to ask, or where to look next without analyzing data as they are collected. Hunches, working hypotheses, and educated guesses direct the investigator's attention to certain data and then to refining

and/or verifying one's hunches. (p. 123)

Through analysis, I attempted to develop "verstehem" or an interpretive understanding of the respondents' experiences (Emerson, 1983).

Throughout the process, I reviewed the literature, reflecting simultaneously on the readings and the data collected. Two lenses were used to view the data: the components of elementary education and the strength of teachers' social and professional ties. Information was coded into tentative conceptual categories. These categories raised more questions that guided further investigation. Findings from the investigations were compared to the original categories. Analytical categories began to crystallize through this constant comparison of data. Data that challenged the initial conceptualization were given special attention (Goodman, 1984). Recurring regularities in the data served as the basis for defining categories. The categories reflected the five components of elementary education.

Sociograms were used to determine the social networks present within each school. Sociograms indicated a "general pattern of interaction between groups or individuals (Lowry & Rankin, 1972, p. 171). For this particular study, teachers were asked to name those people with whom they collaborate. Data were then organized into sociograms which basically mapped out the pattern of interaction, similarities, and differences (Lowry & Rankin, 1991). Since this study included two case studies, the data were presented as two case reports. These reports follow the five components of elementary education.

Research Criteria

Certain research criteria must be met for a qualitative study to be considered trustworthy. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the relationship between the constructed realities generated by the respondents and the interpretation and transmittance of those realities by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thus a credible outcome would be one that "adequately represents both the areas in which these realities converge and the points on which they diverge" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 30). To establish credibility of the research data, I separated myself and my biases from that data, and attempted to accurately depict what the research subject had submitted (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Peer debriefing and member checks were used to achieve credibility. Peer debriefing allowed an outside professional to analyze the study and provide feedback about the findings and conclusions in order to challenge, refine and redirect the process of the study as necessary. Dr. Adrienne Hyle, my dissertation advisor, served as this professional. Member checks allowed respondents to test categories, interpretations, and conclusions of the inquiry throughout and upon completion of the study. I conducted member checks with those people serving as data sources by summarizing the data and granting the respondent the opportunity to challenge interpretations or modify factual mistakes (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which a study's findings can be applied in other situations or with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A study is transferable if there are similarities between the sending context and the receiving context. A thick description allows observers from other situations to determine the relevance of certain observations for their contexts and to form "working hypotheses" to guide their line of inquiry (Erlandson et al., 1993). Guba and Lincoln (1989) maintain that "in a naturalistic study the obligation for demonstrating transferability belongs to those who would apply it to the receiving context" (p. 241). Thick description and purposive sampling help facilitate transferability (Erlandson et al., 1993). Thick descriptions of contextual data were described and reported with enough detail and accuracy to allow the reader to recreate the scene in their mind. To provide a thick description, I was sensitive to my surroundings, interactions, reactions, and verbal and non-verbal communication. I have provided an accurate depiction of the context to allow the reader to put themselves in the place of the researcher (Erlandson et al., 1993). Purposive sampling permits the researcher to select the sample to fit the purpose of the study. I chose individuals based on their ability to provide insights and understanding of the phenomenon under study and typical and divergent data (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of results. Methodological changes and shifts in constructions may impair the consistency of results if it were replicated under the same conditions with the same subjects. Therefore, dependability in a naturalistic study

refers to the reliability and trackability of the process. This is verified by the "audit trail" that yields credentials and a detailed record of the process of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Dependability is communicated through a reflexive journal. A reflexive journal is a detailed record, providing a daily schedule, methodological log, and a personal diary focusing on the researcher's reactions to the study. I kept a weekly journal describing the facts of the interview and observation (i.e., name of respondent, date and length of interview or observation, reactions to the interview or observation, etc). I reviewed my journal entries on a tri-weekly basis (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the results are the product of the focus of inquiry and not the biases of the researcher. "The naturalistic researcher does not attempt to ensure that observations are free from contamination by the researcher but rather to trust in the 'confirmability' of the data themselves" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34).

Confirmability, like dependability is relayed through the audit trail. Conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations should be related to their sources and supported by the study (Erlandson et al., 1993). I have provided an audit trail of interview transcripts, tapes, notes, analysis, reflexive journal and other documents. This audit trail enables the auditor "to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 35).

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may yield significant results to the areas of theory, research, and practice.

Theory

Theoretically, this study explored the usefulness of Perpetuation Theory as an explanation of teacher beliefs. Perpetuation Theory, in conjunction with network analysis, has not been used to examine teachers' beliefs about elementary education. This study also examined social networks in light of Granovetter's (1986) strong and weak ties and their link to teacher beliefs. Finally, this study examined the usefulness of the components presented in the Bennett and Spalding model (1991) for the exploration of teacher beliefs of elementary education.

Research

"Little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools they work in" (Nespor, 1987, p. 317). This study adds information to a limited knowledge base on the impact of social networks and teacher beliefs on educational change.

Practice

This study also enhances the practice of education by providing administrators, teacher educators, and professional developers with insight into teachers' beliefs and social networks and their relationship to educational change. Teacher beliefs provided a lens to look at and understand elementary education as we know it today. "As we learn more

about the forms and functions of teacher beliefs, we are likely to come a great deal closer to understanding how good teachers are made" (Kagan, 1992, p. 85).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of teachers' strong and weak ties and their impact upon their beliefs about elementary education. Perpetuation Theory and the components of elementary education served as the lens through which to examine the social networks of strong and weak ties as reflected in teachers' beliefs of elementary education. Qualitative methods allowed for a thick description of the realities reflected in the understandings, assumptions, and beliefs of elementary teachers.

Reporting

Chapter Two reviews the literature. Chapter Three presents the data collected in the form of two case reports. Analysis and interpretation of the report will comprise Chapter Four. Chapter Five includes the summary, implications, conclusions and discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review encompasses a variety of topics including elementary education, its history, purposes, and theorists. Realities of elementary education are also presented, including administrator beliefs, teacher beliefs, teacher isolation, and teacher collaboration in education.

Elementary Education

This section gives a brief look at the history of elementary education, purposes of elementary education, and elementary educational theorists. The history of elementary education includes an overview of how the elementary educational system has evolved over the last 300 years. The words have changed, but the purpose of education has always been to prepare children for life. How to achieve that goal has been and will continue to be argued by many. Elementary education has evolved into the institution it is today through the influence of educational theorists: Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, Dewey, Watson, and Skinner.

History

Elementary education has developed slowly over the last three centuries into the system that currently exists. "The beginning was very meager, and it has had to struggle to evolve into the elementary schools that we know today" (Mitzel, 1982, p. 543). The primary goal of colonial schools during the 1600s was religious education. The curriculum focused mainly on learning to read the Bible. It was believed that learning to read led to salvation, assisted in deluding Satan, and provided firsthand and personal

knowledge of the Bible which was a requirement for church membership and social standing (Alkin, 1992; Besag & Nelson, 1984; Parkay & Stanford, 1992).

There were three different and distinct beliefs and practices of elementary education in the American colonies: Calvinistic, parochial, and pauper schools (Alkin, 1992). The origin of these schools was a result of the colonists' concern for developing a society with desired ethical and civic values (Caswell & Foshay, 1950). The Calvinistic or Puritan schools in Massachusetts provided their education through compulsory Latin grammar schools, the result of the "Olde Deluder Satan" Act of 1642 requiring that all children be taught to read (Alkin, 1992; Besag & Nelson, 1984). Compulsory education did not require children to attend school, but merely required that they be educated (Besag & Nelson, 1984; Mitzel, 1982; Parkay & Stanford, 1992). The parochial or church school provided education to members' children. Again, the focus of instruction was preparation for church membership. The pauper schools extended education to the children of the poor (Alkin, 1992). Whatever form, children attended these schools primarily for the purpose of learning reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious training (Parkay & Stanford, 1992).

Dame schools, reading and writing schools, and Latin grammar schools became the typical schools during the Colonial era (Caswell & Foshay, 1950). They provided opportunities for children under the age of 14. The intent of these schools was to teach the fundamentals of communication. The dame schools and the reading and writing schools focused primarily on reading, while the Latin grammar schools widened their focus to prepare students for college (Beauchamp, 1959).

The dame schools provided initial instruction for boys and often, the only "formal" education for girls. Children ranged anywhere from ages three to ten. Dame schools were run by widows or housewives in need of extra money. Children were taught how to read and spell, along with an introduction to the catechism. In addition, girls were taught knitting and sewing and basic homemaking skills. Good manners and proper behavior were stressed to all children. Students usually received no longer than a year's instruction at dame schools (Herrick, Goodlad, Estvan, & Eberman, 1956; Parkay & Stanford, 1992).

Reading and writing schools provided education to boys that furthered the education received at home or in dame schools. The focus, again, was learning to read the Bible (Parkay & Stanford, 1992). Latin grammar schools prepared boys beginning at the age of seven or eight for entrance to Harvard College (Besag & Nelson, 1984; Parkay & Stanford, 1992). Boys destined for the town Latin grammar school usually left at the age of seven or eight. Girls were not permitted to enter Latin grammar schools and thus prohibited to go to college (Herrick et al., 1956).

By 1850, elementary education was a fixed part of society (Mitzel, 1982). The student population shifted to include males and females rather than all males. However, the focus of instruction did not change; boys were still prepared for work, while girls were prepared for homemaking (Alkin, 1992). The eight-year graded elementary school replaced the dame schools, reading and writing schools, and Latin grammar schools (Caswell & Foshay, 1950). The establishment of the Quincy Grammar school (1848) set precedence for the common elementary school of today (Collier, Houston, Schmatz, & Walsh, 1967). Students were sorted into grades and passed (or retained) to a new grade

each year (Herrick et al., 1956). The fundamental skills taught included reading, writing, and arithmetic which have been the backbone of curriculum throughout the history of American education (Mehl, Mills, & Douglass, 1958). By the 1890s, schools were graded kindergarten through grades six or eight and were in session nine months out of the year (Thorndike & Gates, 1929).

Instruction was primarily teacher-centered. Students recited passages from textbooks, worked independently on assignments, or listened to teacher instruction. Everything was done in uniformity, including behavior and classwork. The teacher had a classroom to herself with rows of desks bolted to the floor facing the chalkboard. Teachers were expected to have completed grammar or high school. Sixty-five percent of all primary and grammar school teachers were female, and 60 percent of all high school teachers were female (Cuban, 1984).

Gradual changes took place in the elementary schools during the first few decades of the twentieth century (Mehl et al., 1958). One major change was the adoption of movable desks which allowed for rearranging of classroom furniture (Cuban, 1984; Mayher & Brause, 1986). Teachers began to modify groupings of children for instruction, introduce projects that integrated various subjects, and encourage student expression and free movement in the classroom (Cuban, 1983).

The launching of Sputnik in the 1950s influenced curriculum in the elementary schools, providing a new focus on science and math. The 1960s became the age of experimentation and creativity resulting in such innovations as team-teaching, individualized instruction, the integrated-day concept, flexible scheduling, and non-graded

schools. A drop in enrollment, test scores, and public confidence in the 1970s called for a move "back to basics" and teacher accountability. In the 1970s, a substantial number of classrooms adopted practices related to the "open classrooms" theory (Cuban, 1983, p. 164).

However, Cuban (1983) reported that many new teachers coming into the profession, though diversified in numerous ways, teach much like those they replaced, perhaps due to the "internalized history that each of us brings with us everyday to school" (Mayher & Brause, 1986, p. 618). Years after 1965, the image of school teaching looked like that of preceding generations: teacher-centered (Cuban, 1983). The 1980s Nation at Risk report called for restructuring and empowering teachers which continued into the 1990s. Teachers were included in the decision making process related to the curriculum, textbooks, standards for students' behavior, staff development, promotion and retention policies, teacher evaluation, school budgets, and the teacher and administrator selection (Parkay & Stanford, 1992).

The classroom architecture, compulsory attendance, age-graded classes, dividing the day into periods, Carnegie units, and other structural responsibilities have evolved and been modified to allow students to acquire an education in an orderly environment (Cuban, 1984)."Where yesterday's education was thought of as preparation for adult life, today's teaching is designed to help children live also more fully day by day" (Mehl et al., 1958, p. 5). Today's teaching is more realistic respecting the self- confidence and integrity of the child. Learning by doing, understanding before memorizing, and learning through sense impression were some of the principles proclaimed by earlier renowned theorists.

Today they are put into practice (Mehl et al., 1958).

Purposes

What is "appropriate" education? Society's view of "appropriate" education has evolved in response to the needs and demands of society. However, the mainstay in the history of elementary education is its purpose. Herbart, a renowned theorist, and his disciples maintain the purpose of education to be the development of noble character, while Spencer, another notable theorist, and his followers described the aim of education as complete living (Travers & Rebore, 1990). Dewey, a famous theorist of the early 1900s, and his supporters have asserted that social efficiency should be the goal of education (Phillips, 1923). Collier and his associates (1967) agree with Otto, Floyd, and Rouse (1955) that the major purpose of elementary education is to foster the wholesome, well-rounded growth and development that will ultimately provide students with the skills, attitudes and appreciations enabling them to succeed within our ever-changing society.

The common thread that weaves these statements together is the desire to help the individual child reach his potential. Consequently, it has become a primary responsibility of the elementary school to help prepare young children to identify their places in society (Herrick et al., 1956; Power, 1982). Rather than preparation for college or some specific vocation, the elementary school is faced with the responsibility of helping children become "increasingly competent to meet and deal with the problems of growing up to be constructive, participating members of our society" (Herrick et al., 1956, p. 86). The elementary school should strive to maintain mastery of the appropriate balance of elementary facts, developing appropriate responses to real life situations, and initiating the

highest obtainable level of health and vitality (Cole, 1939).

Children spend several hours a day for six years in an elementary school. Therefore, what occurs during the day will have an impact on their social, emotional, physical and intellectual development (Cole, 1939; Jarolimik & Foster, 1985). Goodlad (1984) states four broad areas of goals for schools:

(1) academic, embracing all intellectual skills and domains of knowledge;

(2) vocational, geared to developing readiness for productive work and economic responsibility;

(3) social and civic, related to preparing for socialization into a complex society; and

(4) personal, emphasizing the development of individual responsibility, talent, and free expression. (p. 37)

In terms of academic goals, the primary function of the elementary school has always been considered to be the teaching of reading, citizenship and computational skills (Adams, 1954; Dejnozka & Kapel, 1991; Herrick et al., 1956; Jarolimik & Foster, 1985; Parkay & Stanford, 1992). Besides these functions, Cole (1939), Lull (1935), Otto et al. (1955), and Saucier (1951) list additional functions assigned to the schools to address the changing needs and demands of society:

(1) help in preserving the culture;

(2) development of a broad social outlook to deal with the child's expanding, changing environment;

(3) acceptance and practice of democracy;

(4) promotion and nurturance of self-expression;

(5) balance of all the educational functions; and

(6) advancement of desirable postures, aspirations, understandings, experiences, habits, and skills.

Over the years, education has spread itself thin, responding to the needs and demands of society. In 1826, approximately 91.7% of school time was spent on the three R's - reading, writing, and arithmetic. As of 1939, only 51.7% of the school day was devoted to these subjects (Cole, 1939). Goodman (1987) states that when our children are well educated in the primary years, many social problems can be prevented far in advance. Therefore, if prevention is the best medicine, focusing on the welfare of our elementary schools is critical to the entire society. In 1965, Vice President Hubert Humphry said that "our country would go down in history for having used its educational system to overcome problems of illiteracy, unemployment, crime and violence, urban decay, and even war among nations" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 33). However, more adults are now pressing for more limited expectations of schools. "Back to the basics" has become a popular slogan (Goodlad, 1984, p. 33).

Regardless of the demands placed on the educational system, the ultimate goal is for children to exit with a positive level of self-confidence and a confident view of their ability to learn that will enable them to continue to participate in life most successfully (Goodlad, 1984; Thorndike & Gates, 1929).

Theorists

"So much contemporary philosophical discussion of primary education takes place

in a no-man's land which produces theories that lack astringency or the power to influence practice" (Lofthouse, 1990, p. 6). We often hear teachers say, "theory is one thing, practice is another" (Lull, 1935, p. 9). However, there are many educational theorists who have influenced American education: Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, Dewey, Watson, and Skinner (Mitzel, 1982; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992).

The earliest of these was John Locke (1632-1704). Locke was one of the most influential philosophers of the eighteenth century. Locke was not pleased with the schools of his time. He believed young men should be educated by their fathers as well as tutors. He promoted four goals in educating young men: virtue, wisdom, good breeding, and learning. The true secret to education, he believed, was to have a proper balance between freedom and authority. Subjects should be emphasized based on their usefulness. He felt that schools placed entirely too much emphasis on rote learning instead of thought and understanding (Power, 1982; Smith, 1984).

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) could not be considered a very practical or successful educator during the 1700s (Travers & Rebore, 1990). His recommendations for educating young men were contentious and unrealistic (Smith, 1984). Rousseau laid out what he considered to be an ideal education in his novel, Emile. In this educational program, the student, Emile, learned through his experiences and their consequences under the guidance of a tutor (Power, 1982; Travers & Rebore, 1990). Rousseau fought to replace schools with individual tutors. He believed schools were primarily directed at correcting the ills of society. He considered children to be inherently good, learning evils from social institutions such as schools. With the right education, however, he believed

society could be transformed (Power, 1982; Travers & Rebore, 1990). "This utopian plan is either hard or impossible to imitate except by people of high social rank able to afford tutors for their children" (Power, 1982, p. 5). We can see the impact that Rousseau has made on today's education by looking at the "tensions between choice and uniformity in education" (Alkin, 1992, p. 426). "Today, Rousseau's concept is the basis for the question: Do we allow variability in elementary education or do we stress a common curriculum?" (Alkin, 1992, p. 426).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was the most influential because he laid the foundation and redirection for the modern elementary school (Cubberley, 1947; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). In the late 1700s, he emphasized the need for understanding the learner's intellectual, moral, and personal needs (Alkin, 1992; Mitzel, 1982). He developed a theory called "object teaching" in which experimentation was the chief avenue to learning rather than learning received from books (Alkin, 1992; Cuban, 1984; Mitzel, 1982). Pestalozzi suggested the use of objects to explain concepts such as color, weight, size, and number. Through the use of such manipulatives, he believed children could later understand abstract concepts. The primary role of the teacher was to maintain a pleasant learning environment and to guide students through such experiences (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992; Traverse & Rebore, 1990). Pestalozzi's influence can be seen in the hands-on math and science programs that place heavy emphasis on the use of manipulatives to explore and thus discover the answer.

Johann Friedrich Herbart's (1776-1841) most productive years covered the first third of the nineteenth century, it was 50 years before his view of education made a major

impact (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Herbart is famous for his five "formal steps" in teaching: preparation, presentation, comparison, conclusion, and application (Beauchamp; 1959; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992; Travers & Rebore, 1990). He emphasized that good teaching starts with the learner's interests in what is being studied (Alkin, 1992; Beauchamp, 1959; Mitzel, 1982; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992) and stressed the acquisition of meaning instead of rote memorization (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). By focusing on the learner's interests, apperception is able to occur. Apperception transpires when new ideas are assimilated with previous ideas, resulting in cognitive awareness (Alkin, 1992). "The mind, he believed, was not a series of compartments of separate ideas but rather a mass of ideas emerging and submerging into one's consciousness and subconsciousness" (Travers & Rebore, 1990, p. 55). Therefore, he maintained that the school should integrate and relate new information to previous knowledge as often as possible. He stressed the need to correlate school subjects, using themes as core ideas. For Herbart, the aim of education was morality. Schools should teach students their duties in society and how to conform to them. The purpose of education was to prepare students for life in a society whose foundation was already set in place (Power, 1982; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992; Travers & Rebore, 1990). An emphasis today is placed on integrating the different core subjects, relating one to another. Whole Language is a prime example. All subjects are taught through thematic units.

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) also had a strong impact on our educational system. Froebel claimed that knowledge does not pass from teacher to learner but is obtained only through self-activity of the learner (Alkin, 1992; Mitzel, 1982). Today's principle of

learning by doing can be traced back to Froebel (Mitzel, 1982; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Froebel believed the mind to be actively searching for realization, therefore he saw little need for direct instruction. Learning should be fostered through creativity, discovery, and the child's interests (Alkin, 1992; Beauchamp, 1959; Cole, 1931). He believed the child belonged outdoors. "Nature not only forms a bond between teacher and children; but also leads up to the Author of all things. Therefore, children should be led to nature as to the house of God" (Cole, 1931, p. 263). The main difference between Herbart and Froebel is the process of education. For Herbart, the process of education should be a process of instruction; for Froebel, it should be a process of development (Cole, 1931). Froebel's most notable contribution to American schools was the kindergarten (Cole, 1939; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Today, we see an emphasis placed on developmental readiness of young children. Many children are being screened to determine if they are ready to enter kindergarten. Such programs as Developmental Kindergarten and Developmental First are commonly placed between grades to allow the child to catch up developmentally with the rest of the students.

John Dewey (1859-1952), influenced by the work of Herbart and Froebel, eloquently and effectively synthesized the progressive educational theories of his time (Beauchamp, 1959; Parkay & Stanford, 1992). Dewey believed that through teacher discretion, the educational process should build upon the child's interests that are likely to be productive to learning. It was the child's interests that should guide teaching methods, rather than subject matter or society's interests. He endeavored to prepare students for worthy living in the future by capitalizing on their needs and interests of today (Alkin,

1992; Cuban, 1984; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Like Froebel, Dewey strongly advocated the process of learning by doing. He strongly believed that children learn more from being actively involved rather than simply learning facts. Dewey viewed subject matter as a means rather than an end; it should be chosen based on its usefulness and ability to enable a student to solve a problem (Alkin, 1992; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). "The active side of the child's development preceded the passive side, that movement came before conscious sensations, and that muscular development came before sensory development" (Shepherd & Ragan, 1992, p. 27). Dewey considered education to be a lifelong process in which there is no final end (Travers & Rebore, 1990). "It is ... a cumulative growth, each state of attainment being the starting place for the one to follow. Thus viewed, the educational process is one of continuous adjustment and readjustment" (Meyer, 1975, p. 288).

John B. Watson (1878-1958) was considered to be the "father of modern behaviorism" (Papalia & Olds, 1982, p. 26). He primarily believed that children were trainable. He maintained that children are born with three major emotions - love, rage, and fear - which are unconditioned responses to stimuli. His views on conditioning children have greatly impacted current theories of educational psychology and classroom management (Papalia & Olds, 1981; Power, 1982; Smith, 1984).

B.F. Skinner (1904 -) was also a behaviorist. He believed that all behavior begins outside of man. Man is simply a responder and a product of his environment. Thus, any behavior which is followed by a positive reinforcement will likely be repeated. His views of positive reinforcement greatly impacted school discipline and classroom management. Behavior modification programs that emphasize positive reinforcement are

present in many schools today (Papalia & Olds, 1982; Power, 1982; Travers & Rebore, 1990).

In a timeless way, the educational reform that Dewey advocated almost 100 years ago is still a valid focus for today's educational reform efforts. His dream for education is no less appropriate today than it was in 1893 - that teachers understand the importance of professional reflection and commit themselves to making education truly meaningful for students (Parkay & Stanford, 1992, p. 183). The change in educational philosophies in content and method

> goes back to the work of Pestalozzi, though his contributions and those of Herbart, Froebel, and their disciples and followers are so interwoven in the educational practice of today that in most cases it is impossible to trace them or separate them out from the other. Our elementary-school instruction of today remains, as before, a sturdy native development, but deeply influenced, since 1860, by the best ideas of the great European theorists and reformers. (Cubberley, 1947, p. 471)

These male theorists have been the preeminent leaders in thinking about education and have set the pattern for the philosophies of elementary education that we know today.

Realities of Elementary Education

This section will present the current research on administrator beliefs, teacher beliefs, teacher isolation and collaboration.

Administrator Beliefs

We cannot make sense out of an individual's actions until we understand the

individual's way of seeing the world and how they frame behavior. A principal's beliefs system guides all his or her actions. The principal must be conscious of his beliefs which govern his or her decisions and actions (Buffie, 1989). When fully aware of these beliefs, not only can he or she plan actions that reflect his or her beliefs, but will also be able to spontaneously make decisions that are consistent with those beliefs (Latimer, 1987). Principals impart their values and beliefs in the decisions they make, which can become an ethos that permeates the school (Greenfield, 1982; Sergiovanni, 1982). As an instructional leader, the principal works with teachers and parents to develop, clarify, and affirm a set of beliefs, or educational philosophy, that will lead to a clear vision of the school's mission (Buffie, 1989).

Teacher Beliefs

Education students have spent years in the classroom assessing teachers. They enter teacher education programs with strong biases and preconceptions about the role of the teacher, not with blank minds waiting for inscription (Lortie, 1975; Shapiro & Kilbey, 1990). They bring themselves with them, complete with "baggage," and they exit, with new information, but still basically themselves (Blumberg, 1989, p. 48).

> Baggage refers to the various values, predispositions, attitudes, perspectives, preferred ways of relating to others, and so forth that have their roots in the personal history of one's biological, psychological, and social life and which are carried by a person into adult work life. It is the baggage that largely defines the self and it is the self that confronts, defines, interprets, and acts on the situation (Blumberg, 1989, p. 48).

Learning to be a teacher involves learning to "transfer and elaborate on the skills and understandings one already has about living and dealing with individuals and groups into a new work environment" (Blumberg, 1989, p. 172). We cannot fully understand the actions of teachers and principals and the reason for such actions until we consider the individual and what they bring to their position and role (Blumberg, 1989).

Teacher beliefs can be defined as "tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught" (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). Pajares (1992) maintains that "all teachers hold beliefs...about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities" (p. 314). These beliefs are often well established before teachers receive their undergraduate training due to the many years they spent in the classroom as a student (Buchmann, 1987; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Wilson, 1990). Pajares (1992) also notes that teachers tend to "grow comfortable with their beliefs" and thus may be resistant to change (p. 318). Goodlad (1984) found that teachers believe they generally control the goals, topics of instruction, teaching strategies, and activities within the classroom. Glatthorn (1987) agrees that despite any administrative efforts to control the curriculum and strategies, once the classroom door is closed the teacher has the ultimate control, Researchers have found that often a teacher's beliefs "reflect the actual nature of the instruction the teacher provides to students" (Kagan, 1992, p. 73). Congruence between teachers' beliefs and instruction can be fostered by allowing teachers the opportunity to not only examine the assumptions underlying their own beliefs, but other teachers as well.

Teacher Isolation

For years, teaching has been described as a lonely profession. That comes as no surprise when one looks at the culture of individualism, privatism, and isolation surrounding teachers (Lortie, 1975). The roots of teacher isolation go back to the days of the one-room schoolhouse (Glickman, 1990). During the colonial era, teachers were dispersed in separate schools throughout a vast and sparsely populated territory (Lortie, 1975). The teacher had sole responsibility for everything that occurred within the school. Whatever she felt needed to be done, she did (Glickman, 1990). Teachers were not only physically isolated from other teachers, but adults as well, until full-time administrators were appointed by the board of education (Lortie, 1975).

We frequently see the one-room schoolhouse effect repeated from door to door throughout the hallways of the school (Glickman, 1990). The cellular organization of schools limits the opportunities for teachers to have meaningful interaction with their colleagues (Fullan, 1991; Lortie, 1975). Lortie (1975) found that beginning teachers, who were in dire need of interaction and observation with their peers, were not afforded this opportunity due to the design of the infrastructure of the school. Goodlad (1984) found that "there are not infrastructures designed to encourage or support either communication among teachers in improving their teaching or collaboration in attacking school wide problems. And so teachers,... to a large extent carry on side by side similar but essentially supported activities" (p. 188). Teachers are primarily confined to their classroom (Koppich, Brown & Armsler, 1990), struggling privately with their problems and anxieties (Fullan, 1991).

Teacher isolation still has a strong hold on schools. In the 1970s, the open classrooms were designed which enabled teachers to observe and interact with each other. However, within a few years, schools began to partition off classrooms in order to give teachers back their privacy (Glickman, 1990). Hargreaves (1992) found that many teachers welcome the privacy that isolation sometimes brings, protecting them from unwelcomed criticisms of the outside world. However, just as isolation shuts out the negative interferences, it also shuts out positive feedback.

In Goodlad's study (1984), many teachers claimed that they had never been given the opportunity to observe another teacher at work. They reported to have only moderate knowledge of their colleagues' educational beliefs, practice, and competence (Goodlad, 1984). "In the culture of individualism, teachers rely on the thinnest threads, the tiniest shreds of evidence, to assess one another - noise from next door's classroom, ... or the quality of class performances given to the whole school" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 220).

Teacher Collaboration

Fullan (1991) claims that the power for change lies in teacher professional collaboration and that the degree of success for that change is related to the extent teachers interact with each other. Research also indicates that schools encouraging professional dialogue and collaboration, provide greatest student learning (Freiberg & Knight, 1987). However, teachers lack interaction and opportunities for rich professional dialogue (Goodlad, 1984). Hargreaves posits that teachers "learn most, perhaps, from other teachers, particularly from colleagues in their own work place, their own school" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 216). He adds:

> Most of the problems that the teacher encounters, the issues he or she confronts, have faced many similarly placed colleagues in the past. Over the years these colleagues develop ways of doing things, along with whole networks of associated educational beliefs and values in response to the characteristic and recurrent problems and circumstances they face in their work. Teaching strategies, that is, arise not just from the demands and constraints of the immediate context, but also from culture of teaching; from beliefs, values, habits, and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints over many years. (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 217).

Rosenholtz (1989) reports that team teaching increased teachers' professional dialogue and provided a greater amount of assistance to peers. Team teaching is the "organizational arrangement in which two or more teachers share responsibility for the instruction of a particular group of students" (p. 45). Rosenholtz (1989) also notes that teachers' collaboration primarily depends upon the harmony that rests within the school. If teachers share common goals, problems, and values there is greater reason to collaborate. Thus, in cohesive settings, faculty collaboration tends to be much greater than in isolated settings.

Regardless of the desire for more collaboration (Nias, 1989) and observation (Goodlad, 1984), "elementary teachers have traditionally had almost no scheduled time away from their classes to work and plan with colleagues" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 228). The few attempts for collaboration have been under untimely circumstances such as after school, at recess, or over lunch (Hargreaves, 1992). However, Little (1982), Pajak and

Glickman (1987), and Rosenholtz (1985) found that successful schools have one thing in common: professional dialogue about teaching. Glickman (1990) and Goodlad (1984) maintain that interaction and collaboration of ideas and practices were rare between schools or within schools. "Again, the lack of such dialogue is related to the one-room schoolhouse legacy, which accepts isolation, privacy, inverse responsibility and lack of career stages as the norms of teaching" (Glickman, 1990, p. 35).

Schubert and Ayers (1992) support the notion of teacher lore which refers to "knowledge, ideas, insights, feelings, and understanding of teachers as they reveal their guiding beliefs, share approaches, relate consequences of their teaching, offer aspects of their philosophy of teaching, and provide recommendations for educational policy makers" (p. 9). Miller (1992) suggests that "over time the telling of our stories allows us to hear our own changing and evolving understandings of ourselves as teachers" (p. 14).

Little (1990) warns against superficial collaboration. She suggests that assistance, sharing, and storytelling are inconsequential and have only a slight impact on the school's culture. However, she suggests that interaction involving joint planning, observation, and experimentation provides stronger ties.

Summary

Over the last 330 years, the elementary school has evolved into the educational system that we know today (Mitzel, 1982). The elementary school was designed to perpetuate the American ideology of civil and social obedience and moral and work ethics, all of which are clothed in garments of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Adams, 1954; Herrick et al., 1956). Educational theorists provide us with an educational founda-

tion upon which to build and modify beliefs and philosophies.

Teachers hold a set of beliefs about elementary education. Those beliefs result from a combination of internalized history, professional training, and experience. A number of variables influence those beliefs. Among them are teacher isolation and professional collaboration.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of teacher strong and weak ties and the impact of those associations upon their beliefs about the realities of elementary education in terms of the knowledge and skills that influence those realities. An explanatory case study method of inquiry was used to research the problem (Yin, 1984). Two elementary school sites were selected for study. Each site is presented as a case study in this chapter.

Schools were selected based on the criteria of traditional and non-traditional schools. It was assumed that traditional schools, reflecting the views of Locke, Herbart, Watson, and Skinner, would be administratively authoritarian and bureaucratic, with a homogeneous, isolated, less-diversified and socially collaborative setting, while non-traditional schools, reflecting the work of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Dewey, would be a more diverse and heterogeneous setting, promoting student-centered learning and professional collaboration.

Case Study Procedures

Each case study included interviewing one principal and seven teachers at each site to determine teachers' beliefs of elementary education, what has impacted those beliefs and how strong and weak ties affect those beliefs. Interviews initially began with the principal. Teachers representing diversity in the building (i.e., age, grade level, years of experience, and educational background) were purposively selected based upon recommendations of the principal and further recommendations of other teachers. To view the impact of

beliefs upon practice, additional data were collected through on-site observations of classroom instruction. Faculty lunch periods and faculty meetings were also observed to determine the social networks present within the school. In addition to interviews and observation, I reviewed documentation of communication between and among the teachers and principal.

Case Study Sites

Both studies were conducted in rural communities in the northeastern section of a Midwestern state. The first study took place at Deer Creek Upper Elementary which consisted of second through fifth grades. The second study transpired at Meadowview Elementary which contained kindergarten through fifth grades. Fictitious names were assigned to each school site and city.

Respondents

The principal at each site was contacted by telephone to gain permission to use their elementary school and faculty for the purposes of this study. The principal at each site was asked to review his/her faculty and provide me with a list of teachers who held strong beliefs about education. Teachers representing diversity in the building (i.e., age, grade level, years of experience, and educational background) were purposively selected based upon recommendations of the principal and other teachers in the building.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The names of the participants from Deer Creek Upper Elementary began with the letter D. The names of the participants from Meadowview Elementary began with the letter M.

Interviews

I interviewed participants of each study at their convenience at a place and time of their choice. Each principal and teacher was contacted by telephone to set up an interview at a place and time of their choice. Several participants opted to visit in a restaurant, while others chose the comforts of their classroom or home. Each interview began with an informal gathering of background information followed by a more formal discussion of their beliefs of elementary education. Interview questions centered around individual teacher's beliefs about elementary education, influences of those beliefs, and teacher professional collaboration. Each participant was provided a copy of the transcription of the interview to review for accuracy. They were asked to notify me of any statements that were made that they wished to have removed from the study. No participant requested to modify, delete, or add any information. Copies of all written correspondence with the participants are included in Appendix C. Following the eighth interview of each study, it was determined that no new categories were emerging and that a saturation of data had been achieved.

Observations

Informal observations were conducted at each site on two separate school days to view the impact of beliefs upon practice. These observations included classroom instruction of the participants of each study, faculty lunch periods, before and after school periods, and faculty meetings. I spent approximately 30 minutes in each classroom on two separate days to observe the classroom environment, seating arrangements of the students, location of the teacher during instruction, and classroom management. Observations were

also centered around the faculty lounge, lunchroom, office area, break rooms, and hallways to determine what teachers, if any, collaborated on professional matters. Information from interviews and observations were combined to draw a sociogram to help visualize the relationships teachers have within their school. A sociogram is simply a map of those relationships. Frequent professional collaboration was indicated by a solid line, while the broken line represented occasional professional collaboration. An Interaction Sociogram of each school has been placed in Appendix D for a detailed description of teacher professional collaboration. A sociogram indicating the strength of ties within the school has also been placed in Appendix D. The solid line indicated strong social ties; the broken line represented weak professional ties.

Document Review

Faculty bulletins, informal notes to and from teachers, and the teacher handbook at each site were reviewed to determine communication between and among the teachers and principal. I also reviewed teachers' lesson plans, letters to parents, school discipline plan, mission statement, and student handbook to view the impact of beliefs upon practice.

Reporting

The demographics section discusses the location, size, and ethnic distribution of the city, district and/or school site. The school facility, as well as student/teacher ratio, is also included in this section. Data is presented as two case reports. Each case study is organized into demographics, components of elementary education, and the influences on teachers' beliefs.

The components of elementary education were derived from Bennett and

Spalding's (1991) model of decision making. This model was modified for this study to portray the areas of knowledge and skills that influence the constructed reality of elementary education. Five areas were identified: school context, general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, nature of the learner, and self as teacher. School context detailed the culture and climate of the school. Specifically, this was defined as the personality of the school and who was responsible for setting that tone. General pedagogy consisted of the participant's general instructional philosophy and strategies; more specifically, this included the role and purpose of schools in society, who decided and dictated the curriculum and teaching strategies used. Specific subject matter pedagogy comprised the philosophy of the different subject matter (i.e., reading, mathematics, or the nature of science). The importance of each subject area was considered, as well as effective instructional methods. The nature of the learner entailed participant's philosophy of students and how they learn. Specifically, this included the different roles and responsibilities of students within the classroom. Self as teacher included the participant's perception of his or her beliefs, roles, and responsibilities. Each component of elementary education was discussed thoroughly. Data received from observations indicating the impact teacher's beliefs have upon their practice is also interwoven in this section. The last section discusses the factors teachers indicated influenced their beliefs of elementary education.

Deer Creek Upper Elementary

Deer Creek Upper Elementary was the focus of this case study. The description of the demographics and school context were discussed to provide background of the study.

The components of elementary education, as well as the factors impacting respondents' perspectives, were also discussed.

Demographics

The Deer Creek school system was centrally located in its rural community with a population of approximately 4,300. Five ethnic groups were represented at Deer Creek. Eighty-eight percent of the population was white, 11 percent American Indian, and less than one percent African American, Asian, and Hispanic.

The school system consisted of four buildings housing grades Kindergarten through twelfth: Lower Elementary (K-1), Upper Elementary (2-5), Middle School (6-8), and High School (9-12). The school system housed a total of 907 students. The buildings were designed so that all grades (K-12) were within immediate walking distance of each other.

The Deer Creek Upper Elementary facility, the focus of this study, consisted of the original building as well as a new addition. The original building was designed in a quarter-circle, consisting of the fourth grade and specialty classrooms, teacher's lounge, office, and other various rooms. The second grade wing, separated by various speciality classes and hallways, was also part of the original design. An additional wing, attached to the original building at a later date, consisted of grades three and five, arranged in four-room pods.

At Deer Creek Upper Elementary there was a total of 26 certified staff members serving approximately 360 students. Sixty percent of Deer Creek Upper Elementary's students were classified as white, 38 percent were American Indian, one percent were

Hispanic, and one percent were African American. The average class size was 20 students. Deer Creek Upper Elementary faculty consisted of four second grade teachers, four third grade teachers, four fourth grade teachers, five fifth grade teachers, one physical education teacher, one music teacher, two Title I reading specialists, one learning disabilities specialist, one communications specialist, one librarian, and one counselor.

Eight people from Deer Creek Upper Elementary were interviewed. The principal, Dennis, served as the contact person. Other participants were Darcy, second grade teacher; Debbie, second grade teacher; Della, third grade teacher; Dawn, third grade teacher; Dana, fourth grade teacher; Dorothy, fifth grade teacher; and Diane, Title I reading specialist.

The following descriptions give pertinent information about the administrator and teachers from this site:

Dennis was the elementary principal at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. He held a Master of Education degree and had been the principal at Deer Creek Upper Elementary for 14 years. He had previous experience as an elementary principal for two years and five years as an elementary teacher. He was in his mid-40s, married, and had two children.

Darcy was a second grade teacher. She had taught at Deer Creek Upper Elementary for eight years and in a private school for one year. She held a Bachelor of Science degree, was in her late 30s, married, and had no children.

Debbie was a second grade teacher. She held a Bachelor of Science degree and had taught for a total of ten years. Debbie's previous experience at Deer Creek had been in third grade. She was in her late 40s, married, and had two children.

Diane was a reading specialist. She had taught in public schools for 17 years and in a private school for three years. She held a Master of Arts degree. She was in her early 40s, married, and had no children.

Dana was a fourth grade teacher. She held a Master of Science degree and had taught at Deer Creek for 22 years. She was in her late 40s, married, and had two children.

Dorothy was a fifth grade science teacher. She held a Bachelor of Science degree and had taught for 20 years. She was in her early 50s, married, and had two children. Her mother was also a teacher.

Della was a third grade teacher. She held a Master of Science degree and had taught for a total of 14 years. She was in her mid-30s, single, and had no children.

Dawn was a third grade teacher. She had taught for 20 years and held a Master of Education degree. She was in her early 40s, married, and had two children.

Deer Creek Upper Elementary was chosen for this study because it was considered to be a traditional school representing a homogeneous, isolated, less-diversified and collaborative setting.

School Context

School context referred to the culture and climate of the school. Deer Creek had its own unique climate or personality. The tone of that climate was generally set by one person or a group of people.

Deer Creek respondents experienced a change in leadership during the time of our interviews. Long time superintendent, David, resigned and was replaced by the assistant superintendent. Little was mentioned about the effect the change had on the climate of

Deer Creek Upper Elementary, however, there was an underlying hint of disappointment in the former superintendent mentioned by most respondents. Apparently, he was very bureaucratic and made most of the decisions. Most respondents expressed a positive attitude about the new superintendent.

Several respondents described Deer Creek as a lively, active, enthusiastic, positive and cheerful place to work (Dennis, Debbie, and Diane). Teachers got along well (Darcy, Dana, Dorothy, and Della), showed an interest in kids (Darcy), and were considered to be dedicated professionals (Dawn). My visits to Deer Creek supported the notion that teachers got along well. I found the second grade team particularly interacted well with one another. Team referred to a group of teachers, by grade level, that collaborate. During my observations of Debbie and Darcy's classroom, I saw team members exchange ideas relating to the curriculum and students. Interaction appeared to take place continuously, however, team members protected each other's instructional time. An Interaction Sociogram, in Appendix D, described teacher professional collaboration within Deer Creek Upper Elementary. This sociogram indicated that Darcy primarily collaborated with the second grade teachers, as well as the first grade teachers and Dorothy, fifth grade teacher. Debbie primarily collaborated with the second grade teachers, and occasionally with the first and third grade teachers. Dawn collaborated with the other third grade teachers, the librarian, Dana, fourth grade teacher, and Dorothy, fifth grade teacher. Della collaborated only with Dawn. Dana primarily collaborated with the fourth grade teachers and occasionally with the fifth grade teachers and her principal. Dorothy collaborated with the other fifth grade teachers, second grade teachers, the reading lab teacher, and

Dana, fourth grade teacher. Diane collaborated with the counselor and Dorothy, fifth grade teacher. I also noticed a deep concern for children as I witnessed Debbie, Darcy, and Diane lead a summer day camp to enhance students' learning. Each teacher appeared to be very dedicated and excited about meeting the needs of each student.

Deer Creek Upper Elementary School appeared to be a friendly place for children. The hallways were well-decorated with teacher or administrator chosen materials such as leadership posters and flags. Deer Creek seemed to be very progressive. Their attempts to move forward in the education field were evident in an updated Josten's computer lab, child-care facility, and progressive reading and math series. However, I believe that was primarily due to the principal's leadership. Dennis stressed the importance of staying on top of curriculum updates and providing the best education for students. He continually stressed the need to improve to his teachers and looked for avenues to provide improvement.

Deer Creek teachers mostly collaborated within their grade level (Dennis, Darcy, Debbie, Diane, Dorothy, Della, and Dawn). "They communicate closely with the people that are within their grade level" (Dorothy, 7-14-95, 9). Darcy and Dawn attributed that to the physical logistics of the building. All of the classrooms were clumped together by grade level. Most of the second grade interaction took place during lunch. Dennis also mentioned that teachers had additional opportunities to collaborate through committees on which they served (i.e., principal's advisory committee, curriculum committee, carnival committee, parent organization liaison, field day committee, social committee, Title II, Chapter II, and textbook committee). During faculty meetings, teachers primarily sat

within close proximity of their grade level team members. The second grade team interacted with each other daily during lunch and throughout the day.

Although teamwork and professional collaboration were highly encouraged, no release time was provided. None of the teachers mentioned committee work to be a source of teacher professional collaboration but did voice concern about committee participation. They felt that voicing their opinion was a waste of time because it was rarely considered. Debbie was appointed to the curriculum committee and asked to voice her opinion about the curriculum. However, she found herself very frustrated because "you tell them what you think; you tell them why you think this; and it's for no good" (7-11-95, 9). She felt that curriculum decisions had already been made by the superintendent prior to the curriculum meetings.

Before and after school, planning periods, and lunch periods seemed to be reserved for social collaboration. Teachers either visited socially in the hallway or stayed in their room. I did not observe much interaction between teachers. The faculty lounge was very small and few teachers seemed to take advantage of this area. I believe that if professional collaboration took place at Deer Creek it happened whenever the need arose (i.e., to discuss upcoming events or projects, discipline problems, and academic concerns).

Deer Creek respondents primarily believed that the tone of the school was set by the principal, Dennis. He had high expectations of his staff and students and yet showed a genuine interest in the success of each (Diane, Dorothy, Della, and Dawn). However, several respondents voiced concern that in the past, Dennis was not always given the freedom to lead as he chose. "He doesn't get to do things the way he would really like"

(Della, 7-17-95, 6). "I don't think that our [former] higher administration allows our administrators to be administrators, our on-site administrator" (Darcy, 6-19-95, 12). During my interview, prior to school observations, I did sense that the former superintendent greatly affected Dennis's outlook. He was looking forward to a much better year. A few respondents also believed that teachers had a part in setting the tone (Dennis and Debbie). "I think veteran teachers...definitely have a part to play in the outlook and the flavor of the school" (Dawn, 7-19-95, 9).

Beliefs of General Pedagogy

General pedagogy referred to the teacher's general instructional philosophy and strategies. General pedagogy was broken into two categories: purposes of education and selection of curriculum.

Purposes of education. Five purposes of public education emerged from the data: to provide a basic foundation, to teach basic skills, to prepare students to succeed in society, to develop self-confidence, and to provide a balanced education.

The first purpose of education mentioned by Deer Creek respondents was to provide a basic foundation. Dawn and Della believed that elementary education set the foundation for learning. Debbie agreed "not only is it the foundation for education, but also in the way children relate with people, socially" (7-11-95, 1). Diane described this foundation as a means of setting "their attitude, their feelings about their own confidence, their interest and motivation. In many ways it's a determining point as to their success or failure in future years of school" (7-13-95, 1). Elementary education sets the pace for future formal education. "Without a good beginning, everything from then on is weak"

(Dorothy, 7-14-95, 1).

The second purpose of education indicated by Deer Creek respondents was to teach basic skills. Dennis believed that basic skills were vital. He said that his school had spent a lot of time on "phonetics, basic reading skills, [and] basic math skills" (6-19-95, 1). Dawn agreed that

> reading and math, of course, and writing, are the core things. But underlying all of that, I think, is that ability, in a sense, that they have to love to learn and to enjoy being there and think of it as an adventure and something they are going to look forward to doing. (7-19-95, 1)

The third purpose of education that emerged from the data was to prepare students to succeed in society. Dennis maintained "the biggest thing [purpose] is giving the students the right tools to survive in society" (6-19-95, 1). Those tools include teaching basic skills and providing a basic foundation for the students. By providing those necessary tools schools would be able to prepare children to adequately survive in the world (Diane and Della), "help them [students] to be productive citizens, productive people" (Debbie, 7-11-95, 1) and to function as contributing adults in society (Darcy and Della).

The fourth purpose mentioned was to develop self-confidence. Dennis, the principal, wanted his students "to come away with a determination that they feel positive about self. Self-image is very important" (6-19-95, 1). Deer Creek Upper Elementary students had been involved in conflict-mediation to deal with their problems. They also had the opportunity to become involved in the service club that provides assistance to other students, teachers, and office staff. I observed students providing assistance in the

office and preparing and delivering the morning announcements over the intercom system each time I visited Deer Creek Upper Elementary. Dennis's visibility and interaction with the students also promoted a positive self-image among the students. He not only acknowledged students before and after school and in the hallways during school, but he also exhibited an interest in students' lives, in general, outside the academic realm.

The fifth and final purpose that emerged from the data was to provide a balanced education. Dennis felt that it was necessary to provide students with a well-rounded, basic education. He stated proudly,

> We've made a gain every year on our achievement test scores, on our school wide test scores. It's up a tenth of a point now, but maybe we're starting to top out on our students. I think that coming away with a well-rounded, basic education is key. (6-19-95, 1)

In addition to a well-rounded education, Dawn added the concern that society's expectations put added pressure on the school.

> I think society expects a lot more of schools than we are able to provide. I think we are having to teach ethics and morals and values and those kind of things that really should be coming from the home. But, so many of the kids we get don't have that. So, often times, we are being the parent. You are the only adult that has any responsibility, at all, in their lives. Of course, that complicates everything, you don't have as much time for the basics. (Dawn, 7-19-95, 2)

Selection of curriculum. Teachers deliver curriculum to students on a daily basis. Naturally, as professionals, several teachers felt that they should be able to use their

discretion to determine what works with their students (Dennis, Darcy, and Della). Even with teacher involvement in the curriculum, Debbie felt the need to have local, state, and/or national guidelines. At Deer Creek, teachers were allowed discretion

> as long as they follow policy. And we do a lot of that. They sign away for everything. We monitor the materials and have a survey questionnaire which they have to put down what they use in the classrooms. Anytime they bring outside materials in they have to have it okayed by me. They sign a statement to the fact that they are aware of that policy. (Dennis, 6-19-95, 2)

Policy was written and mandated by the school board and superintendent (Darcy and Della) which, in their view as teachers, ultimately impacted the curriculum. Deer Creek respondents voiced a lot of concern about curriculum being handed down by the administration. They believed the mandated curriculum stemmed from the desire to improve reading scores. Dennis had voiced his concern to a particular grade level. "The principal has talked to us as a group about the reading scores in particular. And he's been very concerned about that. He felt like we needed a change in curriculum" (Debbie, 7-11-95, 4). "He [principal] was looking for an opportunity to improve reading scores" (Darcy, 6-19-95, 7).

The majority of respondents believed there should be a combination of factors taken into consideration when deciding the curriculum. A team effort was important to several respondents. Diane thought that it should be a joint effort among the "teachers and the school principal and the school administrators, superintendent. Parental input is also important. I think the bulk of the decision making, though, should be done by the

teachers and the principal, then administrators" (Diane, 7-13-95, 3). Dawn agreed that parental involvement was important "because it's their child that you're dealing with. Certainly, you have to have some guidance and somebody to make the final decision, so you have to have administrators and the board of education, involved in it" (Dawn, 7-19-95, 2). Debbie would like to see all of the teachers of that grade level come together and write the curriculum. However, she also stated that this curriculum must be approved and supported by the administration.

Specific Subject Matter Pedagogy

Specific subject matter pedagogy referred primarily to the teacher's philosophy of content of the subject matter. The focus of this area was mainly on priority skills and teaching strategies.

Priority skills. Teachers placed emphasis on different subjects according to their philosophy. The majority of the respondents agreed that reading, writing, and arithmetic were the most important subjects in elementary education (Debbie, Dana, and Diane). "If you can't read, you can't do the other things" (Debbie, 7-11-95, 7). "The area of language arts is so encompassing that a great percentage of time needs to be devoted to that" (Diane, 7-13-95, 2). Dawn felt that those areas were also a priority in the school district because of the tremendous amount of pressure felt by the teachers to improve reading, math, and writing skills. Great emphasis was placed on raising test scores, particularly reading. "I felt like we spent a lot of time on reading, probably to the detriment of social studies and science" (Dawn, 7-19-95, 4). The administration presented a brand new reading series to the teachers three days before school started. The

math curriculum was also changed without notice. Many teachers resented the change. "Most really good teachers like to be prepared" (Debbie, 7-11-95, 5).

Teaching strategies. Instructional strategies of the three R's varied from teacher to teacher. There were those who believed each subject should be treated separate but equal. Dorothy preferred to have the subjects broken up for fifth grade. Della, a third grade teacher, however, desired to integrate subjects more, but due to the new curriculum she felt a bit overwhelmed and thus treated each subject separately. "They dumped a lot of new things on us last year. Like four different areas and so you kind of have to keep them separate right now. They changed our reading, math, and science. Nobody knows what they're doing in the reading series. We're supposed to integrate reading and writing and what not. But they never, they didn't give us any training" (Della, 7-17-95, 3).

Other respondents preferred an integrated curriculum. "I would rather do more integrating with them. So that you're reading about a topic, you're writing about those things. And bringing in science and social studies with it" (Della, 7-17-95, 4). Dawn agreed "I like to integrate and work thematically" (7-19-95, 4). Social studies and science are important subjects but tend to be overlooked. However, when presented in unit forms and integrated into the rest of the curriculum, Debbie believed they receive the attention they need. Dennis asked that his teachers "interrelate different subject matter. Not just teach math, teach reading, and teach social studies, but incorporate those subject matters together" (6-19-95, 3). Other effective methods mentioned that meet the needs of auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners were hands-on, homework study, learning centers, cooperative activities, one-on-one, and peer tutoring (Debbie and Dana). I saw learning

centers at work in the second grade hallway. Darcy and Debbie collaborated with their team members to prepare enrichment and review activities for the various subjects. Because of their central location in the hallway, all second grade students had access to those learning centers.

Only one respondent mentioned that she used mostly direct instruction. "...That's the way that we were taught in school. So that's what you know. That's the only thing you know" (Della, 7-17-95, 2). My observations of Della's classroom revealed a lot of teacher direction. She was very structured, with all students facing the front of the room, primarily focused on the teacher. My observations also revealed direct instruction in Dana's classroom. All desks faced the front of the room in rows. Students worked quietly, without visitation. When Dana instructed students, she did so from the front of the classroom.

On the contrary, Dawn found that she had the most success when she allowed students to actively participate. "They get to talk, they get to discuss with whoever their seatmate is and they are actively doing things" (7-19-95, 3). Active participation led to cooperative learning which provided a comfortable learning environment. "They get to discuss and there isn't as much risk taking out there by yourself. There is support from the group, interchanging of ideas and talking" (Dawn, 7-19-95, 3). Dawn's classroom appeared to be very democratic; lessons seemed to be more of a conversation than lecture.

Nature of the Learner

The nature of the learner referred to the teacher's philosophy of the student and how the student learns. Two themes emerged from the data: students' roles and responsi-

bilities in education and the most effective ways for students to learn.

Students' role/responsibilities. Respondents depicted what they believed was the students' role in education. Several different responsibilities emerged from the data: to learn, to actively participate, to pay attention, and to take more responsibility for their actions.

Dawn believed that not only was it the teacher's responsibility to teach, but it was the student's responsibility to learn "...and hopefully enjoy it while they are learning" (7-19-95, 6). Dennis agreed but felt that not only was it the students' role to learn but to also be active participants. "They [students] share the role of an active learner.... We have to engage them in wanting to acquire knowledge" (Diane, 7-13-95, 2). Dorothy added "I would hope that they would be an active participant, not just someone to sit there and let it all rain on them and just hope that it all grows somewhere" (7-14-95, 3). Della continued this thought. "They need to come to class each day to pay attention and put forth some effort to learn" (7-17-95, 5).

Several respondents voiced their desire to see students take more responsibility. "They're responsible...for meeting some of the goals. They're responsible, with your guidance, to set some of their own goals for learning" (Diane, 7-13-95, 2). Dawn believed "their responsibility is to grow as much as they can every day. ...and learn more responsibilities as they go along; start taking care of their own materials and doing their job" (7-19-95, 6). Della and Dana believed it was the students' responsibility to keep up with their assignments, homework, and studying for tests. Dana sent home daily assignment folders and expected students to study for the spelling and reading vocabulary tests in

addition to other homework assignments.

Ways students learn. Respondents were also asked to describe the best way for students to learn. Many believed that there was no particular way students learn best. Each child has his/her own way of learning (Dennis, Diane, and Della). What works for one doesn't always work for another. "It's like going on a diet. ...You're lucky when it works, and if it doesn't work then...try something else" (Darcy, 6-19-95, 10). Therefore teachers should use a varied approach to teach skills (Debbie and Dana).

> I try to provide the auditory. I try to verbally tell. We read. With the hands-on, we try that. I try everything. Sometimes you hit it, sometimes you don't. You just hope that by trying it every way that you can, you hit their learning style. (Dorothy, 7-14-95, 4)

Dennis believed the hands-on approach is effective. Dawn added

> I think that they [students] learn their best...when they are actively involved, when they are getting to talk and they are expressing what they're learning and they get to practice. They are not just sitting there soaking it up, but they're doing experimenting. When they are involved, I think that they can't help but learn, even if it is incidental. (7-19-95, 6-7)

Peer tutoring (Dennis) and cooperative learning (Diane) were also considered important tools used to enhance learning. "Actually cooperative learning I've found to be very helpful and very enticing to the students" (Diane, 7-13-95, 2). Debbie also expressed that students need to realize their capabilities of learning. "I think probably the first thing they [students] need to do is realize the importance of learning. ...That everyone can learn.

Everyone has the ability to learn something" (7-11-95, 8).

Self As Teacher

Self as teacher was defined as the teacher's beliefs, roles, and responsibilities. Two categories of teachers' responsibilities emerged from the data: responsibilities within the classroom and responsibilities within the school.

Classroom responsibilities. A common responsibility within the classroom that was stressed by several respondents was providing a productive environment in which students can succeed (Darcy, Diane, Dorothy, Della, and Dawn). Darcy believed the teacher should provide a learning environment where everyone can and desires to learn. Students should also feel secure no matter what the circumstance. To provide that environment, Darcy and Debbie would use whatever teaching method was necessary to meet students' needs.

> I have these kids for a year and I like to give them as much opportunity to grow and learn as possible. And to help them to be productive people, help them to reach their potential in whatever way, whatever ways that they learn. (Debbie, 7-11-95, 1)

To provide a productive environment, teachers must find ways "to make learning interesting to the students and to make it readily available for the students" (Diane, 7-13-95, 1).

Within the classroom, another responsibility mentioned was to facilitate learning, not just present material (Dana and Dorothy). "I'm the one that plans these experiences for them, help them, direct them and give some structure to their learning, because they are not old enough to do that" (Dawn, 7-19-95, 7). Diane saw herself as a "mentor in a

sort of sense, that encourages them to work toward certain goals, realize the importance of education" (7-13-95, 3). Dorothy and Dawn also noted that not only is it the teacher's responsibility to plan for experiences but to also be flexible enough to make learning experiences out of unexpected situations.

> It's also my job that if I plan and it doesn't go just that way, just exactly, then I should be flexible enough to be able to read my plan and go another direction and the learning that takes place then, sometimes can be so much better than anything I ever planned. (Dorothy, 7-14-95, 3)

School responsibilities. Dennis insisted that the teacher's responsibility does not end in the classroom. "In fact, I've always toyed with the idea of instituting a policy, 'leave your doors open.' We all work together as a team. ...your responsibility is from the time you get to work to the time you leave" (6-19-95, 7). Debbie, Diane, and Dawn agreed that teachers should work together as a team to help the whole school be successful.

> I feel like one of my responsibilities in the school is to be part of the team. And to do whatever I can to help the whole school be successful. Whether it means share materials, or share ideas, or receive someone else's ideas or materials. (Debbie, 7-11-95, 9)

Dawn added that she felt it was also her responsibility to help "with the leadership, if I am called upon to do that" (7-19-95, 7). Dorothy continued this thought by noting that as a senior teacher she must be a role model to the less experienced teachers within her school.

Influences on Teacher Beliefs

Respondents also revealed sources that have impacted their beliefs. Two different influences emerged from the data: life experiences and school experiences.

Life experiences. Life experiences made an impact on a few respondents' (Debbie and Della). Debbie based her beliefs on what she felt was "necessary for kids to learn from my own experiences as a child and from being a mother" (7-11-95, 16). Dorothy agreed that raising her own children impacted her beliefs as a teacher. "As you go through certain ordeals and certain things you do with your own children...that slants an awful lot the way you then feel; the ways that you handle other situations" (Dorothy, 7-14-95, 13). Dorothy felt that her mother, a former educator, was a large influence.

School experiences. Many respondents felt that their beliefs of education were influenced by their interaction and observation of other teachers (Darcy, Debbie, Diane, and Dawn). "I'm open to listen to what other people have. Sometimes it changes me and sometimes it doesn't" (Debbie, 7-11-95, 16). Diane believed that teachers inside and outside her school system have had a positive impact on her beliefs of education. "There's certain people you meet that always have that spark of enthusiasm. They make things work. And that's always a positive influence" (7-13-95, 10).

Teaching experience was also mentioned as an influencer on beliefs (Debbie, Diane, and Dana). "Just dealing with kids" everyday influences one's beliefs (Debbie, 7-11-95, 16). "You watch and if it works and it's good and they like it, then you try it again with another one [group of students]" (Dorothy, 7-14-95, 13).

Mentor teachers also had a great impact on teachers' beliefs. Dorothy and Dana

agreed that their supervising teacher was the biggest influence. "I think she [mentor teacher] had the right idea. She was a caring person, yet she was a firm disciplinarian. I think she just set the ground work" (Dana, 7-13-95, 13). While in another educational system, Dawn had access to a mentor teaching program. This was a program where teachers had "access to professionals that are constantly giving you new ideas and things like that. That definitely had an influence" (7-19-95, 13).

Inservice training, research articles, and expert testimony were other influences. Diane felt her beliefs were influenced "through observing and listening to the so-called `experts' in the field ...and by attending workshops and conventions where new ideas are present, [and] reading some of the literature, professional journals" (7-13-95, 11). Dawn agreed, "I've tried to always keep abreast of whatever is current, new ideas coming out and at least taste and delve those to see if I think it's worthy. And I try to implement it if I think it's good" (7-19-95, 13).

Della attributed her beliefs not only to her educational background, but her educational upbringing as well. She received her master's degree in education and believed that degree helped mold her beliefs. Della also admitted that her educational upbringing had a tremendous impact on her beliefs because that is "the way we were taught. That's what you know. That's the only thing you know" (Della, 7-17-95, 2).

Summary

Deer Creek Upper Elementary was one of four schools in the Deer Creek Independent School District. The demographics depicted approximately 360 students in grades two through five, representing four ethnic groups. Twenty-six certified teachers

were assigned to the building.

The components of elementary education were the foci of the interview for Deer Creek respondents. The areas of knowledge and skills discussed were general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, nature of the learner, and self as teacher. Two categories of general pedagogy emerged from the data: purposes of education and selection of curriculum. The five purposes of public education depicted in the data were to provide a basic foundation, to teach basic skills, to prepare students to succeed in society, to develop self-confidence, and to provide a balanced education. While teachers primarily felt that the upper administration had control of the curriculum, they expressed some desire to be involved in developing the curriculum, with some guidelines and support from the administration. The teacher's philosophy of teaching strategies and priority of skills were emphasized as specific subject matter pedagogy. The three R's continued to be weighted subjects. Some teachers taught the subjects in isolation while others chose a more integrated curriculum. Effective teaching strategies mentioned were hands-on approach, learning centers, cooperative activities, homework study, one-on-one, peer tutoring, active participation and direct instruction. The nature of the learner revealed specific responsibilities of students and effective ways they learn. Deer Creek respondents primarily felt the student's responsibility was to learn, be an active participant, to pay attention, and take more responsibility for their actions. The best way for students to learn varied from student to student. However, peer tutoring and cooperative learning were two methods mentioned that enhanced student learning. Self as teacher enabled teachers to describe their responsibilities within the classroom and the school. Teachers

primarily felt it to be their responsibility to provide a productive environment, facilitate learning, mentor students, plan the curriculum, collaborate with peers, provide leadership and role models to peers.

Sources that had impacted teachers' beliefs emerged into two primary categories: school experiences and life experiences.

Meadowview Elementary

Meadowview Elementary was the focus of this case study. To provide background of this study, the demographics and school context were discussed. The components of elementary education, along with the factors impacting the respondents' perspectives were also discussed.

Demographics

Meadowview Dependent School District was located in a small rural town with a population of approximately 2,300. Four ethnic groups were represented at Meadowview. Eight-seven percent of the population was considered to be of the white origin; 12 percent American Indian; and less than one percent Hispanic and African American.

Two schools made up this school district: Meadowview Elementary (K-6) and Meadowview Junior High (7-8). The school district consisted of 414 students. The Meadowview Elementary School building was designed in such a manner that all of the classrooms encircled a common courtyard for classroom use. Most adjacent classrooms shared a large, common storage area. Individual teachers chose the colors, design of storage space, and placement of chalkboards for their classrooms. The building was

divided into two hallways: primary and intermediate. A map of the main building, located in the main foyer, made it easy to locate one's destination. All visitors were required to sign in at the office and received a name tag for identification purposes.

Meadowview Elementary employed a total of 24 certified staff members who served approximately 280 students. Eighty-three percent of Meadowview Elementary's students were classified as white, while 15 percent were American Indian, one percent Hispanic, and one percent African American. The average class size was 23 students. Meadowview Elementary faculty was comprised of one kindergarten teacher, two first grade teachers, two second grade teachers, three third grade teachers, two fourth grade teachers, two fifth grade teachers, three sixth grade teachers, one physical education teacher, one music teacher, one Title I teacher, one remedial reading teacher, one learning disabilities specialist, one communications specialist, one librarian, and one counselor.

Eight people from Meadowview Elementary were interviewed. The principal, Michael, served as the contact person. Other participants were Martha, kindergarten teacher; Madeline, first grade teacher; Margo, third grade teacher; Margaret, third grade teacher; Marie, fourth grade teacher; Meg, fourth grade teacher; and Marcia, fifth grade teacher.

The following descriptions give pertinent information about the administrator and teachers from this site:

Michael was the elementary principal at Meadowview Elementary. He had been in this position for 16 years. His previous teaching experience was in the area of art. He had been in public education for a total of 23 years and held a Master of Education degree.

He was in his mid-40s, married, and had one child.

Marcia was a fourth and fifth grade science teacher. She held a Bachelor of Science degree and had taught in public schools for five years and in a private school for one year. She was in her late 30s, married, and had one child.

Meg was a fourth and fifth grade social studies teacher. She had taught at Meadowview for 19 years and held a Bachelor of Science degree. She was in her early 40s, married, and had two children. Her mother was also an elementary education teacher.

Margo was a third grade teacher. She had taught in public schools for 18 years and in a private school for one year. She held a Bachelor of Science degree, was in her mid-50s, married, and had three children.

Martha was a kindergarten teacher. She had taught for 20 years and held a Master of Arts degree. She was in her mid-50s, married, and had three children.

Margaret was a third grade teacher with a Bachelor of Science degree. She had taught at Meadowview for 19 years. She was in her mid-40s, married, and had two children.

Marie was a fourth and fifth grade math teacher. She had taught for 13 years in public schools and one year in a private school. She held a Master of Education degree, was in her mid-30s, married, and had no children. Her father was also a teacher.

Madeline was a first grade teacher with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She had taught in public schools for two years and in a private school for two years. She was in her late 40s, married, and had two children. Her mother was an elementary educator and her

father was a college professor. The rest of her family and many other generations had been in education.

Meadowview Elementary was chosen for this study because it was considered to be a non-traditional school representing a more diverse and heterogeneous setting, promoting teacher professional collaboration.

School Context

Meadowview respondents voiced concern about the climate of their school changing over the past few years. Michael described Meadowview Elementary School as being tired and war-torn. "We've gone through several superintendents now. There's a lot of, I think, dissatisfaction with change. I don't think teachers like change much. There really needs to be some quiet time" (6-12-95, 15). Meg described Meadowview as once being a "loving, happy place to be, where children always feel welcome" (7-08-95. 9). She remarked that the climate had changed in the last five years. "I think maybe there's more inner turmoil than there used to be. ...they [teachers] start to strongly disagree where they maybe didn't at first" (7-08-95, 9). Martha agreed that ever since Superintendent Marvin left, there had been a lot of change.

> He sort of held everything together. He was an excellent superintendent. And it's hard to make a change. But, it's just hard to find someone that allows and supports a lot of different viewpoints and a lot of freedom to make decisions. He expected everybody to help make decisions. And everybody was willing to do that. But you don't find too many superintendents like that. (7-19-95, 7)

Despite the changes in leadership, Marie believed that teachers were "relatively

satisfied to be at [Meadowview]. And maybe that's because they kind of have a safety as far as they know the people that teach there and they pretty much know what they stand for" (7-21-95, 7). Marie also agreed that the climate had changed, however, she attributed that to a changing enrollment.

> And I don't mean just in size. We may not really be growing that much in size, enrollment wise. But our enrollment is changing. I think we're seeing more transitional people come in who won't stay as long. I think we see people who come from another little school down the road that wasn't quite as progressive as ours and they are mad at that school so they come and bring their kids to our school. And then they figure out their kids can't cut it, so they're now mad at ours and they pull them out and they take them somewhere else. We get parents who are questioning more. (7-21-95, 7)

Meadowview could also be described as community-oriented (Margo). "It's very much community-oriented as opposed to a larger school. It is much more personal than many larger schools can be" (Madeline, 7-27-95, 4). Martha added that Meadowview Elementary has "always been a real part of the community in the sense [the community] felt like it was their school and they're able to help make policies" (7-19-95, 6).

Marcia also described Meadowview Elementary as being progressive and aggressive. Progressive in the sense that everyone stayed updated on research and were willing to try new things. She also saw Meadowview teachers as being aggressive. They were more willing to say what was on their mind.

The majority of the respondents believed that the administration (principal) set the

tone of the school (Martha, Marie, and Madeline). "And he does a good job!" (Marcia, 6-16-95, 9). However, Michael felt that the tone was primarily set by the superintendent. Regardless, Michael insisted that "the tenor and tone of the school has got to be set by the people who are leading" (6-12-95, 17). A few respondents believed that teachers were the ones who set the tone, depending on what was going on at the time (Meg, Margo, and Martha). Margaret believed that everyone, "teachers, the principal and his idea of who he hires, the superintendent and then the board" set the tone of the school (7-20-95, 7).

My observations of Meadowview Elementary School revealed a warm, inviting place for children. It was a very casual and laid back atmosphere. The design and classroom identification system made it easy to find one's way around the building. Teachers were involved in the design of the elementary building. The classrooms encircled a common courtyard. Some classrooms had more storage space within the classroom, while other adjacent classrooms shared a large, common storage area. This made it easier for teachers to interact with one another during the day, as well as plan for use and storage of materials.

Students were obviously the focus at Meadowview. The primary hallway was laced with student work inviting you to come take a look. The intermediate hallway, however, was laced with coats and backpacks because students traveled to different classes throughout the day. Teacher and student interaction and participation seemed to be at the same level in both hallways. The faculty was very receptive of visitors, possibly due to the high participation of parent volunteers and the fact that each visitor was provided a name tag for recognition.

Meadowview teachers had many opportunities to collaborate. There were a lot of committee meetings that took place throughout the year, providing the opportunity for structured interaction: student discipline, curriculum alignment, school calendar, policy procedures, interviewing, showers, and field trips (Marcia, Martha, and Marie). Because of the size of their district, there was a "tremendous number of committees to do things" (Madeline, 7-27-95, 5). Other arrangements for classroom supervision were usually made to allow teachers release time for curriculum committee meetings. During these times there was an exchange of ideas across grade levels.

My observations revealed that teachers primarily began their day in the classroom preparing for the day. During lunch, many teachers gathered in the lounge for casual conversation. Before and after school also seemed to be reserved for casual, social talk. Planning periods appeared to be reserved for paper work or other menial tasks. I saw little professional collaboration take place during these scheduled periods even though Margo and Madeline believed that many teachers used their planning periods to collaborate with other teachers. It appeared that professional collaboration at Meadowview went on behind the scenes all of the time. No particular place or time, just whenever the need arose. When the need did arise, I found that they would just go to that person's location. I observed many teachers going in and out of other classrooms for a short visit. Teachers also interacted before, during, and after scheduled faculty meetings. The principal, Michael, encouraged this interaction and continually asked for teacher input on topics discussed. Margaret and Madeline said it was also not unusual for teachers to socially interact outside of the school environment. Meadowview appeared to be a very close-knit

staff. A Meadowview Interaction Sociogram, located in Appendix D, revealed that Margo and Margaret frequently collaborated with each other. The sociogram also indicated that Marcia and Marie collaborated continuously. The sociogram also indicates that professional occasionally took place between all individuals.

Beliefs of General Pedagogy

General pedagogy referred to the teacher's overall educational philosophy. The purposes of education and selection of curriculum make up general pedagogy.

Purposes of education. Again, five purposes of public education emerged from the data: to provide a basic foundation, teach basic skills, prepare students to succeed in society, develop self-confidence, and provide a balanced education.

The first purpose of education mentioned was to provide a basic foundation. Meg emphasized the importance of elementary education because it is "the kid's first formal education. A lot of them have been to preschool and all, but it's the first really formal education that they get" (7-08-95, 1).

The second purpose of education stated by Meadowview respondents was to teach basic skills. Madeline stressed that "teaching the basics so that they [students] can go on and get all the goodies" should be the primary purpose of education (7-27-95, 1). Meg agreed that it was important for students "to learn the academic subject area" (7-08-95, 3). In addition to the subject area, Marcia believed that the purpose of elementary education should be "to help people become independent thinkers, to be able to synthesize information and make decisions" (6-16-95, 4).

The third purpose of education that emerged from the data was to prepare students

to succeed in society. Several respondents emphasized that it was the school's responsibility to prepare children to survive in today's world (Martha and Margaret) and to function as a contributing person in society (Margo). Meg argued that students needed to be taught "socially how to get along with people" (7-08-95, 3). Michael agreed that schools must give students "the kinds of tools that [they] need to survive, to take care, to maintain, to be successful, to charge forward, to protect, [and] to engender" (6-12-95, 2).

The fourth purpose indicated was to develop self-confidence. Madeline believed that it was imperative to get "children started right in a direction where they feel good about themselves... Promoting self-confidence is essential" (7-27-95, 1).

The fifth and final purpose that emerged from the data was to provide a balanced education. Michael felt that it was necessary to provide students with a well-rounded, basic education. To provide a balanced education, "you've got to have a variety of technology and methodology and philosophy and compassion, understanding, and patience. All of those things are amalgamated into one big 'ole stew to allow those children to function" (Michael, 6-12-95, 6).

Selection of curriculum. Teachers generally believed that they should be able to use their discretion in order to determine what works with their students since they deliver curriculum to students on a daily basis. Martha expressed, "I feel qualified to make those decisions" (7-19-95, 3). Michael pointed out that "teachers sometimes decide that they know what is best. And in most specific instances they do" (6-12-95, 7). He believed the timing most definitely should be left to the teacher. "Those really true teachable moments, those precious times, when you are actually cooking and you are actually teaching, that is

up to the teacher" (Michael, 6-12-95, 9). Others believed that a committee of teachers should work to make the curriculum student-appropriate.

> As a group all the teachers that work together should all have a say because kids can't learn one way and then shift and learn another way.... We all have to discuss and decide what's going to be best for the kids. (Margaret, 7-20-95, 7)

Even though teachers came together to make curriculum decisions, "the extent that I teach...is pretty much up to me and we try to work together to see what our expectations of each other and our students as they are up and down the scale" (Margo, 7-10-95, 8). Involving teachers in curriculum decisions was wonderful, but Martha insisted "there needs to be some support from the administration and for the principles of good teaching" (7-19-95, 2).

Even with teacher involvement in the curriculum, several teachers felt the need to have local, state, and/or national guidelines (Meg). Marie agreed that guidelines were important because "even though we don't all start up at the same place and we're not all going to end up at the same place, we're all going to be going out in the same world" (Marie, 7-21-95, 4). The teacher could take those guidelines and "be able to go from that, expand, and carry on" (Meg, 7-08-95, 2). Even though the teacher specifically decided what to teach, as well as when, "generally it's the community [that decides], more general than that, it's the state. More than that, it's what the nation sees ...mandated goals, because they're going to determine how it will be funded" (Michael, 6-12-95, 9). The state dictated curriculum through P.A.S.S. (Priority Academic Student Skills) objectives (Martha). P.A.S.S. objectives were very general and allowed teachers room for interpre-

tation. Every teacher in Oklahoma Public Schools was required to follow the P.A.S.S. curriculum as a guide.

The majority of respondents believed there needed to be a combination of factors when deciding the curriculum. "I think teachers have to recognize that they have never decided what they are going to be teaching. It's always been Houghton-Mifflin or someone else, the state, or whatever, the colleges that they went to" (Michael, 6-12-95, 7). Marcia agreed, "The textbook companies definitely dictate what you teach, because if you just solely use the book, then you end up doing that" (6-16-95, 4). A team effort was important to Madeline.

> Team meaning administration, teachers, even parents. I think that a parent should have some input as to what should be taught. I think it's important that everyone agrees on at least some portion of it. The teacher is going to interpret herself or himself. Because no particular type, no particular method will work if that teacher doesn't believe in it. Believing in it is probably as much a part of it as anything else. But it is important that we're kind of all going in the same direction or at least that we get along enough to go in the same direction. (Madeline, 7-27-95, 1)

Specific Subject Matter Pedagogy

Specific subject matter pedagogy referred to the teacher's philosophy of the subject matter content. The foci of this area was mainly on instructional strategies and priority of skills.

Priority of skills. Teachers placed emphasis on different subjects according to their philosophy. However, the majority of the respondents agreed that reading, writing, and

arithmetic continued to be the most important subjects in elementary education (Marcia, Meg, and Madeline) . "What the community wants is a kid that can read, write, [and] do mathematics. That's the main thing they want. And that falls right along the line with what all these teachers want to do" (Michael, 6-12-95, 10).

In conjunction with the three R's, communication was a must. Michael contended "...learning to be a good communicator and a good listener, that's first. You can't process unless you can listen. You have to be able to communicate" (6-12-95, 10). Marie contended that not only do you have to be able to communicate orally, but also in a number of other ways to "be successful and to feel like you really are in control of your life and other people don't just control you" (7-21-95, 5).

Teaching strategies. Instructional strategies of the three R's varied from teacher to teacher. There were those who believed each subject should be treated separately. "The subjects pretty much come into balance and I try not to over weight one or the other because it is more interesting to do a lot of different things" (Margo, 7-10-95, 9). Margaret admitted that the majority of the time she taught subjects in isolation, but tried to integrate some. Other respondents chose to integrate the curriculum (Marcia and Martha). Meg insisted that "you can't help but integrate" (7-08-95, 5).

Effective teaching strategies also varied according to the learning needs of the student. "I try all approaches because no two students are alike. They do not learn the same way" (Madeline, 7-27-95, 2). Marcia did not believe that one particular method was best. She tried a variety of methods to reach the variety of learning needs and interests. Other effective methods that were mentioned were hands-on, oral repetition, learning

centers, cooperative activities, whole language and peer tutoring (Meg, Margo, Martha, and Margaret).

Margo saw the great difference that instructional programs such as Shirley English and Classroom Phonics had made by using the repetition and the constant review and use of information. Martha stressed the need for manipulatives. "I use a lot of manipulatives. If you look around, you see concrete materials" (7-19-95, 2). Martha also placed a lot of emphasis on reading. "We use big books and [the] little books that go with those. I do a whole lot of reading. Just reading to children is very, very important " (7-19-95, 2). Margaret also believed in taking children out of the textbook and using core books to teach reading.

Nature of the Learner

The nature of the learner referred to the teacher's philosophy of the student and how they learn. Two specific areas were addressed: the student's role and responsibilities in education and the most effective ways for students to learn.

Student's roles/responsibilities. Respondents depicted what they believed was the student's role in education. Many different responsibilities emerged from the data: to learn, to be active participants, to do their best, to pay attention, and to make choices.

Michael believed that not only was it the teacher's responsibility to teach, but it was the student's responsibility to learn. "Their function is to learn as much as they can, as well as they can, with whatever tools God gave them" (Michael, 6-12-95, 6). Several other respondents felt that students needed to be active participants (Meg and Madeline). "I think a student needs to be an active participant in the classroom" (Madeline, 7-27-95,

3). Meg agreed but said that did not mean students should have free reign. "I think they should feel free to ask anything they want to or suggest could we do this. I want my...students to feel that it's also their classroom, that I'm not a dictator" (Meg, 7-08-95, 5).

Margaret believed the student's role was plain and simple. "All I ever ask of my kids is that they try their best. ...that they put forth their effort and do just the best that they can" (7-20-95, 6). Paying attention was another important role that Margaret and Madeline believed a student should possess. "The student is responsible for paying attention as much as they possibly can and gaining as much from the environment as possible. And paying attention is really very important because they can get what's there" (Madeline, 7-27-95, 2).

Several other respondents felt that the students should be involved in making choices (Marcia). "I think their part is to make some choices that express their interests" (Margo, 7-10-95). Marie agreed,

> I think that they should be able to have more control over what they're going to learn or how they're going to learn it. ...If you got a little curriculum guide and it's touching on some basic things that you really need to teach, then you can show that guide to the kids. There's not any big mystique about that. And kids can understand that no matter what their age is. ...If you're a good teacher you can explain it. (7-21-95, 2)

Ways students learn. Many believed that students had a variety of learning needs. "Some children will learn one way and some will learn another" (Meg, 7-08-95, 6).

Therefore, teachers should use a varied approach to teaching skills (Meg and Margaret). Margo and Margaret believed being able to do something with manipulatives and experiments, instead of just working out of a book was effective for some students.

Madeline believed that it is important to set up a safe environment in order for students to feel comfortable in learning. "They need to be safe and comfortable and they need to have self-esteem. They're not going to learn very much if they don't have those things first" (7-27-95, 3). Other areas of approach that were mentioned were individualization and peer tutoring (Margaret).

Marie added a realistic twist to the varied approaches of learning. In spite of all that is done, it is a common practice to teach all students equally.

> But kids are at different places functioning academically and yet we start them off at the same place. And I think we do that because we want them all to end up at the same place, at the same time, which stifle some and really pushes others to their stress point. And the place we want them to end up is where that test is or we want them to end up at the same place so...it'll be easier for the next year's teacher. (7-21-95, 1)

Self As Teacher

The teacher's perspective of their beliefs, roles, and responsibilities defined the component self as teacher. Two categories of teachers' responsibilities emerged from the data: responsibilities within the classroom and responsibilities within the school.

Classroom responsibilities. A productive environment in which students could succeed was a common responsibility within the classroom that was stressed by several

respondents (Meg, Margo, and Madeline). Meg believed it should be a "fun, but productive" environment (7-08-95, 1). Margo believed that it should be a place where everyone can and desires to learn. Students should also feel secure no matter what the circumstance. To provide that environment, Madeline used whatever teaching method necessary to meet students' needs.

Other responsibilities within the classroom mentioned were to provide leadership to students (Margaret) set good examples (Meg), provide compassionate, yet firm guidance (Margaret), and facilitate learning, not just present material (Marie).

School responsibilities. A common responsibility within the school mentioned by Meadowview respondents was professional collaboration. Teachers needed to work well with one another (Marcia, Meg, Martha, Marie, and Madeline) and support each other (Margo). They must communicate their needs, goals, concerns, and suggestions (Marcia, Martha, and Margaret). "Communicating your ideas and your views and just [trying] to get along and work with the other people" was very important to Marcia (6-16-95, 7). Teachers should also involve themselves on committees (Margaret and Madeline) and play an active role in the decision making process (Martha and Marie).

Influences on Teacher Beliefs

Two different influences on teacher beliefs emerged from the data: life experiences and school experiences.

Life experiences. Life experiences made an impact on two respondents' beliefs. Marie said the Challenger explosion influenced her teaching beliefs. It opened her eyes and made her really think. Madeline said that "having a son who has really severe prob-

lems with learning" had greatly impacted her beliefs (7-27-95, 9).

Many respondents believed family members influenced their beliefs of education. Marcia attributed her beliefs to the upbringing her parents provided her. Meg's mother was a teacher and initially impacted her beliefs. Marie's father was a teacher and probably developed her interest in becoming a teacher. Madeline's entire family was in the education field. She believed she was born a teacher.

School experiences. Many respondents felt that their beliefs of education were influenced by their interaction and observation of other teachers (Marcia, Margo, and Madeline). "You see what works for them and so you try it" (Margaret, 7-20-95, 11). Margaret also believed her team member had a tremendous amount of influence on her because they worked so closely together (Margaret).

Teaching experience was also mentioned as an influence on beliefs. Meg said that her beliefs were based on "trial and error, just what works for me" (7-08-95, 10). Margo agreed, "I am more influenced by my own experiences. I am always willing to read and to try something, but I do what works" (7-10-95, 11).

Martha's mentor teacher had a great impact on her beliefs. "My supervising teacher, when I did my intern teaching, definitely influenced me" (7-19-95, 12). Martha also attributed her beliefs to her educational background. She attainted her master's degree in education many years ago. Margo admitted that her educational upbringing had a tremendous impact on her beliefs. "Probably my structure in the classroom is because that is the way I was taught" (7-10-95, 11).

Summary

Meadowview Elementary was one of two schools in the Meadowview Dependent School District. The demographics showed approximately 280 students, in grades kindergarten through six. Four different ethnic groups were represented in the student population. Twenty-four certified staff members were assigned to the building.

The school context, which is the climate of the school, was generally set by the principal. He highly promoted teacher professional collaboration and offered teachers many opportunities to collaborate through committee work. Teachers tended to collaborate across grade levels as well as within their own grade.

Interview questions for Meadowview respondents centered around the components of elementary education: general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, nature of the learner, and self as teacher. General pedagogy referred to the teacher's overall educational philosophy and covered two areas: purposes of education and selection of curriculum. Five purposes of education were discussed: to provide a basic foundation, teach basic skills, prepare students to succeed in society, develop self-confidence, and provide a balanced education. Teachers also expressed that they should be involved in developing the curriculum for their classroom, even though it may be necessary to have some guidelines. Specific subject matter pedagogy referred to the philosophy of subject matter content and focused primarily on instructional strategies and priority of skills. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and communication were the emphasized subjects. Instructional strategies varied from teaching subjects in isolation to an integrated curriculum. Effective teaching strategies that were mentioned were hands-on, oral repetition, learning

centers, cooperative activities, whole language, and peer tutoring. The philosophy of the student and how they learn comprised the nature of the learner. The focus in this area was on the students' responsibilities in education and the most effective ways they learn. Respondents primarily felt it was the student's responsibility to learn, to be an active participant, to do his/her best, to pay attention, and to make choices. Respondents also believed that students learned best through manipulatives, peer tutoring, and individualization. Self as teacher discussed the responsibilities of the teacher within the classroom and the school. Responsibilities that emerged were to provide a productive learning environment, to provide leadership, set good examples, provide guidance, and facilitate learning for students. Meadowview respondents also believed teachers should collaborate with one another and support each other.

Two categories of sources that impacted teachers' beliefs emerged from the data: school experiences and life experiences.

Cross-Site Summary

Similarities and differences emerged when comparing the data collected from the two case studies. Both sites were chosen because of their similarity in size and location. Both schools had similar minority distribution. Table 1 summarizes the statistical information about the demographics of each school site.

Table 1
Statistical Data of Research Sites

	Deer Creek	Meadowview
City Population	4,353	2,360
City Type	Rural	Rural
Percent Minority Population		
White	88	87
African American	less than 1	0
American Indian	11	12
Asian	less than 1	0
Hispanic	less than 1	1
Percent Minority Enrollment		
White	60	83
African American	1	less than 1
American Indian	38	15
Asian	0	less than 1
Hispanic	1	1
Number of Schools		
High School	1	0
Middle School	1	1
Elementary School	2	1
Site Enrollment	360	280
Site Staff	26	24

Background data on the participants revealed four teachers with masters' degrees at Deer Creek, while only two teachers held their masters' degree at Meadowview. The average number of years experience of teachers at both sites was approximately 15 years. Four teachers at Meadowview had been there for 18 years or longer, while only three teachers had been at Deer Creek for 15 years or longer. Table 2 summarizes the back-

ground information of participants from each case study.

Table 2
Background Data of Participants

Deer Creek	Education Level	Years Experience	Years at Site
Dennis (principal)	M.Ed	16	14
(as teacher)		5	
Darcy	B.S.	11	8
Debbie	B.S.	10	5
Dawn	M.Ed.	19	1
Della	M.S.	14	4
Dana	M.S.	22	22
Dorothy	B.S.	20	15
Diane	M.A.	17	16
Meadowview			
Michael (principal)	M.Ed.	17	21
(as teacher)		6	
Martha	M.A.	20	18
Madeline	B.A.	4	2
Margo	B.S.	19	18
Margaret	B.S.	19	19
Marie	M.Ed.	14	8
Meg	B.S.	19	19
Marcia	B.S.	6	5

Each school site had a unique climate. Teacher interaction was heavily promoted and exercised at Meadowview Elementary. Teachers tended to collaborate by grade level and across grade levels on a professional and social basis continuously through site-based decision making committees. Teacher professional collaboration was also promoted and deemed necessary at Deer Creek Upper Elementary, however, little professional collaboration actually took place except within the second grade team. Few opportunities were afforded to these teachers to be involved in site-based decision making committees or

teaming. Most social collaboration took place before and after school, at lunch and outside the school on a social basis. Teachers at both sites believed the tone was primarily set by the principal. Occasionally, the teachers believed they affected the tenor of the school. Deer Creek respondents believed the superintendent greatly affected the climate of their school by his bureaucratic decisions. Table 3 summarizes the similarities and differences in the climate of each school site.

Table 3
School Context

Teacher Collaboration	Deer Creek	Meadowview
By Grade Level		
During Lunch	xx	xx
Before School	xx	xx
After School	xx	xx
Faculty Meetings		xx
During Committees		xx
Outside Socials	xx	xx
Across Grade Levels		
During Lunch	xx	xx
Before School		xx
After School		xx
Faculty Meetings		xx
During Committees		xx
Outside Socials	xx	xx
Tone Set By:		
Superintendent	xx	
Principal	xx	xx
Teachers	xx	xx

General Pedagogy referred to the teacher's general philosophies and strategies of elementary education. Two categories of general pedagogy were discussed: purposes of education and selection of curriculum. Each school depicted five purposes of public education: to provide a basic foundation, to teach basic skills, to prepare students to

succeed in society, to develop self-confidence, and to provide a balanced education. Respondents from both schools agreed that teachers should be involved in developing the curriculum or that a combination of factors should be at play. However, Deer Creek respondents also felt their administration played a significant role in developing the curriculum. Meadowview respondents believed the textbook companies greatly impacted the curriculum. They also felt it was necessary to have some state or national guidelines for curriculum and that the administration must support the final result. Table 4 summarizes the similarities and differences in the area of general pedagogy from each case study.

Table 4
General Pedagogy Beliefs

	Deer Creek	Meadowview
Purposes of Education		
Provide a Basic Foundation	xx	xx
Teach Basic Skills	xx	xx
Prepare Students to Succeed in Society	xx	xx
Develop Self-Confidence	xx	xx
Provide a Balanced Education	xx	xx
Selection of the Curriculum		
Administration	xx	
State or National Guidelines		xx
Teachers	xx	xx
Textbook Companies		xx
Combination	xx	xx

Specific subject matter pedagogy dealt with content of the subject matter. Teachers' philosophies of teaching strategies and the priority of skills were addressed. Teachers at both schools agreed that reading, writing, and arithmetic should have the most

emphasis in elementary education. Meadowview respondents also believed that communication should be heavily emphasized. Both schools had teachers who taught subjects in isolation and those who supported an integrated curriculum. Several Deer Creek respondents taught in a traditional mode, using direct instruction. Both schools agreed on a variety of instructional strategies: hands-on, learning centers, cooperative activities, and peer tutoring. Deer Creek respondents also believed homework study and individualization were effective teaching strategies. Meadowview respondents believed whole language and oral repetition were other effective teaching strategies. Table 5 summarizes the similarities and differences in the area of specific subject matter pedagogy.

Table 5
Specific Subject Matter Pedagogy

	Deer Creek	Meadowview
Priority of Subjects/Skills		
Reading	xx	xx
Writing	xx	xx
Arithmetic	xx	xx
Communication		xx
Teaching Strategies		
Teach Subjects in Isolation	xx	xx
Teach an Integrated Curriculum	xx	xx
Direct Instruction	xx	
Hands-on	xx	xx
Homework Study	xx	
Learning Centers	xx	xx
Cooperative Activities	xx	xx
Individualization	xx	
Peer Tutoring	xx	xx
Whole Language		xx
Oral Repetition		xx

The nature of the learner was defined as the teacher's philosophy of the students'

role and responsibilities within education and the most effective ways for them to learn. Both schools agreed that the student was responsible to learn, to actively participate, and to pay attention. Deer Creek respondents also believed students should take more responsibility for their actions. Meadowview respondents believed students should do their best and be involved in making choices within the classroom and curriculum. Teachers at both schools agreed that students had a variety of learning needs and thus instructional strategies should be diversified enough to meet those needs. They also agreed that learning by doing is an effective way to meet those learning needs. Deer Creek respondents believed that peer tutoring and cooperative learning were other ways that students learn best. Table 6 summarizes the similarities and differences in the area of the nature of the learner.

Table 6
Nature of the Learner

Students' Responsibilities	Deer Creek	Meadowview
Learn	xx	xx
Actively Participate	xx	xx
Pay Attention	xx	xx
Take More Responsibility for Actions	xx	
Do Their Best		xx
Make Choices		xx
Ways to Learn		
Variety	xx	xx
Learn by Doing	xx	xx
Peer Tutoring	xx	
Cooperative Learning	xx	

Self as teacher referred to the teacher's beliefs, roles, and responsibilities. Responsibilities of a teacher within the classroom that emerged from both schools were to

provide a productive environment and to facilitate learning. Deer Creek respondents also believed it to be the teacher's responsibility to plan the curriculum and mentor students. Meadowview respondents believed the teacher should set a good example within the classroom and provide guidance to students. Teachers at both schools agreed that it was important for teachers to collaborate with one another. Deer Creek respondents also felt the teacher should provide leadership when called upon and to be a role model to new teachers. Meadowview respondents felt that teachers should volunteer to do committee work and that it is vitally important to communicate thoughts, concerns, and ideas to each other. Table 7 summarizes the similarities and differences in the area of self as teacher.

Table 7
Self As Teacher

	Deer Creek	Meadowview
Teachers' Responsibilities:		
Within the classroom		
Provide a productive environment	xx	xx
Facilitate Learning	xx	xx
Plan Curriculum	xx	
Mentor Students	xx	
Set Good Examples		xx
Provide Guidance		xx
Within the school		
Collaborate with Teachers	xx	xx
Provide Leadership	xx	
Role Model to Peers	xx	
Work on Committees		xx
Communicate with Peers		xx

Teachers at both school sites agreed on the factors that influence teachers' beliefs. The factors that emerged from the data were classified into two categories. These

similarities and differences are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8
Influences on Teacher Beliefs

	Deer Creek	Meadowview
Life Experiences	xx	xx
School Experiences	xx	xx

Summary

The similarities and differences of Deer Creek and Meadowview were discussed. Demographics, school context, components of elementary education, and factors that impacted teacher beliefs were compared and contrasted.

Chapter Summary

Deer Creek Upper Elementary served approximately 360 students in grades two through five, under the supervision of 26 certified teachers. Demographics and school context provided a description of the school's background. The components of elementary education represented teachers' beliefs of education. These components included: general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, nature of the learner, and self as teacher. School experiences and life experiences impacted those beliefs.

Meadowview Elementary consisted of approximately 280 students in grades K-6. Twenty-four certified staff members were assigned to the building. Background of the school was provided through the demographics and school context. Teachers' beliefs were depicted through the components of elementary education. These components included general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, nature of the learner, and self as teacher. These beliefs were impacted by life and school experiences.

The two case studies were compared and contrasted. The similarities and

differences of the demographics, school context, components of elementary education, and factors impacting those beliefs were discussed.

Each case study is analyzed both individually and collectively in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data presented in Chapter III were analyzed individually and collectively through the lens of Perpetuation Theory (McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and Granovetter's (1973) strength of ties. During analysis of the data, three perspectives were considered: 1) traditional and non-traditional teachers' beliefs, 2) the social networks that existed within the schools, and 3) the impact of those social networks on teachers' beliefs.

Operationalizations

Operationalizations of teachers' beliefs originated from the literature. Social networks were derived from Granovetter's (1973) research.

Teachers' Beliefs

The findings of Mehl (1958), Cuban (1983 & 1984), and Mayher and Brause (1986) depicted characteristics of traditional and non-traditional teaching perspectives.

Traditional teaching perspectives. In a traditional teaching environment, students' desks would face the front of the classroom; primarily in rows. Instruction would center around the teacher. Students would recite passages from textbooks, work independently on assignments, or listen to teacher instruction. Subjects would be taught in isolation. Everything would be done in uniformity, including behavior and classwork (Cuban, 1984).

Non-traditional teaching perspectives. In a non-traditional teaching environment, students' desks (if they existed) would be placed as tables to encourage cooperative learning or group work, in a horse-shoe shape to promote whole class discussion, or any other manner than facing the front of the classroom in rows. Instruction would center

primarily around the student, with little lecture and more group discussion or exploration. Students might contract to do work at a slower or faster pace, promoting individualization. An integrated curriculum would tie subjects together throughout the day (Mehl et al,. 1958; Cuban, 1983; Cuban, 1984; Mayher & Brause, 1986).

Social Networks

Granovetter (1973) stated that the strength of a tie depended primarily upon the time spent together, exchange of information and services, and confidence of feelings.

Strong ties. Strong ties pertain to people who have established close relationships. These people most likely share the same thoughts, beliefs, and interests. Strong ties would occur between family members and close friends. "The more frequently persons interact with one another, the stronger their sentiments of friendship for one another are apt to be" (Homans, 1950, p. 133), thus creating a strong tie.

Weak ties. Weak ties primarily exist between acquaintances or friends of friends. "Weak ties are more likely to link members of different small groups..." (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1376). Weak ties offer people the bridge to new, socially distant ideas.

Deer Creek Upper Elementary

Teachers' beliefs about elementary education, the social networks of strong and weak ties, and the impact of those social networks on teachers' beliefs were analyzed.

Teachers' beliefs

Deer Creek Upper Elementary teaching perspectives were presented from traditional to less traditional. A range of beliefs were evident, beginning with Dennis and ending with Diane. Dennis, the principal, as well as two of the seven teachers, held overall

traditional educational beliefs, which were reflected in their teaching or leadership styles. Dennis, the principal of 14 years, exhibited many traditional beliefs in his leadership. He placed a lot of emphasis on teaching basic skills and maintaining or improving state-mandated test scores. The literature also notes that during the 1970s, there was a nation-wide move toward "back to basics" as a response to low test scores (Cuban, 1983, p. 164). Dennis continued to search for ways to improve the education offered to students and, as a result, made many bureaucratic decisions. For example, Dennis chose the leadership posters and flags lining the hallways, as well as the new reading series. He expected teachers to follow policy and did not allow supplemental teaching materials without approval. "Anytime they bring outside materials in they have to have it okayed by me. They sign a statement to the fact that they are aware of that policy" (Dennis, 6-19-95, 2). Dennis highly promoted teacher collaboration but offered few opportunities for professional collaboration to take place.

Dana, who had taught for 22 years at Deer Creek Upper Elementary, expressed traditional views throughout her interview. She placed a lot of emphasis on what she considered to be core subjects: reading, writing, and arithmetic. Dana also put a lot of responsibility back on the student for keeping up with assignments, homework, and studying for tests. Although Dana voiced the need for a variety of instructional strategies to facilitate learning, her classroom reflected direct instruction. Instruction took place primarily at the front of the room or from the teacher's desk in lecture format. Students' desks were in rows, facing the front of the room. No visiting was allowed during independent work. According to Cuban (1984), Dana's classroom mirrored the traditional

classroom where students recited passages from textbooks, worked independently on assignments, or listened to teacher instruction. Everything was done in uniformity, including behavior and classwork. Dana highly respected her mentor teacher and believed she was heavily influenced by her during her internship.

Della, a teacher of 14 years, also expressed traditional views throughout her interview. She too, felt the student should be responsible and held accountable for paying attention, putting forth effort to learn, keeping up with assignments and homework, and studying for tests. She believed that children had their own way of learning, and yet she presented the material in a uniform way to all students. Although she expressed a desire to teach an integrated curriculum, she primarily taught subjects in isolation. There was no evidence of an integrated curriculum during my observations. She attributed this to the new curriculum dumped on her without notice. My observations revealed Della at the front of a very quiet room with the focus primarily on her instruction. I saw little, to no, interaction or discussion among the students. There seemed to be some discrepancy between Della's expressed beliefs and practice. Della admitted that she taught similarly to how she was taught as a child because she was most comfortable with that type of instruction. Her classroom reflected a traditional teaching environment, one that I believe has been perpetuated throughout the years and heavily influenced by her educational upbringing. This classroom mirrored Cuban's (1984) description of the traditional classroom.

Darcy and Debbie's beliefs and teaching strategies were very similar. While they held several traditional beliefs, they also discussed and practiced many non-traditional

methods. Darcy and Debbie placed a lot of emphasis on the three R's, with reading being priority; both were sensitive to Dennis's concerns about low reading scores. They also voiced disappointment when the reading and math series were changed without notice. I believe this disappointment came from a desire to be organized and prepared. The need to be in control also supports the traditional perspective. Darcy and Debbie voiced the need for an integrated curriculum. Their integrated curriculum, however, centered around thematic units and learning centers. The learning centers were a result of team professional collaboration among the second grade teachers, which I believe took place continuously. Although both Darcy and Debbie preferred an integrated curriculum, during my observations I only witnessed each subject being taught in isolation. Both classrooms had an organized seating chart and students worked quietly while doing independent work. Cooperative learning and peer tutoring were other methods they considered to be effective to meet students' needs.

Although Dorothy believed that subjects should be taught in isolation, I would not describe her as a hard core, traditional teacher. Dorothy felt that her role was not only to present the material in a variety of ways, but to facilitate learning. She expected her students to be active participants during instruction. Her learning environment was very relaxed and student-centered. I found Dorothy's classroom to be the least structured of those I observed. I believe this was mainly a reflection of Dorothy's personality. It appeared that students had a lot of freedom to visit and move around. Dorothy's classroom was similar to the non-traditional classrooms Cuban (1983) described: integrated curriculum through various projects, free movement, and student expression in the

classroom.

Dawn's classroom promoted democracy and the importance of each individual. Dawn substantiated this when she reported "they [students] get to talk, they get to discuss with whoever their seatmate is and they are actively doing things" (7-19-95, 3). Dawn's classroom actually appeared more integrated than the rest of the classrooms I observed. Bulletin boards, experiments, and activities actually pulled the curriculum together. Dawn was also quick to verbally tie together everything. During my observations, I saw students converse with each other and work through various problems. Cooperative learning appeared to take place frequently. Students seemed to be much more confident and depended more on themselves and each other and less on the teacher. While Dawn expected students to take responsibility for their actions, she worked with them to develop and understand this responsibility. She stated that she expected students to "learn more responsibility as they go along" (7-19-95, 6). During instruction, students actively participated. Instruction appeared to be more discussion than lecture. Dawn displayed a lot of respect toward each student and received the utmost respect from students in return. Dawn's classroom was very similar to the non-traditional classrooms depicted in the literature in which desks were arranged to encourage cooperative learning, instruction centered around students, with discussion and exploration, and an integrated curriculum (Mehl, et al., 1958; Cuban, 1983 & 1984; Mayher & Brause, 1986).

I would consider Diane to be the least traditional and structured of the participants of the study. She believed a great deal of time should be devoted to teaching language arts since everything in a student's life was centered around that area. She believed that

with teacher guidance, students should be allowed to set their own goals for learning. Diane felt the best way to facilitate learning was through cooperative learning, which enticed students to learn. This method allowed students to be active learners, which she felt was necessary in order for them to develop the desire to acquire knowledge. Diane's beliefs were very similar to Dewey's in which children learn more from being actively involved rather than simply learning facts (Alkin, 1992; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). She felt that each student had their own learning style and thus did not fit into a specific mold. Thus, she felt that the teacher should be responsible for delivering instruction through a variety of methods. As a teacher, she viewed herself as a mentor, encouraging students toward learning goals.

Each participant's beliefs were placed along a continuum of traditional to non-traditional, rated on a scale of one to five; one representing traditional beliefs and five representing non-traditional beliefs. Table 9 summarizes those placements.

Table 9
Deer Creek participant's beliefs rating scale

	Rating				
Deer Creek Participant	1	2	3	4	5
Dennis	xx				
Dana	xx				
Della	xx				
Darcy		xx			
Debbie		xx			
Dorothy				xx	
Dawn				xx	
Diane					xx

Social Networks

Two distinct groups of social networks emerged through analysis of the data: life

experiences and school experiences. Each network set contained both strong and weak ties. Life experiences such as relationships with family members in education and raising children also impacted teachers' beliefs. Each of these experiences afforded opportunities for weak ties and/or strong ties to develop. A family of educators, raising children, collaborating with teachers with similar beliefs, mentor teachers, and educational upbringing offered strong ties. These sources tended to perpetuate the way things had always been done.

School experiences appeared to have more influence on participants' beliefs than any other source. Dana, Debbie, Dorothy, Dawn, and Diane reported that trial and error in the classroom molded their beliefs. "You watch and if it works and it's good and they like it, then you try it again with another one [group of students]" (Dorothy, 7-14-95, 13). Teacher social and professional collaboration, mentor teachers, inservice, and educational upbringing were other sources of influence under school experiences. Collaborating with teachers with difference perspectives, trial and error in the classroom, and inservice training offered avenues to new concepts and ideas.

Life Experiences. The opportunity to raise children enabled respondents to experience situations that slanted their outlook on education. Being raised by an educator also impacted respondents' beliefs. Both of these life experiences offered strong ties with family members which perpetuated traditional family and teaching perspectives.

School experiences. Each respondent was asked to name those teachers with whom they collaborate. Data were then organized into a sociogram to map the pattern of interaction between teachers. Frequent professional collaboration was indicated by a solid

line, while the broken line represented occasional professional collaboration. A Deer Creek Interaction Sociogram has been placed in Appendix D as a detailed description of teacher professional and social collaboration. This sociogram indicated that Darcy primarily collaborated with the second grade teachers, as well as the first grade teachers and Dorothy, fifth grade teacher. Debbie primarily collaborated with the second grade teachers, and occasionally with the first and third grade teachers. Dawn collaborated with the other third grade teachers, the librarian, Dana, fourth grade teacher, and Dorothy, fifth grade teacher. Della collaborated only with Dawn. Dana primarily collaborated with the fourth grade teachers and occasionally with the fifth grade teachers and her principal. Dorothy collaborated with the other fifth grade teachers, second grade teachers, the reading lab teacher, and Dana, fourth grade teacher. Diane collaborated with the counselor and Dorothy, fifth grade teacher.

Four teachers reported that they believed teacher professional collaboration influenced their beliefs. Teacher social and professional collaboration by grade level supports Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties in which people interact with one another because they share the same thoughts, beliefs, and interests. The Deer Creek Upper Elementary Strength of Ties Sociogram, in Appendix D provides evidence that strong ties are present in grades two, three, four, and five. These participants reported to collaborate with those teachers in their grade level. Strong ties were also controlled by the cellular organization (i.e., building layout and grade clustering). Grade clustering seemed to be the common thread for the development of strong ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. Teacher professional collaboration across grade levels supports

Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties in which people are linked to members of different groups. The Deer Creek Upper Elementary Strength of Ties Sociogram, in Appendix D, also provides evidence that weak ties exist between Darcy (grade 2) and Dorothy (grade 5) and between Dawn (grade 3) and Dorothy (grade 5). A solid line indicated strong social ties, while the broken line represented weak professional ties.

Although teachers reported collaboration and its influences, my observations revealed little, to no, professional collaboration taking place at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. The only exception to this was the second grade team.

The second grade team not only had complimentary personalities, but they held similar beliefs. A lot of emphasis was placed on reading, writing, and arithmetic, with reading being priority. The desire for an integrated curriculum was addressed through learning centers, which resulted from team professional collaboration. Each valued the student but expected him/her to conform to his/her classroom. Organized seating charts existed in each of the classrooms that I observed and students worked quietly while doing independent work. Organizational skills, creativity, and the desire to make learning enjoyable were common threads that held together the second grade team.

I believe the physical logistics of the school, the lack of organized opportunities to collaborate during the school day, and the lack of value teachers perceived was placed upon their opinion prohibited teacher professional collaboration. Likewise, Lortie (1975) and Fullan (1991) reported that for many schools, the cellular organization limits the opportunities for teachers to have meaningful interaction with their colleagues. When participants were asked to name those teachers with whom they collaborated, the majority

of the respondents named those teachers within their grade level. Only one participant actually referred to Dennis, the principal, as someone with whom to interact. Dawn and Dorothy appeared to be the only ones to claim across grade level interaction with other teachers. I believe the reason for this was the number of years they had been in Deer Creek district: Dorothy 15 years and Dawn one year. Dorothy believed it was her responsibility to be a role model and mentor to the less-experienced teachers within her school. Dana and Debbie admitted that they occasionally collaborated with those teachers directly above their grade level. However, it is important to note that Debbie had taught with that grade level the previous year.

Few opportunities were offered to develop weak ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. Although teachers received a great deal of support and encouragement from their principal, they lacked exposure to new ideas and the support, from peers, that was necessary to carry out new concepts. Teachers did not view the principal as the key agent in establishing communication. Deer Creek teachers did not view staff development and committee work as avenues to develop weak ties. Again, I attribute the strength of ties to the physical logistics of the building, the lack of organized opportunities to collaborate during the school day, and the lack of value teachers perceived was placed upon their opinion. Those teachers whose classrooms represented a more structured, traditional environment reported to have strong ties within their grade level and few, if any, weak ties. However, those teachers whose classrooms represented a more flexible, democratic, non-traditional environment reported weak ties inside and outside the district with teachers and other sources. Table 10 summarizes these sources of influence.

Table 10
Sources of influence on Deer Creek participant's beliefs

	Life Experience	Life Experience	School Experience	School Experience	School Experience	School Experience	School Experience
	Strong Tie	Strong Tie	Strong Tie Weak Tie	Weak Tie	Strong Tie	Weak Tie	Strong Tie
Participant	Family	Raising a Family	Teacher Collab.	Trial & Error in the Classroom	Mentor Teacher	Inservice	Educational Upbringing
Dana				X	X		
Della	X						X
Darcy			X				
Debbie		X	X	X			
Dorothy	X	X		X	X		
Dawn			X	X		X	
Diane			X	X		X	

Impact of Social Networks

Social network is an important component of Perpetuation Theory. Social networks offer opportunities that either perpetuate traditional beliefs or break the cycle of traditional beliefs.

Perpetuation Theory supports the notion that teachers who are not afforded the opportunity to test their beliefs and be exposed to new ideas, through the development of weak ties, will continue to perpetuate traditional teaching perspectives. The absence of weak ties and the distinct presence of strong ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary perpetuated traditional teaching perspectives.

Perpetuation Theory also supports the notion that to change teachers' perspectives, weak ties must be developed. Several teachers at Deer Creek Upper Elementary developed weak ties by collaborating across grade levels and through inservice training and professional organizations. These teachers were able to break the cycle of traditional beliefs in their classroom by offering a newer outlook on teaching. The weak ties they

developed allowed them to have a support system to test new ideas and concepts.

Summary

The teachers at Deer Creek Upper Elementary reflected educational beliefs that could be classified from traditional to non-traditional. These beliefs were based primarily on teaching experiences at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. Social and professional collaboration, when it existed, took place primarily within the grade level supporting strong ties. Few opportunities were given to develop weak ties. When they were evidenced, weak ties were found in grade levels directly above or below one another. These teachers also shared part of their lunch hour with each other. Table 11 summarizes the existence of strong ties and weak ties within Deer Creek Upper Elementary, based on teacher social and professional collaboration.

Table 11
Existence of Strong and Weak Ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary

Deer Creek Participant	Strong Ties	Weak Ties
Dennis (Principal)	X	X
Darcy (2)	X	X
Debbie (2)	X	
Dawn (3)	X	X
Della (3)	X	
Dana (4)	X	
Dorothy (5)	X	X
Diane (Reading)		X

Meadowview Elementary

Teachers' beliefs about elementary education, the social networks of strong and weak ties, and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and social networks were examined.

Teacher Beliefs

Meadowview Elementary teaching perspectives were presented from traditional to less traditional. A range of beliefs were apparent, starting with Margo and ending with Michael. The majority of the teachers held beliefs that fell between the traditional and non-traditional categories; however, two teachers held non-traditional beliefs.

Margo, a teacher of 19 years, expressed a desire to see each subject get equal treatment. She reported "the subjects pretty much come into balance and I try not to over weight one or the other because it is more interesting to do a lot of different things" (7-10-95, 9). She believed that a variety of instructional strategies should be utilized when presenting these subjects, even though they were taught in isolation. My observations supported this belief. I observed Margo presenting the material through discussion, games, lecture, and discovery. Students were expected to give their undivided attention during each lesson. Her classroom provided an enticing learning environment. Margo was a strict disciplinarian and students treated her and each other with the utmost respect. Students were involved, with teacher guidance, in making choices in the classroom. Margo highly promoted the need for the support of colleagues.

Margaret began her teaching career at Meadowview 19 years ago. She voiced the need to use a variety of teaching strategies when presenting the curriculum. She presented each subject in isolation and rarely tied one subject to another. She believed that it was the student's responsibility to put forth his/her best effort at school. She expressed that it was her responsibility to provide leadership and guidance to her students. Margaret believed that her classroom mirrored her team teacher's classroom. Margaret and Margo

had been team teachers for 18 years.

Madeline placed a lot of emphasis on teaching the basics. The three R's were a priority in her first grade classroom. During her four years of teaching, she realized the need for presenting material in a variety of ways. She expected students to actively participate and pay attention. She placed the need for a student's positive self-esteem above all other needs. "Promoting self-confidence is essential" (Madeline, 7-27-95, 1). She believed that learning could not take place unless a safe environment, that fostered a positive self-concept, was provided for the child. This belief is identical to the goal for education stated by Thorndike and Gates (1929) and Goodlad (1984): for children to exit with a positive level of self-confidence and a confident view of their ability to learn that would enable them to continue to participate in life most successfully.

Meg, a teacher of 19 years, also placed a lot of emphasis on the three R's. She found that she was most successful when presenting an integrated curriculum. She strived to use a variety of strategies to present the curriculum. During my observation, the social studies assignment also addressed spelling, reading, and English skills. She aimed for a "fun, but productive environment" in which students could actively participate (7-10-95, 1). My observations revealed this to be so. I saw her offer several different activities during her teaching. She believed it was her responsibility to set a good example for her students and to socially prepare them for their future.

Marcia began her teaching career at Meadowview five years ago. She provided a relaxed learning atmosphere for her students which mirrored her personality. She also expressed the importance in students receiving the basics. She sought to integrate the

curriculum, even though she was primarily responsible for teaching science. She expressed the need to use a variety of teaching strategies and my observations revealed that she had been very successful in doing so. She valued her students and believed they should be involved in making choices in the curriculum, discipline, and in other areas within the classroom. Her goal was to develop independent thinkers.

Margo, Margaret, Madeline, Meg, and Marcia all supported learning by doing, understanding before memorizing, and learning through sense impression that is present in non-traditional classrooms (Mehl, et al., 1958).

Martha taught kindergarten at Meadowview for 18 years. She believed there was no other way to present the curriculum than through integrating the subjects. She used a variety of methods to present material, from learning centers to discovery. She placed a lot of emphasis on individualization. Students had a lot of freedom to explore, make choices and learn by doing. I would consider Martha to be one of the non-traditional teachers at Meadowview. Martha's beliefs were similar to the philosophy set forth by Froebel. He believed learning should be fostered through creativity, discovery, and the child's interests (Alkin, 1992; Beauchamp, 1959; Cole, 1931).

Marie was also a non-traditional teacher. She believed her role was to facilitate learning, not just present the material. She allowed students to make choices in any matter that affected them at school; i.e., curriculum, homework, discipline, etc. "I think that they should be able to have more control over what they're going to learn or how they're going to learn it" (7-21-95, 2). Marie's beliefs also reflected Froebel's philosophy, as well as Dewey's. Dewey believed that the child's interests should guide teaching methods rather

than the subject matter (Alkin, 1992; Cuban, 1984; Shepherd & Ragan, 1992). Communication was a high priority for Marie. She believed that if students could not communicate, they would not be able to succeed in other areas. There was very little structure in Marie's classroom. She allowed students to have a lot of freedom and opportunities to problem solve through all of their experiences.

Michael, the principal, exhibited many non-traditional beliefs in his leadership. He placed a lot of emphasis on the teacher and gave them a lot of freedom to choose what was best for the student. Not only did he encourage teacher input on topics discussed, but he also valued their opinion. Michael believed teacher professional collaboration was essential and offered teachers many opportunities to collaborate during and after school hours such as allowing teachers release time to attend curriculum committees, allowing teachers to attend any decision making committee that was of interest to them, and encouraging interaction and input during faculty meetings.

Each participant's beliefs were placed on a continuum of traditional and non-traditional beliefs. Their beliefs were rated on a scale of one to five; one representing traditional beliefs and five representing non-traditional beliefs. Table 12 summarizes where each participant's beliefs rated. Notice that no Meadowview participant rated below a three on this continuum.

Table 12
Meadowview participant's beliefs rating scale

Meadowview Participant	Rating 1	2	3	4	5
Margo			xx		
Margaret			xx		
Madeline			xx		
Meg				xx	
Marcia				xx	
Martha					xx
Marie					xx
Michael					xx

Social Networks

Two groups of social networks surfaced from the analysis of the data: school experiences and life experiences. Each of these included both weak ties and strong ties. Meadowview participants were influenced by life and school experiences. Life experiences included the Challenger explosion and raising a family. Family members, especially those in education, also made an impact on beliefs. School experiences such as teacher collaboration, teaching experience, mentor teacher relationships, inservice opportunities, and educational upbringing also influenced beliefs. Each of these experiences afforded opportunities for weak and/or strong ties to develop. A family of educators, raising children, collaborating with teachers holding similar beliefs, mentor teachers, and educational upbringing offer strong ties. These strong ties tended to perpetuate old ways of thinking. Experiencing the Challenger explosion, collaborating with teachers who hold different beliefs, trial and error in the classroom, and inservice training offered opportunities for weak ties to develop. These weak ties provided avenues to new ideas and concepts that break the cycle of traditional teaching perspectives.

Life Experiences. Coming from a family of educators not only developed interest in education but also influenced one respondent's perspective of education. This offered the opportunity for strong ties to develop which perpetuated traditional beliefs. The opportunity to raise a child with special needs also opened one respondent's eyes to the many needs of students. The various outside connections and sources dealing with a special needs child offered the opportunity to develop weak ties. Experiencing the Challenger explosion touched the heart of one respondent. She not only saw the value of life itself, but education as well. This connection offered the development of weak ties by visiting with the many other people that experienced this event and through the news media.

School experiences. Each respondent was asked to name those teachers with whom they collaborate. Data were then organized into a sociogram to map the pattern of interaction between teachers. Frequent professional collaboration was indicated by a solid line, while the broken line represented occasional professional collaboration. A Meadowview Interaction Sociogram, located in Appendix D, revealed that Margo and Margaret frequently collaborated with each other. Margo and Margaret had been team members for 18 years. The sociogram also indicated that Marcia and Marie collaborated continuously. The Interaction Sociogram also indicates that professional collaboration occasionally took place between all individuals.

Four teachers reported teacher professional collaboration as an influence on their beliefs. Teacher social and professional collaboration by grade level supports

Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties in which people interact with one another because they share the same thoughts, beliefs, and interests. The Meadowview Elementary Strength of Ties Sociogram, in Appendix D, indicated that a strong tie existed between Margo and Margaret, third grade teachers. Teacher professional collaboration across grade level supports Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties in which people are linked to members of different groups. The Meadowview Elementary Strength of Tie Sociogram, in Appendix D, provided evidence that weak ties existed at all levels.

Social and professional collaboration took place at Meadowview on a continual basis. Teachers professionally collaborated during faculty meetings and committee meetings. Meadowview's committee work reflected the goal of the 1980s Nation at Risk call for empowerment. Teachers were included in the decision making process related to curriculum, textbooks, standards for students' behavior, staff development, promotion and retention policies, teacher evaluation, school budgets, and teacher and administrator select (Parkay & Stanford, 1992). Both the principal and teachers agreed that teacher professional collaboration on these topics and other concerns related to the school and classroom was essential. The principal highly promoted teamwork. He frequently provided release time for committees to convene. The faculty appeared to be very comfortable expressing their concerns, suggestions, and desires. They knew, from experience, that their opinion was highly regarded by their principal and frequently saw their suggestions put into action.

I attribute the number of weak ties to the fostering of professional collaboration by the principal through committees and faculty meetings. Teachers, as well as their princi-

pal, provided the necessary support and encouragement to carry out these new concepts. Weak ties were designed to further develop the faculty. I believe teacher professional collaboration across grade levels on a continual basis and frequent exposure to new ideas facilitated a more flexible, democratic, non-traditional teaching environment. I did not find there to be any hard core traditional teachers at Meadowview Elementary. As a whole, educational experience and years of service did not appear to impact the strength of ties. However, a strong tie did exist between Margo and Margaret who had taught together in the same grade at Meadowview for 18 years. They were also approximately the same age. Grade clustering, age, and similar beliefs appeared to be the common threads for the development of this strong tie. Table 13 summarizes these sources of influence.

Table 13
Sources of influence on Meadowview participant's beliefs

	Life Experience	Life Experience	School Experience	School Experience	School Experience	School Experience	School Experience
	Strong Tie	Strong Tie Weak Tie	Strong Tie Weak Tie	Weak Tie	Strong Tie	Weak Tie	Strong Tie
Participant	Family	Life Events	Teacher Collab.	Teaching Experience	Mentor Teacher	Inservice	Educational Upbringing
Margo			X	X			
Margaret		X	X				
Madeline	X	X					
Meg	X		X	X			
Marcia	X		X				
Martha		X			X		X
Marie	X	X					

Impact of Social Networks

Social network is an important component of Perpetuation Theory. It is through social networks that opportunities to either perpetuate traditional beliefs or break the cycle

of traditional beliefs are developed.

Perpetuation Theory suggests that to change teachers' perspectives, weak ties must be developed. Teachers at Meadowview developed weak ties by collaborating across grade levels, through committee work, faculty meetings, and inservice training. Meadowview teachers were able to break the cycle of traditional beliefs. The weak ties they developed offered them exposure to new ideas and as well as a support system to carry out these new ideas and concepts in their classrooms.

Summary

The teachers at Meadowview Elementary held a combination of traditional and non-traditional beliefs, however, non-traditional beliefs seemed to be the most prevalent. These beliefs were influenced by life experiences, family members, and interaction with peers. Social and professional collaboration took place on a continual basis, within grade levels and across grade levels. Table 14 summarizes the existence of strong and weak ties at Meadowview Elementary, based on teacher collaboration. Sources for professional collaboration were faculty and committee meetings. Professional collaboration was highly regarded and promoted by all participants, including the principal. A strong tie existed between Margo and Margaret, the third grade team. Weak ties were prominent across all grades. The exposure to new ideas and the support and encouragement to carry out these new concepts may have provided a break in traditional perspectives handed down through the years.

Table 14
Existence of Strong Ties and Weak Ties at Meadowview Elementary

Meadowview Participant	Strong Ties	Weak Ties
Michael (Principal)	X	X
Martha (K)		X
Madeline (1)		X
Margo (3)	X	X
Margaret (3)	X	X
Marie (4)		X
Meg (4)		X
Marcia (5)		X

Collective Analysis

Teachers' beliefs, social networks, and the impact of social networks at both Deer Creek Upper Elementary and Meadowview Elementary were collectively analyzed.

Teachers' Beliefs

Traditional teaching perspectives reflecting teacher-centered instruction, isolated subjects, uniform classwork and behaviors, and structured teaching environments were found in both schools. Non-traditional teaching perspectives reflecting student-centered instruction, group discussion and exploration, integrated curriculum, and democratic teaching environment were also found in both schools. More traditional beliefs were held by teachers in Deer Creek Upper Elementary; more non-traditional beliefs were held by teachers in Meadowview Elementary.

Social Networks

Teachers' beliefs were impacted by life experiences and school experiences. Life experiences included relationships with family educators, raising children, and experiencing the Challenger explosion. School experiences included teacher collaboration, trial and

error in the classroom, mentor teachers, inservice training, and educational upbringing. These experiences afforded opportunities for weak ties and/or strong ties to develop. A family of educators, raising children, collaborating with teachers with similar beliefs, mentor teachers, and educational upbringing offered strong ties. These sources tended to perpetuate traditional beliefs. The Challenger explosion, collaborating with teachers with different perspectives, trial and error in the classroom, and inservice training offered opportunities to develop and explore new ideas and concepts.

Strong ties were the most prevalent at Deer Creek Upper Elementary, the traditional school. Teachers collaborated and interacted by grade level. The cellular organization of the school enhanced the development of strong ties. Few opportunities were offered to develop weak ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary.

Weak ties were the most prominent in Meadowview, the non-traditional school; however, strong ties also existed. Teachers collaborated across grade levels continuously. Faculty meetings and committee work encouraged professional collaboration and interaction. The development of weak ties offered exposure to new ideas and concepts and the support system to carry out these new ideas. Weak ties were designed to further develop the faculty.

Impact of Social Networks

Perpetuation Theory supports the idea that teachers who are not given the opportunity to examine their beliefs and be exposed to new ideas would continue to perpetuate traditional teaching perspectives. Weak ties offered the opportunity to break the cycle of traditional beliefs. The absence of weak ties and the definite existence of

strong ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary led to the lack of exposure to new ideas and support and perpetuated traditional teaching beliefs. The presence of weak ties at Meadowview offered the avenue to educational change through exposure to new ideas and concepts.

Summary

Traditional teaching beliefs were the most prominent at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. Non-traditional teaching beliefs were the most prevalent at Meadowview Elementary. These beliefs were impacted by life experiences and school experiences which offered opportunities for weak and strong ties to develop.

The distinct existence of strong ties and the absence of weak ties at Deer Creek Upper Elementary perpetuated traditional teaching perspectives. The development of weak ties, in conjunction with strong ties, at Meadowview Elementary offered an avenue for educational change through the exposure to new ideas and concepts.

Summary

Teacher beliefs at both Deer Creek Upper and Meadowview Elementary schools reflected a range from traditional to non-traditional. Social networks at both school resulted in strong ties as well as weak ties. But, overall, strong ties were prominent at Deer Creek Upper Elementary; traditional beliefs have been perpetuated. Weak ties were prevalent at Meadowview Elementary; the constant professional collaboration across and between grade levels offered exposure to new ideas.

The summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications will be presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND COMMENTARY

This chapter includes a summary, conclusions, recommendations, implications and commentary gleaned from the data compiled in this study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of teachers' strong and weak ties and the impact of those associations upon their beliefs about the realities of elementary education in terms of the knowledge and skills that influence those realities: school context, general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, the nature of the learner, and self as teacher (Bennett & Spalding, 1991). This purpose was accomplished by:

- Data collection from two purposively divergent elementary school sites using the long interview method and direct observation;
- Data presentation into the components of elementary education (Bennett & Spalding, 1991) from each individual site and then collectively; and
- Data analysis by site, then collectively, from two perspectives: (1) Granovetter's (1973) strength of ties and (2) McPartland and Braddock's (1981) Perpetuation Theory.

Data Needs

Data from traditional and non-traditional schools concerning teachers' beliefs about elementary education and the factors impacting those beliefs were needed. To

achieve the purpose of this study, data depicting how teachers came to believe the way they do, through strong ties and/or weak ties were also needed.

Data Sources

Data were collected from two elementary school sites. Each school was located in a rural community in the northeastern section of a Midwestern state. One school housed approximately 360, second through fifth grade students. The other school housed approximately 280 students, kindergarten through sixth grade.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two sources: the long interview method and observations. Eight participants were interviewed from each site. Observations of classroom instruction, faculty lunch periods, before and after school periods, and faculty meetings were conducted to support the findings from the interviews.

Data Presentation

Prior to collecting the data, a literature review was completed. Data were continuously cast against the literature. Data were then categorized into the five components of elementary education: school context, general pedagogy, specific subject matter pedagogy, the nature of the learner, and self as teacher. An additional category, influences on teachers' beliefs, was included.

School Context. Teacher professional collaboration was heavily encouraged and exercised at Meadowview. Teachers collaborated continuously by grade level and across grade levels on a professional and social basis. Teacher collaboration was also promoted and believed necessary at Deer Creek. However, little professional collaboration actually

took place, except within the second grade team. Most collaboration, at Deer Creek, took place before and after school, at lunch and outside the school, on a social basis. Both schools believed the tone was primarily set by the principal. Occasionally, the teachers believed they, themselves, affected the tenor of the school. Deer Creek respondents believed the superintendent greatly affected the climate of their school through his bureaucratic decisions.

General Pedagogy. General pedagogy was the teacher's general instructional philosophy and strategies. Five purposes of public education emerged from the data: to provide a basic foundation, to teach basic skills, to prepare students to succeed in society, to develop self-confidence, and to provide a balanced education. Teachers also felt that they should be involved in developing the curriculum or that a combination of factors should be at play. Deer Creek teachers also felt that the administration had a significant role in developing the curriculum, while Meadowview teachers believed that the textbook companies greatly impact the curriculum. They also felt that it was necessary to have national or state guidelines, in addition to administrative support.

Specific Subject Matter Pedagogy. Specific subject matter pedagogy referred to the content of subject matter, more specifically, teachers' philosophies of teaching strategies and the priority of subjects. Respondents agreed that reading, writing, and arithmetic should be emphasized in elementary education. Meadowview felt that communication should also be emphasized. Both schools had teachers who taught subjects in isolation, as well as those who supported an integrated curriculum. Several respondents from Deer Creek taught in a traditional mode, using direct instruction. Both schools

agreed that a variety of instructional strategies were essential.

Nature of the Learner. The nature of the learner dealt with the teacher's philosophy of the students' role and responsibilities within education and the most effective ways for them to learn. Teachers at both schools agreed that the student was responsible to learn, to actively participate, and to pay attention. Deer Creek teachers also believed students should take more responsibility for their actions, while Meadowview teachers felt students should do their best and be involved in making choices within the classroom and curriculum. Teachers at both schools also agreed that students have a variety of learning needs and thus, instructional strategies should be diversified enough to meet those needs. Learning by doing was seen as an effective way to meet students' learning needs at both schools.

Self as Teacher. Self as teacher referred to teachers' perspectives of their beliefs, roles, and responsibilities. Both schools believed that it was the teacher's responsibility to provide a productive learning environment and to facilitate learning. Deer Creek also believed it to be the teacher's responsibility to plan the curriculum and mentor students, while Meadowview believed the teacher should set a good example within the classroom and provide guidance to students. Both schools agreed that it was important for teachers to collaborate with one another. Deer Creek also felt the teacher should provide leadership when called upon and be a role model to new teachers. Respondents from Meadowview felt that teachers should volunteer to do committee work and communicate thoughts, concerns, and ideas to each other.

Influences on Teachers' Beliefs. Teachers at both school sites reported factors

that influenced their beliefs: life experiences and school experiences. Life experiences included raising a family, the Challenger explosion, and interacting with family members in education. School experiences included trial and error in the classroom, teacher collaboration, mentor teachers, educational background, educational upbringing.

Analysis

Data were analyzed through the lens of Perpetuation Theory. During analysis of the data, three perspectives were considered. First, based on the literature and research presented in Chapter II, teachers' beliefs were considered to be traditional or non-traditional. Second, the social networks that existed within the school were determined. Third, the impact strong or weak ties made on teachers' beliefs was assessed to determine if these beliefs had been perpetuated. Thus, the analysis of the data centered around Granovetter's (1973) strength of ties and McPartland and Braddock's (1981) Perpetuation Theory.

Findings

What are teachers' beliefs about elementary education? Traditional teaching beliefs, reflecting teacher-centered instruction, isolated subjects, uniform classwork and behavior, and structured teaching environment were the most prominent at Deer Creek Upper Elementary. Non-traditional teaching beliefs, reflecting student-centered instruction, group discussion and exploration, integrated curriculum, and democratic teaching environment, were the most prevalent at Meadowview Elementary.

What has impacted those beliefs? Those beliefs were impacted by life experiences and school experiences which offered opportunities to develop strong and/or weak ties.

How do strong ties and weak ties affect those beliefs? Teachers with traditional teaching beliefs collaborated primarily by grade level which enhanced the development of strong ties. Few opportunities were offered to develop weak ties. The absence of weak ties and the distinct presence of strong ties perpetuated traditional teaching beliefs. Teachers with non-traditional teaching beliefs collaborated continuously across grade levels through committee work and faculty meetings, which enhanced the development of weak ties. Strong ties also existed at Meadowview. The development of weak ties at Meadowview Elementary offered exposure to new ideas and concepts, a support system to carry out these new ideas, and the avenue to educational change.

Conclusions

Conclusions centered around answers to the research questions, developed to guide this study.

What are teachers' beliefs about elementary education?

In general, teachers hold beliefs about elementary education: from traditional to non-traditional. Literature reveals that teachers ultimately control the goals, topics of instruction, teaching strategies, and activities within the classroom, despite any administrative efforts to control the curriculum and strategies (Goodlad, 1984; Glatthorn, 1987). Given the findings of these two case studies, teachers hold general beliefs in the following areas:

1. General Pedagogy - traditional "goods" of basic foundation, basic skills, prepare students to succeed in society, develop self-confidence, and provide a balanced education. In sum, "Mom and apple pie."

2. Specific Subject Matter Pedagogy - basically traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic centered around the teacher. Non-traditional teachers might add in a greater variety of instructional techniques, but content changed very little.

3. Nature of the Learner - non-traditional and traditional teachers believe the same things: student's responsibility to learn, actively participate and pay attention. Any difference was seen in the non-traditional perspective that students should be involved in making choices within the classroom and curriculum.

4. Self as Teacher - non-traditional and traditional teachers believe the same thing: that teachers must be responsible for providing a productive learning environment to facilitate learning, collaborate with peers, and mentor students.

What has impacted those beliefs?

Life, more than school experiences. The sixteen plus years teachers spend in classrooms before becoming teachers seem to have enduring influences. Buchmann (1987), Florio-Ruane and Lensmire (1990), and Wilson (1990) reported that teachers beliefs are often well established before they receive their undergraduate training due to the many years they spent in the classroom as a student.

How do strong ties and weak ties affect those beliefs?

Social networks work to impact beliefs. Strong ties in schools ameliorate the effects of traditional life experiences. The weak ties in schools chip away even more at the traditional beliefs established through life experiences.

Summary

The data and findings of these case studies result in the following conclusions:

1. Teachers and administrators generally believe that the purpose of public education is to provide a basic foundation, teach basic skills, prepare students to succeed in society, develop self-confidence, and provide a balanced education.

2. Teachers generally believe they should be involved in developing the curriculum.

3. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are priority subjects and should be taught through a variety of teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of the student.

4. Students are responsible for learning, participating, and paying attention; teachers are responsible for facilitating learning and providing a productive learning environment.

5. Teachers' beliefs are influenced by life experiences and school experiences.

6. Strong ties and traditional perspectives co-existed in the same environment, while weak ties and non-traditional perspectives co-existed in the other environment.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study yield significant results in the areas of theory, research, and practice.

Theory

Perpetuation Theory (McPartland & Braddock, 1981), in conjunction with Granovetter's (1973) strong and weak ties, was used to examine the link between social networks and teachers' beliefs about elementary education. To begin this process, teachers' beliefs were examined by using the components of Bennett and Spalding's Model (1991). This model was very useful in examining teachers' beliefs. However, the

definition of each component was left to the reader. It would have been extremely helpful if these components had been operationally defined.

Social networks were then examined through Granovetter's (1973) strong and weak ties to determine the strength of ties present within the school. This framework was conducive to examining social networks in each school. Perpetuation Theory provided a wonderful avenue to link teachers' beliefs and social networks and examine the impact of networks on beliefs. Perpetuation Theory offers many possibilities for further educational research in gender in education, gender in administration, and the existence of gangs in schools.

Research

The findings of this study add to the knowledge base of teachers' beliefs, social networks within the schools, perpetuation of beliefs, and educational change. "Little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools they work in" (Nespor, 1987, p. 317). Further research might examine how strong ties are perpetuated and weak ties are developed. Future research might also examine the impact of strong and weak ties on the classroom, as well as, strength of ties and their connection to the culture of the school.

Since this study focused on elementary teachers and administrators' beliefs and social networks, another study should examine secondary teachers and administrators' beliefs and social networks. Another study could examine beliefs and networks present at the university level, of both professors and students

Practice

These findings seem significant to educational practice because they will allow teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and perhaps understand why they believe the way they do. Given the schools in this study, organized opportunities for teacher professional collaboration must be made available. Principals need to be aware of the existing social networks within the school and build upon those. Teachers do not naturally collaborate about professional matters on their own accord and yet they possibly learn most from their colleagues in their own school. Teacher professional collaboration offers teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, to express those beliefs to colleagues, and critique and alter those beliefs. The principal must facilitate this professional collaboration. Teachers should have opportunities to talk about their beliefs and practices, observe other classrooms, plan, design, and evaluate curriculum, and be encouraged to participate in group decision making.

Future studies on practice should examine the means by which social networks can be developed at school. More specifically, the means by which weak ties can be developed.

Commentary

When I began this study, my real interest was in why schools do not change. Why do schools continue to foster traditional teaching styles? As an educator, I have seen many new teachers enter the teaching field eager to practice the exciting, new methods they were taught in college. After several years of experience, their classroom began to look like the room next door; traditional, with a bit of their personality woven into it. As

my study evolved, I began to question if the relationships teachers developed with one another actually impacted their teaching, their beliefs, and their attitude. Are new teachers regressing back to traditional perspectives because they are comfortable and familiar methods or because they are effective methods?

As my study evolved, I began to see, as a principal, that my role was to foster positive networking. Teachers needed to have time to develop social networks through professional collaboration. But how? Teachers generally had no scheduled time away from the classroom to discuss professional matters. The only available times were usually at the end of a work day of which teachers were mentally and physically exhausted. These times were simply not conducive to professional collaboration. However, if we want change in education, we must search for opportunities to facilitate professional collaboration. Fullan (1991) claims that the power of change lies in teacher collaboration and that the degree of success for that change is related to the extent teachers interact with each other. Thus, I have come to the conclusion that change is not possible without the development of weak ties, fostered through teacher professional collaboration.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 05-22-95 **IRB#:** ED-95-089

Proposal Title: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND TEACHER BELIEFS ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Principal Investigator(s): Adrienne Hyle, Michelle Aston

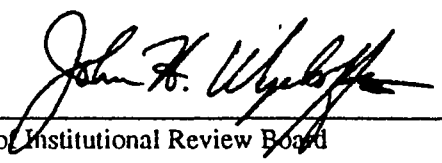
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Provisions received and approved.

Signature:  Date: June 7, 1995

Chair of Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Questions for Administrators

Grand Tour and Follow-up Questions:

Talk to me about what's important about teaching or elementary education. How did you come to believe this?

General and Specific Subject Matter Pedagogy

1. What is your philosophy of teaching? curriculum?
   Who do you believe should decide what is to be taught and when?
2. What role do schools play in society? Purpose of schools?

Nature of the Subject Matter

1. How much weight should be placed on the different subjects?
   Should they be prioritized, separated, integrated?

Nature of the Learner

1. What do you believe the student's role in the classroom should be?
2. What do you believe the student's role in the school should be?
3. In your opinion, what is the best way for students to learn?

Self as Teacher

1. How would you describe a good teacher? Important characteristics?
2. What should the teacher's role in the classroom be? school?
3. What is your role in the school? in the classroom?
4. What is your role with students? with teachers?

School Context

1. Describe the climate of your school. Who sets the tone/mood?

Networks (strong or weak ties)

1. What kind of teacher interaction transpires within the school?
2. What kind of opportunities do teachers have to collaborate?

Follow-up

1. What teachers, in your building, hold strong beliefs about education? leaders, influence others
2. What teachers do you believe would feel comfortable talking with me about their beliefs? A variety (wide range of experience, those who are outspoken/leaders, those who are reserved/isolated, young, older, newer, experienced)

Interview Questions for Teachers

Grand Tour and Follow-up Questions:

Talk to me about what's important about teaching or elementary education.
How did you come to believe this?

General Pedagogy

1. What is your philosophy of teaching?
   Who do you believe should decide what is to be taught and when?
2. What role do schools play in today's society? Purpose of schools?

Nature of the Subject Matter/Subject Matter Pedagogy

1. What instructional methods have you found to be effective for individual subject areas?
2. How much weight should be placed on the different subjects?
   Should they be prioritized, separated, integrated?

Nature of the Learner

1. What role should students play in the classroom? responsibilities?
2. In your opinion, what is the best way for students to learn?

Self as Teacher

1. What should your role be in the classroom? in the school?
2. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

School Context

1. Describe the personality of your school. Who sets the tone/mood?
2. Have you ever taught in a different school? Was it different?
   How did that climate affect your beliefs?

Networks (strong or weak ties)

1. What kind of teacher interaction transpires within the school?
2. With whom do you discuss school matters? When? Where?
3. Do you ever collaborate with people that think different than you? challenge your beliefs?
4. Who are some other people in the building that hold strong views about education?
   Similar or different from you? How?
5. How did you come to believe the way you do? What has influenced your beliefs of elementary education the most? Who's made a difference in your teaching beliefs? How have they impacted your beliefs?

APPENDIX C

WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT FORM FOR A STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND TEACHER BELIEFS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

General Information

You have been asked by a doctoral student of Oklahoma State University working on a research project (dissertation) to be interviewed and observed about your beliefs about elementary education and how they are impacted by the social networks present in the school.

The interview and observation serve two purposes: (1) information collected in the interview and observation will be used by the doctoral student to create a scholarly paper (dissertation) about the impact of social networks and teacher beliefs on educational change, and (2) information collected by the doctoral student may be used in scholarly publications of the student and/or the project director (dissertation advisor).

The interview should last from one to one and one-half hours. The questions asked will be developed by the doctoral student. All participants will be asked the same general questions. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed by the doctoral student for analysis. The project director (dissertation advisor) may review these transcripts. Observations will last approximately one hour. Notes will be taken by the doctoral student. The project director may also review these notes. All tapes, transcripts, and notes are treated as confidential materials and will be kept under lock and key for a 5 year period and then destroyed. During this 5 year period, only the project director (dissertation advisor) and doctoral student will have access to these tape recordings and transcripts.

The doctoral student will assign pseudonyms for each participant of the study. These pseudonyms will be used in all discussions and in all written materials dealing with interviews and observations. Lastly, no interview will be accepted or used by the doctoral student unless the consent form has been signed. The form will be filed and retained for at least 2 years by the project director (dissertation advisor).

Subject Understanding

I understand that participation in this interview and observation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director (dissertation advisor).

I understand that the interview and observation will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the interview

and observation will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

I understand the interview and observation will not cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

I may contact the project director, Dr. Adrienne Hyle, Ph.D., Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078; Telephone (405) 744-7244, should I wish further information about the research. I also may contact Jennifer Moore, University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078; Telephone (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

DATE:_____ TIME:_____ (A.M./P.M.)

SIGNED:_____
(Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it and provided the subject with a copy of this form.

DATE:_____ TIME:_____ (A.M./P.M.)

SIGNED:_____
(Signature of Doctoral Student)

FILED:
INITIALS OF INSTRUCTOR_____ DATE:_____

July , 1995

Dear Principal,

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me about your beliefs of elementary education and teaching. I have included a copy of the transcript, dictating our conversation. If you will notice, I did not change any of the names to pseudonyms in this copy. This is to protect the confidentiality of the teachers you work with. I am not allowed to let anyone know which pseudonyms are assigned to individuals. Every name will be replaced with pseudonyms in all other written documents. Please look over this transcript for accuracy (except for typos and punctuation). If there is anything you would like to add or change, give me a call and we can either talk over the phone or meet again. Sometimes it is difficult to tell exactly what the work is on tape. I am primarily looking for meaning.

In the Fall, I will be visiting to observe the network or collaboration patterns. I would also like to observe some classrooms of those I spoke to over the summer. With your permission, I would like to take a few photographs of some of the innovative things you have done in your building. I would like to observe a faculty meeting - not to observe you conducting a meeting or of the exchange of information, but to see the different networks and collaboration that goes on before and after that meeting. Again, I am interested in who talks to who, about what, when, and where!

I have also included a copy of the signed consent form for you to keep. Thanks again for your time. And remember if you want to change or add to our conversation, give me a call.

Sincerely,

Michelle Aston

July , 1995

Dear Teacher,

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me about your beliefs of elementary education and teaching. I have included a copy of the transcript, dictating our conversation. If you will notice, I did not change any of the names to pseudonyms in this copy. This is to protect the confidentiality of the teachers you work with. I am not allowed to let anyone know which pseudonyms are assigned to individuals. Every name will be replaced with pseudonyms in all other written documents. Please look over this transcript for accuracy (except for typos and punctuation). If there is anything you would like to add or change, give me a call and we can either talk over the phone or meet again. Sometimes it is difficult to tell exactly what the work is on tape. I am primarily looking for meaning.

At this point, I am primarily interested with whom you collaborate about school matters. If by chance you find yourself discussing educational things with one or two particular people, please let me know. From our interview, I gathered that you collaborate with the following people:

In the Fall, I will be visiting to observe the network or collaboration patterns. I would also like to observe your classroom. With your permission, I would like to take a few photographs and just sit back and watch for about 30 minutes - I hope that is not too intimidating. I will also be choosing some days that I can see a faculty meeting or teacher's lunch period. Again, I am interested in who talks to who, about what, when, and where!

I have also included a copy of the signed consent form for you to keep. Thanks again for your time. And remember if you want to change or add to our conversation, give me a call.

Sincerely,

Michelle Aston

November , 1995

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for allowing me to spend time observing in your classroom. I will be back on December to finish my observations. If you will take the time, I need the following information from you:

- a copy of one week's lesson plans (any week that represents your instructional strategies)
- a copy of any bulletins you have kept from the principal or staff
- a list of names you have collaborated with and a brief reason
  i.e., Janet - instructional - every day
  Marge - reading series - one hour per week
  Betty - student discipline - once this year
- a copy of your parent letter sent home at the beginning of the year and discipline plan (if applicable)

Remember that any names present in these documents will be replaced with pseudonyms.

I will also need to talk to you briefly (5 minutes) about a neat idea that you have or have heard/seen that you are incorporating or would like to incorporate into your classroom. Where did you get this idea?

I will be coming by your room to observe at approximately _____. I will come by to visit at _____. If these are not good times, let me know and I will try to catch you at your convenience. If it is impossible for us to visit, could you write out your response to the above question?

Sincerely,

Michelle Aston

December , 1995

Dear Teacher,

Thank you so much for allowing me to spend time observing your classroom and visiting with you. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know you.

As soon as I have a rough draft of my dissertation I will have someone from your staff review the information (with pseudonyms) to make sure that this is an accurate depiction of your school. I will send a final copy of the approved dissertation to the office if you choose to review it.

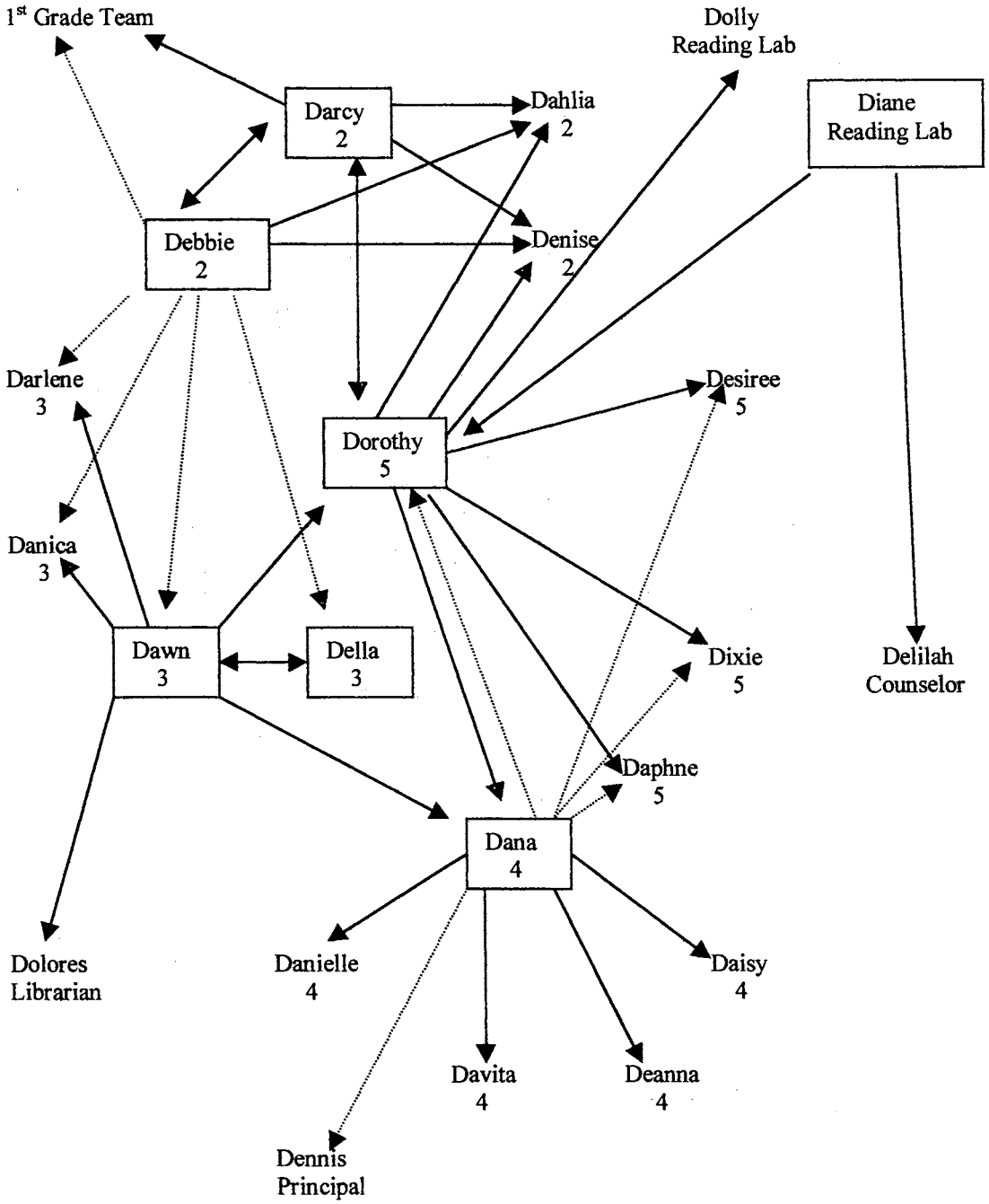
Again, thank you for your cooperation and good luck with your professional goals.

Sincerely,

Michelle Aston

APPENDIX D

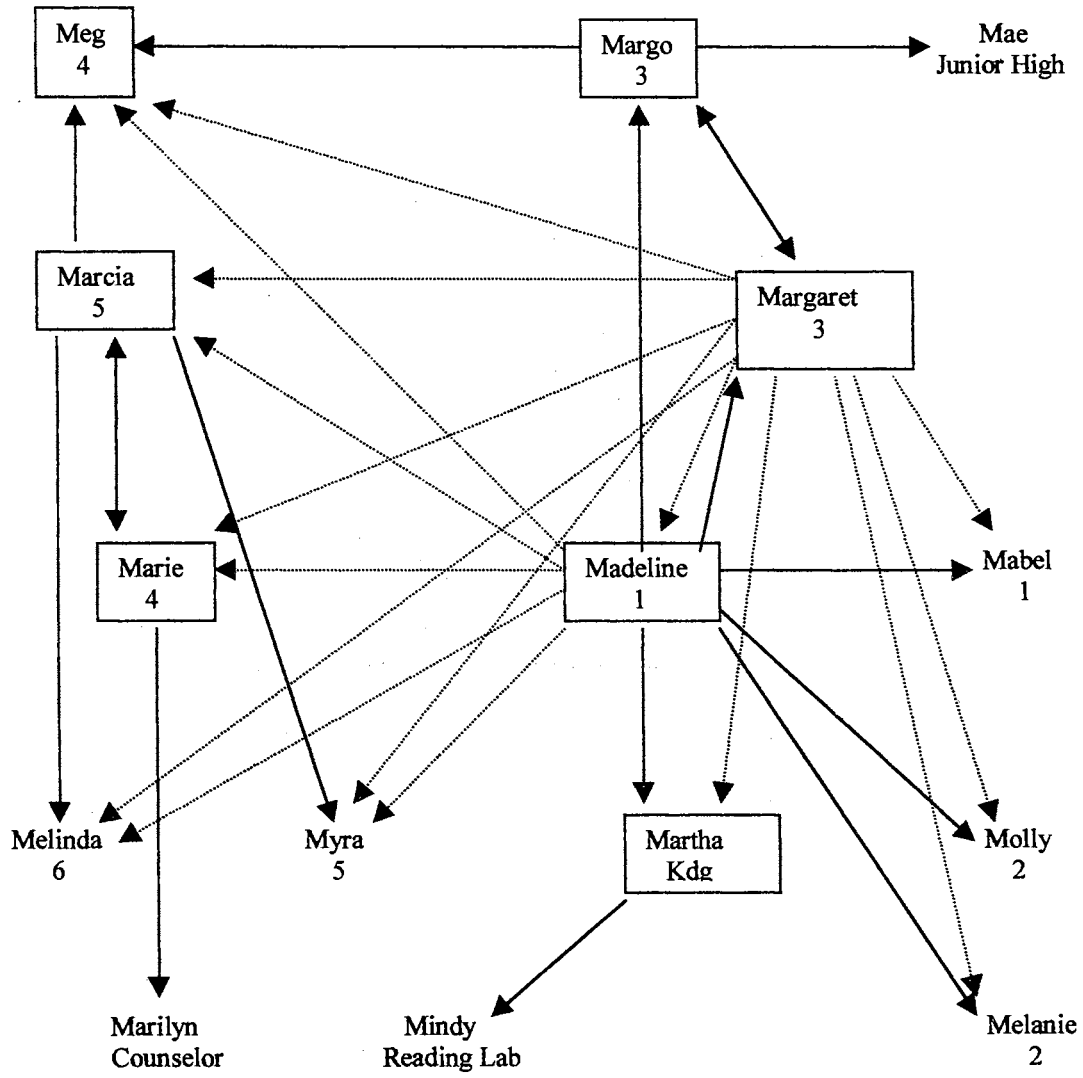
SOCIOGRAMS



..... = occasionally collaborates

——— = frequently collaborates

*Each numeral indicates grade level taught

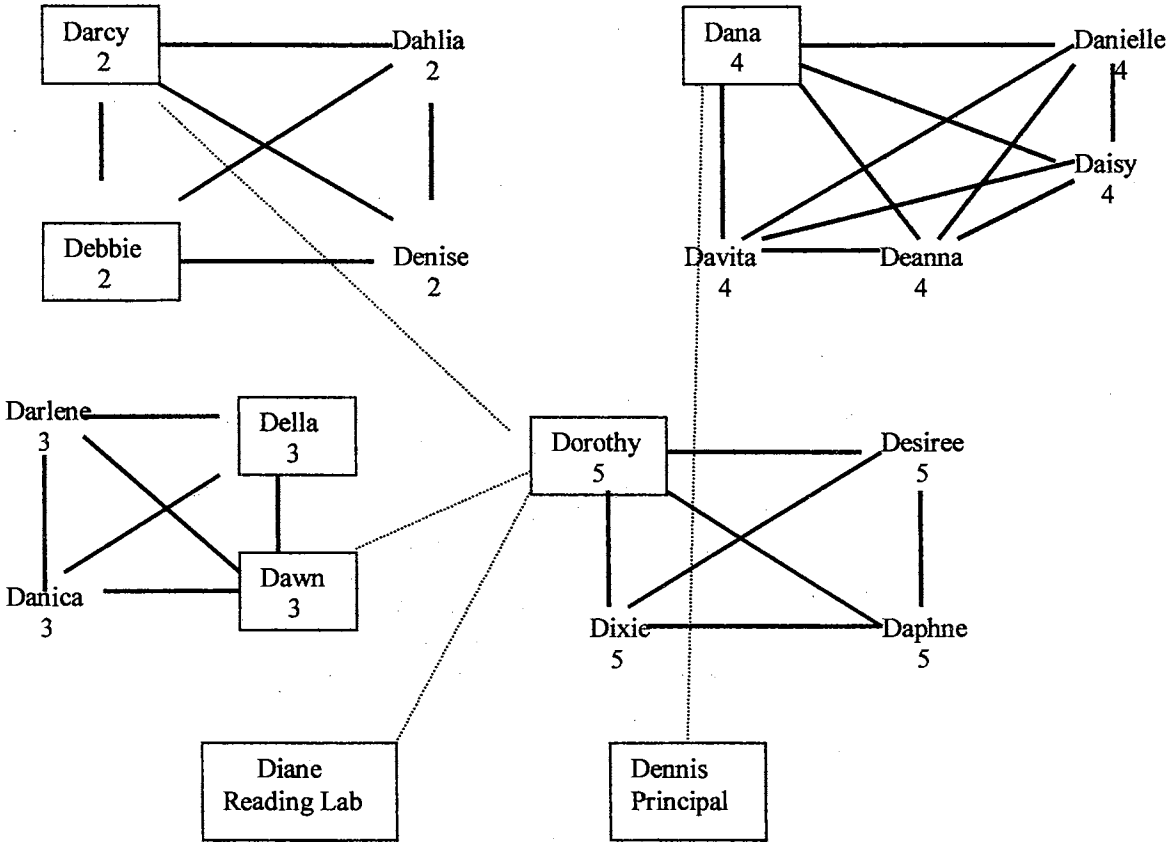


..... = occasionally collaborates

——— = frequently collaborates

*Each numeral indicates the grade level taught

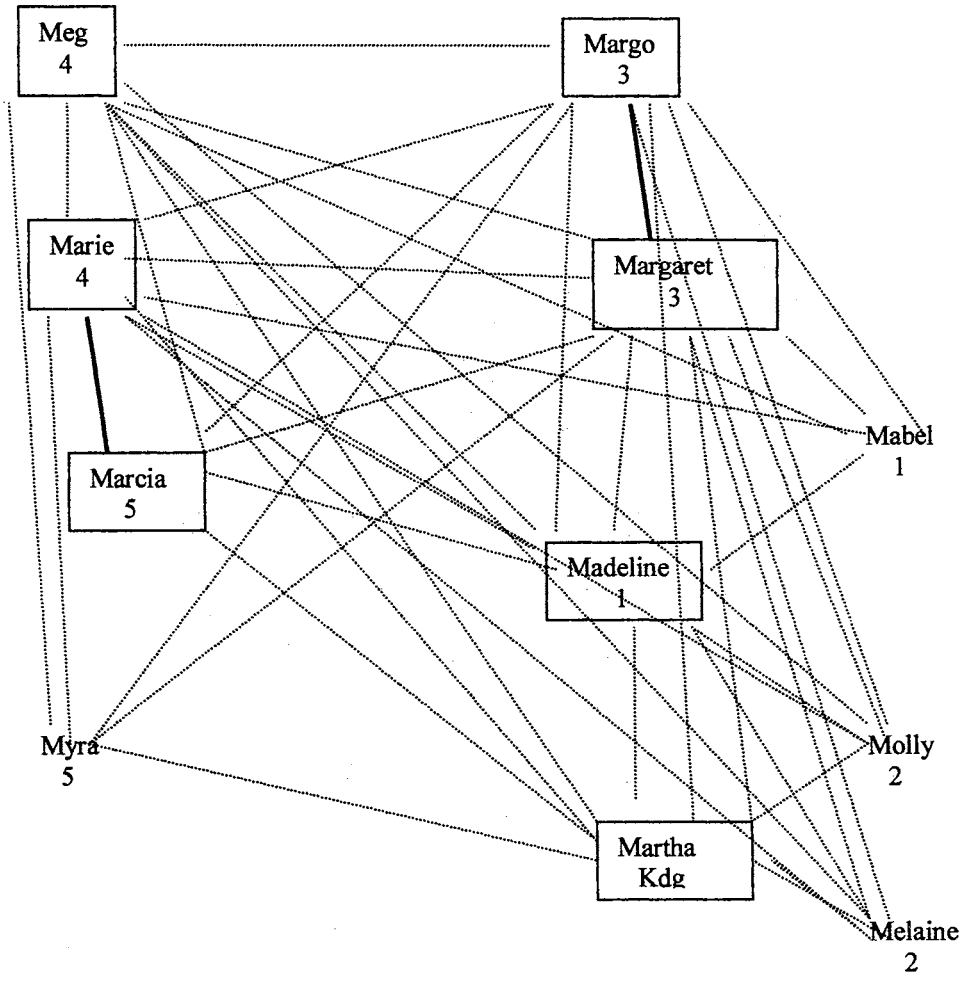
Deer Creek Strength of Ties Sociogram



..... = weak professional tie

——— = strong social tie

*Each numeral indicates grade level taught



..... = weak professional ties

——— = strong social ties

*Each numeral indicates the grade level taught

VITA

Susan Michelle Aston

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND TEACHER BELIEFS ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Education: Graduated from Collinsville High School, Collinsville, Oklahoma in May 1982; received Bachelor of Science degree in Education with a major in Elementary Education from Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma in May, 1986; completed the requirements for the Master of Education degree with a major in educational administration at Northeastern State University in May, 1990; completed requirements for elementary school principal's certification in January, 1990; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in May 1997.

Experience: Taught elementary education at Kellyville Elementary School in Kellyville, Oklahoma; taught elementary education at Ator Heights Elementary School in Owasso, Oklahoma; currently elementary principal, Ator Heights Elementary School in Owasso, Oklahoma.

Professional Memberships: National Association of Elementary School Principals; Oklahoma Association of Elementary School Principals; Phi Delta Kappa; Tulsa Reading Council.